

Business Wellness: Creating a high-performing, thriving & resilient workforce



Mental Wellness

Manage stress, optimise mental health and well-being

Neuroscience and mental health

Optimise performance, resilience and wellbeing

Leading a mentally healthy workplace

Understand the critical differences between a toxic workplace and one that soars to peak performance.

1 Mental Wellness

How do we manage stress, optimise mental health and well-being?

Good health doesn't just happen



Health continuum



Unhealthy

Thriving

Liabilities

Assets

Risk factors
(Liabilities)

Protective factors
(Assets)

Physical health



Risk factors
(Liabilities)

Protective factors
(Assets)



Mental health



What are the
protective factors and risk factors
for good mental health?



Risk factors
(Liabilities)

Protective factors
(Assets)

What is your
mental health
balance sheet?



What is mental health and wellbeing?

Wellbeing of our mind and brain.

Feel, think, behave and relate to others.

Good mental health and wellbeing:

is a solid foundation for a satisfying personal and professional life.

It's even more important as our professional lives have become marathons.



Good mental health and wellbeing:

We use our mind and our brain all day.

How do we invest in them?

We don't understand much about them!

Tips for investing in good mental health and wellbeing:

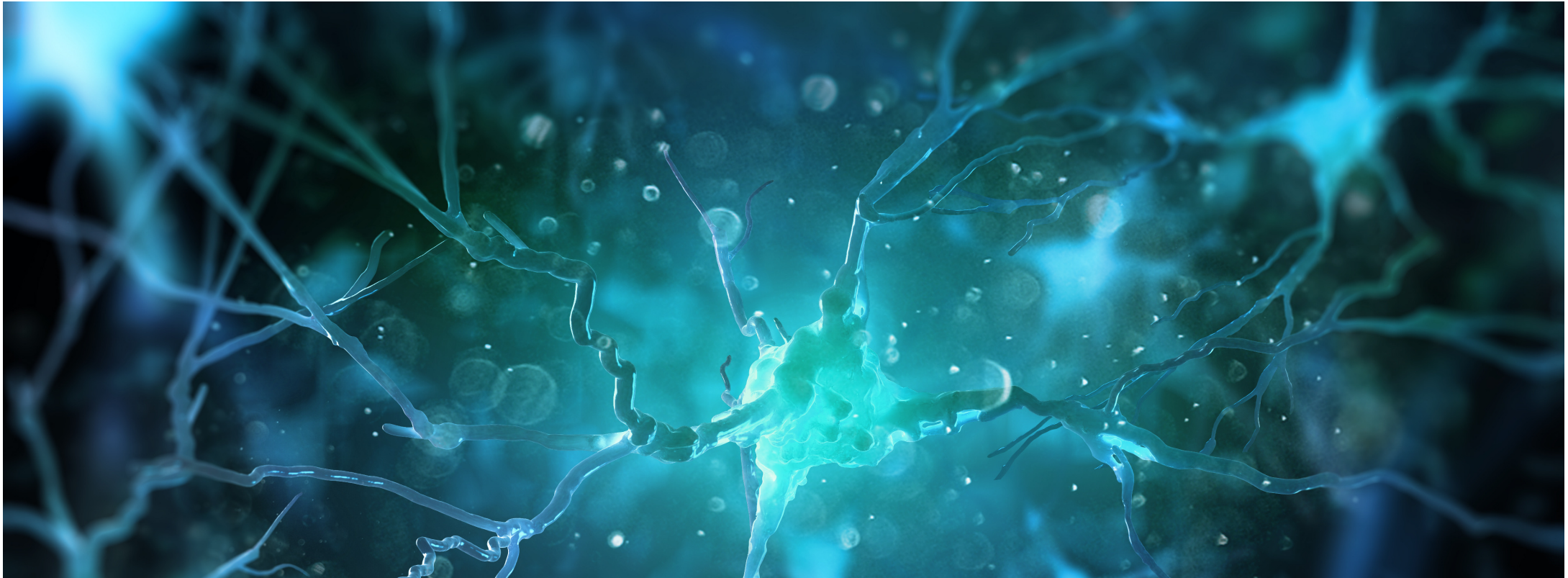
- Breathing practices
- Mindfulness & Meditation
- Flow activities
- Physical activity – yoga, qi gong, tai chi
- Healthy lifestyle habits – sleep, exercise, hydration and unprocessed foods
- Gratitude practices
- Self-compassion
- Friendships and Personal supports
- Meaning and Contribution
- Growth, mastery and learning
- Activities that cultivate fun and joy

Understanding the brain helps with mental health



2 Neuroscience and Mental Health





Understanding the Brain

Evolution of Brain Science

Neuroplasticity

- *we can influence our brain wiring*

Neuroscience

- *patterns of thoughts influences our brain wiring*

Interpersonal neurobiology

- *our relationships influence our brain wiring*



The Regions of the Brain

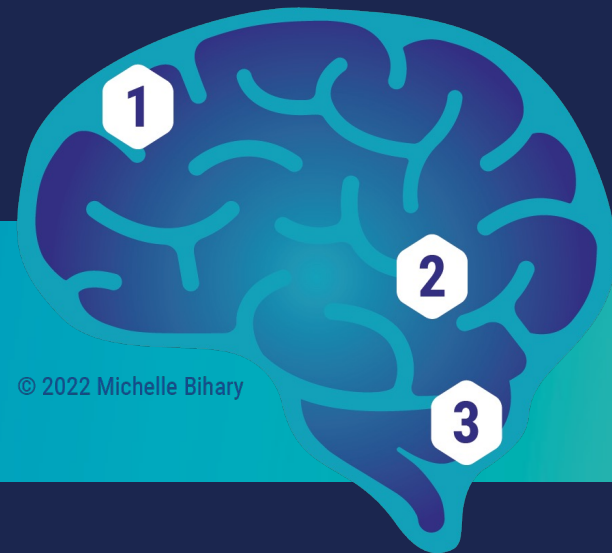


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Brain in 3 parts

- 1 **Executive Brain** - helps us think and relate
- 2 **Limbic System** - helps us feel and remember
- 3 **Brainstem** - keeps us safe by monitoring risks

