



In 2019, more in the U.S. died from substance use (alcohol/other drugs)—that’s 561 deaths/1M population—than those who died in car accidents (117 deaths/1M population) ...and these numbers are pre-Covidⁱ. In 2020, 29% increased their alcohol drinking, with the majority of those already anxious or depressedⁱⁱ. That’s a growing 5 to 1 drug deaths to car deaths.

Over 75% of the world’s workforce are now feeling burnout and/or mental health issues with the majority of those saying they’re having problems sleeping. Over 80% of youngest workers (ages 22 to 25) are having deteriorating mental healthⁱⁱⁱ to the point that they’re becoming part of the YOLO^{iv}—you only live once—economy, quitting lucrative traditional careers for adventure, fun, risk. Women, especially working moms, have left—nearly 2.2 million^v—the workforce and many are highly stressed^{vi}. People of color have all of above, social injustices, AND there are few therapists of color or trained in cultural differences to help out^{vii}.

WE is the answer to surviving this pandemic, now in its second year.

WE as in Wellness Being programs, apps, podcasts, and outsourced or completely guaranteed confidential EAP^{viii}. Other potential sources of taking the stress out of working in this pandemic include two timeless well-proven methods known for reducing fatigue and burnout:

- **FLOW opportunities:** Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi created the term and authored the book *FLOW*^x. An excellent way to present these complete immersions in one activity is by offering performance improvement **micro-learning** (learning in bite-sized pieces that makes the transfer of learning 17% more efficient and 50% less expensive to develop) and **gamification opportunities**^x (turning a learning experience into a game). While totally immersed in the experience, the rest of a person’s environment fades away in the enjoyment of the activity...all the while increasing adoption and use of knowledge and tools that will enhance employee performance, engagement, and satisfaction.
- **Mindfulness opportunities:** Ellen J. Langer created the term and authored the book *Mindfulness*^{xi}. The exact opposite of being immersed in one activity, mindfulness is an active thought process that creates new categories and opens up new possibilities by looking at new information and by enlarging perspectives. In this changing world, having employees relabel business initiatives—from old shareholder perspectives to new ESG stakeholders, such as the creation of new DEI initiatives—will engage employees in creating ways to smooth and build relationships that break groupthink, which enhances profitability. Mindfulness helps employees brainstorm analogies—like rethinking the traditional hospital building into something more like an automobile assembly factory where sick people come in one end and emerge healthy on the other end, resulting in less germs and more time efficient processes. Employees feel empowered by helping creating these choices that will lead to enhanced productivity, lower costs, and happier stakeholders.

Totally confidential EAP/wellness programs combined with stress-reducing complete flow immersion learning experiences and out-of-the-box creative mindfulness thinking—yes, they’re part of the solutions as to how WE can **survive thrive** in year 2 of this pandemic.

REFERENCES

i

- White et al. (2020). Using death certificates to explore changes in alcohol-related mortality in the United States, 1999-2017. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, ISBRA, 44(1)*, 178-187.
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2021, April 18). *Alcohol facts and statistics*. U.S. National Institutes of Health. <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>
- Insurance Institute for Highway Safety - Highway Loss Data Institute. (2019). *Fatality facts 2019 yearly snapshot*. <https://www.iihs.org>
- Insurance Institute for Highway Safety - Highway Loss Data Institute. (2019). *Rates of alcohol-induced deaths among adults aged 25 and over in urban and rural areas: United States, 2000-2018*. <https://www.iihs.org>
- Wikipedia. (2021, April 18). *United States drug overdose death rates and totals over time*. <https://www.wikipedia.com>
- National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2021, April 19). *Overdose death rates*. <https://drugabuse.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). *Increase in drug and opioid overdose deaths – United States, 2000–2014*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, January 1). *Morbidity and mortality weekly report*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.cdc.gov>
- American Addiction Centers. (2021, April 7). *Alcohol and drug abuse statistics*. <https://americanaddictioncenters.org>

“Using Death Certificates to Explore Changes in Alcohol-Related Mortality in the United States, 1999 to 2017; White et al., *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research, ISBRA, Volume 44, No. 1, 2020*; pp. 178-187;

“Alcohol Facts and Statistics, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 4/18/21;

“Fatality Facts 2019 Yearly Snapshot, IIHS HLDI;

“Fatality Facts 1975 – 2019, IIHS-HLDI;

“Rates of Alcohol-Induced Deaths Among Adults Aged 25 and over in Urban and Rural Areas: United States, 2000-2018;

“United States drug overdose death rates and totals over time,” Wikipedia, 4/18/21;

“Overdose Death Rates,” National Institute on Drug Abuse, 4/19/21;

“Increase in Drug and Opioid Overdose Deaths – United States, 2000 – 2014, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report,” 1/1/16;

“Alcohol and Drug Abuse Statistics,” AmericanAddictionCenters.org, 4/7/21.

ii “Employers Respond to Rising Substance Abuse with Treatment, Support,” Sammer, Joanne, SHRM, 3/5/21.

iii “Young Workers Hit Hardest,” Oracle and Workplace Intelligence, SHRM, 4/19/21.

iv “Welcome to the YOLO Economy,” Roose, Kevin, 4/21/21, NewYorkTimes.com.

v “Amid COVID-19, moms leaving the workforce could have lasting impact on economy,” Pedersen et al., 12/1/20, ABCNews.go.com.

vi “Working Mothers Derailed by Pandemic Face a Tough Road,” Feintzeig and Weber, 4/11/21, *Wall Street Journal*.

vii “One Year into the Pandemic, COVID-19 Fatigue Takes Hold,” Agovino, Theresa, 2/27/21, SHRM;
“Double Duty Takes a Toll on Working Mothers,” Agovino, Theresa, 12/2/20, SHRM;
“Black Women Are Facing an Overwhelming Mental Health Crisis,” Lynya Floyd, *Prevention*, 11/6/20.

viii “Mental Health Apps Offer New Ways to Support Employees,” Sammer, Joanne, SHRM, 5/12/21.

ix *Flow*, Csikszentmihalyi, 1990.

x <https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/numbers-dont-lie-why-bite-sized-learning-is-better-for-your-learners-and-you-too>; “What is Gamification?,” BI Worldwide, 2021.

xi *Mindfulness*, Langer, 1989.