Purposefully Pursuing the Next Normal – EAPs and the Psychologically Healthy Workplace

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R3 Continuum

What we'll be covering

Overview – Ongoing stressors & mass event process

What is a psychologically healthy workplace?

- Impacts to individual and organizational functioning
- Individual versus organizational assessment and interventions
- Factors impacting your workforce during COVID-19

Providing disruptive event management support

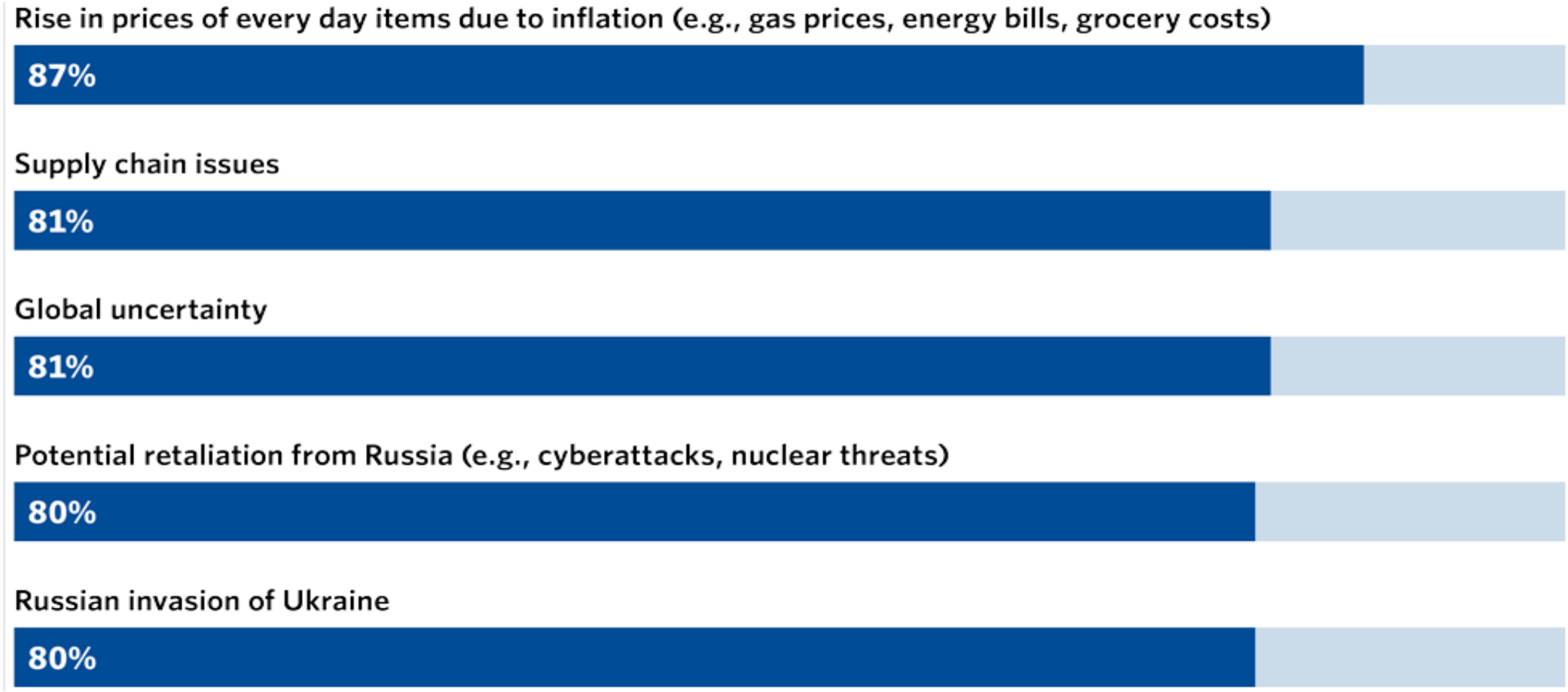
- COVID-19 and civil unrest: EAP Utilization
- Toxic Positivity vs Post-traumatic Growth
- Narrative Shaping and the Operationalization of Fortitude

Practical next steps to increase psychological health and crisis resilience

APA, 2022 Survey Results

HIGH NUMBERS REPORT STRESS RELATED TO INFLATION, GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY AND INVASION OF UKRAINE

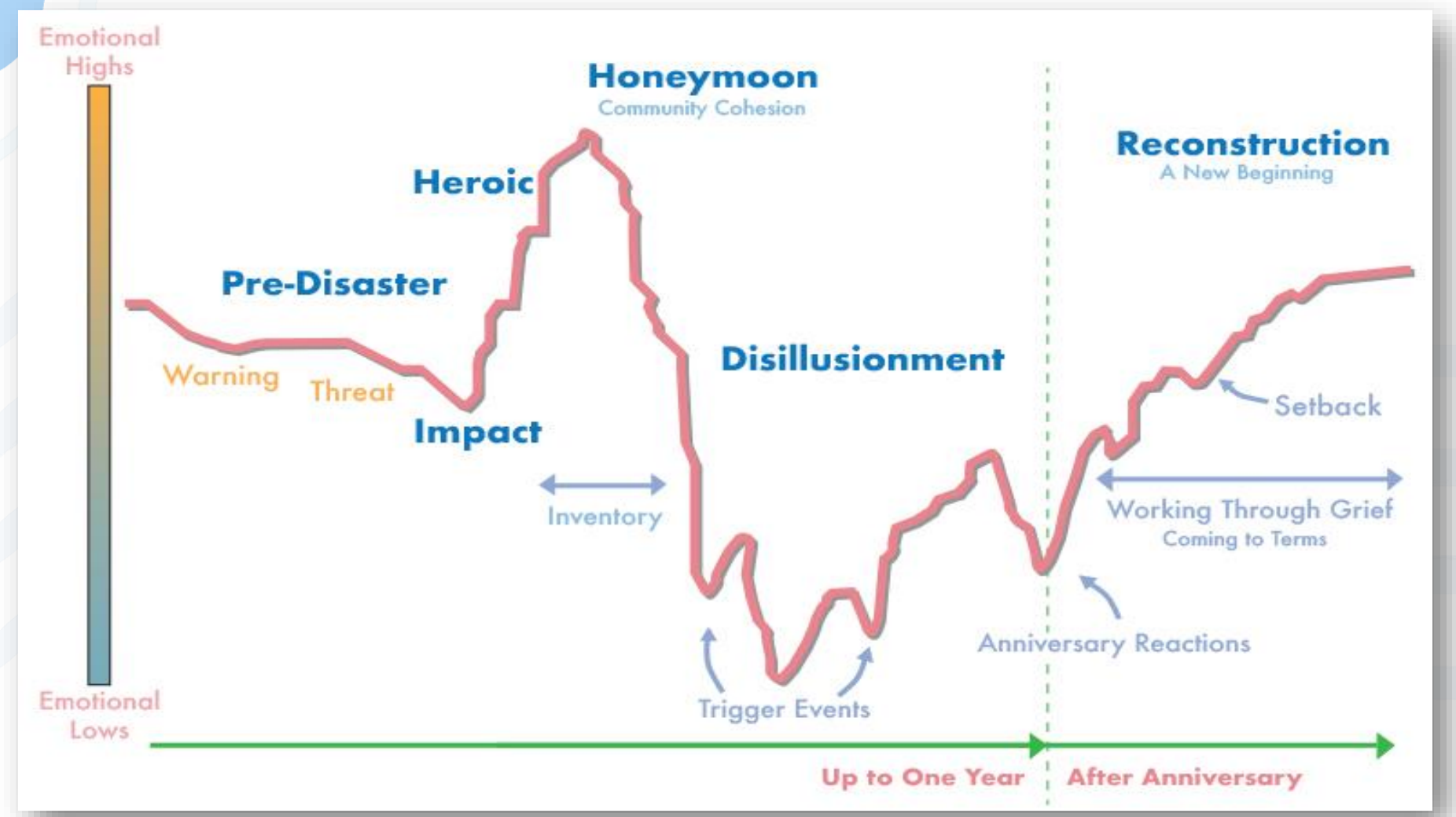
% SAY IS A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF STRESS



