Disaster Recovery and Resilience
Exploring Moral Injury:
Building resilience in disaster response

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Answering the call
national survey

Beyond Blue's National Mental Health and Wellbeing Study of Police and Emergency Services – Final report

The mental health, wellbeing and work impacts of COVID-19 on first responders and frontline workers in Australia.

Summary of findings

June 2021

1 in 3 employees experience high or very high psychological distress compared to 1 in 8 among all adults
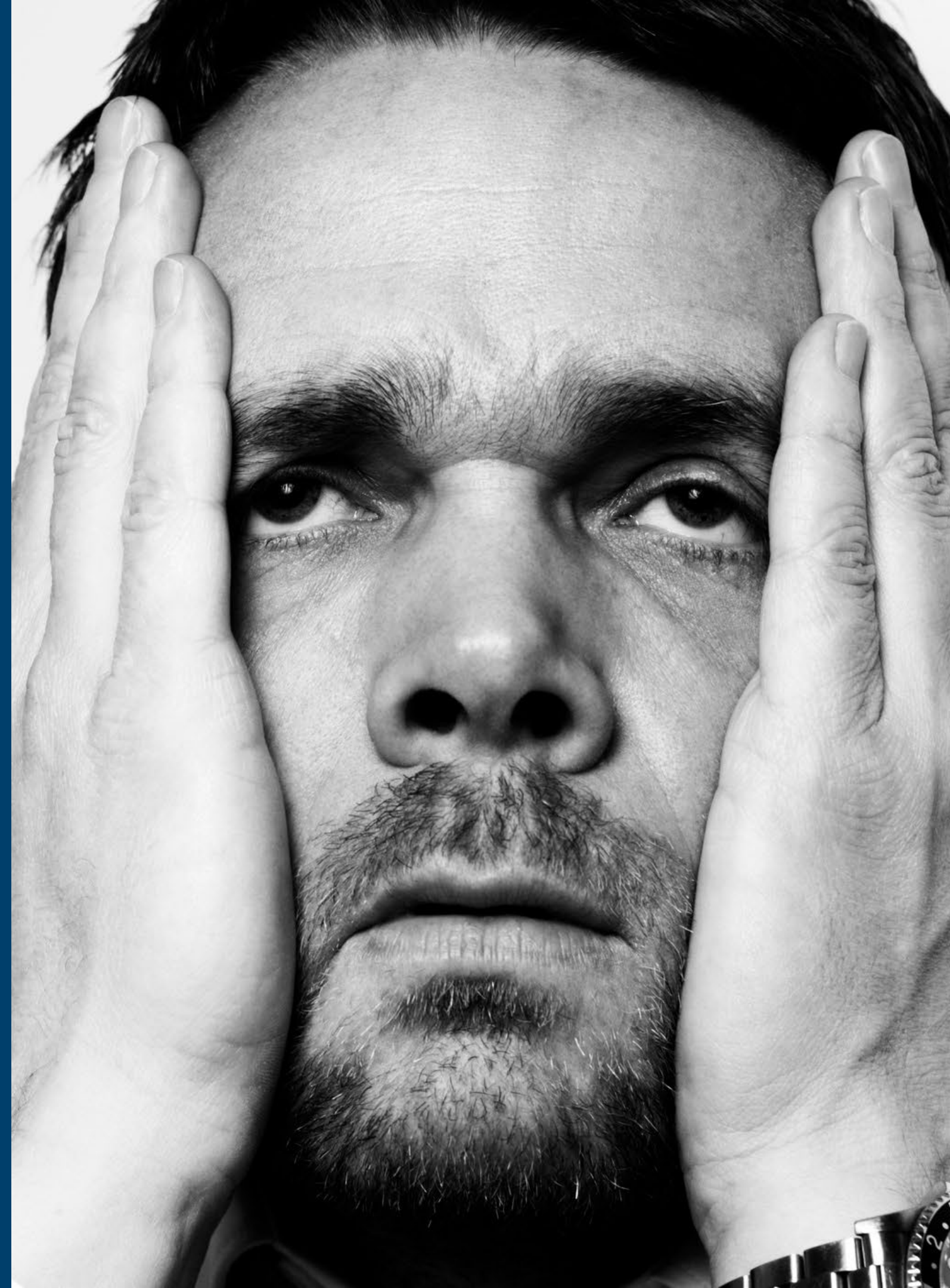
depression & anxiety were 10 and 4 times higher (respectively) than the general population rate.

Wellbeing washing is occurring!

# Flawed foundational assumptions about distress:

1) Failings in individuals
2) Bio-psycho-social
3) Trauma exposure
4) Reactive to events
5) Poorly measure

Industry	2020-2021	2022-2023
Public administration and safety	$259,572,188	$404,520,824 (56% increase)
Healthcare and social assistance	$176,595,307	$235,205,267 (33% increase)

2023 Review of the Workers Compensation Scheme

Change in positive sense of wellbeing
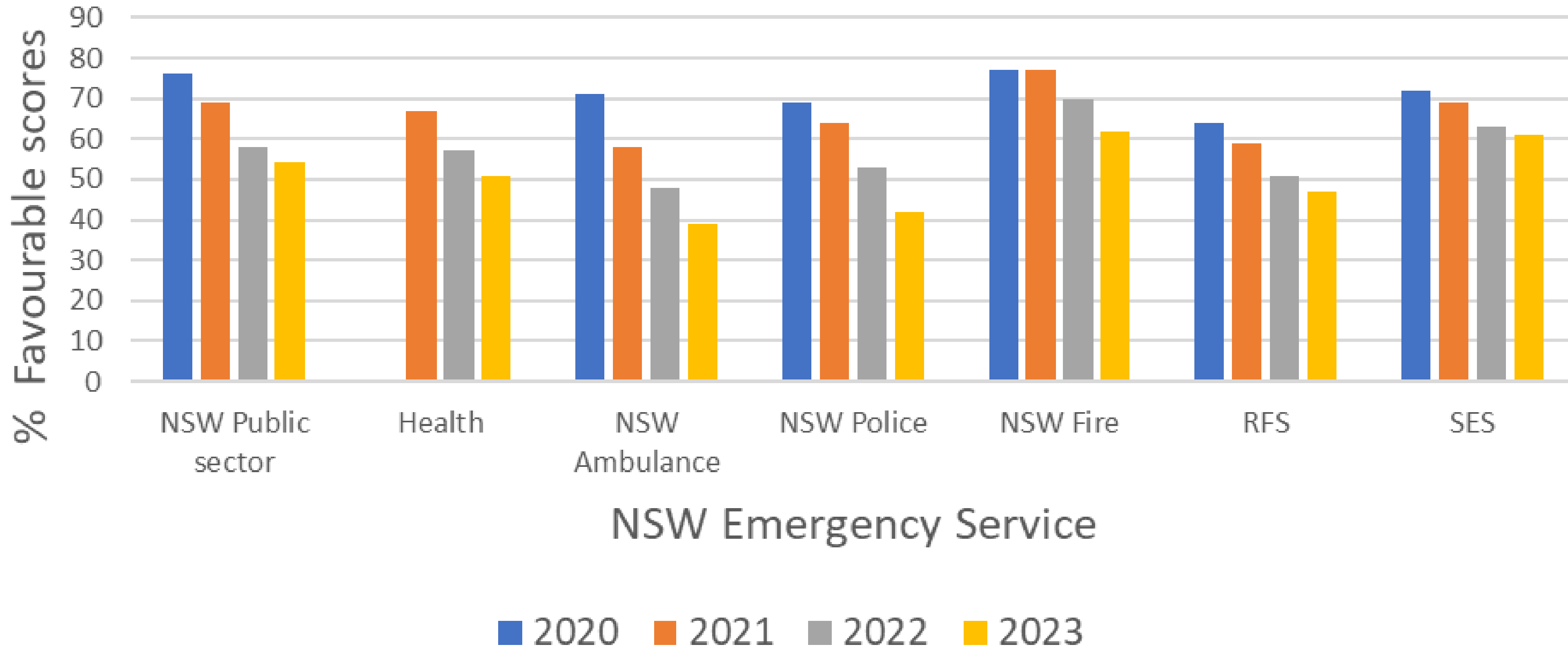
Australia's volunteer firefighting force declined 10% in past decade

