Should we still care about burnout and engagement?
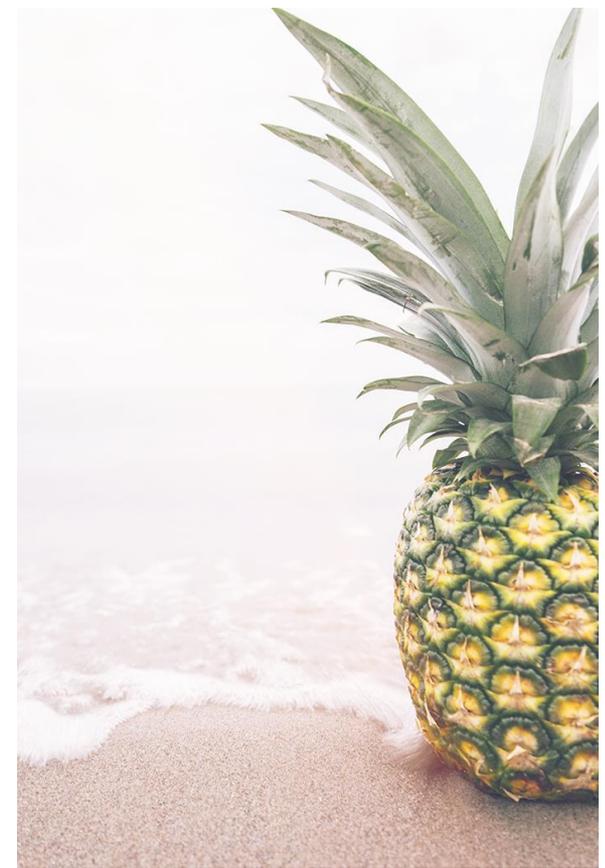
Dr Luke Fletcher, Aston Business School
l.fletcher1@aston.ac.uk

IOSH Yorkshire Branch Event: 17th May 2019

OVERVIEW OF SESSION

- What do we mean by wellbeing?

- Why should we still care?

- Mapping out different types of wellbeing

- A closer look at:
  - burnout
  - engagement
  - resources and demands
  - meaningfulness as a critical need

WHAT IS WELLBEING?

- Wellbeing is not simple to define as it is culturally and socially embedded, and is multifaceted:

  - Some emphasise happiness and contentment with one's self, i.e. wellbeing as being satisfied with one's situation in life (e.g. life satisfaction)

  - Others emphasise one's commitment to a leading a purposeful and full life, i.e. wellbeing as having an active fulfilling life (e.g. meaning in life)

  - And some focus on physical and mental health, i.e. wellbeing as a healthy and productive life (e.g. GHQ12)

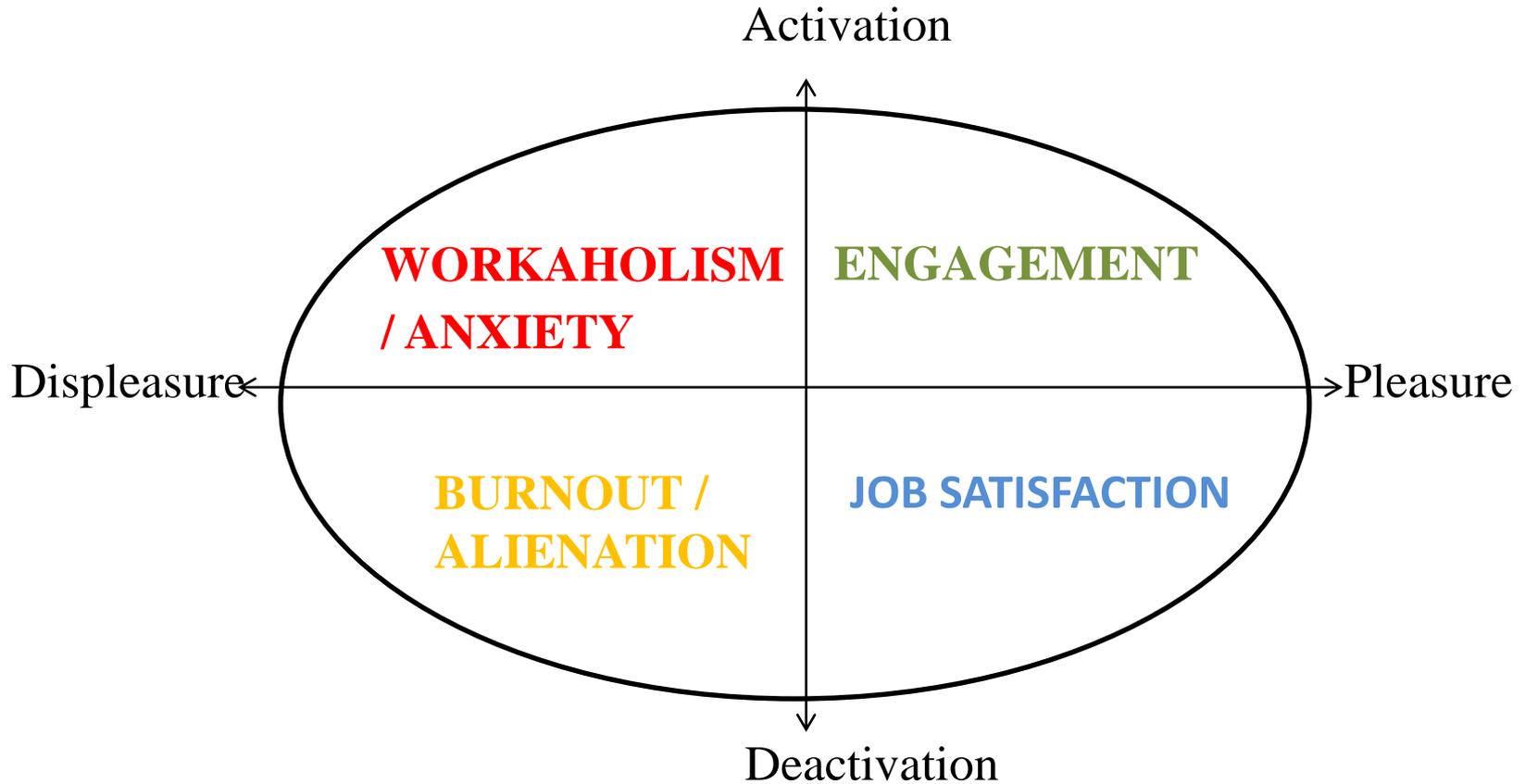# MAPPING OUT DIFFERENT TYPES OF WELLBEING

