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Mental Health in IT: Safeguarding our most precious resource

Tracy Boggiano
Data Platform MVP

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@TracyBoggiano

<https://databaseuperhero.com>

tracy@tracyboggino.com

DocuSign

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Database Superhero

Tracy Boggiano



North Carolina
GUARDIAN AD LITEM
A CHILD'S ADVOCATE IN COURT



PAC
PRODUCT
ADVISORY
COUNCIL



PASS
PASSION AWARD



USA
**MENTAL
HEALTH
FIRST AID**



speakingmentors.com




Microsoft
Most Valuable
Professional




**Disability Rights
North Carolina**

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Disclaimer



Gina Meronek (she/her) #BlackLiv... May 7

Sidebar, but @TracyBoggiano has worked some horrifically toxic places. If you're listening to her stories & it sounds familiar, please know: you do not deserve that kind of environment. EVER. Use the #sqlfamily to help get out ASAP. #dpwit

1 8

Suicide as well is mentioned in here so if you are thinking of suicide please reach out for help.

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1. Discuss workplace causes of mental health challenges
2. Discuss ways to help yourself
3. Discuss ways to help others
4. Discuss how an employer can provide help
5. Surviving a pandemic with your mental health intact
6. Provide plenty of resources for you to walk away with

Agenda

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Who am I?


- Not a mental health professional
- Suffered from mental health issues
- My work has been affected by my mental health
- Work has affected my mental health
- Ready to talk publicly about it and raise awareness
- Done a lot of research on the subject as it relates to IT

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Mental health isn't just mental illness – it's part of being human. – Anonymous



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Positive Mental Health

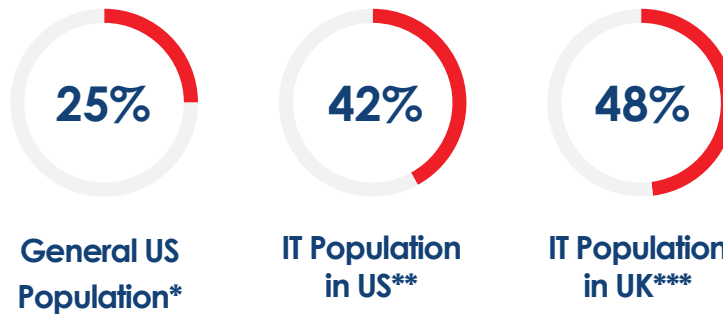
- Realize their full potential
- Cope with the stresses of life
- Work productively
- Make meaningful contributions to their communities



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Mental Health Issues

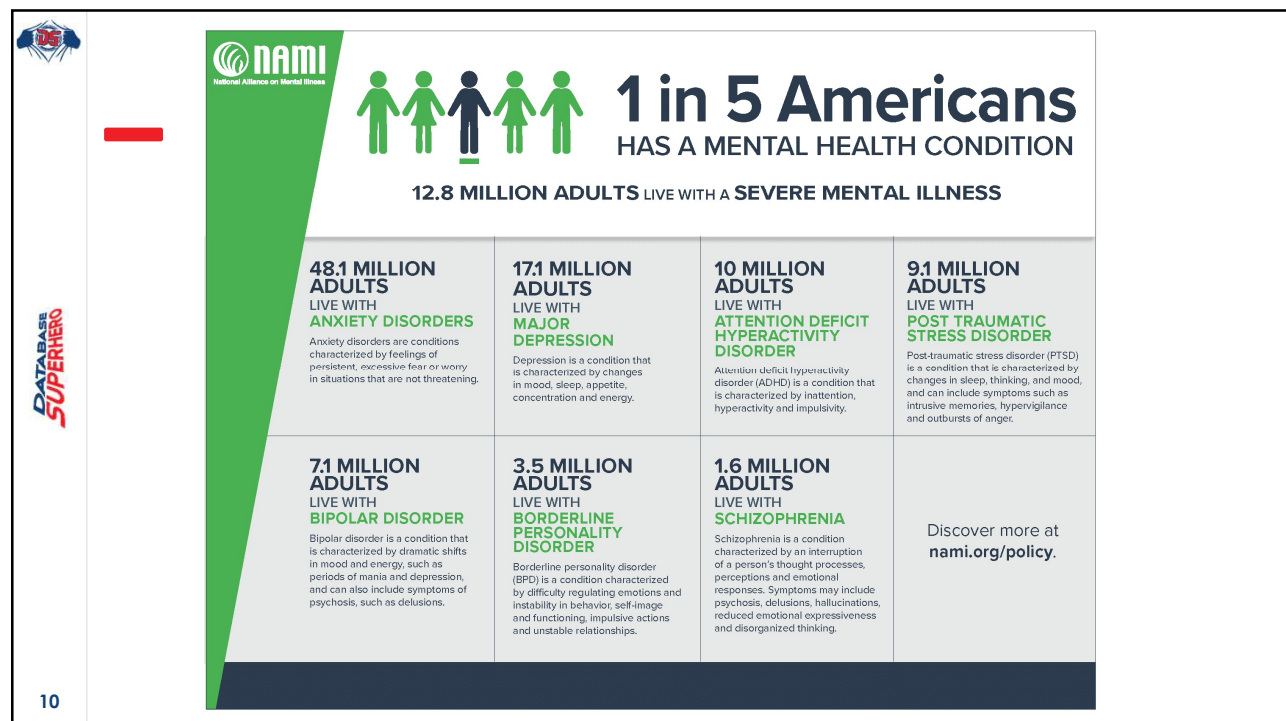


*John Hopkins - <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/mental-health-disorder-statistics>