STRESS IN AMERICA™ 2022: COVID SECOND ANNIVERSARY

APA, 2022 Survey Results – cont'd

Mass Event Phases - SAMHSA



https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/recovering-disasters/phases-disaster

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What is a psychologically healthy workplace?

"A psychologically healthy workplace fosters employee health and well-being while enhancing organizational performance."

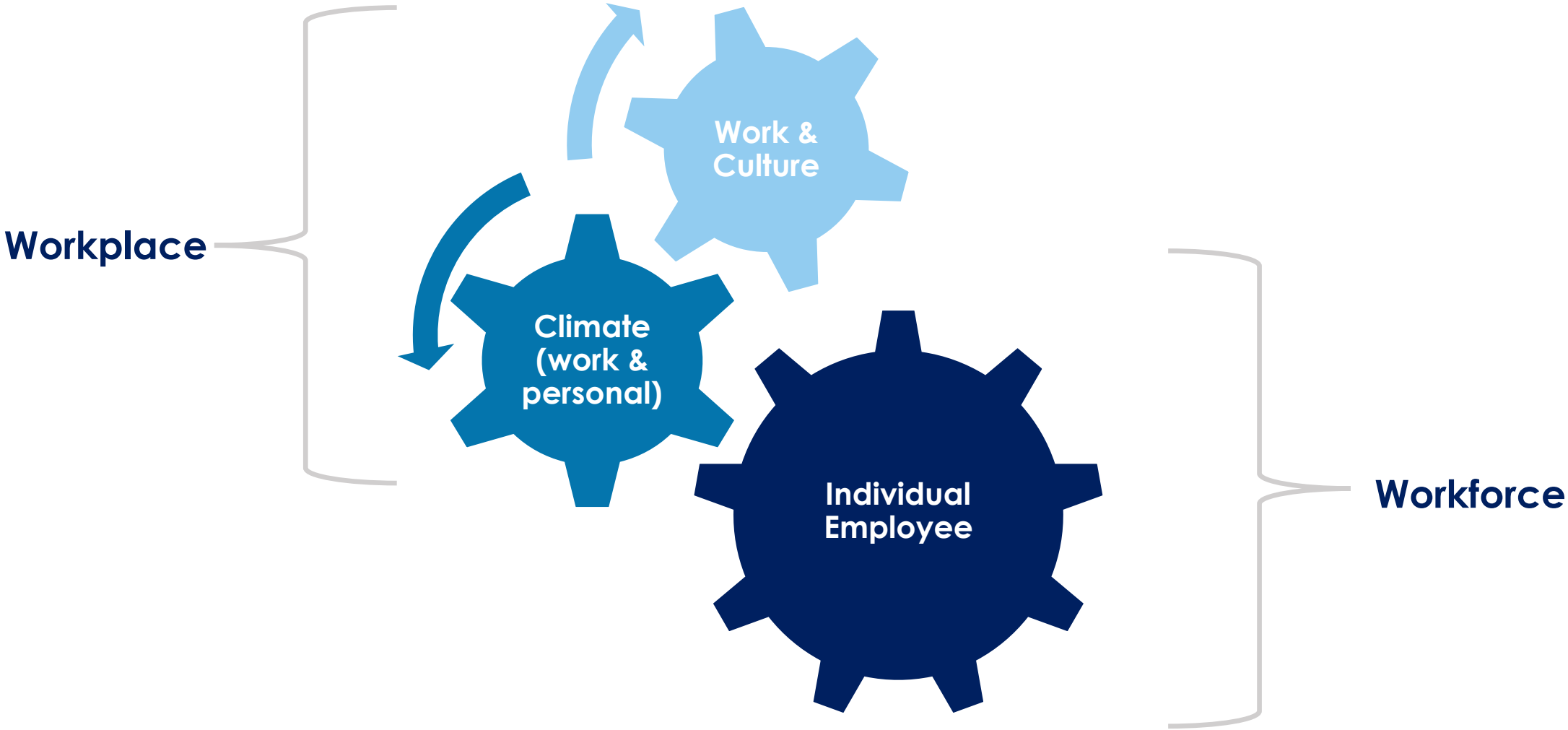
– American Psychological Association

"A psychologically healthy and safe workplace promotes workers' psychological well-being and actively works to prevent harm to worker psychological health."

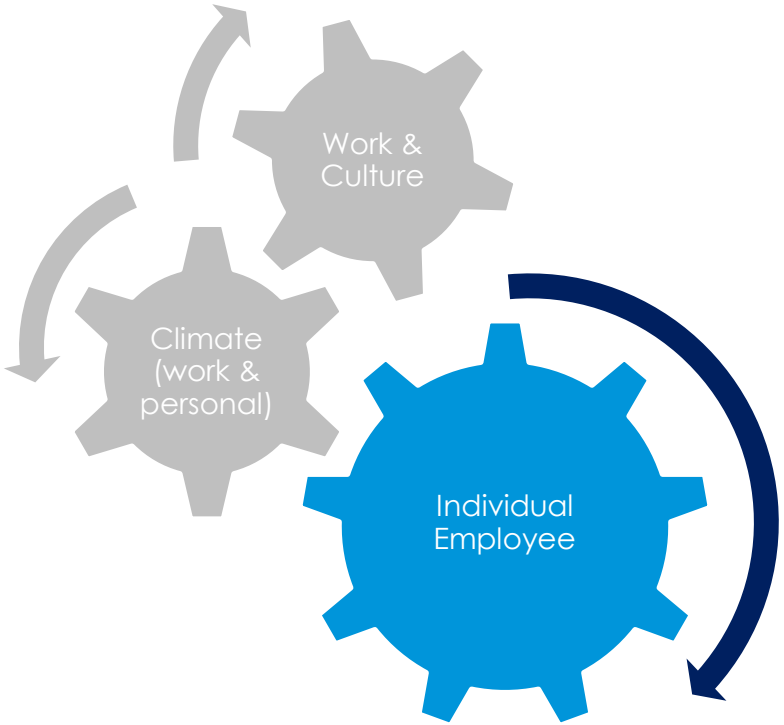
– Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Workplace ≠ Workforce

NOTE: One of the first "interventions" EAP can make!



