

WHAT THE NR-1 DOESN'T SAY —
AND WHAT NO REGULATION WILL EVER SAY ABOUT YOU

WHO ARE YOU?



AN INVITATION
TO TRUE HUMAN
HEALTH IN
ORGANIZATIONS

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WHO ARE YOU?

What NR-1 Doesn't Say — and What No Regulation Will Ever Say About You

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Before We Begin

I always knew.

I didn't need a crisis, a collapse, or a piece of legislation to realize that something was fundamentally wrong with the way we treat people inside organizations. Back when I was still on the other side — managing large teams, delivering projects, held accountable for the numbers — I already felt it. I already saw what no one was naming. The person who delivered everything and came home unable to explain why they felt so empty. The leader who knew the name of every target but no longer knew his own name — the real one, the one that exists before the title.

It was that certainty that made me change direction. Not toward a new career. Toward a question I have carried for more than 28 years and that still has no easy answer:

What are we doing to the human being inside organizations — and what is the human being doing to himself?

This ebook is not about NR-1 — Brazil's federal occupational health and safety standard, recently updated to make the management of psychosocial risk mandatory in the workplace. The regulation is the pretext — the moment when the law finally acknowledged what had already been happening for decades. But what you'll find here is something else.

You'll find questions you may have been avoiding. You'll find the woman who serves the coffee, the director, the person who cleans the bathroom — and you'll recognize in each of them something that may be yours too. You'll find HR — not as a department, but as a human being who chose that profession for a reason the system has spent years burying under processes and metrics.

And if you have the courage to reach the end, you will find yourself.

Not the professional. You.

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If no one asks me, I know. If I wish to explain it to one who
asks, I no longer know.
— Saint Augustine, on time. And on us.

—|— THE QUESTION THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING WHO ARE YOU, REALLY?

I've been asking this question for 28 years. In boardrooms, in workshops with leaders of global companies, in conversations with employees who never imagined anyone would ask them something like that. And what happens in the first few seconds after the question lands in the air is always the same — regardless of hierarchical level, salary, or the size of the badge:

A silence that says everything.

It isn't shyness. It isn't modesty. It's something far deeper and far more disturbing: most people who spend forty, fifty, sixty hours a week inside an organization genuinely cannot answer that question without stammering.

They start with the job title. They retreat. They try their education. They stop. They mention their family. They hesitate. And somewhere in the middle of that search, something is revealed — not what the person is about to say, but what they can no longer access.

Saint Augustine described this about time with a precision that has crossed fifteen centuries: if no one asks me, I know; if I wish to explain it to one who asks, I no longer know. He was talking about time. But he was describing, with exactness, what modern organizational culture has done to human identity.

You exist for as long as no one questions you. You function, you deliver, you show up, you respond, you produce. But when someone — or you yourself, in a rare moment of silence — asks who is doing all of this, the answer disappears.

The Day That Ends Like Just Another Day

Think of someone you know. Or of yourself.

Wake up. Check the phone before getting out of bed. Face the traffic or open the laptop. Sit through meetings. Answer emails. Make decisions. Resolve conflicts. Deliver. Repeat. Close the computer. Get home.

And when you get there — when the door closes and the silence of the house replaces the noise of the day — what's left?

Not a sense of a day lived. Not the satisfaction of having been present for something that mattered. Not the memory of a moment when something genuinely human happened between you and another person.

What's left is exhaustion. And the vague, almost unbearable awareness that tomorrow will be the same.

Just another day. Not a day. Just another one.

That distinction seems small. It isn't. It's the difference between a life being lived and a life being served out. Between existing and showing up. Between being and functioning.

And the most disturbing part: most people living this way cannot name what's wrong. They aren't in clinical crisis. They haven't been diagnosed with anything. From the standpoint of any management system, they're fine. They are not fine.

THE HIJACKING NO ONE NOTICES BECAUSE IT HAPPENS SLOWLY

Organizational culture doesn't break people. It does something more sophisticated and harder to name: it normalizes them.

It replaces dreams with targets. It replaces identity with job title. It replaces presence with availability. It replaces curiosity with compliance. And it does this so slowly, so systematically, with so many small rewards along the way — the promotion here, the bonus there, the public recognition in a meeting — that by the time the person notices what's been lost, they can no longer tell what is theirs from what the system installed in them.

It isn't a conspiracy. It's design. A design no one chose consciously, yet everyone reproduces — because it's what they learned it meant to be professional. To be responsible. To be committed.

And the dreams? The dreams were buried, little by little. Not all at once — that would have been too dramatic, too visible. They were filed away as immaturity. As the romanticism of someone who hasn't yet understood how the world works. As a luxury you can't afford when there are bills to pay and a career to build.

Until one day — not a specific day, because that day never has a date — the person realizes they no longer know what they dream of. Not for lack of imagination. Because they unlearned how to give themselves permission.

When was the last time you wanted something — not for what it would give you, but for what it would mean?





