UNPACKING SOCIAL DYNAMICS:
A GUIDE TO STRENGTHENING YOUR
WORKPLACE SAFETY CULTURE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Sentis acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Australia and recognises their connections to land, waters and community.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today. We do this because we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, culture and knowledge.

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To change the lives of individuals and organisations for the better, every day.

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AGENDA

1   THE RESEARCH AND RESULTS

2   STRENGTHS IN THE SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

3   IMPROVING REWARD AND RECOGNITION OF SAFETY

4   MANAGING MISTAKES

5   IMPROVING EMPLOYEE INPUT IN DECISION MAKING

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POSITIVE SAFETY AND THE SAFETY EXPERIENCE

Positive safety is about focusing on proactive safety controls and genuine, helpful attitudes that can guide organisations to create a culture of trust, growth and excellence that leads to safer results.

Positive safety addresses the physical, social and psychological aspects of safety, resulting in an environment that supports each individual to bring the best of themselves to work.

Physical Experience
For example, work environment, equipment, hazardous tasks, shift work

safety experience

Psychological Experience
For example, resilience, engagement, wellbeing and mental health

Social Experience
For example, quality of relationships with team and leaders, communication, trust, support

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THE RESEARCH

Aiming to reshape our collective understanding of what workplace safety means, as well as how people on the ground experience it, we're pleased to introduce *Unpacking Safety Experiences: Employee Perceptions of Safety Climate*.

In this eye-opening report, we explore the balance and interplay between the physical, psychological and social experiences of safety.

Unpacking Safety Experiences:
Employee Perceptions of Safety Climate

2024 EDITION

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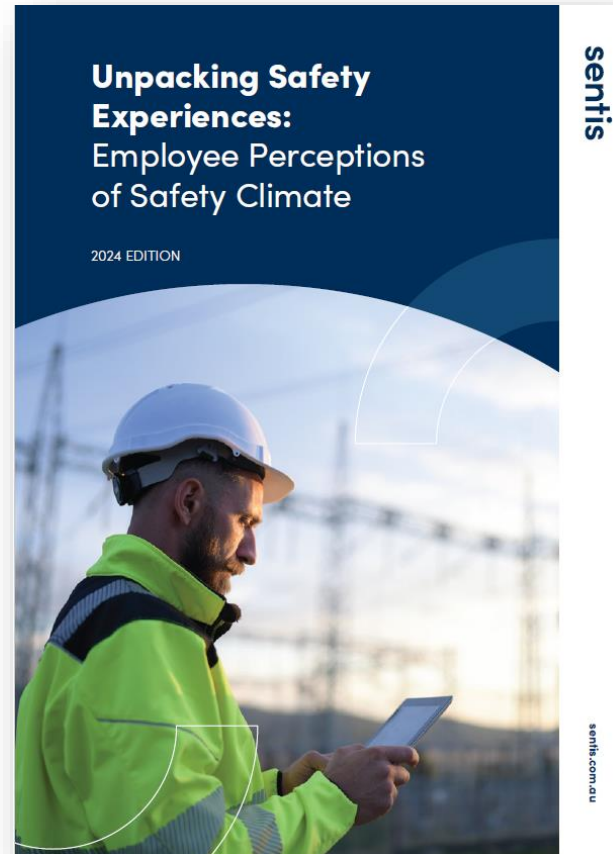
"While physical safety is fundamental to our survival, it's not all we need in order to experience a safe, happy, healthy and thriving life at work."

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More than 59,000 respondents participated in the SCS to share their perceptions of safety climate at work.
To ensure that no industry or organisation was over-represented, the responses were stratified to a sample of 29,390 respondents. The survey included workers at all levels – including frontline, supervisor and management positions – and a cross-section of demographics.

Sample

Stratified sample of

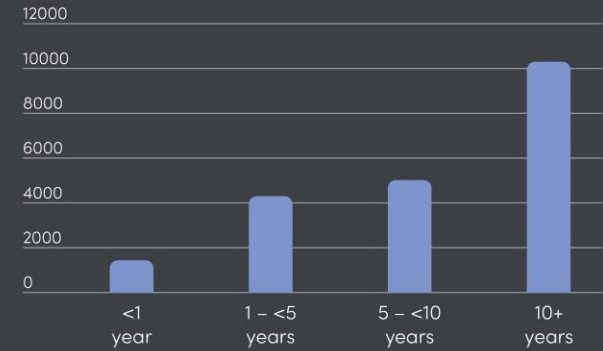**29,390**

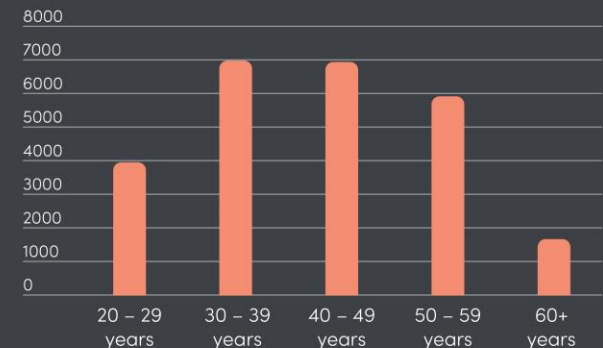from a total sample of more than 59,000

Countries

15 countries:

Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States, Ireland, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam

Industry

12 industries:

Utilities, mining, construction, oil and gas, transport, healthcare, manufacturing, government, agriculture, aquaculture, industrial services and education

Organisations

75 organisations

Position

- Executive Management
- Middle Management
- Supervisor / Frontline Leader
- Frontline Employee

Industry Tenure

Bar chart with y-axis from 0 to 12000 (intervals: 0, 2000, 4000, 6000, 8000, 10000, 12000) and x-axis categories: <1 year, 1 – <5 years, 5 – <10 years, 10+ years

Age

Bar chart with y-axis from 0 to 8000 (intervals: 0, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 5000, 6000, 7000, 8000) and x-axis categories: 20 – 29 years, 30 – 39 years, 40 – 49 years, 50 – 59 years, 60+ years

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THE SOCIAL EXPERIENCE

Physical Experience

For example, work environment, equipment, hazardous tasks, shift work

safety experience

Psychological Experience

For example, resilience, engagement, wellbeing and mental health

Social Experience

For example, quality of relationships with team and leaders, communication, trust, support

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The SOCIAL experience relates to our experience of interactions with others in our workplace. This includes a sense of community, mutual respect and collaborative problem-solving among employees.

A strong social experience indicates a culture of trust and shared responsibility for safety, where people feel included and invited to contribute.

By enhancing the social experience, we promote a culture where safety is not just an individual responsibility but a collective one, moving us beyond compliance to citizenship.

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THE SOCIAL BRAIN

THE SOCIAL BRAIN

FACTORS THAT FILL THE BUCKET

TASK: feedback, job crafting

WORK: autonomy & skills utilisation, practical resources, learning & development

LEADERSHIP: coaching & mentoring

TEAM: social support, protective resources, good work relationships

ORGANISATION: career possibilities, accessible resources
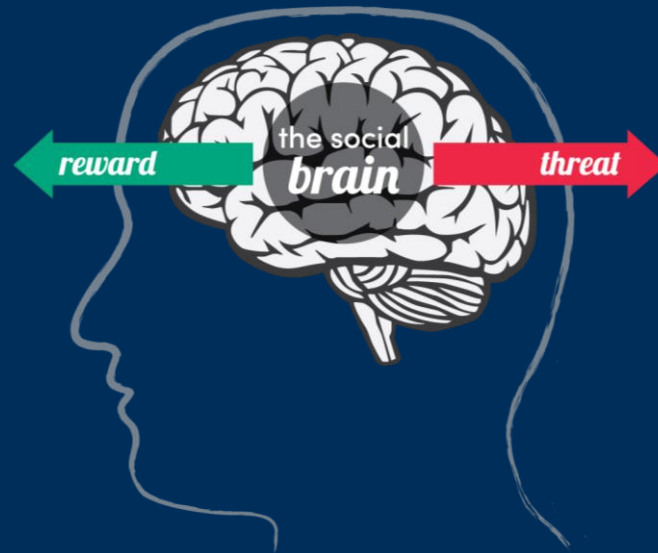
FACTORS THAT DRAIN THE BUCKET

TASK: interruptions, technostress, emotional demands, time pressures

WORK: workload, role ambiguity, stressful working environments

LEADERSHIP: Withholding information, mixed messages, favouritism, micromanagement

TEAM: role conflict, inappropriate workplace behaviours, poor relationships

ORGANISATION: reorganizations, change

reward ← the social brain → threat

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THE RESULTS

The SOCIAL experience of safety showed both the most **positive** and the most **negative** perceptions

SOCIAL STRENGTHS

Classification: Social

Team members' genuine belief that safety is everyone's duty to maintain
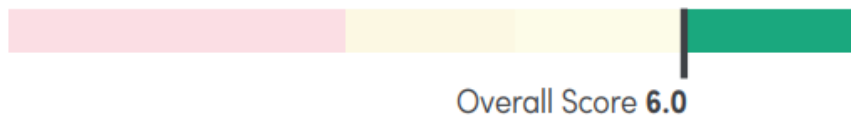
Overall Score **6.0**
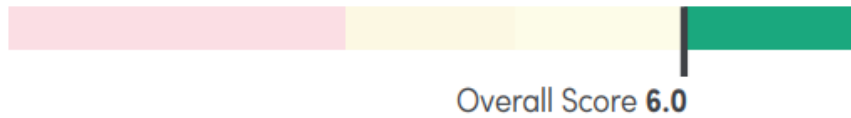
Classification: Social

Extent to which team members look out for each other's safety and wellbeing

Overall Score **6.0**
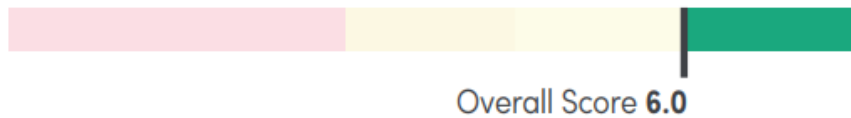
Classification: Social

Expectations that team members have of each other to work safely

Overall Score **6.0**

"Everyone wants to get home safely; we all have the same goals in mind."