Brain in 3 parts



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1 Executive Brain = **think, learn & relate**

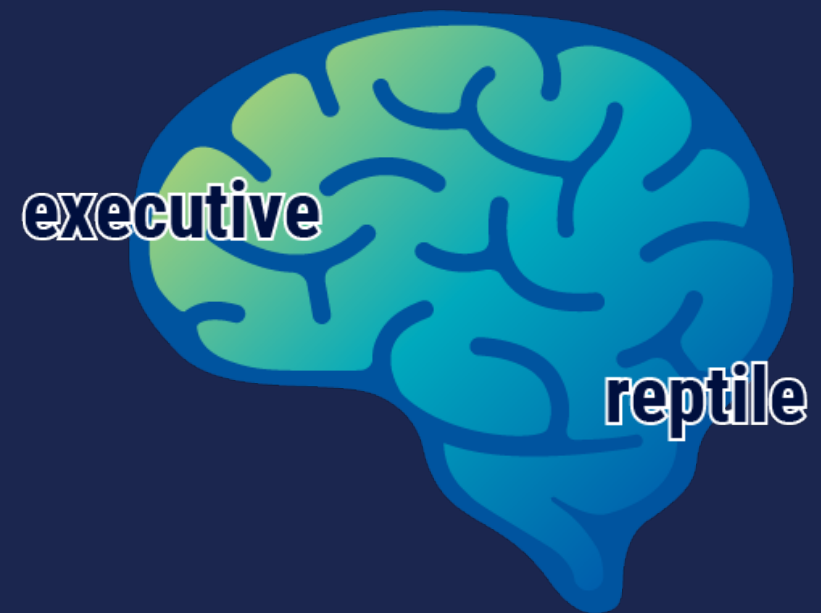
Executive Brain = **think, learn & relate**

- ✓ Helps us think well
- ✓ Make best decisions
- ✓ See situations from other perspectives
- ✓ Essential for relationships – empathy, listening and valuing others' viewpoints

*The more our **Executive Brain** is switched on*

- ✓ Agile and flexible, helps us manage challenges and change
- ✓ Assists us to see the opportunities, positives & strengths
- ✓ Manage ourselves - align actions with our values
- ✓ Better for our mental and emotional wellbeing
- ✓ Reduces the roller-coaster of triggers

Reptile brain = **keeps us safe**





Brainstem / Limbic System = **keeps us safe**

If the brainstem is highly active through stress, overwhelm, fear, lack of safety:

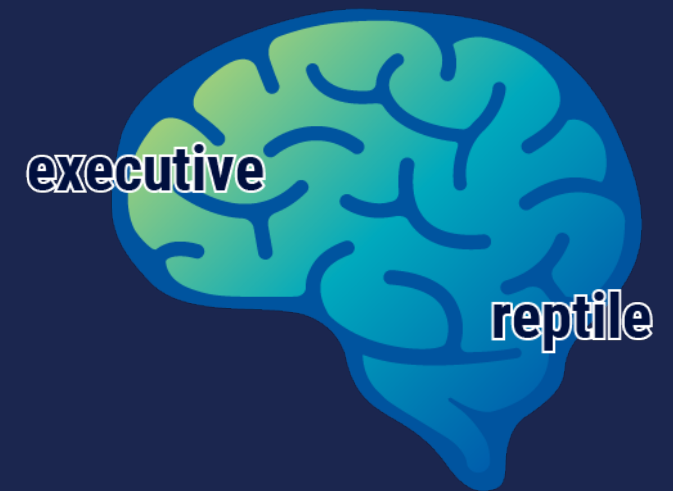
It takes the executive brain off-line:

- ✓ we're in a **reactive or triggered state**
- ✓ unable to think, learn and relate effectively

If the brainstem is active, we become :

- ✓ Reactive, negative
- ✓ Black and white - win / lose, right / wrong, good / bad
- ✓ Can't see things from others' perspectives
- ✓ More prone to distractions, hard to focus
- ✓ Tense, offhand, don't listen, impatient, critical
- ✓ Fear based – see others as opponents, competition
- ✓ Find change and adapting difficult

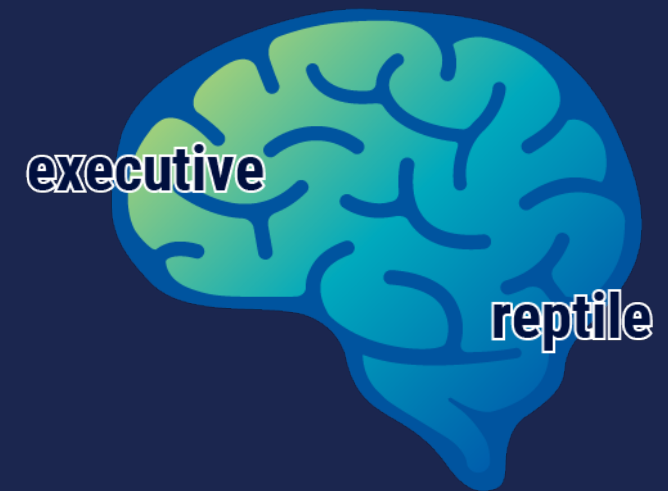
If the brainstem is highly active – flip our lid!