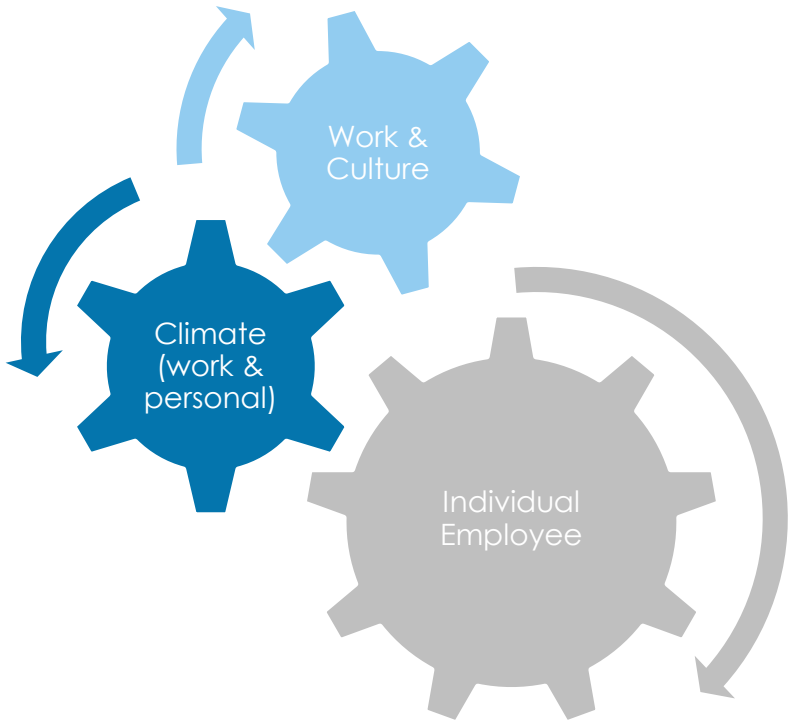
Workforce Interventions



Objectives: Individual employee well-being and resilience, early intervention, effective treatment

- Mental health coverage
- Employee assistance programs
- Clinical interventions:
  - Early detection
  - Depression care management
  - Comorbidity programs

Workplace Interventions



Objectives: Enhanced organizational resilience, performance, and adaptability; a culture of well-being; healthy work relationships

- Training
- Job design
- Policies on leave, work, bullying, etc.
- Strategic communications
- Employee engagement
- Integration of employee assistance and leave administration

Disruptive event management as part of a psychologically healthy workplace

A pro-active part of a solid BC plan vs. a reactive response

- Crisis is inevitable
- Can help avoid small cracks to huge fissures in organizational health
- Supports employee and organizational resilience

Practical steps

- Organizational interventions
- Individual employee interventions
- DEM as **standard operating procedure** reduces stigma and reinforces culture of health
- Communicate, communicate, communicate

Best practices — long-term strategy

- Address all safety concerns, psychological and physical.
- Communicate transparently to your workforce about any internal and external factors impacting your business.
- Prioritize a culture-of-well-being strategy, emphasizing emotional and physical well-being and career fulfillment.
- Review corporate policies to ensure they align with the characteristics
of a psychologically healthy workplace.
- Continually assess employees' needs and involve them in improvement efforts (and solicit leadership support).

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COVID-19 and civil unrest: EAP Utilization

Jeff Gorter, MSW, LCSW
VP of Crisis Response
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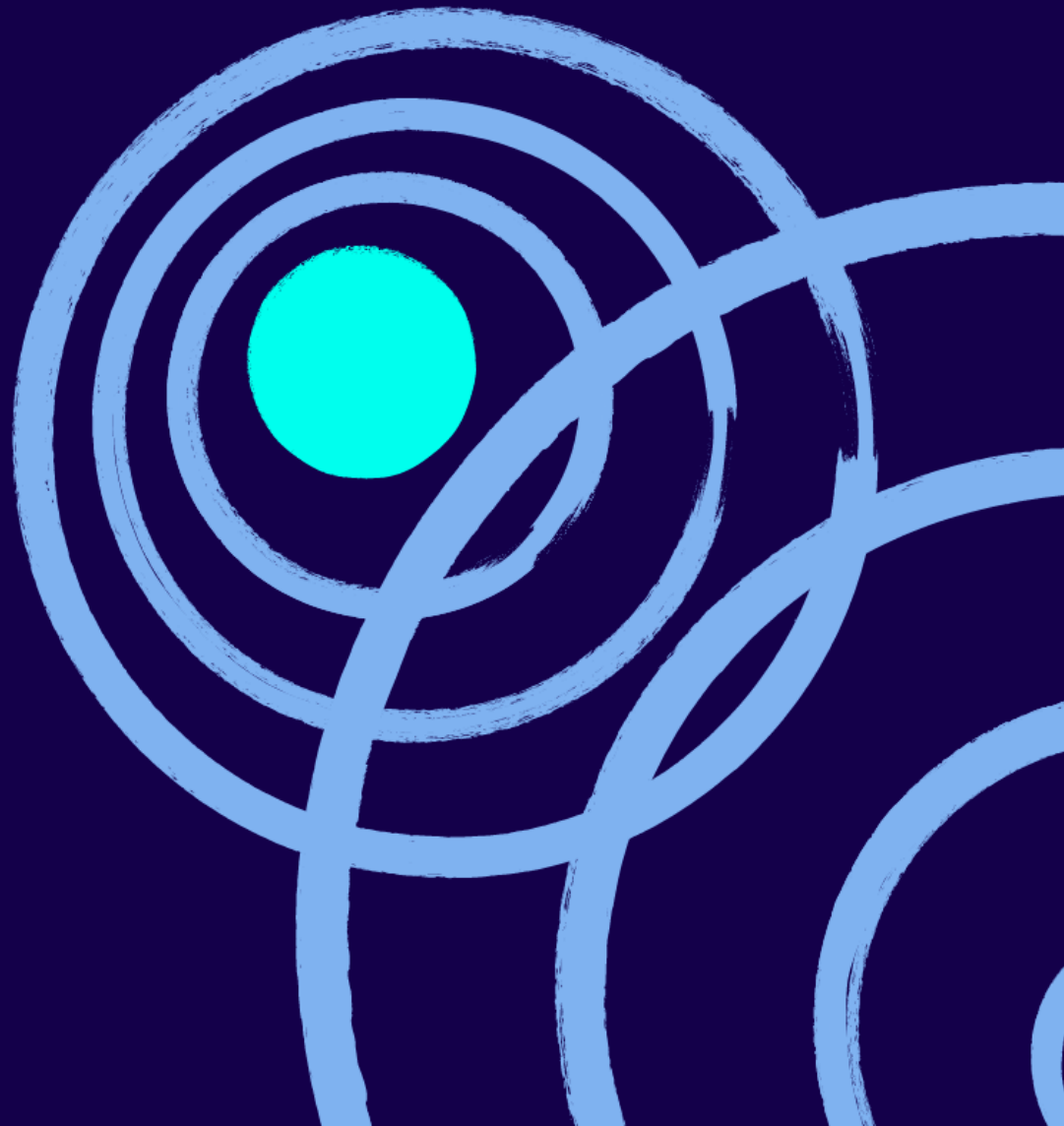
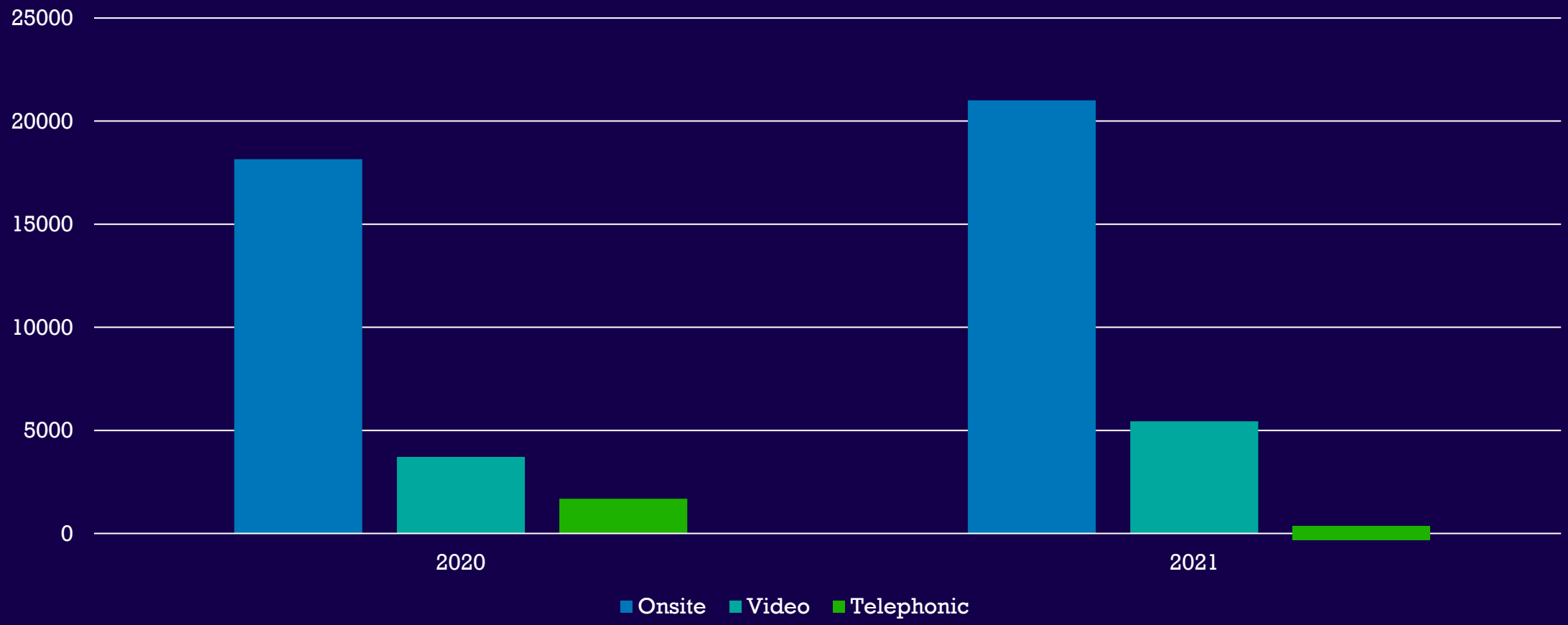