Hedonic

- Views pleasure and happiness as central

- More self directed, focus is on self interests

- Emphasises quantity over quality of experience, particularly positive versus negative mood.
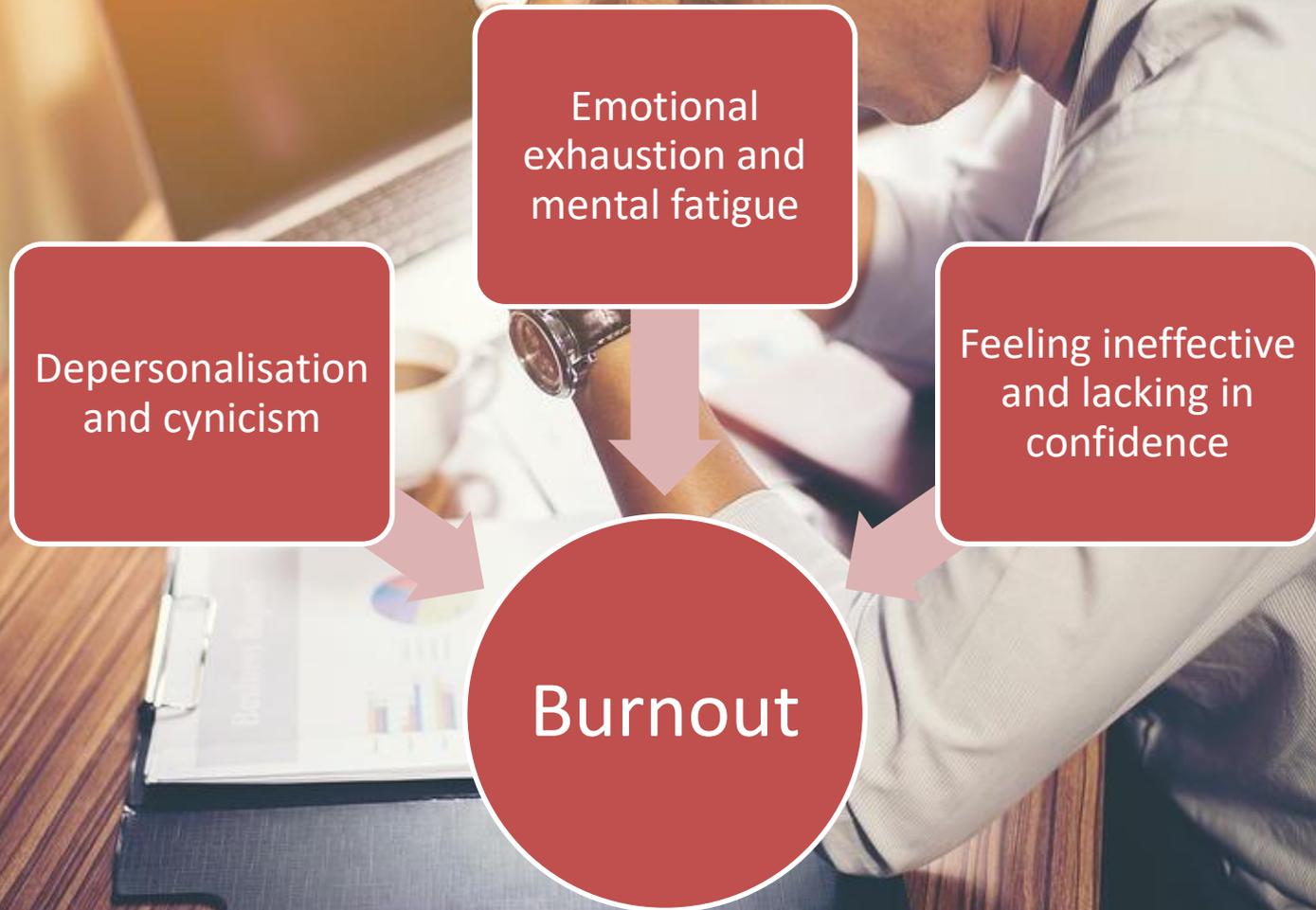
Eudaimonic

