

WELLBEING & BURNOUT TOOLS: READ BEFORE USE

Preface

What this is: A practical aid for leaders and teams to reflect on workload, energy, and ways of working - and to hold humane, constructive conversations about wellbeing and burnout.

What this is not: A clinical assessment, diagnosis, or treatment plan. It does not replace professional mental-health or medical support.

Your role as a leader: Create space, ask curious questions, agree small, concrete next steps, and **signpost** to appropriate support where needed. Do not probe beyond your remit, promise confidentiality you cannot keep, or hold information you are obliged to escalate.

If you're worried about someone's safety: Follow your organisation's **safeguarding policy** immediately and seek advice from a designated safeguarding lead/HR. If there is **immediate risk**, contact local emergency services.

Important note and disclaimer:

*These tools support reflective practice and wellbeing conversations at work. It is **not** counselling, therapy, or medical advice.*

*Leaders should use the tools to **notice**, **listen**, and **signpost**. If someone may be at risk of harm, follow your organisation's **safeguarding** and **escalation** procedures and direct them to professional support.*

CONTENTS

Page 3 How to roll this out internally

Page 4 Personal Reflection Tool

Page 11 Conversation Guide - 1:1 and Team

Page 21 Where to get help

How to Roll This Out Internally

These tools are most effective when introduced with care and intention. Here are a few ways to embed them into your team's rhythm and culture:

Start with a pilot: Begin small - test the tools with one team, project group, or leadership circle. Gather quick feedback and refine before scaling.

Model from the top: When leaders use the tools themselves and share reflections openly, it sets the tone for honesty and psychological safety across the organisation.

Make it routine: Integrate short wellbeing check-ins or reflection questions into existing rhythms - e.g. team meetings, supervision sessions, or quarterly reviews.

Create safe spaces: Signal that these conversations are about care, not performance. Clarify that nothing shared in wellbeing check-ins will be used for evaluation or HR purposes.

Support your facilitators: Equip line managers or team leads with simple guidance (or a short orientation session) so they feel confident using the tools effectively.

Link to broader initiatives: Align with existing wellbeing, equity, or leadership development efforts - this keeps the tools relevant and sustainable.

Keep learning: Encourage anonymous feedback and share stories of what's working. Continuous learning keeps the tools alive and responsive to changing team needs.

PERSONAL REFLECTION TOOL: WELLBEING & BURNOUT PREVENTION

A self-guided companion for leaders to reconnect with balance, awareness, and purpose