**2018 Survey taken by OSMI - <https://osmi.typeform.com/report/xztgPT/NFu2PHjwsMUKkL3h>

***<https://digit.fyi/mental-health-technology-industry/>

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No poll or quiz assigned

Time left: -

Vote at: attend.sl/af56

Votes: 0

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No poll or quiz assigned

No poll or quiz assigned

Time left: -



Votes: 0

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Mental Health Disorders

- ADHD
- Anxiety Disorders*
- Bipolar Disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder
- Depression*
- Dissociative Disorders
- Eating Disorders
- OCD
- PTSD
- Schizoaffective Disorder
- Schizophrenia

* Most commonly treated disorders

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Why Am I Speaking About This?

- Personal experience
- Tired of the stigma
- People need to realize they are not alone
- Looked at the stats



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My Story

- Debacle of the summer of 2018
- Diagnoses
- Work stressors over the years
 - On call
 - Development
 - Layoffs

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Stats

- 86% would not discuss with employer at all
- 44% are not aware of what healthcare coverage they have
- 63% say employer has not formally discussed mental health

2018 Survey taken by OSMI -

<https://osmi.typeform.com/report/xztgPT/NFu2PHjwsMUKkL3h>

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Stats

- \$1 trillion is lost to productivity globally
- \$210.5 billion to depression alone
- \$69 billion to suicide, 10th leading cause of death in 2019 in the US, 18th worldwide in 2016
- Worldwide 800,000 people die from suicide a year, for every death there are 20 attempts

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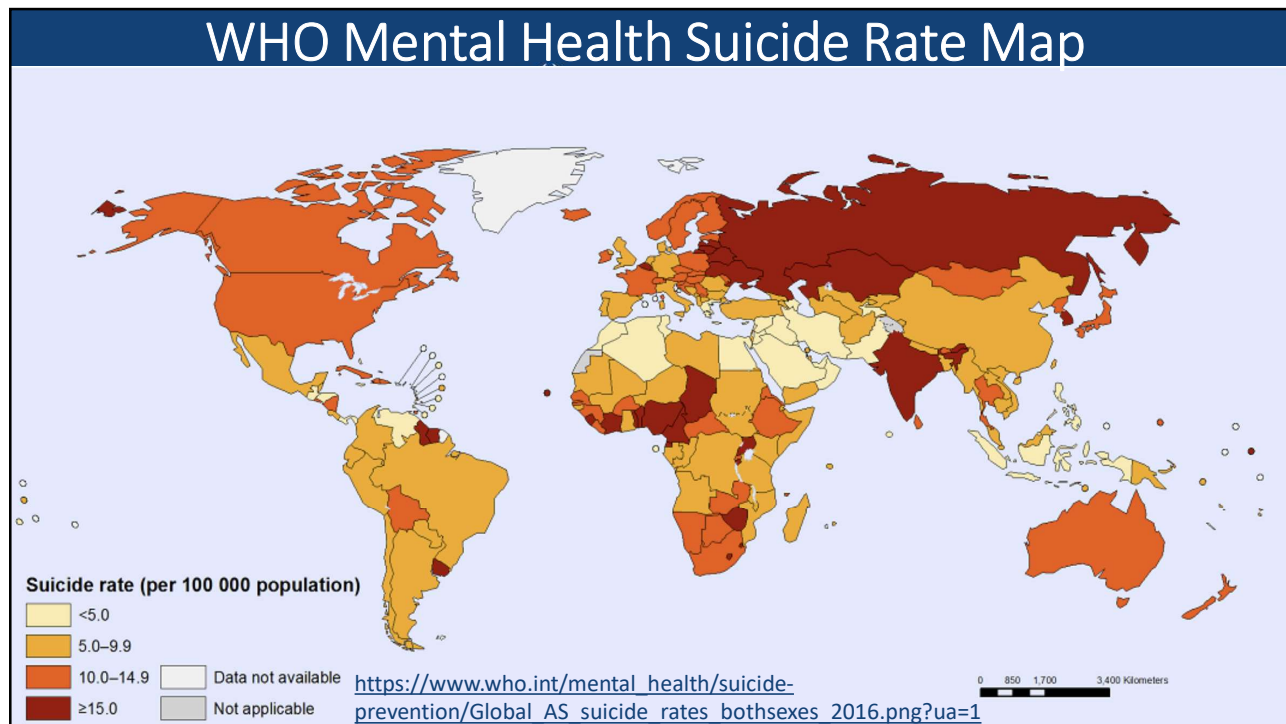
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Suicide

- Talk to someone / #SQLFamily Hamish Watson/ Steve Jones / Anders Pederson
- Please seek help
- There are hotlines to call
- Plan ahead
- Tell friends ahead of time what will help you
- Call your doctor/therapist