Total DEM Support: 2020-2021



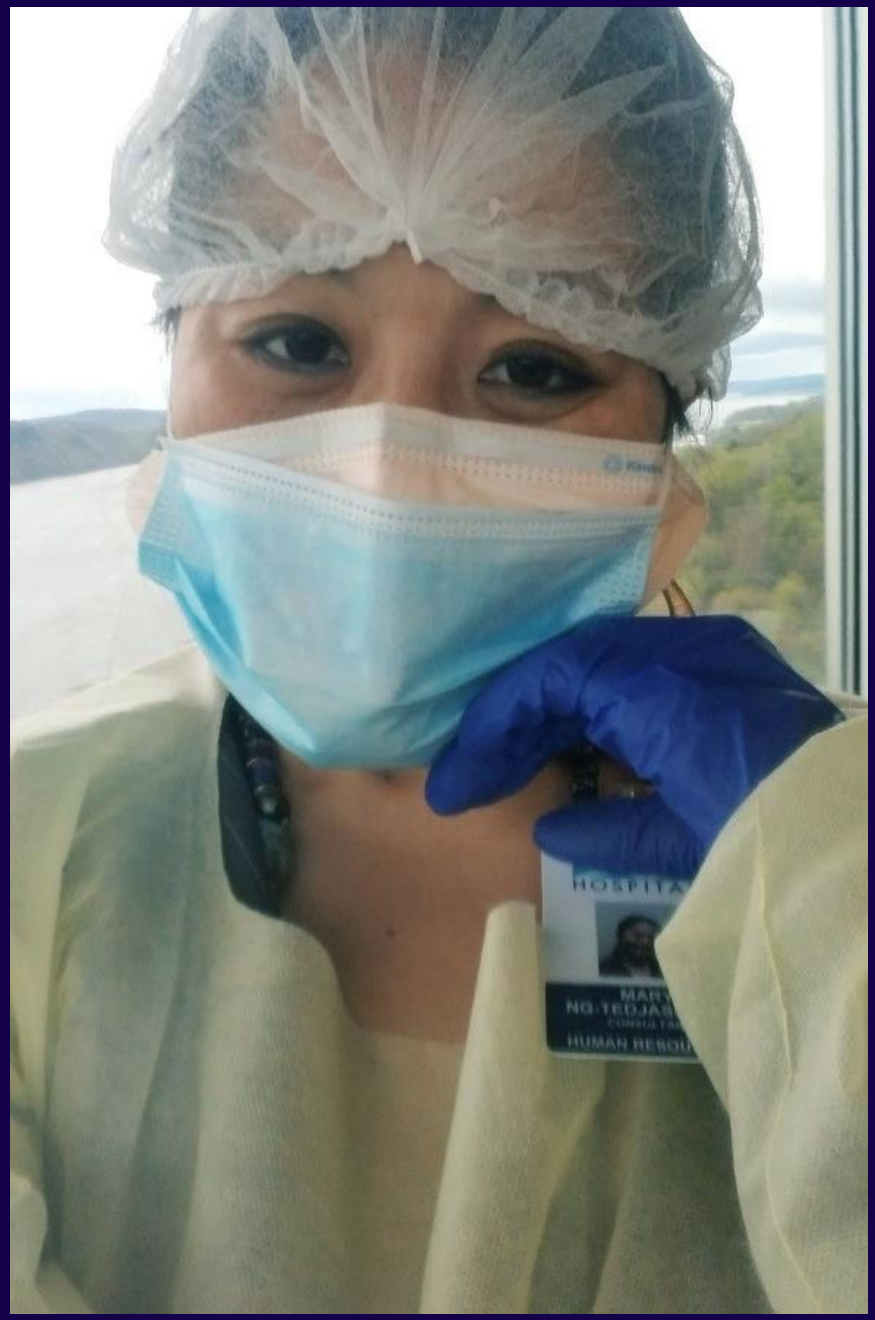
Supporting the Frontline

Covid-19 DEM Data

- Service provided to 57 EAP customers
- Primary client industries initially were Healthcare and Food Distribution
- *Locus of Control* was critical dynamic for Food Distribution Employees

Covid-19 DEM Data (2020-21)

