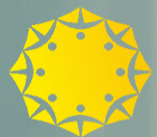
A photograph of four construction workers on a metal scaffold against a clear blue sky. Two workers in orange safety vests and white hard hats are on the upper level, while two others in red and teal shirts and white hard hats are on the lower level. The scaffold is made of vertical and horizontal metal poles.

Bringing psychosocial risk and critical risk together

Dr Dougal Sutherland
Principal Psychologist
Umbrella Wellbeing



UMBRELLA

Today's session

1. What's the relationship between psychosocial risk, physical risk, and critical risk?
2. Understanding the stress pathway model (exercise)
3. Examples of psychosocial risk → critical physical harm
4. How do we control for psychosocial risk?



Physical hazards

Examples of Physical Hazards



Slips, Trips, and Falls



Exposure to Harmful Substances



Confined Spaces



Electricity



Extreme Temperatures



Toxic Materials

SafetyCulture

Psychosocial hazards



Psychosocial hazards vs Psychosocial risk?



Psychosocial hazards: specific workplace conditions or factors that can increase the risk of harm to an employee's psychological, social, or physical wellbeing.

Psychosocial risk : potential for harm to an employee's psychological, social, or physical wellbeing due to factors (psychosocial hazards) in the workplace environment.

Hazard

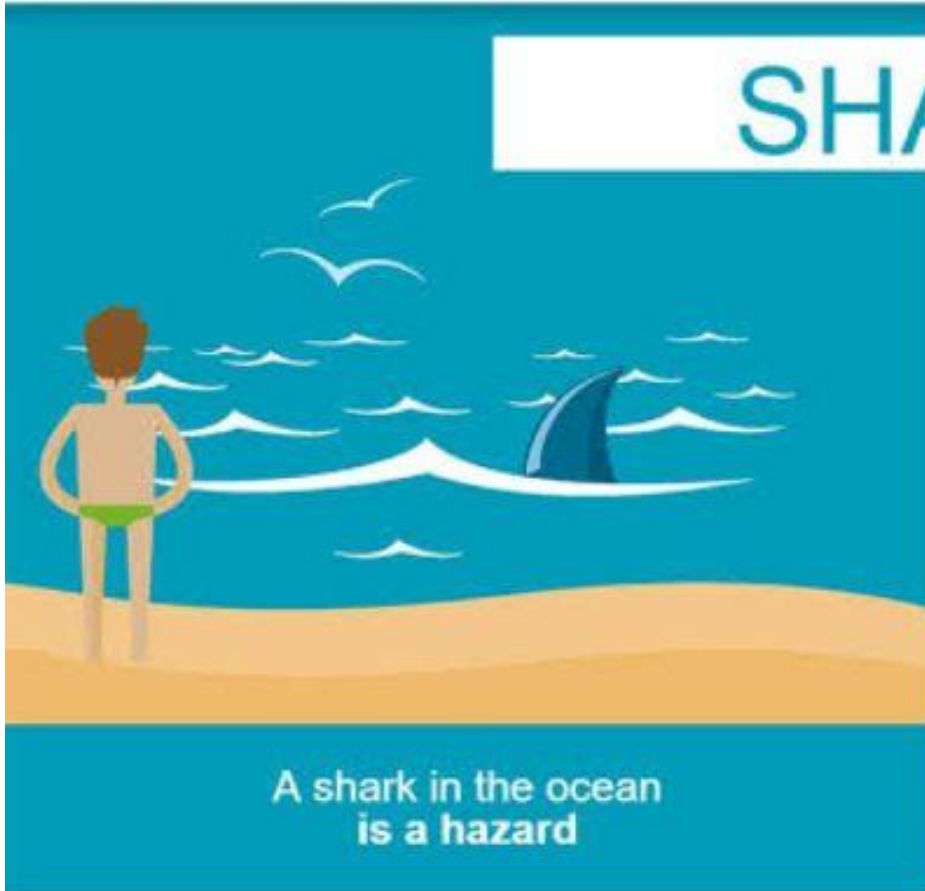
vs.

