

Four ways to address *employee languishing* before it leads to burnout.

ICYMI: Takeaways from our live event with Adam Grant, Wharton professor and organizational psychologist and Nickle LaMoreaux, CHRO of IBM

What is languishing?

Change is a constant, and organizations will always need their people to flex and adapt to its rapid pace and unpredictability. However, 57% of employees¹ may not be up to the task due to languishing – a driver of performance issues and *an early indicator of burnout*. Languishing employees are 3X more likely to cut back on their work and have less engagement, motivation, and focus.² Their resulting burnout drives up stress, anxiety, depression, and costly turnover.

However, helping languishing employees learn mindsets they need to thrive can reduce burnout and foster teams that are more innovative, more creative, and enjoy increased performance while experiencing less attrition, absenteeism, and conflict.³

How to address employee languishing before it leads to burnout

1. Take a preventative and holistic approach

According to Nickle, when it comes to languishing, “Prevention is extremely lower cost than crisis management — it creates higher performing employees, leads to less turnover, and more engaged employees. The benefits compound.” Acute treatment for well-being won’t help those languishing in the middle, nor those who are thriving from slipping backward.

2. Use surveys to spot languishing early warning signs

Pulse surveys are a great way to track employee engagement, but Nickle says that the mistake organizations make is over-indexing on measuring engagement. Regular check-ins about mental well-being and languishing can help your leaders understand macro-level trends across their teams early and effectively pinpoint solutions to help.

3. Leaders must model behaviors to kickstart change

Successfully addressing languishing and burnout starts when senior leaders and people of influence share their own experiences with them. When leaders create psychological safety to discuss these issues, it helps normalize feelings for employees and removes stigma. Adam notes leaders can put this in action by “letting people know that you’ve been there or are there with them ... [it’s] a great way to help them find some self-compassion.”

4. Use coaching to help employees build key mindsets and behaviors

Adam noted that coaching is a key way to help employees “learn from their own resilience and practice self-compassion” which is needed to overcome languishing and burnout. When employees reflect on their own solutions, they can take more ownership over their feelings and gain insight into how to change — especially helpful in turbulent times.

Stop languishing and burnout before it starts

Reduce languishing and burnout to foster more innovative and creative teams who enjoy increased performance. With the help of BetterUp coaching, members experience a 27% shift away from languishing toward thriving and see a 19% reduction in burnout.

[Request a demo](#)

¹ BetterUp member data, 2021

² Corey Keyes - Emory University, From Languishing to Flourishing in Life 2002

³ Wharton Business Journal - Managing emotions in the workplace, Apr 2007