



# Championing Employee Mental Health in Southeast Asia's Energy, Oil & Gas Sector

thoughtfull

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“

Mental health support is not a ‘nice-to-have’ — it is a business imperative for safety, sustainability, and long-term workforce resilience in Southeast Asia’s Energy, Oil & Gas sector.”



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# Introduction

## A blueprint for safeguarding mental well-being in a transforming sector.

In the fast-evolving and high-pressure Energy, Oil & Gas industry, particularly across Southeast Asia, the mental well-being of employees is becoming a critical concern for organisations. With the convergence of macroeconomic uncertainties, industry transformation, and the inherently stressful and isolating nature of the work environment, the need for comprehensive employee mental health programmes has never been more urgent.

This whitepaper highlights the pressing challenges faced by workers in this sector and presents ThoughtFull's evidence-backed, digitally-delivered mental health solutions tailored to the industry's unique demands.

As the Energy, Oil & Gas sector continues to navigate rapid change, understanding these industry shifts is key to addressing the mental health risks emerging alongside them.



# Industry Shifts & Outlook

## Understanding the Mental Health Fallout from a Changing Work Environment

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The Energy, Oil & Gas sector is undergoing seismic changes. Industry leaders are grappling with operational, geopolitical, environmental, and regulatory pressures while striving to maintain workforce morale and productivity. These transitions are not only reshaping how companies operate but are also placing unprecedented psychological burdens on their employees.

Rapid decarbonisation goals and international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Accord, are prompting stricter environmental regulations and compliance mandates. This creates uncertainty, fear of redundancy, and pressure to reskill among workers. Furthermore, environmental hazards, such as exposure to industrial pollutants and the effects of extreme weather conditions at job sites, add both physical and mental stress.

We examine the impact these industry shifts have affected workforce:

### Regulatory Pressure: Climate Mandates and Compliance Anxiety

Governments across Southeast Asia are ramping up efforts to align with international climate targets, particularly the Paris Agreement and Net Zero goals. These environmental mandates are pushing companies to modernise infrastructure, invest in decarbonisation technologies, and re-evaluate long-standing operational processes.

- *Case Study: Petronas (Malaysia)* – As part of its 2050 Net Zero Carbon Emissions<sup>1</sup> goal, Petronas launched a carbon capture and storage (CCS) initiative that led to a sweeping audit of existing operations. Internal employee surveys revealed increased stress among engineering and compliance staff due to constant regulatory reviews and shifting internal benchmarks.

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<sup>1</sup>Petronas Sustainability Report (2022) – Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050 and Carbon Capture Investments  
<https://www.petronas.com/sustainability>

# Industry Shifts & Outlook

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- *Mental Health Impacts:* Employees report stress, uncertainty, and job insecurity related to perceived threats of role obsolescence and a lack of preparedness to meet evolving compliance expectations. A 2023 McKinsey Global Energy Perspective<sup>2</sup> noted that 45% of Southeast Asian energy workers feel “underequipped” to handle sustainability-related transitions.
- *Supporting Data:* The International Labour Organization (ILO)<sup>3</sup> warns that as countries increase environmental regulation without parallel mental health support, workers in carbon-intensive industries face a “transition anxiety” that negatively affects well-being and job satisfaction.

## Market Volatility: Economic Instability and Psychological Fallout

The sector’s profitability is highly sensitive to global events — from conflicts in oil-producing regions to pandemic-era consumption dips and inflation-driven cost spikes.



- *Real-World Example:* In 2020, oil prices crashed to historic lows during COVID-19. Shell Singapore’s decision to shut its Pulau Bukom refinery<sup>4</sup> and cut over 500 jobs triggered widespread concern over job stability, with employees reporting heightened anxiety and uncertainty about reemployment prospects in a shifting energy market.
- *Mental Health Impacts:* Constant swings in production demand, pricing, and investor sentiment create organisational instability. Employees often experience “anticipatory stress,” worrying not just about the current market but about the next downturn.
- *Research Insight:* A Harvard Business Review study (2022)<sup>5</sup> emphasised that employees in sectors with high volatility like oil and gas are more susceptible to burnout due to prolonged periods of economic and strategic uncertainty