WHAT WE CALL MENTAL HEALTH AND WHAT IT REALLY IS

Mental Health Is Not the Absence of Illness

I need to start here because this is where almost everything said about the topic goes wrong. Mental health has become an agenda item. A campaign. A month, a color, a ribbon, an emoji. It has become a corporate benefit, a meditation app, a decompression room with colorful beanbags.

And amid so much noise about mental health, what mental health actually is has become even more hidden.

The World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to their community. It's a functional definition. Useful for legislating, for building protocols, for measuring. And completely insufficient for describing what it truly means to be mentally sound.

Because mental health is not functionality. It is not productivity. It is not the ability to handle stress without collapsing.

Mental health is the capacity to be who you are — whole, contradictory, imperfect — without having to fragment yourself to survive the environment you live in.

That distinction changes everything. Because by the WHO's standard, the person who comes home every day to just another day can be perfectly healthy. They're functioning. They're producing. They're handling stress without collapsing. By the real standard — the question of whether they can be who they are, whether they have access to what they feel, whether they can name what they want, whether they remain in contact with what gives them meaning — they are in profound suffering. A suffering with no code in the ICD. One that triggers no medical leave. One that sets off no alarm. A suffering that functions.



WHAT THE NERVOUS SYSTEM KNOWS THAT HR DOESN'T MEASURE

Stephen Porges spent decades studying the autonomic nervous system and arrived at a conclusion with devastating implications for the organizational world: the human organism does not distinguish between physical threat and social threat.

Public humiliation in a meeting activates the same survival system a predator would. Chronic uncertainty about one's own job keeps the organism in a permanent state of alert — the same state that would be appropriate for crossing a dangerous forest, but that wears the organism down when it becomes the default state of a professional life.

What this produces, over months and years, is not burnout. Burnout is the name we give to the moment the system finally collapses. What happens before the collapse — and what lasts far longer — is a state of functional shutdown. The organism cuts off access to whatever is metabolically expensive and non-essential for immediate survival: creativity, empathy, curiosity, genuine presence, the capacity to truly care.

The person keeps functioning. But what makes them human keeps falling behind. And no one notices. Because the indicators organizations measure — attendance, output, behavior in meetings — stay within normal range.

THE FALSE SELF THAT LEARNS TO SMILE

Donald Winnicott described the false self as the psychic structure a human being builds when the environment offers no conditions for the true self to exist safely.

Winnicott was talking about children. But the mechanism doesn't stop in childhood. It repeats itself in any environment that demands conformity as the price of belonging — and most organizations are exactly that kind of environment.

The organizational false self is the version of you the system approves of. The one that agrees in the right meetings. That disagrees within permitted doses. That demonstrates commitment in recognized formats. That smiles when it's expected to. That doesn't bring personal problems to work — as if a human being could be divided into parts.

This false self is competent. It is well-adapted. It is frequently promoted. And it is exhausted — an exhaustion that doesn't come from the work itself, but from the constant effort of being a version of yourself that isn't real.

Self-esteem is not liking yourself. It's having access to yourself.

THE EXISTENTIAL VOID HAS AN ADDRESS

Viktor Frankl survived Auschwitz and arrived at a conclusion no circumstance has managed to invalidate: what sustains a human being is not pleasure, not comfort, not the absence of suffering. It is meaning.

The woman who has cleaned the same hallway for twelve years without anyone ever asking how she's doing — not as part of an engagement-survey protocol, but for real. The director who makes decisions that move millions and comes home unable to explain to his eight-year-old what he does, why he does it, or what any of it has to do with who he is. The HR analyst who rolls out a wellness program at nine in the morning and at three in the afternoon is handed a mass layoff to announce.

All of them in the same void. With different names. With different salaries. With the same unanswered question:

What, in the end, is all of this for?

— III — THE ORGANIZATION AS A MIRROR OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

Where love rules, there is no will to power; and where power predominates, love is lacking.

— Carl Gustav Jung

WHAT THE WALLS OVERHEAR

There's a phenomenon few dare to name: organizations are not made of processes. They are made of people. And people don't walk into the office as blank slates — they carry with them fears, unmet needs, desires, traumas, and needs for belonging and recognition that have been forming over an entire lifetime.

When you put two hundred, three hundred, a thousand people inside a system, what emerges isn't just a functional structure. It's a collective emotional dynamic — an organizational unconscious that operates behind the scenes of every decision, every meeting, every conflict that appears to be about process but is, in fact, about something far older and far deeper.

Wilfred Bion, the psychoanalyst who devoted his life to studying group psychology, showed that every human group operates on two simultaneous registers: the task register — what the group gathers to do — and the basic-assumption register — what the group is doing emotionally while it believes it's simply working.

A group may officially be discussing market strategy. Emotionally, it may be running from a conflict no one wants to face. It may be searching for a messianic leader to fix everything. It may be united not by purpose, but by the shared fear of an external enemy — real or invented.

These basic assumptions never appear in the meeting minutes. But they determine everything that happens in the room.

THE COMPANY AS A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

Some organizations operate like entire families transposed onto the corporate environment — and no one notices, because the language of business perfectly masks the relational dynamic underneath.