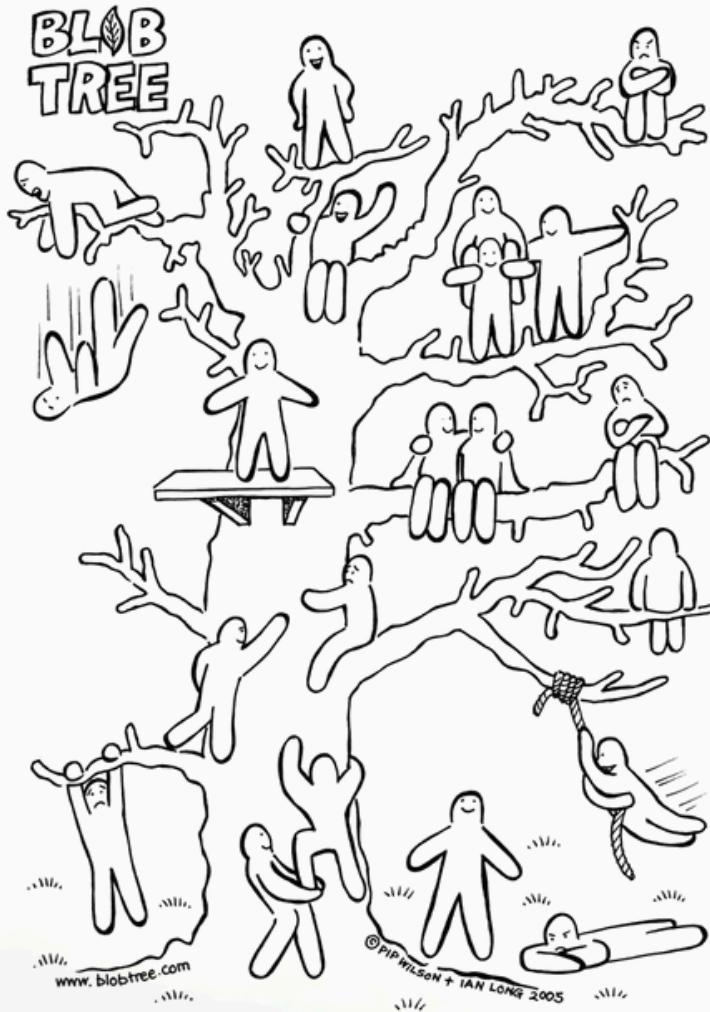
Purpose of This Tool

Leadership is meaningful work, but it can also drain our energy, focus, and sense of self. This tool invites you to pause, reflect, and gently notice where you are emotionally, mentally, and physically. It's not about perfection, but awareness - the first step to prevention and restoration.

There's no "right" rhythm: you can use it weekly, monthly, or whenever you feel out of balance. What matters is coming back to yourself.

Modular Use

These tools are designed to be modular - you can use the different sections independently or as a complete process. We recommend you adapt the prompts, language, and format to suit your context, culture, and capacity.



The Blob Tree — Where Am I Right Now?

Visual emotional awareness

Take a moment to imagine or draw a tree filled with figures (or “blobs”) in different positions: some climbing, some helping others up, some resting, some falling, some alone at the edge.

Ask yourself:

- Which figure represents me *today*?
- Which figure represents *how I'd like to feel*?
- What's happening around me that makes me feel like this?
- What support or condition could help me move closer to where I want to be?

The Wheel of Life — Exploring Balance

Understanding what fills or drains your energy

Draw a circle divided into 8 segments, each representing an area of life that sustains you:

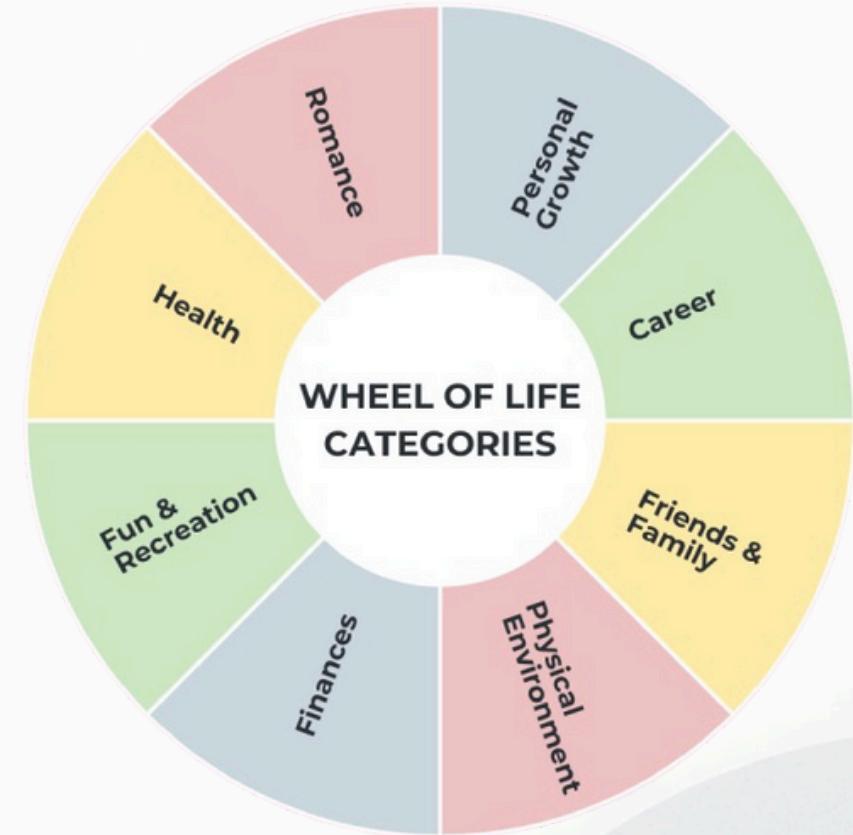
- 💼 Career
- 💬 Friends & Family
- 🧘 Health & Wellbeing
- ❤️ Romance
- 💡 Personal Growth
- 🏡 Finances
- 🌈 Fun & Recreation
- 🌿 Physical Environment

Rate each area from **1 (low satisfaction)** to **5 (high satisfaction)**.