- Views self-realization and self development as central

- More socially and culturally embedded, focus is on congruence between self and environment

- Emphasises quality over quantity of experience, particularly fulfilment of psychological needs

MAPPING OUT WELLBEING

Aston Business School
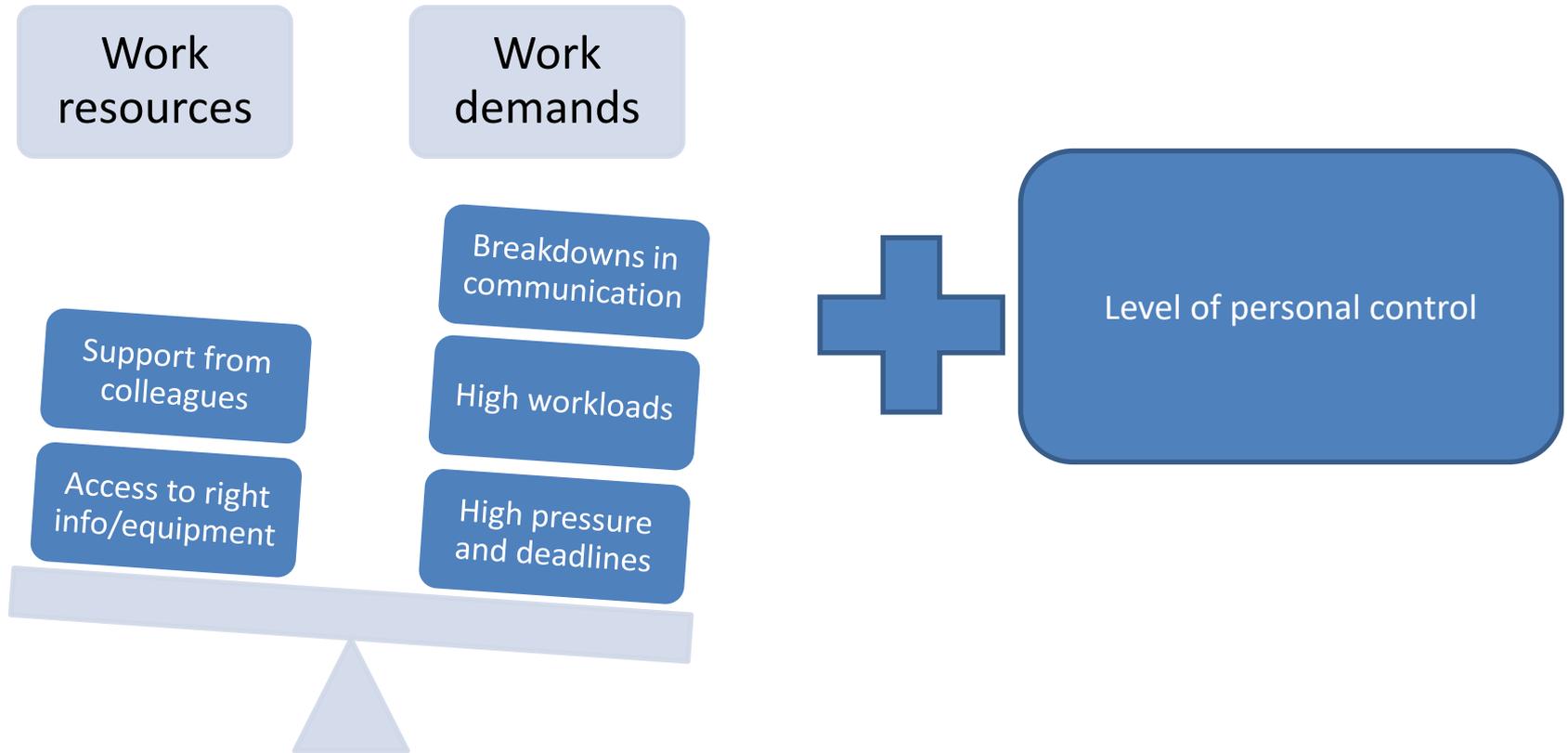
Emotional exhaustion and mental fatigue

Depersonalisation and cynicism

Feeling ineffective and lacking in confidence

Burnout

A CLOSER LOOK AT ENGAGEMENT

Bailey et al. (2017)

Feeling enthusiastic and excited

Attentive, focused, and mentally alert

Feeling energised to put in effort

Engagement

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN IN PRACTICE?

