

Johnny C. Taylor, Jr. ([00:02](#)):

Now more than ever the world of work needs HR.

Speaker 1 ([00:06](#)):

Tony, congrats on the promotion, we're going to enroll you on SHRM's PMQ program to help you manage your first team. I emailed Jean the diversity, equity and inclusion report from SHRM.

Speaker 2 ([00:15](#)):

Oh, that's great.

Speaker 1 ([00:17](#)):

We believe you will bring a new perspective so we'd like to offer you the position.

Tony ([00:21](#)):

Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Speaker 3 ([00:23](#)):

Now more than ever, SHRM has the tools you need to create a world of work that works for all. Join SHRM today.

Speaker 4 ([01:01](#)):

On today's episode of Tune in Tuesday, we're joined by SHRM Chief Knowledge Officer, Dr. Alex Alonso. As he shares the latest research from SHRM surrounding mental health in the workplace. And leads the discussion with the Honorable Patrick Kennedy of One Mind, and Marjorie Morrison of Psych Hub, about HRs ability to lead and support employee mental health. But first, your Tune in Tuesday host, Christopher Lopez.

Christopher Lopez ([01:34](#)):

Hello, and welcome to SHRM's Tune in Tuesday. If you're joining us for the first time, thank you for tuning in, and as always, if you're returning welcome back. My name is Christopher Lopez, and in today's episode, we are going to focus on a topic that you, our Tune in Tuesday audience has been asking for, an episode dedicated to mental health and wellness in the workplace. During last month's program, SHRM president and CEO, Johnny C. Taylor Jr. shared updates surrounding SHRM 21 annual conference and expo, and we previewed the Together Forward at Work Champions for Change episode, featuring an in-depth conversation between SHRM's Emily M. Dickens, and John Deere's Mark House to discuss how companies are creating real workplace change when it comes to racial equity. In case you missed that episode, you can watch the replay at any time on this page.

Christopher Lopez ([02:26](#)):

As you saw at the top of the hour, we've launched a new initiative called Now More Than Ever. In doing so, we are highlighting the business need for HR to the world. As the voice of all things work, SHRM knows firsthand the importance of the work HR professionals like you are doing around the globe. That's why we want to be your lifelong career partner. And through your membership, you will receive immediate access to the resources and related tools that will support you in your day-to-day role. You'll

also be connected to a community of 300,000 members across the globe to stay on the leading edge of the profession, creating impact in your workplace and communities. You can rely on SHRM for access to compliance resources, one-to-one guidance from expert HR knowledge advisors, interactive tools, a peer-to-peer network, professional development, and so much more. Learn more about SHRM membership and join or renew your membership today.

Christopher Lopez ([03:27](#)):

Now, before we get started, let's take a quick tour around the platform. First, if you're looking to add captions to your viewing experience, hover over the player window to find the CC icon. You can click on the button to turn on the caption feature. Now, to the right of your screen, you'll see our chat window where you can communicate with your fellow attendees and toggle to the other conversations to ask your questions throughout the show. Just below that window is our polling feature. Let's test it out right now by answering this question. Does your company have mental health support services in place for employees? Use your cell phone camera to scan the QR code and submit your answer.

Christopher Lopez ([04:09](#)):

And lastly, below the video screen, we have upcoming dates, announcements, and related resources to this episode for you to explore. So make sure to mark your calendars. In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month, we heard you, our Tune in Tuesday viewers, call for information about how employee mental health has been impacted throughout a time of true upheaval in the world of work. SHRM Chief Knowledge Officer Dr. Alex Alonso is here to share the latest SHRM research surrounding mental health. He will be joined by SHRM foundation partners, Patrick Kennedy of Psych Hub, and Marjorie Morrison of One Mind to discuss HR's position to lead the effort to support employee mental health. Welcome Alex to the Tune in Tuesday program.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([05:05](#)):

Thank you all for being here today, we're grateful for your, uh, participation in Tune in Tuesday. Today, uh, we're very fortunate to be joined by guests, Marjorie Morrison, president, CEO and co-founder of Psych Hub, and her co-founder the Honorable Patrick Kennedy, who is also an advisor for One Mind at work. Um, today we're gonna start off though a little differently because we're gonna jump in and talk a little bit about mental health in the workplace and some of SHRM's most recent data. We recently surveyed close to 33,000 American households to kind of get a sense of where it is that we are in terms of the mental health status of the nation as we go into a year of the pandemic and go beyond a year of the pandemic. What we learned is rather staggering, nearly half or 48% of employed Americans report feeling mentally and physically exhausted at the end of the workday.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([05:58](#)):

41% of employed Americans report feeling burnt out at work and really burnt out from their work. And that's, when we think about what Christina Maslach defined in, in thinking about burnout, emotional exhaustion was the first component, and we see that more than 90% of these individuals who report this indicate that they are experiencing that emotional exhaustion. Nearly one third of employees who tele-work, about 32% of them report often feeling tired or having little energy. That's 7% higher than those who work in-person. Nearly half of working women or 49% report feeling depleted from their work, 16% higher than working men. 43% of working Americans without children in the household report feeling burned out or emotionally drained from work. That's 9% higher than those with children. And perhaps most telling is what we found in terms of generation Z and younger millennials. They report

close to 16% higher burnout and emotional exhaustion than other generations with baby boomers and, and our traditionalists being the least likely to report this. So with this data in mind, I'm gonna open the floor for further discussion, and I wanna introduce my two colleagues and welcome them to the floor. Marjorie, Patrick, it's great to have you here.