Productivity Commission figures show nationwide drop from 169,766 to 152,798

How do we stop volunteer emergency service workers quitting?

April 4, 2017 5.17am AEST

volunteer firefighting force declined by 10% (about 16,000 volunteers) in the decade 2009-2019
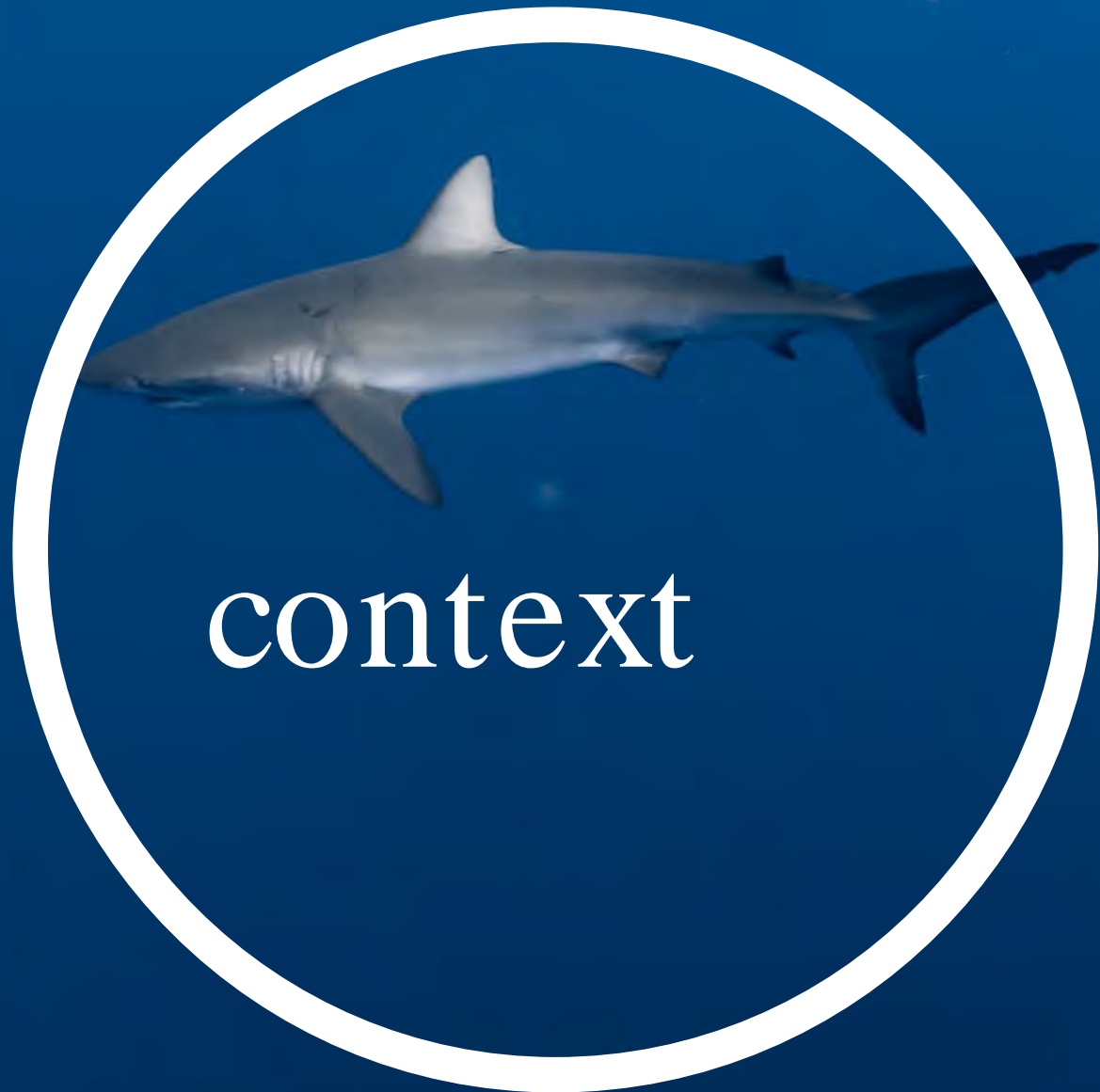
(Karp, 2020)