Risk

A hazard is something that has the **potential to cause harm**

Risk is the **probability** that a hazard **will cause harm**

SHARK





Critical risk

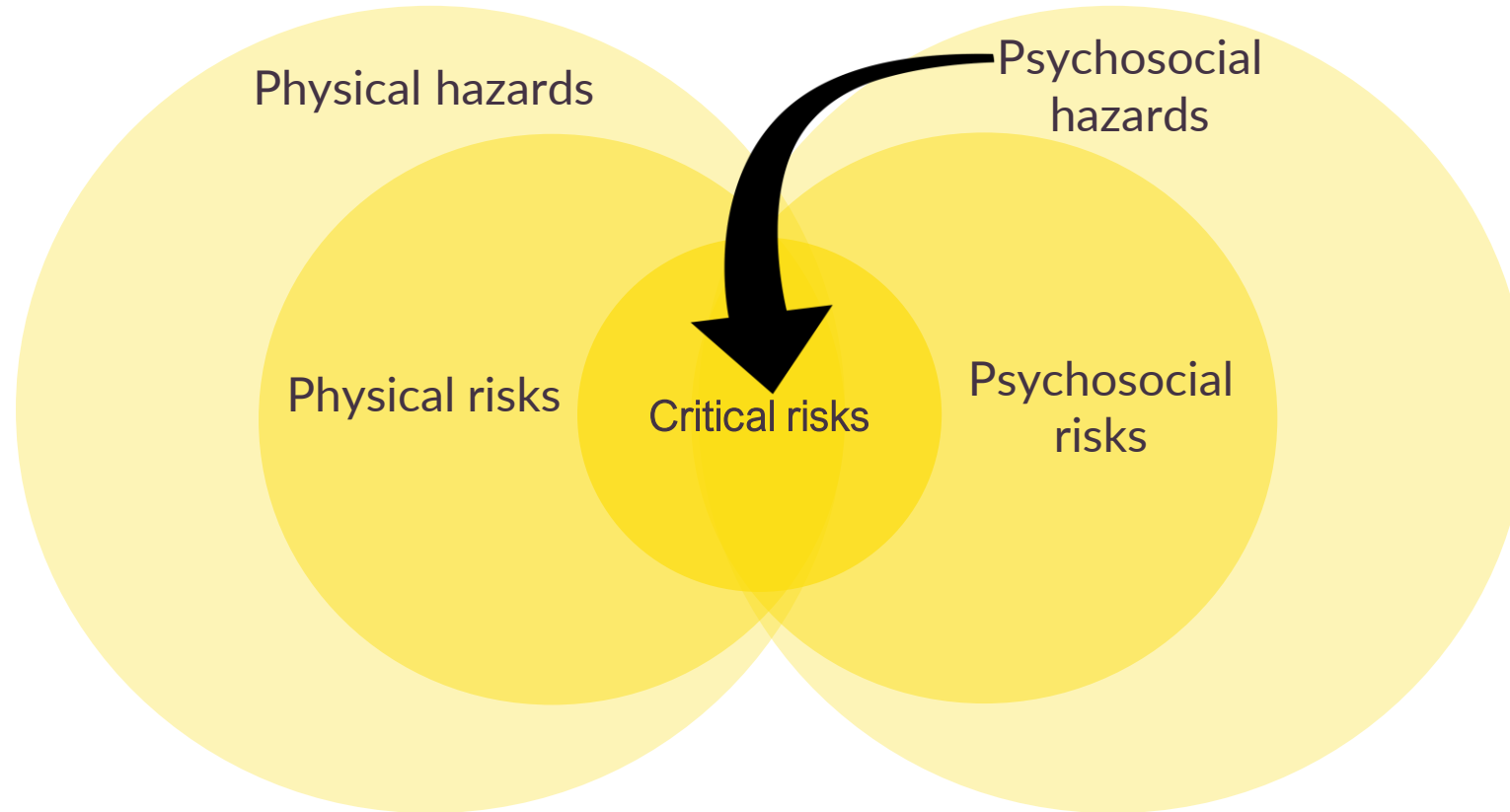
“There is an understanding that not all risks are equal in terms of the **potential for causing significant