If the brainstem is highly active – flip our lid!

we can feel out of control and/or chaotic:

- **Fight** - conflict or critical
- **Flight** - disconnected or isolated
- **Fright** – rigid, frozen and concealing



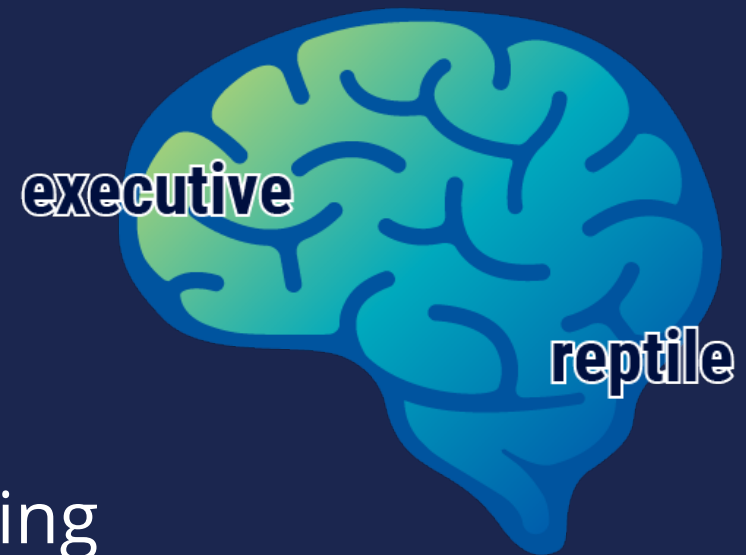
If customers or employees are in fight, flight or fright: How do they act?

- **Fight** - conflict or critical
- **Flight** - disconnected or isolated
- **Fright** – rigid, frozen and concealing



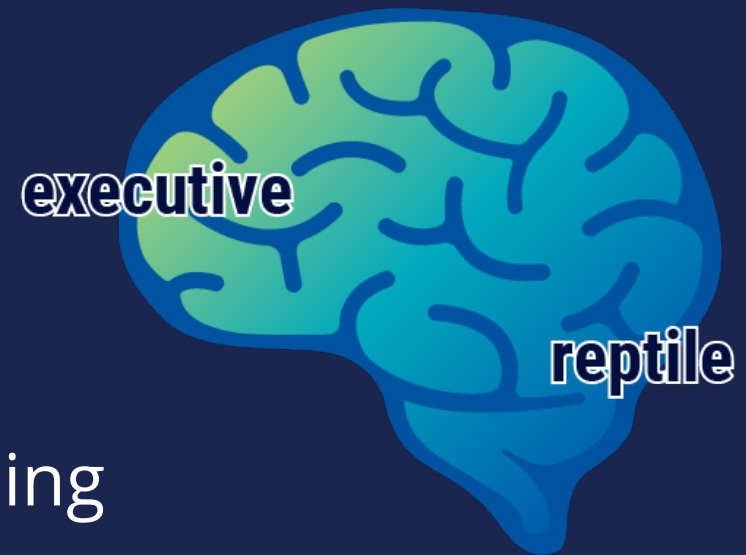
At work, how do we act when we are in:

- **Fight** - conflict or critical
- **Flight** - disconnected or isolated
- **Fright** – rigid, frozen and concealing



How can we shift ourselves, if we are in:

- **Fight** - conflict or critical
- **Flight** - disconnected or isolated
- **Fright** – rigid, frozen and concealing





executive

reptile

What feeds the **executive brain**?





executive

reptile

What feeds the **reptile brain**?





executive

reptile

Now consider your **employees**
(and yourselves):

What behaviours are you more likely to
observe when the **executive brain** dominates?

What behaviours are you more likely to
observe when the **reptile brain** dominates?





executive

reptile

Dealing with emotional reactivity and triggers:



We all have emotional reactivity, triggers, emotional hotspots, or buttons

Normal to have emotional reactions and triggers

It's personal and unique.

Dealing with emotional reactivity & triggers:



Externalise



Internalise

Externalise

Internalise

Feel relief, but damages relationships.	Stressful, but others don't know
Examples of when people externalise	Examples of when people internalise
Blame, shame, humiliate, angry, gaslight, exclude, gossip, pick on, cold, lack compassion	Stressed, shame storm, blame selves, harsh & self-critical, negative feelings



executive

reptile

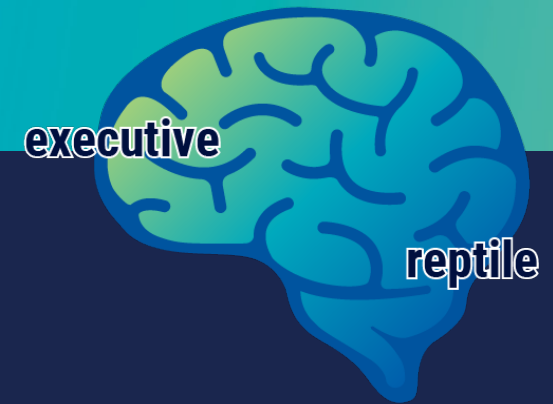
How often we get triggered



Frequently

Rarely

Navigating our triggers



1 PLAN

Have a plan or tool kit for when triggered.

