How can I help my organisation support better mental well-being practices at work?
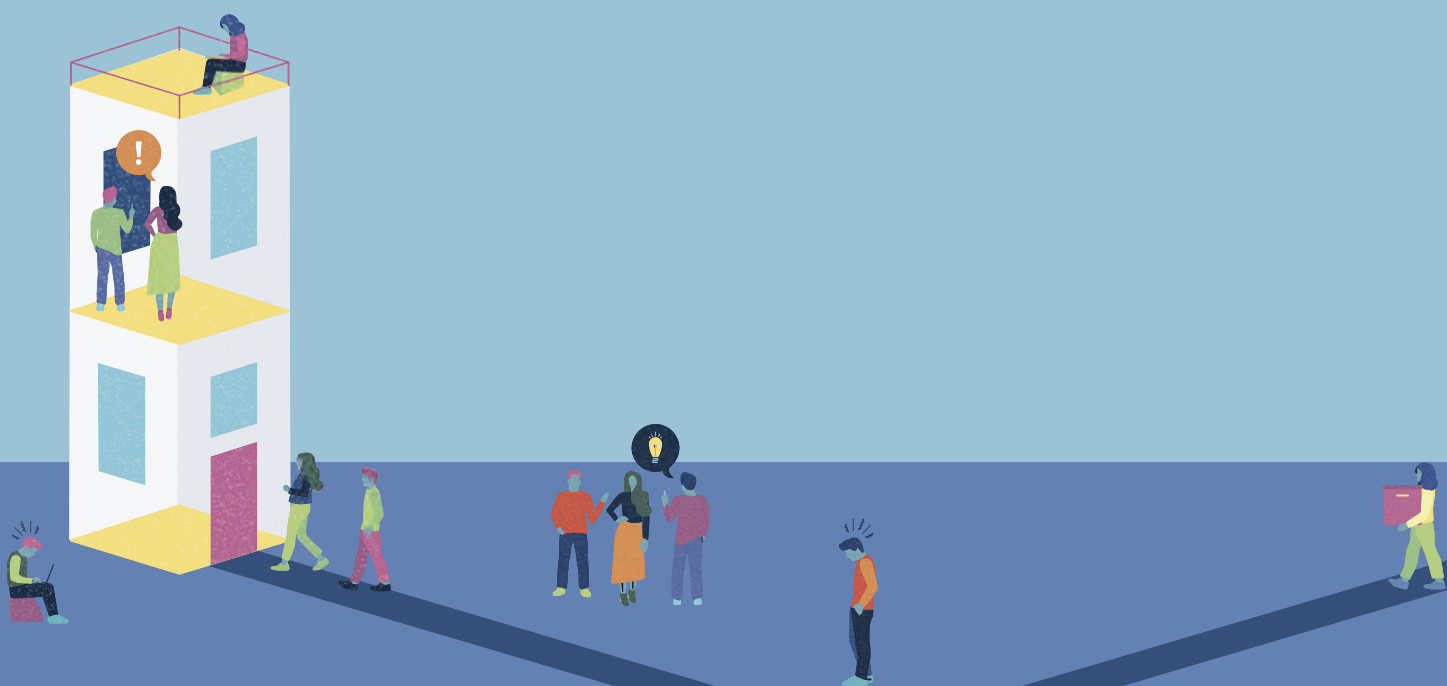
common GROUND
CREATING WHOLE COMMUNITIES

Studio DOJ8

With Gratitude and Credit to

Content

Before We Begin & How To Use This Guide

Why read this?

Mental health and well-being has always been an issue in Singapore. We spend S$3.1 billion - 18% of our total healthcare expenditure - on stress-related illnesses annually[1]. In a survey of the most stressful countries in Southeast Asia, Singapore topped the list[2]. Singapore's general mental well-being has only been highlighted and further exacerbated by the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the early days of the pandemic in 2020, more than 9 in 10 Singaporeans (91%) have reported a decline in mental health[3].

What is more troubling is that despite experiencing overwhelming stress, many Singaporeans might still choose not to reach out for help or turn down work. A 2021 report[4] listed the top reasons that keep Singaporeans from getting professional help as:

The report implies two big realities that all of us must acknowledge in our workplaces today:

1. 9 out of 10 of us will have experienced some impact on our mental well-being.

2. Yet, many of us are likely to choose to stay silent about it - especially if our workplace champions personal resilience, is perpetually busy and is unclear about its stance on supporting mental health.

Staying silent and alone in our struggles is not a healthy option for us. It also does not teach our organisations how to work together to create a more supportive workplace.

We hope that this field-guide will support you to have the missing conversations and take the necessary actions that can support your organisation's mental well-being.

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[1] The Straits Times, Nov 2019

[2] https://www.thedrum.com/news/2021/11/01/workers-singapore-and-the-philippines-the-most-stressed-south-east-asia

[3] AIA, Apr 2021

[4] https://www.moh.gov.sg/resources-statistics/reports/covid-19-mental-wellness-taskforce-report

Who is this for?

If you are reading this field-guide, we're guessing it's because

- You are a **senior leader** working at the top level of your organisation who gets the worth of supporting everyone's mental well-being and wants to do better.

- You are a **middle manager** tasked to come up with mental wellness initiatives at your workplace but are unsure how to start.

- You are a **working staff** on the ground who cares for your team's struggles with mental well-being and wants your organisation to offer support.

You might have gone through your own struggles with mental well-being and are personally vested in it. Or you might have little experience with mental wellness issues but have been appointed to do the work.

Either way, we are grateful that you are here and are open to doing your part.

We ourselves have gone through the ups and downs of supporting each other's mental well-being through all sorts of life's crises.

Sometimes we did well. Sometimes we fell short. But we are still here, working together, always ready to learn how to do better.

We empathise with how hard the work is and we root for anyone ready and willing to begin this work within their own teams and organisations.

Thank you for being here and we hope this field-guide serves you well,

Common Ground
Supported by Studio Dojo

Who is behind this work?

The "what"

Reimagine
Mental Wellbeing
at the Workplace
Report

The "how"

How can I help
my organisation support
better mental well-being
practices at work?

In 2020-21, Common Ground and Studio Dojo piloted a citizen-led process, interviewing 30 young Singaporean employees and 10 employers to explore how mental wellbeing is handled in the workplace.

We put out a **Reimagine Mental Wellbeing at the Workplace Report** with 8 key insights that emerged. Each insight was accompanied by a problem statement "ripe" for use.

While that Report is great for better understanding "What" you may be facing, this companion field-guide is meant to better guide your "How".

The process we offer in this field-guide is mostly based on what we learnt through a five-month programme we did as a follow-up in 2022. We brought together a mental health coach, 4 design (UX) coaches and 15 volunteer designers to support 4 organisations through their own journey of reimagining their approach to mental well-being.

What principles are being applied?

This field-guide approaches the challenge of workplace mental well-being through both **service design** and **organisational development** principles.

Service design focuses on understanding the problem that needs to be solved and goes beyond product experiences. It often uses the methodology of design thinking, which is a design process to solve problems. **We wanted to think of mental well-being initiatives as services to be provided and sustained, rather than tangible products.**

- It begins with a call to "Do your research" so that we can "design the right thing" before "designing the thing right". It helps you **build a common ground of data to operate from before we jump into solutioning for a complex issue** such as mental well-being.

- It does require an upfront investment of time and energy but if we don't understand what we are trying to solve first, we might end up wasting even more money, time and energy later, creating solutions nobody needed or wanted. Doing the research first will not just verify what we should actually work on, it can also create early interest and buy-in for whatever solution that emerges.

Organisational development focuses on understanding the people, the power and the cultural structures surrounding the problem that needs to be solved. **It is helpful for planning how to navigate the human dynamics that might support or undermine your problem-solving process.**

- It reminds us that "Change occurs when one becomes what he is, not when he tries to become what he is not". It encourages us to **build a common ground of acceptance about what is the current reality of human behaviours we are facing before we can invite each other to change something about it.**

- It does require an upfront curiosity to explore how we are really thinking and feeling as individuals, as groups or as a whole organisation. Doing this early can help you see what's going on for yourself or others that might encourage or discourage the process of change.

How To Use This Guide
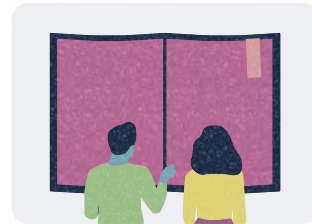
How might I use this field-guide if I am working as a senior leader (Top), middle manager (Middle) or working staff (Ground) in my organisation?

If you've picked up this field guide, we are assuming either of these statements (or both) are true for all of you reading:

- You have been tasked to work on your organisation's mental well-being
- You care for the mental well-being of your organisation.

In organisational development, we believe in empowerment: Everybody can exercise their power to change something. This field-guide will walk you through four Phases (see next page), each with practical steps that give you a more structured approach to figuring out how best to support the mental well-being of your organisation, no matter what your position is.

You will be guided by two main sections: **What to do**, and **What to consider**. As you move along the field-guide, bear in mind that this is not a prescriptive process - there are other possible variations* of the activities you can embark on if you wish to explore further. Otherwise, feel free to follow through our suggested approach!

*You may check out designkit.org and ibm.com for more references on design thinking activities.

The 4 Phases of Our Overall Process

1.
Reflect on experience of mental wellbeing at your workplace

2.
Scope what you want to address and identify key stakeholders to involve

Desire to improve mental wellbeing at workplace

Initial scoping brief

Phase I

Who can I work with?

3.
Conduct research to uncover insight into what really is the problem

Phase IV

Formalise solution?

Phase II

What is/are the problem(s)?

4.
Define the root problem(s) you want to focus on

7.
Acknowledge your achievements and put solutions into action

Phase III

What are some possible solutions?

Tested solution

Problem definition

6.
Test prototypes and iterate on them until a tested solution can be used

5.
Ideate possible solutions and develop prototypes

In your organisation, you are likely to be either a **senior leader** (Top), a **middle manager** (Middle), or **working staff** (Ground).

Through our research process, we realise that 3 dimensions must be present for any organisation to effectively sustain its mental well-being efforts:

1. Appropriate Knowledge about mental well-being issues

2. Organisational Commitment to work on the issues

3. Relevant Resources available to support the work
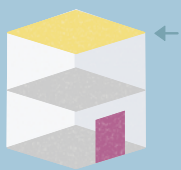
What to consider if you are approaching the issue as a senior leader:

- You have the most influence and access over organisational resources such as budget, manpower, space etc. You might even be the gatekeeper that controls access to resources and determines how resources can be moved.

- If you couple that with knowledge and commitment, you have a high chance of successfully seeing the mental-wellbeing change effort through.

- We strongly encourage you to sound out committed managers from the Middle and fellow leaders at the Top to lead your organisation through all 4 Phases.
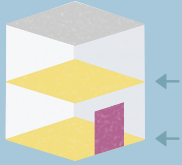
If you are approaching the issue as a middle manager and/or working staff:

- You might bring a decent amount of knowledge and strong personal commitment to work on the mental-well-being concerns for your organisation. But if you do not have access to relevant resources or clear organisational commitment from your leaders at the Middle or Top level to back up your efforts, you might risk feeling unsupported, cynical and burnt out down the road.

!

- **We strongly encourage you to do Phase 1 but not proceed to Phase 2 onwards if you do not find sufficient committed stakeholders or sufficient access to resources to see things through.** You can offer Phase 2-4 to your managers and leaders as a proposed way forward that you are willing to help organise but make a clear request to your organisation for an adequate commitment of resources.

What if you sincerely want to embark on the work but have little knowledge about or question your commitment to working on mental well-being issues?

You don't have to be an expert or be extremely devoted to the cause to support the work of better mental well-being. Talk to people with lived experiences, read up online and ask genuinely curious questions.

We will always strongly encourage you to just start somewhere, don't be afraid of making mistakes and be open to learning from others along the way. This playbook is one possible starting point.

Let's get started!

Phase I: Who can I work with?

1. Reflect on experience of mental wellbeing at your workplace

1.
Reflect on experience of mental wellbeing at your workplace

2.
Scope what you want to address and identify key stakeholders to involve

Phase I

Who can I work with?

Desire to improve mental wellbeing at workplace

Initial scoping brief

In organisational development, we believe that change begins with self-awareness. We cannot stress how crucial it is to make the awareness of your own experience of mental wellness in your organisation as step one. Supporting other people's mental well-being is a noble thing - but supporting your own mental well-being is fundamental. You cannot help others well if you are operating from shaky foundations.

It is hard for us to see that our mental well-being is being compromised. Experiencing high levels of stress might have unfortunately become acceptable and normalised in our environments.

Take a look at these quotes - have you heard yourself or someone else say these before?

