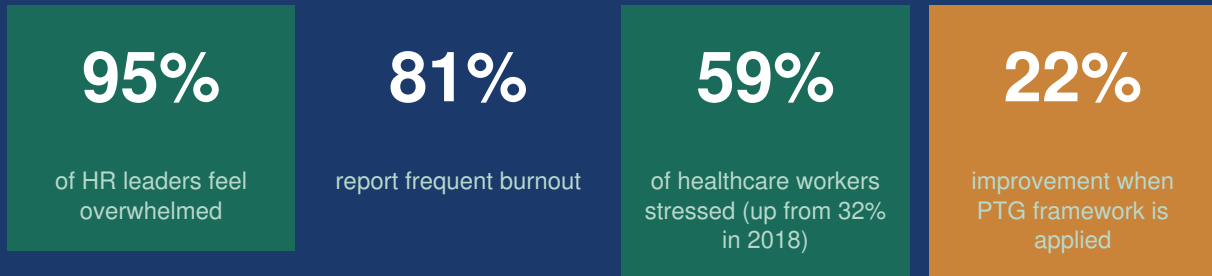


# THE 95% PROBLEM

*What Happens When the People Strategy Expert  
Has No People Strategy for Themselves*

*A Research-Backed Brief + Self-Assessment for HR Leaders*



***HR leaders are trained to carry everyone else.  
Nobody trains them for what happens when they start to break.***

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## THE BRIEF — WHY THIS MATTERS RIGHT NOW

### The Invisible Crisis Inside HR

There is a crisis hiding inside every HR department in America — and it belongs to the HR leader themselves.

HR professionals are the designated shock absorbers of organizational life. When the workforce is anxious, they steady it. When leaders make difficult decisions, they manage the fallout. When employees experience trauma — layoffs, restructuring, harassment, grief — HR is the first call. They carry the institutional weight of every person in the building, often simultaneously, often without acknowledgment, and almost always without a people strategy of their own.

*"Who is carrying the carrier? In most organizations, the honest answer is: nobody."*

### What the Research Reveals

95%	of HR leaders say the role is overwhelming due to excessive workload and stress	(Sage, 2024)
84%	frequently experience significant stress in their role	(Sage, 2024)
81%	report feeling burned out	(Sage, 2024)
90%	cite limited budgets as a top stressor; 89% cite inadequate team resources	(Sage, 2024)
59%	of healthcare workers are stressed by burnout in 2025 — nearly double the 32% reported in 2018	(Wellhub, 2025)
\$4.6B	annual cost of burnout to the U.S. healthcare system	(American Medical Association)
56%	of healthcare executives fail to get adequate sleep nightly	(Executive Burnout Report, 2025)

### Beyond Burnout — The Concept Most Organizations Miss

Most burnout conversations end at "resilience" — encouraging HR leaders to be stronger, more boundaried, more self-aware. But my doctoral research found something the resilience literature often overlooks:

*Resilience alone is not enough. What separates HR leaders who break from those who breakthrough is Posttraumatic Growth (PTG) — the capacity to be genuinely transformed by adversity rather than merely surviving it.*

PTG is not toxic positivity. It is not pretending difficulty isn't real. It is the documented phenomenon — grounded in 30+ years of psychological research — of people emerging from high-stress periods with expanded

perspective, deeper relationships, new possibilities, personal strength, and a richer appreciation for their work and life. HR leaders are uniquely positioned to experience PTG — if they are given the frameworks to do so.

## The Three-Stage Framework

<b>STAGE 1 — RECOGNIZE</b>	Name what is happening without minimizing it. Burnout often disguises itself as dedication. The first act of posttraumatic growth is honest recognition — of the weight you're carrying, the cost it has, and the signals your body and behavior are already sending.
<b>STAGE 2 — REFRAME</b>	Shift from barrier mindset to breakthrough orientation. This is not about gratitude journaling. It is about deliberately reconstructing how you interpret adversity — from something happening to you, to something that is shaping and informing your next chapter.
<b>STAGE 3 — REBUILD</b>	Design systems for sustainable resilience. Peer support structures, executive coaching, organizational enabling conditions, and intentional recovery — not as afterthoughts, but as strategic investments in your most important leadership asset: yourself.

## THE SELF-ASSESSMENT — WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?

This assessment is grounded in the research on HR leader burnout and posttraumatic growth. It is not a diagnostic tool — it is a mirror. Answer honestly, without editing for how you think you should feel.

**Instructions: For each statement, rate yourself on a scale of 1–5. 1 = Rarely/Never 2 = Occasionally 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Almost Always**

### SECTION A: THE LOAD — Recognizing What You're Carrying

A1 .	I feel emotionally drained by the end of a typical work week.	1 2 3 4 5
A2 .	I spend significant energy managing perceptions, translating myself, or navigating dynamics unrelated to my actual job.	1 2 3 4 5
A3 .	I find myself absorbing the stress of the people and situations I'm managing.	1 2 3 4 5
A4 .	I have difficulty disconnecting from work — mentally or physically — during off hours.	1 2 3 4 5
A5 .	I feel that the emotional labor I perform goes unacknowledged by my organization.	1 2 3 4 5

### SECTION B: THE SIGNAL — Early Warning Indicators

B1 .	My productivity or quality of work has declined without a clear external cause.	1 2 3 4 5
B2 .	I feel cynical or detached from work that used to energize me.	1 2 3 4 5
B3 .	I experience physical symptoms (headaches, fatigue, disrupted sleep) during high-stress periods.	1 2 3 4 5
B4 .	I have considered leaving the HR profession entirely.	1 2 3 4 5
B5 .	I feel like I am performing resilience rather than actually experiencing it.	1 2 3 4 5

### SECTION C: THE STRENGTH — Posttraumatic Growth Indicators

<b>C1</b> .	I have grown professionally or personally as a result of navigating a difficult workplace experience.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>C2</b> .	I am able to identify meaning or purpose in adversity — even if it was painful.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>C3</b> .	I have systems, relationships, or practices that actively restore my energy.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>C4</b> .	I believe I can leverage the challenges I've faced to become a more effective leader.	1 2 3 4 5
<b>C5</b> .	I actively invest in my own development — not just the development of others.	1 2 3 4 5

## INTERPRETING YOUR SCORES

Add up your scores for each section separately. Use the guide below to understand where you are — and what it means.

### Sections A + B (The Load & The Signal): Total Possible = 50

10–20	Low burden indicators. You are managing well — or you may be suppressing signals. Revisit honestly.
21–35	Moderate burden. You are carrying significant weight. The signals are present. It is time to act.
36–50	High burden. You are in or approaching a breaking point. This is not sustainable. Seek support now.

### Section C (The Strength): Total Possible = 25

5–12	Growth capacity is low or underdeveloped. You have the potential — it needs nurturing.
13–18	Moderate growth orientation. You have experienced growth but haven't fully operationalized it.
19–25	Strong posttraumatic growth profile. You are leveraging adversity. Build on this intentionally.

*The goal is not a perfect score. The goal is honest awareness — so you can design a response that is worthy of the leader you are.*

## YOUR NEXT STEP — THREE ACTIONS THIS WEEK

NAME IT	Write down the three things that are costing you the most energy right now. Not work tasks — the invisible labor. Name it without minimizing it.
TELL SOMEONE	Share your score with one trusted person — a peer, a coach, a mentor. Breaking isolation is the first act of posttraumatic growth.
INVEST IN YOURSELF	Schedule one hour this week that is specifically for your own development — not your team's, not your organization's. Yours.

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