List of what works for you – shifts you from triggered state without internalising or externalising - Keep that list handy

2 REDUCE TRIGGERS LONG TERM

Do things on a regular basis that helps reduce the frequency of your triggers.

What steps can we take when we experience triggers?

1 Be aware of it – monitor yourself for signs

2 What do I need for myself? How can I support myself?

3 What supports do I need from others?

4 Who can provide me with the support I need?

5 Have a conversation with that person to let them know what you might need and discuss how you can make it happen.





executive

reptile

How do we feed the brain?

Feed the executive brain

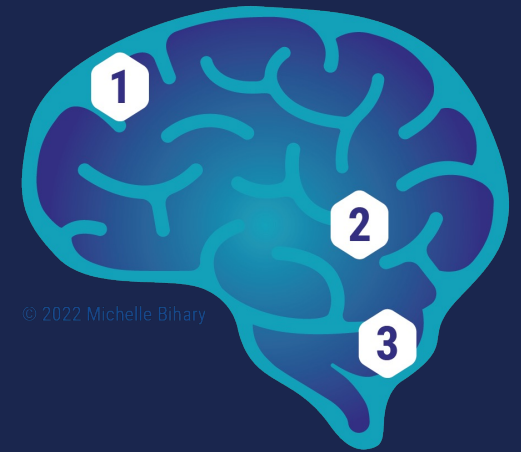
- ✓ Look after your body, mind, heart and soul
- ✓ Get enough sleep, rest, eat well and exercise
- ✓ Mindfulness, meditation, relaxation
- ✓ Self-leadership
- ✓ Value your strengths and skills
- ✓ Focus on what can influence, not what you can't
- ✓ Absorb the good
- ✓ **Do an audit of where you invest your time and energy**
- ✓ **Core human needs: Love and belonging, safety, valued, meaning, mastery and fun**



Don't feed the reptile brain

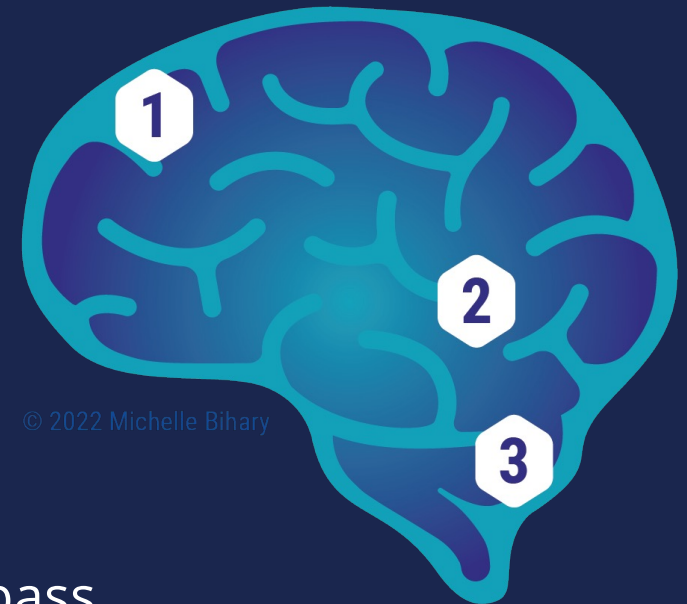
Less:

- ✓ Unnecessary self criticism
- ✓ Focussing on weaknesses or negatives -> shift to learning
- ✓ Less assuming the worst
- ✓ Focus on what we can't control
- ✓ Absorb the bad
- ✓ Overly driven by expectations



Strategies for when you are triggered:

- ✓ Something that makes you laugh
- ✓ Music that you find uplifting or relaxing
- ✓ Move your body
- ✓ 10 deep breaths
- ✓ Go outside or into nature
- ✓ Note to self – everything will be OK, this too will pass....
- ✓ Perspective: will this matter in a day, a week, a month, a year?
- ✓ Connection to self and/or others



3 Leading a mentally healthy workplace

Leadership
Psychological Safety
Culture

*Every human and workplace needs an
Executive brain friendly environment*



Above the line



Below the line

What is Above-the-Line Leadership?

Business owners set the tone for how their business functions at the psychological level.

If you tolerate or model below the line behaviours, this will determine the standards of employees.

What is Above The Line Leadership?

Above-the-line behaviours are acceptable, healthy, and responsible from a human, psychological and interpersonal perspective.

They feed the **executive brain**, are good for people, bringing out employees' capacity to **think, learn and relate effectively**.

Above-the-line behaviours generate **positivity, kindness, appreciation, goodwill, respect, openness to learning, authenticity, trust, and connection**.

What is Below-the-Line Leadership?

Below-the-line behaviours are not acceptable, healthy, or responsible from a psychological and human perspective.