I'm burnt out and overwhelmed. I feel tired just thinking of work.

What's the point of what I'm doing at work? I just want to quit so badly.

To survive in this system, you have to kill a part of yourself.

If not for the money, I won't be here. Work is just work.

You may not immediately associate these sentences with mental well-being. You may have even brushed these sentences aside as: "That's how life is." But that's how declining mental well-being can sound like.

Stress is a natural part of work. But we must tell the difference between what's a healthy level and unhealthy level of stress for you.

- You are having a **healthy level of stress (known as eustress)** if it produces positive feelings of excitement, fulfillment and meaning for you and empowers you to grow emotionally, psychologically and physically.

- You know you have an **unhealthy level of stress (known as distress)** if it makes you feel overwhelmed as your physical, mental and emotional resources are inadequate to meet the demands you're facing.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as:

"a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. It is possible to have a mental illness (e.g. "I have anxiety disorder, depression etc.") and yet have high levels of mental well-being (e.g. "I am well-rested, taking my medications, practicing my coping skills and feeling good.") Conversely, it is possible to have no mental illness and yet have low levels of mental well-being, as we see in those quotes above.

What To Do ✓

So how do I check where I sit on the spectrum of mental well-being?

A. Use the Many Shades of Wellbeing spectrum to sense where you are at:

IN CRISIS	STRUGGLING	SURVIVING	THRIVING	EXCELLING
Very anxious	Anxious	Worried	Positive	Cheerful
Very low mood	Depressed	Nervous	Calm	Joyful
Absenteeism	Tired	Irritable	Performing	Energetic
Exhausted	Poor performance	Sad	Sleeping well	High performance
Very poor sleep	Poor sleep	Trouble sleeping	Eating normally	Flow
Weight loss	Poor appetite	Distracted	Normal social activity	Fully realising potential
		Withdrawn		

According to Delphis Learning (https://delphis.org.uk/mental-health/continuum-mental-health)

☐ If you are in the green zones, you are in a good place to support others at the workplace.

☐ If you are in the yellow zone, be kind to yourself as you read on.

☐ If you are in the orange or red zones, the first person we want you to take care of is yourself. Please share where you are at with your safe people who love you and seek a professional's help to get you through this crisis point. You can refer to our Annexe A: Where to go for help.

There is no shame or blame if you find yourself in the orange, yellow or red zone. There should be no sense of superiority either if you find yourself in the green zones.

Depending on what is happening in the moment in our lives, we can find ourselves moving back and forth on the spectrum.

We are where we are. And acceptance of that, without harsh judgment, is the beginning of healthy change.

Only when we see where we are will we know what requests we need to make of others or what offers we can give to others.

B. Explore your current experience in your organisation

After you have sensed your individual experience on the well-being spectrum, now you can sense where you are in your organisational experience.

Our individual experience is affected by the interpersonal relationships, group dynamics and organisational structures of our workplace.

Healthy organisations who are deeply interested in helping their people thrive and excel usually encourage an honest exploration of what's working and not working in the interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, policies and culture of the workplace. They know that high performance does come from high levels of well-being - when more of us are thriving and excelling people, more of us are able to maximise our talents, drive towards goals and live out our potential.
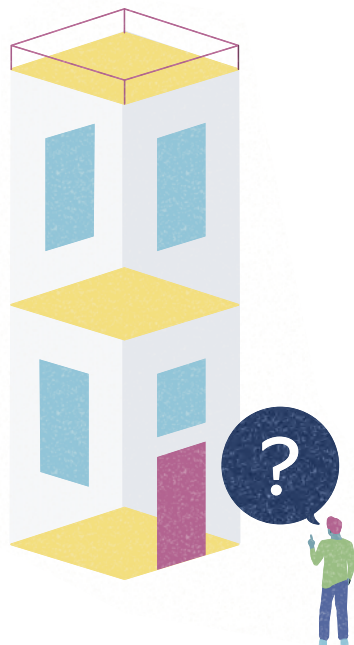
Many organisations are not deliberately toxic or traumatising. But there might be unhealthy people, unsupportive behaviours or unhelpful policies worth flagging up.

Sometimes, one person's feelings of being in crisis, struggling or surviving are not merely personal issues but can turn out to be a signal of system-wide issues in an organisation.

Our personal reflection can sometimes be the beginning of a team, department or even organisational level reflection about what can be changed or must be changed in our workplace.

You can use our Employee Journey Maps to explore what things you might have seen or places you might have been as an employee in your organisation.

- These two Employee Journey Maps (see next page) were produced from our 2021 research process where we interviewed 30 young Singaporean professionals and 10 HR professionals/ leaders of organisations from the public, private and people sectors.

   a. Tick events on the map that resonate with your personal experience so far

   b. Add other experiences you've seen or been through that might not be reflected on the maps.

   c. List the specific stakeholders involved in those experiences (e.g. "Head of Department A", "client B", "colleague C")

   d. If both maps do not reflect your experience as you received an **ill-intended, unhelpful, and unsafe** response, do the following:

      - List 3-5 experiences you had that were unhelpful and unsafe

      - List the specific stakeholders involved

      - List what you know or assumed about their intentions

HELPFUL AND SAFE RESPONSE FROM EMPLOYER

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THRIVING

SURVIVING

STRUGGLING

Background: Employee is excited to start new job, although facing some issues with family at home. Volunteers with community organisation and is in a relationship.

Starts new job. Feels focused and productive. Engages in discussions and is outgoing. Sleeping and eating as per usual.

Work load starts to feel overwhelming. Receives reminder email from company on available mental wellbeing support.

Experiences burnout: Difficulty focusing, eating, and sleeping. Feels drained. Disengages from discussions. Relationships suffer at work and at home.

THRIVING

Starts to feel more at ease. Sleep and work schedule returning to normal. Appetite returns.

All is well at work. Enjoys projects again and can better contribute to team. Relationships improve at work and at home.

Poor mental wellness becomes visible to self and others as employee experienced a panic attack and is often late. Knows support is needed.

Employee feels that Workplace-based Wellness Plan is sufficient.

Employee starts receiving regular external support.

Work load increases in busy period.

Employee feels that Workplace-based Wellness Plan is insufficient.

External mental health and emotional support is needed. Employer shares information. Provides subsidy.

Employee receives public or private care depending on needs and resources.

Knows resources on how to cope and where to find support.

Considers disclosing as employee has heard about workplace mental wellbeing support through the personal experiences of colleagues and reminders from management.

Employer checks in to see how employee is coping.

Employee is not satisfied as the wellness plan does not adequately address their needs.

SURVIVING

Safe and helpful response given by employer

Approaches manager to ask for support.

Joins workplace peer support group. Colleagues check in on each other and provide emotional support.

Takes time off during work hours for counselling. Colleagues are understanding.

Workplace-based wellbeing plan created with employer. Beginning with work load adjustment.

This company sees the **mental wellbeing of staff as essential to its success.** There are policies in place on how to step in if someone needs support. There are programmes available to support mental wellbeing for all staff, and also options for more **personalised support in times of distress.**

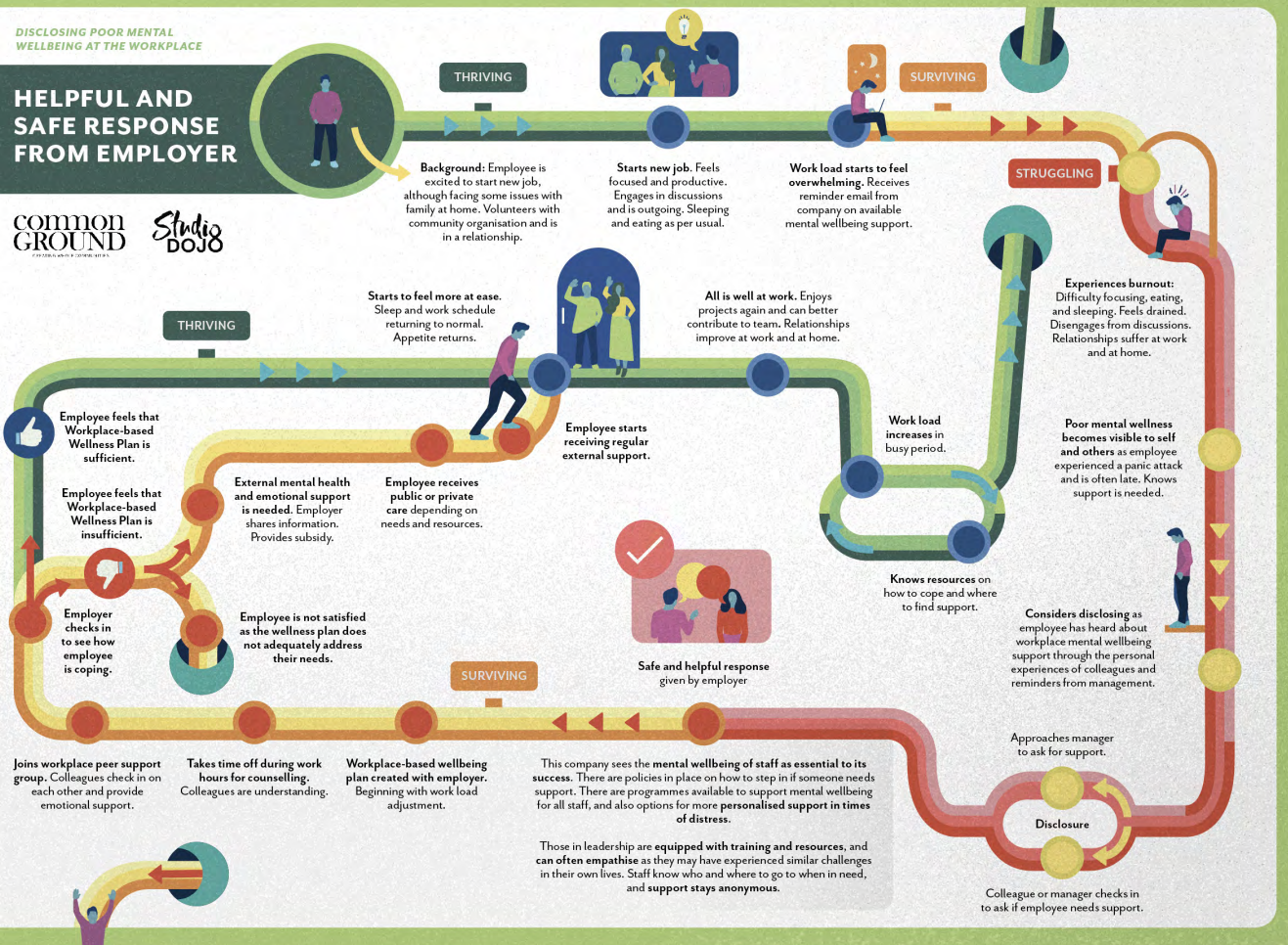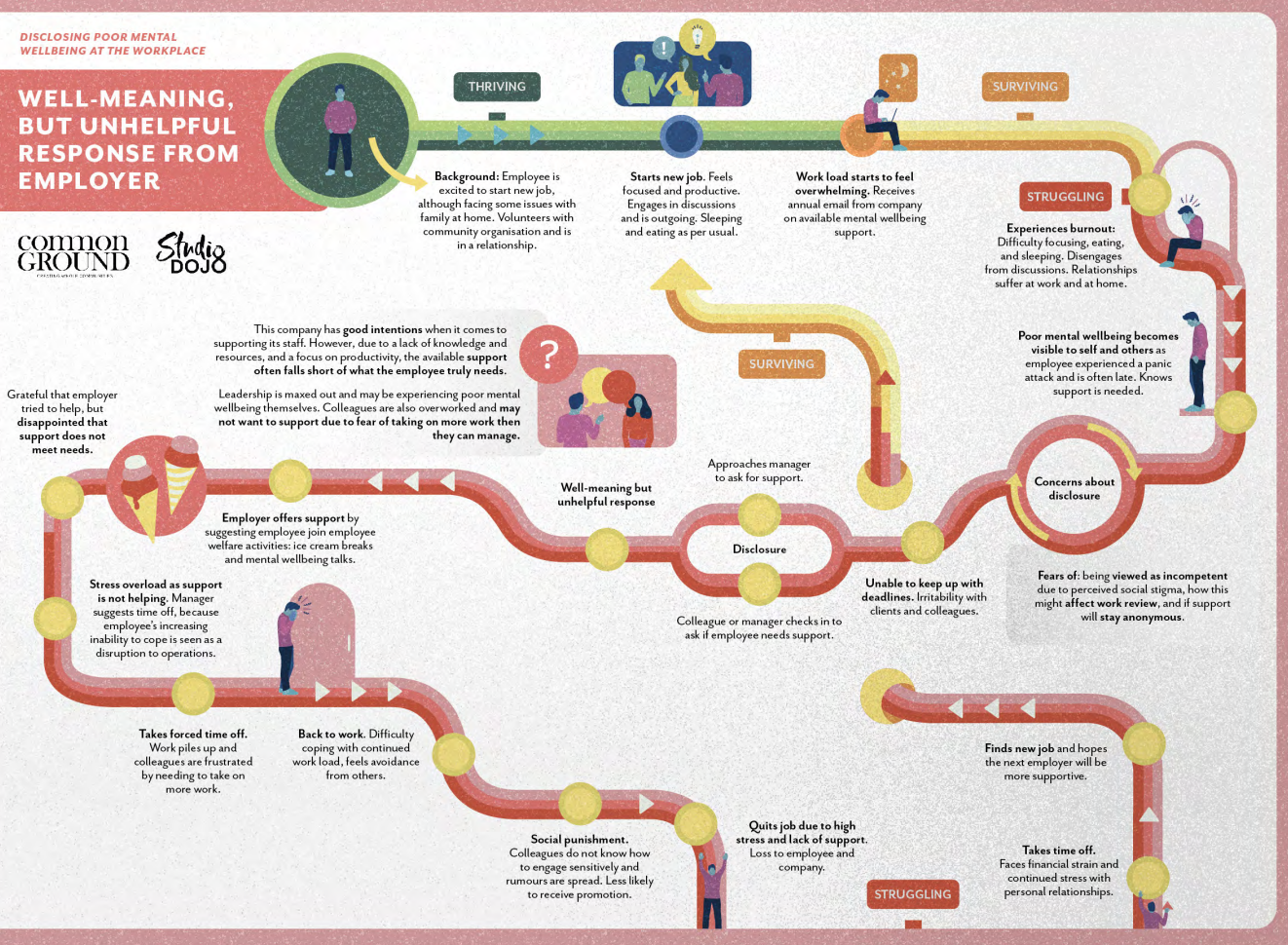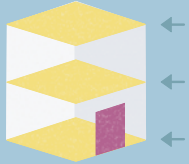Those in leadership are equipped with **training and resources**, and **can often empathise** as they may have experienced similar challenges in their own lives. Staff know who and where to go to when in need, and **support stays anonymous.**