Work resources

Work demands

Support from colleagues

Access to right info/equipment

Breakdowns in communication

High workloads

High pressure and deadlines

$+$ Level of personal control

DIFFERENTIATING RESOURCES

Personal

Organizational

Resources

Relational

Task/Job

Fletcher (2017)
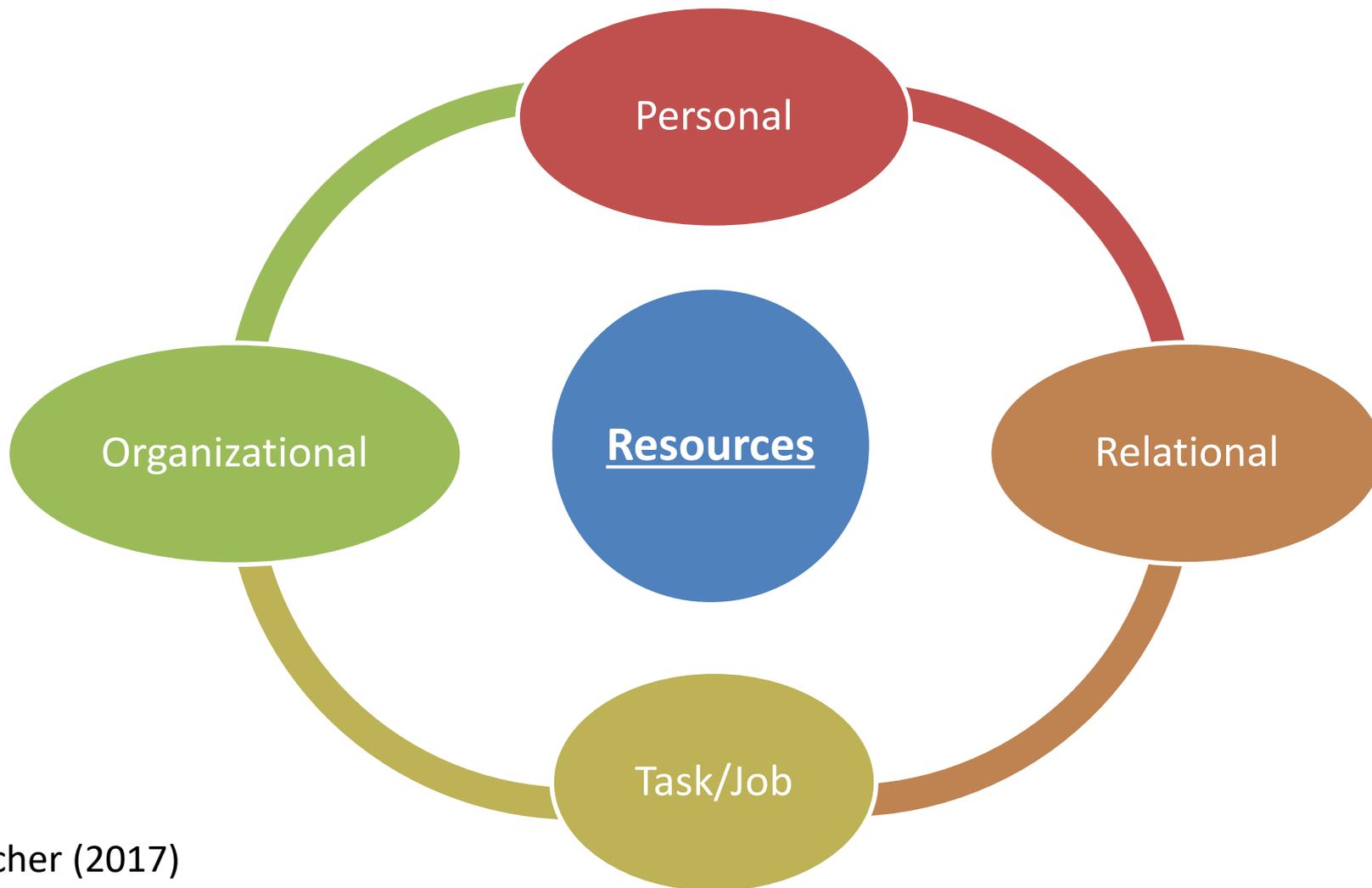
DIFFERENTIATING DEMANDS

Challenge demands

- Facilitates both engagement and burnout
- Promote growth and mastery
- Depletes energy which can lead to strain
- Allows the regulation and replenishment of energies to occur

Examples include increased responsibilities, short term increased workload, novel assignments/activities

Hindrance demands

- Facilitates burnout, but not engagement
- Does not promote growth or mastery
- Depletes energy which can lead to strain
- Disrupts the regulation and replenishment of energies

Examples include red tape, communication breakdowns, technological issues.

Meaningfulness as a critical need?

