



Service with a Mask: Managing Emotions and Stress during COVID-19

Recommended Citation for this Session: Grandey, A. (2020, October 8). Service with a Mask: Managing Emotions and Stress during COVID-19 [Webinar]. University of Central Florida Rosen College of Hospitality Management.

Targeted Research Training (TRT) Program

Housed in Department of Psychology at UCF



Cutting-edge research and interventions to improve workplace well-being and organizational effectiveness in hospitality



Interdisciplinary training for graduate students



Outreach and dissemination of research findings

Sunshine Education & Research Center

Funded by

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Mission

The Sunshine Education and Research Center transforms workplace quality of life through transdisciplinary education, research and practice, and industry partnerships.



The content of this webinar was supported by grant number T42OH008438, funded by the National Institute Occupational Safety (NIOSH) and Health under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIOSH or CDC or the Department of Health and Human Services.

Targeted Research Training

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- Dr. Cynthia Mejia, Rosen College
- Dr. Kristin Horan, I/O Psychology
- Dr. Steve Jex, I/O Psychology
- Dr. Deborah Breiter Terry, Rosen College

Academic Partners

- Multiple Universities
- Multiple Disciplines
- Faculty, Graduate and Undergraduate Students

Advisory Partners

- Central Florida Hotels
- Union
- Research & Public Policy





Service with a Mask: Managing Emotions and Stress during COVID-19

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Three main goals



Make sense of the pandemic as an emotional event



Explain the unique challenge for hospitality: Emotional labor



Identify ways to manage emotions as hospitality workers

Poll: Tell me about your current work status

- (a) Working at work (mostly in person)
- (b) Working at home (mostly remote)
- (c) Not working: furloughed or on leave
- (d) Not working: laid off/between jobs

Poll: This past week, how often did you feel any of the following:

- (a) Almost every day
- (b) Several days
- (c) A few days
- (d) Almost never



- Nervous
- Anxious
- Dread
- Worried

- Exhausted
- Fatigued
- Ineffective
- Overwhelmed



Why do we feel anxious?

GLOBAL CHANGE
Pandemic

NATION/STATE CHANGE
Lockdown & Masks
Politics & Protests

LOCAL CHANGE
Remote/layoffs
Work and School



Change → adaptation

Frontline Staff in April 2020

Note: Larger
words = frequency



“four walls are
closing in on me”,

Why do we feel anxious?