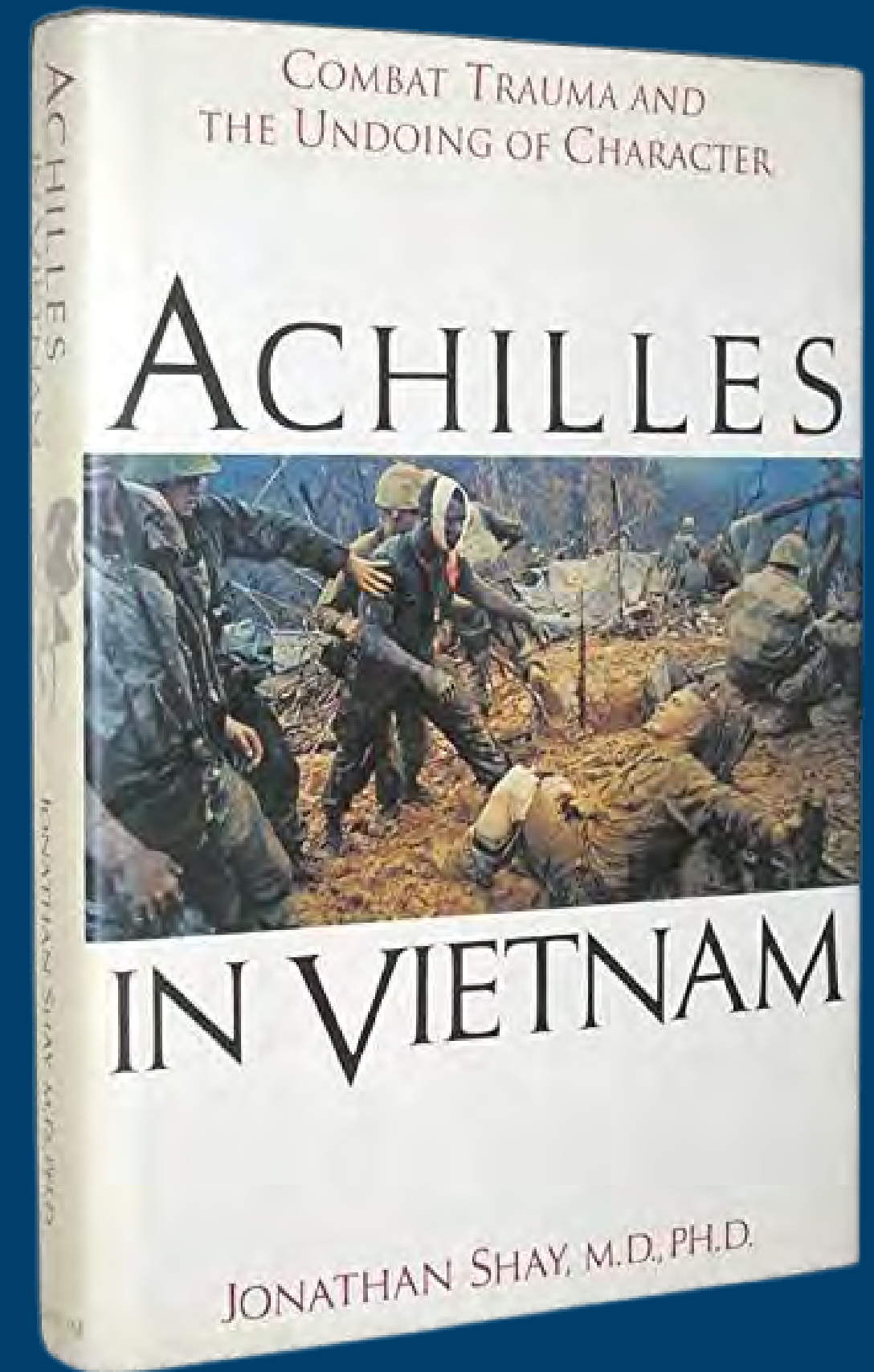About half of all emergency service volunteers leave within the first two years

(Forner, Jones & Berry, 2017)

Veterans can usually recover
from horror, fear, and grief
once they return to civilian
life, so long as "what's right"
has not also been violated.

(Shay, 1994, p. 20)

COMBAT TRAUMA AND
THE UNDOING OF CHARACTER

ACHILLES

IN VIETNAM

JONATHAN SHAY, M.D., PH.D.

Moral injury (MI)

betrayal of what is right,

by someone in legitimate authority,

in a high-stakes situation

(Shay, 2014)

Moral distress

when one knows the right thing to do, but institutional constraints make it nearly impossible to pursue the right course of action.

(Jameton, 1984)

Moral injury (MI)

the lasting psychological, biological, spiritual, behavioral and social impact of perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations

(Litz et al., 2009)

Spirituality

Spirituality is a dynamic and intrinsic aspect of humanity through which persons seek ultimate meaning, purpose and transcendence, and experience relationship to self, family, others, community, society, nature, and the significant or sacred. Spirituality is expressed through beliefs, values, traditions and practices.

(Puchalski et al., 2014, p. 646)

Character

It deteriorates their character; their ideals, ambitions, and attachments begin to change and shrink. [...] When social trust is destroyed, it is replaced by the settled expectancy of harm, exploitation, and humiliation from others. With this expectancy, there are few options: strike first; withdraw and isolate oneself from others (e.g., Achilles); or create deceptions, distractions, false identities, and narratives to spoil the aim of what is expected (e.g., Odysseus)

(Shay, 2014).

ODYSSEUS IN AMERICA
COMBAT TRAUMA AND THE
TRIALS OF HOMECOMING

JONATHAN SHAY, M.D., PH.D. FOREWORD BY SENATORS JOHN McCAIN AND MAX CLELAND

"A brilliant successor to Shay's groundbreaking *Achilles in Vietnam.*"
— Richard Rhodes, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Why They Kill* and *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*

AUTHOR OF ACHILLES IN VIETNAM

Suffering's recursive relationship to decay

The prisoner who had lost faith in the future – his future – was doomed. With his loss of belief in the future, he also lost his spiritual hold; he let himself decline and became subject to mental and physical decay

(Frankl, 1984, p. 99).