"Meaningfulness is a fundamental human need because it identifies and satisfies what is of profound importance for living a human kind of life" (**Yeoman, 2014**, p.241)

Meaningfulness is about an authentic connection between one's work and a broader collective or contextualised purpose (**Bailey & Madden, 2015**)
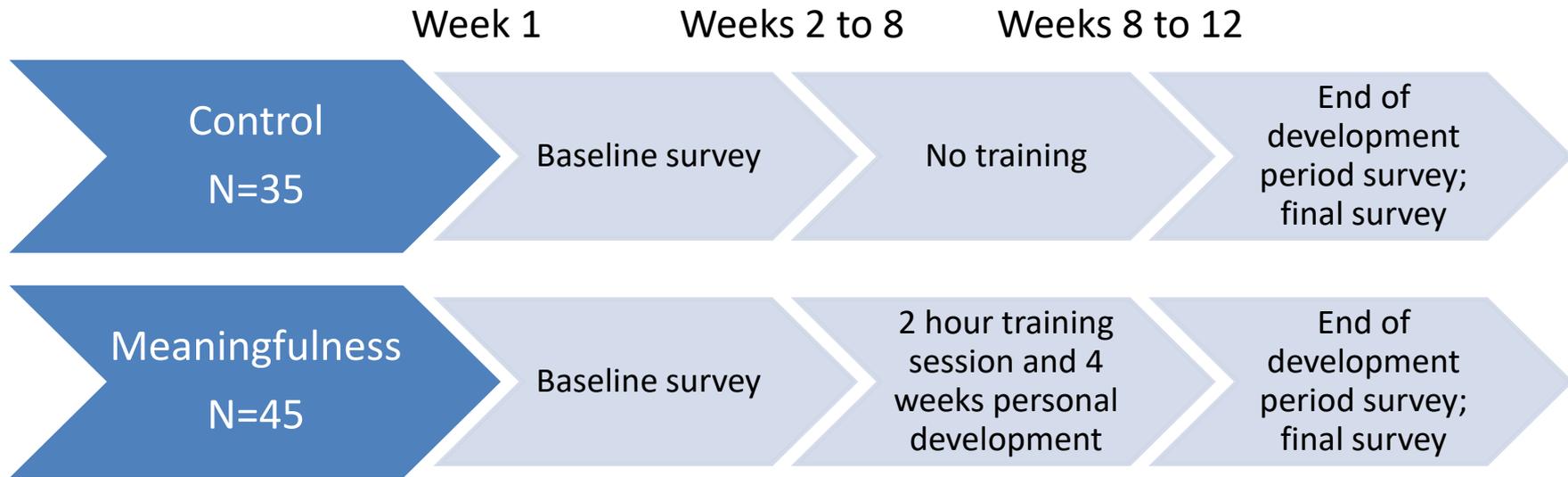

"People need to feel as if they matter, that their contributions have meaning" (**Kahn, 2010**, p.24).
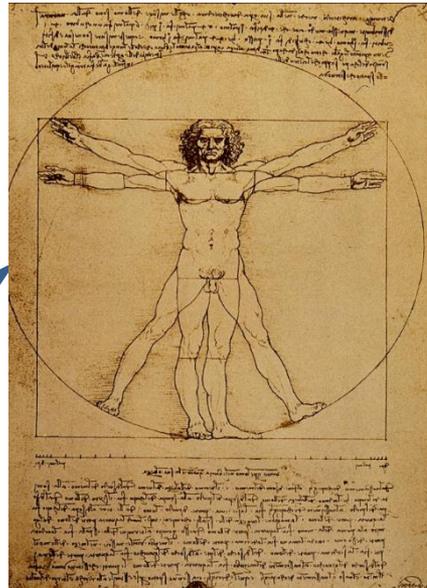
"Man's main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life" (**Frankl, 1959**, p.115)

Facilitating Meaningfulness

|	Week 1	Weeks 2 to 8	Weeks 8 to 12
Control N=35	Baseline survey	No training	End of development period survey; final survey
Meaningfulness N=45	Baseline survey	2 hour training session and 4 weeks personal development	End of development period survey; final survey

**Meaningfulness intervention**

Identify, describe, and reflect upon a relatively meaningful event/situation that happened at work over the last week or so;

Focus a different broader source of meaningfulness and discuss how this could be utilised/strengthened within the workplace;

