

From Burnout to Performance

The new operating system for
human energy, resilience, and culture

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PART 2 OF 3

Resilience

Building the Human Capacity to
Recover, Reorient, and Grow

kumanu

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SERIES OVERVIEW

We keep treating burnout like a “wellbeing” problem. In high-reliability work, it’s more direct than that: **low energy = higher risk** (quality, safety, decision-making, retention).

This 3-part series translates the evidence into an operating model leaders — and Human Capital/Leadership Development teams — can actually run.

The series outlines a frame with metrics that can improve performance, quality, safety, and retention. It advocates shifting focus from time management and perks to managing energy through work design, sleep, recovery, and purpose as part of an organization’s wellbeing strategy, and recommends leaders track energy indicators, reduce cognitive load, concretize purpose, embed recovery into work systems, and equip managers accordingly.



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Resilience: Building the Human Capacity to Recover, Reorient, and Grow

Executive Takeaway

If you want sustainable performance, treat resilience as an operating capability—not a personality trait, training module, or motivational slogan. Energy gets people going. Resilience helps them sustain energy under pressure, recover from strain, and adapt without breaking.

That matters because burnout is not just a “wellbeing” issue. It is a signal that the demands placed on people are exceeding the recovery, meaning, connection, agency, and system support available to them.

The biology is real. Chronic stress research describes how repeated adaptation without adequate recovery creates cumulative physiological “wear and tear,” often called allostatic load. A 2024 integrative review found consistent links among occupational stress, burnout, work environment, and allostatic load, while noting that measurement methods still vary. [1]

The takeaway for leaders is direct: resilience cannot be delegated to individuals alone. It has to be practiced by people, modeled by managers, and designed into culture.

From Burnout to Performance

Part 1 of this series made the case that **energy** is a missing metric behind performance, risk, and retention. But energy alone is not enough. Energy without resilience is unstable; under pressure, it gets depleted fast.

Resilience is the capacity to recover, reorient, and grow under pressure. It is not endurance. Endurance asks people to keep going. Resilience asks whether people can keep adapting without losing health, judgment, agency, purpose, or connection.



In practice, resilience is built through four interdependent capacities:

- **Energy regulation:** the ability to notice depletion, protect recovery, and sustain performance without chronic overextension.
- **Emotional self-regulation:** the ability to intentionally respond rather than react under stress.
- **Purpose orientation:** the ability to interpret pressure through a meaningful “why.” Peer-reviewed research on eudaimonic well-being treats purpose in life as a meaningful dimension of functioning and links it to resilience-related health and adaptation outcomes. [2]
- **Connection, belonging, and psychological safety:** the relational infrastructure that helps people feel seen, supported, and able to speak up early. In healthcare survey research, psychological safety has been associated with better work environment perceptions and lower burnout, supporting its use as a system-level wellbeing metric. [3]

When those four capacities are weak — or when the work system overwhelms them— burnout becomes predictable. That is the real leadership issue. Burnout is not only a personal health concern; it’s also data about the operating system of work.

The Human Adaptation Gap

The Human Adaptation Gap is the distance between external demand and human adaptive capacity. AI, digital acceleration, labor shortages, rising complexity, and constant change are increasing the pace of work. But humans are not machines. The advantage to humans now is not speed; it's judgment, creativity, meaning-making, ethical prudence, connection, and recovery.

Resilience Is Not a Trait. It's a Capability.

Research demonstrates that resilience can be cultivated. A 2025 systematic review of resilience-based workplace interventions found that most interventions had positive effects, even though definitions and measures varied. [4] The leadership message is clear: resilience is trainable, observable, and designable.

Self-Leadership Is the Starting Point

Self-leadership begins with noticing. People need the ability to recognize depletion, regulate attention and emotion, reconnect to purpose, and choose behavior under pressure. Purpose is not inspiration on a poster. In the science of psychological wellbeing, purpose in life is treated as a meaningful dimension of functioning and is linked to resilience-related health and adaptation outcomes. [2]

Managers Make Resilience Operational

Leaders should not ask teams to “be resilient” while leaving the work system unchanged. They create the conditions for resilience through clarity, prioritization, recovery norms, meaningful recognition, relational trust, and psychological safety. In a 2024 study of 621 nurse practitioners, psychological safety was associated with better work environment perceptions and lower burnout. [3]



Culture Is Where Resilience Scales

A resilient culture is not one where people tolerate endless urgency. It is one where the system absorbs change, recovers, learns, and keeps people connected to meaning. That shows up in workload planning, decision rights, escalation pathways, manager routines, recovery norms, recognition, and measurement.