Marjorie Morrison ([07:18](#)):

Great to be here.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([07:19](#)):

So good to be see- seeing you, uh, Alex, and thank you for your, uh, doing this check-in, it seems as though, uh, we're gonna need check-ins for everybody, but, uh, kind of not only on a daily basis, but throughout the day. I think the future for mental health in the workplace is the future for mental health just generally, and that is that we have to really pay much greater attention to our mental health, be mindful of our stresses, our triggers, uh, and also what our strengths are in order to be able to throughout the day address these challenges. Um, and so honored to be joined by, uh, Marjorie Morrison who, who really has spent her life, um, working on trying to bring greater literacy to the workplace so that we would know what the how to looks like in, in being able to do this.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([08:13](#)):

Thank you. You know, it's funny, you should mention the, the workplace and bringing greater literacy to the workplace, 'cause the first question that jumps to mind is, in your experience and what you're seeing every day these days, what is it that you think is really affecting or impacting mental health at work the most? Uh, we saw data that expressed the workplace being different or being at home. What, what is it that you're seeing that is really impacting the, the, the mental health of our employees as they think about their everyday lives at work in particular? Marjorie, I'll start with you.

Marjorie Morrison ([08:47](#)):

Well, I, I think we're just seeing a whole new trend, right? Now as you mentioned, it's fascinating to think people are more burnt out at home, which I think just goes to show you that that human interaction probably plays a protective factor for us of just having some natural breaks within the day, maybe it's the commute, maybe it's the water cooler talk, or running to go get a coffee. And I think for so many of us at home we wake up and you're just on a Zoom or a, you know, a video call or on a call all day long, barely have time to eat. So I think all of that factors in.

Marjorie Morrison ([09:20](#)):

And I, I also think one of the bigger contributing factors is really the unknown, we don't know, there's been so much kind of lack of, of control, right? I mean, all of a sudden COVID happened and everybody's scrambled to work from home. So that gave people sort of a lack of control. I think that contributes. Um, there's a lot of unclear expectations. I hear that all the time where people aren't quite sure what their roles are because of the fact that they might be wearing, you know, different hats or kind of picking up different types of activities. And I think that, that probably the biggest thing is work-life balance. It's really hard to achieve a balance when you are working at home and you have kids at home and all of that. So I, I mean I think we could kind of see how this happened, and now what's gonna be the critical moment for us is how do we, how do we deal with it, how do we respond to it.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([10:17](#)):

Patrick, same question to you.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([10:20](#)):

So, um, you know, as I said, I think we're in the midst of trying to grapple with something that we've just long ignored but which is fundamental to our overall well being and sense of fulfillment, and that is, understanding our default mode of thinking, you know, kind of how do we react and manage stress often in counterproductive ways. And, uh, we've really just never been forced to pay attention to this, but it's become, um, it's brought, brought to the surface obviously I think by COVID and the enormous stress that as Marjorie said, um, has kind of forced this in everybody's face. Um, I guess if there's a silver lining, we'll be a lot more conscious of the fact that, you know, we can't just run through life, um, oblivious or, or lacking any kind of sense of insight as to why we're feeling the way we're feeling. Because if, uh, we do that, we'll end up acting in ways that are counter our best interests, and, uh, and we all wanna kind of strive and do better.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([11:28](#)):

So knowing that they're actually tools as Marjorie called them, you know, protective factors that can, uh, be deployed, that will not only make us more productive, but you know, obviously, uh, more serene and content and less agitated. And, uh, um, so in any event, I, I think that this is great that SHRM is really doubling down on trying to provide toolkit for employers so that they can help their employees. You know, I think that those employers who have invested in their employees throughout COVID, you know, with, uh, you know, the team type of approach that we're in this together, we're gonna try to cover for you, we're gonna try to help you, support you in whatever ways we can.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([12:14](#)):

There's just a lot more loyalty and trust factor, and, and I think that those types of workplaces engender greater productivity. So I think doing the right thing by your employees is definitely doing the right thing by your bottom line. Even though I think we grew up in a society which was emphasized, you know, extracting every bit of value you can, but what that leaves out is that people can't just, uh, function constantly, uh, uh, without feeling part of, and if they're included they actually perform a lot better, and it, it kind of runs contrary to the me- myth that we've all been brought up to believe in, and that is, you know, just doubled down, work harder. But there's always uh, a, a catch to that, and I think-

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([13:03](#)):

It's uh, a, uh, a catch to that. And I think the idea of the work life balance is that it, it's not, um, it doesn't take away from emphasizing productivity. In fact, you're, you're going to be more in the game if you're able to draw those boundaries between your, your work life and, and your personal life and, and your mental health being a very key part of maintaining that.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([13:28](#)):