Classification: Social

Positivity of working relationship with supervisors

Overall Score **6.0**

Classification: Social

Comfort with talking about safety and wellbeing concerns with direct supervisors

Overall Score **6.0**

■ Negative   ■ Fair – Low   ■ Fair – High   ■ Positive   Scale range 1-7

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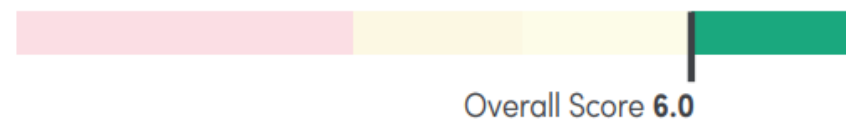
WHAT WE'RE DOING WELL

✓ Strengths in the social experience are observed at the **team-level**

✓ Individuals accept personal responsibility for safety

✓ Individuals feel supported by their team to operate safely

✓ Individuals believe their supervisors are supportive of employee safety and wellbeing
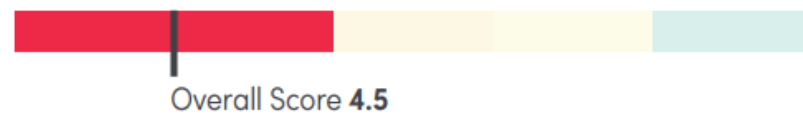
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SOCIAL AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Classification: Social

Fairness of how mistakes during high-risk activities are managed

Overall Score **4.3**
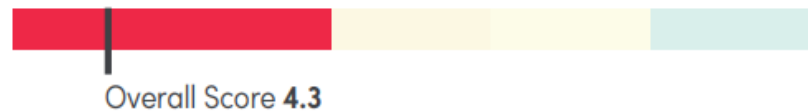
Classification: Social

Employees' opportunity to contribute to organisational decisions

Overall Score **4.5**

Classification: Social

Extent to which safe behaviour is recognised and rewarded

Overall Score **4.7**

Classification: Social

Effectiveness of change communication and implementation
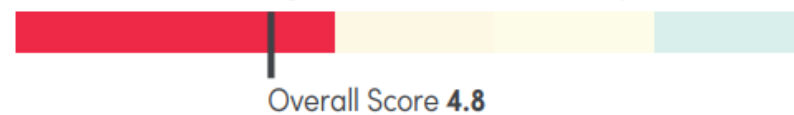
Overall Score **4.8**

"People are a little guarded and don't want to get in trouble. Blame and finger pointing can occur."

■ Negative   ■ Fair - Low   ■ Fair - High   ■ Positive   Scale range 1-7

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WHERE WE CAN IMPROVE

Improvement areas in the social experience relate to the **organisational-level**

🏆 Improve <u>recognition and reward</u> processes for positive safety behaviour

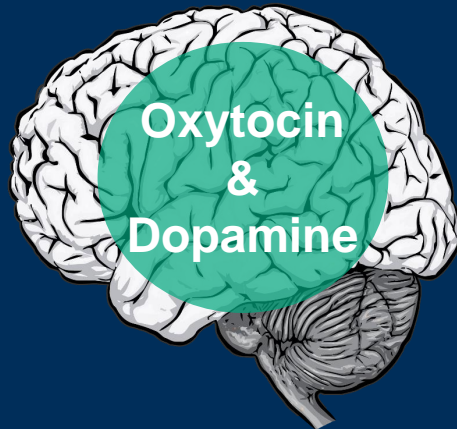👥 How <u>fairly mistakes</u> are managed during high-risk work

👥 Offer more opportunities to <u>contribute to decision making</u> regarding safety

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REWARD AND RECOGNITION

REWARD →

Oxytocin & Dopamine

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POLL: REWARD AND RECOGNITION

HOW WELL DO YOU THINK YOUR ORGANISATION RECOGNISES AND REWARDS SAFE BEHAVIOUR?

a) Not well at all. We recognise and reward based on performance targets

b) Not great. We try but it doesn't happen consistently

c) We are trying. We have a process in place, but the business doesn't seem to engage with it

d) Fairly well. Our leaders regularly recognise workers for safe behaviour

e) We're doing really well. Leader to worker, peer to peer and cross-team safety recognition occurs regularly

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THE BRAIN AND RECOGNITION

One of our basic human needs is recognition. We need to be heard, seen and feel valued for our contributions.