Shade the segments according to your current state. The more uneven the wheel, the bumpier the ride.

Reflect:

- What area feels most full? Which feels neglected?
- What one small shift could bring more balance this week?
- Where do I most need to invest care?



The Fight / Flight / Freeze / Fawn Tool — Where Am I Operating From This Week?

Understanding your nervous system and patterns under stress

Our bodies often respond to burnout before our minds do. Use this tool to locate yourself in the moment:

State	Description	Common Signs	Helpful Shifts
 Fight	Feeling angry, controlling, impatient	Tension, irritability, urgency	Pause. Breathe. Step away before reacting.
 Flight	Feeling anxious, overworking, restless	Rushing, avoiding rest, perfectionism	Slow your pace. Take short breaks.
 Freeze	Feeling stuck or numb	Low motivation, confusion, detachment	Ground yourself. Move gently. Connect with someone.
 Fawn	People-pleasing or over-accommodating	Saying yes when you mean no	Reconnect with your needs. Practice small “no’s.”

Ask:

- Which of these modes am I in right now?
- What triggered it?
- What helps me return to a calm, grounded space?
- Who or what supports that regulation for me?

Reflection & Journaling Prompts

Building emotional literacy and leadership self-awareness

Self-Check (Short Reflection, 5 minutes)

Use a 1–5 scale:

- My energy feels replenished (1–5)
- I'm acting from calm rather than reactivity (1–5)
- I feel supported and connected (1–5)
- I'm setting healthy boundaries (1–5)
- I can disconnect from work (1–5)

Then ask:

- What feels heavy right now?
- What feels light?
- What can I do to move one point higher in any area?

Deep Journaling (10–15 minutes)

Pick one prompt and write freely:

- What emotions have been most present lately? What might they be telling me?
- When did I feel most energized this week? Most drained?
- What boundaries am I neglecting and what would protecting them give me?
- Who truly understands the pressures I face? Have I reached out to them?
- What story am I telling myself about burnout and is it true?
- What would leading from calm and compassion look like this week?

Leadership Reflections

- How am I modelling balance and wellbeing for others?
- Do I create space for honest conversations about stress and workload?
- When was the last time I changed my approach after someone's feedback?
- What values are guiding me through this season?
- How can I normalize asking for help - for myself and my team?

Final Words

Thank you for making it here! Please, may we gift you a quote:

“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

— Nelson Mandela

This tool is not a checklist - it's a mirror. Return to it whenever you feel ungrounded and let it remind you: your wellbeing is not a reward for good leadership, it's the foundation of it.

CONVERSATION GUIDE TOOL – BURNOUT & WELLBEING

A practical, human-centered framework to hold meaningful conversations about burnout and wellbeing

Purpose of This Tool

This tool provides a structured playbook for leaders to effectively facilitate difficult conversations about burnout and wellbeing, both one-to-one and in teams. This work is based on values of curiosity, compassion, hope, and accountability, and grounded in psychological safety.

Modular Use

These tools are designed to be modular - you can use the different sections independently or as a complete process. We recommend you adapt the prompts, language, and format to suit your organisation's context, culture, and capacity.

General Tips for Sensitive Conversations

Helping you to prepare mentally and emotionally for wellbeing conversations - ensuring presence, empathy, and psychological safety.

Before the Conversation

- Am I calm, focused, ready to listen?
- Do I know my boundaries and referral options?
- Take a breath or short walk.
- Enter with curiosity, not a fixed state of mind.
- Remember that psychological safety is a behaviour, not a promise

Important Opening Framing

- **Consent & comfort:** *"We'll go at your pace - share only what you're comfortable sharing. We can pause or stop at any time."*
- **Confidentiality limits:** *"I'll keep this private within policy. If I'm worried about anyone's safety, I may need to escalate. If possible, I'll tell you first."*
- **Scope of the conversation:** *"I'm here to listen and help with work factors we can influence. I'm not a clinician; if things arise where specialist help could be useful, I can help signpost options."*

During

- Be honest about your state: *I'm a bit tired but I want to listen.*
- Use silence. Acknowledge feelings.
- Avoid labelling; use the person's own words.
- Prioritise workload, boundaries, role clarity, team norms, and practical support.
- Avoid forced disclosure: Invite, don't require. Focus on team ways of working rather than personal history.
- If sensitive topics arise, note them and arrange an appropriate follow-up - don't "hold" complex issues in a single meeting.