The paternal company is one in which the founder or CEO occupies the place of the father — protective, but controlling. Decisions are centralized not for strategic reasons, but out of a need for control rooted in a personal history the leader doesn't always recognize. Employees become infantilized — they wait for authorization, ask permission, and avoid autonomy the way one avoids the punishment of a rigid father.

The narcissistic company exists to reflect the grandiosity of whoever founded it. Its real mission isn't the one framed on the lobby wall — it's feeding the image of a leader who needs the organization's permanent mirror to feel whole. Those who question are pushed out. Those who confirm are rewarded. And what gets called a strong culture is, in fact, defensive rigidity.

The paranoid company sees threats everywhere. Secrecy is excessive. Trust is scarce. Innovation suffocates, because innovating requires trust, and trust is exactly what a paranoid culture cannot produce.

The avoidant company runs from every conflict. Meetings are harmonious — and unproductive. Real problems are sidestepped with politeness. The result is an organization that looks healthy on the outside and rots on the inside — because conflicts don't disappear when they're avoided. They metastasize.

The dependent company cannot function without a savior. The entire organization outsources the responsibility of thinking and deciding to a figure who supposedly holds the answers it cannot produce on its own.



WHAT NO ONE SEES BECAUSE EVERYONE TAKES PART

The most disturbing thing about these patterns isn't that they exist. It's that they're invisible to the people living inside them. Like the fish that doesn't know what water is, the participants in a dysfunctional organizational culture don't perceive it — because it's the only environment they know.

And when someone from outside points out what's happening, the system's reaction is almost always the same: rejection. Not out of bad faith. Out of self-preservation. Because recognizing the dysfunction would require looking at what sustains it — and what sustains it is, often, the unprocessed emotional material of whoever sits at the top.

It's impossible to transform an organizational culture without understanding that it is an amplified mirror of the psyche of whoever created it and whoever sustains it. Processes are the surface. Emotional dynamics are the structure.

Does your organization discuss processes — or reproduce emotional systems that no one has ever named?



LÍDER
DO ANO
2022

RESIGNADO

RESISTENTE

TRANSICION

DESEMPENHO



GESTÃO
DE ALTO
DESEMPENHO



DISCIPLINA
FOCO
METAS
PERFORMANCE



— IV — BEING AND HAVING THE INCOMPATIBILITY NO ONE NAMES

YOU ARE WHAT YOU HAVE. OR ARE YOU?

Erich Fromm saw this before almost anyone else. In 1976, he published *To Have or to Be?* — a book that should be required reading at every business school — and described with precision what modern civilization had done to human identity.

We built a culture based on having. You are what you possess, what you accumulate, what you display. Including — and this is where organizations show particular sophistication — you are what you produce, what you deliver, what you achieve professionally.

The job title is identity. The promotion is worth. The salary is the measure of how much you matter. And being — what you are when you have nothing left to show, when the title disappears, when the company closes, when retirement comes and the badge ends up in a drawer — that being has been left with no space. No voice. No oxygen.

Who are you when you have nothing left to prove?

This isn't an abstract philosophical question. It's the most practical question there is. Because the answer determines whether you have a life or whether you have a career that's consuming a life

THE RATIONAL AND THE RATIONALIZING

There's a distinction I use in my work with leaders that I rarely find named with precision anywhere else: the difference between thinking rationally and rationalizing.

Thinking rationally is using reason to understand reality — including inner reality: what you feel, what you need, what is really happening to you.

Rationalizing is using reason to justify what you've already decided — usually so you don't have to feel what the real decision would require you to feel.

"I can't quit this job right now because I have responsibilities." That could be rational thought. It could also be the rationalization of a fear the person doesn't want to name. "I'm fine, just tired." That could be an honest assessment. It could also be the rationalization of an illness she isn't yet ready to see.

Organizational culture is a rationalization-production machine. Not out of bad intent — out of operational necessity. An environment that asked each person to emotionally process every decision they make would be unworkable. So people learn to think without feeling. To decide without noticing. To function without being present. And the price of that learning is paid at home. In the silence after the door closes. In the exhaustion that doesn't lift once the weekend is over.

SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-LOVE — WHAT NO ONE TAUGHT

Self-esteem is not thinking you're good. It is not confidence. It is not the ability to present yourself well in an interview or to speak with assurance in a boardroom.

Self-esteem is the capacity to have access to yourself. To know what you want — not what the system wants from you. To know what you feel — not what would be appropriate to feel in that situation.

And self-love — a word the corporate world still can't pronounce without discomfort — is not narcissism. It is the capacity to treat yourself with the same consideration you give the people you say you love. To set a boundary when something is destroying your health — even when the system rewards those who don't.

Most people who work in organizations never learned this. Not because they're incapable. Because no one taught them. And because the system has every interest in you not knowing.

This isn't cynicism. It's what NR-1 was trying to regulate.

Lawmakers saw the result of decades of a system that extracted the maximum from the human being without giving back the minimum conditions of integrity.

— V —
**THE INVISIBLE ADDICTION TO
PERFORMANCE
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WORK
BECOMES THE DRUG**

Man is a creature who can get used to anything — and I believe that is the best definition one can give of him.