Something we value
is threatened

Uncontrollable

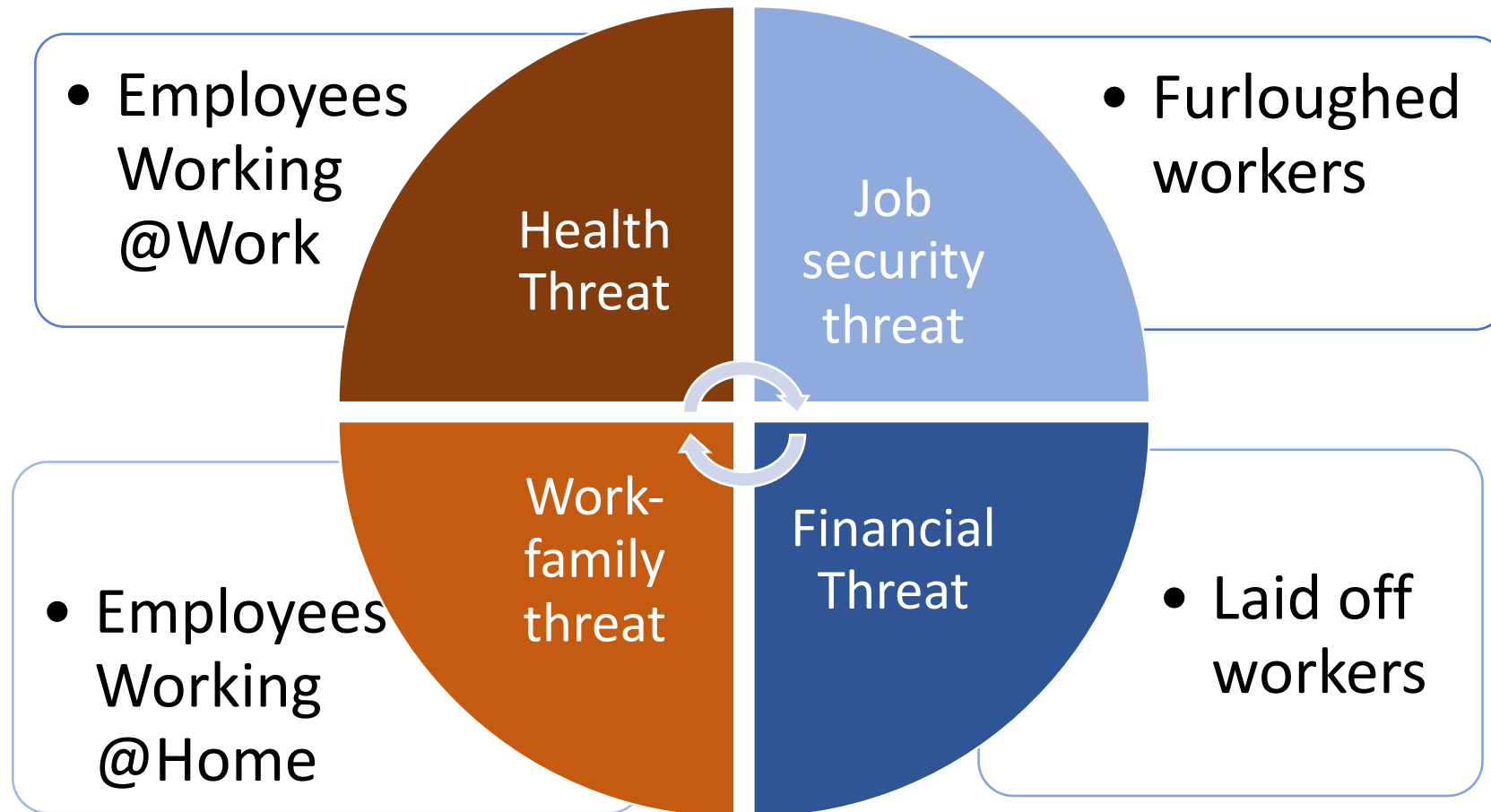
Unpredictable

Uncertain

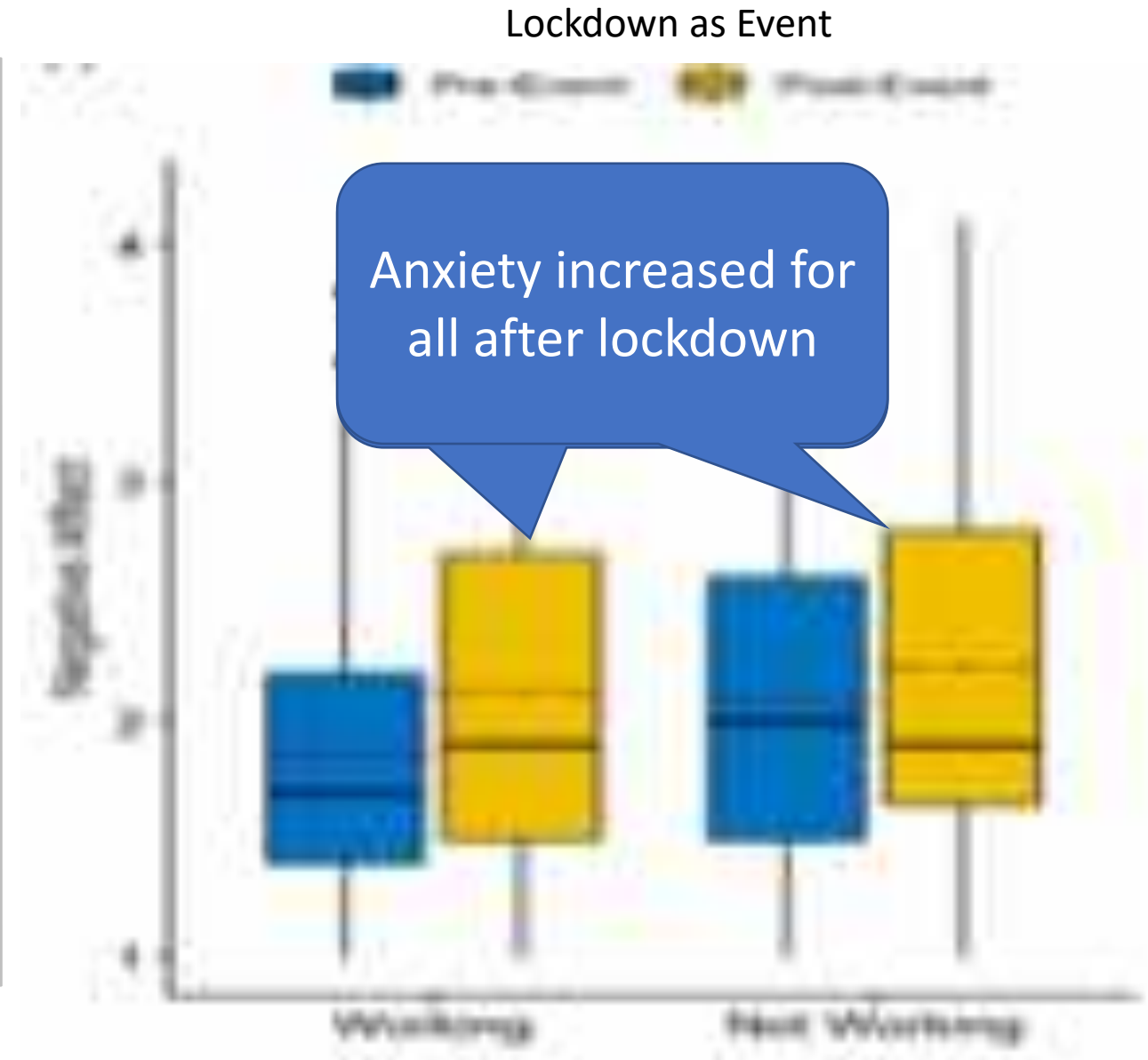
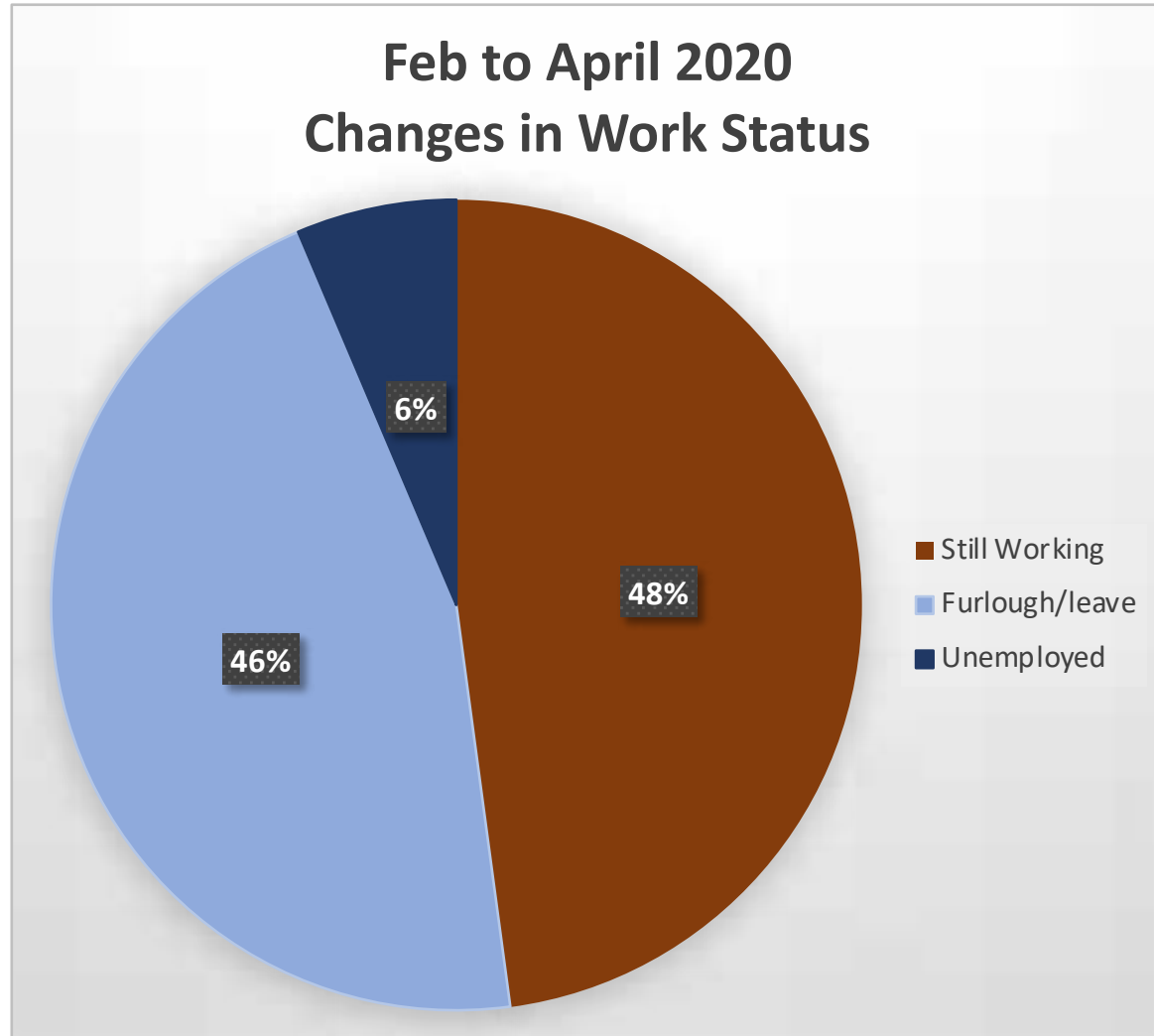


