



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 “we need to talk to others more.” The most effective leaders (those with the highest corporate competitive sales performance and industry dominance) globally in GLOBE’s research study^{viii} of 5,000 senior executives and 1,000 CEOs in 24 countries share two behaviors: (1) they are visionary—they clearly communicate a vision of the future and make plans/act on future goals; (2) they are inspirational—they inspire others, increase the morale of their subordinates, are energetic, confident.

Leaders cannot produce the highest sales performance, cannot dominate in their industries, if they’re not talking to their employees, communicating “we’ll get through this together and we’re going to make X happen” AND asking what they can do to make work sustainable.

LinkedIn has given employees a bonus paid week off, Twitter has a monthly #DaysofRest initiative^{ix}, others are offering reminders to walk during commute time, restructuring project scopes, no-meeting Wednesdays, no-meeting lunches, more flexibility—whatever it takes to increase employee morale by lessening stress^x.

The need for more of these communications/actions is still here: The Conference Board just released today that the number of employees experiencing burnout has increased from 42% in September 2020 to 76% in April 2021!^{xi}

We leaders need to talk to others more because McKinsey statistics^{xii} says there’s a 40% gap between what companies are asking their managers to do (check in weekly to: ensure workload is manageable, employees are mentally/physically healthy, and parents’ work/life needs are being met) and what managers are actually perceived to be providing by their employees.

A leader is defined^{xiii} as someone who takes the initiative in an action and is an example for others to follow; i.e., to cause a person to go with one by holding their hand while moving forward. In this sense, we’re all leaders in various networks. Let us leaders talk more with others we know via authentic visionary and inspirational communications that increases morale.

WE can get through this pandemic—in the U.S., we’re almost through it. All that’s needed now is just a bit more flow (total emersion in an activity that acts as a stress break), mindfulness (looking at situations differently to unleash new solutions that will add a spring to the step of those who create, implement, and are impacted by those solutions), and caring communication to ease stress, in order to avoid work environment blowups and/or mental/physical health crashes of any kind.

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