— Fyodor Dostoevsky

WHEN WORK BECOMES THE DRUG

There's an addiction that appears in no diagnostic manual. It involves no substances. It produces no visible withdrawal symptoms. And it is, probably, the most prevalent and least recognized dependency in the corporate world: the addiction to performance.

Many people don't overwork because they need to. They overwork because they've become dependent on the validation work produces. The recognition. The praise. The promotion. The feeling of importance. The title. The message from the boss that produces, in the nervous system of whoever receives it, the same effect as a hit of dopamine in an already-conditioned reward circuit.

Neuroscience helps explain the mechanism. The mesolimbic dopaminergic system — the same circuit involved in chemical addiction — responds not only to substances, but to any stimulus the brain has linked to reward. When professional recognition becomes the primary source of personal worth, tolerance rises. The pursuit intensifies. And withdrawal — which here goes by the name vacation, retirement, or simply a weekend without emails — produces a void that isn't boredom. It's identity collapse.

THE PERSON WHO CAN'T STOP

You know this person. You might be this person.

It's the one who checks their phone at the birthday dinner. Who answers emails in the middle of the night not because urgency demands it, but because the silence bothers them more than the exhaustion does. Who plans vacation with guilt and comes back early. Who, when asked what they did over the weekend, talks about how much work they got ahead on — and presents it as an achievement.

This person isn't being dedicated. They're being hijacked by a reward circuit they don't even notice. Because the culture calls this excellence. Commitment. Ambition.

Byung-Chul Han described the mechanism with precision: the achievement society has replaced the disciplinary society. No one from outside needs to impose exploitation anymore. The achievement-subject exploits himself — and believes he's exercising freedom.

That's what the addiction to performance is: the person who destroys themselves while believing they're building themselves up.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE MACHINE STOPS

The most revealing test of this addiction isn't the excess of work. It's what happens in its absence.

The early retirement that produces depression in executives who 'had it all.' The medical leave that generates more suffering than the illness that caused it. The vacation that's supposed to restore but produces anxiety instead. The Sunday evening that weighs on you not because the work is bad, but because the emptiness of not-working is unbearable. When the machine stops, what surfaces isn't rest. It's the question that had been muffled by the noise of permanent production:

If I'm not producing, who am I?

—VI— THE FEAR THAT MOVES EVERYTHING AND THAT NO ONE NAMES

Fear doesn't keep us from dying. It keeps us from living.
— Náguliev Bogossían

THE HIDDEN ENGINE

You've seen what happens when a leader feels they're losing relevance. You've seen the reaction of someone who realizes the person hired for the position just below theirs is more brilliant than they are. You've watched the silent transformation of someone who receives negative feedback. All of this is fear. Fear disguised, with great sophistication, as strategy, as positioning, as 'career management.' Fear is the hidden engine behind most of the organizational behaviors we call toxic, dysfunctional, or unproductive. It isn't greed. It isn't incompetence. It isn't a lack of character. It's fear. Fear of not belonging. Of failing. Of disappointing. Of being replaced. Of not being loved.

MERITOCRACY AS A MASK FOR FEAR

Many organizational cultures that present themselves as meritocratic are, in fact, cultures of fear with rhetorical sophistication. Poorly understood meritocracy turns fear into fuel and rewards it as virtue.

And no one talks about it. Because talking about fear in a corporate setting is the last taboo. You can talk about stress. You can talk about pressure. You can even talk about burnout, which has already earned clinical legitimacy. But saying "I am afraid" — afraid of not being enough, afraid of being discarded — that is forbidden. Because the system needs people who act as if they had no fear.



THE FEAR THAT SICKENS WITHOUT A NAME

Hierkegaard distinguished fear from anxiety with a precision modern psychology still relies on. Fear has an object — you know what you're afraid of. Anxiety has no object — it's the sense of a diffuse threat, of something being wrong without your being able to say what.

What predominates in organizations isn't fear. It's anxiety. The permanent sense that something might happen — the restructuring, the cut, the change in leadership, the loss of standing — without ever knowing when, how, or why. This anxiety doesn't produce crisis. It produces erosion. Erosion of trust, of creativity, of the capacity to genuinely bond with one's work.

And the cruelest part: the system that produces this anxiety is the same one that demands you manage it alone. The illness the environment creates is treated as an individual responsibility.

What are you really afraid of when you think about your work? And how long has it been since you let yourself say that out loud?

— VII — THE SUCCESS THAT FAILED US THE METRICS THAT MEASURE EVERYTHING EXCEPT WHAT MATTERS

It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.

— Jiddu Krishnamurti

THE METRICS THAT MEASURE EVERYTHING EXCEPT WHAT MATTERS

How many promotions does it take for someone to feel like enough? How much money is enough? How many titles? How many followers? How many bonuses?

Society created metrics to measure success. But none to measure fulfillment. And that absence isn't an oversight. It's a structural choice. Fulfillment doesn't scale. It can't be compared. It doesn't fit inside a KPI.

So we measure what's convenient. Revenue. Market share. Headcount under you. Speed of promotion. And every person learns, from early on, that success is whatever the system says it is — not what they, in the silence of themselves, sense it might actually be.