injury, illness, or fatality** and that a focus on those risks which, although occur less frequently, could **cause the greatest harm to workers** (“critical risks”) provides for a safer work environment for everyone.”

- *Government Health & Safety Lead*

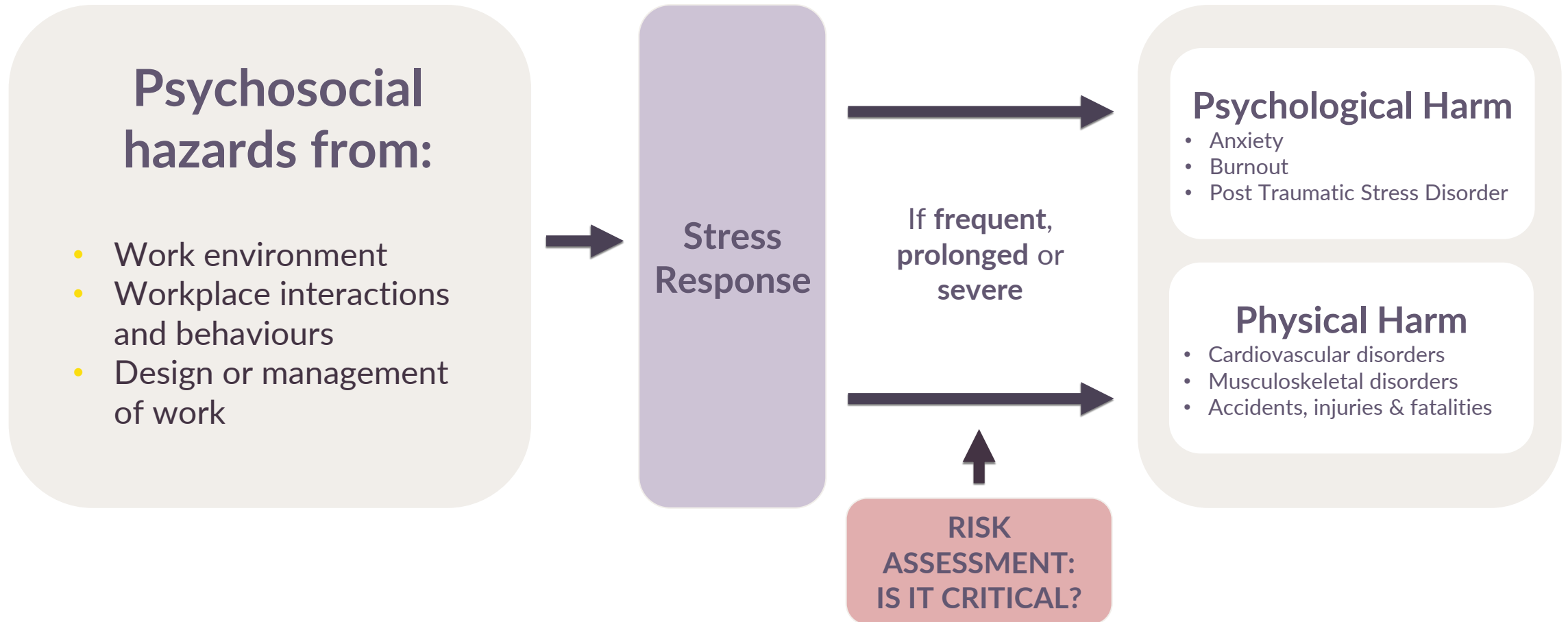
Separate?