Uh, uh, I, I appreciate the fact that you raised the issue of boundaries, both of you did. And I say that in large part, because one of the newest things that we're seeing in terms of the world of psychology is boundary, boundaryless phenomena or phenomenon. And part of the reason we're seeing that is because we're experiencing all these, these particular issues, the spillover effect being, uh, one, that's absolutely critical because we're seeing that individuals are in fact, working from home cha-, very

different hours. Really looking at the world in a different way, what the workplace means in a different way.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([14:02](#)):

The other thing though, that really stood out to me in terms of recent research, was what we've learned in terms of the outlets that individuals had for reducing or, or coping with stress in particular, which is the biggest contributor in many cases to what we're experiencing. And, uh, what struck me was, if you look at what happened at the beginning of the pandemic, and really has continued, we've seen places where we don't have the opportunity to engage in exercise at a different location than what we used to. We don't have that commute, right.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([14:31](#)):

I, I don't know what I would be without audible and driving in my car (laughs). And we don't have the ability to travel. If you think about the stress relievers that we've seen over the years, the traditional ones, it's, it's sort of stunning that we had all of those taken away while being forced to work in a, a workplace rather than having workplace flexibility. Uh, so it, it really is a, a almost a quadruple whammy when you think about what we're doing and asking individuals to cope in new and different ways. Uh, with that in mind, I want to kind of, uh, rip, uh, uh, a question here from the headlines, if you will.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([15:06](#)):

Uh, we've seen recently that for instance, return to office is something that we're seeing quite a bit about. Uh, and we're, we're hearing a lot about work from anywhere versus return to office. And, uh, certainly the Googles of the world have announced that they're coming back and they're going to bring their offices back, uh, especially with a new campus being built. And so one of the things that I'd, I'd ask is how, how has the uncertainty and changes in the workplace location really affected employee mental health. In other words, when you see this in your, in your work, how can employers and HR really help alleviate that?

Dr. Alex Alonso ([15:40](#)):

And I asked that in two ways, one is dealing with the uncertainty that, that we have around the communication and what our plans are. And then the other side is wh-, what is it that we are doing in terms of offering that flexibility to our workers. And I'll start with you, Patrick.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([15:57](#)):

Um, thanks, Alex. Um, well, let me just say, you know, what's really interesting about your data is that it's kind of, um, uh, contradictory, like the notion that people without kids are having higher stress and people who are at home and not at work to Marjorie's earlier point are, are, are having higher stress and [inaudible 00:16:21] it's kind of counterintuitive. And, um, uh, I will just say that, you know, the, when we did the post, um, perspective of, of why in the military, there were so many, uh, suicides during of course the Iraq and Afghan war.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([16:38](#)):

They assumed it was because there were all, all of those veterans were over exhausted because they had been on so many tours, which of course, I think certainly had a big part of it. But a lot of the suicides in fact, a great number were from those that had been, there were pre-deployed. Um, uh, and you

know, it just didn't track based upon what your common assumption would be as to who would be most vulnerable. And, and what it does is that, you, say that not all of these things fit in some, some tight little neat little box. So the message to take away here is there's no way to kind of titrate this and figure out, Oh, well, this is going to be the specific set of circumstances that are going to be stressful for people.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([17:24](#)):

And then we can manage that, right? No, no. I think the message from your report is that we all can anticipate where we're going to be sidetracked by stress for any number of reasons that are frankly are very, also very, uh, personal to us in terms of what our own triggers are. And so that is important for everybody. Okay, no matter what box they fit into to be proactive on, you know, stress management, learning the tools to, you know, know what their triggers are. As I said, what the boundaries are and what are ways for them to, um, alleviate their stress without resorting to the things that, you know, society has given us to alleviate stress.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([18:11](#)):

Which are often addictions, which is also the reason why, um, addiction has been so prevalent among other things in this crisis is because, um, people are self-medicating more and we don't want that to tip into a full on, uh, addiction. So there's a lot of things to keep, keep our eyes on, but, but the most important of which is never assume that because you don't fit in that particular box, that you're exempt from some of the challenges that this new mental health crisis, uh, is bringing to, to the workplace and to society in general.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([18:47](#)):

Marjorie, your thoughts.

Marjorie Morrison ([18:50](#)):

I couldn't agree with Patrick more about that there's no one size fits all. So that's, I mean, that's definitely all of us, you know, it's, it's super interesting because I feel, I feel for employers because you're sort of damned if you do and damned if you don't. I mean, we know that there's all of these extra issues working remote, but yet there's a real resistance to bringing people back to the workplace. They don't want to go. They're getting comfortable with waking up and not having a commute and maybe not having to get ready or, you know, going to work barefoot with their yoga pants on.

Marjorie Morrison ([19:22](#)):

And so employers are really put in a, in a tough spot. I think that where we're going to see a difference is alternative ways of managing life. And I think this is what Patrick was alluding to earlier, things that we know, maybe it's in, you know, Eastern medicine around like mindfulness and meditation and gratitude and literacy, right? It's like, how do you, how do you get somebody the most productive when they're working? And I think part of that is educating all of us to focus when we're at work and then let it go when we're not.