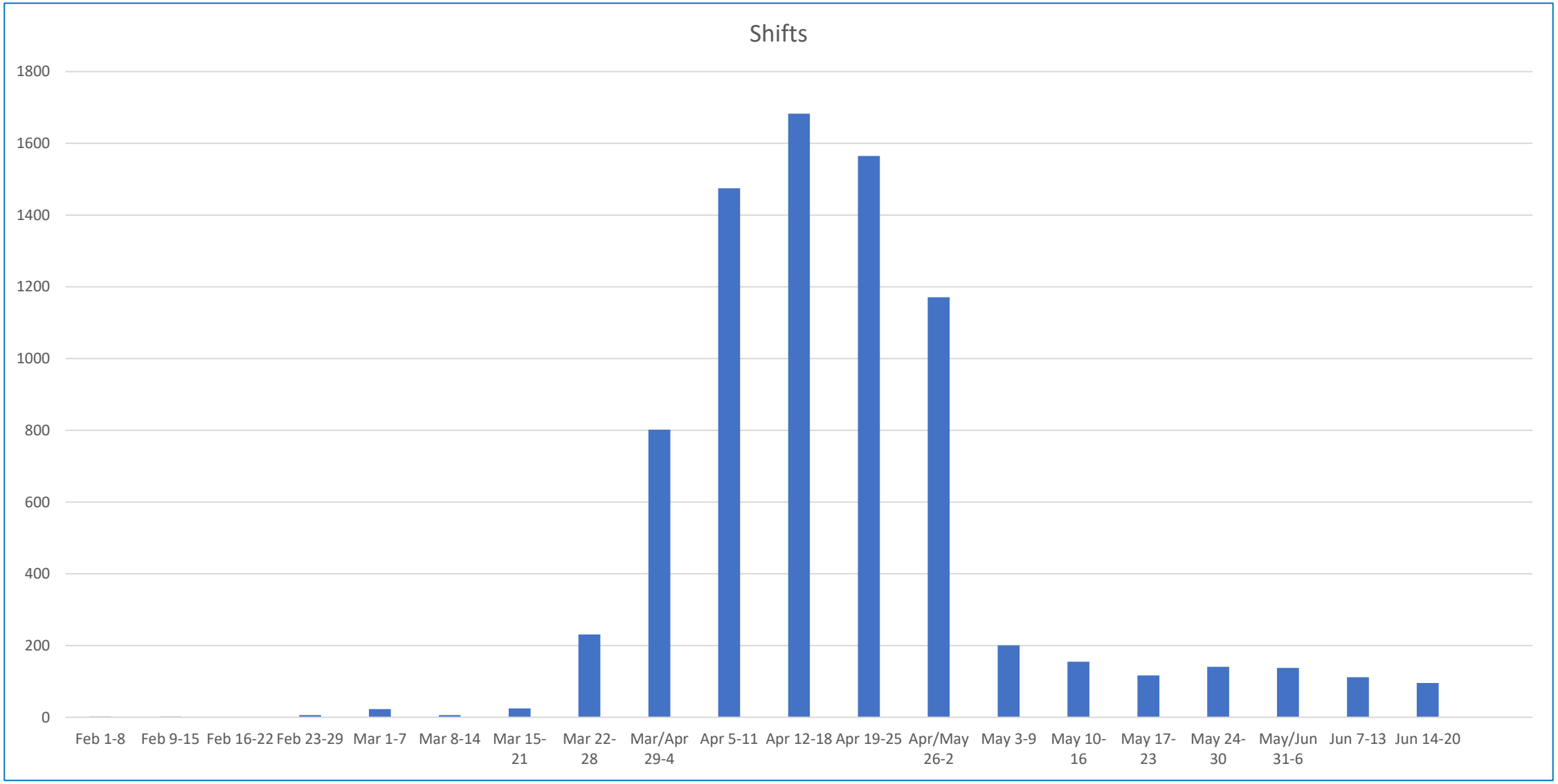
- 133,498 discreet EE contacts
- Delivered by 1,113 consultants



Racial Justice/Civil Unrest DEM data

- Served 29 different EAP customers
- 19,819 discreet EE contacts
- Delivered by 248 consultants
- Specific trainings to ensure support and understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Facilitated discussion in conjunction with SME