Threats →
arousal state
to adapt/cope

What is Threatened for Hospitality Workers?

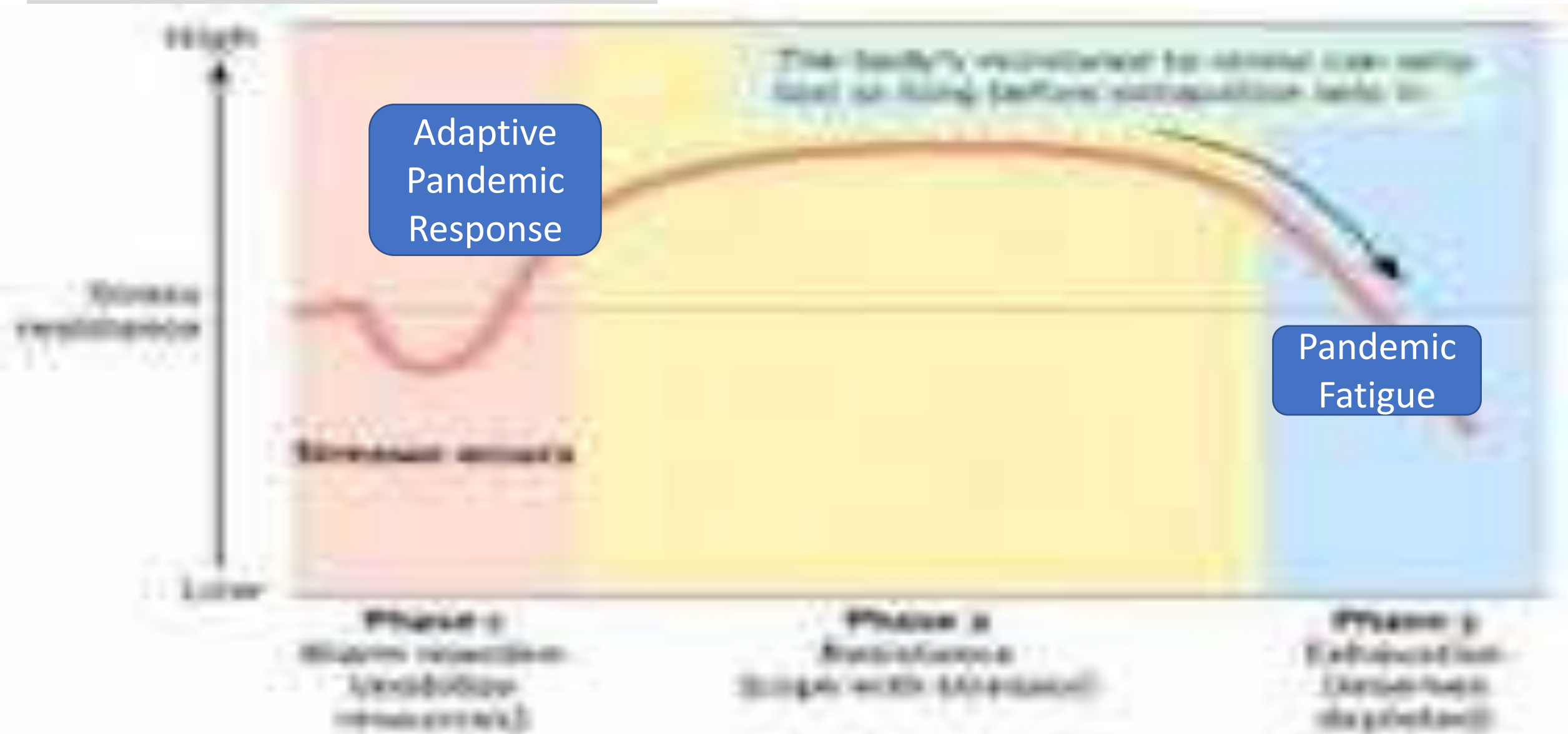


Evidence: Is Anxiety Higher for Those *Still Working* or *NOT Working* in Hospitality?