Marjorie Morrison ([20:01](#)):

And this sense of being on, you know, like we're all on Slack, like in Psych Hub, you know, and someone slacked me late, sorry. And I know it was like, "Ah, ah don't, don't do that (laughs). It's Saturday night, you shouldn't be working right now." But I think all of these are very important for people to, and

employers to put in, as we keep talking about boundaries. Because they're going to get harder and harder to enforce as the blurred lines, whether it's work remote, work from home, do a hybrid. I don't think we're going to go back to five days a week, full time. So something else has to change alongside of that.

Marjorie Morrison ([20:33](#)):

And I, I obviously we're in the business of literacy, you know, mental health literacy, but we're in it because we really believe in it. And we can talk about that next, but even within educating yourself, we all learn different, right. And we now know that, not everybody learns the same. And so it's really important that we meet people where they're at, give them tools and resources that are the right resources for them at that time. And that was like what Patrick was saying. It's like, it doesn't really, it doesn't matter because right now maybe somebody needs professional help, but maybe right now they just need a friend or maybe they need a coach or a mentor, or like people need different things in their journey. And we have to be prepared to give them those resources to help them when they need it.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([21:19](#)):

You know, it's funny, you mentioned that. And I, I say this in large part, because one of the things I've seen kind of, uh, popping up left and right, is behavioral health coaching. And it's about knowing what resource to leverage when you need it, whether it's that friend or that, uh, you know, somebody who's in a mental health counselor, professional or something even more like a psychiatrist or a psychologist, I guess the, the, the question I would raise to you, 'cause we're seeing that about 12% of the organizations out there have added that to their, their portfolio in terms of services.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([21:51](#)):

And, you know, they think of it as innovation. I think of what you all did, Psych Hub as true innovation, something that was, uh, you know, a very, uh, kind of different program for a different community. So I guess the question I would raise for you is what are you seeing in terms of how employers are innovating in this space? What is it that they're doing that's different that they weren't doing pre pandemic.

Marjorie Morrison ([22:13](#)):

Want me to take this one?

Dr. Alex Alonso ([22:14](#)):

Sure. Go ahead, Marjorie.

Marjorie Morrison ([22:15](#)):

(Laughs). Well, I mean, I would say I can speak from my experience at Psych Hub, right. So what, what we do and we're finding this to be very popular, right? With, with the workplace is we've created a Psych Hub, which has a series of resources for em-, for let's just say employees. We do them for different audiences. So, uh, modules when stacked upon each other can earn certification. So we have our mental health ally, and what's fascinating about that. And we are honored that we get to partner with SHRM on a version of it for our workplace as well. But you can train everyday people on what to say to someone that might be suicidal, understanding substance use and opiates, what to look for.

Marjorie Morrison ([22:57](#)):

Understanding diversity, motivational interviewing, like how to have co-, hard conversations. When you do that for everybody, not just managers or not just this group or that group, but when you do that, for everybody, we're all armed to support those that are needed. So I think that's really critical. And there's a huge appetite for workplace to have that. Plus, you know, podcasts, 'cause some people like to listen and short videos because some people need quick things. And what we're seeing now is EAP historically has had a low utilization, right? I mean, what rates, sorry, Patrick and I met, you know, over a decade ago, trying to revamp EAP then.

Marjorie Morrison ([23:35](#)):

And we're, but we're seeing changes now, right? We're seeing EAPs starting to be creative. You know, we're seeing companies pick up things like these, um, coaching capabilities. We're seeing things like calm and head space, you know, employers offering these types of things so that employees can, can meditate and all of that. And that traditional you're either healthy or mentally ill. Like that's going, that's, that's gone, right. We're on a spectrum, we live on the spectrum and we bounced around it sometimes throughout the day, sometimes throughout the week, the month and the year. And employers now have to have these different resources depending on where you are on that spectrum.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([24:18](#)):

Patrick, your thoughts.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([24:20](#)):

Yeah. Um, so it's really great to see. I mean, the, the need is there and, and employers are trying to figure out all their different ways for them to address that. So they're looking at not only as, as Marjorie said, revamping their EAPs, but you know, making, having kind of a resiliency. As you said, kind of coaching mechanism, some mental health, isn't just about when you're weak and you need to get stronger. But it's more about how do you enhance your strengths? You know, there's a different way of glass half full, half empty type of approach. Then of course, they're very in tune to what kind of mental health they're buying from their third party administrator.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([24:59](#)):

These, uh, payers have always relegated mental health to kind of the, um, the margins as a carve out. Now they're saying, "Oh no, Jeez, if you're not really integrating mental health into overall health, you're, you're losing the value of mental health to the rest of your physical health." Um, 'cause so many chronic illnesses are driven by really untreated, uh, chronic depression, anxiety, addiction, the likes. So there's so much of a better appreciation for the full picture. And then of course, in terms of disability in the workplace, there's a greater appreciation that mental health, frankly, and worker's comp has to be incorporated.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([25:37](#)):