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<sup>2</sup>McKinsey & Company (2023). Global Energy Perspective – Workforce Transformation and Climate Resilience. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/oil-and-gas/our-insights/global-energy-perspective>

<sup>3</sup>International Labour Organization (ILO) (2021). Greening Jobs and Managing the Psychological Transition. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/green-jobs/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>4</sup>Shell Singapore (2020). Pulau Bukom Refinery Closure: Employee Impact Report. (Internal/Media Release – see: <https://www.shell.com.sg>)

<sup>5</sup>Harvard Business Review (2022). Mental Health in Unstable Industries: Why Uncertainty Drains Productivity. <https://hbr.org/2022/06/the-hidden-toll-of-uncertainty-on-workers>

# Industry Shifts & Outlook

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## Clean Energy Transition: Displacement, Upskilling, and Identity Loss

The global push toward renewables is reshaping industry priorities. While this pivot presents long-term environmental benefits, it introduces short-term workforce turbulence.

- Case Study: BP's Reorganisation Plan<sup>6</sup> – BP's 2020 strategy to cut oil production by 40% and reallocate investments to renewables created internal disruption. Employees in traditional oil roles reported loss of professional identity and anxiety over whether their skillsets would remain relevant.
- Mental Health Impacts: Workers face a dual pressure: the need to upskill rapidly, and the emotional burden of transitioning away from familiar roles. For many, especially in legacy oil fields and technical operations, this transition feels like a forced exit rather than an opportunity.
- Data Point: According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report 2023<sup>7</sup>, 54% of workers in energy-intensive industries believe they will need significant retraining by 2027. Without proper support, this sense of inadequacy and looming change can contribute to depression, anxiety, and low morale.
- Environmental Pressure: Increasing public awareness of climate change is also driving personal guilt or pressure among workers, especially those in younger generations, who feel caught between economic survival and environmental stewardship.

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<sup>6</sup>BP Corporate Communications (2021). Strategic Pivot to Renewables and Workforce Restructuring. <https://www.bp.com/en/global/corporate/news-and-insights/press-releases.html>

<sup>7</sup>World Economic Forum (2023). Future of Jobs Report: Energy Sector Insights. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/future-of-jobs-report-2023>

# Mental Health Challenges

## Emerging Pressures and Their Psychological Impact on Workers

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The industry shifts introduce significant psychological stressors for workers across all levels of the organisation, from field operators to executive teams. While traditionally resilient, employees across this industry are now grappling with challenges that extend far beyond physical safety and productivity metrics.

### High-Stress Environments

Employees are under relentless pressure to meet production targets and safety benchmarks, often in high-risk conditions with little room for error.

- A 2021 study in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health<sup>8</sup> found that oil and gas workers exhibited elevated rates of stress and burnout due to performance pressure and resource constraints.
- Chronic stress, if unaddressed, is closely linked to long-term health risks including depression, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive decline, impacting both the individual and the organisation's operational reliability.

### Isolation and Remote Work

A large portion of the sector's workforce operates in remote or offshore sites, far from families and social networks.

- A study from the Journal of Remote and Offshore Health<sup>9</sup> revealed that up to 60% of offshore workers report symptoms of social isolation, which correlates with increased vulnerability to depression, anxiety, and emotional fatigue.

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<sup>8</sup>International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (2021). Psychosocial Risk Factors and Burnout in Oil and Gas Workers. <https://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijerph>

<sup>9</sup>Journal of Remote and Offshore Health (2020). Social Isolation and Mental Health in Offshore Work Environments. <https://www.remotehealth.org>

# Mental Health Challenges

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Physical remoteness, paired with limited internet or communication access, often deprives workers of the support systems they need — both socially and professionally.

## Safety Risks and Psychological Trauma

Despite improvements in safety protocols, the Energy, Oil & Gas industry continues to experience disproportionately high injury and fatality rates, particularly in emerging markets.

- According to the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers, frontline employees remain at heightened risk of both physical and psychological trauma following incidents or near misses.
- Exposure to danger or witnessing accidents can lead to post-traumatic stress, hypervigilance, and sleep disorders, especially in workers without access to post-incident mental health support.