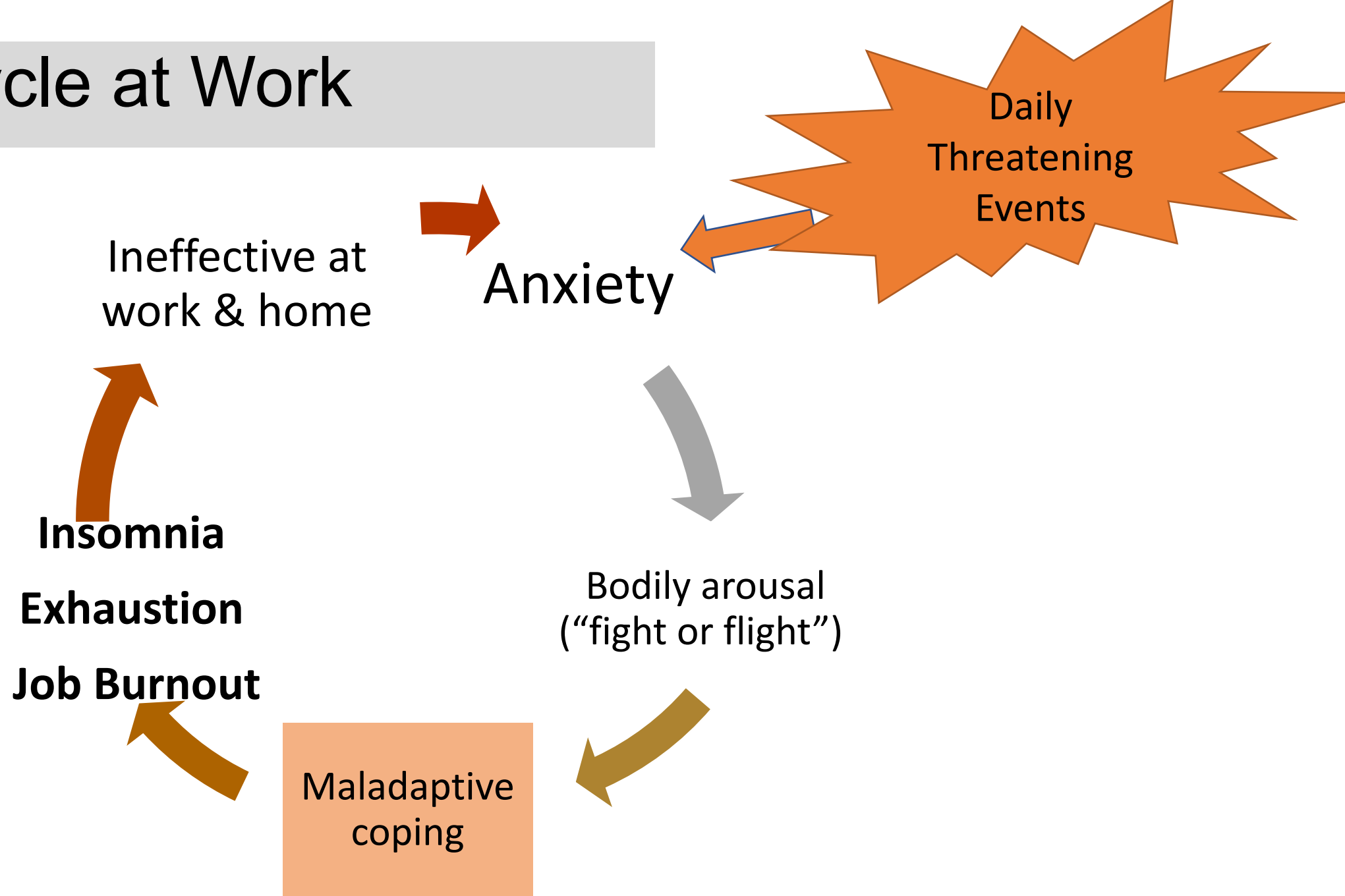
Survey of 141 Hospitality Workers (US and UK) – Grandey et al, 2020

Why are we so tired?