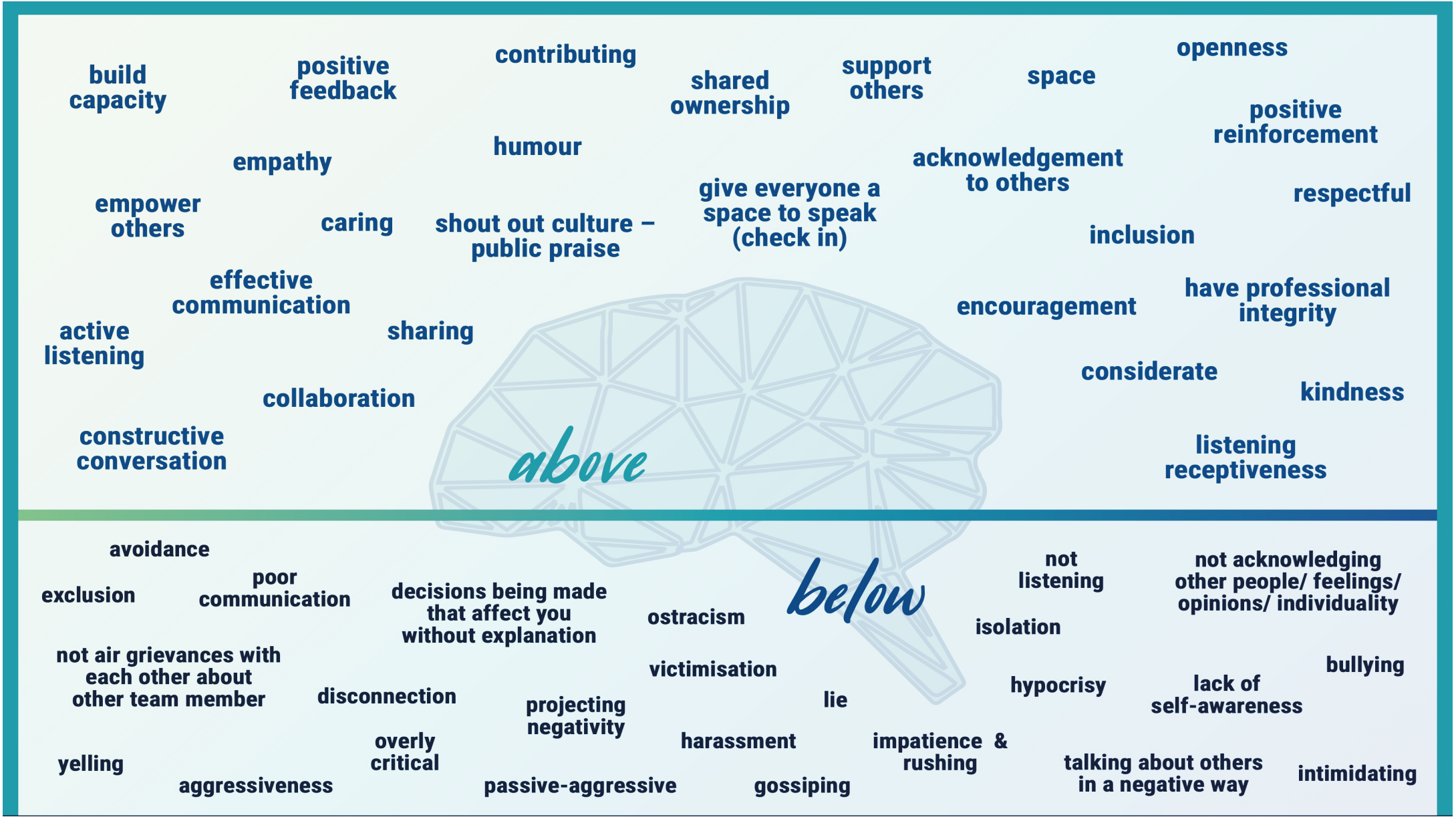
They feed the reptilian brain, are not in the best interests of people, diminish performance, productivity, and employees' mental health. Incivility, sarcasm, defensiveness, shaming, excluding, ignoring, bitching, unnecessary criticism, bullying, harassment, and discrimination are examples of below-the-line behaviours.

What attitudes, behaviours, and questions would feed the executive brain and be above the line?



What attitudes, behaviours, and questions would feed the reptile brain and be below the line?





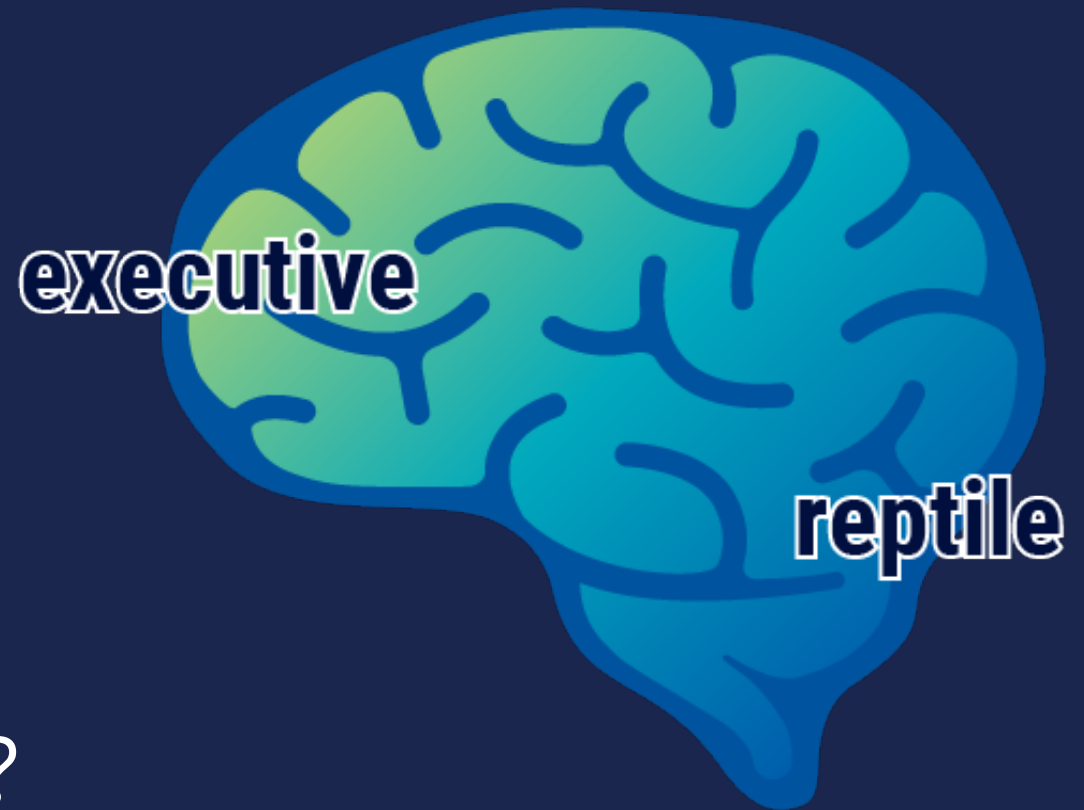
How we interact with each other will influence each others' neural wiring.