To be heard	To be seen	To feel valued

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BENEFITS OF REWARD & RECOGNITION

- ✓ Employee performance improves

- ✓ Organisational culture becomes more unified through behaviours linked to organisational values

- ✓ Increased employee engagement and retention

- ✓ Improved employee connection and sense of belonging

- ✓ A positive work environment that focuses on the good stuff

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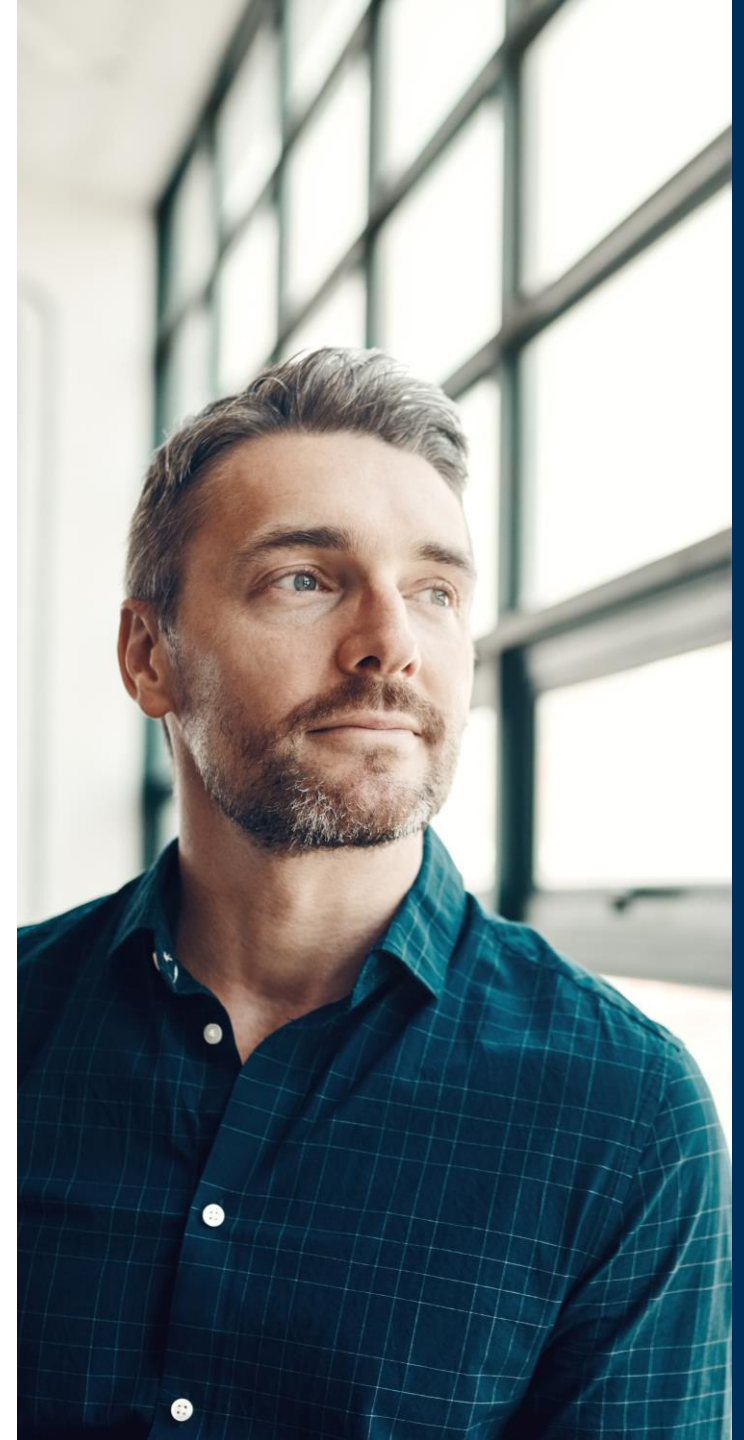
Where do organisations go wrong with reward and recognition?

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TOP TIPS

For creating a culture of safety recognition...