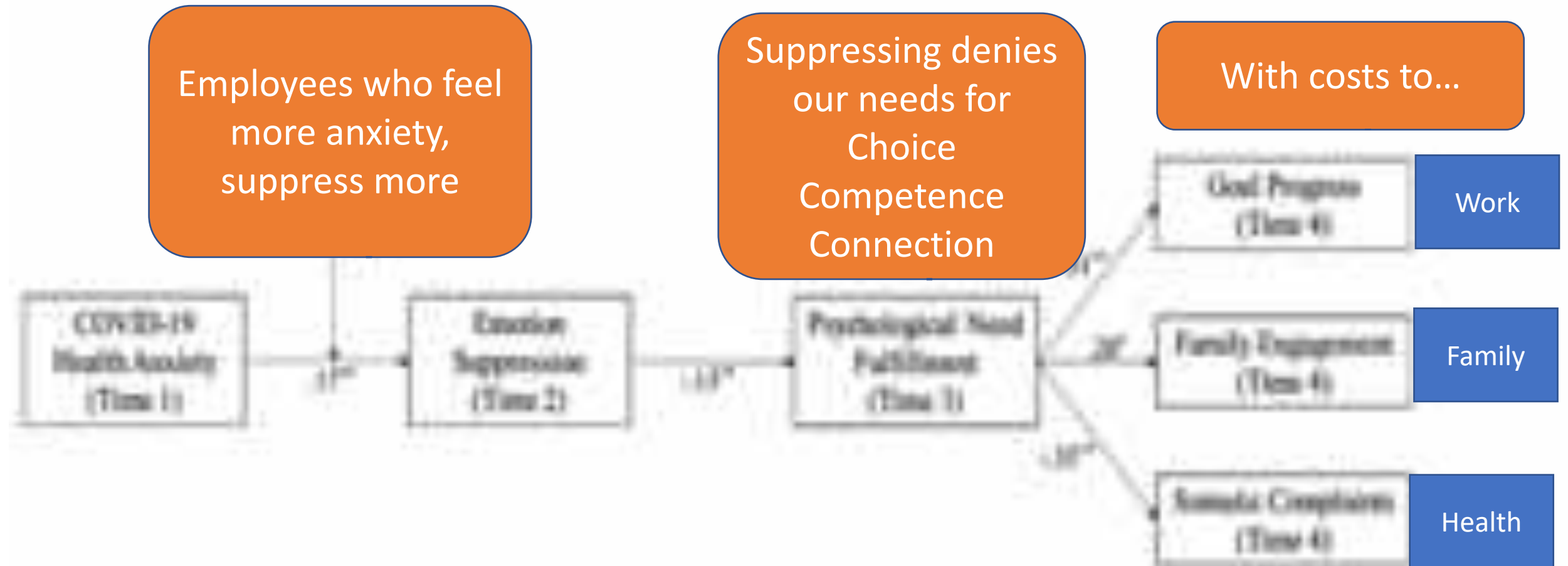


General Adaptation Syndrome (Selye)

Stress Cycle at Work



Evidence: Common Maladaptive Coping is Emotion Suppression (avoid, numb, ignore feelings)



In summary



Anxiety is a rational and adaptive response to threatening and uncertain events



When anxiety continues and is suppressed over time



Exhaustion – and costs to health, family and work – occurs

Three main goals



Making sense of the pandemic as an emotional event



Explaining the unique challenge for hospitality: Emotional labor



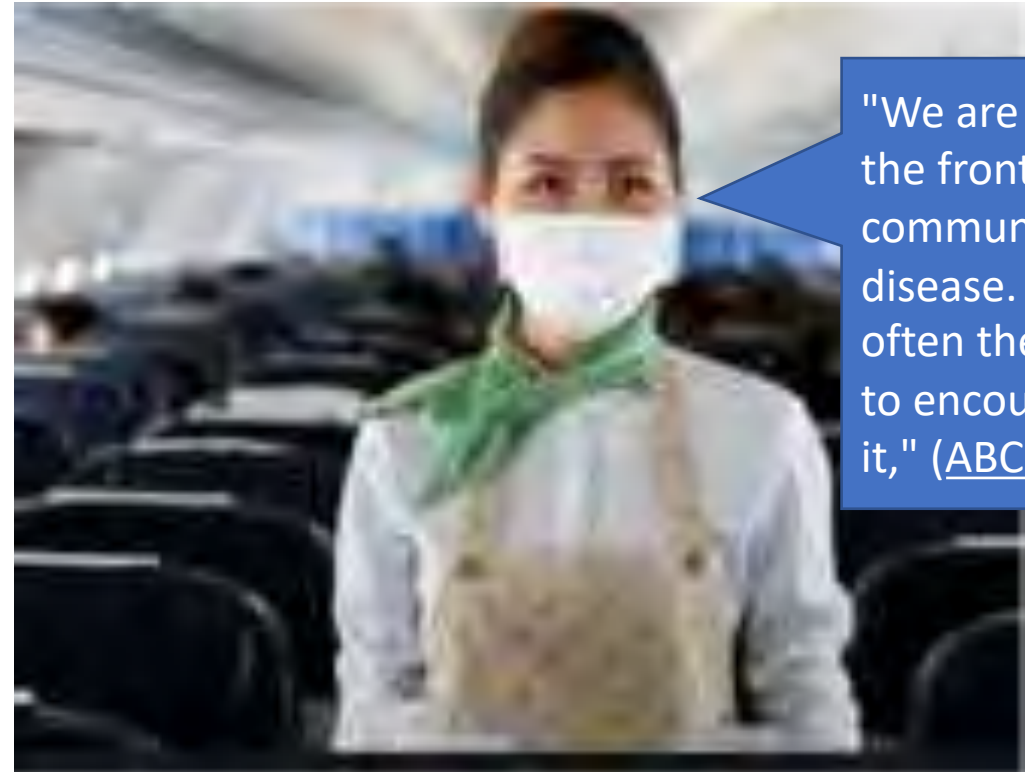
Identifying ways to manage emotions as hospitality workers

Emotional Labor: Managing own emotions

Service with a Smile Expectations



Feeling anxious about health and job



"We are often on the frontlines of communicable disease. We're often the first ones to encounter it," ([ABC news](#))

Emotional Labor: Managing own emotions

Expectations haven't changed –
so how meet them with a mask?



Grandey et al., 2020, in progress

Poll: Which service provider is smiling?

SURFACE ACTING (pretend and suppress)

DEEP ACTING (“smize”, modify feelings)

(a)



Used when feeling negative or mistreatment

(b)



Used when feel positive or *prosocial*

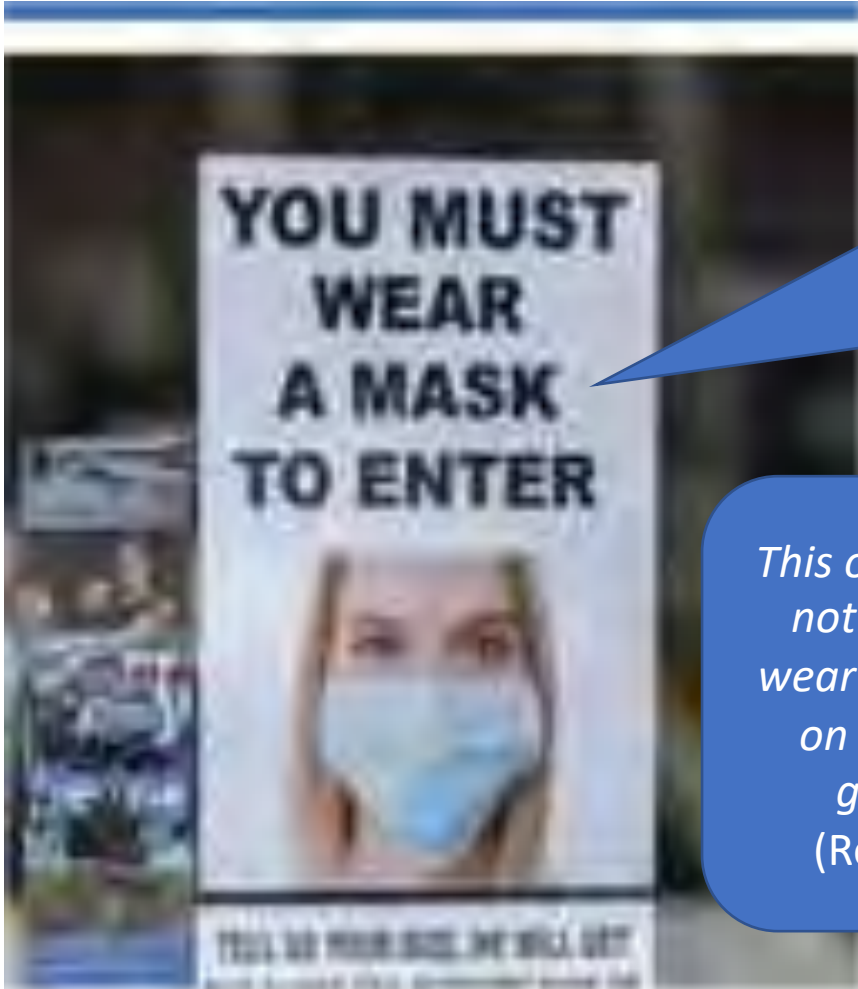
(c)