The absence of physical safety can bring injury or death,
but the absence of psychological safety can inflict
devastating emotional wounds,
neutralise performance,
paralyse potential and
crater an individual's sense of self-worth.

Timothy R Clark

Are workplaces
healthy eco-systems
or toxic ego-systems?



Healthy ecosystem or toxic ego-system?

Toxic Ego-system 1.0	Healthy eco-system 2.0
Individual	Collective
Old operating system	New operating system
Command & Control	Empowering leadership
Hierarchy, autocratic, micromanagement	Collaboration and inclusive
Potential for bullying, harassment & discrimination	Potential for work enriching employees' lives
Psychologically unsafe	Psychological safety

Toxic ego-system

Employees treated as robotic

Blame and shame

Customers get the worst of
employees

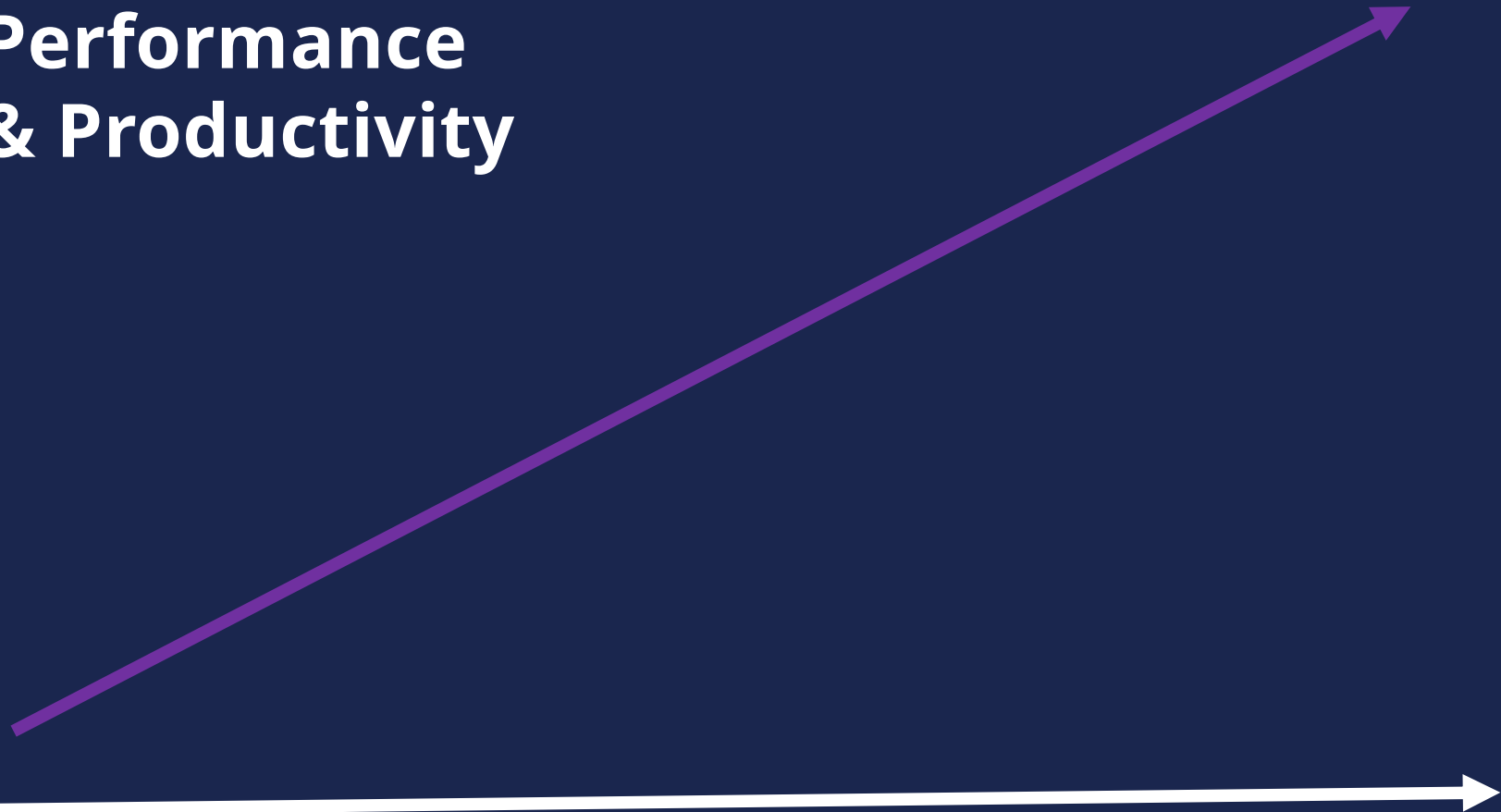


Ego-system 1.0	Healthy eco-system 2.0
No longer successful	Successful
Not sustainable	Sustainable
Not legal	Legal
Not productive	Productive
Not evidence based	Evidence based
Not employer of choice	Employer of choice

