

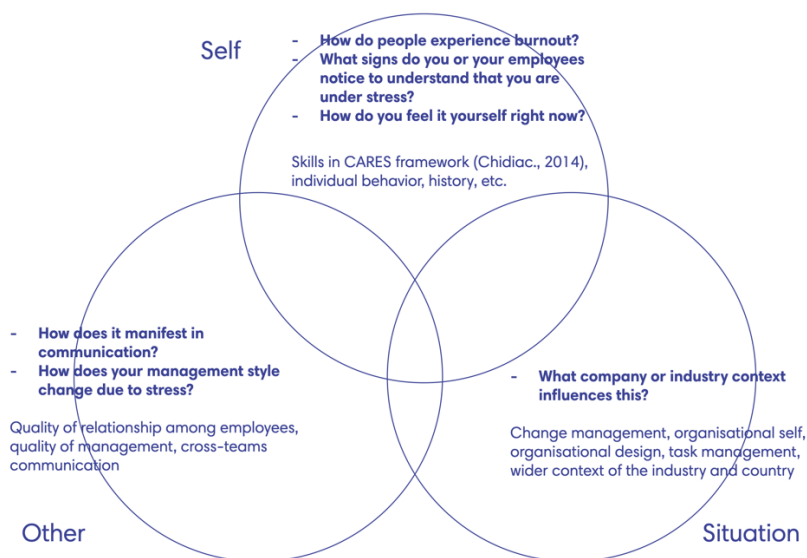
Holistic Organisational Well-being by Renata Gizatulina

As an organisational consultant and coach, I work with companies and teams to help improve well-being, safety, and the psychological climate in the workplace. I would like to elaborate here on some key ROG models and concepts that have enhanced my understanding of how to approach these issues: the SOS model (Denham-Vaughan & Chidiac, 2013), phenomenological inquiry, and the paradoxical theory of change (Beisser, 1970).

I found the SOS (Self-Other-Situation) model extremely helpful in addressing organisational well-being holistically and relationally. What does this mean? In my practice, either the HR department or the managers of a company often bring me in when they notice high burnout, or elevated turnover rates among employees. However, their initial goal is typically to "fix" the employees, not the underlying problem. In an individualistic paradigm, if someone is experiencing burnout, it's seen as their responsibility to act: setting goals, establishing boundaries, practicing mindfulness, going to the doctor if necessary, and so on. While there is some truth to this, we can also address these issues at a systemic level within the organisation.

In a couple of companies, I conducted a series of coaching sessions, beginning with a co-diagnostic phase to understand the causes of well-being issues. This was followed by ongoing coaching sessions to support changes in their workplace culture.

Based on the SOS model, I developed a holistic well-being model for the company (shown below), which helps me and my clients take a broader perspective on well-being issues.



What I noticed from my practice is that burnout means something different in every company. In organizational settings (and in fields like education), diagnostics typically involves identifying behavioural symptoms to find and label a problem — much like the process used in medicine. Initially, my goal with companies was to do just that: discuss burnout, help managers recognise it, and address it. However, employee burnout is only one part of the picture — what Gestalt terminology calls a 'figure' — and we need to understand the actual experience across different levels of the system. So, we need to ask ourselves, what is this “burnout” made of?

Each lens in this model impacts employees' well-being, influencing both stressors and the levels of challenge and support they experience to cope.

- The **Self lens** represents the subjective pressure employees face and their ability to self-support.
- The **Other lens** reflects how communication, especially toxic, and conflicts within the company contribute to pressure, as well as the ability of employees to give and receive support within their teams, with managers, and across functions.
- The **Situation lens** provides the context that creates challenges and affects employees' well-being. These factors are often related to psychological and economic safety (e.g., fears of being fired or replaced, or cross-functional fights for resources). This lens also helps identify where the system lacks support.

I primarily coached groups of up to eight managers. In one company, participants came from different departments, while in another, they were from the same department. In one company, for example, we discovered that people experience burnout as distress caused by frequent internal conflicts — both within teams and in cross-functional communications. That was the primary tension experienced by people at all levels — managers, employees, and leadership alike.

In another company, we found that burnout is a stress within the whole company stemming from numerous changes over the past two years. These changes had been implemented without proper integration in the end, so employees weren't clear on how the changes worked or what results they achieved. This created an atmosphere of constant anxiety and never-resting environment, without the sense of stability they needed.

After these exploration sessions, I could see how raising awareness helped. It reorganised the field and allowed teams to mobilise energy around their challenges and change. Raising awareness of personal challenges and the lack of support led to the reorganisation of their schedules and plans. As part of the intervention, we developed a

supportive coaching dialogue model, which they tried with each other and then with their employees. Additionally, increasing awareness of stress reactions and communication patterns helped managers better understand how their employees exhibit stress, enabling them to notice and respond appropriately. Managers started to check their team's well-being not only through surveys but also in everyday conversations. On the contextual level, small steps were initiated by line managers, such as restructuring workloads and revising certain business processes. Beyond the team level, I escalated the issues to HR and senior leadership in a session where I presented diagnostic results and recommendations.

However, sometimes this awareness also leads to frustration. In one team experiencing intense internal conflicts and fights, they wanted to know how “specific tools” to manage changes effectively, asking me questions like: “Now that we understand the situation, can you provide us with tools?”. After one session that left all disappointed, my recommendation was to avoid working with the entire team, as teamwork itself was adding an extra layer of stress. Instead, I suggested working individually or mediating conflicts in smaller groups of two to three people.

Managing this remains my own challenge: finding the balance between challenge and support, so teams aren't just left with frustration but can move forward constructively.

In general, the ROG experience has shaped my practice as an organisational practitioner in many other aspects as well. I am very grateful to my teachers, Marie-Anne Chidiac and Sally Denham-Vaughan, as well as the entire group that supported me in this transformation.

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