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01 Workplace Causes

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Workplace Causes

- Stress
- Burnout
- Harassment
- Bullying

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Stress and Burnout

Poll of 11,000 people

56% reported stress and burnout

<https://burnoutindex.org>

2018 Survey taken by OSMI -
<https://osmi.typeform.com/report/xztgPT/NFu2PHjwsMUKkL3h>

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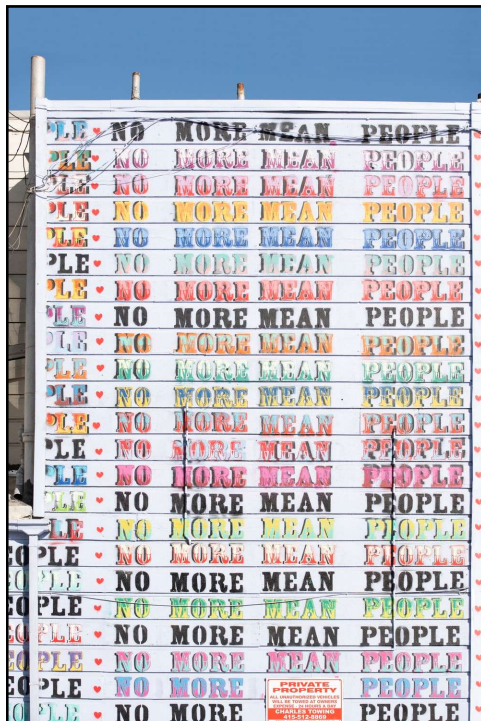
Stress and Burnout

- Being on call
- 24x7 up times
- Meeting deadlines
- Constantly on
- Usually caused by prolonged intense stress
- Feeling of lack of control



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Harassment and Bullying


- Yelling/rude comments
- Making fun of colleagues
- Sexual
- Religion



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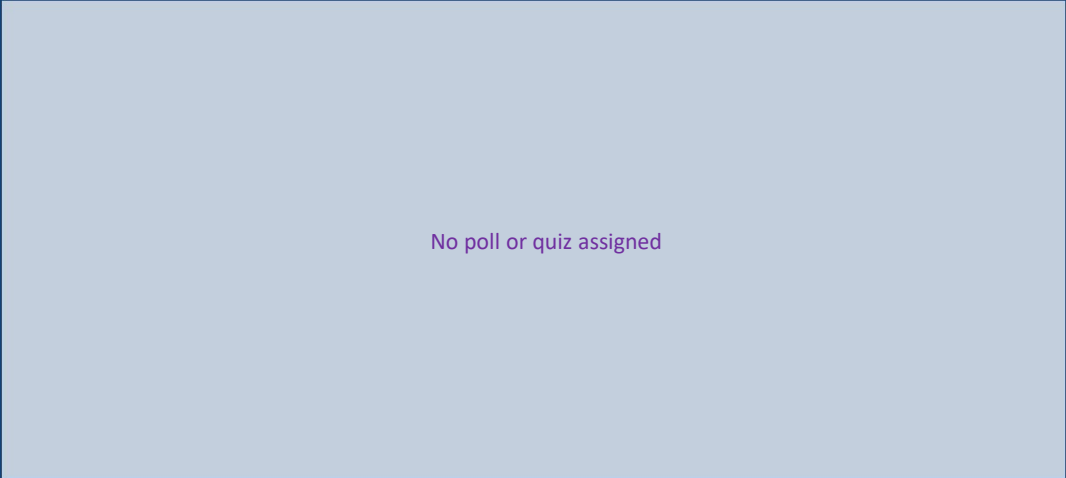


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No poll or quiz assigned



No poll or quiz assigned

Time left: -  Votes: 0

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How mental health can affect anyone

- Make you sad and/or irritable
- Extreme mood changes highs and lows
- Have excessive fears, worry, or anxiety
- Pulling away from people and activities
- Changes in sleep and eating habits
- Trouble concentrating

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How my mental health has affected me

- Negatives
 - Missed work
 - Lack of focus
 - Lack of motivation
- Positives
 - Extreme energy
 - Work well under work stress



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02 How Are Your Doing?



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Self Evaluation

| Thriving "I got this." | Surviving "Something isn't right." | Struggling "I can't keep this up." | In Crisis "I can't survive this." |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Calm and steady with minor mood fluctuations</p> <p>Able to take things in stride</p> <p>Consistent performance</p> <p>Able to take feedback and to adjust to changes of plans</p> <p>Able to focus</p> <p>Able to communicate effectively</p> <p>Normal sleep patterns and appetite</p> | <p>Nervousness, sadness, increased mood fluctuations</p> <p>Inconsistent performance</p> <p>More easily overwhelmed or irritated</p> <p>Increased need for control and difficulty adjusting to changes</p> <p>Trouble sleeping or eating</p> <p>Activities and relationships you used to enjoy seem less interesting or even stressful</p> <p>Muscle tension, low energy, headaches</p> | <p>Persistent fear, panic, anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness</p> <p>Exhaustion</p> <p>Poor performance and difficulty making decisions or concentrating</p> <p>Avoiding interaction with coworkers, family, and friends</p> <p>Fatigue, aches and pains</p> <p>Restless, disturbed sleep</p> <p>Self-medicating with substances, food, or other numbing activities</p> | <p>Disabling distress and loss of function</p> <p>Panic attacks</p> <p>Nightmares or flashbacks</p> <p>Unable to fall or stay asleep</p> <p>Intrusive thoughts</p> <p>Thoughts of self-harm or suicide</p> <p>Easily enraged or aggressive</p> <p>Careless mistakes or inability to focus</p> <p>Feeling numb, lost, or out of control</p> <p>Withdrawal from relationships</p> <p>Dependence on substances, food, or other numbing activities to cope</p> |

Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V., Evlander, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

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Thriving “I’ve got this”


- Calm and steady with minor mood fluctuations
- Able to take things in stride
- Consistent performance
- Able to take feedback and to adjust to changes to plans
- Able to focus



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Thriving “I’ve got this”

- Able to communicate effectively
- Normal sleep patterns and appetite

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Surviving “Something isn’t right.”