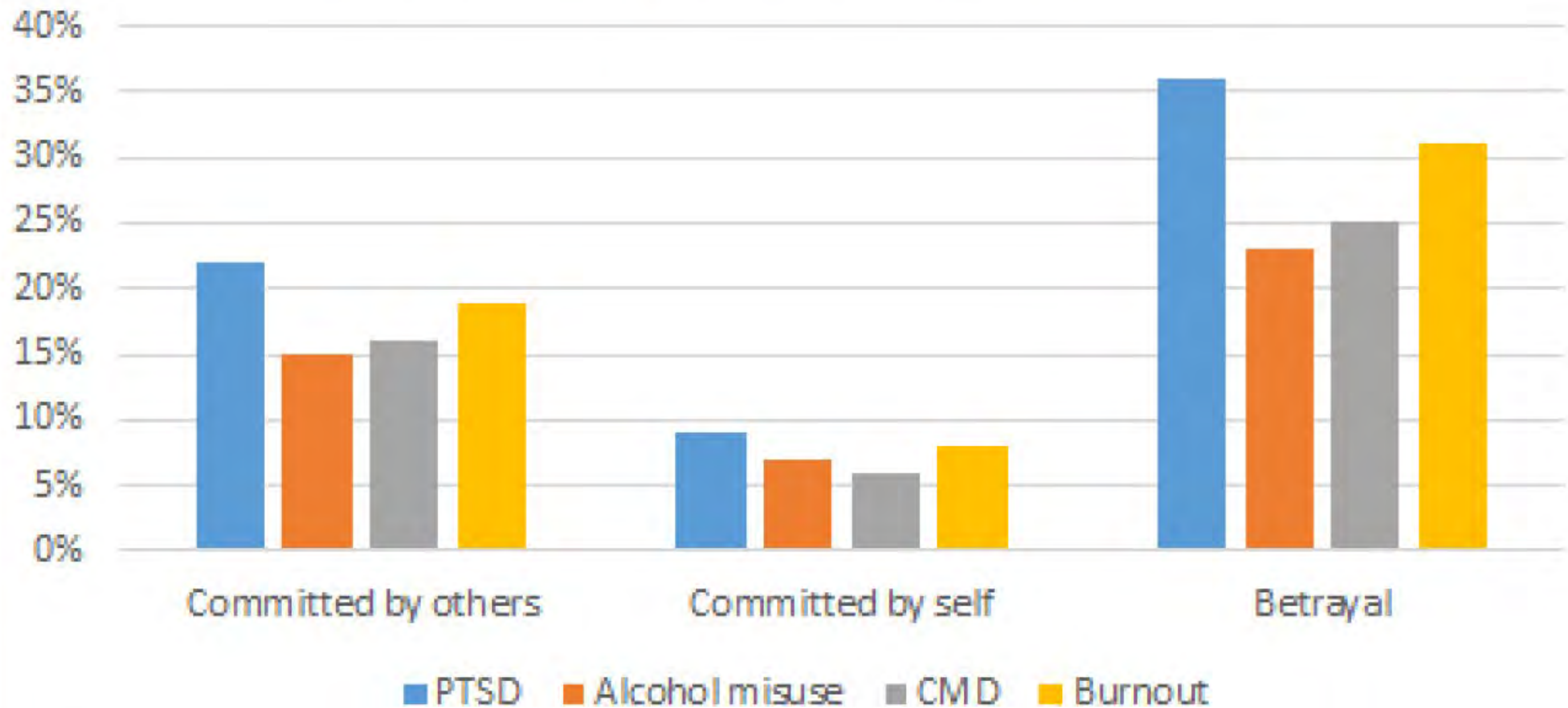Loss of trust

Settled expectancy of harm

Loss of control

Others live "rent-free" inside your head

Loss of self

Become someone you never imagined

What is lost?

% answering moderately/strongly agree on MIES subscales, by mental health disorder

Neil Greenberg (2022)

When Employees Strike Back: Investigating Mediating Mechanisms
Between Psychological Contract Breach and Workplace Deviance

Prashant Bordia
University of South Australia

Simon Lloyd D. Restubog
University of New South Wales

Robert L. Tang
De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde

Moral disengagement as a mechanism between perceptions of organisational injustice and deviant work behaviours

Sigurd W. Hystad *, Kathryn J. Mearns, Jarle Eid

Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities

Albert Bandura
Department of Psychology
Stanford University

Moral Injury, Betrayal and Retribution: Australian Veterans and the Role of Chaplains

Timothy J. Hodgson[1] · Lindsay B. Carey[2,3] · Harold G. Koenig[3,4,5]

How many times during your career as a first responder did you feel betrayed by a manager, a colleague or systems/people in your organisation? (*n* = 237)

% of respondents

Number of perceived betrayals
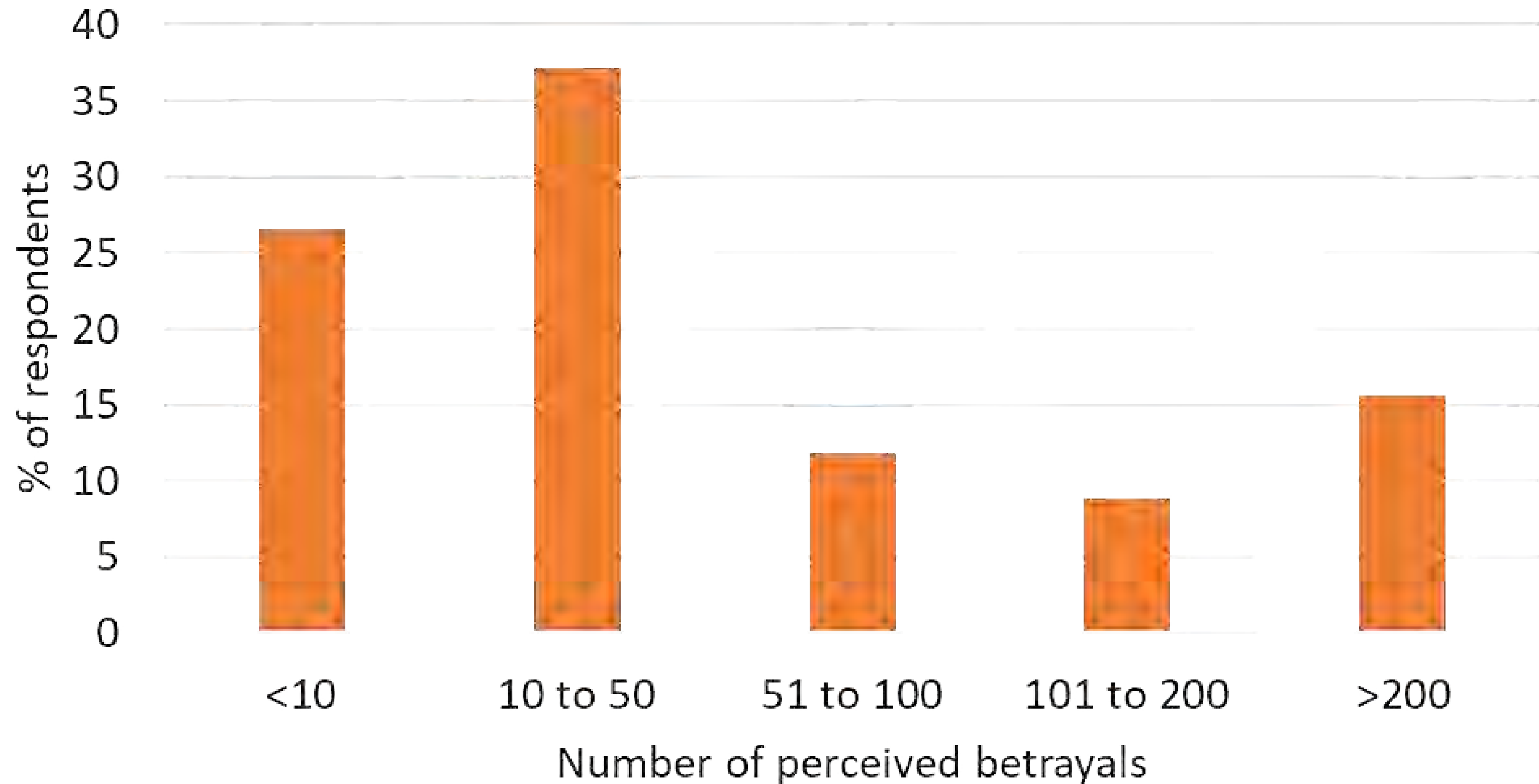
How many times during your career have you felt betrayed by a manager, a colleague, or systems/people in your organisation?
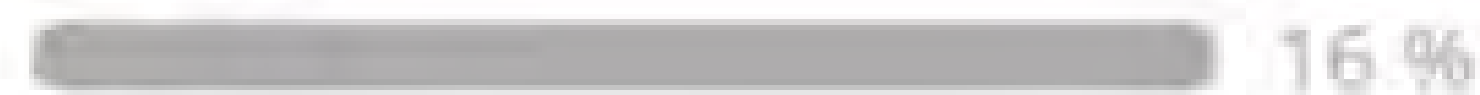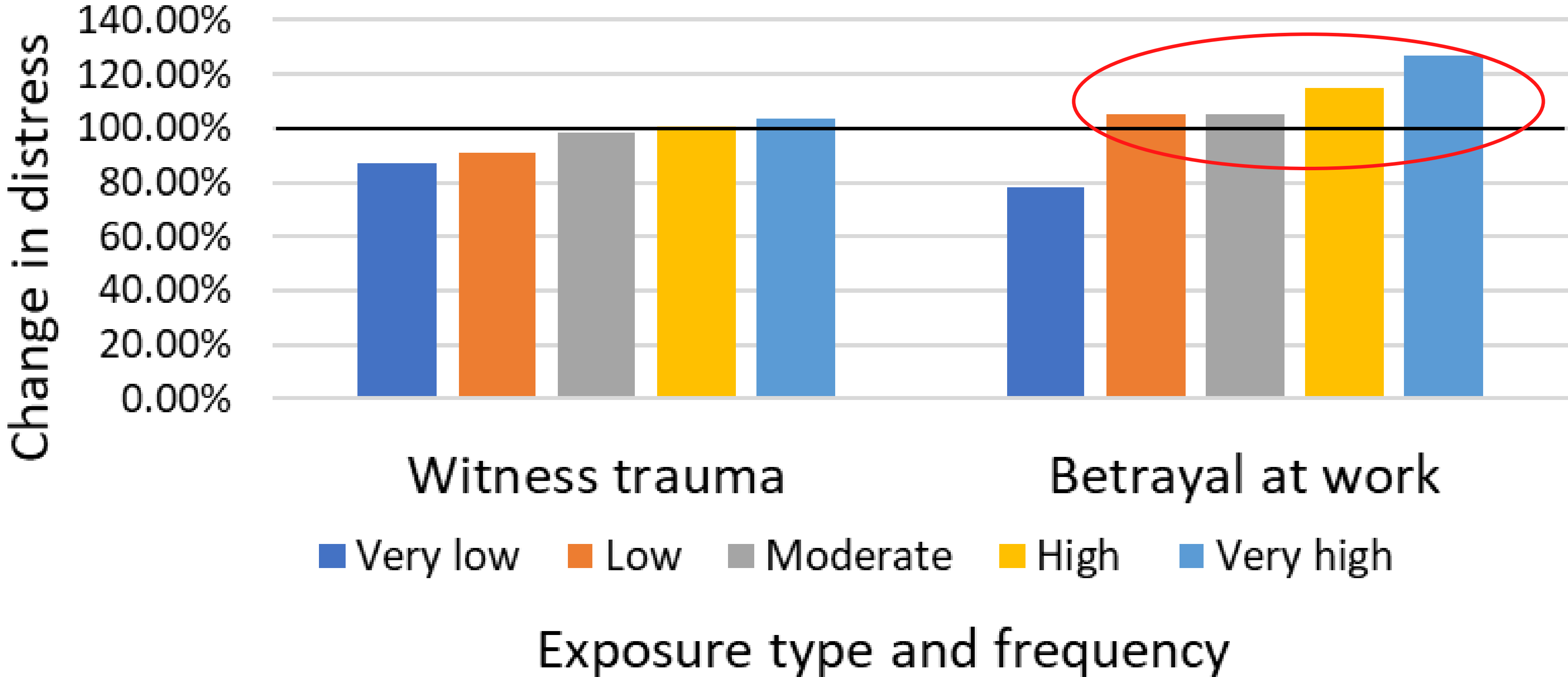
<10