Together?



The Stress Pathway

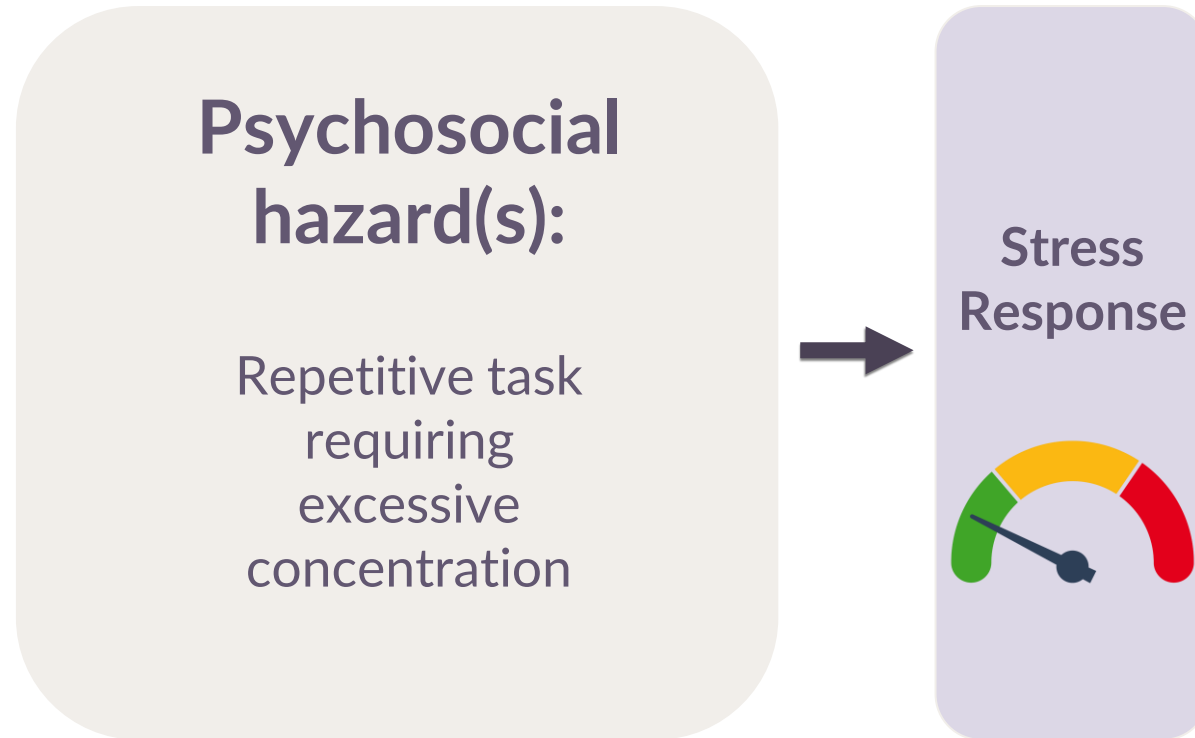


Here's how the Stroop test works:
I will give you a word, like this one

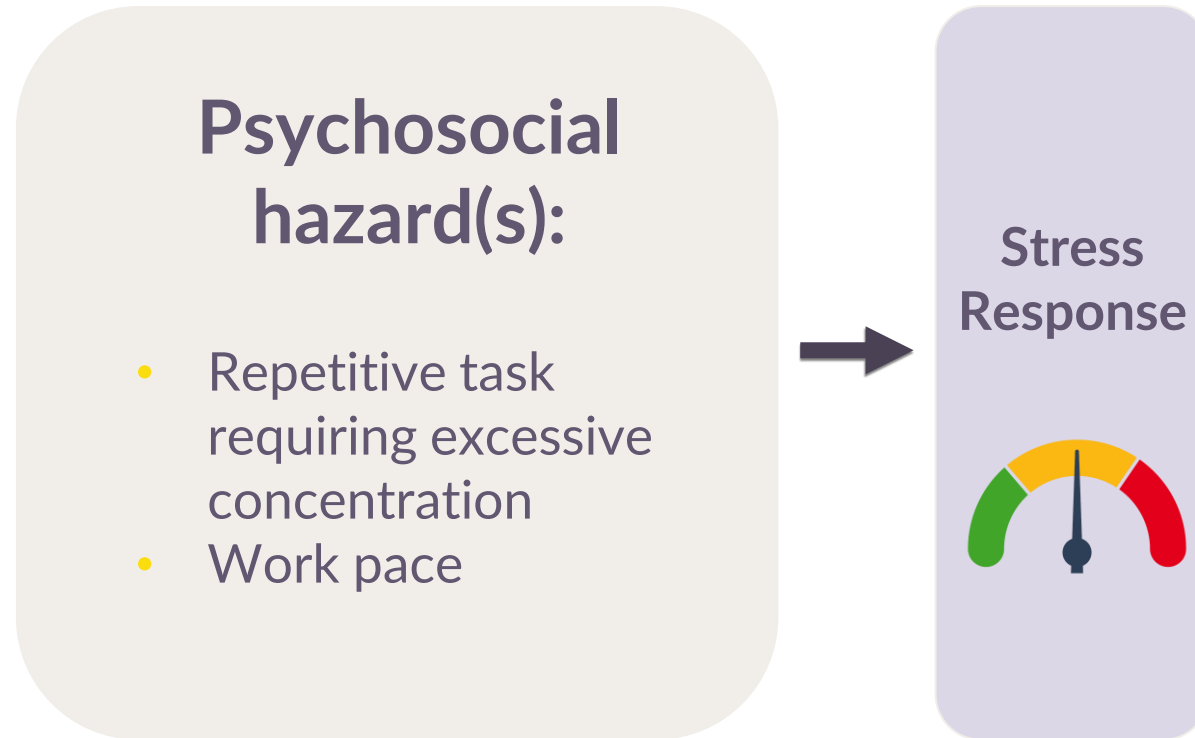
Red

and you will say the color of the word.