- Nervousness, sadness, increased mood fluctuations
- Inconsistent performance
- More easily overwhelmed or irritated
- Increased need for control and difficulty adjusting to changes
- Trouble sleeping or eating

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Surviving “Something isn’t right.”

- Activities and relationships you used to enjoy seem less interesting or even stressful
- Muscle tension, low energy, headaches

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Struggling “I can’t keep this up”

- Persistent fear, panic, anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness
- Exhaustion
- Poor performance and difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Fatigue, aches or pains

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Struggling “I can’t keep this up”

- Avoiding interactions with coworkers, family, and friends
- Restless, disturbed sleep
- Self-medicating with substances, food, or other numbing activities

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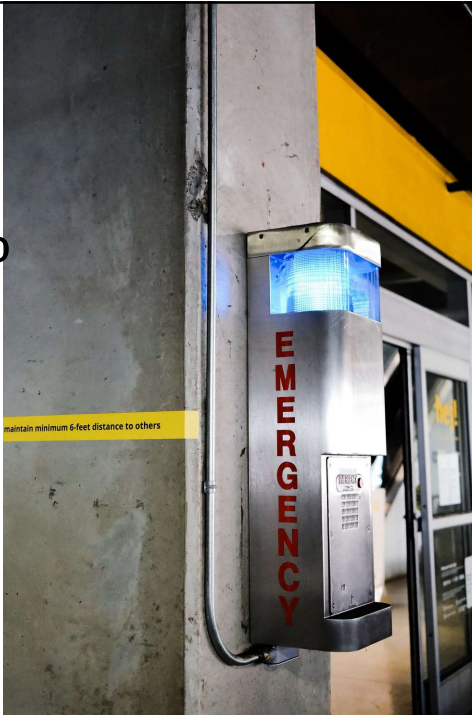


In crisis "I can't survive this"

- Disabling distress and loss of function
- Panic attacks
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Unable to fall or stay asleep
- Intrusive thoughts
- Thought of self-harm or suicide

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In crisis "I can't survive this"

- Easily enraged or aggressive
- Careless mistakes and inability to focus
- Feeling numb, lost, or out of control
- Withdrawal from relationships
- Dependence on substances, food, or other numbing activities to cope

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No poll or quiz assigned

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Votes: 0

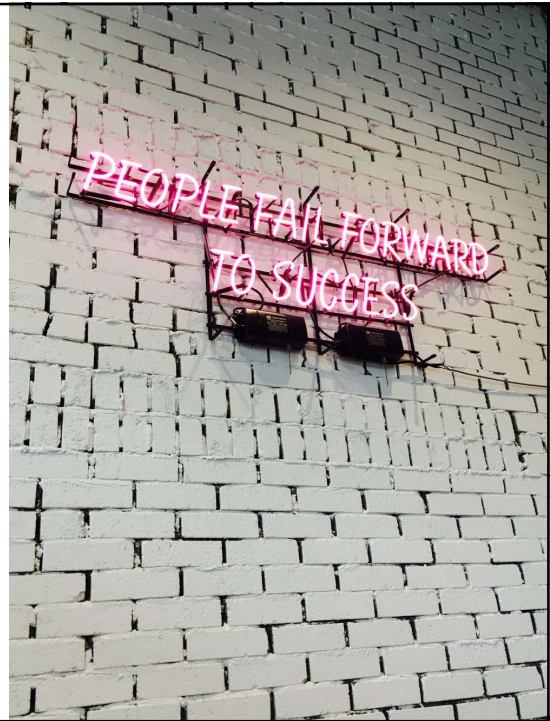
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Internal Factors of Burnout

- Holding idealistic expectations of themselves
- Having a strong need for recognition
- Needing to please other people
- Controlling and not being able to delegate
- Often overestimating themselves, overcommitting to work, and becoming overburdened
- Viewing work as the only meaningful activity

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External Factors of Burnout



- Demanding workload
- Problems with leadership or management where there is a lack of role clarity, poor communication, or lack of positive feedback
- A toxic atmosphere at work
- Lack of autonomy and influence over work decisions
- Lack of personal and professional development opportunities



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Stages of Burnout

- Stage 1: Honeymoon
- Stage 2: Fuel Shortage
- Stage 3: Chronic Symptoms
- Stage 4: Crisis
- Stage 5: Hitting the Wall