34 %

10-50

39 %

51-100

16 %

101-200

5 %

>200

5 %

Increased exposure vs increased distress

Y-axis: Change in distress — 0.00%, 20.00%, 40.00%, 60.00%, 80.00%, 100.00%, 120.00%, 140.00%

X-axis: Exposure type and frequency — Witness trauma, Betrayal at work

Legend: Very low, Low, Moderate, High, Very high

I could feel emotion. There was anger, there was determination, there was frustration with the equipment.
(Sparkes, p. 83)

I was contracted by one of the investigators who were preparing the brief for the coroner. He suggested that I might reconsider parts of my evidence, particularly in relation to the radios, and remove them from my statement.
(Sparkes, p. 95).

We just wanted the appropriate equipment. We didn't get the gear. Instead, we were given a region commander's commendation for our work. I know what everyone would have preferred. (Sparkes, p. 96

Organisational injustice

Leadership practices

Resources/workload

Reward

Managing the risk of psychosocial hazards at work

Code of Practice

2022

WHSQ
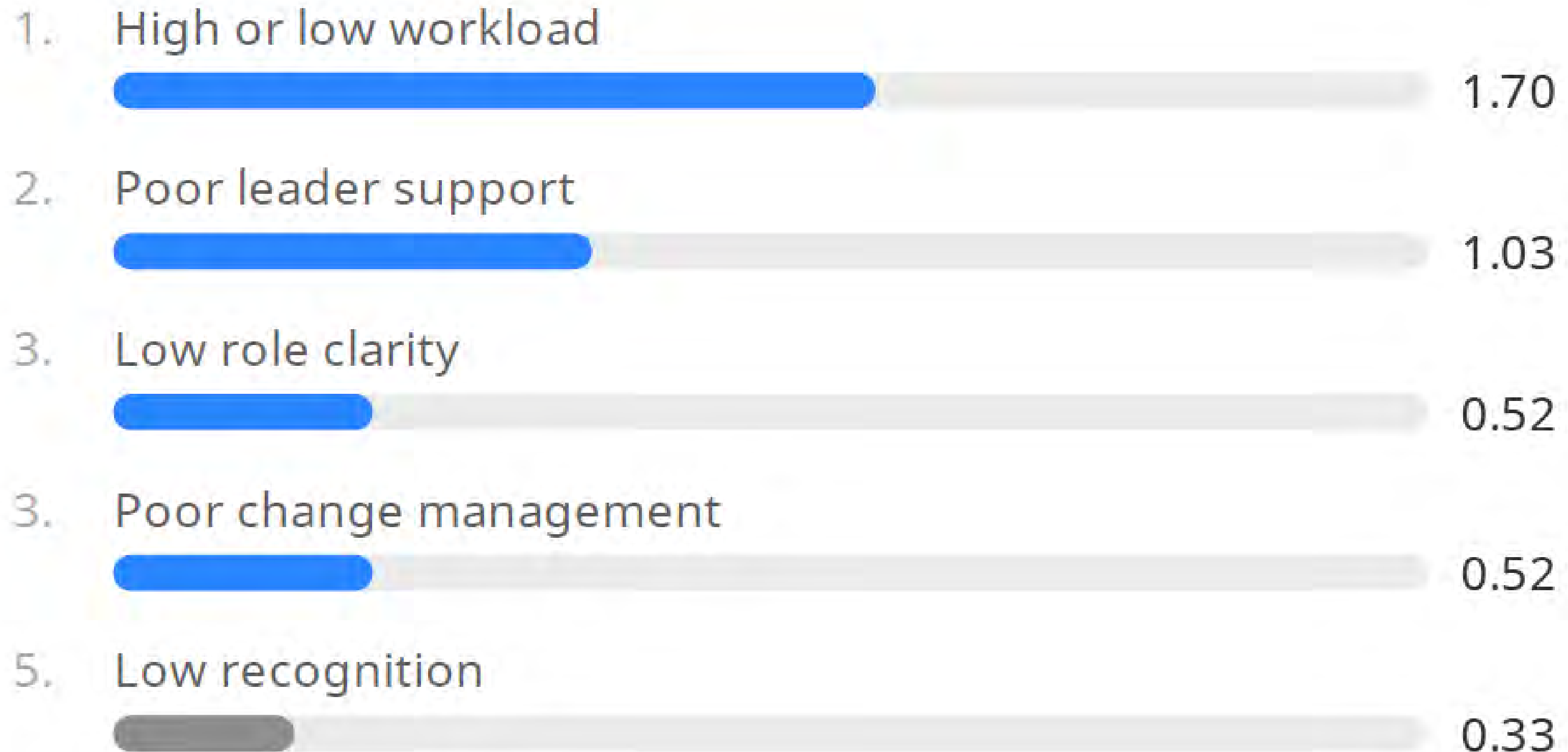Workplace Health and Safety Queensland
worksafe.qld.gov.au

