

# Protecting High Performers



Blue Ground

**High performers are often the most reliable, capable, and steady members of a team.**

They deliver consistently, absorb pressure, and often hold the emotional and operational glue of a workplace.

But high performers are also the most at risk of invisible labour, relational aggression, burnout, and being taken for granted. Their competence can make them targets for subtle harm or lead to chronic overload because they are “the reliable one.”

Leaders must actively protect high performers to maintain capability, culture, and wellbeing.

## Why This Matters

When high performers are unsupported, teams lose capability, culture declines, and burnout spreads. Protecting high performers strengthens retention, stabilises team rhythm, and models healthy leadership.

## Who This Is For

- Supervisors and team leaders
- Senior leaders and executives
- Wellbeing and HR teams
- Anyone responsible for operational clarity or team culture

## What You'll Learn

- Why high performers are at risk
- How subtle harm targets high-capacity people
- Leadership behaviours that protect excellence
- Practical tools to support and stabilise high performers

# What High Performers Experience

## High performers often experience:

- increased workload because they are reliable
- subtle undermining from peers who feel threatened
- unrealistic expectations from leaders
- emotional labour that goes unnoticed
- pressure to maintain perfection

## High performers are vulnerable because they:

- rarely complain
- self-manage
- absorb relational pressure
- take responsibility for team outcomes
- are often the informal leaders in a group

## When high performers are unprotected, teams experience:

- reduced capability
- increased turnover
- fractured culture
- loss of trust
- burnout contagion

# How High Performers Are Impacted

## A. Over-Reliance

Leaders unintentionally overload high performers because they “can handle it.”

## B. Subtle Harm

High performers may be targeted by relational aggression due to competence or visibility.

## C. Invisible Labour

They pick up tasks others drop, often without recognition.

## D. Emotional Containment

They absorb team stress to keep things steady.

## E. Perfection Pressure

They feel responsible for maintaining high standards at all times.

# Leadership Behaviours That Protect High Performers

## A. Redistribute Load

Ensure high performers are not carrying the majority of invisible or operational labour.

## B. Name Their Contribution

Recognition protects against subtle harm and reinforces psychological safety.

## C. Set Boundaries Around Their Capacity

Leaders must prevent over-functioning by setting clear limits.

## D. Intervene Early in Relational Aggression

High performers are common targets—leaders must act quickly.

## E. Create Recovery Space

High performers need structured opportunities to rest and reset.

## Practical Tools

Tool 1: The Capacity Check-In	Tool 2: The Visibility Anchor	Tool 3: The Redistribution Conversation
<p>A simple script for leaders:</p> <p><b>“You’re carrying a lot right now. Let’s look at what can be redistributed so you’re not overloaded.”</b></p> <p>This validates effort and protects capacity.</p>	<p>A leader-level recognition tool:</p> <p><b>“I want to acknowledge the quality and steadiness you bring. It has real impact on this team.”</b></p> <p>This protects high performers from subtle harm and invisibility.</p>	<p>A structure for reducing overload:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Name the load.</li><li>2. Identify what can be shared.</li><li>3. Set new boundaries.</li><li>4. Follow up to ensure the shift holds.</li></ol>

## The Capacity Check-In

The Capacity Check-In gives leaders a simple, steady way to surface load and protect capacity. High performers often carry more than others realise. The Capacity Check-In validates their effort, surfaces invisible load, and creates space for redistribution.

### Structure of a Capacity Check-In

- Name what you're seeing.
- Invite honesty about capacity.
- Identify what can be shifted.
- Set a clear boundary.

This protects high performers from chronic overload.

### Operational Examples

- "You're carrying a lot right now. Let's look at what can be redistributed."
- "I want to check in on your load — what's feeling heavy at the moment?"
- "Let's adjust this so you're not absorbing more than is sustainable."

### Why It Works in Policing

- It reduces burnout risk.
- It validates invisible labour.
- It prevents over-functioning.
- It strengthens trust and retention.

## The Visibility Anchor

High performers are often invisible because they self-manage. The Visibility Anchor protects them from subtle harm and ensures their contribution is seen.

### Structure of a Visibility Anchor

- Name the contribution.
- Name the impact.
- Reinforce the value.

This strengthens psychological safety and protects against relational aggression.

### Operational Examples

- "Your steadiness has anchored the team this week."
- "The quality of your work sets a standard others rely on."
- "Your consistency makes a real difference to our rhythm."

## Why It Works in Policing

- It reduces subtle harm and envy.
- It protects informal leaders.
- It reinforces fairness and recognition.
- It stabilises team culture.

## The Redistribution Conversation

High performers often carry load because no one else does. The Redistribution Conversation resets expectations and protects capacity.

### Structure of a Redistribution Conversation

- Name the load.
- Identify what can be shared.
- Set new boundaries.
- Follow up to ensure the shift holds.

This prevents chronic overload and protects capability.

### Operational Examples

- “You’ve been carrying X, Y, and Z. From here, A and B will move to others.”
- “Let’s redistribute this so you’re not absorbing the majority of the work.”
- “I’m setting a boundary here — this won’t sit with you going forward.”

## Why It Works in Policing

- It prevents burnout contagion.
- It strengthens fairness and team rhythm.
- It protects capability and retention.
- It models steady, consistent leadership.

**Protecting high performers is a leadership standard that strengthens capability, fairness, and team rhythm.**