Disclosure

Colleague or manager checks in to ask if employee needs support.

WELL-MEANING, BUT UNHELPFUL RESPONSE FROM EMPLOYER

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THRIVING

SURVIVING

STRUGGLING

Background: Employee is excited to start new job, although facing some issues with family at home. Volunteers with community organisation and is in a relationship.

Starts new job. Feels focused and productive. Engages in discussions and is outgoing. Sleeping and eating as per usual.

Work load starts to feel overwhelming. Receives annual email from company on available mental wellbeing support.

Experiences burnout: Difficulty focusing, eating, and sleeping. Disengages from discussions. Relationships suffer at work and at home.

This company has **good intentions** when it comes to supporting its staff. However, due to a lack of knowledge and resources, and a focus on productivity, the available **support often falls short of what the employee truly needs.**

Leadership is maxed out and may be experiencing poor mental wellbeing themselves. Colleagues are also overworked and **may not want to support due to fear of taking on more work then they can manage.**

Poor mental wellbeing becomes visible to self and others as employee experienced a panic attack and is often late. Knows support is needed.

Approaches manager to ask for support.

Well-meaning but unhelpful response

SURVIVING

Grateful that employer tried to help, but **disappointed that support does not meet needs.**

Employer offers support by suggesting employee join employee welfare activities: ice cream breaks and mental wellbeing talks.

Disclosure

Unable to keep up with deadlines. Irritability with clients and colleagues.

Concerns about disclosure

Fears of: being **viewed as incompetent** due to perceived social stigma, how this might **affect work review,** and if support will **stay anonymous.**

Stress overload as support is not helping. Manager suggests time off, because employee's increasing inability to cope is seen as a disruption to operations.

Colleague or manager checks in to ask if employee needs support.

Takes forced time off. Work piles up and colleagues are frustrated by needing to take on more work.

Back to work. Difficulty coping with continued work load, feels avoidance from others.

Finds new job and hopes the next employer will be more supportive.

Social punishment. Colleagues do not know how to engage sensitively and rumours are spread. Less likely to receive promotion.

Quits job due to high stress and lack of support. Loss to employee and company.

Takes time off. Faces financial strain and continued stress with personal relationships.
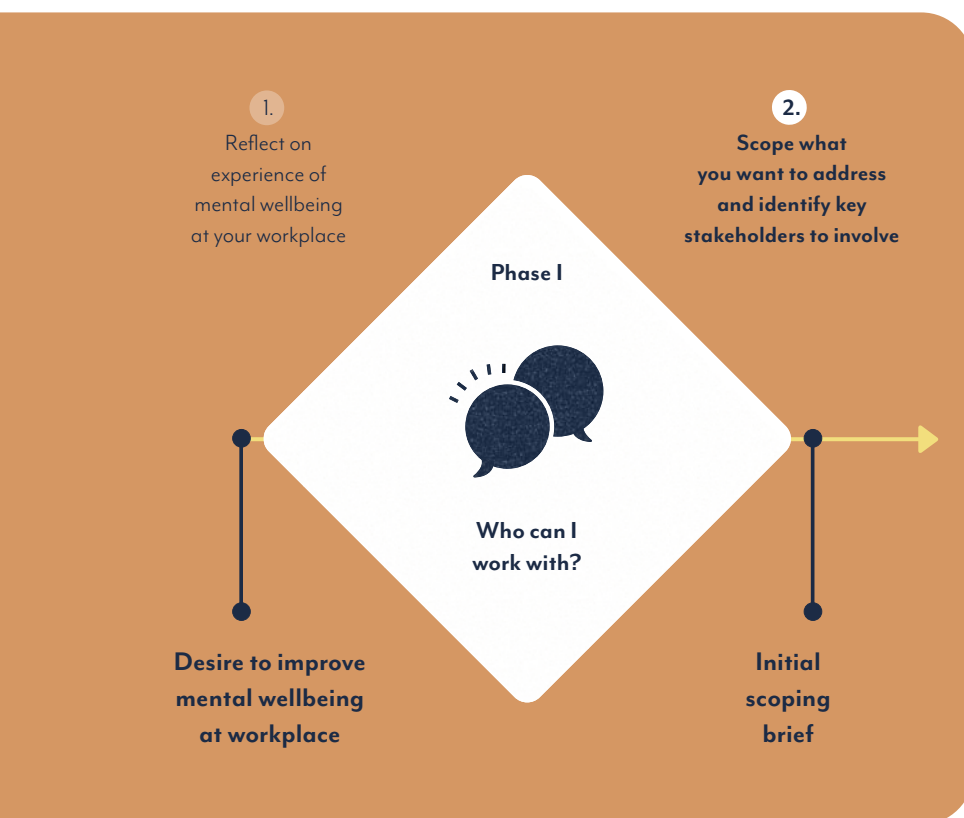
STRUGGLING

What to consider if you are a senior leader, middle manager or working staff

Consider your experiences as an employee working at the Ground, Middle or Top level of your organisation:

- As an employee at the Ground/Middle level: When you or a colleague are going through challenges to your mental wellbeing, do you generally see helpful or well-meaning but unhelpful responses from your manager or leader?

- As an employee at the Top level: When you see colleagues going through challenges to their mental wellbeing, do you generally offer helpful or well-meaning but unhelpful responses?

2. Scope what you want to address and identify key stakeholders to involve

1.
Reflect on experience of mental wellbeing at your workplace

2.
Scope what you want to address and identify key stakeholders to involve

Phase I

Who can I work with?

Desire to improve mental wellbeing at workplace

Initial scoping brief

In service design, it is important to clarify expectations to help people decide whether something is worth pursuing.

Now that you have a better grasp of what you have experienced on the individual and organisational level, you can strategise how to position your "Ask" of your organisation.

There are many things you might be seeing that can be and must be addressed by your organisation but asking yourself to do it alone or asking others to do it all can be overwhelming.

Scoping the problem down to something more specific helps you clarify what you are willing and able to work on. The scoping brief will help you communicate what you need more clearly and increase your chances of being heard by key stakeholders.

Think of it as a meaningful project you want to work on and need others to come alongside.

What To Do ✓

A.   Fill up a scoping brief.

Before our volunteer UX designers and coaches kicked off work with the organisations' mental well-being work teams, they requested for the teams to fill up a scoping brief first. We are sharing the same scoping brief questions here (see next page) for you to apply to your own situation.

These answers can be extracted and turned into an email, presentation deck or whatever communication mode works best when you are ready to make your "Ask" to the organisation.

Scoping Question	Response	Example
a) Problem area to focus on What is one problem area you are currently facing in your organisation that you want to focus on? • Share what do you think is happening, and why? • You can start with "This is the problem that I see…"		*This is the problem that I see:* *Hybrid work provides more flexibility for employees, but it's harder for employees to manage their boundaries with work and easier to experience burnout.* *Our employees may also feel more distant from their colleagues and teams, and find it difficult to build*
b) Existing initiatives If applicable, list the types of initiatives specific to mental wellbeing practices in your organisation and the response from your colleagues/employees to these practices.		*We currently have:* *- 24/7 counselling service, available via call, virtual or face-to-face.* *- Talks, workshops on managing stress, mental wellness*
c) Scope of work Based on the above problem area, how would you define what you hope to work on? Word this as an inviting statement starting with: The question I want to explore is: "How might we…" **How might we?**		*The question I want to explore for our organisation is:* *How might we create a safe and supportive experience for our employees to raise the challenges they are facing with mental wellness and gather the support they need to thrive in this season of hybrid work?*

d) Outcomes

State your desired outcome and your vision of success. "I want to see our..." or "I want to achieve..."

I want to see :

- more employees have greater awareness and acceptance of challenges we face with mental wellness

- more employees proactively reaching out for support and accessing workplace wellness programmes.

e) Resources

What are the kinds of resources we have? What are the kinds of resources you are requesting for? (Manpower support, time, financial support etc)

I believe we have:

- Manpower – we have passionate employees who can work with HR as a special mental well-being work group

I would like to request for:

- Permission for employees to form that special workgroup with HR

- Budget to prototype ideas

f) Commitment level

Who is involved, what are their roles within your organisation? How would they like to be involved specifically in this project?

The people who want to work on this are:

- *Myself*
- *The other department heads*

We are willing to commit:

- *1.5 hours/week for this month to talk with HR.*

B. Identify the key stakeholders you need to involve

Now that you have scoped a clearer "Ask" of your organisation, you need to identify who you should bring up the matter to.

When we don't know that we have people around us who can support the cause that we care about, we can feel uncertainty and helplessness. Taking time to reflect on who you already have around you that has a stake in the issues you care about can offer you strength, support and a sense of safety.

An important principle in organisational development is to collaborate to build win-win relationships in the organisation.

i. List out all the stakeholders that are involved in the situation

Stakeholders are people who are involved in a situation with you because they have

- **Interests:** the situation impacts their concerns and makes them feel vested in what's going on and desire to be involved (e.g. money, status, time off etc.)

- **Influence:** they have power over the situation that allows them to support or oppose change (e.g. decision-making power, social influence over certain groups)

In Step 1B of our process where you explored your organisational experience (pages 16-19), you already listed some stakeholders that you encountered. List them out.

Look at the **Problem Area** and **Scope of Work** in the scoping brief you did in Step 2A (pages 22-23). Who has interests or influence there? Also add them to your list of stakeholders.

ii. Use a Stakeholder Analysis Matrix* to see who you must engage

Use the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix to roughly place your stakeholders according to

- whether they have high or low **power and influence** in the situation

- whether they have high or low **interests** in the situation

	High	
KEEP SATISFIED		**ENGAGE CLOSELY AND INFLUENCE ACTIVELY**
Low interest, high influence stakeholders are disinterested but are **DECISION-MAKERS & GATE-KEEPERS** with access to resources and networks you need. You must **satisfy** their curiosity and concerns so that they do not evolve into formidable opponents and block your cause.		**High interest, high influence stakeholders** are your **ACTIVATORS** who are both significantly impacted by the situation and most able to act on it. They must be **engaged closely and actively**. Get their buy-in, bring them into your team, help them have ownership in the outcomes.
MONITOR (MINIMUM EFFORT)		**KEEP INFORMED**
Low interest, low influence stakeholders are **BYSTANDERS** who are the least important for you to engage for now. You can put in **minimum effort** and keep them informed as a courtesy.		**High interest, low influence stakeholders** are your potential **ADVOCATES** should be **kept informed**. They may not have much obvious power but they are very vested in the outcome. Do not ignore them because if they are sufficiently upset, they can suddenly band together to resist changes.