Neither

(d)

Both

Emotional Labor: Managing customer emotions



Threatens customers' need for control; power shift from "customers' always right"

This one lady got really mad, "it's not your job to tell me how to wear a mask", started filming me on her phone saying she was going to post on youtube (Restaurant manager in PA)

Emotional Labor Is a Store Clerk Confronting a Maskless Customer



Emotional Labor: Managing customer emotions

...we're expected to have a positive attitude but also be stern to make sure people are following the rules. It's a fine line to walk. (Librarian in MO)

we're at the front lines of a war and I am kind of like a general in battle. I do get "mean" to some people now, which I've never done.
(Bartender in GA)

(Grandey et al., in progress)



Service providers: people-pleasers or mask-enforcers?

Customer Mistreatment → More Surface Acting
(suppression and faking) which is linked to more...



Burnout

Insomnia

Somatic
symptoms

Marital conflict

After work
Drinking

e.g., Grandey, Krannitz, et al., 2016; Grandey et al., 2019; Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000; Wagner, et al., 2013

In summary



Hospitality workers still expected to perform “service with a smile”



Must effortfully suppress and fake expressions to manage own and customers emotions



Exhausting effort with costs to health, family and work

Three Main Goals



Make sense of the pandemic as an emotional event



Explain the unique challenge for hospitality: Emotional labor



Identify effective ways to manage emotions as hospitality workers

Managing Emotions Effectively for Health and Work

(1) Regulate



- **ACCEPT THE FEELINGS**

- Track emotions: [Mood](#) apps
- Information: not good or bad
- Take time to listen to the message

AVOID FUELING THEM

- Limit negative news/media/people
- Stop negative thought spirals
 - Catastrophizing
 - Guilt tripping (feel bad for your condition or how you feel)

(2) Recover – you choose how



Managing Emotions Effectively for Health and Work

- **REDUCE STRESS AROUSAL**

- **Detach:**

- Micro-breaks (BREATHE)
- set work-family boundaries (time or space)

- **Relax:**

- Video games/Movies/Netflix
- Nature, walking, [Meditation](#)

- **REFOCUS POSITIVE AROUSAL**

- **Exercise...**

- **Mastery:** learning or growth, focus on hobby or new skill (exert control!)

The Recovery Paradox:
Those who need recovery the most...
often feel they don't have time for recovery

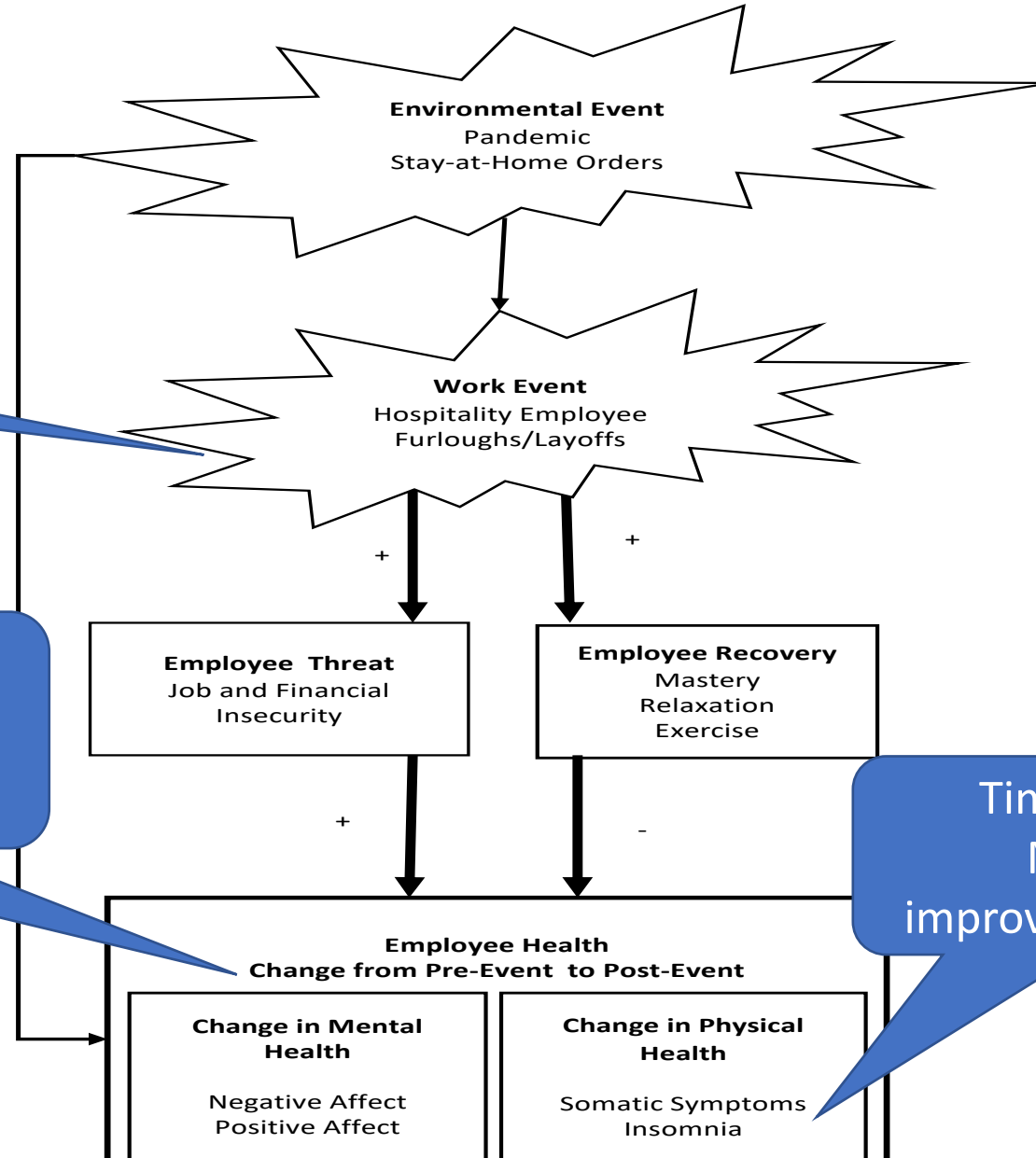
Evidence Based Conclusion:
Time spent on recovery
is a good investment