And it isn't today. You know, when you think of worker's comp in a very siloed way, it's that injury, you do the injury treatment and then you go back. But there's a whole cascading impact on your mental health. So worker's comp is now starting to incorporate mental health. So mental health in their EAP and the TPA and workers' comp and then as supplemental benefits on the resiliency side, you're seeing a

whole, uh, tool kit available to employers to try to help, as Marjorie said, their employees at every level of the, along the spectrum, uh, where they might need help.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([26:14](#)):

You know, to your point, one thing that stands out to me is what we've seen here, which is an increase in mental health, kind of creeping in, not just in terms of being at the margins, but also creeping into wellness programs. Uh, for years we've seen wellness programs really be about cessation or trying to treat things that are, are symptoms of, uh, a bigger issue. So for instance, weight loss, or, you know, I'm, I'm diabetic myself. And so I know that they, you know, I've, I've entered wellness programs with the idea of gaining incentives for being more, uh, cautious with my, my glucose and, and what have you.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([26:49](#)):

And I've seen the same thing for smoking cessation and things like that. But one of the things that we're starting to see is that employers are innovating by building in mental wellness as, and programs around that to ensure that they're, um, that, that they're also incentivizing wellness in terms of mental health. And, uh, I really, it really did resonate with me and I'd never thought about this way. But Marjorie, the way you described it as we're no longer a dichotomy, right? It's not, you're healthier or you're not healthy. It's where are we on the spectrum of mental health?

Dr. Alex Alonso ([27:19](#)):

And so that, that was something that really resonated with me, and I know it will resonate with our members. Uh, I, I, it almost reminded me of a, uh, why we're so honored to work with you both in terms of educating HR professionals. Uh, I'll share with you a small anecdote. I'm going to digress here for a moment, but it reminds me of one of my first weeks here at SHRM. I, I realized that we had a, uh, we have a call center where we take questions and questions from our members. And one question came in where the person immediately assumed substance abuse because the person kept coming back from lunch with a white powder on their nose.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([27:54](#)):

And the immediate reaction was substance abuse. And sure enough, the, the HR professional was, was doing due diligence and understood what was going on. But wanted to see if there was a different way of thinking about it. Well, what we discovered later on down the line was that the person had an, an addiction to jelly donuts. And it was (laughs) powdered sugar on their nose. They really were going to lunch and having jelly donuts every day. And what was intriguing about that though, was that the individual really learned from their experience, they thought more di-, uh, differently about how they were thinking and consuming information and what they were doing.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([28:25](#)):

And I think about the program that we're engaged in between SHRM and Psych Hub and One Mind, and thinking about how we're doing more to help educate individuals, not just in the diagnostician role, but also in the support roles. And that, that to me is a big deal. Now...

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([28:38](#)):

Let me just add in here for a second, Alex, as someone who's in recovery from drug addiction, uh, it, it's a point worth making that, uh, being addicted to the jelly donut is, uh, is not maybe on a scale quite as

bad as being addicted to, you know, cocaine or stimulants of some kind. But the bottom line is they're both addictions and they're both physiological and they both follow the same neuro pathways. And so we're understanding process addictions. Marjorie and I did a recent podcast on the future of mental health in terms of sex addiction and porn addiction and, uh, my area where a lot of, uh, casinos, it's online gambling.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([29:23](#)):

You know, and then of course with our kids, it's, it's, it's gaming and it's too much time on the screen and it's, and it's addictive. So, you know, we're very, we have a very small mind in terms of what we think we think addiction is, you know, the person on the side of the street, who, you know, is on it. Addiction also has that whole spectrum and the sooner people kind of catch it earlier in their addictive, uh, thinking, the better off they're going to be in terms of all. Because, uh, what happened to me and what happened to a lot of my colleagues as you think you're addicted to one thing you deal with that.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([29:59](#)):

And then all of a sudden, you know, it's, whack-a-mole, you start to move towards addiction of other things. So understanding that basic addictive thinking is key to better being able to address it.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([30:11](#)):

Yeah. I, I think back to, uh, you know, research that we've seen over the years on the, what they used to call an addictive personality. So you, you'd transition from one to the other. Now, today it's a, it's a different terminology. But to your point, Patrick it's a, it's understanding the process, right. And what happens and how individuals process the, the need and the information. So I'm going to jump forward a little bit here, and I'm going to ask a question that I think you're both well-suited to answer here. 'Cause one of the things we hear about often is not just the HR professionals and the employers and what they can do, but we also hear about people managers, right?

Dr. Alex Alonso ([30:43](#)):

And, and we have a bunch of data that exists out there in the, in the ecosphere from the last couple of years, it says that, you know, the people manager is really the biggest lever in creating that employ-, employee experience. And, uh, you know, our own research says that about 78% of Americans have thought about leaving a job because of a toxic people manager, right? And we think about how people managers play a role in creating a rough situation. If you were to offer one piece of guidance to people managers, whether they're new or experienced and need help, what, what would you offer to them in terms of helping them kind of understand what's going out there for the employees mental health, of their employees mental health, but also what you would offer in terms of guidance to get them to think about their employee's mental health more frequently.