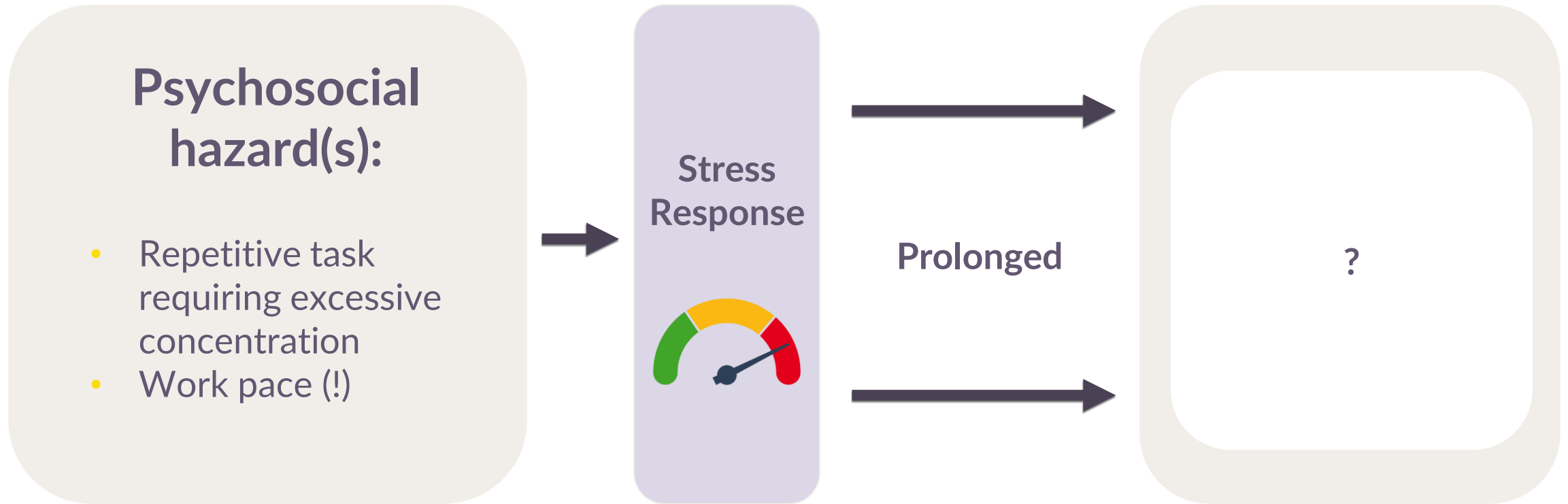
Round 1: BAU



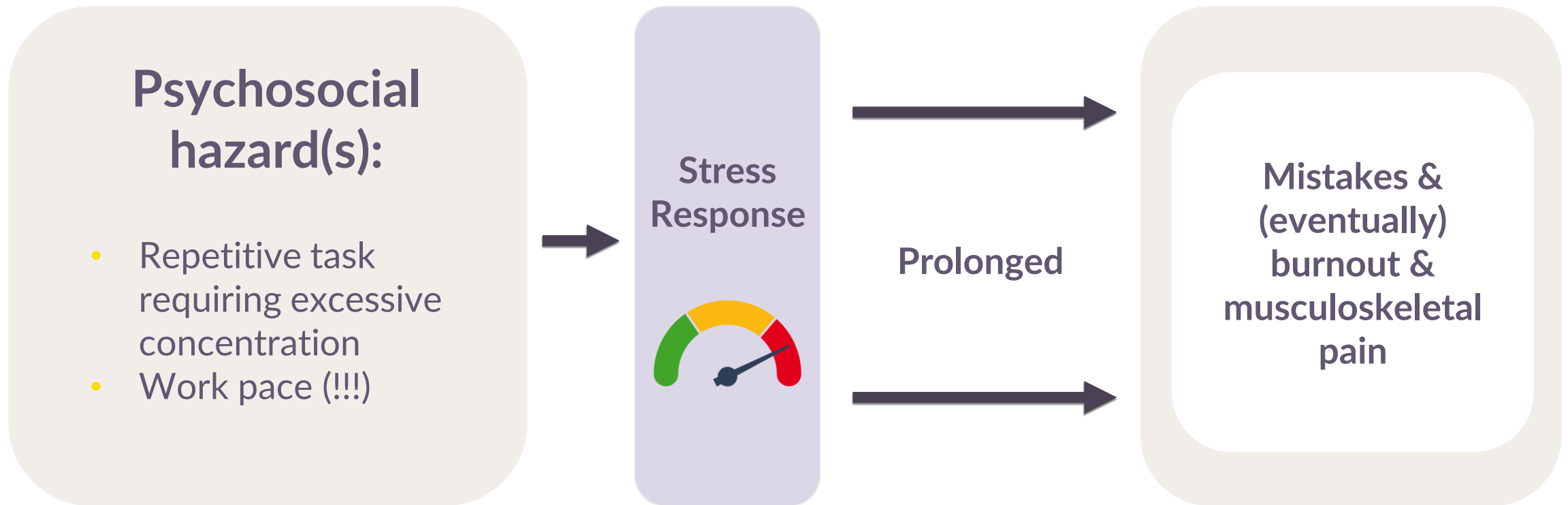
Round 2: Compounding hazards



Round 3: Prolonged exposure



Round 4: Prolonged & high risk





Now imagine your work is repetitive,
fast-paced and physically hazardous

How would stress alter your critical risk?



When do
psychosocial
hazards become
critical physical
risks?

