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When pressure becomes a pattern



Supports leaders, coordinators and team leaders to notice repeated concerns, identify patterns and review broader psychosocial risk.



Reflection statements



6.1

Repeated concerns are reviewed to identify patterns across workers, teams, clients, families, services or locations.



6.2

When patterns are identified, existing controls are reviewed to check whether they are actually reducing psychosocial risk.



A Conversation Starter Pack for Aged Care

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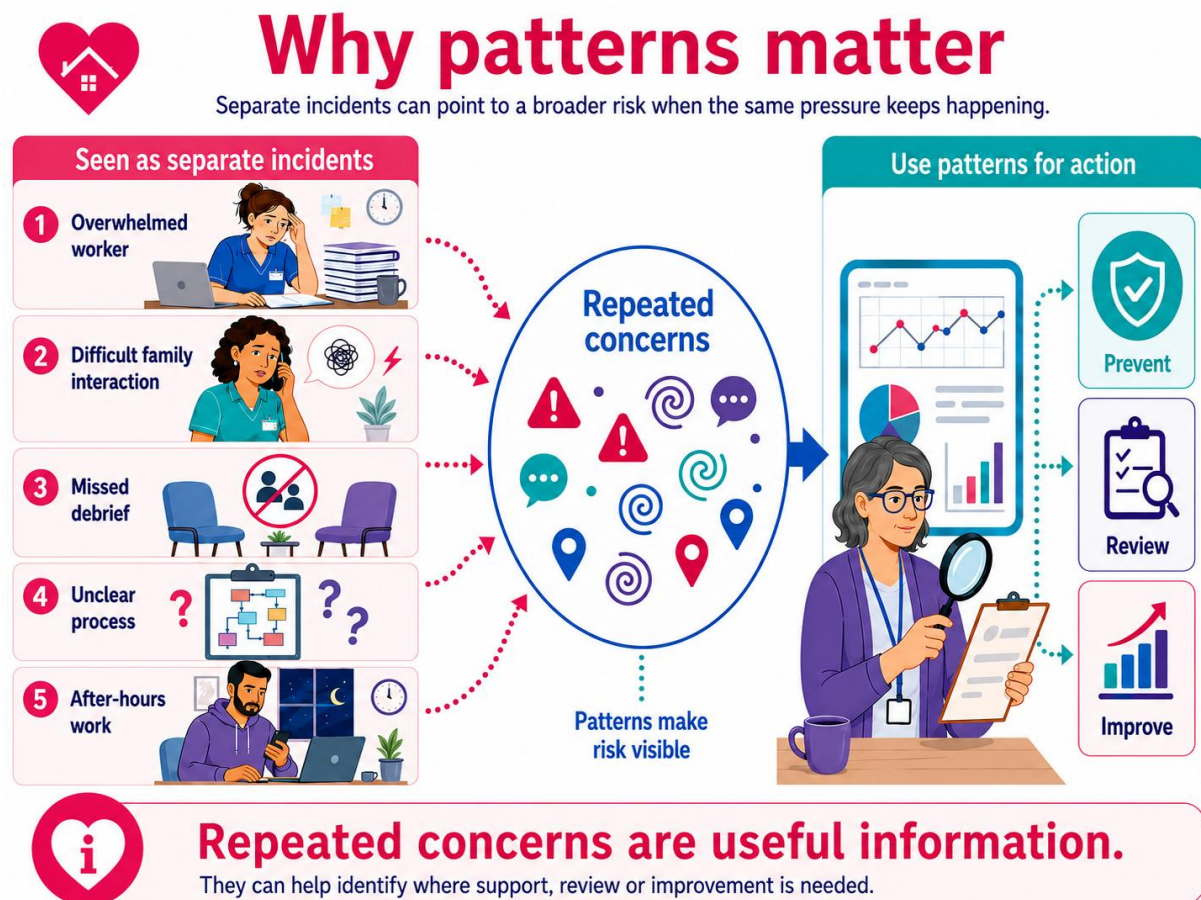
Recognising when concerns are no longer isolated

Leaders, coordinators and team leaders play an important role in noticing when repeated concerns may point to broader psychosocial hazards, system pressures or work design issues that need review. One difficult day, conversation or situation may not indicate a broader psychosocial risk. But when the same pressure keeps showing up across workers, teams, clients, families or services, it may be a sign that something in the work needs closer attention.

Why patterns matter

Psychosocial hazards are not always obvious when they are viewed as separate incidents. A worker feeling overwhelmed may be treated as an individual wellbeing issue. A difficult family interaction may be managed as a one-off complaint. A missed debrief may be explained as a busy day, while an unclear process may be handled informally. Staying back late or checking messages after hours may even be seen as commitment, rather than a sign that the work is not manageable.