Marjorie Morrison ([31:29](#)):

I love that question because I think it's, that's the critical question that we have to be asking, and I have an opinion on it. Um, it's just my own opinion. But I think people have to go in first, right? You can't really fix or treat or think about your whole group that you're managing, if you're not aware of your own unconscious bias. And to tie it to what you just talked about, about the jelly donut, that is an unconscious bias, right? The white powder immediately thought it was a substance and it did the right thing. Got advise, what should I do turned out not to be. But there was an unconscious bias that

happened in that person to make the assumption that there was drug use. And I, I believe all of us have to learn about our own unconscious bias that we show up with.

Marjorie Morrison ([32:18](#)):

And when we go in and we do that work and it is work and it's hard because sometimes we're even ashamed when we go and we start realizing these biases. I mean, it can be, I know we have a module in it, on our, in one of our mental health ally. But it could be really geography and you might not even realize it that we have a bias to have someone's rural and who they are versus someone who's urban. And so when you're managing people, I think the first step is you have to know how you are reacting to that person. And we have to figure out a way to move to acceptance. And that happens with diversity and color, whether it's gender, all of the different types of things that make someone feel safe in a workplace, feel that they belong, feel that they're part of.

Marjorie Morrison ([33:09](#)):

So like I said, it's my, it's my opinion, but I think we've really got to start with ourselves first and then, you know, really think about how we show up and how we react to those people.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([33:21](#)):

I agree with you 100%. It's a, it's interesting. It's, it's almost the inward look as to what makes us toxic and how we go about that. Patrick, uh, I'm sure you've had people managers that you've come across. What, what are your thoughts?

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([33:34](#)):

Well, I just, uh, use, uh, uh, example of, uh, the military have, have invested in, um, you know, the special forces. Of course you have to be at a premium of ability when they're called to a mission that could happen in any given moment that, you know, they're kind of 911 right on the, on time. And they, they have invested in proactively building every, uh, little bit of teamwork that they can possibly invest in as well as individual, uh, treatment for, for kind of intrusive thinking that the special operators may be suffering from because of whatever's going on in their lives so that they can build cohesion.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([34:20](#)):

But also help address individual challenges that could divert those special operators from the mission, uh, because they know the mission is so critical of everybody has to have their head in the game. No one can be kind of, um, you know, uh, presenteeism, so to speak. So I, I just love the fact the military, you know, of course like many things figure this out like a long time ago. Well, before all of this. And I just think it's an affirmation to your point, that if we have already figured out into an order to produce the world-class forces, that this is essential, this is not soft, right?

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([35:00](#)):

This is not as it has often been treated in the past as, Oh, you know, way down from the C-suite and over here in quote, HR, no, no. These days post pandemic, HR is the C-suite. And if the C-suite ain't focused on HR, they're missing the most important component to their overall bottom line that's out there. So, so do not dismiss HR as, as soft because the military, you know, generation to go figure it out, that this was the essential element in the success of their mission operation. And I hope that those HR perspective, HR, uh, members that are out there who hear this, understand how critic-, mission critical

they are to the business. This is, this is the bottom line. Um, as much as anything else in that, uh, office is.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([35:54](#)):

You know, it's, it's fascinating that you raise that 'cause as you know, traditionally HR is the profession, one of the professions that gets bagged on, or one of the operations that gets bagged on. And today we're seeing that that is exactly the opposite. This is the, the equivalent of Y2K for technology officers or the 2008, 2009 financial crisis for financier's. This is what HR is moment is. And, uh, I, I used to say, you know, we, we'd hear HR professionals say, "I just want a seat at the table." And now it's not that it's, "You're all welcome to come to our table." Is really the, the way I think of it. Yeah.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([36:29](#)):

So (laughs) with that in mind, I, I, uh, want to highlight specifically, uh, one of the things that we've talked about is burnout and emotional exhaustion. But a second factor that we see in, in burnout is a lack of professional accomplishment. Meaning, uh, depending upon what profession in HR, people are in, we're seeing that they, they, they start to see a decrease in their per-, personal accomplishment and they start to not see the value in what they're doing or the meaning in their work.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([36:57](#)):

And I guess the, the question I would raise for you all, especially as you think about the, what you were able to do with Psych Hub and what you've been able to do with One Mind At Work, I, I would question for you, wh-, what is it that you think is a key driver for meaning at work for Americans today? In other words, how would people manager really remind individuals of how important what they're doing is, and why it matters to the, the greater economy and the greater world. I'll start with you, Patrick.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([37:25](#)):

Um, well, I, I'm a person, as I said, in long-term recovery, for me, service to others is essential, thinking of others, getting outside my own, uh, neighborhood of my own head is the, the essence of saving myself. So it's, it's not a selfless act to be, um, thinking of others. It's actually a very selfish thing. And so, um, you have to practice intentionally, what am I going to do today to be of service to others? And, uh, and I think that's just true in life. And I think that whether, the people be more productive at work or, and work can be, you know, maintain their family, being of service to their family and their community.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([38:06](#)):

We, we think that self is the answer. Self-help, self [inaudible 00:38:11] I don't get mine, then I'm, I'm going to be insecure. The f-, the, the irony is the jailbreak, the handcuffs come off when you're thinking about other people. And, uh, that's where the magic of President Kennedy's ask not what your country can do for you, what you could do for your country, resonated with so many people, transformed them into kind of spiritual thinking. Like, how could we live a life that's bigger than ourselves?

