

Job Demands–Resources Model

A practical guide to understanding workplace pressure, wellbeing and sustainable performance

What is the model?

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, introduced by Demerouti and colleagues in 2001, proposes that working conditions can be considered in terms of demands and resources. It is widely used to understand exhaustion, engagement and workplace wellbeing.

Job demands

Demands are aspects of work that require sustained physical, mental or emotional effort. Examples include workload, conflicting deadlines, emotionally difficult conversations, interruptions, unclear expectations and sensory strain. Demands are not always harmful, but excessive or prolonged demands can become costly when recovery and support are insufficient.

Job resources

Resources help people meet work goals, reduce the impact of demands or grow professionally. Examples include autonomy, supportive colleagues, accessible tools, clear priorities, meaningful feedback, adequate staffing, predictable breaks and reasonable adjustments.

Two important pathways

Health impairment: sustained demands with insufficient recovery can contribute to exhaustion and burnout. **Motivational:** useful resources can support engagement, learning and a sense of capability. Resources do not erase all risks, and the balance varies between individuals and jobs.

A workplace example

A staff member has a high caseload, frequent interruptions and unclear deadlines. Adding a short wellbeing session may be welcome, but it does not resolve the workload. More effective changes might include prioritising tasks, protecting focused time, adjusting caseloads and clarifying decision-making responsibilities.

Important: This is an educational model, not a diagnostic test or a formula for calculating burnout.

Practical workplace adjustments

Reduce unnecessary demands

Review workload and deadlines together. Clarify what is essential, what can wait and what can be delegated. Reduce avoidable interruptions, duplicate reporting and unnecessary meetings. Consider whether role expectations are realistic for the time and staffing available.

Strengthen meaningful resources

Offer reliable supervision, accessible instructions, timely feedback, control over task order where possible, and appropriate equipment. Support can also include predictable routines, protected breaks, flexible working arrangements and a safe route for raising concerns.

Include individual needs

The same working conditions do not affect everyone equally. Sensory environments, disability, chronic illness, neurodivergence, caring responsibilities and previous experiences can shape what feels demanding or supportive. Ask the person what barriers they experience rather than assuming.

Worksheet 1 — My demands

Which three aspects of your work currently take the most energy? Which can be changed by you, your team or your employer?

Worksheet 2 — My resources

What helps you cope, focus or recover? Which useful resource is missing or unreliable?

My workplace action plan

Worksheet 3 — Turn insight into action

Choose one demand to reduce and one resource to strengthen. Make each change specific, achievable and reviewable.

The demand I want to address:

One change that would reduce this demand:

The resource I need more of:

Who could help me make this change?

My first small step and when I will try it:

How I will know whether it helped:

Conversation starter

“I have noticed that [specific demand] is affecting [focus, energy or wellbeing]. Could we discuss [specific adjustment] and review whether it helps after [agreed period]?”

Reflection and follow-up

Review both the working conditions and your experience. If the adjustment is not effective, that is information for changing the plan, not evidence of personal failure. Persistent or severe distress may warrant support from a healthcare professional as well as workplace changes.

Reference: Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands–resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499–512.

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