WORKSAFE

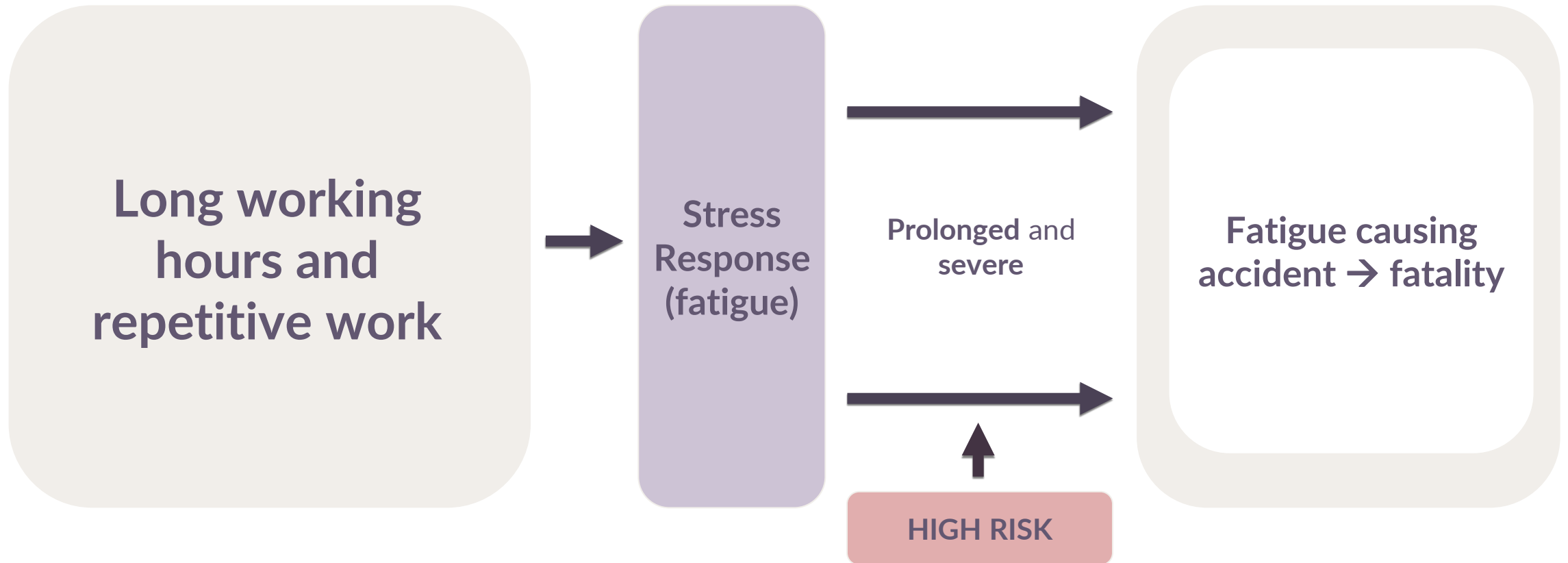
Mahi Haumaru Aotearoa

News and media

Tractor driver had worked almost 200 hours in the fortnight leading up to his death

10 May 2018

Stress pathway (long working hours)



Psychological harm can create physical harm

Culhana v State of New South Wales

Mr Stockwell was employed as a police officer by the State of New South Wales. In the course of his employment with the State, Mr Stockwell sustained a psychological injury as a result of struggling with recent jobs involving suicide. Liability to pay workers compensation for the psychological claim was accepted by the State.

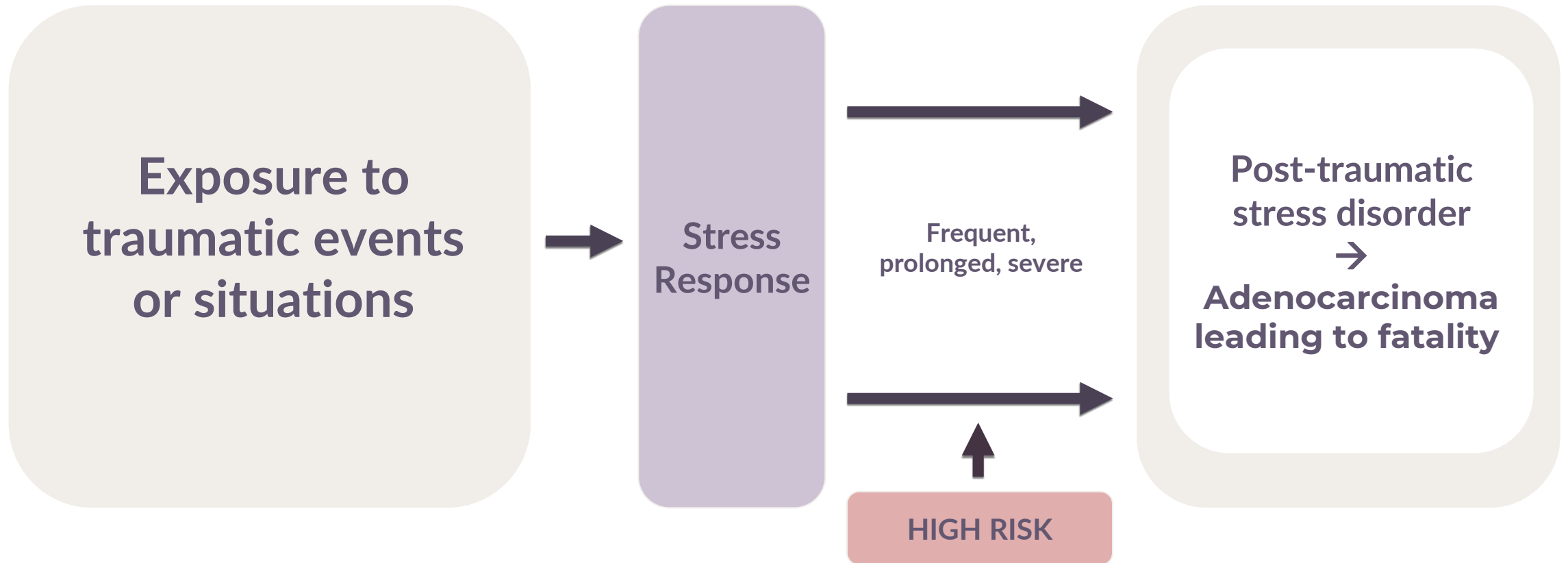
Two years later, Mr Stockwell was subsequently diagnosed with Barrett's oesophagus and adenocarcinoma. Liability to pay compensation for this injury was disputed. On 27 November 2022, Mr Stockwell died as a result of metastatic gastroesophageal functional carcinoma.


Evidence presented in court demonstrated that Mr. Stockwell's PTSD symptoms, exacerbated by his job stress, led to increased stomach acid secretion, causing gastroesophageal reflux disease (GORD) and eventually Barrett's oesophagus. His coping mechanisms included heavy alcohol and tobacco use, to relieve his symptoms of anxiety and PTSD, further aggravated these conditions.