Queensland Government

Psychosocial Hazards:

1. High and/or low job demands
2. Low job control
3. Poor support (from leaders and workers)
4. Low role clarity
5. Poor organisational change management
6. Low reward/recognition
7. Poor organisational justice
8. Poor workplace relationships & conflict
9. Remote or isolated work
10. Poor environmental conditions
11. Traumatic events
12. Violence and aggression
13. Bullying
14. Harassment (incl. sexual)

(Work Health & Safety QLD 2022)

Which (3) of these issues do you think need most attention in your workplace?

(1/3)

1. High or low workload

   1.70

2. Poor leader support

   1.03

3. Low role clarity

   0.52

3. Poor change management

   0.52

5. Low recognition

   0.33

2

Supporting Multicultural Community

Learn and experience   To help empower vulnerable people

Learn from colleagues collaboratively   help   Learn something new

Job security   organisations   structure   people   To find value in my work

Impact   To love what I do and help people

Make a difference

To be valued   Work

Meaningful career   # Help people   Grow Purpose

A challenge

Job Satisfaction and learning   Work as a team Care   Teach others

To do something meaningful Have a positive impact

Moral dissonance

There is a critical gap between the moral identity of the individual who dons the uniform in service of the state, on the one hand, and the ethics [...]of the state, on the other

(Baker, 2020)

Psychological contract

what that exchange means to workers or employers is a subjective experience for each participant, affected by personal values and upbringing, the relationship's history, and the broader society. All of these factors merge to create a central feature of employment: the psychological contract"

(Rousseau & Schalk, 2000)

The flight path of moral injury.

It's a journey,
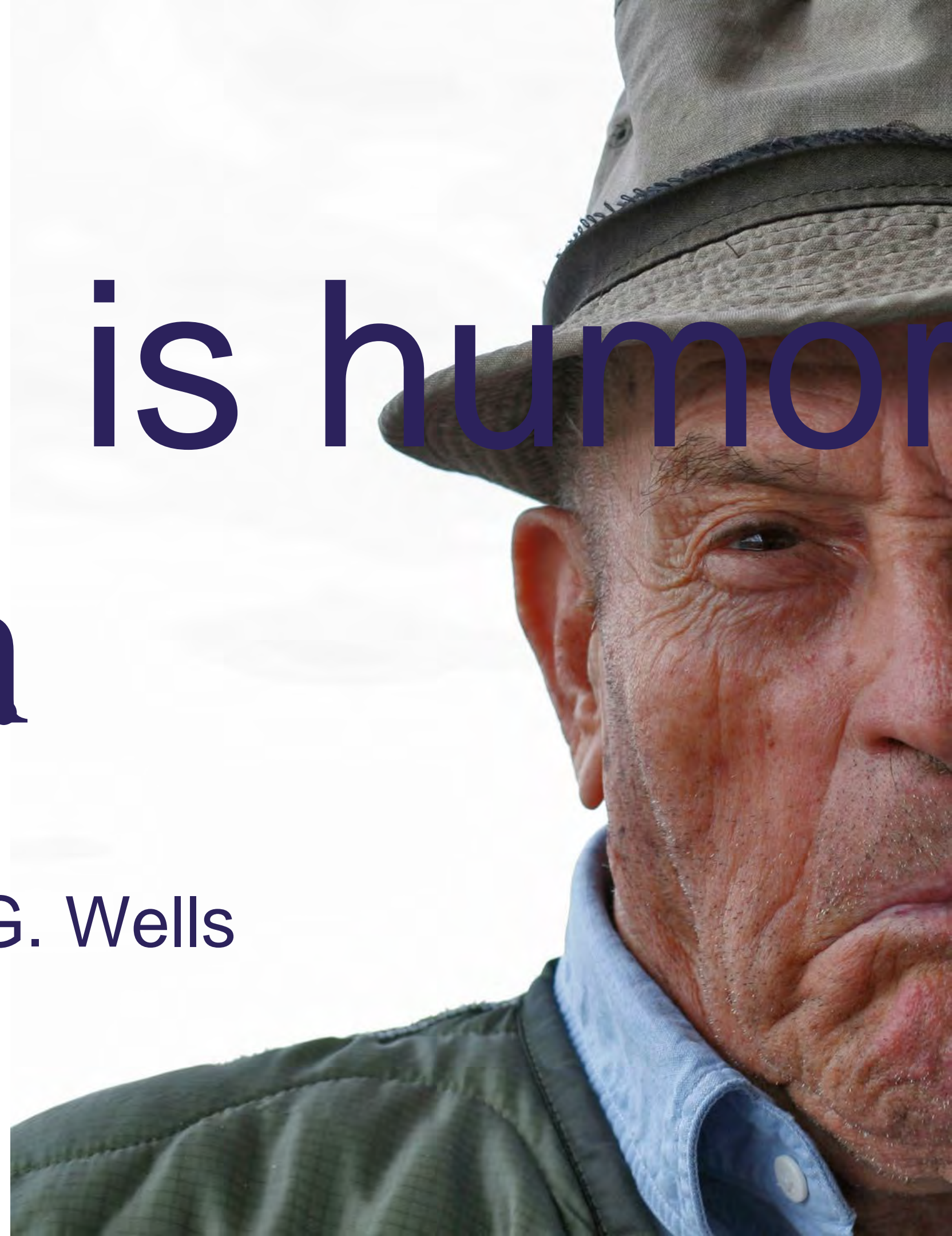not just a destination!

I love this job!!