- [ ] Recognise people frequently but make sure it doesn't become expected

- [ ] Link recognition to specific actions or behaviours

- [ ] Ensure safety is rewarded similarly to production, quality & efficiency

- [ ] Help people identify positive safety behaviours by linking them to organisational values

- [ ] Reconsider the use of financial incentives linked to safety KPIs

- [ ] Support and encourage peer to peer recognition

- [ ] Consider what will motivate your people – access to your CEO, development opportunities, time off work, access to better parking for a week, gift vouchers, tickets to events etc

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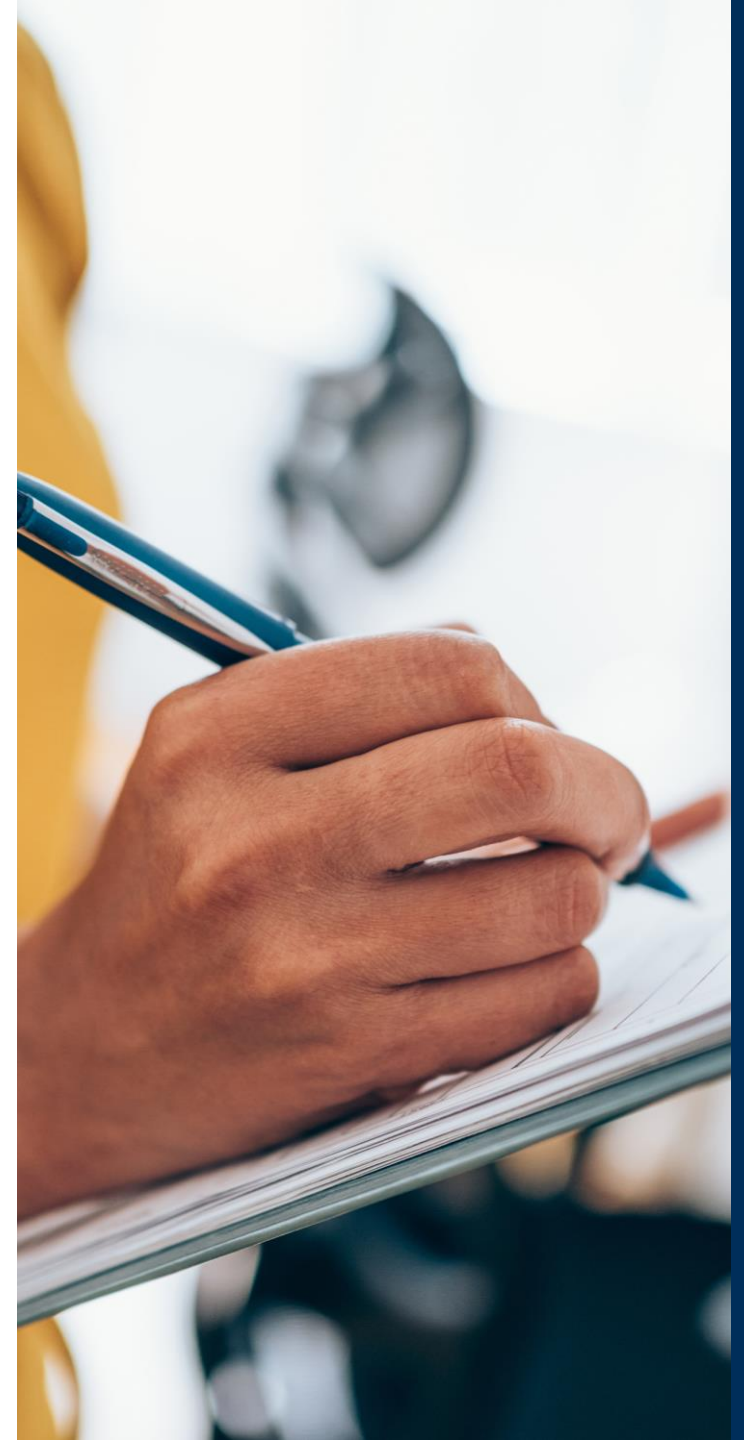
MANAGING MISTAKES AND ERRORS

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MANAGING MISTAKES: CONSIDER THIS…

