

What Are We Asking Our People to Recover From?

A 10-minute organizational strain audit for leaders

Burnout is not always a resilience problem.

Use this quick audit to identify conditions your people may be repeatedly absorbing, compensating for, or recovering from. Score the organization, not the employee.

RATE EACH ITEM: **0** rare / well-managed **1** sometimes **2** often **3** chronic / high impact

1. Constant urgency

Everything feels time-sensitive. Priorities shift faster than people can stabilize.

0 1 2 3

2. Emotional load

Staff routinely absorb crisis, conflict, trauma, grief, anger, or distress.

0 1 2 3

3. Unclear authority

People are accountable for outcomes they do not have the power or resources to influence.

0 1 2 3

4. Understaffing / overload

Caseloads, vacancies, volume, or administrative burden regularly exceed realistic capacity.

0 1 2 3

5. Poor recovery after crisis

Work resumes immediately after critical incidents with little debrief, relief, or follow-up.

0 1 2 3

6. Supervisor inconsistency

Support, communication, accountability, or decision-making varies dramatically by supervisor.

0 1 2 3

7. Low psychological safety

People calculate the risk of speaking honestly, disagreeing, asking for help, or admitting mistakes.

0 1 2 3

8. Moral distress

Employees are repeatedly asked to act in ways that conflict with what they believe people need.

0 1 2 3

9. Boundary erosion

After-hours access, skipped breaks, emotional availability, or "just one more thing" are normalized.

0 1 2 3

10. Change without capacity

New initiatives, mandates, systems, or expectations are added without removing old demands.

0 1 2 3

YOUR SIGNAL

0-7 Stable

8-14 Watch

15-21 Strained

22-30 Chronic load

Do not use the total score as the only answer. Circle the three highest-rated conditions - those are your best starting points for leadership action.

Turn the signal into an operational question.

Choose one high-scoring condition. Do not start with "How do we make employees more resilient?"

1. What is happening?

Name the actual condition. Be specific about where, when, who, and how often.

2. What does it cost people?

Consider attention, emotion, sleep, trust, safety, recovery time, relationships, and capacity.

3. What does it cost the organization?

Consider turnover, errors, conflict, absenteeism, claims, vacancies, quality, and credibility.

4. What are employees currently doing to compensate?

Working late? absorbing extra cases? skipping breaks? avoiding conflict? emotionally detaching?

5. What can leadership remove, redesign, clarify, or resource?

Look for an operational change before adding another individual wellness expectation.

The question worth carrying into your next leadership meeting

What are we asking our people to repeatedly recover from?

And which of those conditions are actually within our power to change?