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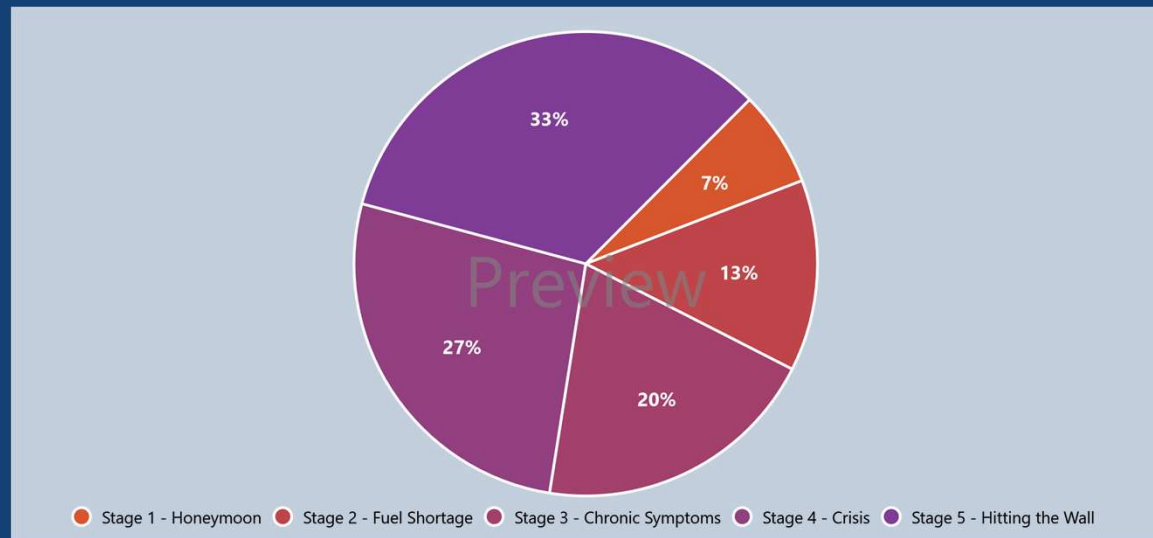


What stage of burnout are you in?

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What stage of burnout are you in?



Time left: -




Votes: 0

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03 Getting Help and Giving Help



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What Can You Control

- Acknowledge that burnout is not indicative of personal failure.
- Identify tasks that are energizing versus tasks that are draining.
- Say “No” more often.
- Keep track of positive events and small wins.
- Be realistic with what you can and cannot achieve with the resources you have.

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What Can You Control

- Lower demands by talking to your managers and outlining the additional support you need to get the job done.
- Tap into existing resources by leveraging on your strengths and your support network.
- Ask for help from teammates and managers.
- Lower the unrealistic standards you hold yourself to.
- Make time to rest.

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Ways to Avoid Burnout

- Take time off
- Identify stressful tasks
- Unplug at the end of the day
- Eat well and exercise
- Socialize
- Develop an escape plan
- Get plenty of sleep
- Cross train

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Identifying Burnout in Your Team

- You notice a consistent increase in bugs in production, accompanied by a deterioration in the quality of work.
- Your roadmap is regularly derailed in pursuit of projects that don't align with the company's long-term goals.
- Your team is shipping less and less frequently.
- The individual is less engaged.
- Increased cynicism and unconstructive criticism, and it's beginning to impact the rest of the team.

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Helping Your Team

- Develop trust with your team.
- Do not talk about burnout as an individual failure.
- Help them clarify their request for help and support to overcome stress and burnout.
- If a team member has requested a vacation or long-term leave, work with them to create a re-entry plan.



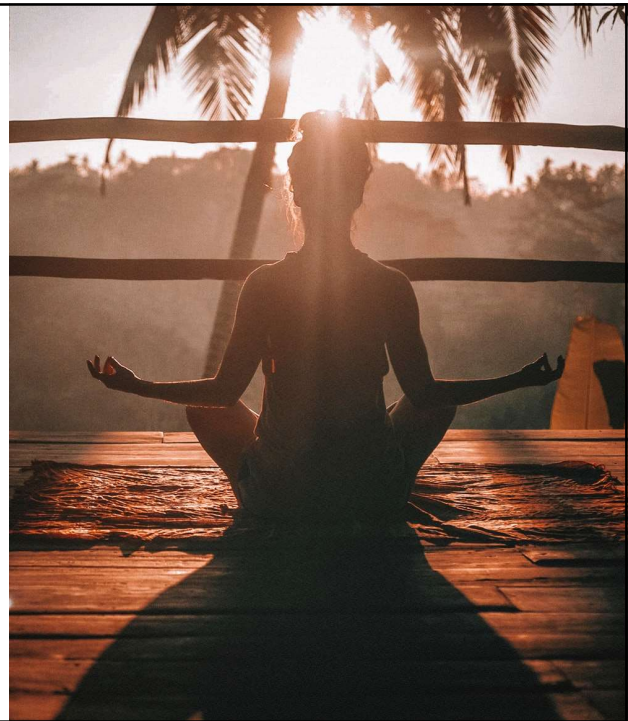
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What can you do for yourself?

- Take care of yourself
 - Eat well
 - Exercise
 - Sleep
- Develop hobbies away from the computer
- Get away from social media
- Light therapy
- Relaxation training
- Spend time with friends and family



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Where to get help

- Talk to your boss
- Talk to HR
- Talk to a friend
- See a therapist
- See a doctor



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What can you do as a friend?

- Listen nonjudgmentally
- Ask questions that show you care
- Be patient
- Don't be critical
- Check in on your friends
- Don't be confrontational
- Be honest about your concerns



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What not to say to people

- Pull yourself together
- Snap out of it
- Just pray about it
- You have the same illness as my _____
- Just distract yourself
- You don't need medication

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What not to say to people

- Stop acting crazy
- Just don't worry about it
- Cheer up
- Therapy is for people who are weak
- Things will be better in the morning
- Stop focusing on the bad stuff

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What to say to people

- You can be honest with me.
- Let's go somewhere quiet or take a walk
- How is your treatment going?
- Can I help you find help?
- Do you want to talk about it?
I'm always here for you.



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What to say to people

- How are you really doing?
- I'm really sorry you're going through this. I'm here for you if you need me.
- I'm so glad you are in my life.
- That sounds really difficult. How are you coping?
- Are you looking for my perspective or would you rather I listen?