**Performance
& Productivity**

Toxic Ego-system
(Psychologically unsafe)

Healthy Eco-system
(Psychologically safe)



What is Psychological Safety?

Psychological safety is a belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes.

It is broadly defined as a climate in which people are comfortable expressing and being themselves.

What is Psychological Safety?

It ensures employees are comfortable **sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution.**

They are confident to speak up and won't be humiliated, ignored, or blamed.

They know they can ask questions when they are unsure about something. They tend to trust and respect their colleagues.

What is Psychological Safety?

Research has shown that psychological safety is the number one factor contributing to high performance in teams.

This is particularly important within any complex, dynamic, and high stakes work environment.

Australian workplaces are now **legislated** to provide a psychologically safe work environment.

What Psychological Safety is Not:

- ✓ About being nice – it is more being kind and respectful
- ✓ A personality factor
- ✓ About avoiding candour and conflict
- ✓ Another word for trust
- ✓ About lowering performance standards
- ✓ Not a comfort zone

Psychological Safety : Impact on Employees

Psychologically unsafe	Psychologically safe
See mistakes as threats to career	See mistakes as learning opportunities
Unwilling to step outside comfort zone	Willing to take considered risks and fail
Hide your ideas, reflects and insights	Share your ideas, reflects and insights
Cover up any sign of vulnerability	Share struggles and challenges
Fear your colleagues	Trust in your colleagues

Psychological safety can be defined as a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking.

In psychologically safe teams, members are accepted and respected.

They can respectfully share ideas, questions, concerns.



Amy Edmondson
Harvard Business School Professor

TED**x**HGSE

x = independently organized TED event

Psychological Safety is not an optional extra.

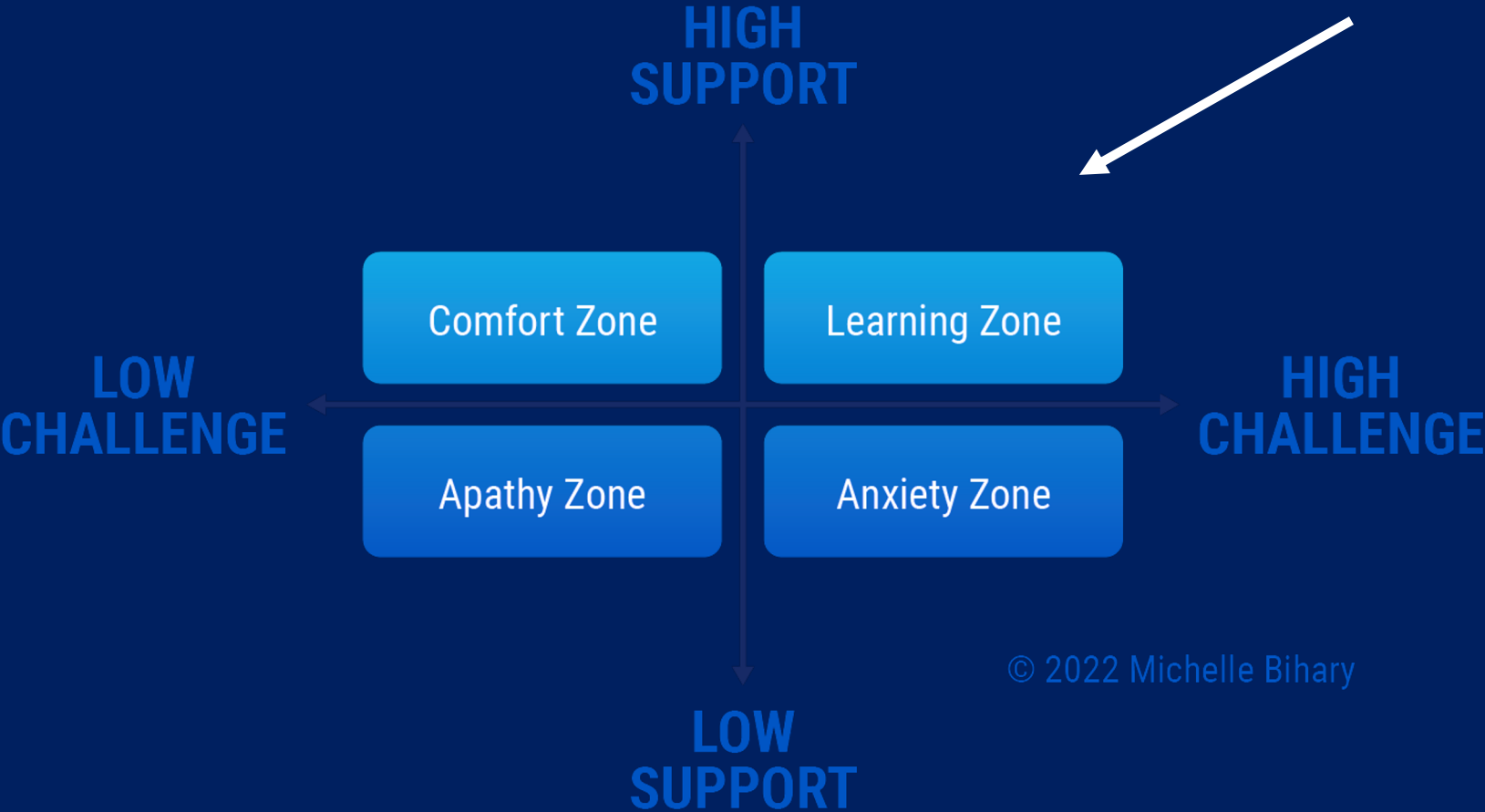
It is a critical leadership responsibility.