THE CORRIDOR WITH NO ARRIVAL

The logic of contemporary success works like a corridor with no door at the end. You run because everyone is running. You speed up because someone sped up beside you. And when you reach the point you imagined was the destination — the promotion, the salary, the title — you discover there is no door. Just more corridor.

Seneca warned about this two thousand years ago: it isn't that we have little time, it's that we waste a great deal of it. Life is long enough for those who know how to use it. But the success model we've inherited is designed precisely to keep anyone from stopping long enough to ask whether they're using their life — or being used by it.

WHAT FROMM, FRANKL, AND ARISTOTLE WOULD SAY ABOUT YOUR LAST PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Fromm would say your performance review measures having, not being. It measures what you produced, delivered, achieved — but not what you became along the way.

Frankl would say it measures results, not meaning. It measures whether you hit the numbers, but not whether the work that generated those numbers connects to something you recognize as genuinely valuable.

Aristotle would say it confuses pleasure with flourishing. The momentary satisfaction of having hit a target is not eudaimonia — the state in which your highest capacities are being exercised toward something that transcends the immediate.

And Saint Augustine would add: you know what success is for as long as no one asks. But if someone asks for real, the answer will stammer. Because the success you've been chasing may never have been yours. It was the system's success, which you adopted as your own and mistook for destiny.

What if the success you achieved is exactly what took you furthest from who you could have been?



— VIII — THE DEATH THAT HAS NO NAME FINITUDE, IDENTITY, AND WHAT REMAINS

*He who does not die before he dies, perishes when he dies.
— Jacob Böhme*

THE QUESTION THE SYSTEM FORBIDS

It may seem strange for an ebook about organizational health to talk about death. It isn't.

Everything you've read so far is about identity. And identity inevitably runs into finitude. Because the urgency of being who you are only exists once you understand that the time to be it is finite. Without an awareness of death, the question 'who am I?' loses its force. It becomes an intellectual curiosity. With finitude present, it turns into an existential necessity.

Heidegger called this being-toward-death. Not death as a future event, but as a structure that shapes the present. A human being who lives aware of their finitude lives differently — because they know that every choice is also a renunciation, that every day spent is a day that doesn't come back.

Organizational culture is built on the systematic denial of that awareness. Everything in the system is designed as if there were infinite time: the five-year plan, the staged career ladder, the promotion that's coming next cycle. And that illusion of unlimited time is exactly what allows intelligent, sensitive people to indefinitely postpone the most important question of their lives.

THE SYMBOLIC DEATH THAT ALREADY HAPPENED

There's a question I ask executives during consulting engagements that almost always produces silence:

*If tomorrow you could no longer practice your profession,
what would be left of you?*

Most can't answer. Not for lack of imagination. Because they built a career so totalizing that it occupied the space where an identity should be. The job title isn't something they have — it's something they are. And when the title is taken away, what happens isn't a transition. It's a symbolic death.

And when that symbolic death arrives, it finds a person who never learned to exist outside the character. Who never cultivated relationships that weren't mediated by the title. Who never asked what remains once everything removable has been removed.

WHAT FINITUDE TEACHES

Ironically, it is the awareness of death that makes it possible to live life with wholeness. Not the fear of death. The awareness of it.

Montaigne spent his whole life writing essays about this: that to philosophize is to learn how to die. Not in a morbid sense — in a liberating one. Whoever accepts that they will die loses their fear of living. Loses their fear of saying no. Loses their fear of displeasing the system. Loses their fear of being real — because they understand that the alternative, being false until the end, is the only real tragedy.

What are you postponing for when you have time — knowing that time may never come?

— IX — THE MIRROR NR-1 OFFERS IF YOU HAVE THE COURAGE TO LOOK

THE REGULATION DIDN'T COME TO CREATE BUREAUCRACY

You've probably already heard about the updated NR-1. About the mandatory mapping of psychosocial risks. About the PGR — the legally required Risk Management Program. About the fines. About the deadline that began in May 2026. And you've probably already received at least one consulting proposal offering help with compliance. A checklist. A process. Documentation that will put you in compliance. I need to tell you something about that:

Compliance is not the problem the regulation is trying to solve.

The regulation is a mirror. And like every mirror, it only works for those with the courage to look — not to register the reflection, but to do something with what they see.

WHAT THE REGULATION IS SAYING BETWEEN THE LINES

When the Brazilian State decided to make psychosocial risk a mandatory object of management, it was acknowledging something organizations should have recognized on their own decades earlier: that work environments produce psychological illness — and that this illness is the system's responsibility, not just the individual's.

That reversal is historically significant. For a long time, the dominant narrative was that workplace illness was the person's problem — they weren't resilient enough, didn't know how to manage stress. The regulation says the opposite: the environment produces the illness. And whoever creates the environment bears responsibility for what it produces.

That changes the question. Instead of 'why isn't this employee doing well,' the question becomes: what are we doing that is producing this illness?

COMPLYING IS NOT THE SAME AS CARING

The company that drafts the psychosocial risk-identification document that no one will ever use has complied with the regulation. The company that sends out the preventive-health email no one will read has complied with the law. And it remains exactly the same place it always was.