How are post-incident reviews viewed in your organisation – as a learning moment or an inquisition?
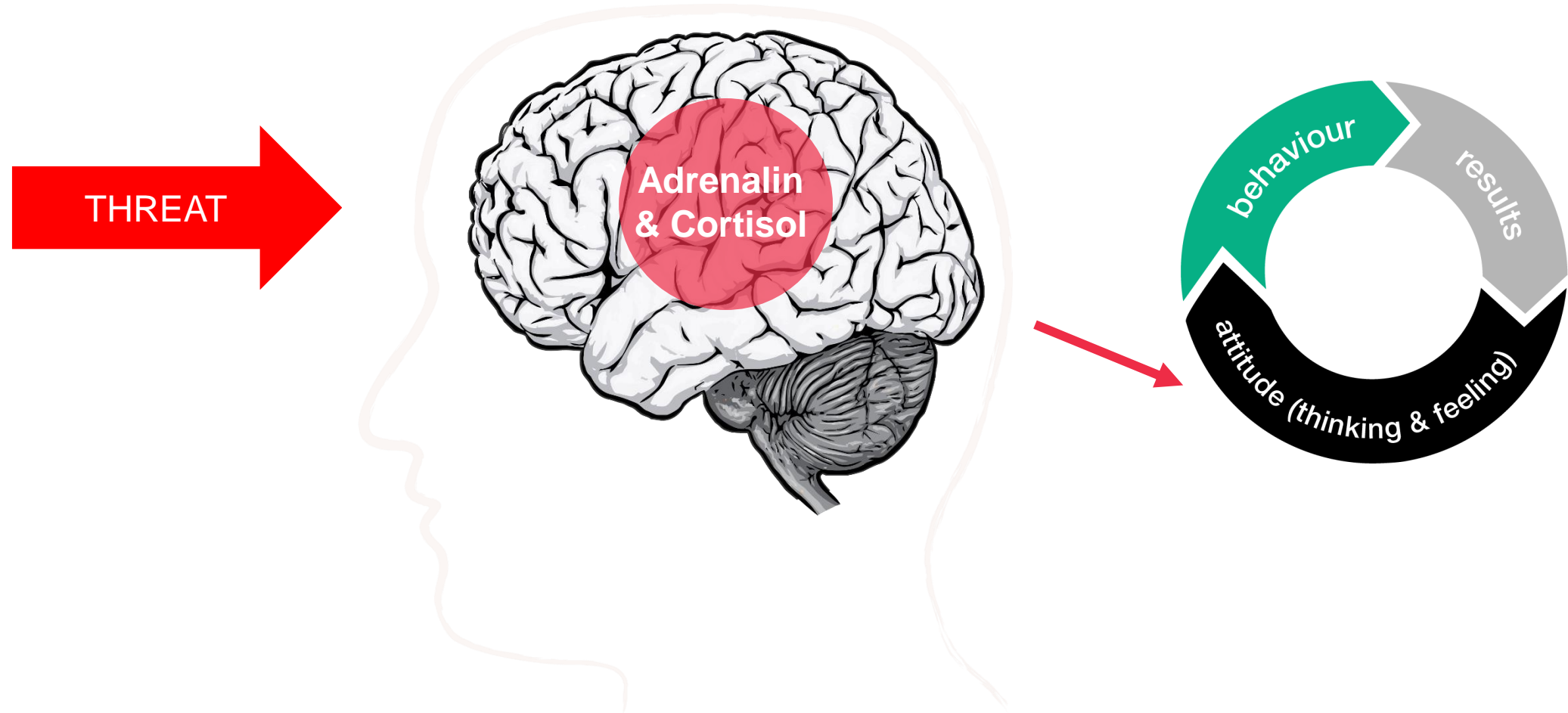
How often do leaders speak openly about their mistakes or learning opportunities? Do they set the standard that it's safe to discuss mistakes?

How well does your organisation move from mistakes to focusing on the lessons learned?

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# Why can admitting a mistake or error be perceived as a THREAT to our social brain?

THE IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING MISTAKES

- Mistakes are inevitable

- How leaders react to mistakes can set the organisational culture

- A culture of blame leads to resentment, distrust, withholding information and a lack of accountability

- When leaders respond without blame, they can create a culture of learning and continuous improvement

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TOP TIPS

❑ Make it easy to report

❑ Create an investigation culture that doesn't seek to attribute blame

❑ Reward transparent discussion

❑ Focus on process improvement

❑ Hold people to account for wilfully or repeatedly make unsafe choices

❑ Hold systems to account

❑ Try to create a culture where mistakes are expected, accepted and used as learning opportunities