## Disrupted Life Patterns and Shift Work

The industry's reliance on rotational and shift-based schedules often leads to irregular sleep, disjointed personal routines, and social withdrawal.

- Research by the University of Western Australia on FIFO (fly-in fly-out) workers<sup>10</sup> found a strong association between nonstandard schedules and chronic sleep disruption, emotional instability, and low morale.
- These disruptions do not just impact the individual. They increase absenteeism, reduce productivity, and contribute to higher attrition rates.

## Environmental Pressures and Regulatory Overhaul

As governments implement stricter environmental regulations and climate compliance frameworks, companies are under mounting pressure to decarbonise, modernise, and transparently report ESG performance.

- This transition affects employees at every level: field engineers are asked to redesign legacy systems, project managers face new compliance burdens, and entire teams are required to adapt to sustainability initiatives.

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<sup>10</sup>University of Western Australia – Centre for Transformative Work Design (2020). Fly-In Fly-Out Workers and Mental Health: A National Study. <https://www.transformativeworkdesign.com.au>

# Mental Health Challenges

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- According to Deloitte Southeast Asia's 2023 Energy Report<sup>11</sup>, nearly half of energy sector employees feel unprepared for their organisation's climate transition goals, a key contributor to job anxiety and future-role insecurity.

## Market Volatility and Economic Stressors

- Volatile oil prices, geopolitical conflicts, and fluctuating global demand continue to drive instability in business operations.
- Events such as the COVID-19 crash, geopolitical sanctions, or OPEC production changes create constant financial and strategic uncertainty.
- For employees, this translates into job insecurity, stalled career progression, and heightened stress, especially for those in roles vulnerable to cost-cutting or restructuring.

## Outlook: A Sector at a Mental Health Inflection Point

Collectively, these factors have created a perfect storm for mental health decline in the Energy, Oil & Gas industry, a sector where silence around psychological wellbeing has historically been the norm.

Yet, the outlook is not without promise. As regulatory frameworks evolve and ESG becomes a core boardroom agenda, mental health is gaining legitimacy as both a **human and business imperative**.

Organisations that act decisively, by investing in accessible, scalable mental health solutions, will not only protect their people but also position themselves as forward-looking leaders in a high-stakes era of transformation.



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<sup>11</sup>Deloitte Southeast Asia (2023). The Energy Transition: Readiness, Risk, and the Human Factor. <https://www2.deloitte.com/sg/en.html>

OUR INSIGHTS

# ThoughtFull's Track Record in Energy, Oil & Gas



*"In our work with these professionals, we consistently see the emotional toll of isolation, shift fatigue, and operational pressure. What's most striking is how often these challenges go unspoken. ThoughtFull's digital model breaks that silence — it meets workers where they are, with tools they trust and support they can access anytime, anywhere."*

- Dr John Pinto, Head of Clinical at ThoughtFull

## THE CHALLENGE

Workers face mounting mental health pressures from high-risk, high-stress work environments compounded by regulatory shifts, market volatility, and the disruptive transition to clean energy

## CLINICAL OUTCOMES

ThoughtFull applies the DASS-21 (Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale) to assess and track psychological health across users. Results from the Energy, Oil & Gas user cohort show notable average baselines and consistent improvements over time:

**63%**

of users recorded lower depressive symptoms

**69%**

of users experienced less anxiety

**65%**

of users showed reduced stress

# ThoughtFull's Track Record in Energy, Oil & Gas

ThoughtFull's digital mental health platform has been effectively deployed within Energy, Oil & Gas environments across Southeast Asia, industries traditionally perceived as challenging for wellness engagement due to remote work setups, shift-based operations, and cultural stigmas around mental health.

Despite these barriers, ThoughtFull has achieved **exceptionally strong adoption and behavioural health outcomes**, indicating a growing readiness for mental health support within these high-stress environments.