Set a behavioural goal, and a plan to achieve it, that they feel would have a meaningful impact to themselves and in their workplace. Plus some space of reflection of previous goal.
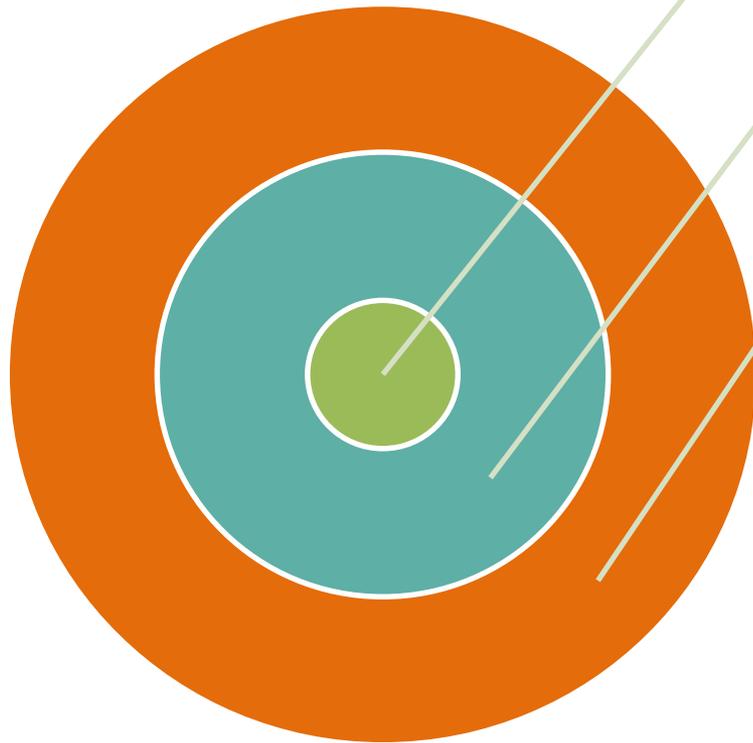