What distinguishes an organization that cares from one that merely manages illness isn't in the documents. It's in the questions it has the courage to ask — and what it does with the answers.

An organization that cares isn't one that has a psychologist available once a week. It's one where the manager who notices someone coming apart has real authority, the right vocabulary, and the available time to act before the collapse becomes inevitable. One where a target gets revised when the human cost of hitting it outweighs the value of hitting it.

The regulation has arrived. What you do with it is a choice. And choices define culture.

—X— ORGANIZATIONAL HAPPINESS IN THE SENSE THAT MATTERS

HAPPINESS CANNOT BE MANAGED

The market turned corporate happiness into a product. It has a name, a department in charge, a KPI, an annual budget. It has a decompression room, a snack bar, a mindfulness program on Tuesdays. And it has, with a regularity that doesn't go unnoticed, the same burnout rate, the same turnover, the same silent illness that existed before any of it. Because happiness — in the sense that really matters — cannot be programmed. Cannot be gamified. Cannot be measured on a 1-to-5 engagement-survey scale.

Aristotle called eudaimonia the state we crudely translate as happiness. The word doesn't mean pleasure. It doesn't mean satisfaction. It means flourishing — the state in which a human being is living in accordance with what is deepest in their nature, exercising their highest capacities toward something they consider genuinely valuable.

Organizational happiness, in the philosophical sense, is not a state with no suffering in it. It is the condition under which a human being can be whole inside their work — and the work becomes better because of it.

WHAT CHANGES WHEN IT REALLY WORKS

A mid-sized company — three hundred employees, a sector under high pressure to deliver — had turnover above forty percent a year. The diagnosis was salary competition. The response was a pay raise. Turnover dropped for two quarters. Then it came back.

That's when someone asked the question that wasn't on the script: why are the people who are well paid leaving?

The answer didn't come from an engagement survey. It came from real conversations, with time, with listening that wasn't searching for a data point — it was searching for a person. What people described wasn't overload. It was invisibility.

The process was slow. Uncomfortable. Some managers didn't survive the honesty it demanded. But eighteen months later, turnover had dropped to eighteen percent. Absenteeism due to mental-health conditions had fallen by a third. And what came up in the stay interviews: people described a place where they felt they could say what they thought. Where mistakes weren't punished with silence. Where someone genuinely cared how they were doing.

That result didn't come from NR-1. It didn't come from any wellness program. It came from a decision — made by people with real authority — to stop managing the illness and start understanding what was producing it.

— XI —
**FOR THE HR PROFESSIONAL
A CONVERSATION THAT'S BEEN
WAITING A LONG TIME**

YOU, WHO TAKE CARE OF EVERYONE: WHO TAKES CARE OF YOU?

I want to speak directly to you now.

Not to the HR professional. To the person who one day decided they wanted to work with people. Who entered this field for a reason — maybe because they believed people matter, that environments make a difference, that work could be more than just clocking hours.

Do you remember that reason?

Because the system has been remarkably efficient at burying it under processes, metrics, reports, legal demands, engagement surveys no one uses to change anything, and the permanent pressure of being held responsible for everyone's health while your own illness has no space to be named.

You listen to everyone's pain. You hold the employee who's at their limit. You manage the conflict between the manager and the team. You roll out the mental-health program leadership approved with enthusiasm but no adequate budget. You deliver the mass layoff none of the leaders wanted to announce in person.

And then you close the computer. And you go home. And when someone asks how you are — if anyone asks — you say you're fine.

This has a name. It isn't commitment. It's the false self running at full capacity — inside the very professional who was trained to identify it in others.

WHAT NR-1 ASKS OF YOU — AND WHAT YOU NEED TO ASK OF YOURSELF

The updated regulation places HR at the center of a responsibility that is simultaneously the most visible and the most poorly understood: implementing, documenting, communicating, and monitoring what the law requires.

But what it really needs from you isn't operational. It's leadership of an agenda that is, first and foremost, human. And you cannot lead a human agenda if you aren't in contact with your own humanity.

You cannot create conditions of genuine psychological safety in an environment where you yourself feel unsafe. You cannot promote a culture of mental health while denying your own.

How are you, really?

Not as a professional. You. What do you feel when you think about the work you chose? Does it still make sense? Does it still connect to the reason that brought you here?

WHERE TO REALLY BEGIN

Not a checklist. A compass.

Start by stopping the confusion between compliance and care. The NR-1 document isn't the destination — it's the minimum. Start by reviewing the systems before holding individuals accountable. The question isn't: which leaders need to be more empathetic? The question is: which systems in the organization are producing behaviors no one would consciously choose?

And start with you. By asking yourself the question you ask others. By treating your own health with the same seriousness you treat that of the employees you're responsible for protecting.

Because the greatest contribution you can make to an organization that wants to be different is to be, yourself, different. To be living proof that it's possible to work with depth, with dedication, with real commitment — without losing contact with who you are.

