

Mental Health and Workplace Culture in Tech: A Personal Perspective

**This presentation is in memory of my friend and industry colleague Erik Bais,
who passed away in 2024.**



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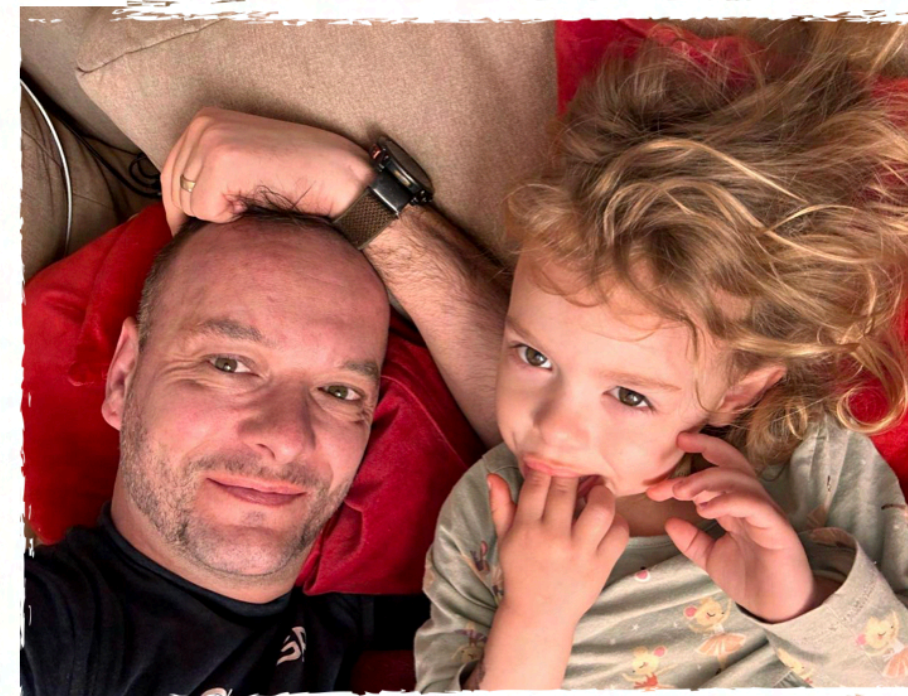
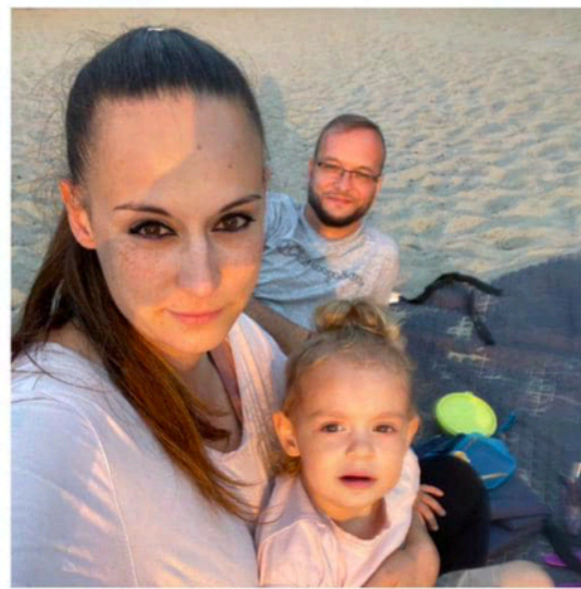
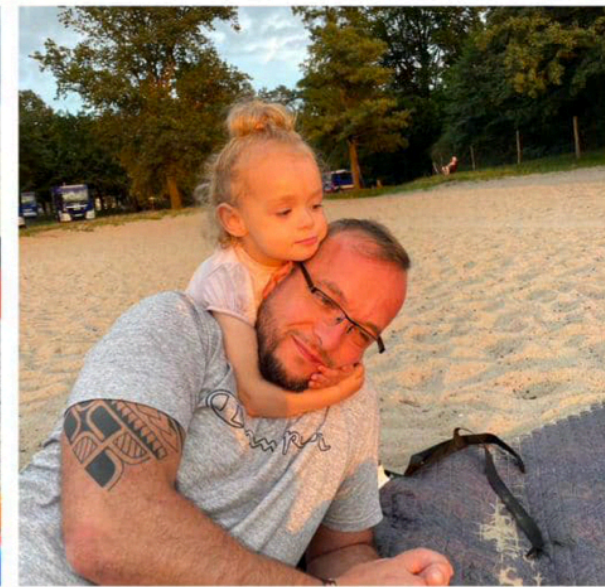
Co-Founder- OpenEars

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The René everyone knows



Only a few people know the other René



Why am I dealing with this topic?