Fletcher and Schofield (in press)
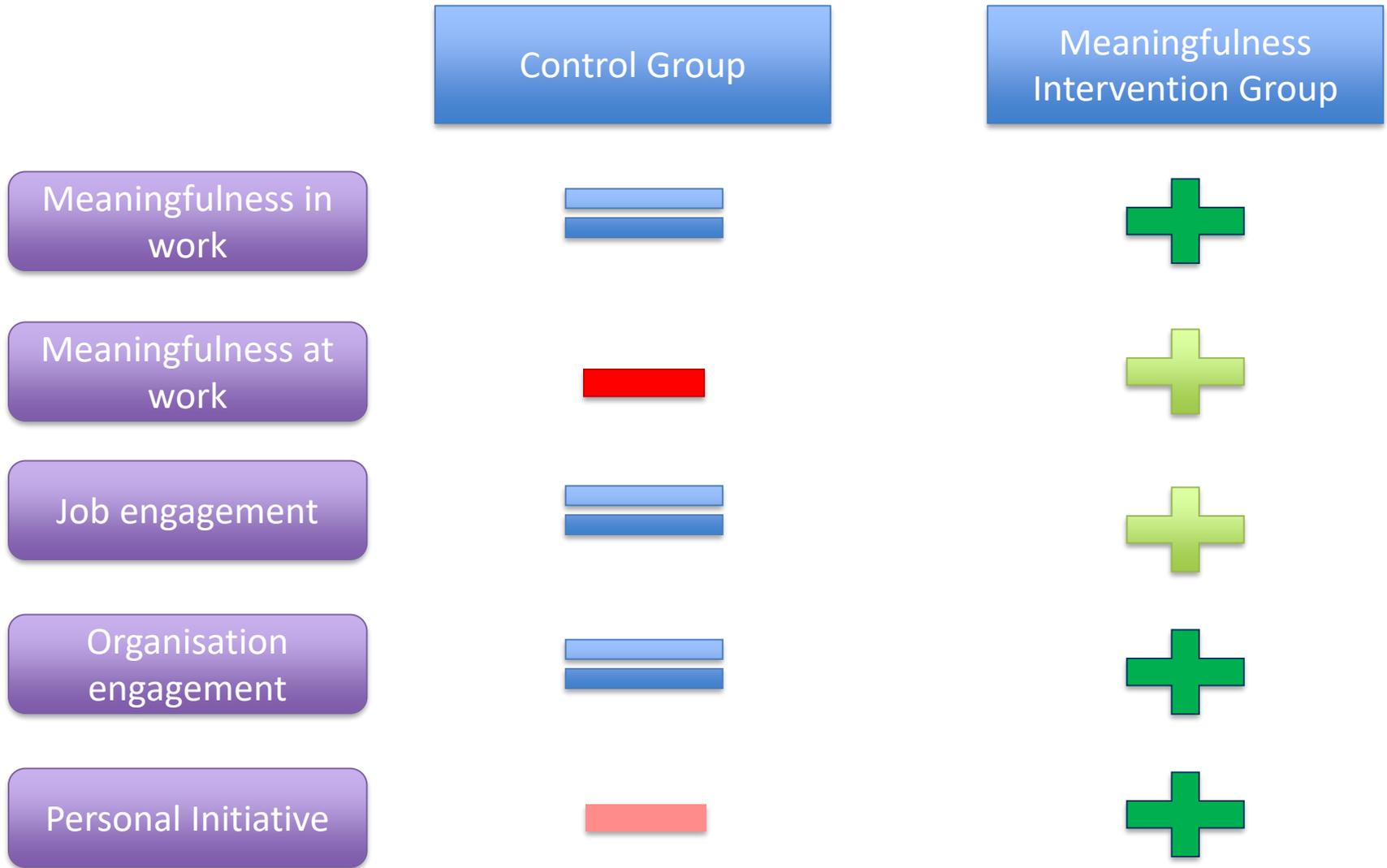
Qualitative Findings
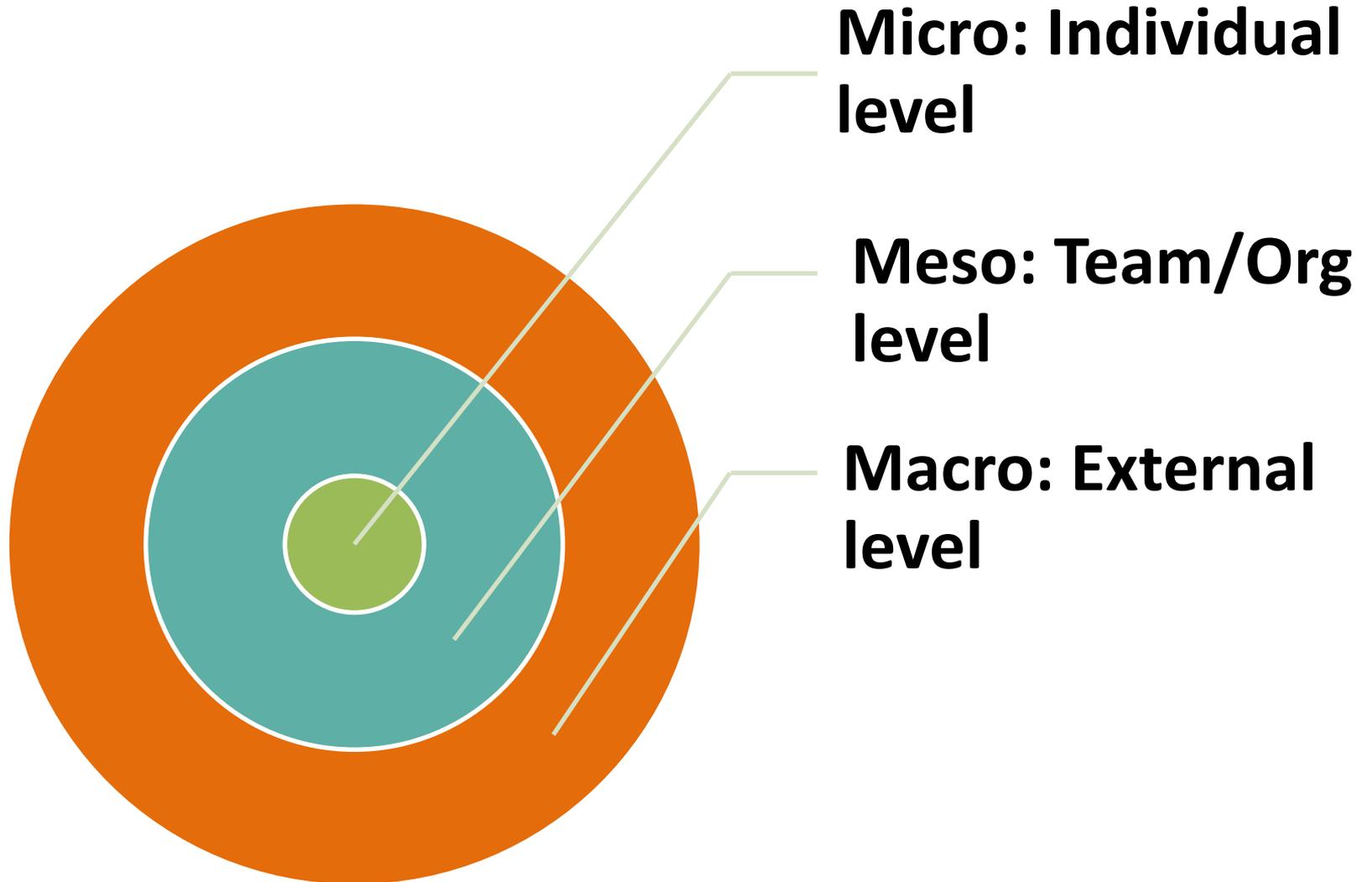
Micro: Individual level
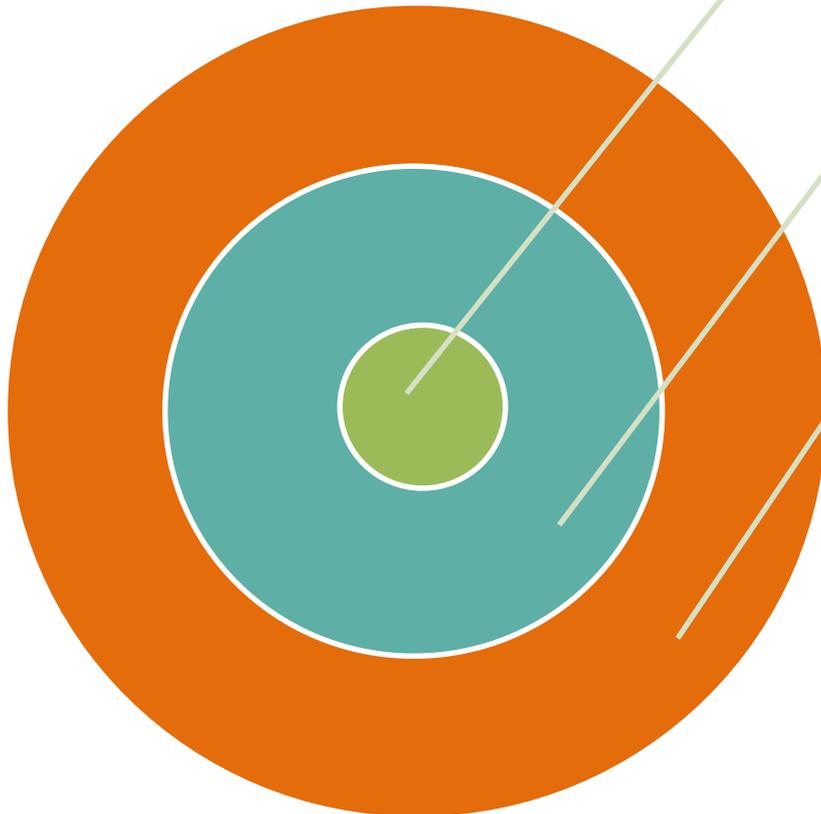
Meso: Team/Org level