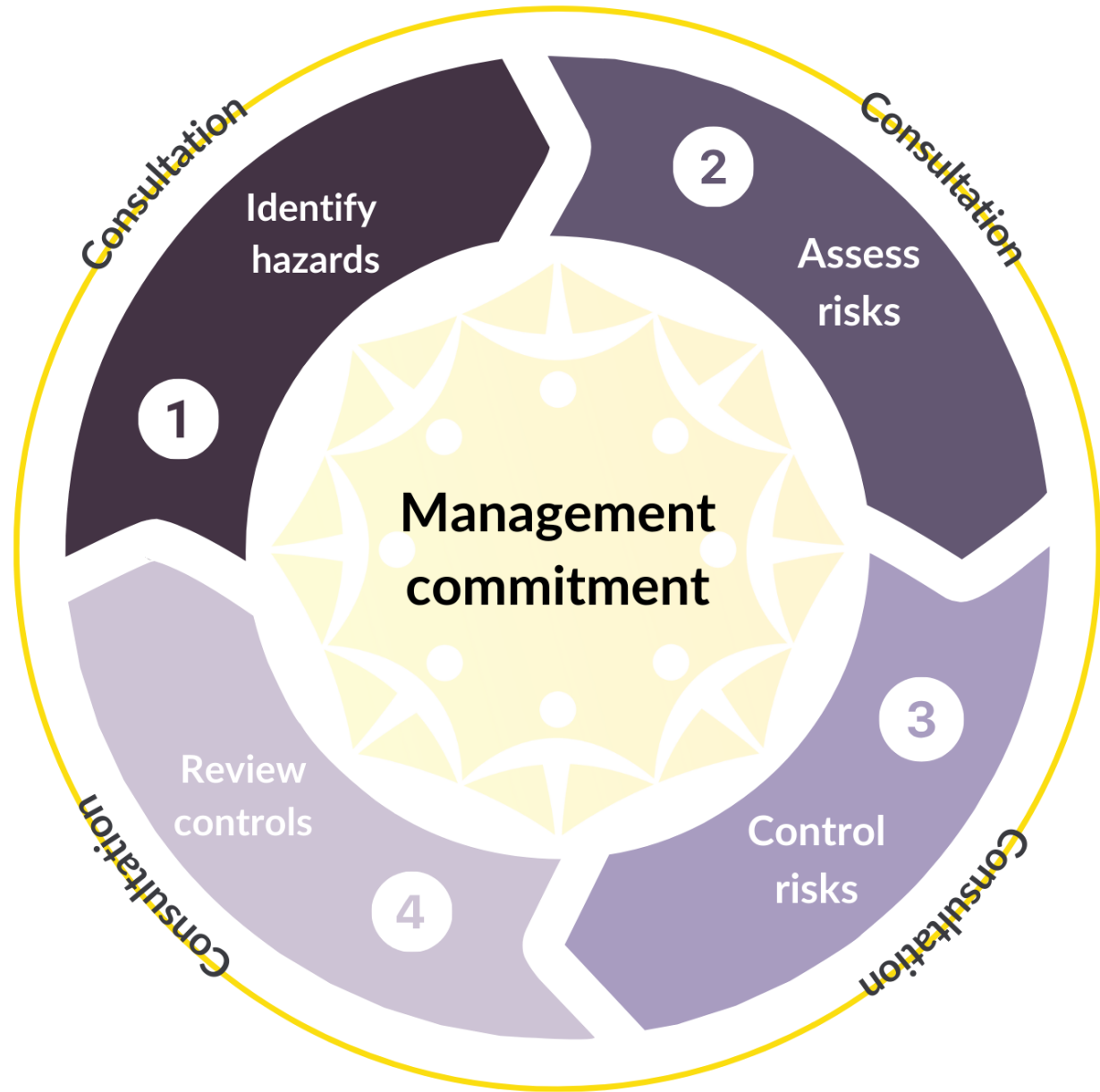
JACKSON McDONALD
MULTI-SECTOR LAW

Culhana v State of New South Wales





How do you
manage the risk
from psychosocial
hazards?



Psychosocial hazards need to be identified, and risks assessed and controlled, too.