POWER (axis, vertical)

Low ——————— INTEREST ——————→ High

* This power-interest grid is a common stakeholder analysis technique which was originally published by Colin Eden and Fran Ackermann in their book Making Strategy.

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As you identify these stakeholders, use lines to describe their relationship to each other (above).

When you work with your stakeholders at the right level of engagement, you're on a better path to achieve your goals.
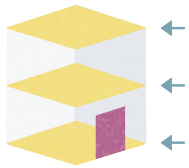
C. Form your dream work team

After you have identified the key stakeholders you need to involve, now is the time to create your dream work team.

Having a well-constructed work team with the **right mix of interests, influence and skill-sets** can make the hard work of supporting mental well-being feel easier.

As pointed out through the Stakeholder Analysis Matrix, knowing who the "mission-critical" people you need to engage from the get-go will ensure a higher likelihood of buy-in for the situation you are addressing.

Whether you are trying to form your dream work team from the Top, Middle or Ground level, you can:

A. Reach out to your selected stakeholders you need as part of your team

    a. Extract your Scoping Brief. Rework that information into an email, presentation deck or whatever communication mode that best suits your organisation.

    b. Set up the necessary meetings (especially with your decision-makers and gate-keepers) to share what you wish to address with your stakeholders. Bring in your activator(s) into your conversations, if possible.

B. Meet up with your stakeholders.

    a. Focus on the "how might we.." problem statement, along with resources "we believe we have.." as well as what "we will like to request for.." as a call to action.

    b. Listen and note down what works for them, what does not work and what their considerations are.

    c. Meet them where they are at, not where you wish them to be. Be open to different arrangements that work for different people. For example, would your stakeholders prefer that employees suggest and plan new ideas that leaders can take up and implement, or top-down management with willingness from the ground, etc?

C. Paint a vivid yet practical picture of where things could be if we worked together.

    a. Share the list of work functions/roles that you have identified.

    b. Invite people to bring up what they are willing to bring to the table - be it resources and/or their commitment.

    c. End off meetings with what you are committed to do and manage expectations of what can be accomplished given current resources

.

D. Set time aside to reflect on your personal experience of the meeting.

    a. Review your information and start to string your next steps together on what you want to do, along with fitting names into the various responsibilities.

    b. Your work team should ideally be between 3 & 5 people. Walk them through the previous steps of this field-guide, if necessary.

> **!**
>
>   c. Remember: do not proceed to Phase 2 onwards if you did not receive sufficient organisational commitment or sufficient relevant resources to see things through. You can offer Phase 2 to 4 to your managers and leaders as a proposed way forward that you are willing to help organise but make a clear request to your organisation for a clearer commitment of resources if they wish for you to proceed.
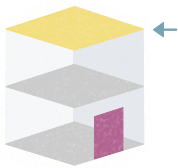
If you are a leader at the Top level, you can:

E.   Get the opinions and buy-in from key managers from the Middle and key leaders at the Top to ensure you have the organisational commitment and resources to lead your organisation through all four Phases.

F.   Expand your work-team to include external expertise and external support.

    i. Supporting the mental well-being of your organisation does not have to be an extra piece of work carried alone by your internal stakeholders. If your organisation is able to free up a budget for you, you can engage a solid consultant, coach, dialogue designer, trainer or facilitator from the outside to help you out.

    ii. In our own five-month process of working with organisations' mental well-being work teams, these were the project roles held by external stakeholders we brought in to work on organisational needs that emerged which required more skill, insight, expertise, neutrality or nuance:

        • **Mental health coach**: a therapist who can help the work-team and the organisation itself have a more nuanced understanding of mental well-being issues and learn to work through people dynamics that might show up in the process.

- **Design coach**: a Dialogue, UX or Experience Designer who can help the work-team research, design, develop and execute the necessary dialogues, engagements and experiences that the organisation needs.

- **An Organisational Development consultant, facilitator, trainer or cultural change strategist** can also be engaged if it emerges that there are much deeper or more significant cultural changes that need to be facilitated so that better mental well-being is more embedded into organisational practices.
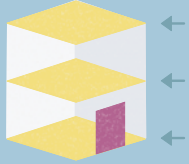
What to consider if you are a senior leader, middle manager or working staff

Three things we learnt from our experience with how the different organisations formed their mental well-being work teams in the five-month programme and how it impacted the effectiveness of their efforts:

1. When **decision-makers and gatekeepers at the Top/Middle levels** initiate the mental well-being work or are engaged early in the process, the project has a significant chance of being adopted into the organisation's system in meaningful ways. Your dream work team must **involve those with direct power and influence over the situation**. They may not need to be members of your team in the sense of being fully or directly involved in the actual planning and execution of the plans. But they hold significant access to resources and their "Yes"es and "No"s can make or break the work team's plans. **You must get buy-in at the top level.**

2. **Activators at the Top, Middle and Ground levels** must be core members of your dream team. They are usually the one who are quick to be enrolled on the teams or they themselves would naturally volunteer to be in the team.

3. The "high interest low influence" quadrant of **advocates at the Middle and Ground levels** might often be left out. Tapping on them to be part of your team can help garner interest and energy around your project. **You must get buy-in from the most affected at the Ground level.**
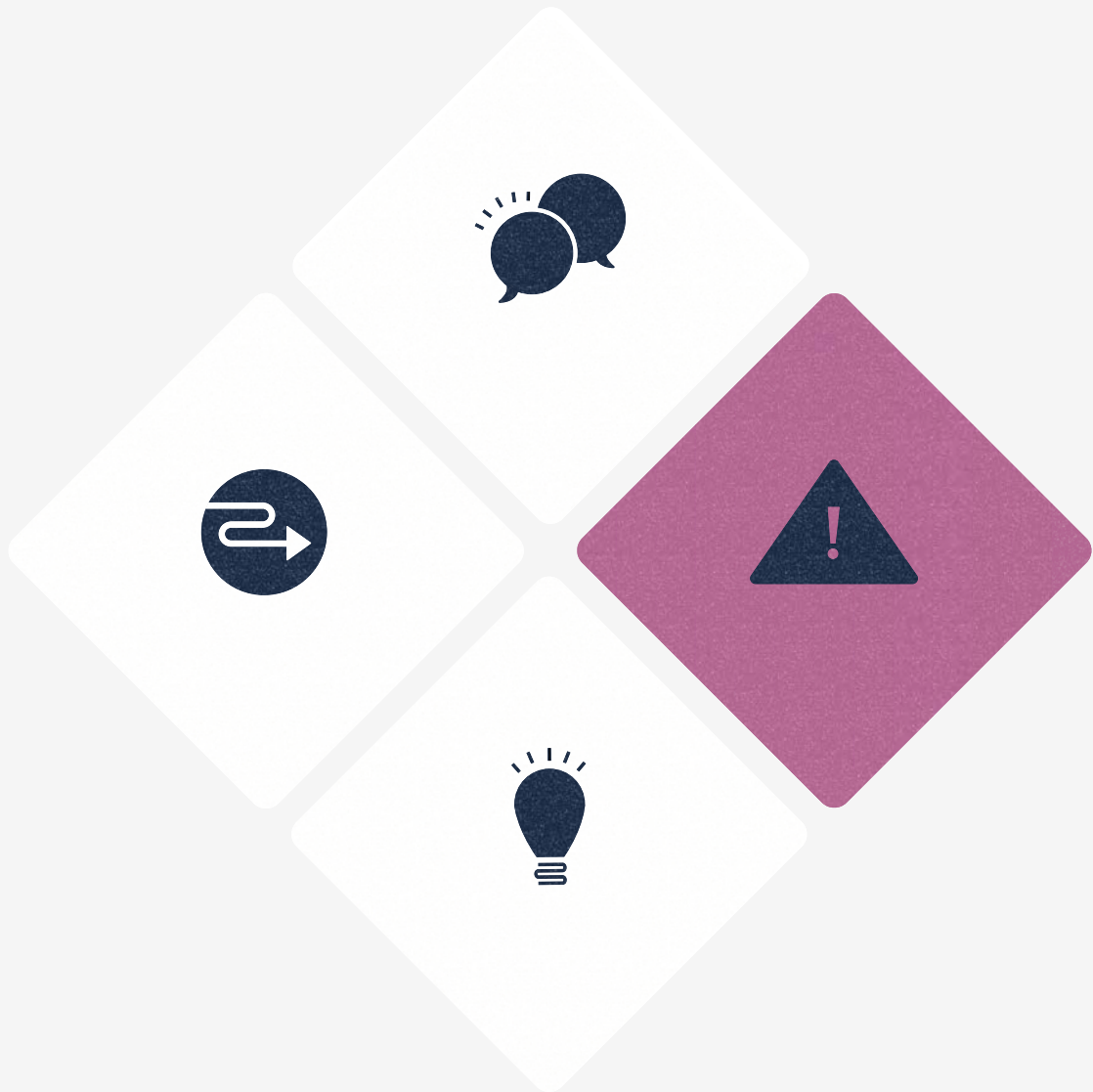
When you assemble your mental well-being work-team, you can pay attention to key responsibilities such as:

- Collecting and analysing data
- Coordinating access to resources and networks
- Getting buy-in from peers - ground, middle and top level
- Keeping key stakeholders updated

- Managing timelines and workload of each person
- Ensuring welfare and wellbeing of the team
- Sharing updates within the team to keep everyone on the same page
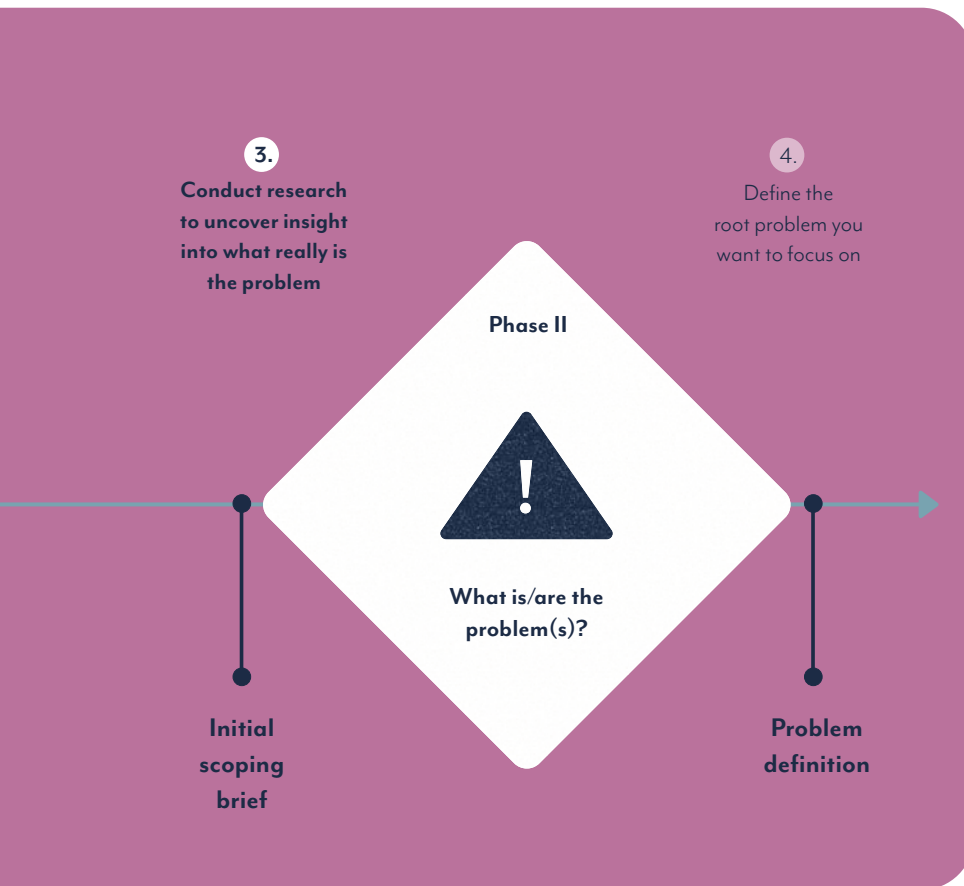- Implementing and testing interventions; reviewing and iterating

This is not an exhaustive list and you can define the key responsibilities with your team members that help you work together. As long as your potential team members have a personal motivation to be involved in this work and are willing to give this project a shot, bring them on board and innovate together.

Phase II: What is the Problem?