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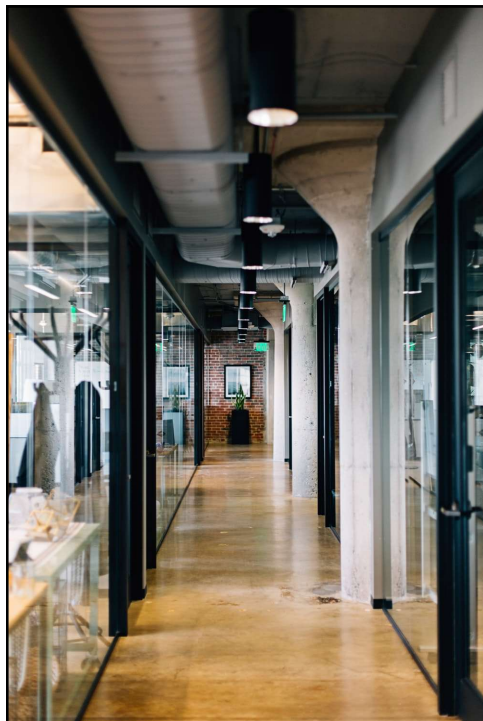


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04 What Employers Can Do



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What can you do as an employer to achieve wellness?

- Create open vacation policies
- Offer flexible work arrangements
- Honor a 40-hour work week
- Respect boundaries
- Reconsider open-plan office layouts
- Offer comprehensive health insurance that includes mental health

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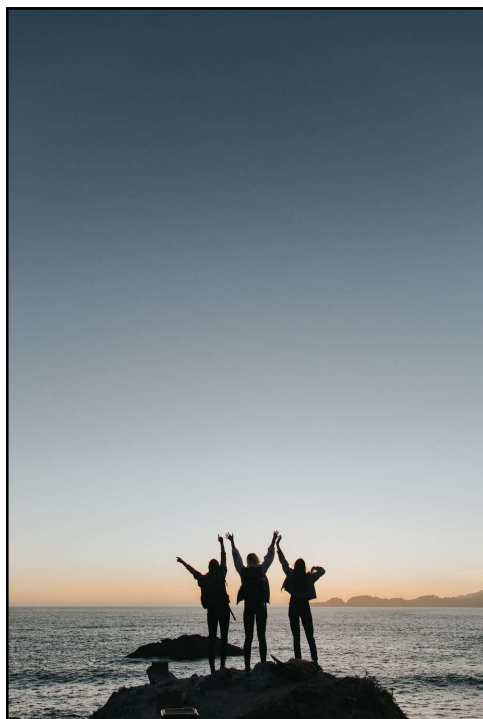
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What can you do as an employer to achieve wellness?

- Educate and learn to develop empathy – Workplace Mental Health Topics website
- Provide accommodations for employees - Job Accommodations Network website
- Lead by example
 - Set healthy boundaries
 - Practice selfcare
 - Ask for help




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Employers Gain

- Improved attitudes towards mental health and decreased stigma around mental illness
- Improved employee engagement
- Increased productivity and creativity
- Increased sense of overall wellbeing
- Improved levels of trust in the workplace
- Increased satisfaction with leadership

https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Workplace-Mental-Health-in-Canada_CMHA_Feb2016-1.pdf



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Employers Gain

- Improved interpersonal relationships at work
- Increased sense of commitment and loyalty to the company
- Decreased inefficiency and errors
- Decreased rate of absenteeism
- Decrease in employee turnover
- Decrease in lost revenue due to missed work

https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Workplace-Mental-Health-in-Canada_CMHA_Feb2016-1.pdf

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Good News

- 80% of treated employees report improvements

<https://www.bustle.com/p/9-workplace-mental-health-statistics-that-show-why-this-years-world-mental-health-day-theme-is-so-important-2840292>


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Surviving a Pandemic

- Connection
 - Schedule socials
 - Don't just write
 - Check in on others
 - Share your experiences
- Calmness
 - DON'T PANIC
 - Turn off the news
 - Use local government websites to stay up to date and WHO
 - Do something for yourself
 - Anything, go for a run, read a book, clean the house, etc.





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Surviving a Pandemic


- Happiness
 - Get outside if you can
 - Get some exercise
 - Accept you aren't perfect
 - Look for the positives
 - Practice mindfulness
- Coping
 - Set boundaries between life and work
 - Have a designated work area
 - Establish a routine close to what you had before
 - Take breaks, you aren't your desk at 8 hours a day at work



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Surviving a Pandemic

- Health
 - Physical and mental are intertwined
 - Again go outside if you can
 - Get some exercise (videos are available online)
 - Meditation
 - Yoga
 - Eat healthy
- Sleep
 - Stress has a tendency to mess this up
 - Try not to working from your bedrooms
 - Stay off work stuff after hours

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Surviving a Pandemic

- Fulfillment
 - Productivity can feel like it's down when working remotely
 - Don't over work, do what you can
 - Take regular breaks
 - Chat to family, friends, colleagues not about work
 - Set agreement with boss on realistic goals based on your situation
 - Stick to a routine
 - Feel a sense of accomplishment even in small tasks
 - Look out for others that might be feeling alone

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Mental health isn't just mental illness – it's part of being human. – Anonymous

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Podcasts

- The Anxious Achievers
- DBSAlliance
- Depresh Mode with John Moe
- Good Life Project
- The Happiness Lab with Dr. Laurie Santos
- The Hilarious World of Depression
- Inside Mental Health: A Psych Central Podcast
- Live Happy Now
- Mental Illness Happy Hour (NSFW)
- Neurodiversity at Work; Eliminating Kryptonite, Enabling Superheroes
- The Science of Happiness