It can make or break employees' ability to contribute, to grow, learn and collaborate.

There is extensive evidence to show that psychological safety has a critical impact on:

- 1) Quality of **customer care**
- 2) Quality of **teamwork**
- 3) Capacity for **high performance, problem solving, productivity, creativity**
- 4) Capacity for **change readiness**
- 5) Ability to be **open to learning, growth, and development**
- 6) **Wellbeing** of the workforce
- 7) **Employee motivation**, and **commitment**
- 8) **Quality culture** and **morale**

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY



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Above-the-line relationship strategies

More

- ✓ Model above-the-line behaviours
- ✓ Appreciation and recognition
- ✓ Feedback of strengths
- ✓ Respect and kindness
- ✓ Collaboration and connection
- ✓ Role to role, human to human

Above-the-line relationship strategies

Less

- Unnecessary criticism or put downs
- Shaming, dismissive, ignoring, avoiding, sarcasm, belittling
- Gossiping or bitching
- Competitive, win/lose, ego games
- Brilliant jerks

Workplace culture strategies

More

- Respect and kindness
- Collaboration and connection
- Build goodwill
- Positive feedback
- Recognise strengths, skills, what we can learn from others
- Appreciating diversity
- Build a learning culture, safe to learn, safe to be open

Workplace culture strategies

Less

- Below the line behaviours
- Shaming or dismissive
- Unnecessary criticism or put downs
- Gossiping or bitching
- Competitiveness
- Isolating others



Organisational Culture is the “water” in the fishbowl.

If the water is clean, nourishing, energising the fish will thrive.

If the water is toxic the fish will die leaving the infrastructure value-less.

Ranjan De Silva



Mentally healthy workplaces

Workplace environment is not
automatically neutral to mental health

Risk factors
(Liabilities)

Protective factors
(Assets)



Mentally healthy workplace





Mentally Healthy Workplace

- ✓ Overwhelming Demands
- ✓ Inadequate control
- ✓ Low social support

= **200 - 300%** increase in mental illness amongst the workforce

Impact of Workplace on Mental Health

Risk factors
(Liabilities)

Protective factors
(Assets)

Mental health and wellbeing

Individual responsibility
&

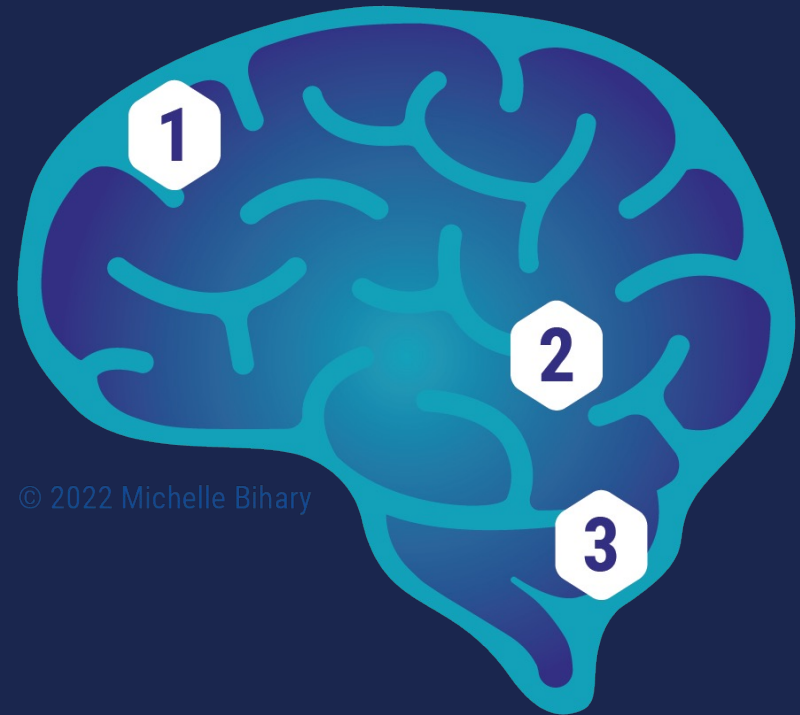
Workplace responsibility



Our mental wellbeing is a balance sheet of assets and liabilities.

Executive brain friendly environment helps your people protect their mental health.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS



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Every interaction in the workplace can

enhance or undermine

the way your colleagues are able to do their jobs, and their wellbeing and motivation.

A thriving brain builds a thriving workplace



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RESILIENT TEAMS • THRIVING PEOPLE

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