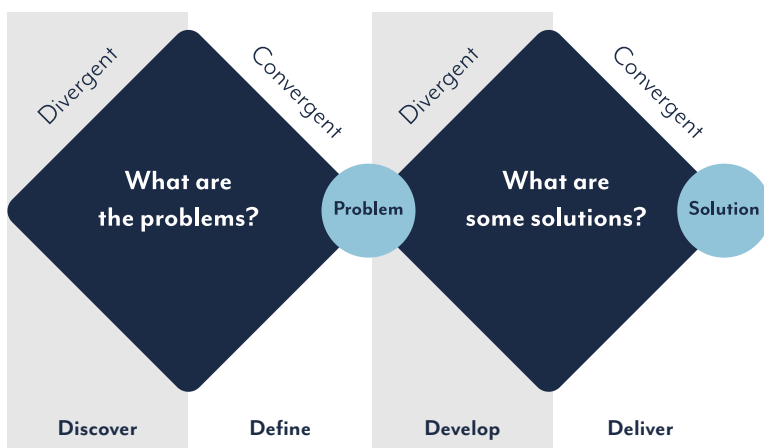# 3. Conduct research to uncover insight into what really is the problem

3.
Conduct research to uncover insight into what really is the problem

4.
Define the root problem you want to focus on

Phase II

What is/are the problem(s)?

Initial scoping brief

Problem definition

Now that you have gathered your work team, it's time to start doing the work!

It is very helpful to approach problems and solutions by using 2 different types of thinking: divergent and convergent. Using the **"double diamond" service design thinking model** helps us to be curiosity-oriented (diverge) and solution-oriented (converge) at the appropriate phases of our work process.

Divergent

Convergent

Divergent

Convergent

What are the problems?

Problem

What are some solutions?

Solution

Discover

Define

Develop

Deliver

Divergent Thinking — Think broadly, keep an open mind, consider anything and everything

Convergent Thinking — Think narrowly, bring back focus and identify one or two key problems and solutions

- The **first diamond** calls us to **Discover** (through empathy) what the problem really is, before we converge to **Define** what we want to focus on.

- Only then can we move on to the **second diamond** where we **Develop** potential solutions before we converge to **Deliver** solutions.

What To Do ✓

A. With your work-team, discuss who is affected by the issue you've scoped out and decide who you need to talk to so you can learn from them. Remember the concept of divergent thinking. Stay curious, withhold judgment and empathise with what you hear.

B. Develop a list of questions based on your Scoping Brief to use for the interviews.

C. Interview the people you've chosen. Listen with empathy and curiosity to learn.

D. (Optional) You can document what you've learned by creating **empathy maps**. This should happen directly after your interview/observation session.

- **Empathy Maps** are documents that capture key phrases or repeated themes of what people are saying, doing, thinking and feeling, hearing and seeing. These should be verbatim or based on what you have heard from your people.

- Draw a grid and label the four sections with Say & Do, Think & Feel, Hear, and See.

- Have everyone record what they know about the interviewee. Use one sticky note per observation. Place it on the appropriate section of the map.

THINK & FEEL

HEAR

SEE

SAY & DO
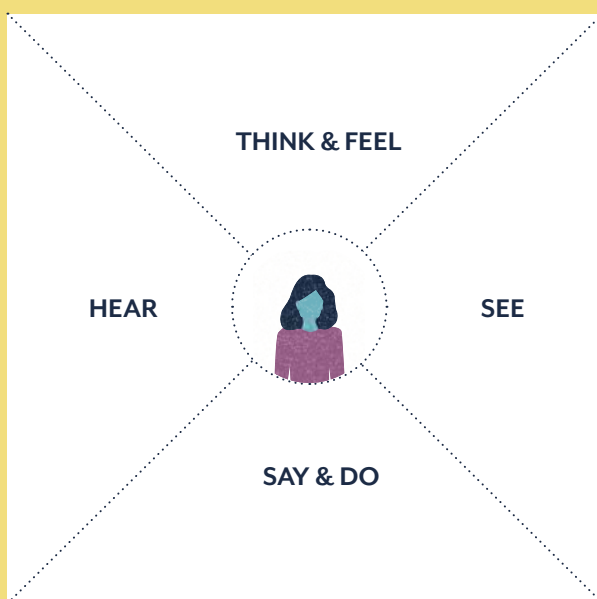
- Within each quadrant, look for similar or related items. If desired, move them closer together. As you do, imagine how these different aspects of your interviewee's life really affect how they feel.

- After the interview, sit down with your team and find patterns in what you have recorded. Label anything on the map that might be an assumption or a question for later inquiry or validation. Look for interesting observations or insights. What do you all agree on? What surprised you? What's missing? Repeat this process with the subsequent interviews you conduct.

4. Define the root problem(s) you want to focus on

3.
Conduct research to uncover insight into what really is the problem

4.
Define the root problem you want to focus on

Phase II

!

What is/are the problem(s)?

Initial scoping brief

Problem definition
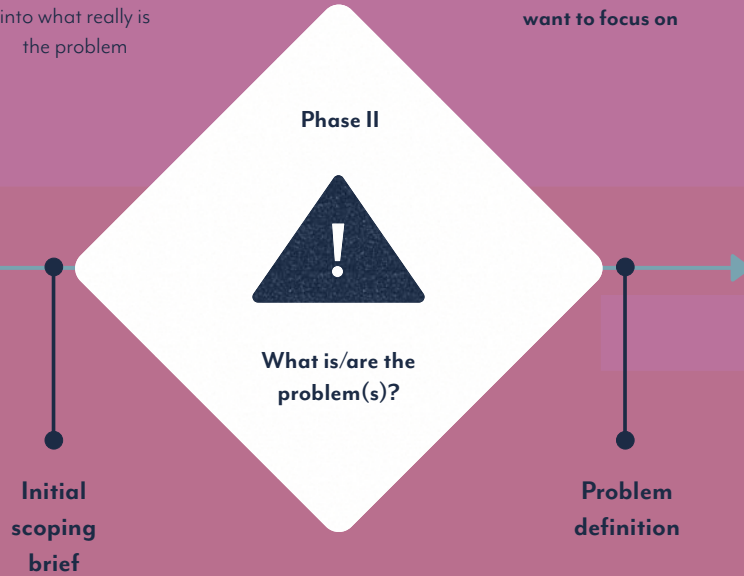
Remember the concept of convergent thinking. We will be focusing on key areas and converging on specific experiences within your people's organisational journey.

What To Do ✓

A. Convene with your work-team to discuss what you are seeing in your empathy maps.

B. As a team, review the delightful and painful points of people's experiences. Vote and agree on the key areas that need a solution.

Roses — Activities
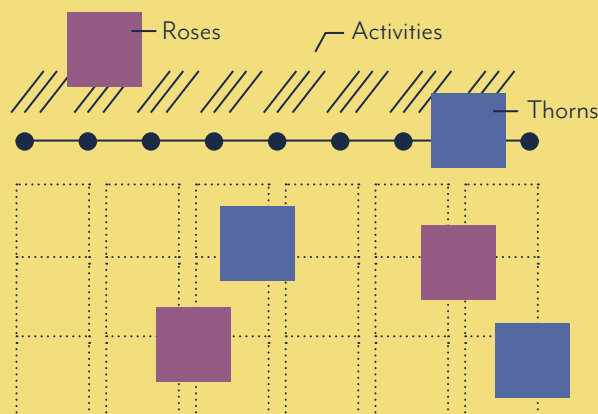
Thorns

Organisational journey

• Do a **"Roses & Thorns" activity** where you overlay some of the delightful and painful points on your people's organisational journey. You can plot a timeline of the activities people go through with your organisation — be it places, tools, people or messages they interact with.

- Use single coloured post-it notes to mark the **Roses (delightful points)** and another colour to represent **Thorns (painful points)**.

  - Converge on the pain-points (thorns) that stand out to your team and re-frame them as questions for us to focus on solving. For an extra challenge, you can practice turning the pain-point into a delight using the **"How might we….?" framing**.

  - For example, instead of framing the issue as a problem to solve *"how might we stop middle managers from asking for last minute work?", we can frame it as an opportunity to create something better: "how might we support middle managers in turning a request of last minute work into a moment to demonstrate solidarity?"*

C. As a team, come up with a focused problem statement. It should feel like a much more specific statement than your initial scoping brief.

Identifying key insights will help start your team down the path of finding opportunities to design possible solutions.

- These are two examples organisations came up with from our five-month programme:

  - *E.g. How might we better understand struggles our volunteers go through and perceive our current mental wellness initiatives?*

  - *E.g. How might we create a safe and supportive environment for our people to raise workplace challenges we are facing and gather support needed to thrive?*

*Look at Annex B for more examples of possible problem statements that are "ripe" for use. They are the 8 key insights accompanied by a problem statement that we captured in our **Reimagine Mental Wellbeing at the Workplace Report** in 2021.*
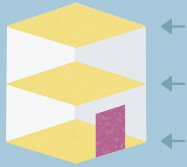
What to consider whether you are a senior leader, middle manager or working staff:

- Where do you sense your people are generally at? Are they in crisis, struggling, surviving, thriving, or excelling based on the **Many Shades of Wellbeing spectrum**? You might want to prioritise pain-points that can help people in crisis or struggle.

- Might the problem be intended or unintended things that your organisation is doing that might be the cause of people's stressors? This implies later that the solution cannot be a surface fix like "more mental wellness day-offs" vs. a deeper fix like "better management of overtime".
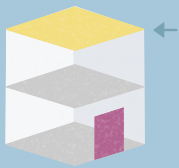
If you are a senior leader:

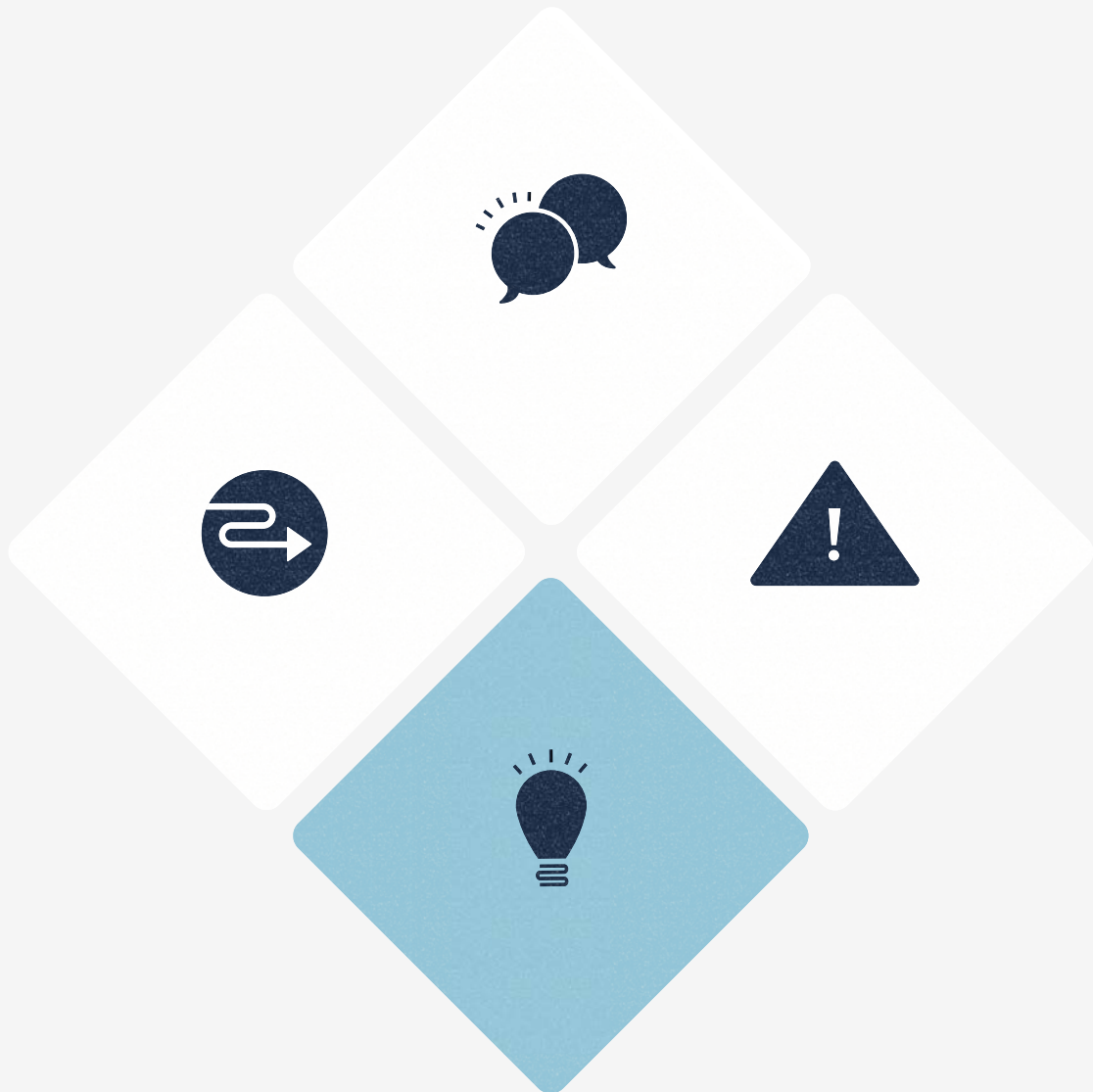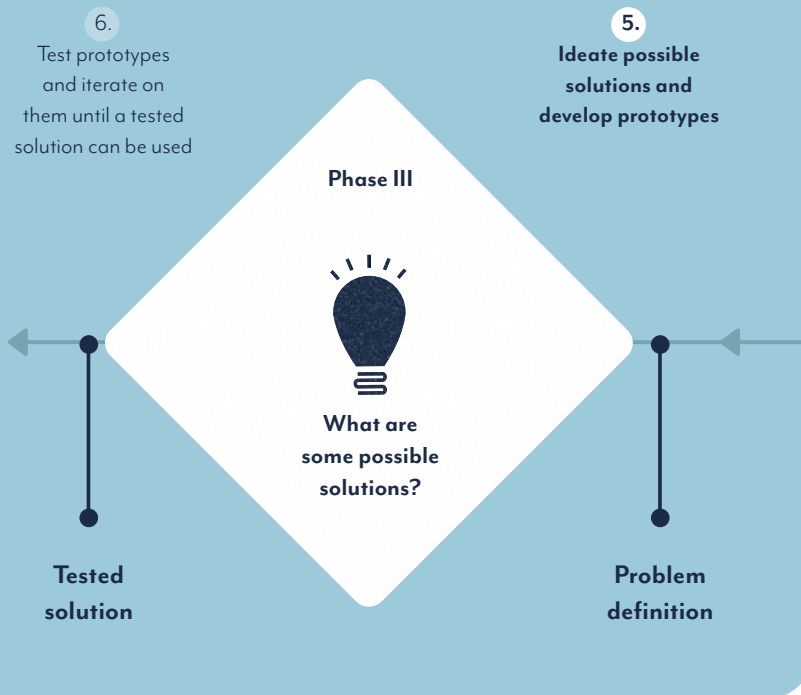- Is the problem rooted in a larger cultural or environmental context? For instance, how much of the surviving and struggling was caused by Covid-19 issues beyond your organisation's control? Will those stressors be likely to be relieved? This may give your team perspective on whether they should simply focus on what is within your control and agency to do.