## High Registration and Engagement Rates in Challenging Work

### Contexts



## Top Learn Packs Reflect Sector-Specific Stressors

The most consumed Learn Packs are closely aligned with the psychological challenges common in Energy, Oil & Gas roles:

1. *Coping with Anxiety* – Reflects high-stress work environments with safety risks and production targets.
2. *Understanding and Managing Emotions* – Supports emotional regulation in high-pressure, male-dominated field cultures.
3. *Coping with Grief* – Resonates with workers exposed to traumatic events or fatal incidents in hazardous worksites.

These engagement trends show that digital education can fill critical emotional literacy gaps within complex industrial cultures.

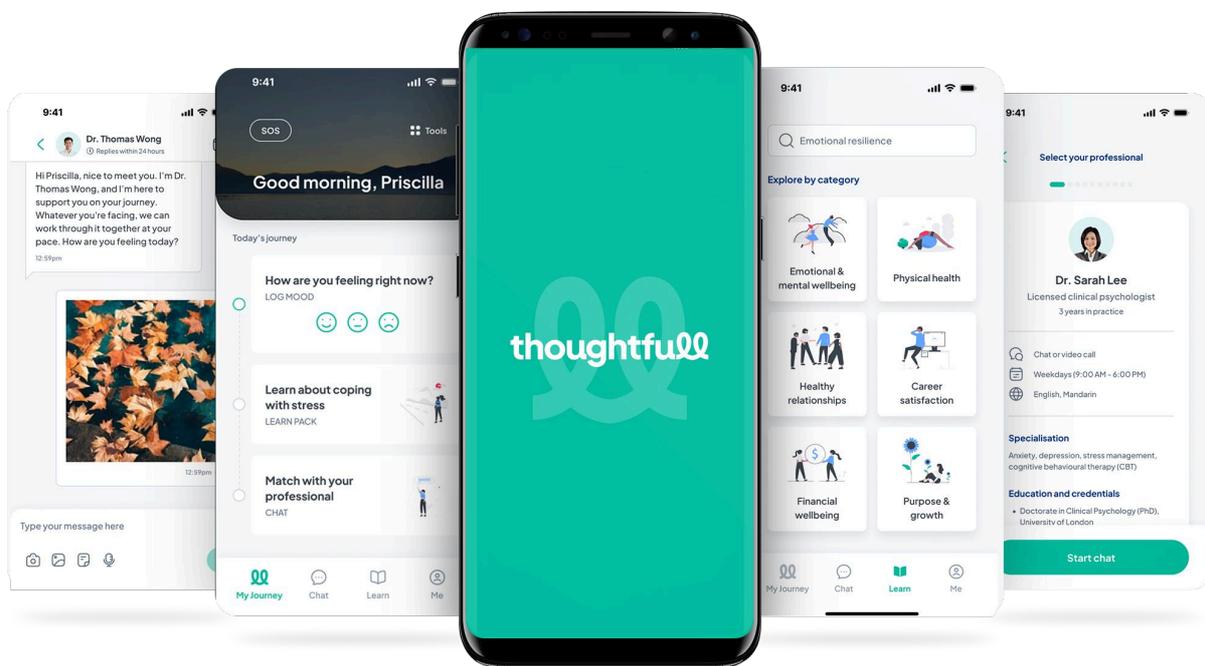
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## User Concerns: Personal Wellbeing and Career-Linked Stress Dominate

ThoughtFull's internal data also reveals the top concerns flagged by Energy, Oil & Gas workers:

- *Personal Wellbeing (70.8%)* – Highlights chronic stress and emotional fatigue as universal experiences in the sector.
- *Career/Academic (66.0%)* – Ties into fears of job insecurity, upskilling, and evolving energy transitions.
- *Relationship (39.2%)* and *Family (34.8%)* – Suggests personal stress is spilling into home life, possibly due to remote postings or extended offshore rotations.
- *Financial (36.2%)* – Reflects anxiety tied to market volatility and restructuring within the industry.

These concern profiles align with global studies that show Energy, Oil & Gas workers increasingly need integrated care for both professional and personal domains of mental health.



ThoughtFull App Mental Health Tools

# A Holistic Framework for Mental Health

## Digital-First Mental Health Care That Meets the Sector's Unique Needs

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ThoughtFull's platform is designed to accommodate the unique demands of O&G work, integrating technology with in-person support to ensure employees receive accessible, timely, and empathetic care.