Evidence: What short-term recovery activities were effective for hospitality workers?

Grandey et al, under review

Those who stopped working
had more financial threat
But also more time

Time spent on RELAXATION
counteracted job insecurity--
reduced stress & symptoms



Time spent on
MASTERY
improved sleep for all

Managing Emotions Effectively for Health and Work

(3) Relate



○ **SHARE EMOTIONS WITH COWORKERS**

- Break out of isolation
- Give gratitude and compassion
- Foster a climate of authenticity
(Evidence)

Evidence:

Climate of authenticity breaks the emotional labor stress cycle

Grandey, et al., 2012, JOHP

"Staff made a Google doc for everyone to say their feelings and how to make restaurant safer. That was sent to the owners and the owners responded to how we feel, it made me feel like we are on the same page and makes everyone feel safe and more comfortable coming to work." (Restaurant server in GA)

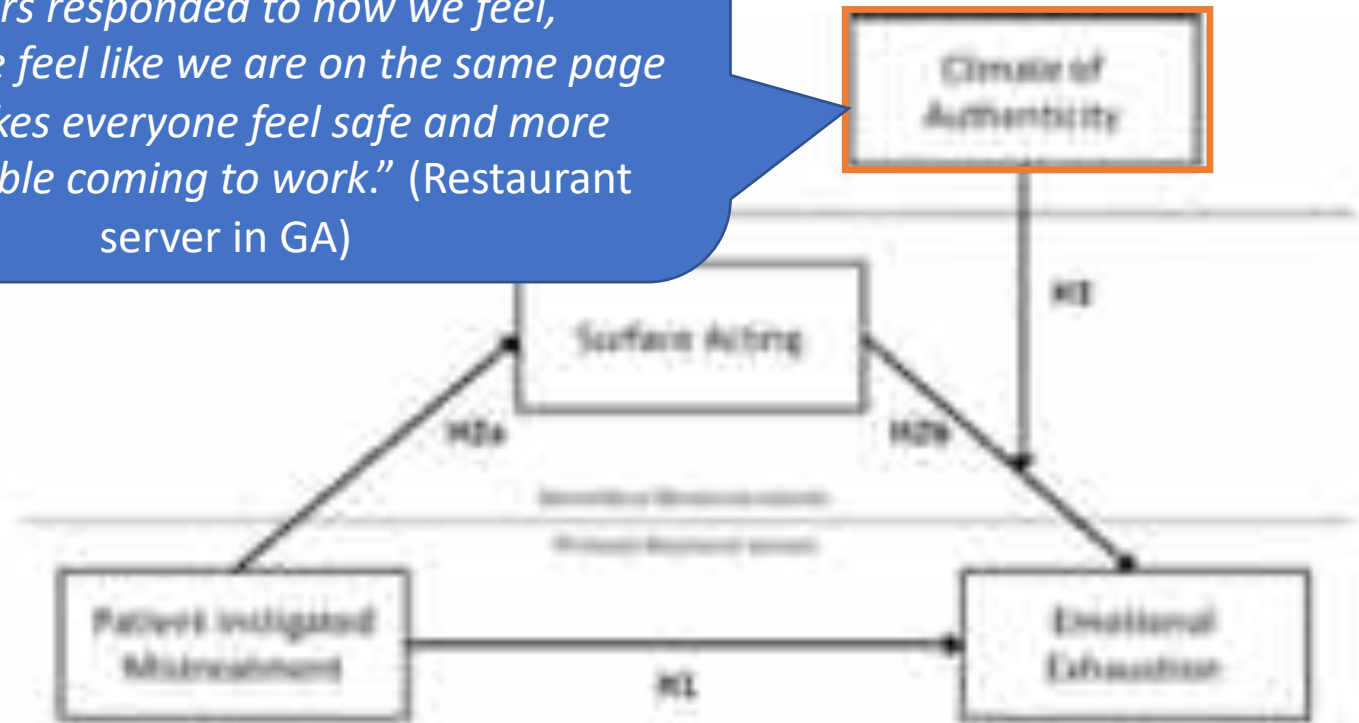


Figure 1. H1-H3 Hypotheses

Managing Emotions Effectively for Health and Work

(3) Relate



○ **SHARE EMOTIONS WITH COWORKERS**

- Break out of isolation
- Give [gratitude](#) and compassion
- Foster a climate of authenticity (Evidence)