1. I have experience of a toxic work environment
2. I would like to share my experiences
3. I would like to help people who find themselves
in a toxic work environment
4. I would like to introduce my new
Global NOG Alliance Project: **“Open Ears”**

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **No room for mistakes** =

Do you try to avoid making mistakes,
and are paralyzed by the fear of making them?

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **Lack of trust** =

Toxic workplaces often suffer from a lack of trust between employees.

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **Excessive Stress** =

Employees may face stress due to various factors, including burnout, conflicts with management, insufficient communication, fear of failure, and ambiguity regarding job expectations.

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **Office Gossip** =

While some level of office gossip may be considered normal... but

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **Office Gossip** =

When employees gossip about one another, it fosters negative communication that creates drama, distractions, distrust, and emotional pain.

Such gossip contributes to a toxic atmosphere, leading employees to turn against each other and propagate harmful rumors.

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments = **High turnover rates** =

High employee turnover is a warning sign

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments = **Unhealthy work boundaries** =

Toxic work cultures undermine healthy work-life balance

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **Lack of career support** =

No career support= stagnation= demotivation

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **Lack of career support** =

Some employees feel unsupported in their career growth due to a lack of mentorship and team connection.

This absence of guidance complicates their ability to identify career advancement steps.

With more employees working remotely, especially entry-level staff, building connections with teams and managers can become even more challenging.

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments = **Low morale and negativity** =

Low employee morale can create widespread negativity in the workplace

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments = **Sick guilt** =

Feeling shame for not performing optimally when unwell.

Part I: Understanding Toxic Work Environments

= **Sick guilt** =

Behavioral Impact:

Individuals avoid taking leave or requesting to work from home due to guilt.

Need for Open Communication:

Employees should feel safe to express their need for breaks.

Honesty in Limitations:

Employees need to be honest about their ability to deliver work when sick.

Company Responsibility:

Organizations must foster an environment that supports open communication and encourages employees to prioritize their health.

Part II: Why am I addressing this topic?

We have to react since the statistics are alarming!

Part II: Why am I addressing this topic?

High Burnout Rates:

A survey by Blind in 2021 found that 61% of tech workers reported feeling burned out, with factors including **long hours**, **high expectations**, and a **lack of work-life balance**.

Source: <https://www.teamblind.com>

Part II: Why am I addressing this topic?

Workplace Stress:

According to a report by Deloitte, 77% of tech employees have experienced **burnout** at their current job.

The **fast-paced nature** of the industry, combined with job demands, contributes significantly to stress levels.

Part II: Why am I addressing this topic?

Impact on Productivity:

Research by the Harvard Business Review indicates that employees experiencing burnout in tech roles are 2.6 times more likely to be seeking new employment, impacting retention and increasing recruitment costs.

Part II: Why am I addressing this topic?

Mental Health Concerns:

A 2020 survey from LifeWorks revealed that 83% of tech professionals reported that their mental health has been negatively affected by workplace stress, which is higher than the general workforce average.

Part II: Why am I addressing this topic?

Remote Work Challenges:

According to a survey by Buffer, 20% of remote tech workers indicated loneliness as a key problem, which can exacerbate feelings of burnout and disconnection from teams

Part II: Why am I addressing this topic?

(Unhealthy) Coping Strategies:

A study from the Human Resource Management Journal found that

30% of tech employees

said they rely on unhealthy coping strategies, such as overworking or neglecting their health, to deal with job stress.

Part III: **Psychological** and Physical Effects on Employees

Increased Stress and Anxiety:

Heightened emotional strain from negative interactions

Depression:

Feelings of hopelessness and lack of motivation

Decreased Job Satisfaction:

General discontent and lack of fulfilment in work

Burnout:

Emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion over time

Lower Self-Esteem:

Erosion of confidence and self-worth

Isolation:

Disconnection from colleagues and team dynamics

Cognitive Impairment:

Challenges in concentration and decision-making

Part III: Psychological and **Physical Effects** on Employees

Chronic Fatigue:

Persistent tiredness and low energy levels

Sleep Disorders:

Disrupted sleep patterns and insomnia

Headaches:

Frequent tension headaches or migraines

Cardiovascular Risks:

Increased susceptibility to heart issues

Weakened Immune System:

Higher likelihood of illness

Muscle Tension:

Chronic pain, particularly in neck and back

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Open Communication

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Promote Work-Life Balance

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Implement Strong Leadership Training

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Build a Positive Company Culture

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Prioritize Employee Well-being

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Establish Clear Roles and Responsibilities

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Encourage Professional Development

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Create a Safe Reporting Mechanism

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Conduct Regular Assessments

Part IV: How can we tackle?

Lead by Example

How to get further help!

Global NOG Alliance

„Open Ears“

How to get further help!



Rene Fichtmueller



Let's keep in contact