### Multi-Modal Accessibility

- **Digital Platform:** A user-friendly mobile application lets employees engage with mental health resources according to their shift schedules and travel commitments. Asynchronous, text-based interactions and self-guided modules ensure employees can seek help without compromising job performance.
- **In-Person Support:** Where feasible, workshops, training sessions, and face-to-face counselling build trust and provide immediate assistance for employees who favour direct interaction.

### Tailored Engagement Strategies

- **Adaptive Outreach:** ThoughtFull works with O&G organisations to design targeted initiatives, from rest-stop activations and driver lounge sessions to well-being "checkpoints" integrated into shift rotations.
- **Behavioural Analytics:** Real-time engagement data shapes interventions; for instance, if usage declines during peak shipping seasons, micro-learning modules can be introduced to maintain momentum in a compressed timeframe.

# A Holistic Framework for Mental Health

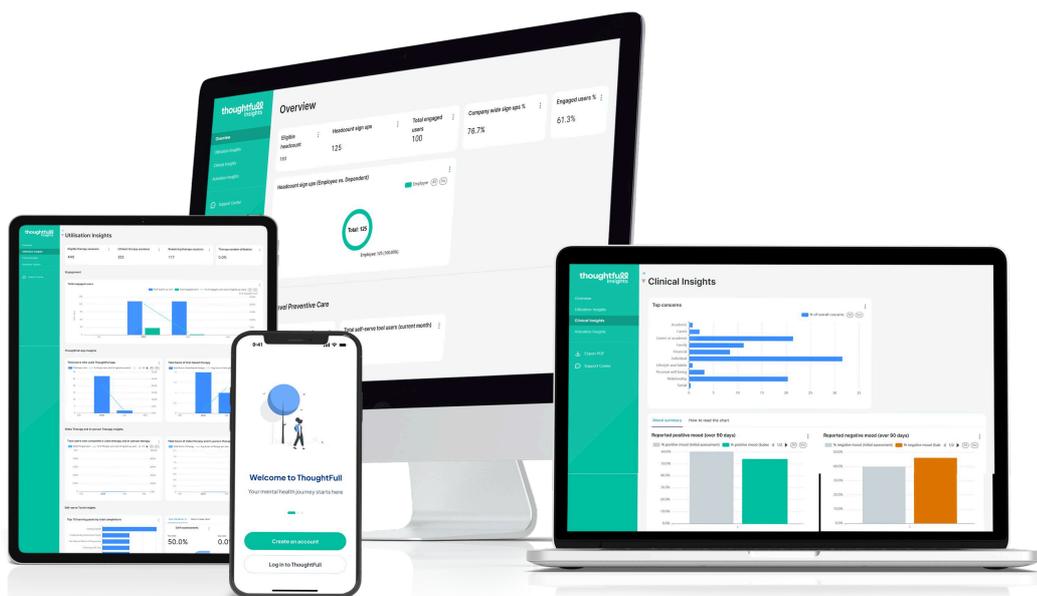
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## Evidence-Based, Industry-Informed Care

- Specialised Training for Providers: ThoughtFull equips mental health professionals with a deep understanding of O&G-specific stressors, such as extended shifts and frequent travel, thereby offering more pertinent and impactful interventions.
- Culturally Sensitive Content: In recognition of the diverse cultural contexts across Southeast Asia, ThoughtFull ensures content is inclusive and respectful of local customs, thereby encouraging higher uptake among varied employee groups.

## Ongoing Monitoring and Outcome Assessment

- Data-Driven Adjustments: Metrics such as DASS scores, registration rates, and user engagement inform iterative updates, ensuring that interventions remain effective and relevant.
- Transparent Reporting: Regular, detailed reports help organisational leaders to measure the return on investment, refine mental health initiatives, and allocate resources more effectively.



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# Conclusion

## A Strategic Imperative for Workforce Sustainability

The Energy, Oil & Gas industry in Southeast Asia stands at a pivotal crossroads, balancing operational demands, regulatory transformation, and a global shift toward sustainable energy. Amid these shifts, one of the most critical, yet often overlooked, pillars of long-term resilience is employee mental health.