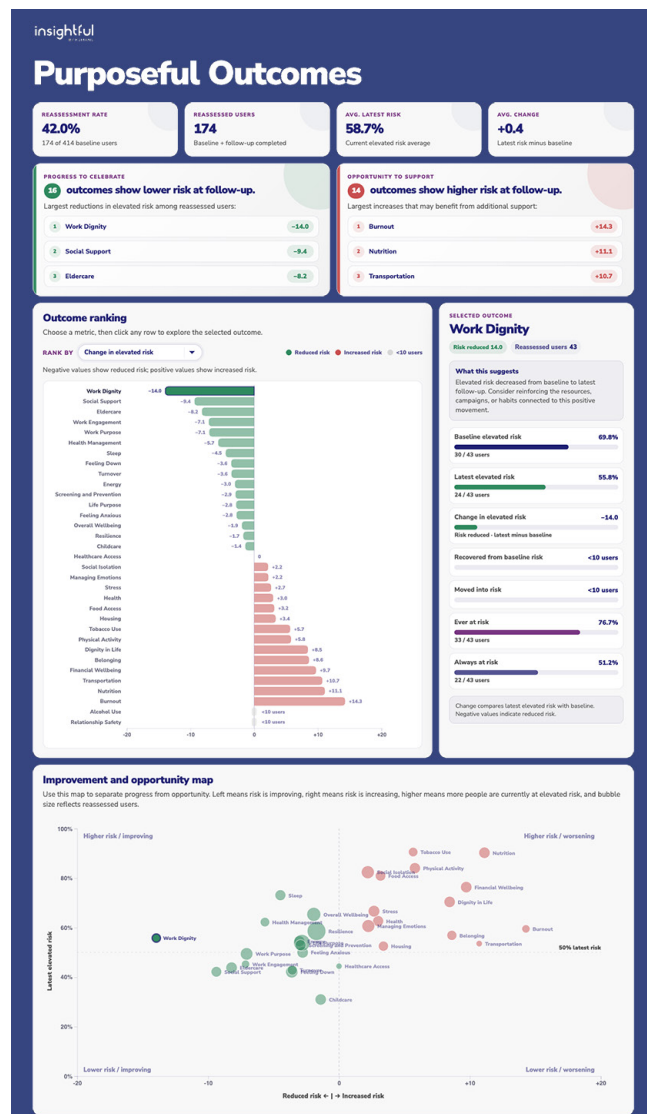
Data from Real World Application

Kumanu outcomes help connect the evidence base to applied implementation. In client and platform data, purpose-centered wellbeing has been associated with improvements in retention intent, burnout risk, resilience, emotional self-regulation, purpose at work, engagement, anxiety, and depression risk.

Organizations have experienced the following improvements within 90 days of using the Kumanu platform, which includes the **Purposeful** app:

- **31% increase in resilience**
- **37% improvement in managing emotions**
- **37% reduction in anxiety**
- **9% reduction in burnout risk**
- **83% reduction in actual turnover**

Publicly reported Kumanu figures include improved retention intent among elevated-risk users, reduced work burnout risk, improved sense of resilience, improved purpose in life and purpose at work, and improved ability to self-regulate emotions among baseline-risk participants. [5]



Insightful, the Kumanu enterprise analytics and dashboarding system, provides decision support by measuring and tracking employee burnout risk, energy, and resilience.



What High-Performing Leaders Do Differently

- **They measure resilience as a leading indicator.** Recovery, perceived agency, purpose line-of-sight, psychological safety, emotional regulation, workload volatility, and retention intent become part of the operating dashboard.
- **They equip managers.** It's important to not just communicate with managers, but provide them with practical routines: capacity check-ins, tradeoff language, recovery planning, escalation paths, and recognition tied to sustainable performance.
- **They design the work, not just the program.** Resilience depends on job control, staffing adequacy, decision rights, meeting load, interruption burden, and workflow friction.
- **They make support accessible across the workforce.** Resilience supports reach people across roles, shifts, and job types—not only knowledge workers or senior leaders.
- **They protect resilience from misuse.** Resilience never becomes a rationale for under-resourcing, unsafe workload, or chronic urgency.

If You Lead People: 5 Moves You Can Make in the Next 14 Days

Start small. The goal is not another program. The goal is to change the routines that shape energy, recovery, meaning, and adaptation.

- **Define your resilience red flags.** Pick 3–5 indicators—recovery, overload, conflict, context switching, staffing volatility, or psychological safety—and review them regularly.
- **Remove one recurring drain.** Redesign one meeting, report, approval step, or handoff that creates rework and cognitive load.
- **Make purpose concrete.** Ask: “What human outcome does this work serve?” and “What risk rises when we are depleted?”
- **Build recovery into the plan.** Protect realistic staffing, clean handoffs, breaks, and off-hours boundaries where roles allow.
- **Equip managers.** Give leaders scripts and routines for capacity check-ins, priority tradeoffs, escalation, and recognition.

What Comes Next

Energy is the starting point. Resilience is what helps people sustain energy under pressure, recover from strain, and adapt to what comes next. But if organizations want performance that lasts, they need a human operating system — a culture — that protects recovery, strengthens purpose, builds connection, and makes resilience visible in the way work gets done.

In Part 3, we'll share how to build one or strengthen the one you already have.

References:

1. Garcia JC, Arteaga A. [Allostatic load and physiological responses to work stress: an integrative review](#). Rev Bras Med Trab (2024). [Peer-reviewed]
2. Ryff CD. [Psychological well-being revisited: advances in the science and practice of eudaimonia](#). Psychother Psychosom (2013). [Peer-reviewed]
3. de Lisser R, Dietrich MS, Spetz J, Ramanujam R, Lauderdale J, Stollendorf DP. [Psychological safety is associated with better work environment and lower levels of clinician burnout](#). Health Affairs Scholar (2024). [Peer-reviewed]
4. [Resilience-based interventions in the public sector workplace: a systematic review](#). BMC Public Health (2025). [Peer-reviewed]
5. Kumanu. [More Engaged, Resilient, and Purposeful: Kumanu Announces Results of Its Wellbeing 3.0 Impact Study](#). PR Newswire (2023). [Company-reported outcomes]

Want help launching your resilience initiative?

Kumanu works with leading organizations to develop and launch purpose-driven human performance and wellbeing programs that produce concrete outcomes.

Built by scientists and backed by decades of behavioral and neuroscience research, our platform helps employers reduce burnout risk, improve retention, and increase workforce energy and resilience.

The logo for Kumanu, featuring the word "kumanu" in a bold, lowercase, blue sans-serif font.

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