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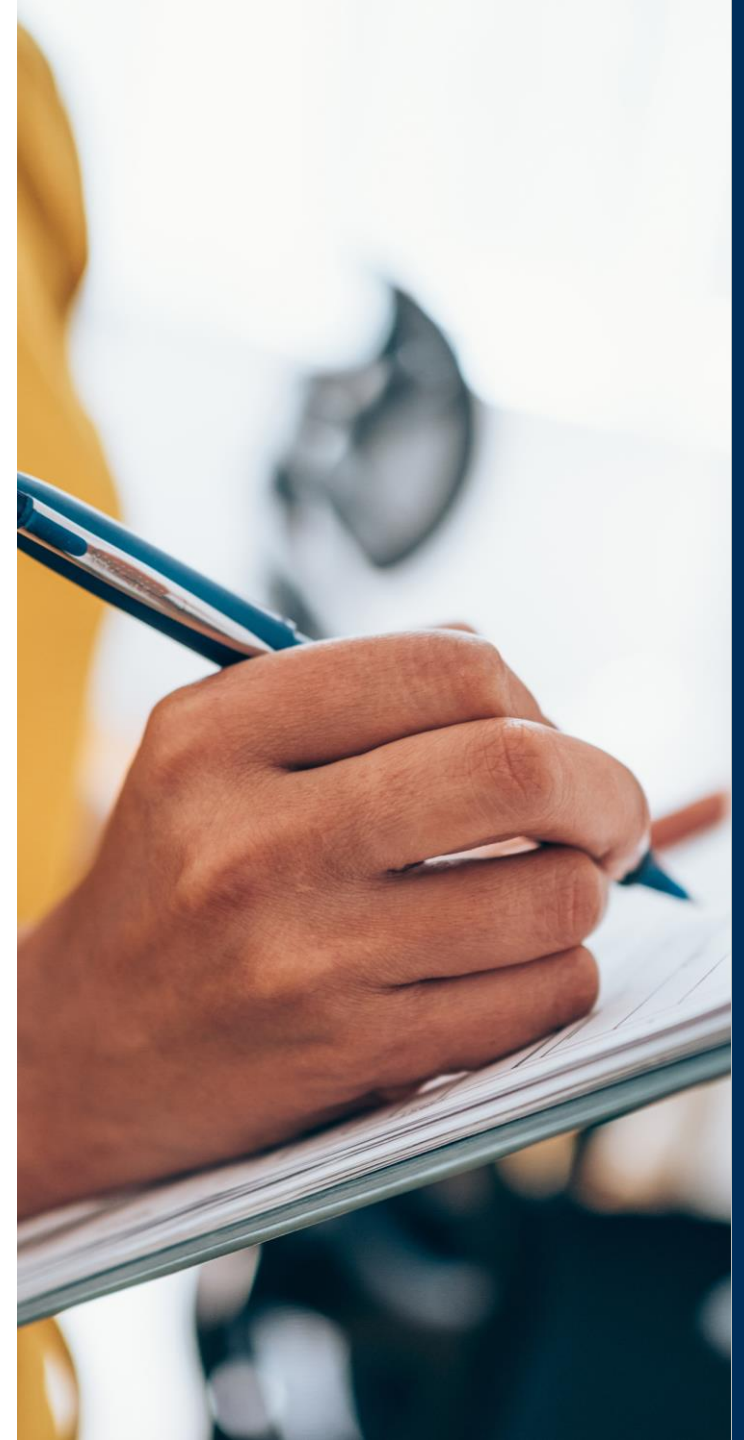
BUT CONSIDER…

Could we go too far in the no blame ideology to the point where we are failing to learn from incidents because we are scared to ask questions about human error or behaviours?

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EMPLOYEE INPUT IN DECISION MAKING

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POLL: EMPLOYEE INPUT IN DECISION MAKING

HOW WELL DO YOU THINK YOUR ORGANISATION GIVES EMPLOYEES THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE INPUT INTO DECISION MAKING?

a) Not at all. We don't seek employee input outside of surveys.

b) Not great. We occasionally ask for employee input but decisions are made by the people in charge.

c) We ask our employees for input but don't get much engagement or useful input.

d) Fairly well. We have processes in place for workers to provide input and we do our best to take their input on board if we can.

e) We're excelling. Decisions are made at the lowest possible level and employees are highly involved in decision making that impacts them

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WHY IS A LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES TO PROVIDE INPUT PERCEIVED AS A THREAT?

Employees may feel like:

- They have no control over how to do their job

- They have limited control over their safety

- Their opinion is not valued or important therefore they are not valued or important

- Their leader/employee doesn't think they are capable/intelligent/experienced enough to make decisions

- They are not trusted to make decisions

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WHERE ORGANISATIONS GET IT WRONG

Asking for input that will not be taken on board as the decision has already been made

Relying on an annual survey to collect employee input rather than seeing employee input as an ongoing, daily process

Ignoring employee feedback or not closing the feedback loop on why a different decision was made

Asking for employee input in a way that puts employees on the spot or requires them to speak up in front of others

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THE BENEFITS OF GETTING EMPLOYEE INPUT

BETTER IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS

IMPROVED COMMITMENT

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

MORE TRUST AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

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TOP TIPS

❑ Give employees notice of the opportunity early, allowing them time to think and bring solutions to the table