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([38:36](#)):

And I think that's just the way to go, whatever place of employment someone has or wherever, they can be helpful to their fellow human beings. And they can be helpful in some way to someone else. And, and even whatever background they have, that background has given them tools and opportunities to take

that experience and, and put it to the use of someone else who may need those, um, those tools. So that's just the attitude, I think that we need in general and I think it applies in the workplace, uh, as well.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([39:08](#)):

Marjorie.

Marjorie Morrison ([39:09](#)):

I, I agree with Patrick. I would just piggyback on it to say that working in silos doesn't give you that sense of accomplishment, right? Because then you're falling into this competitive nature. And it's an excellent question. And employers have to be paying attention because the younger generations are all about impact. Right? I have, I have two kids in their twenties and I know, you know them, that whole group, and we employ a lot of them. They care a lot about their contributions. And I think that happens easier when you're a piece of a solution and it might be that I'm doing this, you know, I'm doing this part and think about like first cycle, right? I'm the motion graphics person. And I am the clinician that writes content. And I'm the adult learning person that puts the, you know, theory behind it. And I'm the sound engineer that, like all of those things contribute to a product together, which then goes and makes an impact in life.

Marjorie Morrison ([40:05](#)):

And it's when you're doing it in silos, you can feel burnt out. You can feel like all I'm doing is editing audio all the time. So that collaboration is so key, which is harder to do when you're working remote. So, so much of, of what we have to do and I, and I, to go back to like Patrick's point right out of the gate, about that, there's basically no silver bullet, right? There's no right answer. These are hard problems to fix, but there have to be ways where people see their impact when it's working together. And I, I go back to SHRM and, and your leadership with Johnny Taylor, who has really come out as a leader around empathy and this concept and notion of empathy in the workplace. And I think that contributes to it too. Both, what we were talking about earlier about, you know, biases and whatnot, but also when it comes to feeling a part of something, feeling it contributing, you know, making an impact to making the world a better place. A lot of that does come from empathy as well.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([41:07](#)):

Yeah. You- you know, it's interesting you raise Johnny's, uh, mission this, uh, in this last year has been around creating an, uh, empathy and helping organizations understand the power of empathy. And I, and I think specifically around what it is that makes up empathy and, and the way that organizations can demonstrate that and they almost align perfectly with the symptoms of what burnout are. The conditions of burnout. So it- it's almost as if we've got a solution there it's just about actually using that solution. And then to Patrick's point, one thing that stands out to me is, is getting to the point where we actually connect it to someone other than ourselves. In other words, uh, th- the thing I always think about, and, and it comes to mind for me here is as we think about silos, as you described Marjorie, here at SHRM, we have six different or eight different divisions. And each one is responsible for a small piece in either helping someone learn or experience or be able to apply what they've learned in their own workplaces.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([42:03](#)):

But there's only one time that we really see it all come together. And that's typically at our annual conference that we hold once a year, where we, where we convened 25,000 HR professionals across the globe. And what strikes me more than anything else is it's the ability to connect with that customer. Connect with that individual whose life we're helping change, that makes it much more meaningful for us. And so, as I think about the throughput here, and, and the takeaway message is, it's not just thinking about someone beyond yourself, but it's also being able to connect with that individual and demonstrate that empathy.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([42:36](#)):

So I'll ask another question here that I think might be, uh, a little bit controversial. I- I know it would be controversial in my house, 'cause I have Gen Z, I have millennials, I have a Gen X like me. Uh, although my kids would tell me that I'm a baby boomer, uh, based upon my thinking, but, uh, one thing that I'd raised here and I take that as a badge of honor, but one thing that I would, I, I would raise here is as we look at different stages and different kind of generations and generational research is, you know, certainly had different, uh, uh, kind of, uh, reception, receptivity across the globe, what do we see, or what is it that you recommend in terms of building a supportive culture, that accounts for all the different needs that individuals bring, right? And I, and I say that in large part, because we see that for instance, as our data suggests Gen Z and millennials, younger millennials have a, a need for greater attention, not just to the meaningfulness of work, but also to identifying ways to cope with stress related to work. Uh, wh- what would you recommend? How would you design a workplace if, if you had your, your druthers and unlimited resources, what would you do to design a workplace that really accounted for this flexibility and difference in perspective? Marjorie, I'll start with you.

Marjorie Morrison ([43:51](#)):

Well, I always go back to education because I think literacy is the key really to everything. And so you have to educate those different generations about the other generations, because we only know what we know. And so if we go into every situation with the lens of what we know, to your point, you know, a Gen X goes it with that lens. Although a Gen Z has a different one. And so I- I think it's really critical that we are able to step outside of ourselves and learn. And then I always say too, it's like, you don't have to go become, you know, get it, got back to school, become degrees and all that. You can ask people. You can say help me understand where you're coming from. And it goes back to, you know, the piece about empathy. But we have to open up our hearts, open up our minds to understanding that different people have a different perspective. I think the minute that we cross over that line and we fully open ourselves to other people's opinions that matter and thoughts that are just as important as our own, that's when we start to kind of cross those bridges and can make those, those changes.

