

# Total Health Index™

Morneau Shepell's Total Health Index (THI) is a suite of evidence-based analytical tools that help employers improve health, engagement and productivity. THI goes beyond the scope of traditional assessment tools to capture data on total employee health—physical, mental, life and work.

THI provides an opportunity for employers to gain insights into *what* is impacting employees' health, engagement and productivity, as well as the *why*. The THI promotes a shared accountability between employer and employees with respect to what the employer and employee can do to improve results. It uncovers environmental factors (within the employer's control) and individual factors (within the employees' control). Through an evidence-based process, the THI provides employers with clarity of where they can make strategic investments to maximize employees' health, engagement and productivity.

## Olivia's Story

Traditional assessment tools, such as engagement surveys and Health Risk Assessments (HRAs), are not telling the full story—they aren't giving employers the kinds of information and insights they need to best shape their programming.

There is a strong connection between mind and body as it relates to health. We know that if a person is experiencing prolonged exposure to stressors, both internal and external, it will have a negative impact on their health.

To illustrate this point, let's take a look at the real life situation of Olivia (*not her real name*).

Olivia lives in Calgary and works for a company in the oil and gas sector. Each year, her employer conducts both an annual employee engagement survey as well as an HRA. Olivia is well liked by her peers and has a very strong work ethic. From an engagement perspective, she is a highly engaged employee who enjoys her team and the nature of the work she does. She rarely misses work and from an HRA perspective she is in the low range across the physical health scales.

At first glance Olivia seems like an ideal employee that her employer would want to have more of in the organization. So what is missing here?

The HRA that her employer conducted did not take into account Olivia's mental health—one of the four factors along with physical, life and work that influence a person's total health. In fact, there are a number of internal and external stressors that are not being identified through the assessment tools the organization is using.



There are a few things about Olivia that aren't obvious from the information we've shared so far. Firstly, she is a single mother of three, who got divorced a few years ago. This situation certainly comes with a certain amount of stress and strain that she is managing. Given the challenging economic environment facing the oil and gas sector right now, Olivia is also very concerned about company downsizing and her own job security. And while Olivia likes her co-workers and enjoys her day-to-day work, she has a very difficult working relationship with her manager. This particular individual is not very supportive in terms of workplace culture, coaching and communication skills, which is very difficult on Olivia.

Olivia is also experiencing some significant financial pressures. As a single mom she worries that she will have to sell her home and downsize to make ends meet. And right now, not unlike many Canadians, Olivia is carrying a fairly heavy debt burden, which adds to her stress and anxiety.

An important factor too is that Olivia does not have very strong coping mechanisms. She's hard on herself, on the quality of her work, and on the contribution she makes both to her employer and her community. Like many people, she engages in negative self-talk. One way Olivia tries to cope with her stress and anxiety is through online shopping. This online shopping addiction is contributing significantly to the debt load that she is carrying.

The organization's current tools identified Olivia as a highly engaged employee and they would have been pleased about that. However, not all engaged employees are at low risk. Olivia falls into a category of highly engaged employees with a high risk health profile. Unless action is taken, she will likely experience burnout; leave the organization; or find herself in a short-term to long-term disability cycle. So for organizations thinking about engagement generally, it's critical that they think about sustainable engagement, as opposed to focusing solely on the engagement scores themselves.

As we can see, while the assessment tools that Olivia's organization is currently using highlight some of the *what* about Olivia, they are not uncovering the *why*. Using THI will give her company benchmarks and metrics on the total health—physical, mental, life and work—of their employee and organizational health as well as a comprehensive risk profile. THI will help support a two-way conversation between employer and employees that is rooted in a joint accountability model. And lastly, THI will provide the organization with solid evidence to target investments in people and programs, while measuring the impact those programs and initiatives are having in driving improved outcomes related to health.