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After

- Note themes.
- Record agreed actions, owners, and dates - **not** sensitive personal details.
- Follow up within two weeks.
- Offer a check-in and share signposts discussed.
- Communicate continuity: *You mentioned this - how's it going?* Raise systemic issues carefully.

Boundaries

- You're not a therapist.
- Listen, empathize, refer.
- Keep confidentiality unless risk of harm.

Reflect and Learn

- What surprised me?
- What did I learn?
- What might I do differently?
- Did I act on my promises?
- Ask:
 - *Are these check-ins useful?*
 - *Anything we could change?.*

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1:1 Conversation Guide

These wellbeing conversations should always be voluntary. Leaders are encouraged to offer them regularly while recognizing that, in some cultural contexts, hierarchy or power dynamics may affect how comfortable team members feel sharing personal reflections.

Purpose

Regular, intentional conversations between leaders and team members to explore wellbeing, workload, and connection - not just performance. Used after challenges, during tension or misunderstanding, or as part of a standing monthly rhythm.

When to have the Conversation

- Regular touchpoints
- After particularly demanding work phases
- When noticing signs of fatigue in team members
- Proactively creating space for these conversations to avoid potential issues in future.

Setting the Scene

- Choose a neutral, relaxed space
- Avoid performance-review rooms
- Clarify intent: *This isn't about performance, it's about how you're doing.*
- Reduce hierarchy: sit side-by-side, offer water, minimize note-taking.

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Tone and Language

- Keep it plain, human, inclusive.
- Lead with curiosity, compassion, hope, accountability.
- Avoid fixing (*You should...*); use collaboration (*What if we tried...*)
- Adapt to cultural comfort levels.

Starting with Curiosity and Care

- *I wanted to check in on how you're feeling about everything lately.*
- Create space for professional and wellbeing reflections: *What's been energizing or draining lately?*
- Invite feedback on leadership: *What can I do differently to support you?*
- Share one thing you're working on personally.

Conversation Starters & Prompts

- *How are you, really?*
- *If your week had a headline, what would it be?*
- *What's been energizing or draining you?*
- *What helps you recharge?*
- *How can I support you better?*
- *What's one small action that could make next week lighter?*
- *What have you been up to lately? Any specific areas you need some guidance on?*

Psychological Safety

- *There are no wrong answers - I want to understand what's working and what's difficult.*
- Reinforce that honesty is safe.
- Treat struggles as shared learning.
- Acknowledge courage: *Thank you for being open - that helps me lead better.*

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Co-creating Solutions

- Explore options together, not as directives.
- *What might help you feel more balanced?*
- Normalize rest and time off; plan back-ups.
- Leaders should also reassure team members that they maintain an open-door policy for ongoing conversations or support.

Follow-up and Accountability

- Within two weeks revisit: *Last time you mentioned X — how has that been?*
- Note themes, not details.
- Escalate systemic issues responsibly.
- Trust grows through follow-up, not one-time talks.

Boundaries and Escalation

- Listen and care, but know limits.
- *That sounds heavy — can I help you connect with [support resource]?*
- Maintain confidentiality unless there's risk of harm.

Personal Reflection

- After each check-in, ask:
 - What surprised me?
 - Did I listen more than I spoke?
 - What might I try differently?
- Go through some of the processes in the accompanying **Personal Reflection Tool**

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Team Conversation Guide

Purpose

Structured, open, team conversations to explore how people are doing - not only what they deliver, but how they work together.

Used to strengthen trust, inclusion, and collective wellbeing.

When to have the Conversation

- Monthly rhythm
- After major projects
- After conflict
- When noticing disengagement.