Covid-19 Support Shifts 2020

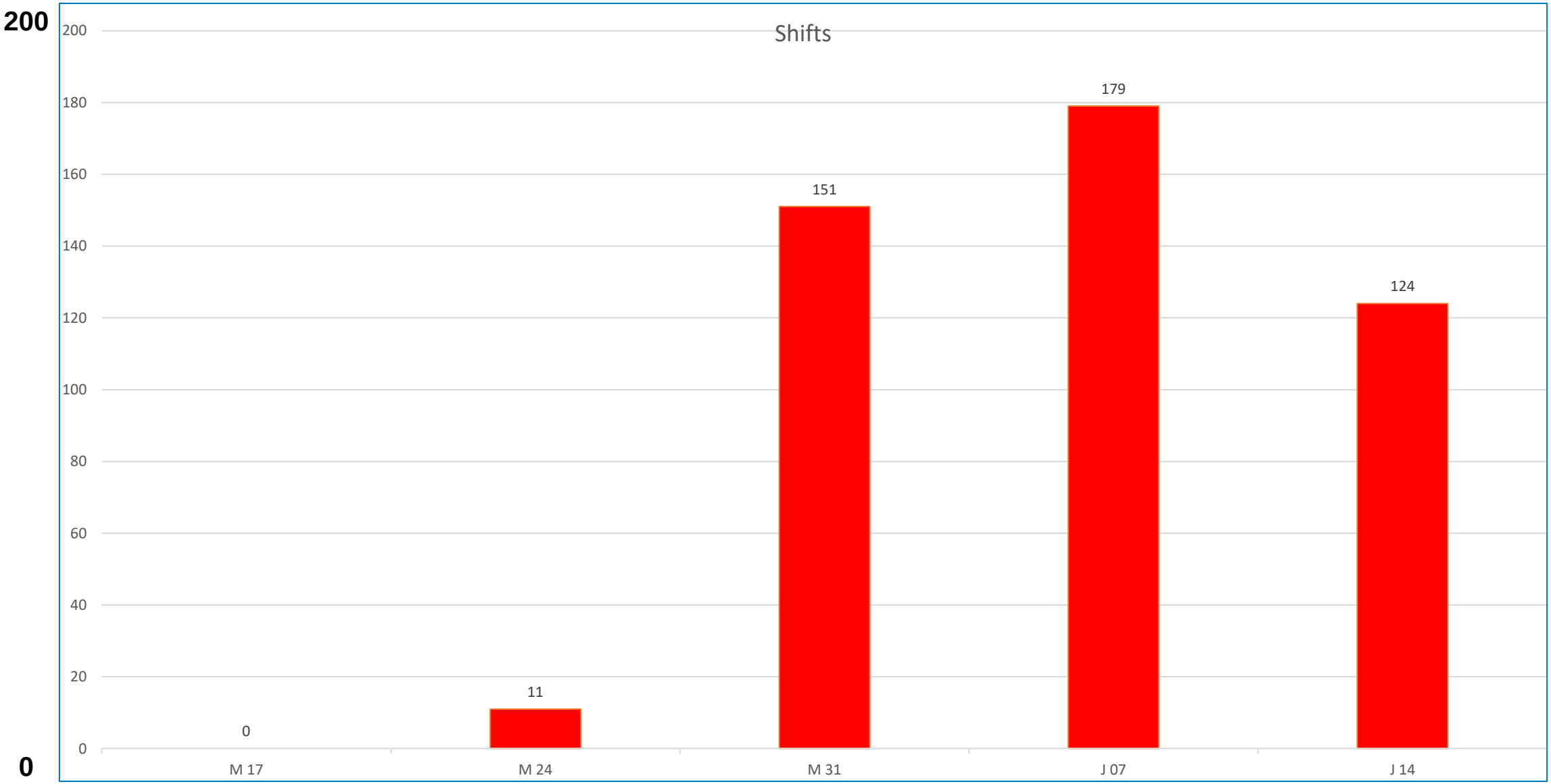


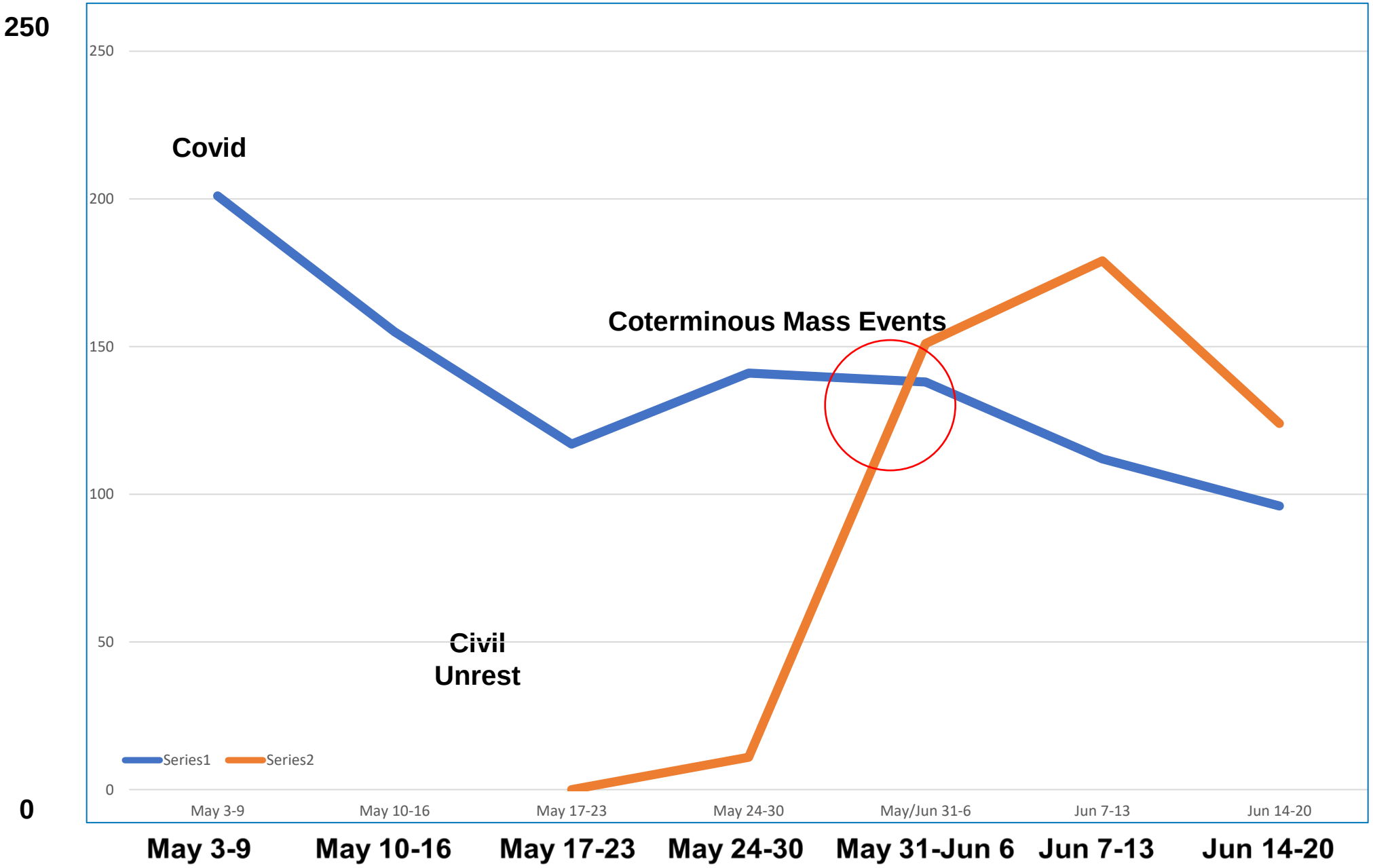
1800

0

Feb 1 Mar 1 Apr 1 May 1 Jun 1

Civil Unrest/Racial Injustice Support Shifts 2020



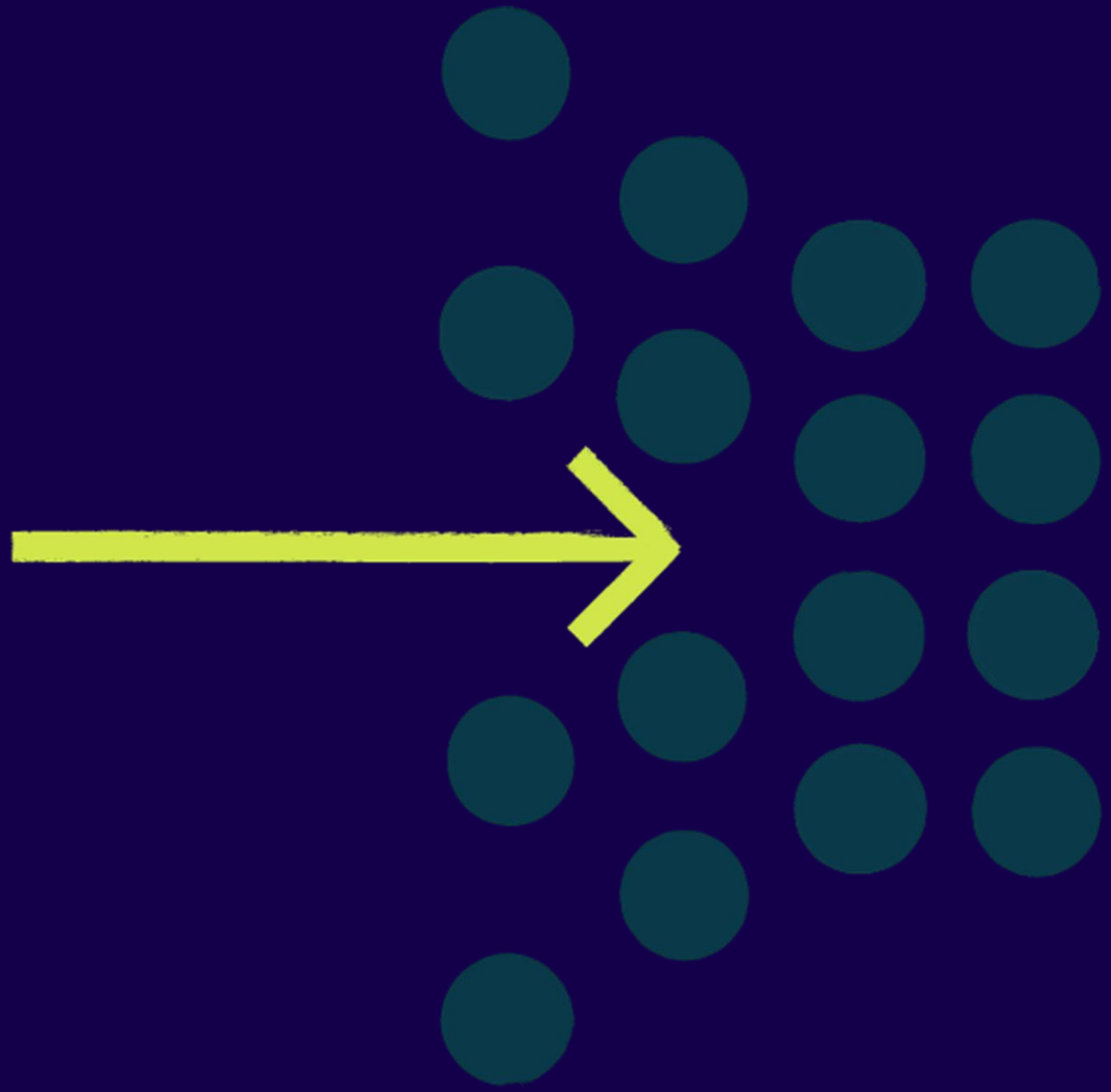

250
0
250
200
150
100
50
0
Covid
Coterminous Mass Events
Civil
Unrest
Series1
Series2
May 3-9
May 10-16
May 17-23
May 24-30
May/Jun 31-6
Jun 7-13
Jun 14-20
May 3-9
May 10-16
May 17-23
May 24-30
May 31-Jun 6
Jun 7-13
Jun 14-20

Coterminous: having the same boundaries in space, time, or meaning

Space: both events span the US and the globe

Time: both events were concurrent and diffuse in duration with no clear end in sight

Meaning: both challenged existing structures of health and social equity
(i.e. Covid-19 has disproportionally impacted the BIPOC community)



Leveraging Post-Traumatic Growth in the Psychologically Healthy Workplace

Toxic Positivity vs. Post-Traumatic Growth

- **Toxic Positivity** – the suppression or dismissal of negative emotions
- Can lead others to feel invalidated or that their distress isn't legitimate
- Performative platitudes - "Hang in there! You can do it! Tough it out! It could be worse. Don't worry…be happy!"
- Diminishes trust in leadership and negatively impacts culture

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Toxic Positivity vs. Post-Traumatic Growth

- **Post-Traumatic Growth** – positive change experienced as a result of struggling with highly challenging or stressful life circumstances
- Acknowledges and validates the very real pain, but also affirms the efforts to survive/cope
- Closely aligned with Meaning Attribution, an expression of resilience
- To see the pain, and to see *beyond* it

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Example: UPMC Research with HCW

Distressing Events at Work or Home (N = 927):

- 94.1% (*n* = 872) reported at least 1 distressing event
- Of those who reported a distressing event, the average events experienced was 4.37(2.47) of 18
- Females report more distressing events than males

	N (%)
Had to continue to work even though in close contact with people who might be infected	771 (81%)
Increase in workload or work responsibilities	669 (71%)
Spend a lot of time disinfecting at home due to close contact with people who might be infected at work	480 (51%)
Provided care to people who died as a result of the disease	443 (47%)
Had a child at home who could not go to school	294(31%)