Macro: External level

MESO

1) **Team Climate and Intergroup Relations:** "a shared mentality of what matters"

2) **Capacity of line managers:** "you want the managers to get together and take a step back"

3) **Utilizing change agents:** ""it's like converting to a religion...it needs to be sold in the right way"

4) **Harnessing existing strategies, systems, processes:** "it's finding a way to sneak it in and it not become a tick in the box"

MACRO
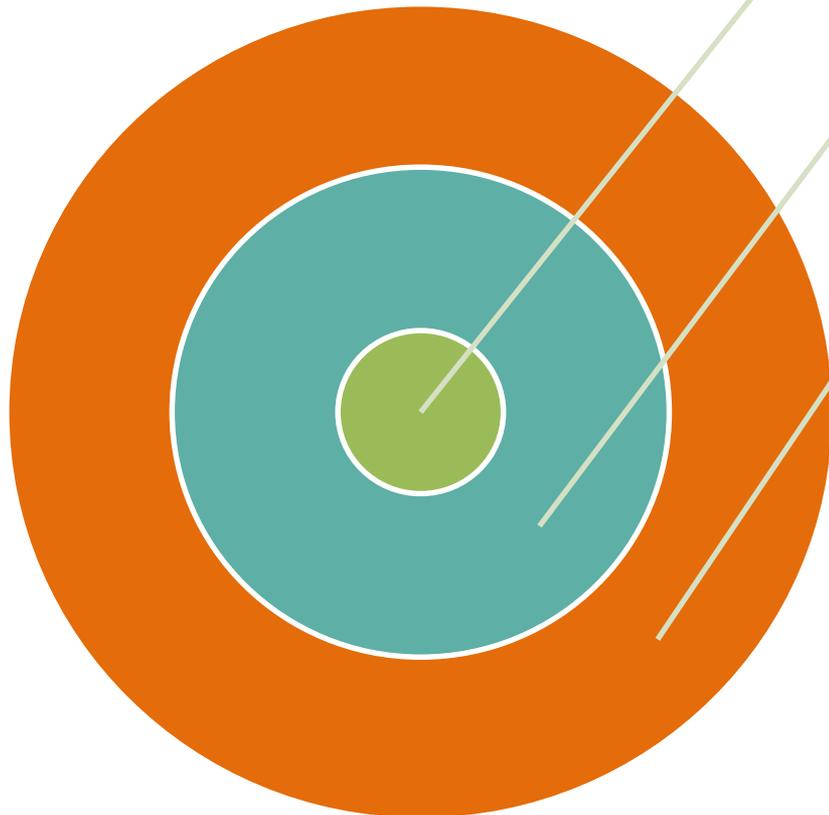
1) Socio-Political/Economic Environment: "last week it was incredibly difficult because of the Referendum result and so everything just seemed meaningless anyway...I was really negative ...I wasn't my usual working self"""

Thank you for listening

Key Publications

- Bailey, C., Madden, A., Alfes, K., and Fletcher, L. (2017). The meaning, antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement: A narrative evidence synthesis. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 19, 31-53. doi: 10.1111/ijmr.12077

- Fletcher, L. (2017). The everyday experience of engagement: What matters most?. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*. Online first. Doi: 10.1002/hrdq.21288

- Fletcher, L., & Robinson, D. (2014). *Measuring and understanding engagement* in C. Truss, R. Delbridge, K. Alfes, A. Shantz, and E. Soane (Eds.), Employee Engagement in Theory and Practice (pp.587-627). London: Routledge.

- Fletcher, L. and Schofield, K. (in press). Facilitating meaningfulness in the workplace: A field intervention study. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management.*