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Blog Posts From the Community

- **Tracy Boggiano** - <https://tracyboggiano.com/archive/2020/03/living-with-bipolar-during-a-pandemic/>
- **Kellyn Pot'Vin Gorman** - <https://dbakevlar.com/2019/12/adhd-and-certification-tests-a-tale-of-disaster/>
- **Eugene Meidinger**- <https://www.sqlgene.com/2018/11/06/how-i-deal-with-depression/>
- **Matthew Roche** - <https://ssbipolar.com/2018/10/28/talking-about-mental-health-is-important/>
- **Mark Vaillancourt** - <https://markvsq.com/2017/10/a-bully-and-a-hero-depression-and-my-daughter/>
- **Taib Ali** – <https://sqlworldwide.com/tsql-tuesday-132-roundup/>

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Resources

- **Open Sourcing Mental Illness Resources** - <https://osmihelp.org/resources>
- **Workplace Mental Health – Mental Health Topics** - <http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/Mental-Health-Topics>
- **Job Accommodations Network** - <https://askjan.org/>
- **Are You More Than Okay: The State of Mental Health in Tech in 2016** - <https://modelviewculture.com/pieces/are-you-more-than-okay-the-state-of-mental-health-in-tech-in-2016>
- **Supporting Mental Health in the Tech Workplace** - <https://www.infoq.com/articles/mental-health-tech-workplace/>
- **Mental Health in the Tech Industry** - <https://twloha.com/blog/mental-health-in-the-tech-industry/>

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Resources

- **World Mental Health Day: It's time for the tech industry to address the issue** - <https://diversityq.com/world-mental-health-day-its-time-for-the-tech-industry-to-address-the-issue-1507895/>
- **Geeks & Depression: Highlighting Mental Health Issues In The Tech Community** - <https://www.tpr.org/post/geeks-depression-highlighting-mental-health-issues-tech-community>
- **9 Ways To Fight Mental Health Stigma** - <https://www.nami.org/blogs/nami-blog/october-2017/9-ways-to-fight-mental-health-stigma>
- **Suicide Statistics - AFSP** - <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/suicide-statistics/>
- **World Health Organization – Mental Health in the Workplace** - https://www.who.int/mental_health/in_the_workplace/en/



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Resources

- **The Difference Between Mental Health and Mental Illness -**
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/reaching-across-the-divide/201804/the-difference-between-mental-health-and-mental-illness>
- **A Programmer Burnout Story; How to Recognize it And Avoid it -**
<https://www.coderhood.com/a-programmer-burnout-story-how-to-recognize-it-and-avoid-it/>
- **10 Different Types of Harassment in the Workplace -**
<https://opinionfront.com/different-types-of-harassment-in-workplace>
- **It's Time to Get Serious About Mental Health in the Technology -**
<https://digit.fyi/mental-health-technology-industry/>
- **BIMA Tech Inclusion Diversity Report 2019 Key Takeaways -** <https://bima.co.uk/bima-tech-inclusion-diversity-report-2019-key-takeaways/>
- **Developer Burnout: Why It Happens and What We Can Do About It -**
<https://codesubmit.io/blog/developer-burnout/>

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Resources


- **Supporting Mental Health in the Tech Workplace -**
<https://www.infoq.com/articles/mental-health-tech-workplace/>
- **Getting Honest About Mental Health In The World Of Tech Startups -**
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/08/08/getting-honest-about-mental-health-in-the-world-of-tech-startups/#7b48fbd8641a>
- **Tech Has a Depression Problem -**
<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/09/tech-has-a-depression-problem/380004/>
- **Mental health: Tech's biggest taboo -** <https://www.uktech.news/need-to-know-2/mental-health-tech-biggest-taboo-georgie-barrat-20170314>
- **Mental Health Awareness Week - the tech industry crisis that organizations need to tackle -** <https://diginomica.com/mental-health-awareness-week-tech-industry-crisis-organizations-need-tackle>
- **7 Areas of mental wellbeing to nurture while working in self-isolation -**
<https://fowinsights.com/insights/wellbeing/7-areas-mental-wellbeing-nurture-working-self-isolation/>

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Self Evaluation



| Thriving <i>"I got this."</i> | Surviving <i>"Something isn't right."</i> | Struggling <i>"I can't keep this up."</i> | In Crisis <i>"I can't survive this."</i> |
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| Normal sleep patterns and appetite | Muscle tension, low energy, headaches | Self-medicating with substances, food, or other numbing activities | Easily enraged or aggressive |
| | | | Careless mistakes or inability to focus |
| | | | Feeling numb, lost, or out of control |
| | | | Withdrawal from relationships |
| | | | Dependence on substances, food, or other numbing activities to cope |


Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V., Evlander, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