Increase in verbal arguments or conflict with a partner or spouse	247 (26%)
Had to take over teaching or instructing a child	210 (22%)
Childcare or babysitting unavailable when needed	162 (17%)
More conflict with child or harsher in disciplining child or children	114(12%)
Difficulty taking care of children in the home.	101(11%)
Had to spend a lot more time taking care of a family member.	96(10%)
Unable to pay important bills like rent or utilities	76 (8%)
Increase in verbal arguments or conflict with other adult(s) in home	84 (8%)
Hard time doing job well because of needing to take care of people in the home	74 (8%)
Family or friends had to move into your home	33 (3%)
Increase in physical conflict with a partner or spouse	20 (2%)
Increase in physical conflict among children in home	18(2%)
Increase in physical conflict with other adult(s) in home	7 (<1%)

Prioritizing the Well-being of Frontline Healthcare Workers: Current Research on Risk and Resilience.
Maria L. Pacella-LaBarbara, PhD
University of Pittsburgh Medical Center
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States
November 4, 2021

Example: UPMC Research with HCW

Positive Changes (n = 929):

- 85.6% (*n* = 795) reported at least 1 positive change
- Of those who reported a positive event, the average events experienced was 4.63 (3.05) of 19
- Females report more positive events

	N (%)
More quality time with partner or spouse	431 (46%)
More quality time with family or friends in person or from a distance	416 (44%)
More appreciative of things usually taken for granted	369 (39%)
More time in nature or being outdoors	293 (31%)
More quality time with children	298 (32%)
Paid more attention to personal health	266 (28%)
More time doing enjoyable activities (e.g., reading books, puzzles)	216 (23%)
Found greater meaning in work, employment, or school	186 (20%)
Improved relationships with family or friends	178 (19%)
Ate healthier foods	159 (17%)
New connections made with supportive people	155 (16%)
Increase in exercise or physical activity	151 (16%)
Developed new hobbies or activities	131 (14%)
Paid more attention to preventing physical injuries	114 (12%)
Donated time or goods to a cause related to this disease	128 (11%)
More efficient or productive in work, employment, or school	86 (9%)
Less use of alcohol or substances	65 (7%)
Spent less time on screens or devices outside of work hours	42 (4%)
Volunteered time to help people in need	60 (6%)