Phase III: What are some possible solutions?

5. Ideate possible solutions and develop prototypes

6.
Test prototypes and iterate on them until a tested solution can be used

5.
Ideate possible solutions and develop prototypes

Phase III

What are some possible solutions?

Tested solution

Problem definition

Remember this phase requires us to get back into divergent thinking again. We want to generate a list of creative, unusual and innovative ideas to improve mental well-being at the workplace. To ensure you don't over-create more ideas than you can handle, don't be afraid to bracket the amount of time and energy you spend by the simple practice of "start on time, and stay on time".

Scan here to explore a mix of possible methods to prototype!

Both service design and organisational development share the same principles of respecting and valuing the opinions of everyone.

Everyone has a unique perspective on the user and the problem, so everyone should contribute ideas for solutions. Give each other full permission in this phase to be as creative and irreverent as possible so that you can consider everything and focus on generating as many ideas as possible. **In this phase don't judge the quality of ideas yet, focus on quantity of ideas.** There are no bad ideas. Instead of dismissing ideas your team members may suggest, push yourself to build on them, without focusing on implementation. Possible prototypes can come in forms such as a storyboard, short video, role-play, etc.

What To Do

A. Begin the activity with a good prompt, such as a problem statement from Phase 2.

B. Generate ideas; don't describe the features, details or implementation of a solution yet.

C. Look for similar ideas and natural affinities. Move them physically closer together and name the clusters.

D. Converge on a set of ideas that your work team wants to pursue. Focus on which ideas we can develop into real solutions that can solve our people's very real needs. Here are some ways you can converge:

- You can use **Visual Voting**. Each person in the group votes for a maximum of 2 ideas each. Use markers or stickers to cast your vote.

- You can use **"Yes, and..."** to give the chosen ideas more space to be elaborated on so we can further narrow the field. Let people take turns explaining and pitching their ideas to the team. Everyone is given temporary permission to diverge here by responding ONLY with "Yes, and..." to add to the idea and improve it. No "But..." is allowed for now.

- After voting, you can use an **Impact Vs. Difficulty matrix** to kick-start converging on the right solution. With your team, plot your chosen ideas in the matrix:

- Once you have chosen those few solutions to focus all your resources on, just lean in and start to create your first 'prototypes', i.e. an early sample to test your concept or process.

LUXURIES **Lower impact, higher difficulty** ideas are **"Don't Have to Do"s** as these are really **luxuries** you may not be able to afford - your limited resources are better focused on the other quadrants.	**LONG-TERM INVESTMENT** **Higher impact, higher difficulty** ideas are **"Should Do"s** too as they are excellent **long-term investments** of your resources.
EASY WINS **Lower impact, lower difficulty** ideas are **"Just Do"s** as they are **easy wins** that can improve things and motivate people to put energy into the more challenging "Must Do"s or "Should Do"s.	**HIGH ROI** **Higher impact, lower difficulty** ideas are **"Must Do"** as these have really **high returns on investment** of your resources.

DIFFICULTY (vertical axis) — IMPACT (horizontal axis)

6. Test prototypes and iterate on them until a tested solution can be used

Phase III

What are some possible solutions?

Tested solution

Problem definition

What To Do ☑

Test prototypes

A. With the prototypes you are ready to share, bring it to the people you are designing it for, e.g. your people in the organisation whom you have interviewed, potential recipients of your proposed ideas, etc. Share with lots of people so that you get a variety of reactions. This can be done via group interview / feedback sessions.

B. In a group feedback session, make sure that:

i. You identify the sort of group you want to talk with, especially if you want to learn something specific, in this case, their response to your prototypes.

ii. Convene the session on neutral ground, such as a shared community space in your workplace, or even outside of the workplace.

iii. Be certain to have one person asking the questions and other team members taking notes and capturing what the group is saying.

iv. You communicate your desire to receive honest feedback. People may praise your prototype to be nice, so assure them that this is only a tool by which to learn and that you welcome honest, even negative feedback.

C. Write down the feedback you hear and use this opportunity with the people you're designing for to ask more questions and push your ideas further. Look ahead under point E (below) to decide if you wish to capture feedback using the Feedback Grid either during or after the group interview.

Integrate feedback and iterate

D. Sit with your team and share the feedback you have collected. You'll now probably want to synthesize some of the feedback you got.

WORKED ✓	△ CHANGE
QUESTIONS ?	💡 IDEAS
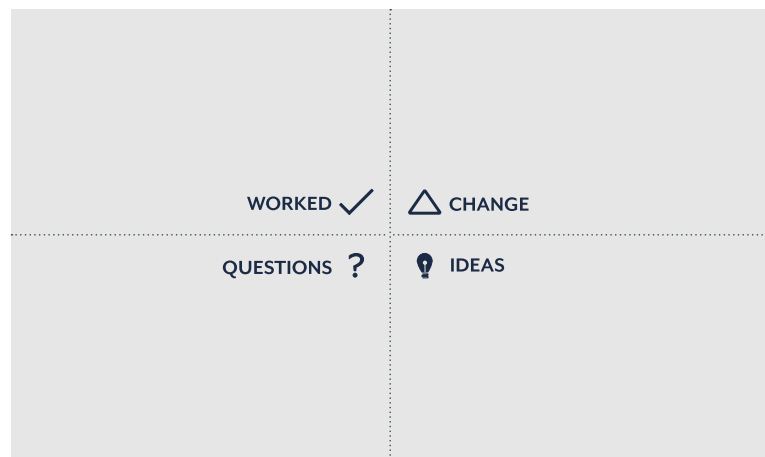
E. Create a **Feedback Grid** (above) by drawing a two-by-two grid. Label its four quadrants: Works well, Needs to change, Questions, and New ideas.

F. Use the Feedback Grid to capture feedback on sticky notes in real-time (while doing the group feedback session), or convert notes taken previously (after the group interviews)

G. Cluster similar ideas and discuss right after the group feedback session. Search for patterns and themes.

H. Review your ideas again by going back to point A (page 40) and use Visual Voting to assist the process.

I. Decide whether your team is ready to formalise your chosen solution. Prepare to repeat.

The above process is to help make sense of what people are trying to tell you.

> ❗ Bear in mind that this will not be perfect and this may take a few rounds to get to. You will not get it right the first time. This process is to refine your idea and not get to the ultimate solution. You are bound to hear feedback, even criticisms, along the way. This is all part of the experience of designing effective solutions: you have to just learn along the way, integrate what you are learning, redesign, test and iterate along the way to get to the right solution.

! If there is any comfort, know this: **complex problems (such as mental well-being) don't have "best practices" or "expert practices" type of solutions - instead, they have "emergent practices" - unique solutions that emerge only through a process of experimentation within your unique context.** You'll likely make some stumbles and mistakes. Listen and learn quickly from what doesn't work so that you can design something that does.

What to consider: Review and refine

If things aren't working well, we suggest backtracking to check the foundations of your approach:

- **Is it the scope of the problem?** Is it so macro that we are overwhelmed and lack focus? Is it so micro that we are underwhelmed and sensing lack of purpose? What can we do to change that?

- **Is it the stakeholder or work-team strategy?** Are we facing resistance from gate-keepers, decision-makers or advocates we should have engaged earlier and included in our work team? What can we do to change that?

- **Is it in our "Double Diamond" approach?**

  - Did we discover the right range of ground sentiment and were people able to be honest with their thoughts? What can we do to change that?

  - Did we define our problem statement so widely that we lost focus or so narrowly that we lost enthusiasm? What can we do to change that?

  - Did we really give a chance for a full range of creative solution ideas to be expressed? What can we do to change that?

  - Did we leave some solutions on the Impact/Difficulty matrix that we now see deserve a second chance to be prototyped and tested? What can we do to change that?