❑ Conduct problem solving sessions

❑ Seek diversity

❑ Senior leaders speak last

❑ Don't underestimate the effort involved in using a suggestion box

❑ Don't make employees feel wrong
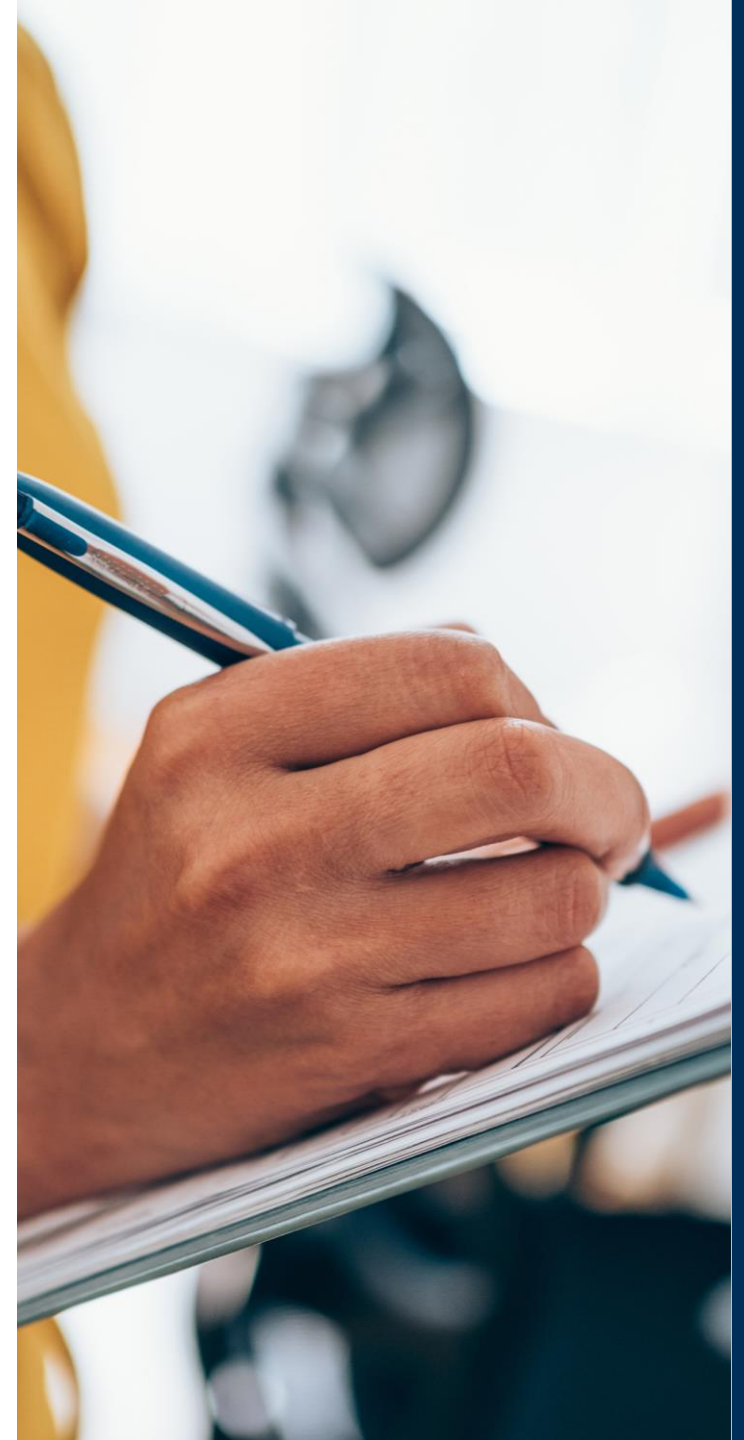
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Unpacking Safety Experiences: Employee Perceptions of Safety Climate
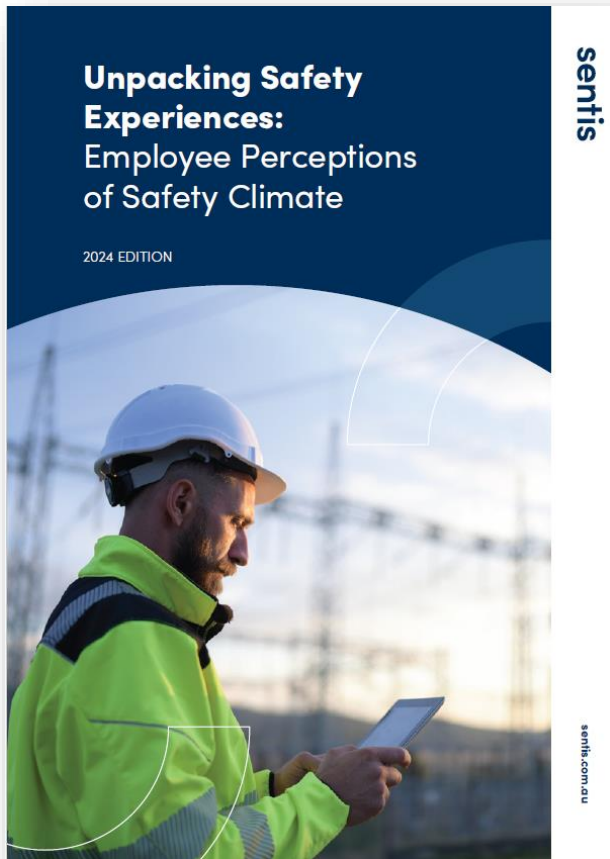
In this soon to be released report, we cover:

- The current state of safety and why you need to consider cultural and social factors when it comes to influencing safety outcomes in your workplace

- How the three experiences of safety (physical, psychological and social) relate to different aspects of the workplace and determine your overall safety culture

- How employees rated their experiences of physical, psychological and social safety (and where the strengths and opportunities lie)

- How you can contribute to building a safer, more inclusive and positive work environment in your organisation

💬 Express your interest

Get in touch

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Q&A
OVER TO YOU

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