Setting the Scene

- Sit in a circle or use breakout groups.
- Choose a comfortable, informal environment - not the usual meeting room.
- Set ground rules: *This is a safe space; we listen with respect and keep it confidential.*
- Normalize wellbeing: *We want to talk about how we're working together, not just what we deliver.*
- Rituals help - visuals (trees, emojis, "wheel of life") or simple openers like *How was your weekend?*

Tone and Language

- Keep it inclusive, curious, constructive.
- Use *we* more than *you*.
- Frame challenges as shared learning.
- End with gratitude and optimism.
- Trust grows from presence, honesty, and follow-through.

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Reading the Room

- Observe tone, silence, and energy as data
- Use teammates with strong empathy and emotional intelligence to sense dynamics
- Recommend resources (e.g Amy Edmondson, *Google Re:Work*).
- Use personality or style tools (DiSC, MBTI) to adapt approaches.
- Model authenticity: *I'm not in a great moment right now - can we talk later?*.

Starting with Curiosity and Inclusion

- Use open prompts: *What's working well for us, and what could we improve?*
- Invite everyone's voice: *Let's each share one insight from the last month.*
- Leaders speak last to model listening.

Conversation Starters & Prompts

- *What's something we're proud of this month?*
- *What did we handle well under pressure?*
- *If the team were a weather forecast today, what would it be?*
- *Which tree represents how you're feeling?*
- *Did everyone feel heard in recent discussions?*
- *Who would we like to thank today?*

Psychological Safety and Trust

- *This is a learning space, not a judgment space*
- Focus on patterns, not individuals
- Recognize vulnerability: *Thank you for speaking up*
- Reference Amy Edmondson and Google Re:Work for frameworks.
- Maintain trust with follow-through.

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Co-creating Solutions

- Summarize group insights: *What are we noticing collectively?*
- Turn them into experiments: *What's one change we'll try next week?*
- Bring anonymized 1:1 themes to address systemic issues.

Rituals and Habits

- Be intentional - wellbeing won't appear unless planned.
- Suggested:
 - Weekly 1-hour small-group check-ins
 - In-person gatherings
 - Gratitude rounds
 - Rotating facilitation.
- Optional: *Team Wheel of Life* to visualize balance across energy, learning, connection, workload.

Follow-up and Accountability

- Capture key themes briefly.
- Revisit at the next meeting: *We said we'd try X — how's it going?*
- Escalate if structural.
- Visible follow-up builds credibility.

Boundaries and Escalation

- Clarify what belongs in team reflection versus HR or wellbeing support.
- *Thank you for trusting us - let's connect you with the right help.*
- Protect confidentiality.

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Reflections for the Leader

- What did I notice about team energy or inclusion?
- Did I balance listening and guiding?
- What can I improve?
- Go through some of the processes in the accompanying **Personal Reflection Tool**

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Signposting - Where to Get Help

We recommend you create a customised localised version of this page for your organisation.

Internal

- HR / People Team: [name/email/phone]
- Safeguarding Lead: [name/email/phone]
- Employee Assistance Programme (EAP): [link/phone]

External and national support (UK example)

- **Samaritans (24/7):** Call **116 123** · www.samaritans.org - for anyone in emotional distress or struggling to cope.
- **Mind Infoline:** **0300 123 3393** · www.mind.org.uk - information and advice on mental health, services, and advocacy.
- **Shout (24/7 text line):** Text **SHOUT** to **85258** - for free, confidential text support with mental health or crisis.
- **NHS urgent mental health helplines:** [Find your local helpline](#) - available in every region of England.
- **Hub of Hope:** hubofhope.co.uk - national database of local mental health services and crisis support.
- **Urgent help:** If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call **999** or go to your nearest **A&E department**.

Multi-country support (example)

- **Find a Helpline:** findahelpline.com - global directory of verified emotional-support and crisis lines in 90+ countries.
- **IFRC Psychosocial Centre:** psccentre.org - guidance and links to local Red Cross / Crescent psychosocial support services.
- **Lifeline International Network:** lifeline-international.com/centres - connects to crisis centres worldwide.
- **Befrienders Worldwide:** befrienders.org - international network providing listening and suicide-prevention support.
- **WHO Mental Health Resources:** who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use - official WHO information and regional contacts
- **If you or someone else is in immediate danger:** Call your local **emergency number** (112 in the EU, 911 in North America, 000 in Australia, 999 in the UK, 119 in Kenya) or go to the **nearest hospital emergency department**.