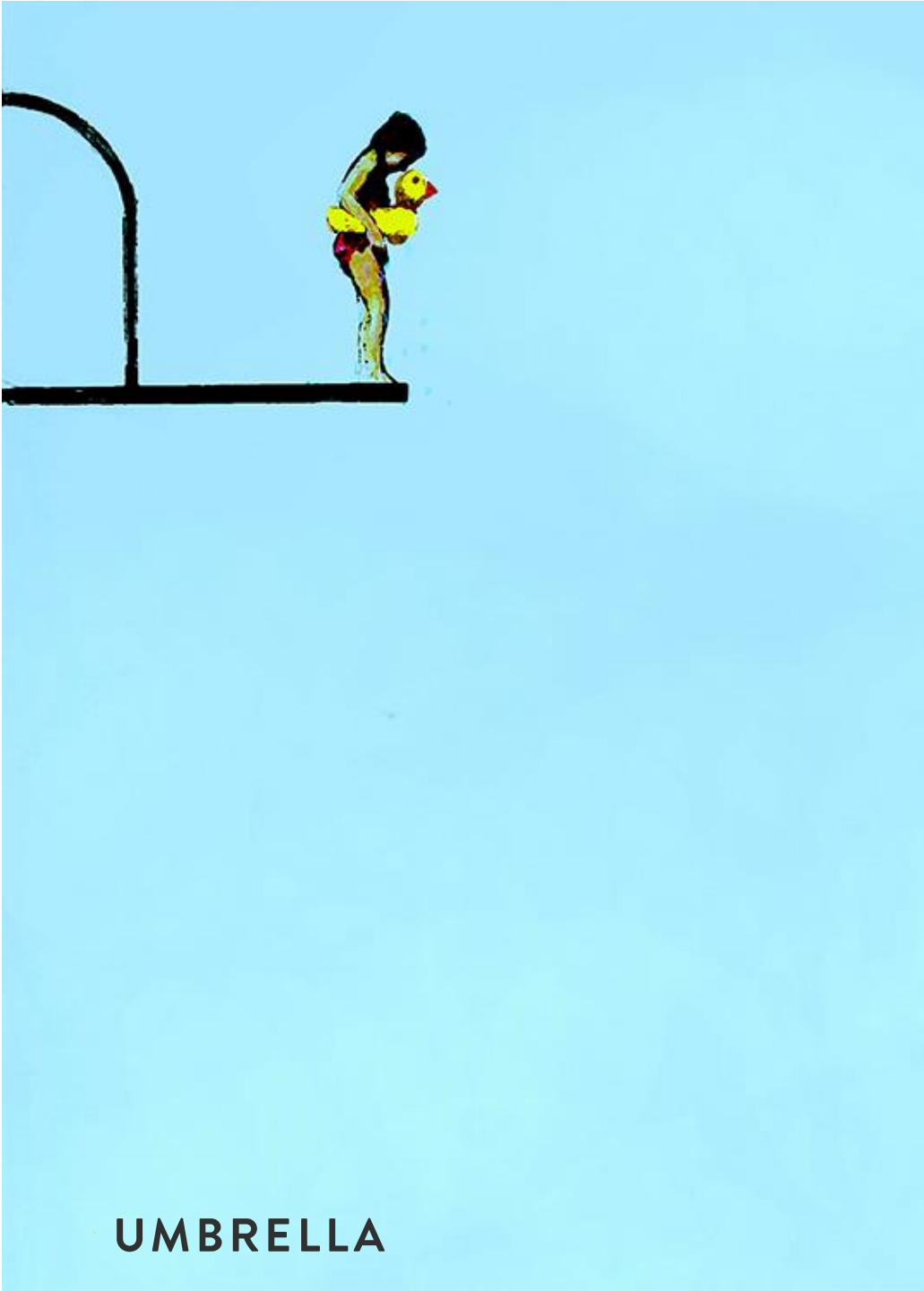
Example: Controlling for trauma exposure

- 1 Only involve essential workers in traumatic events/reviewing traumatic materials
- 2 Rotate workers through different tasks so that frequency of exposure is lower
- 3 Flag or password protect traumatic materials to stop accidental exposure
- 4 Increase breaks and recovery time if workers are exposed to traumatic events/materials
- 5 Increase support available to workers who are exposed to traumatic events/materials
- 6 Remove unnecessary exposure e.g., banning users after a serious breach



“We've reported near misses and accidents and so on and when we do a lot of that's ignored - sometimes guys get punished, reduced number of shifts, and that's the culture of management, that's how they treat us.”

Anonymous employee, 2021 RNZ interview



Physical safety starts with psychological safety

- 1 A climate in which people are comfortable being (and expressing) themselves.
- 2 The belief that you won't be punished when you make a mistake.
- 3 To know that others will have your back.

Amy Edmondson
Harvard University



Case study: Culture Change

“My experience is that we ask questions, but we don’t really listen to what is being said,” she says. “But when I say ‘listen’, it’s about empowering that voice as well, because the whole listen piece is about taking action when they do tell you something.”

“For the first six months, I was spat at, sworn at, screamed at [...] I apologised. I let them cry. I let them heal. Because no one had done that...”

But her first task was to build trust and respect. Rather than bringing in qualified health and safety people, she brought in great communicators who could sit in the lunchroom and chat with staff. She fronted the team, turning up every day at 7am, being visible, present and listening. That management visibility – other managers also joined her – was one of the biggest shifts [...]

It took 12 months to build the necessary trust and respect. A 2022 survey of [...] staff saw the safety and wellbeing score jump 16 points from 2020, to 74%.

Together.

Critical physical risk
increases with the
presence of psychosocial
risk

Physical
risk

Psychosocial
risk

Critical psychosocial
risk increases with the
presence of physical
risk

Thank you

- Wellbeing and Psychosocial Risk Assessment & Strategy
- Mental Health and Leadership Training and eLearning
- Enhanced EAP



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