

Application Guide

ADDRESSING ORGANIZATIONAL LANGUISHING WITH ADAM GRANT



BOTTOM LINE:

Since the pandemic began, many people have felt a sense of emptiness and stagnation as a response. That feeling is called languishing, and it dulls our motivation, disrupts our ability to focus, and triples the odds that we'll cut back on work. But there is a way to stop languishing and start finding flow.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

I. The start of the pandemic was dominated by feelings of fear, grief, and loneliness. Pretty quickly, it became a chronic condition.

A. What is this “pandemic fog” we have all become familiar with?

1. Not depression, people still have hope. Not burnout, people still have energy. It's called languishing.

2. **Languishing:** a sense of emptiness and stagnation

a) Feels like the world is standing still

b) Feels a little bit aimless and a little bit joyless

B. Throughout the pandemic, a key place this took root was in the workplace.

1. Predictable environments were stripped away.

2. Zoom fatigue grew.

3. People sit still all day and attempt to read expressions and gain connection through a camera lens.

II. What can we do to stop languishing and start finding flow?

A. **Normalize this state of feeling.**

1. Talk about it and create spaces of psychological safety by giving people a chance to open up about what they are going through.

2. Prioritize mental health as a part of overall health.

a) Model behavior by talking about your own challenges.

b) When the message is communicated that mental health is significant, there is a much higher likelihood of working together to prioritize finding solutions.

B. **Block out quiet time.**

1. Set a specific time with no meetings and no interruptions so you can actually get things done.

a) As a result of being constantly accessible and available while working remotely, we get pulled into commitments all day long.

b) Constant interruptions cause us to feel like we have fallen behind.

2. Develop good boundaries to protect time and find a flow to finish tasks.

C. **Be flexible.**

1. Everyone has a rhythm, but not everyone's rhythm is the same.

2. Provide the freedom to set when and where to get work done. Examples:

a) Consider empowering individuals to set their own schedules and priorities while maintaining good work and professionalism.

b) There is growing evidence that people can be just as productive, if not more

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productive, in a four-day work week rather than a five-day work week.

D. Create a to-do list AND a to-don't list.

1. Have a list of rules you try not to break in order to stay in a productive flow and not fall into distractions and interruptions.
2. When you jolt yourself out of a focus state, it can take 10-20 minutes to get back into it. So when you are rapidly switching back and forth between two tasks, it's disastrous to creativity and productivity because it interferes with your ability to do either task well.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. How did you and your team initially respond at the start of the pandemic?
2. What practices have you maintained since the start of the pandemic?
3. Do you have space to talk with one another when languishing appears among your team?
4. Generally, what is your team's rule of thumb when it comes to meetings? Do you have a specific day of the week for team meetings, one-on-one meetings etc., or is it a free-for-all?
5. What seems to be the biggest distraction for you and your team when trying to be productive at work? What is one "rule" you can put into place to help you avoid said distractions?

RESOURCES MENTIONED

1. [New York Times Article](#) on Languishing by Adam Grant
2. [Think Again](#) by Adam Grant