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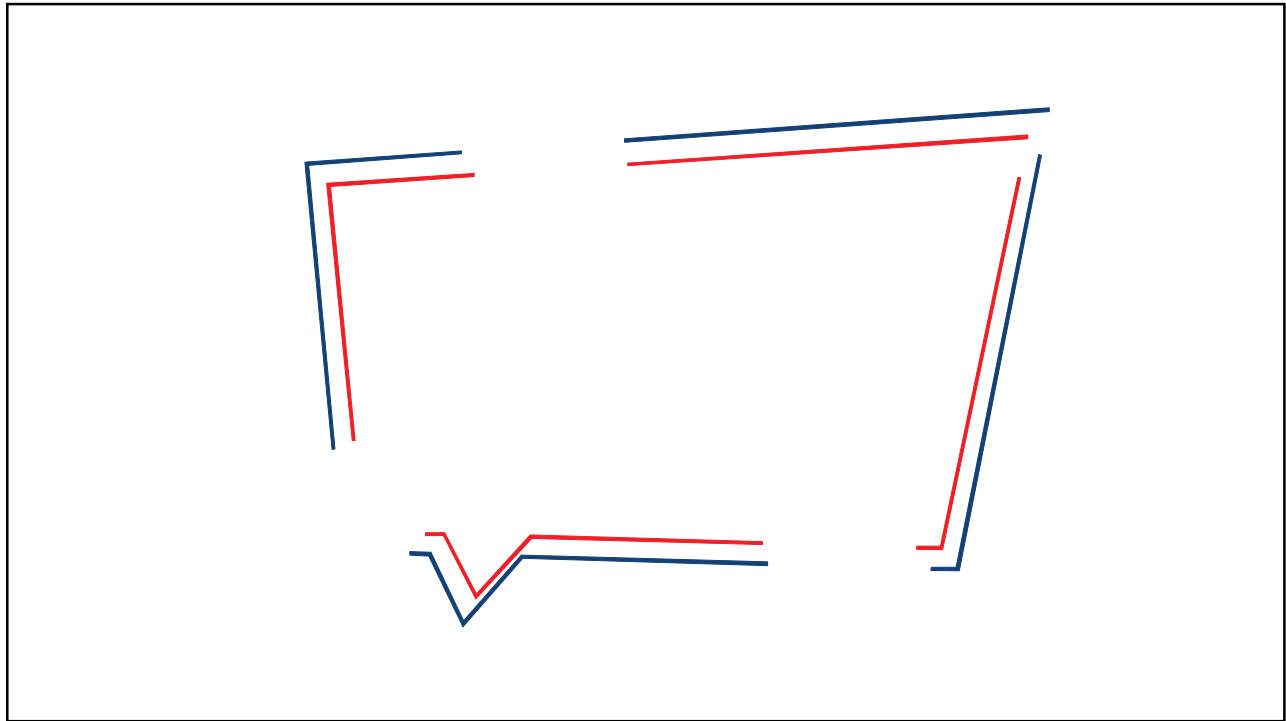
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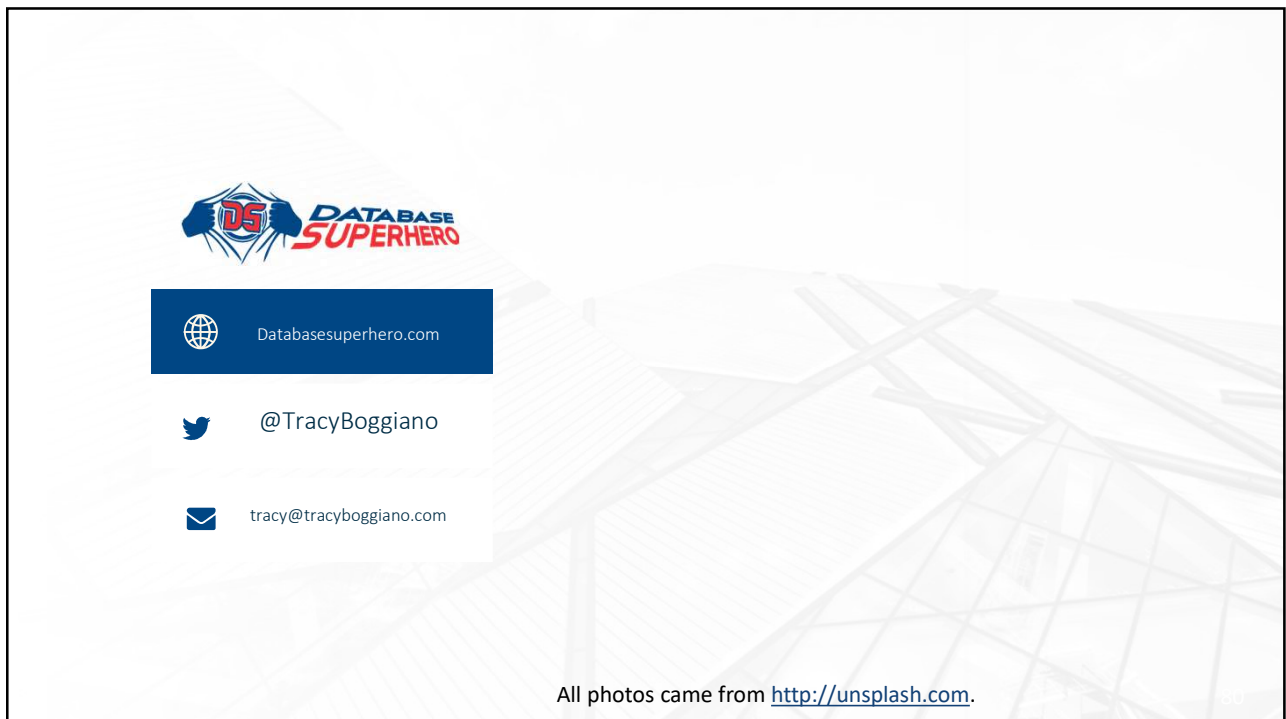


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