CAUTION

WTF

just
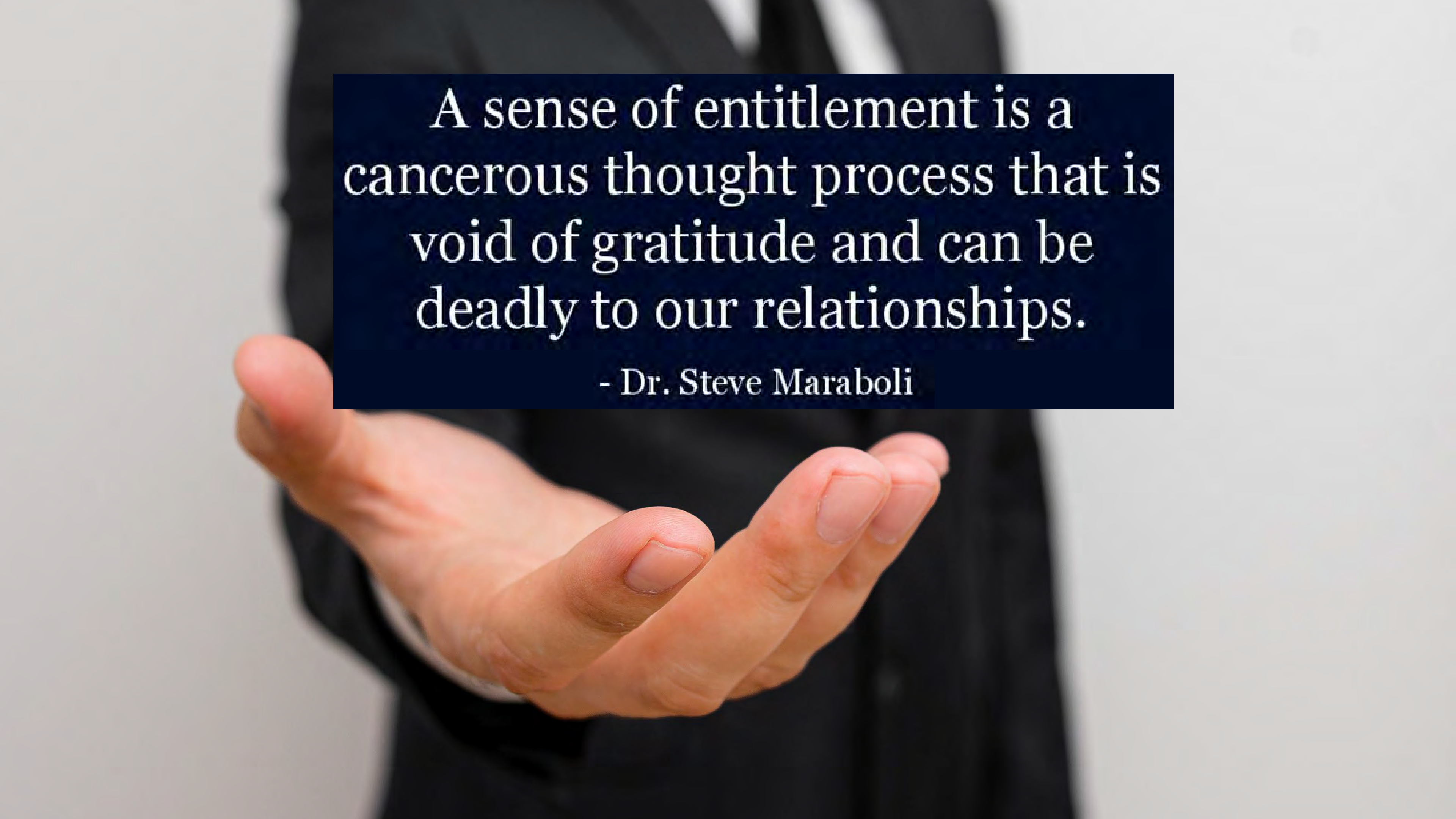
happened?

Cynicism is humor

in ill health

H. G. Wells

Resentment is like drinking poison and then waiting for your enemy to die

THEY

A sense of entitlement is a cancerous thought process that is void of gratitude and can be deadly to our relationships.

- Dr. Steve Maraboli

Because they..., I ...

If they hadn't ..., I ...

They had it coming

What did they expect?

They can get f@#%*d

Can this world be turned upside down?

1. Naivety
2. Caution
3. Cynicism
4. Resentment
5. Entitlement

Post Traumatic growth in five areas:

1. Appreciation of life.

2. Relationships with others.

3. New possibilities in life.

4. Personal strength.

5. Spiritual change.

Tedeschi & Calhoun 1996/2004

Appreciation of life

Relationships

Open to
new
ssibilities

Personal
Strength

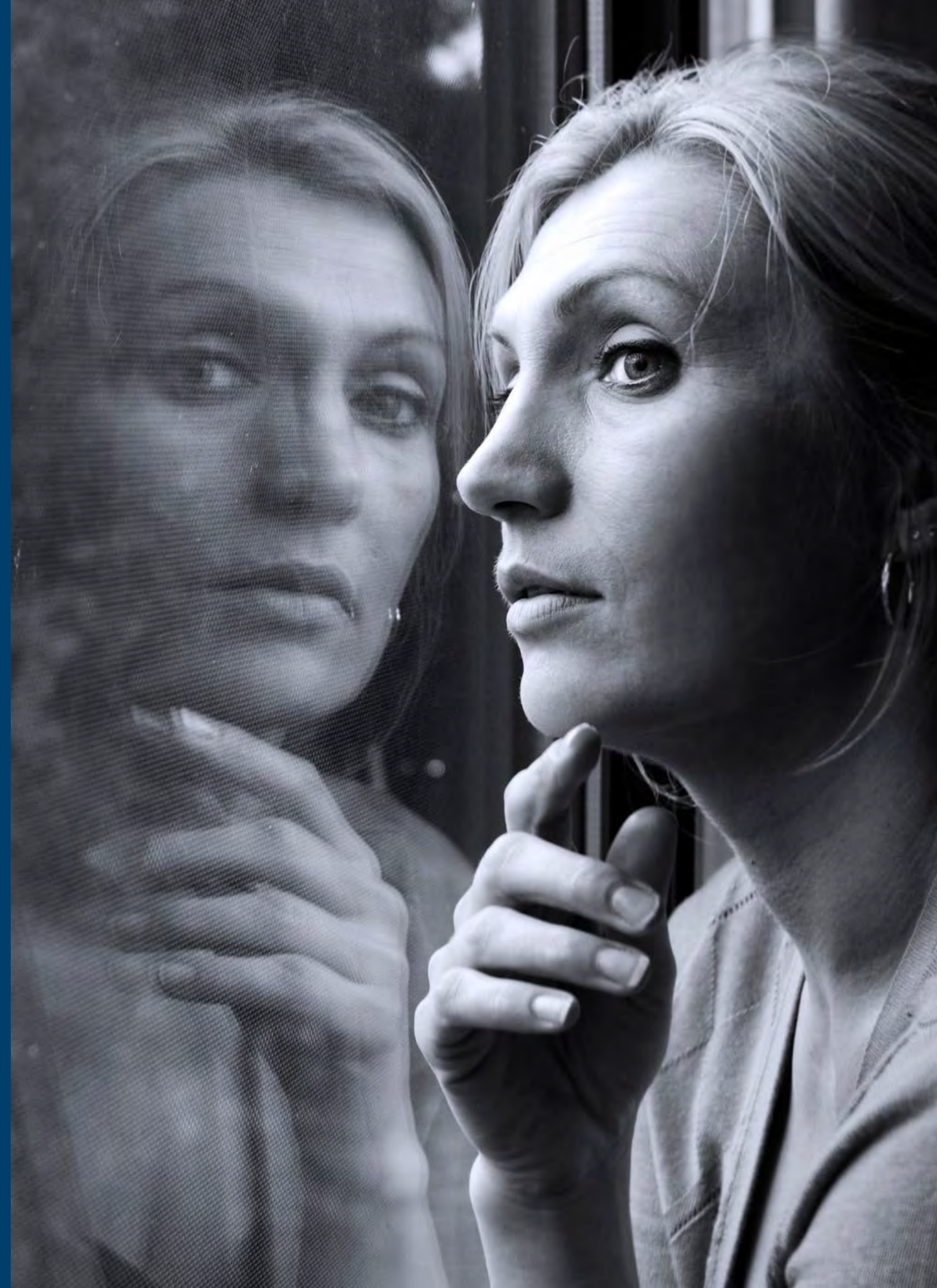Spritiual change

What is your narrative?

Point of reflection and action

What is the story you tell yourself and others.

Are you always the victim/hero?

Does it show the possibility of growth.

Building moral resilience

the capacity of an individual to sustain or restore their integrity in response to moral complexity, confusion, distress, or setbacks.

(Rushton, 2016)

Identity: Warrior or Guardian

The guardian spirit connects you with your community. The warrior mindset alienates you from your community by establishing an us-vs-them attitude; essentially, this view sees anyone who isn't a cop as the enemy or, at least, as someone to be highly mistrusted until proven otherwise. Not surprisingly, the warrior mindset contributes significantly to a reduction in your overall wellbeing.
(Blumberg, Papazoglou, Schlosser, 2022).

Your framework

Your spiritual health depends on your ability to remain committed to your values [...] steadfast devotion to the things that matter most to you establishes a critical foundation, which is necessary for you to maintain your integrity

(Blumberg et al., 2022)

Moral imagination

an ability to imaginatively discern various possibilities for acting within a given situation and to envision the potential help and harm that are likely to result from a given action"

(Johnson, 1993, p. 202).

Forgive !

It is not…

- Yeah fine, don't worry about it!!
- A denial that harm has been done
- A denial that justice should be done
- A demand to be best mates again
- Because you should or have to
- simply a therapy tool (but it can help)

Forgive!

Why?

forgiving for the relationship,
based on principle,
because injurer reformed,
because understood injurer.
NOT
to demonstrate moral
superiority, because of Social
Pressure,
for pragmatic reasons.

(Belicki et al. 2020)

Seek
Forgiveness

Allow Forgiveness

RECONCILIATION & FORGIVENESS

In the end, reconciliation is a spiritual process, which requires more than just a legal framework. It has to happen in the hearts and minds of people.
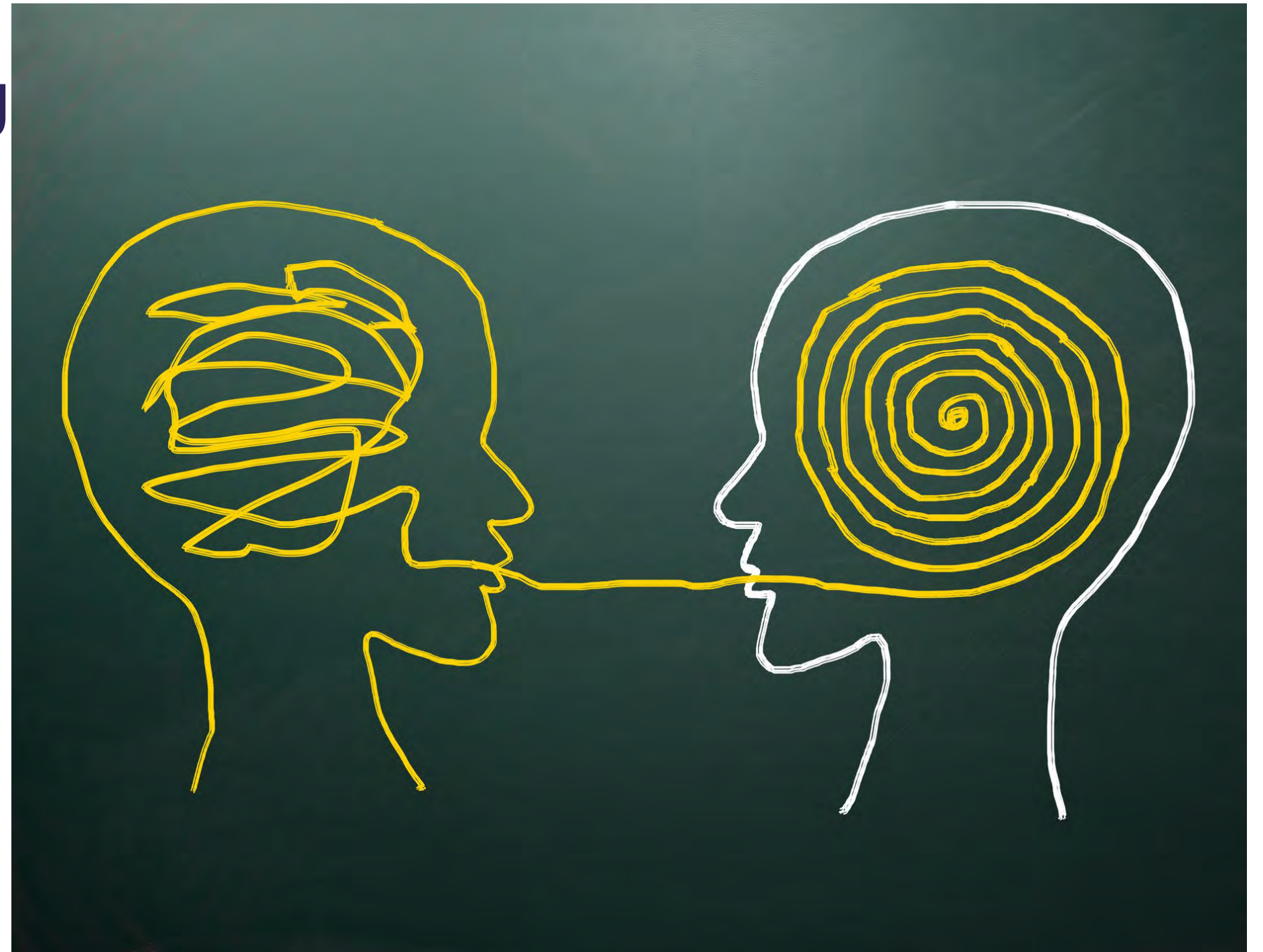
Nelson Mandela

Enlarged thinking

we enlarge our thinking by letting the voices and perspectives of others, especially those with whom we may be in conflict, resonate within ourselves, by allowing them to help us see them, as well as ourselves, from their perspective, and if needed, readjust our perspectives

(Volf, 2019)

NSW Centre for WHS reports

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