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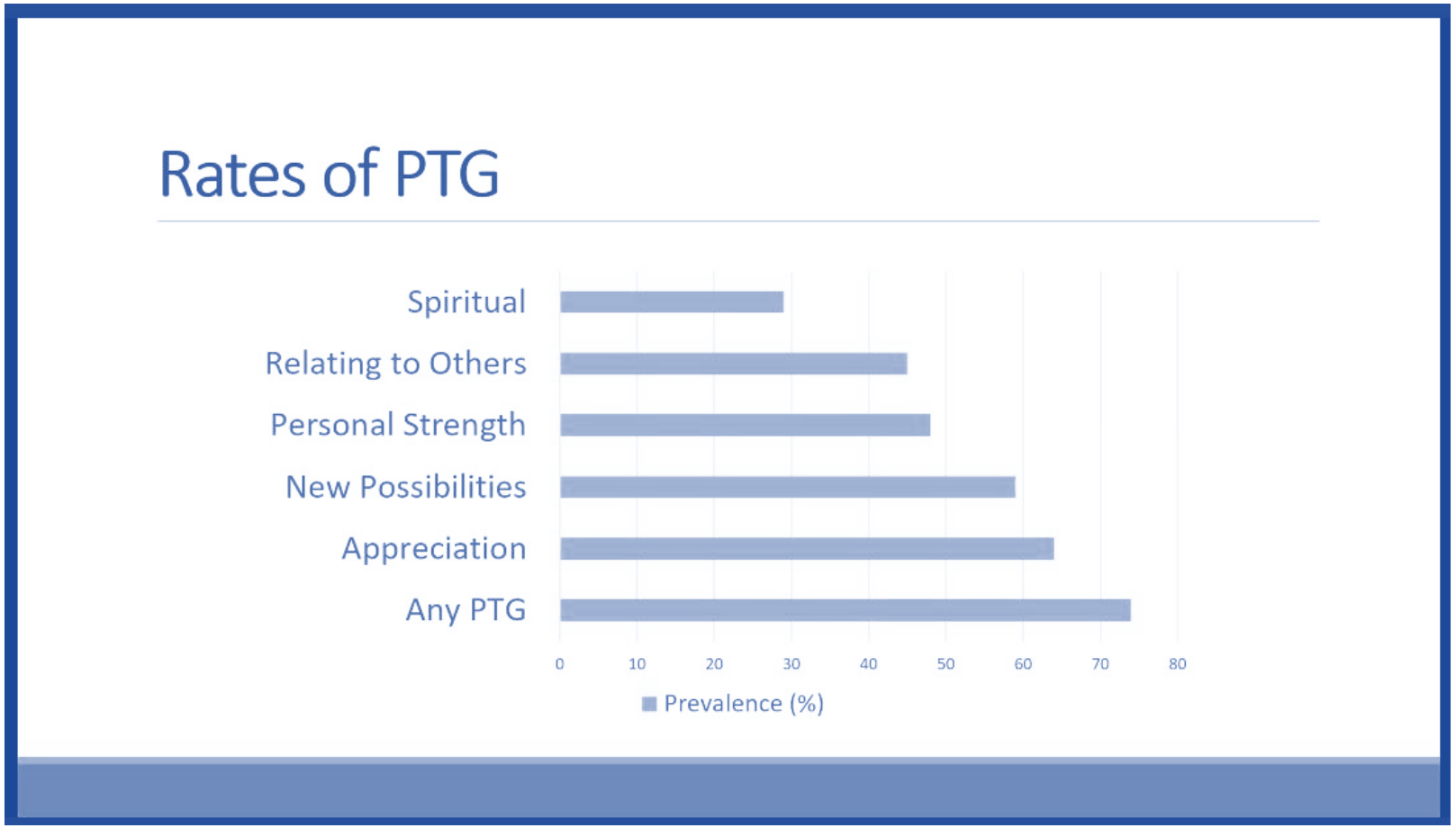

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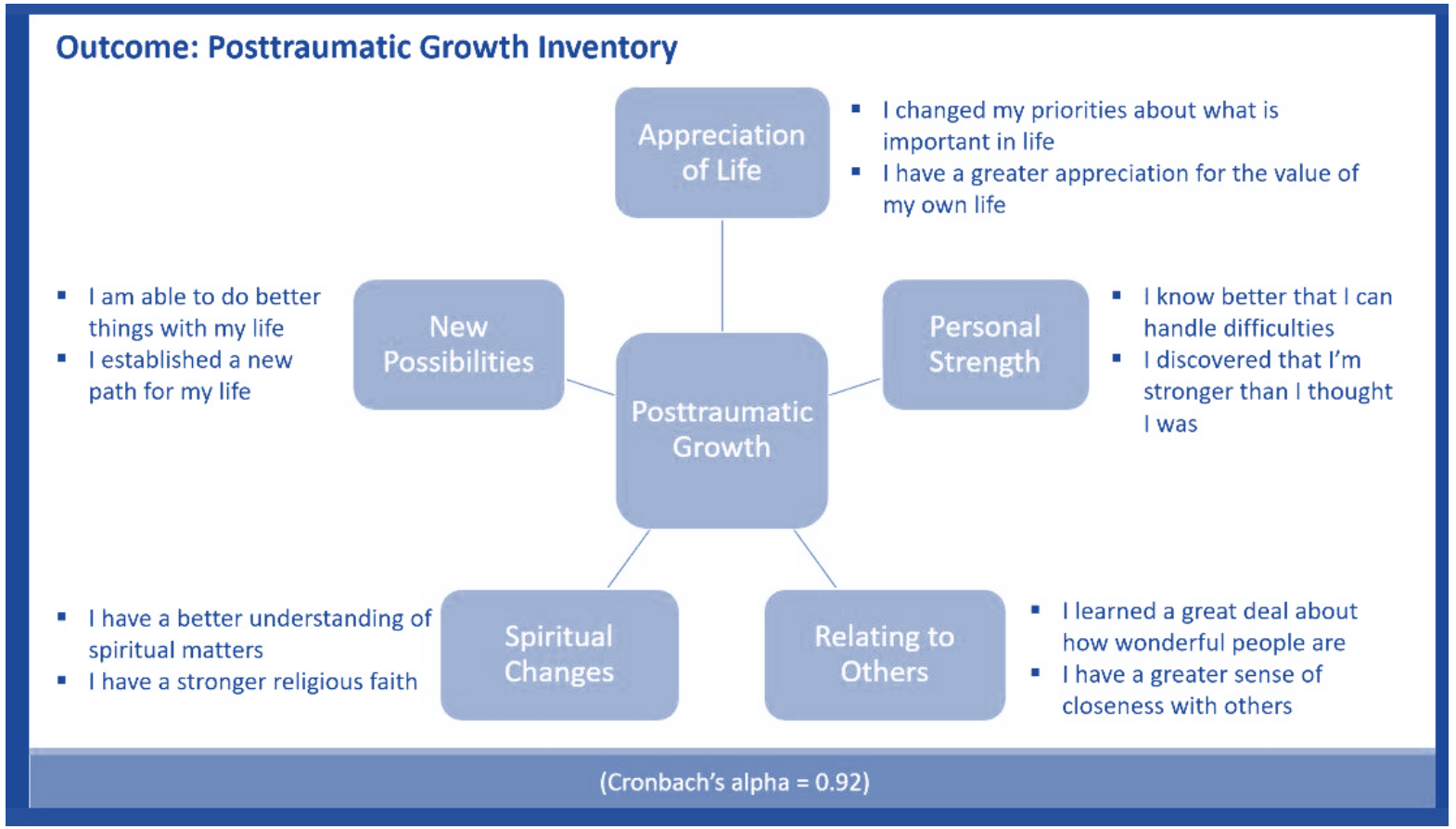

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Fortitude: *"courage and growth in the face of pain or adversity"*

- Choose a new perspective
  - Rethink assumptions – what have I learned about myself, my company, my community?
  - What did I do to adapt? Honor those efforts
- Regulate your emotions
  - Is anger, anxiety, fear my automatic default? Am I focused exclusively on "worst case scenarios"?
  - Intentional self-care is crucial
- Own your stuff
  - Growth won't come if I'm locked in the past…allow yourself to grieve
  - Be transparent, authentic about what the past 2 years have been like for you, but recognize it's not permanent
- Own your narrative
  - Did you catch it? That's what we've just done!
  - What does the next chapter look like?
- It ain't all about you
  - Extend grace, express gratitude…we've all gone through this together
  - Leverage what you've learned to help others

Key Take-Aways

- The emotional and behavioral health impacts were central in these two crisis…as they are in every crisis
- EAPs play a pivotal role in sustaining the resilience and developing a psychologically healthy workforce
- PTG indicates we are stronger than we give ourselves credit for
- Lean into the narrative – shape the **Next Normal** rather than waiting for the New Normal to emerge

Contact Information

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