— XII — THE FIVE QUESTIONS THAT REBUILD AN IDENTITY FROM REFLECTION TO TRANSFORMATION

“Know thyself.”

— Inscription at the Temple of Apollo, Delphi

Everything you've read so far has been reflection. Necessary. Fundamental. But insufficient.

Because reflection without movement is just more information in an age where we already have too much of it. What transforms isn't knowing. It's deciding. And to decide, you need clarity about where you're starting from.

The DCC methodology — Cognitive-Behavioral Development — works from the premise that identity is not something you find. It's something you build. And rebuild. Every day.

There are five questions I've carried as a working instrument for years. They aren't questions meant to be answered quickly. They're questions meant to be inhabited.

FIRST QUESTION: WHAT DO I DO?

Not what your badge says. What you actually do with your time, your energy, the hours you have. When you look honestly at last week — what did you do? How much of that time was chosen? How much was simply served?

SECOND QUESTION: WHAT DO I THINK I AM?

The narrative you tell about yourself. The story you repeat when someone asks who you are. Is it a true story? Or is it a comfortable one? How much of the person you believe you are was chosen by you — and how much was installed?

THIRD QUESTION: WHAT DO OTHERS SAY I AM?

Not the formal feedback. What gets said behind the scenes. What your actions communicate about you, regardless of what your words declare. Is there a gap between who you are and who others perceive? And if there is — what does that gap reveal?

FOURTH QUESTION: WHAT HAS REMAINED IN ME DESPITE EVERYTHING?

This is the question that searches for what is essence. Despite the losses, the detours, the forced adaptations — what remained? What have you never managed to fully abandon, even when you tried? Whatever remained — that irreducible core — is probably the closest thing to who you really are.

FIFTH QUESTION: WHO WOULD I BE IF I HAD NO FEAR?

The simplest question. And the most devastating. Because the distance between who you are and who you would be without fear is the exact measure of what fear has cost your life. Not legitimate fear, which protects. Apocryphal fear — the kind that paralyzes, that silences, that makes you choose what's comfortable when you know the path lies elsewhere.

These five questions are not a method. They are a compass.

A starting point for a process that takes time, demands courage, and cannot be done alone.

—XIII— THE TERRITORY YOU ABANDONED THE WAY BACK

“The map is not the territory. The territory is you.”
— Marcello de Souza

ALL THE MAPS. NO TERRITORY.

You've read about NR-1. About burnout. About anxiety. About psychosocial risks. About organizational happiness. About HR. About leaders. About fear. About death. About the success that failed.

All of that is maps. Useful maps. Necessary ones. Some, urgent. But maps. Representations of something that exists before them, that exists without them, and that will go on existing after all of them have been forgotten.

The territory always was, and always will be, the human being.

THE ABANDONED TERRITORY

The suffering that runs through every chapter of this text is not, at bottom, about work. It is not about the organization. It is not about legislation. It is about what happens when a human being drifts so far from themselves that they no longer recognize their own territory.

The professional who no longer knows what they feel has abandoned the territory of the body. The leader who no longer knows what they want has abandoned the territory of desire. The person who can no longer answer 'who am I?' has abandoned the territory of identity. And the organization that treats people as resources has abandoned the territory of the human.

THE WAY BACK

Perhaps modernity's greatest mistake was believing that identity is something you find. As if there existed, somewhere, a final version of you waiting to be discovered. There isn't. We don't find identity. We build it. And we build it every day, through the choices we make, the boundaries we set, the truths we accept, and the masks we decide to set down.

The closer you are to yourself, the more alive you feel. The further you are from yourself, the more distractions you need to bear the life you've built.

That's the criterion. It isn't a KPI. It isn't a metric. It doesn't show up in any management report. But it is the most precise indicator there is for whether you're living or merely functioning.

YOU'VE REACHED THE END OF THIS TEXT. THAT ALREADY SAYS SOMETHING.

It says that something here touched something you weren't able to name. Or that it confirmed something you already knew but hadn't found the words to defend. Or that it woke up an urgency you'd been putting off.

It doesn't matter which of the three. What matters is what you do with it now.

Because the territory you abandoned hasn't disappeared. It's waiting. It's underneath the maps, underneath the job titles, underneath the targets, underneath the exhaustion, underneath just another day.

All you have to do is decide to come back.



EPILOGUE

The Question You Carry With You

*"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart
and try to love the questions themselves..
Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually,
without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer."
— Rainer Maria Rilke, Letters to a Young Poet*

For twenty-eight years I have asked the same question. The rooms have changed — boardrooms, HR offices, factory floors, auditoriums across three continents. The badges have changed, the titles, the org charts. The question hasn't changed. And neither has the silence it provokes.

You have just crossed that silence. Not as an idea — as an experience. You met the woman who serves coffee whom no one asks how she's doing. You met the director who knows the names of every target and forgot his own. You met the HR professional who takes care of everyone and closes the laptop without anyone asking how they are. And if you made it this far honestly — not rushing to finish an ebook, but genuinely willing to let yourself be touched by it — you also met yourself somewhere in these pages.

That wasn't an accident. It was the only purpose of this text.

...