When these issues keep happening, they may point to a broader risk. Patterns matter because they can show where psychosocial hazards are being normalised, missed or left for individuals to manage alone. Repeated concerns should not be treated as isolated events, but as information that can help leaders identify when prevention, closer review or improvement is needed.



What this can look like in aged care

In aged care, patterns may show up through repeated concerns, familiar phrases, changes in team behaviour, or the same pressure appearing across workers, clients, families or services.

This may include repeated missed debriefs after distressing interactions, workers regularly staying back or checking messages after hours, multiple workers raising confusion about the same process, similar family concerns appearing across different clients, or repeated delays, handover gaps or unclear escalation pathways.

Signs a pattern may be emerging

Patterns are not always visible through one incident or one conversation. They often become clearer when leaders notice repeated language, similar concerns, changes in team behaviour, or the same pressure appearing across different workers, clients, families or services.

A pattern may be emerging when...

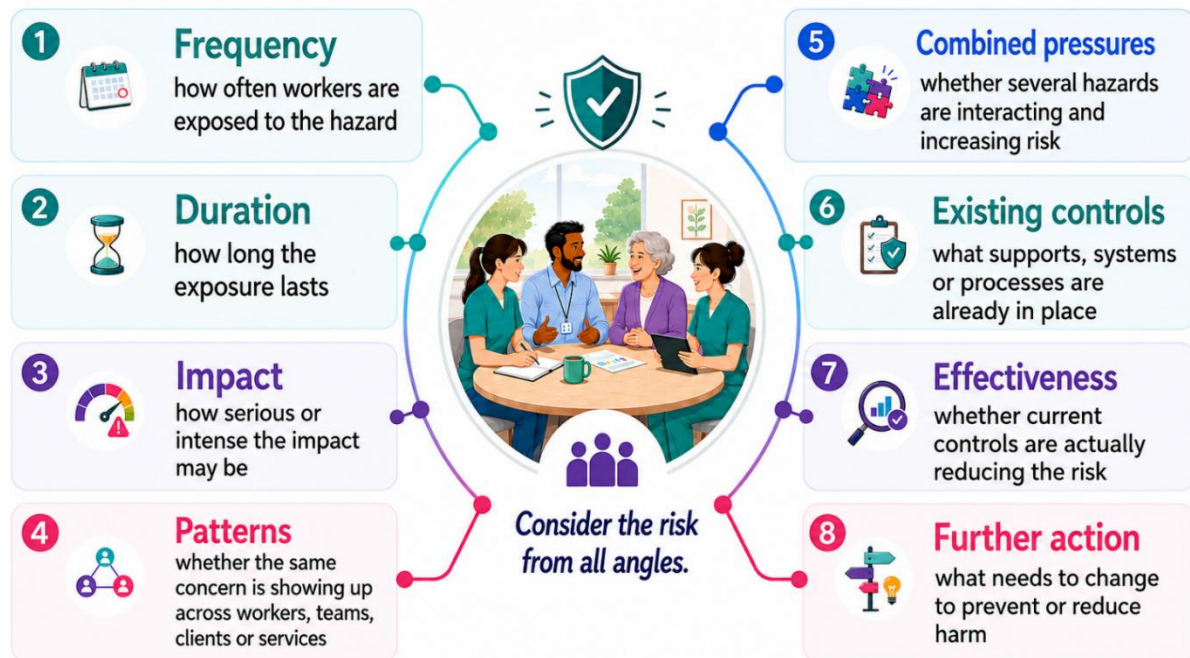


These signs do not automatically mean psychological injury. They may indicate that psychosocial risk is increasing and that closer attention, consultation or review is needed.

Using patterns for prevention

Patterns should be used as information for prevention and continuous improvement. When the same concern keeps appearing, leaders may need to review what is happening in the work, not only how individual workers are coping. This may include looking at workload and staffing, scheduling and travel time, role clarity, decision-making authority, escalation pathways, documentation and handover, supervision and debriefing, support after distressing or aggressive interactions, change communication, team culture and workplace behaviours.

Leaders should also consider whether existing controls are actually reducing the risk. A support process may exist on paper, but workers may not know about it, may not feel safe using it, or may find that it does not address the source of the pressure. This resource is a starting point for noticing patterns and prompting review. It does not replace work health and safety advice, psychosocial risk assessment, supervision, consultation, training or organisational processes.



What this should prompt

The aim is not to blame workers, leaders, clients or families, but to recognise repeated concerns as signs that psychosocial risk may need closer review. When patterns are identified, organisations should document what is being noticed, consult with workers, review existing controls and consider whether a psychosocial risk assessment is required. Repeated pressure should not be managed as separate incidents when it may be pointing to a broader work-related risk.

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