BetterUp

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

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

What is languishing?

Adam elaborated on the definition of languishing coined by sociologist Corey Keyes as "the absence of well-being," to add that it's also "as if everything in life is in grayscale as opposed to vivid color — the sense of being a little joyless or aimless." While someone who we say is flourishing has a powerful sense of meaning and mastery, languishing can dull motivation, interfere with our focus, and on average makes us 3x more likely to cut back on work[1], which can ultimately lead to performance issues and drag other colleagues down.

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

What should organizations do to start addressing employee languishing?

1. Broaden our understanding of mental health and well-being

According to Adam, "we need to help people grow across the spectrum, not just cure ill-being. An important thing is shifting away from response and cure toward prevention," for your entire workforce.

2. Take a preventative and more holistic approach

"Prevention is extremely lower cost than crisis management — it creates higher performing employees, leads to less turnover, and more engaged employees.

3. Use surveys to spot languishing warning signs

Pulse surveys are a great way to track employee engagement, but Nickle notes, the mistake organizations make with them are over-indexing on "measuring engagement, but not accounting for whether people are languishing.

4. Leadership must model behaviors that drive lasting change

Nickle noted that for IBM, successfully addressing languishing started with "creating space and psychological safety to have companywide conversations around these feelings."

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

Coaching can be one of the biggest drivers to help employees "learn from their own resilience and practice selfcompassion" needed to overcome languishing.

Build a flourishing workforce.

Get a free demo