Marjorie Morrison ([44:56](#)):

And I, there was no, there's no way that any workplace can do all of it perfectly, right. You just, you can't and you do the best that you can and you're, and you get all of that reinforced by people's thoughts and opinions.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([45:09](#)):

Patrick, your thoughts.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([45:12](#)):

Well, I think we're living through a very historical time in terms of, uh, how we as a society, I mean, globally post pandemic are gonna start to think of ourselves, our relationship to our, uh, to each other. Globally it's a smaller world. We're seeing how we're currently shipping, you know, oxygen tanks to India. Our hearts go out to everyone who is suffering over there right now. We're realizing that we're all in it together. We have to have a greater kind of connectedness to each other. This isolation and alienation that comes from the, from frankly COVID and having to isolate is only raising the, the biggest enemy, uh, within, and that is being disconnected. We have to figure out ways to connect with one another and to community. And at, at whatever age of our lives it's essential to our human condition to be, to love others, to be loved, to be connected.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([46:12](#)):

And, um, and that is ultimately what makes us much more functional and thriving and resilient and successful. Um, so I think we just have to celebrate those things and really emphasize the value of connection. Um, and it's never been more apparent than at a time when we've had to isolate why it is so that as social beings, that we need each other so much, and that no matter what generation we come from, we all have something to contribute to each other. And if we have that spirit of service in mind, you know, things will work out.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([46:49](#)):

So, I'll ask one question as we're running short on time here. One thing I'd ask you each to kind of weigh in. If I gave you a minute each to say why it is that you think HR is critical in helping, uh, foster greater employee wellness and mental health in particular, uh, please do share, provide us with some parting thoughts here. Marjorie, I'll start with you.

Marjorie Morrison ([47:11](#)):

Well, I'm gonna steal Patrick's so I'm glad you picked me first. But you know, Patrick talks a lot about how mental health and physical health have always, have been historically separated. And how what a travesty that has been and how difficult we're seeing that now. And when you think about healthcare, and we talked earlier about mental health, all on one spectrum, HR can play that role, right? HR can play the role of we want you to be healthy so that you can show up to work. Whether that's mentally healthy and whether that's physically healthy so that you can focus and be engaged. And so I'd say to all HR, if there's any person in an organization that can make that integration, that can put value on that person, that whole person, it's HR. Whether it's benefits, whether it's, uh, you know, the way the culture of the company, the expectations, the, the investments, all of that can come from HR. And so I think HR can set this new tone that is so critical in integrating mental health, physical health is that we're all a whole person's health and that your health matters. Whether it's how you eat, whether it's smoking cessation, whether it's exercise, whether it's meditation, whether it's getting coaching, you know, whether it's mentoring all of those things and that all comes from HR.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([48:35](#)):

Thank you. Patrick.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([48:38](#)):

Yeah, thanks Alex. No, I just, uh, to be a broken record, you know, service to others is the rent we pay for our room in heaven. And people who are in the business of focusing on how to be of service to

others when they need it and then to try to be, catch them a little bit ahead of the game when they may not know they need the help. Boy, that's, that's a brilliant kind of vocation to have. So I salute all those who've made it, their vocation. Um, I'm envious because I really think it's the life that gives the greatest sense of fulfillment and contentment, uh, which is what, you know, we should all want anyway in our lives. So thanks for having us on Alex.

Dr. Alex Alonso ([49:18](#)):

Thank you. And, uh, you know, Patrick to your point and Marjorie your point, uh, you've heard me say this before, HR is one of those few disciplines that's cross cutting. It exists in every organization. And one of the things that's different about it though, is it actually has not, not just an impact on the workforce, but beyond that workforce it's families as well. And so as I think about this, the ability to affect the lives of 165 million working Americans, as well as their families is something that, uh, is a unique opportunity. And when I think about the HR profession, it's, it's a responsibility and a burden that that profession has taken and taken on quite well in my opinion. Thank you both so much for your time here today. I really am grateful to have spent some time with you, and I hope we cross paths again soon.

Honorable Patrick Kennedy ([50:01](#)):

Likewise.

Marjorie Morrison ([50:02](#)):

Thank you Alex for having us.

Christopher Lopez ([50:13](#)):

Thank you so much, Alex, Marjorie and Patrick for sharing your insights on the program today. If you're interested in finding more resources and tools related to mental health visit SHRM's mental health hub, using the links in this episode resource section below. Before we close today's program, I want to highlight the reason why we started this monthly series in the first place. After the cancellation of last year's annual conference, SHRM made the commitment to bringing you the latest in all things work and providing a virtual meeting place for our community to connect each month until the next time we could meet again. Well, that time is on the horizon. Now more than ever the world of work needs HR. Our SHRM21 Annual Conference and Expo is set to take place on September 9th through 12th in-person, in Las Vegas, Nevada and virtually online. If you haven't yet secured your spot for HR's premier educational and networking event of the year, visit annual.shrm.org.

Christopher Lopez ([51:14](#)):

We thank you again so much for joining us today for Tune in Tuesday. And I look forward to seeing you on Tuesday, June 8th for our next installation.