I need to be honest with you about something before you close this book: I'm not going to give you a conclusion.

I could. It would be more comfortable — for me and for you. An executive summary of thirteen chapters, a list of "next steps," a promise that by following a certain script, the wholeness we've lost will be recovered in ninety days. That kind of book exists in abundance. It has a name, a colorful cover, a subtitle promising six steps to a better life. That isn't what you read here — and it isn't what I believe.

The truth — the only one I have to offer after more than two decades observing human beings inside organizations — is that identity isn't solved with a method. It's resolved through repeated decision. Every day, in the face of every small choice, you decide again whether you move toward who you are or toward what the system expects you to be. There is no point of arrival. There is only direction.

That's why this isn't a book with an ending. It's a book with an opening.

I return to Saint Augustine, who opened this text and who insists on returning now, at the end. He said he knew what time was as long as no one asked him — and that the moment he tried to explain it, the certainty disappeared. I would say the same about you: you know who you are. You always have. That knowing isn't lost — it's buried under layers of title, of performance, of fear well disguised as strategy. The question this book has been asking was never "discover who you are." It was "stop pretending you don't know."

And this is exactly where Rilke becomes more useful than any people-management model you've ever studied. He doesn't ask you to solve the question. He asks you to inhabit it. To stop treating it like a problem to be eliminated as quickly as possible — with a course, a six-session therapy package, a weekend workshop — and start treating it as the very structure of your adult life. Who am I when no one is measuring? will remain without a definitive answer tomorrow, and the day after, and probably until the end. That isn't the question failing. That's its nature.

...

So what do you do with what you just read?

Nothing extraordinary, really. No heroic action is required tomorrow morning. What I ask — the one genuine request I'll make of you in this epilogue — is smaller, and for that very reason, harder: the next time someone asks who you are, resist the urge to answer with your job title. Wait one extra second before speaking. Let the silence show up. And inside it, listen for whatever tries to surface before the automatic answer suffocates it again.

The next time the day ends like just another day, don't let it pass unexamined. Ask yourself, even if only for thirty seconds: what, today, did I choose — and what did I merely comply with? Not to judge yourself. To start noticing the difference again. Noticing it, on its own, is already the beginning of the way back.

And when fear shows up — because it will, it always does when someone gets too close to themselves — don't treat it as the enemy. Treat it as information. Fear points exactly to what matters most to you. No one is afraid of what's irrelevant.

There's a reason this book was born from a labor regulation and ended up talking about Rilke, about finitude, about the territory you abandoned. The NR-1 was the pretext — I said so at the very beginning, and I repeat it now because it matters that it stays with you. Regulations govern behavior. They don't govern presence. They don't legislate whether you are actually inhabiting your own life or merely administering it.

That's something only you decide. No audit will check. No regulatory body will fine the absence. You could spend the rest of your career in full compliance — with the law, with the culture, with everyone's expectations around you — and still never have answered the one question that, in the end, actually counts.

...

I don't write to convince. I write to unsettle enough — carefully, but without anesthesia — until the question you may have been avoiding becomes impossible to postpone for one more day.

If this text did that, it accomplished what it set out to do. The rest — what you do from here, what conversation you have with yourself on the way home today, what boundary you finally set, what mask you decide not to wear tomorrow morning — that no longer belongs to me. It never belonged to any author, any regulation, any map. It belongs to the territory. Which is you.

You don't need to have the answer today.
You just need to stop running from the question.

Dr. Marcello de Souza
Campinas, 2026



About the Author

Marcello de Souza began where few would expect to find a thinker of human development: leading teams and complex projects in the world of IT and Telecom. He was good at what he did. He mastered the logic of exact sciences, understood systems, delivered results. And it was precisely there — inside technically competent teams that still could not find each other — that the question which would define his entire trajectory began to take shape.

It was not a crisis. It was a perception that could not be ignored: efficiency without humanism is incomplete. Systems function. People need something more — and that something more has no protocol, no metric, no solution in the form of one more well-designed tool. It lives in what happens between people, before any technical decision, before any well-structured process.

The transition to the field of human development was not a career change. It was the inevitable consequence of a restlessness that systems could never answer. More than 28 years later — with a doctorate in Social Psychology, five postgraduate degrees, international certifications, and the creation of the DCC and DCCO methodologies, which integrate neuroscience, social and behavioral psychology, philosophy and psychoanalysis — Marcello still carries the same founding question, now with name and method: why do intelligent, well-intentioned and technically competent people still fail to find each other?

The answer he has built over these decades — with leaders, teams, organizations and individuals in real transformation processes in Brazil and abroad — is what runs through every text in this ebook. Not as theory. As accumulated experience from someone who has spent a lifetime observing what happens in the space between people — before words, beyond techniques, this side of any easy promise.

Anti self-help. Anti formula. In favor of what is real, deep and lasting – because it is the only development the Between recognizes as true.

Author of *The Secret of Coaching* and *The Map Is Not the Territory, the Territory Is You*, Marcello publishes regularly at marcellodesouza.com.br, where human development is treated with the density it demands — and the language it deserves.



DR. MARCELLO DE SOUZA