Phase IV: Formalise Solution

7. Acknowledge your achievements and put solutions into action

7.
Acknowledge your achievements and put solutions into action

Phase IV

Formalise solution?
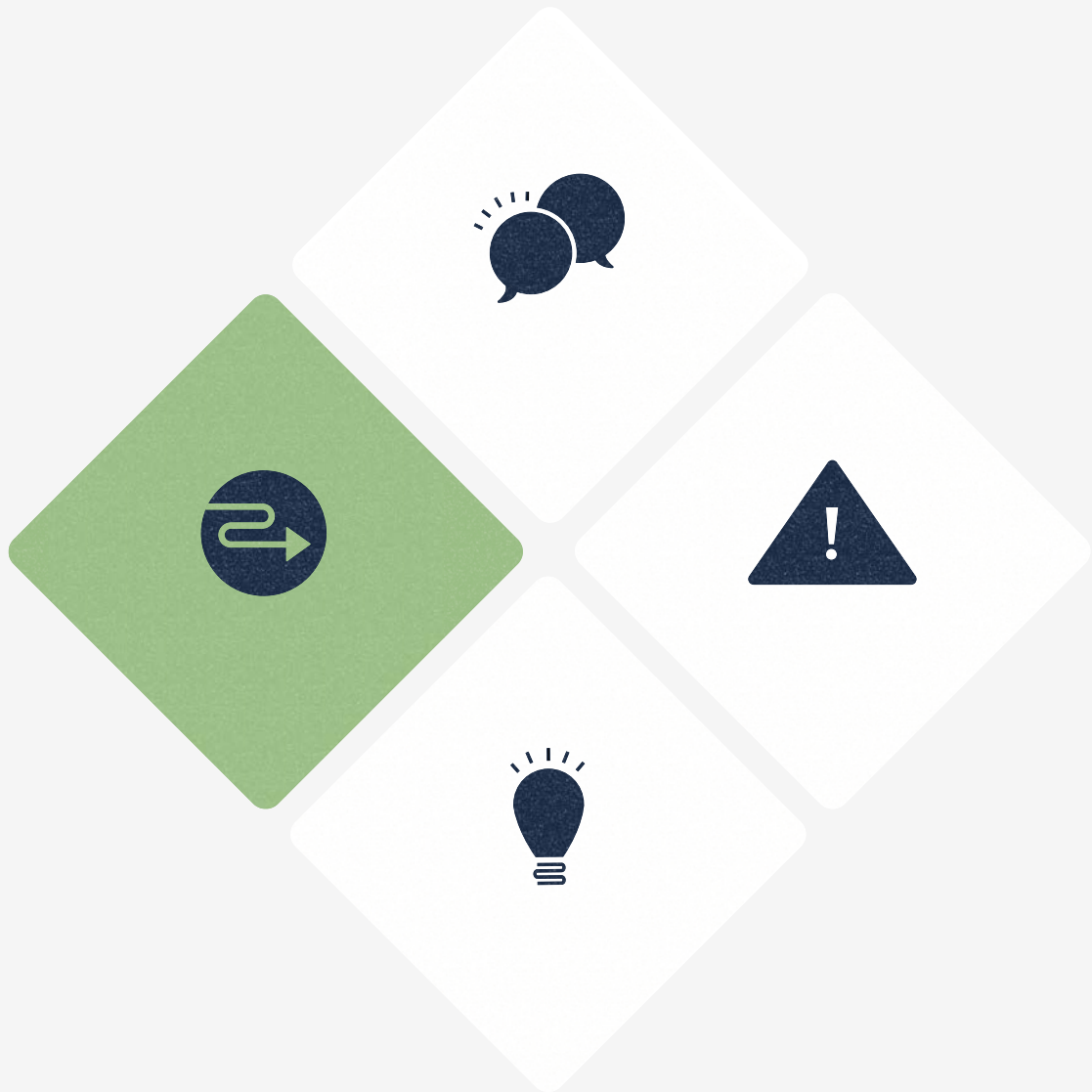
Tested solution
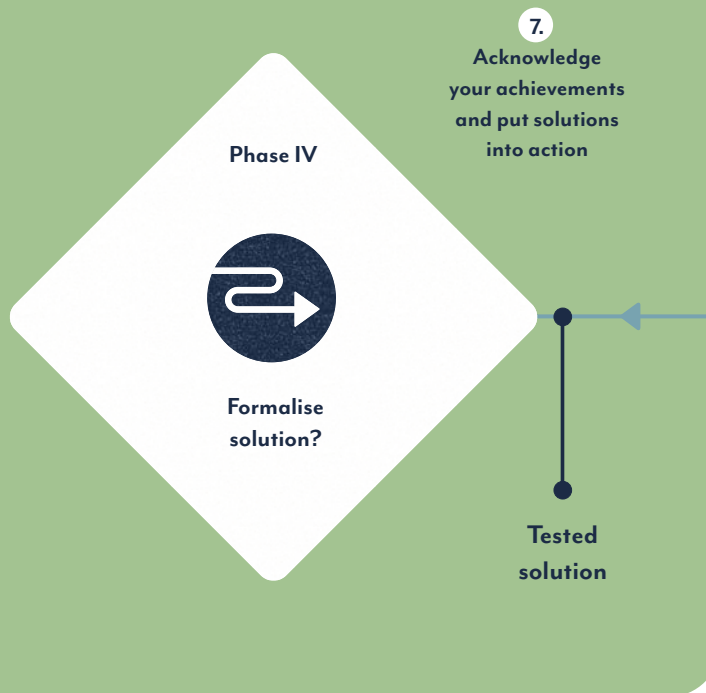
You have gone through a whole lot to get here. You've tried out things. You've reviewed what didn't work. Surprisingly, what you may not have paid attention to is what actually worked and what you actually achieved.

It is very human to focus more on the "unfinished business" of our inadequacies, failings and mistakes rather than what we actually finished and got done - fairly well at that. However, not making time and space to acknowledge ourselves and each other for our achievements can cause us to feel unfulfilled, dissatisfied, and purposeless. This may add stress to your own and your team's mental well-being.

An important principle in organisational development is to help people behave congruently with their espoused values. It would be ironic for a mental well-being project to cause mental well-being problems. It is important to acknowledge that working on the mental well-being of your organisation might have brought your team through both high and low points.

At whatever junctions of the process where you feel it is necessary, you can bring meaningful closure for yourself and your team. Closure does not have to be at the end of a whole project. Sometimes, you must create **"mini closures" or "mid-way closures"** to give people a sense of completion of what part of a project so they can have new energy to begin the next part of the project. This is particularly true for long-drawn projects or projects which evoke a growing sense of "languishing" as they go through a seemingly endless stretch.

What To Do ✅

A. Set aside time to close the process well as a work team:

☐ Define what success looks like for all of you and declare it as a team.
☐ Acknowledge and celebrate together what you have achieved: big and small wins
☐ Offer any missing apologies so there isn't any "unfinished business"
☐ Affirm what you got from each other: give compliments and words of gratitude

B. Sort out the logistics of your chosen solution and prepare to execute!
   i. You will be iterating less in this action stage as now is the time to truly test your system. You may make necessary improvements but do not change too many variables as it makes it harder to find out what works and what doesn't.

C. Collect information about how your formalised solution is working (or not).
   i. Feedback from the people you're designing this for is important, and you'll also want to have some form of metric to assess your success, as stated in point 1.

   ii. Whatever was your process of formalising, we'd love to know what came up for your organisation and look forward to hearing your process.
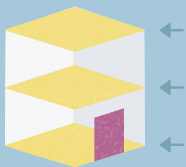
What to consider if you are a senior leader, middle manager or working staff

If you are a senior leader, do you need to cement your organisational commitment and open up relevant resources by changing company policy, adjusting your HR practices, passing new budgets or even changing relevant sections of your Employee Handbooks?

If you are a middle manager or working staff, how can you support your senior management's initiatives and communicate to your teams the reasons, intentions and details of any significant changes so there is broader buy-in and wider support?

Gratitude + Acknowledgements

The World Health Organisation (WHO) states that mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life. If you have chosen to do anything that promotes, protects and restores mental health for your organisation, you are working on something that is vital to the flourishing of individuals, communities and societies.

Your challenge is great but your rewards will be greater. We thank you on behalf of those who have been impacted by your efforts. And we thank you for sharing in the burden of this costly work. We thank you for your willingness to walk with your people.

As you followed this field-guide, we hope your organisation has found new and healthier ways to talk, work and thrive together. Please share your newfound wisdom with us and with the world. Contact us anytime if you need support or just want to share a good story at community@ourcommonground.com.sg.

Staying silent and alone in our struggles is never a healthy option for us, be it on a personal front or at the workplace. Only by trying new things and learning from our knowledge gaps will we then be able to create the change in the mental wellbeing landscape that we wish for at our workplaces.

Check out another of our field-guides "How might we make Work conversations WORK?" where we help internal stakeholders discern when they can do the work themselves and when they need to engage an external consultant for support.

Annexes

Annexe A: Where to go for help Mental Health Helplines

Singapore Association for Mental Health

💬 1800-283-7019

AWARE Counselling Helpline

💬 1800-777-5555

National Care Hotline

💬 1800-202-6868

🕐 8am -8pm Daily

TOUCHline (Youth Counselling)

💬 1800-377-2252

Samaritans of Singapore

🕐 24 hr Suicide Hotline

💬 1800-221-4444

Silver Ribbon

💬 6386 1928

IMH Mental Health Helpline

💬 6389 2222

🕐 24HR

WE CARE Community Services (for Addiction)

💬 6547 5459

CHAT Community Health Assessment Team

💬 6493 6500   6493 6501

✉ chat@mentalhealth.sg

Updated as of June 2022

Annexe A: Where to go for help
Counselling Services

Counselling and Care Centre
🔵 6536 6366
🕒 Mon - Fri: 9:00am - 6:00pm

REACH Counselling Centre
🔵 6801 0730
🕒 Mon - Fri: 9:00am - 6:00pm

Talk Your Heart Out
https://talkyourheartout.com/
✉️ contact@talkyourheartout.com
🔵 9831 0005
Counselling hours:
🕒 Mon - Sun: 7:00am - 11:00pm
Corporate office hours:
🕒 Mon - Fri: 9:30am - 6:00pm

LGBTQ+ Community
Oogachaga
https://oogachaga.com/email-counselling
🔵 Whatsapp: 8592 0609
🕒 Mon-Fri: 10:00am – 7:00pm

Note: This is a non-exhaustive list and is subjective to change. Please check for opening hours and other details before consulting with any.

Updated as of June 2022

WINGS Counselling Centre
🔵 6383 5745
🕒 Mon - Fri: 8:30am - 5:30pm
    Sat: 9:00am - 1:00pm

AWARE Sexual Assault Care Centre (SACC)
🔵 6779 0282
🕒 Mon - Fri: 10:00am - 6:00pm

Fei Yue's Online Counselling Service https://www.ec2.sg/
🕒 Mon Thur, Fri: 10.00am to 12.00pm, 2.00pm to 5.00pm

Malay Community
Club HEAL (Hope, Empowerment, Acceptance & Love)
🔵 6899 3463
🕒 Mon - Fri: 9:00am – 5:00pm
✉️ info@clubheal.org.sg

Indian Community
**Mental A.C.T.
(Advocate. Care. Train.)**
https://www.facebook.com/mentalactsg/
🔵 24/7 Helpline 1: 9619 3531
🔵 24/7 Helpline 2: 9776 9067

Annexe A: Where to go for help

**For more Mental Health
Helplines & Counselling Services
(as of November 2020)**

Advisories on Mental Well-being
MOM, Singapore National Employers
Foundation, and National Trades Union
Congress have also jointly issued a Tripartite
advisory which sets out practical guidance
on measures that employers could adopt to
support their employees' mental well-being
and provided resources that employers,
employees and self-employed persons could
tap on. The advisory can be assessed at:

Annexe B: Possible problem statements to explore

8 Key Insights from the Reimagine Mental Wellbeing at the Workplace Report (2021)

1. Help Me Thrive, Not Just Survive

There are many shades of well-being. Take care of my wellness, not just my illness.

Mental wellbeing exists on a spectrum. For an organisation to be truly healthy, it is imperative that mental wellbeing practices support employees across the whole spectrum and include both preventive and reactive measures. Focusing on illness over overall mental wellbeing may set up the expectation that only employees with mental health conditions need to care about their mental health. Organisations then miss out on important preventative mental wellbeing support practices that could benefit a much broader segment of their employees.

> *I don't know what support I need or can have, because I can understand they also need to deliver service and the manpower is low right now. It is a really tough struggle to live up to or produce 100% when I'm far from 100% myself. It is very hard.*
>
> *- Interview Transcript 16*

Problem statement as an organisation:
How might we redesign workplaces for thriving?

2. I Can't Act On Something I Don't Know Is Happening

It's a catch-22 situation, and employers can find it hard to know the real situation because employees' mental health concerns are often concealed by everyday requests.

For employers, it may seem natural that the onus of disclosure is on the employee as signs of poor mental wellbeing are often invisible, and they assume that employees know their lived condition best and would be able to speak for themselves. For employees, disclosure is a difficult choice to make as they are deterred by possible stigma associated,

> *I lied to my company, I didn't tell them that I burnt out. I told them I went to pursue my studies. It's not a lie, it's just a matter of time...they released me, to be in support of my personal development.*
>
> *- Interview Transcript 7*

as well as worry about possible implications on their current work scope or future career progression. As employers tend to look out for clear signals of asking for help, they are more likely to overlook indirect cues of mental health concerns via everyday requests, e.g. applying for a few days of medical leave or requesting for a lighter workload.

Problem statement as an organisation: **How might we signal to employees that it is safe to disclose their mental wellbeing challenges?**

3. If I'm Performing, I Must Be Ok

Work performance is the most commonly used signal of determining an employee's mental wellbeing even though it is not the most accurate.

Work performance is not always an accurate barometer of mental wellbeing as high performers may also suffer from mental wellbeing challenges. In some cases, experiencing a mental health challenge might even seemingly improve work performance — hence giving rise to terms like "high-functioning anxiety*". Employees with mental wellbeing conditions may also see their wellbeing as tied to their productivity, such that they only seek help when they perceive that it affects their work performance.

> *I only got help because I wanted to address my work performance issues... it took me a few sessions with counsellors before I realised it was linked to my self-worth issues.*
>
> - Interview Transcript 11

Problem statement as an organisation:
How might we design better indicators to measure and evaluate mental wellbeing at work?

* High functioning anxiety is not a recognized mental health diagnosis or disorder.

4. Serious Problems Call For Drastic Measures... Or Maybe Not?

Not seeing mental wellbeing conditions as acute problems, but ongoing instead.

> *The road to hell is paved with good intentions. There was a misunderstanding... the idea that a "drastic intervention" was needed. If only the people I trusted and loved had talked to me... My [workplace] told my colleagues, especially those close to me, do not contact her, let her focus completely on her recovery. No "how are you", no SMS from colleague, even when I got discharged and went back to [workplace].*
>
> *- Interview Transcript 1*

If an employee's mental wellbeing challenge was not shared or addressed early, then disclosure may happen suddenly through unintended incidents when it becomes more difficult to manage. Employers then assume responsibility of providing directed, immediate, and short-term solutions when facing intense disclosures, which may not match employees' expectations even when those solutions are well-intended. Instead, they are looking for more holistic, ongoing, and long-term support from their employers.