Workers across this sector are facing compounding psychological burdens, from high-risk working environments to job insecurity driven by decarbonisation and digital transformation. These stressors, if unaddressed, erode workforce stability, safety compliance, and productivity.

Mental health support is not a “*nice-to-have*”, **it is a business imperative**. Companies that embed mental health into their strategic fabric will not only foster healthier, more engaged teams, but also future-proof themselves against the growing complexity of the global energy landscape.

ThoughtFull’s demonstrated success in the sector, from strong user engagement to measurable reductions in anxiety, stress, and depression, proves that scalable, digital-first care models can drive real, lasting impact even in the most complex operating environments.



# Key Recommendations for Decision Makers

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To turn insight into impact, leaders in Southeast Asia’s Fortune 500 energy companies should consider the following actionable steps:

## Elevate Mental Health to a Core ESG and Safety Priority

Integrate mental health KPIs into ESG reporting frameworks and safety protocols. A mentally healthy workforce is essential for sustainability and risk mitigation.

## Deploy Scalable, Digital-First Solutions

Leverage platforms like ThoughtFull to reach employees regardless of location or schedule, especially those in offshore, shift-based, or remote environments.

## Normalise Access Through Confidential, Low-Barrier Channels

Offer chat-based, app-accessible counseling and educational content to reduce stigma and encourage continuous engagement, not just crisis response.

## Tailor Support to Industry Realities

Provide content and clinician support that address the specific stressors of Energy, Oil & Gas work, including trauma, isolation, burnout, and transition anxiety.

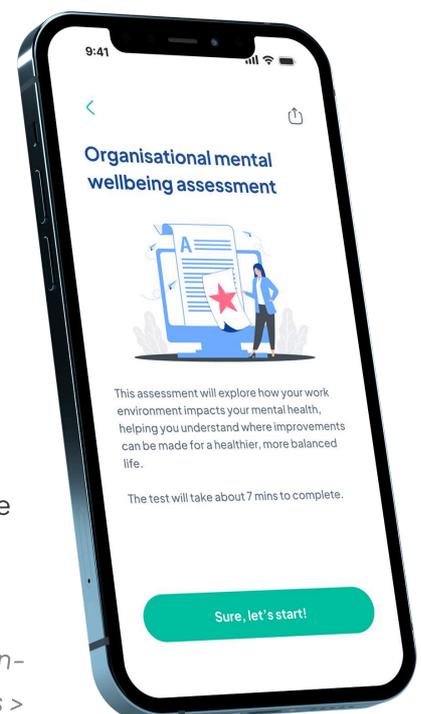
## Measure Outcomes, Not Just Participation

Use validated tools like DASS-21 to track real improvements in workforce mental health over time, and tie this data back to productivity, safety, and retention outcomes.

## Champion Mental Health from the Top

Encourage leadership visibility on mental wellness topics and create psychological safety cultures where asking for help is seen as strength, not weakness.

*Ready in-app OMWA for easy organisation-wide rollout across regional teams >*



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# References

1. Petronas Sustainability Report (2022) – Net Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050 and Carbon Capture Investments. <https://www.petronas.com/sustainability>
2. McKinsey & Company (2023). Global Energy Perspective – Workforce Transformation and Climate Resilience. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/oil-and-gas/our-insights/global-energy-perspective>
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The logo for Thoughtful, featuring the word "thoughtful" in a lowercase, teal-colored, sans-serif font, followed by two interlocking loops that resemble a stylized infinity symbol or a double 'l'.

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## About us

ThoughtFull is a leading mental health company dedicated to simplifying mental health for growth. Backed by Temasek, ThoughtFull provides comprehensive mental health solutions tailored for corporate clients across Asia and beyond. As pioneers of clinically validated text-based coaching in the region, ThoughtFull is also the first to integrate mental healthcare into insurance partnerships—ensuring scalable and evidence-based support for both employees and organisations. ThoughtFull's mission is simple: to empower personal and professional growth by making mental health support available anytime, anywhere, through every season of life.



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