○ **UNDERSTAND CUSTOMERS' EMOTIONS**

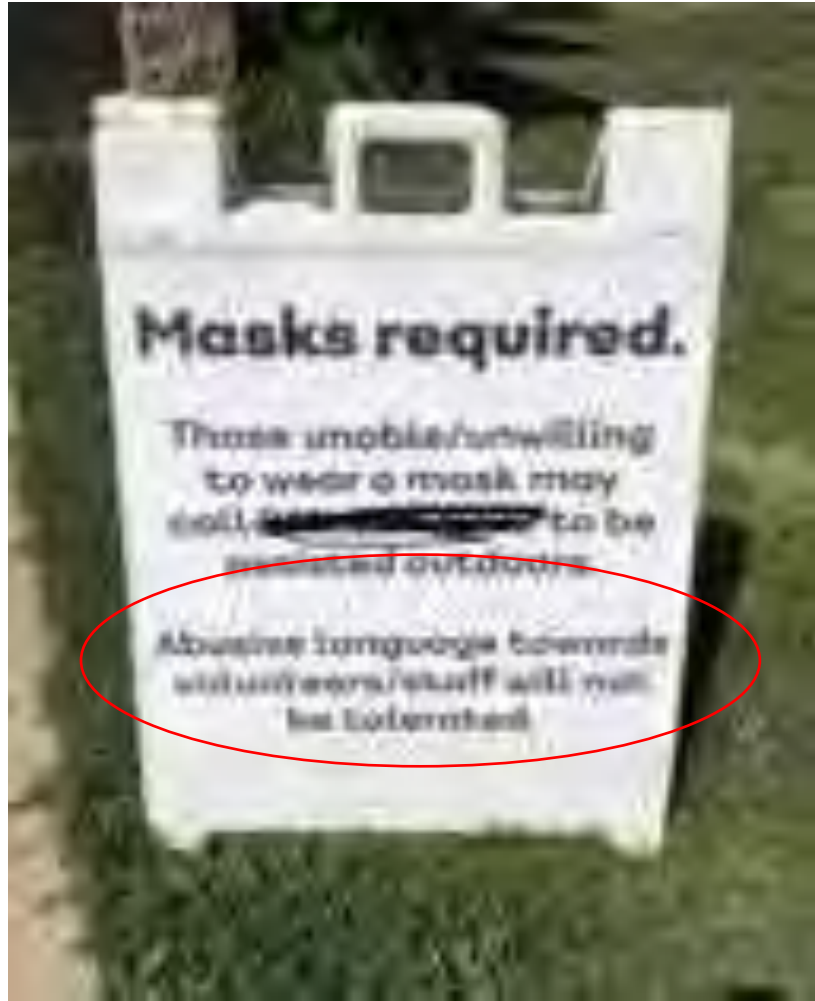
- Build rapport with mask
- De-escalate conflict

Build rapport with mask (link)

- **Prosocial focus (deep acting):**
recall positive interactions,
practice perspective-taking
- **Eyes:** Direct contact & “smize”
- **Vocal tone:** ‘smile in your voice’
- **Body language:** open posture
- **Synchronicity:** mirror others’ body



De-escalate conflict (link)



- 1) Show empathy for 'unfair' situation
 - Acknowledge discomfort
 - *Threat* to autonomy
 - 2) Clarify policy fairness
 - Clear, applies to all, all the time
 - Offer choices (increase autonomy)
 - 3) Offer interpersonal fairness
 - *Explain* the reason for the policy
 - Courtesy: "Kill them with kindness" (emotional labor!)
- Exhausting: Take a micro-break to recover!

CDC guide: Useful for Management & Owners

Employers can take action to prevent workplace violence



Establish a workplace violence prevention program. This includes policies, procedures, training, and communication. The program should be tailored to the specific needs of the workplace and should be updated regularly.



Provide training for employees on workplace violence prevention. This training should cover topics such as recognizing potential threats, de-escalation techniques, and reporting procedures.



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Don't

Don't argue with a customer if they make a complaint or demand. If a customer is angry, try to calm them down. Listen to their concerns and try to resolve the issue. If the customer is still angry, ask them to leave the store.

Don't discuss the details of a customer's complaint with other employees. This information is confidential and should only be shared with the person who made the complaint. If you need to discuss the complaint with someone else, make sure you are in a private area.

In summary



Regulate emotions by accepting
(not suppress or judge)



Recover from stress off-work by
investing in detachment,
relaxation, and mastery activities



Relate at-work by emotion
expression (with coworkers) and
understanding (with customers)

Conclusion

Have different emotional reactions?

Have your own stories about
working with customers?

Have great ideas about how to cope?

We want to hear them!



Make sense of the pandemic as an emotional event: Rational to feel anxious



Explain the unique challenge for hospitality: Emotional labor of people pleasing and mask enforcing



Identify ways to manage emotions as hospitality workers: Regulating and recovering while relating



We need participants to
improve work conditions for
hospitality!

Click link or QR code for
eligibility survey for
[Service with a Mask](#) study



Question & Answer



For More Information

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Targeted Research Training

Targetedresearch@ucf.edu

sciences.ucf.edu/psychology/sunshine/



Rosen College

hospitality.ucf.edu

hospitality.ucf.edu/research-recovery-and-reskill





Upcoming Webinars

Lessons from Astronauts on Dealing with Isolation

Dr. Lauren Landon, NASA

Thursday October 15, 2020

11 AM – 12 PM EST

[Zoom Registration Required](#)





Thank You!

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Additional Reskill resources:

Degree programs

<https://hospitality.ucf.edu/degree-programs/>

Graduate certificates:

[Hospitality and Tourism Technologies
Graduate Certificate](#)

[Destination Marketing & Management
Graduate Certificate](#)

[Event Management Graduate Certificate](#)

Upcoming Webinars:

"People" People Working or Not Working in Isolation: Coping Tools for the Hospitality Industry

(balance of 4-part series)

Part 3: Lessons from Astronauts on Dealing with Isolation

Thursday, Oct. 15 @11:00 a.m. ET

Part 4: Who am I? Finding Your Purpose in a Period of Unemployment

Thursday, Oct. 22 @12:00 p.m. ET