Problem statement as an organisation: **How might we begin to create solutions that can both address immediate needs and also allow a smoother entry for the employee?**

5. See Mental Health As a Capability, Not a Liability

Beyond a short-term concern due to a pandemic.

> *Addressing well-being helps with retaining talents, and our employee value proposition has been beefed up. We have been collecting data, the cost of doing this (wellness initiatives) versus staff absenteeism and staff departure is lower. After such implementations, I noted a big shift in employee response, and we are now positioned as an organisation that cares. We think of well-being as an organisation capability.*
>
> *- Employer Transcript 10*

Conversations about mental wellbeing at the workplace is a reasonably new development in Singapore. Some organisations may perceive mental wellbeing as a short-term concern due to COVID, or a problem to be fixed quickly to get work "back on track". The more mature the conversation becomes, the more organisations will begin to see it as a vital part of their organisational capabilities.

Problem statement as an organisation: **How might we help organisations see mental wellbeing as an organisational capability, and not an organisational liability?**

6. Please Commit to Understanding and Supporting Me

All three critical factors need to be in place for success.

To have successful mental wellbeing practices, organisations need to have the holistic approach of having

1) appropriate knowledge,

2) relevant resources, and

3) organisational commitment, of which there has been growing progress.

The challenge many organisations may face is how to create an environment where each of the 3 success factors flourish together.
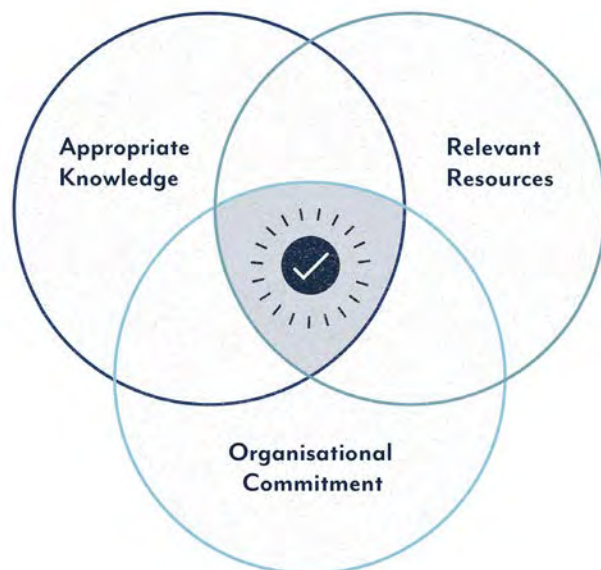
Through our interviews, this was expressed largely in an interpersonal context as leaders and colleagues feared not knowing how best to respond to someone struggling with their mental wellbeing. At an organisational level, a lack of **knowledge** and best practices may also lead to absent or ineffective policies targeting mental wellbeing.

> *Training. We need training... In Singapore, [there are] not enough examples to learn from to say this is what you need to do.*
>
> *-Employer Transcript 4*

Appropriate Knowledge

Relevant Resources

Organisational Commitment
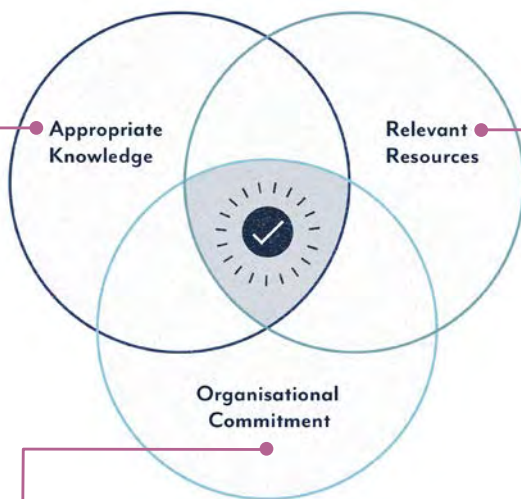
Through desktop research, we found that **resources** in the form of financial support can often only be afforded by larger companies. Resource scarcity is especially acute for SMEs, whom might not be able to ensure the longevity of their mental wellbeing solutions without some creative ways to create resource buffers.

> *Resources in [the] form of 'what can we do is important... We should have resource networks.*
>
> *-Employer Transcript 4*

Commitment appears to be the hardest success factor to influence from the outside. Internally, companies often juggle multiple priorities that are seemingly in tension with each other such as care and excellence, or people and results. However, it may be helpful to see these factors as inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing to form virtuous cycles. If seen in opposition, mental health can consequently become de-prioritised in favour of seemingly more immediate organisational plans and needs.

Problem statement as an organisation: **Which of the three success factors does my organisation need more of?**

7. How can leaders help when they already carry a lot of weight?

Leaders are human too.

Leaders are so used to bearing responsibilities at the workplace that it can become a bottleneck to how an organisation responds to mental wellbeing concerns, especially if they may feel like formal, top-down approval is required. While leadership commitment is important, this places pressure on leaders to have the right knowledge on mental wellbeing. Moreover, those who are expected to help are often overworked themselves, and may end up overstretching themselves and cost them their own mental wellbeing ironically.

> *I learnt that I cannot do everything -- I carried guilt from trying to solve things all by myself.*
>
> *- Interview Transcript 13*

Problem statement as an organisation: **How might we empower all individuals at the workplace to contribute to supportive mental wellbeing practices?**

8. Journey With Me

The importance of providing continuous support, not just one-off solutions.

Organisations that provide safe and helpful responses are better able to meet the needs of each employee in part because they are committed to providing continuous support. Employees desire both continuous and customised support throughout the different stages of their mental well-being journey, ranging from wanting to be accepted as they are, to wanting support as they embark on the process of healing.

> *It's an iterative process to ensure we do better, can't pinpoint one or two specific actions [to improve quality of support provided].*
>
> *- Employer Transcript 7*

Problem statement as an organisation: **How might we customise the help we offer employees to what they need at each stage of their journey?**

Annexe C: Journey Maps

HELPFUL AND SAFE RESPONSE FROM EMPLOYER

common GROUND

Studio DOJ8

STRUGGLING

SURVIVING

THRIVING

SURVIVING

THRIVING

Background: Employee is excited to start new job, although facing some issues with family at home. Volunteers with community organisation and is in a relationship.

Starts new job. Feels focused and productive. Engages in discussions and is outgoing. Sleeping and eating as per usual.

Work load starts to feel overwhelming. Receives reminder email from company on available mental wellbeing support.

Experiences burnout: Difficulty focusing, eating, and sleeping. Feels drained. Disengages from discussions. Relationships suffer at work and at home.

Poor mental wellness becomes visible to self and others as employee experienced a panic attack and is often late. Knows support is needed.

Considers disclosing as employee has heard about workplace mental wellbeing support through the personal experiences of colleagues and reminders from management.

Approaches manager to ask for support.

Disclosure

Colleague or manager checks in to ask if employee needs support.

Work load increases in busy period.

Knows resources on how to cope and where to find support.

All is well at work. Enjoys projects again and can better contribute to team. Relationships improve at work and at home.

Employee starts receiving regular external support.

Safe and helpful response given by employer

This company sees the **mental wellbeing of staff as essential to its success.** There are policies in place on how to step in if someone needs support. There are programmes available to support mental wellbeing for all staff, and also options for more **personalised support in times of distress.**

Those in leadership are **equipped with training and resources,** and **can often empathise** as they may have experienced similar challenges in their own lives. Staff know who and where to go to when in need, and **support stays anonymous.**

Starts to feel more at ease. Sleep and work schedule returning to normal. Appetite returns.

Employee receives public or private care depending on needs and resources.

External mental health and emotional support is needed. Employer shares information. Provides subsidy.

Employee is not satisfied as the wellness plan does not adequately address their needs.

Workplace-based wellbeing plan created with employer. Beginning with work load adjustment.

Employee feels that Workplace-based Wellness Plan is sufficient.

Employee feels that Workplace-based Wellness Plan is insufficient.

Employer checks in to see how employee is coping.

Takes time off during work hours for counselling. Colleagues are understanding.

Joins workplace peer support group. Colleagues check in on each other and provide emotional support.

WELL-MEANING, BUT UNHELPFUL RESPONSE FROM EMPLOYER

common
GROUND

FOSTERING INCLUSIVE CULTURES

Studio
DOJ8

THRIVING

Background: Employee is excited to start new job, although facing some issues with family at home. Volunteers with community organisation and is in a relationship.

This company has **good intentions** when it comes to supporting its staff. However, due to a lack of knowledge and resources, and a focus on productivity, the available support **often falls short of what the employee truly needs.**

Leadership is maxed out and may be experiencing poor mental wellbeing themselves. Colleagues are also overworked and **may not want to support due to fear of taking on more work then they can manage.**

Grateful that employer tried to help, but **disappointed that support does not meet needs.**

SURVIVING

Starts new job. Feels focused and productive. Engages in discussions and is outgoing. Sleeping and eating as per usual.

Work load starts to feel overwhelming. Receives annual email from company on available mental wellbeing support.

SURVIVING

STRUGGLING

Experiences burnout: Difficulty focusing, eating, and sleeping. Disengages from discussions. Relationships suffer at work and at home.

Poor mental wellbeing becomes visible to self and others as employee experienced a panic attack and is often late. Knows support is needed.

Concerns about disclosure

Fears of: being viewed as incompetent due to perceived social stigma, how this might **affect work review,** and if support **will stay anonymous.**

Unable to keep up with deadlines. Irritability with clients and colleagues.

Colleague or manager checks in to ask if employee needs support.

Disclosure

Approaches manager to ask for support.

Well-meaning but unhelpful response

Employer offers support by suggesting employee join employee welfare activities: ice cream breaks and mental wellbeing talks.

Stress overload as support is not helping. Manager suggests time off, because employee's increasing inability to cope is seen as a disruption to operations.

Takes forced time off. Work piles up and colleagues are frustrated by needing to take on more work.

Back to work. Difficulty coping with continued work load, feels avoidance from others.

Social punishment. Colleagues do not know how to engage sensitively and rumours are spread. Less likely to receive promotion.

Quits job due to high stress and lack of support. Loss to employee and company.

STRUGGLING

Takes time off. Faces financial strain and continued stress with personal relationships.

Finds new job and hopes the next employer will be more supportive.

Annexe D: Templates

Empathy Map

SEE

THINK & FEEL

SAY & DO

HEAR

Feedback Grid

△ CHANGE

💡 IDEAS

✔ WORKED

? QUESTIONS

Scoping Brief

Scoping Question	Response	Example
a) Problem area to focus on What is one problem area you are currently facing in your organisation that you want to focus on? • Share what do you think is happening, and why? • You can start with "This is the problem that I see…"		*This is the problem that I see:* *Hybrid work provides more flexibility for employees, but it's harder for employees to manage their boundaries with work and easier to experience burnout.* *Our employees may also feel more distant from their colleagues and teams, and find it difficult to build*
b) Existing initiatives If applicable, list the types of initiatives specific to mental wellbeing practices in your organisation and the response from your colleagues/employees to these practices.		*We currently have:* *- 24/7 counselling service, available via call, virtual or face-to-face.* *- Talks, workshops on managing stress, mental wellness*
c) Scope of work Based on the above problem area, how would you define what you hope to work on? Word this as an inviting statement starting with: The question I want to explore is: "How might we…"		*The question I want to explore for our organisation is:* *How might we create a safe and supportive experience for our employees to raise the challenges they are facing with mental wellness and gather the support they need to thrive in this season of hybrid work?*

d) Outcomes

State your desired outcome and your vision of success. "I want to see our..." or "I want to achieve..."

I want to see :

- more employees have greater awareness and acceptance of challenges we face with mental wellness

- more employees proactively reaching out for support and accessing workplace wellness programmes.

e) Resources

What are the kinds of resources we have? What are the kinds of resources you are requesting for? (Manpower support, time, financial support etc)

I believe we have:

- Manpower – we have passionate employees who can work with HR as a special mental well-being work group

I would like to request for:

- Permission for employees to form that special workgroup with HR

- Budget to prototype ideas

f) Commitment level

Who is involved, what are their roles within your organisation? How would they like to be involved specifically in this project?

The people who want to work on this are:

- *Myself*
- *The other department heads*

We are willing to commit:

- *1.5 hours/week for this month to talk with HR.*

Stakeholder Analysis Matrix*

KEEP SATISFIED

ENGAGE CLOSELY AND INFLUENCE ACTIVELY

MONITOR (MINIMUM EFFORT)

KEEP INFORMED

POWER

High

INTEREST

Low ——— High