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Title

Addressing morale during a global pandemic: The creation of a Support U committee on Tower 8 to reduce staff burnout

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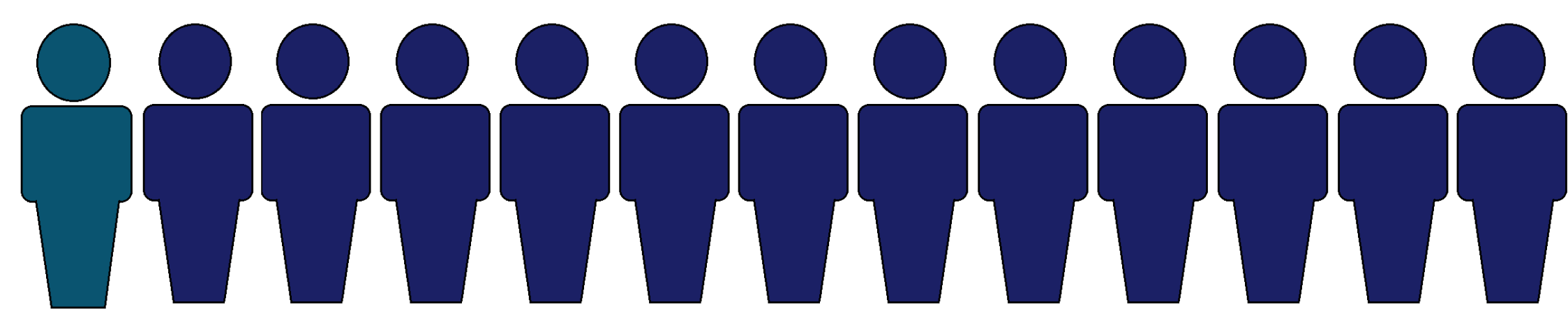
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Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline workers have experienced mental and physical strain due to increased workload, dire conditions, and a perceived lack of support. Tower 8, the Transplant Metabolic Unit, was no exception, learning how to adapt to changes across the healthcare system. As patient acuity increased and uncertainty about the future of the virus grew, so did the amount of staff calling out sick each week. Nurses on the unit reported feelings of low morale and dissatisfaction.

In order to improve subjective morale and decrease the number of burnout-related sick calls, a Support U committee was created on Tower 8.

Methods

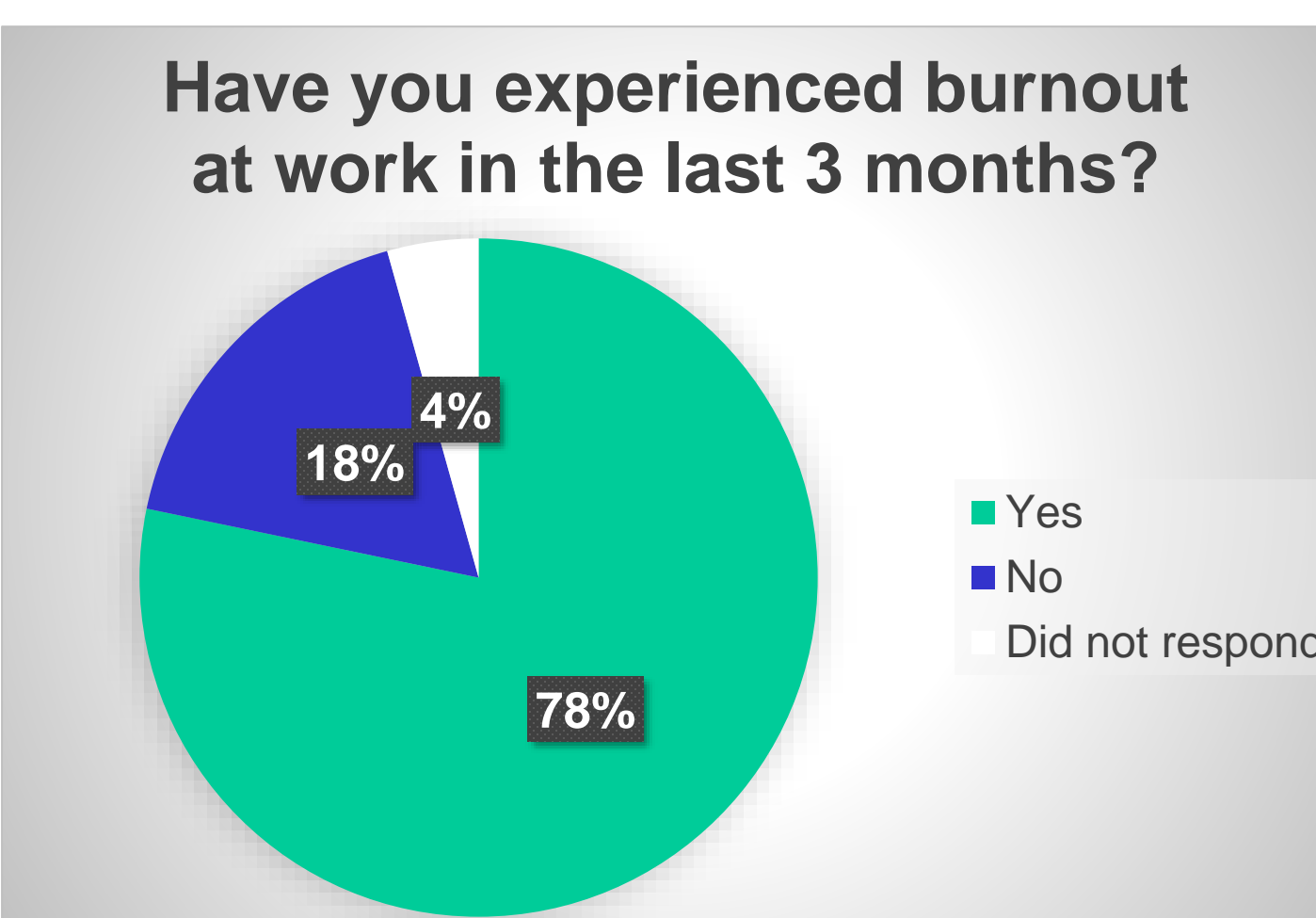
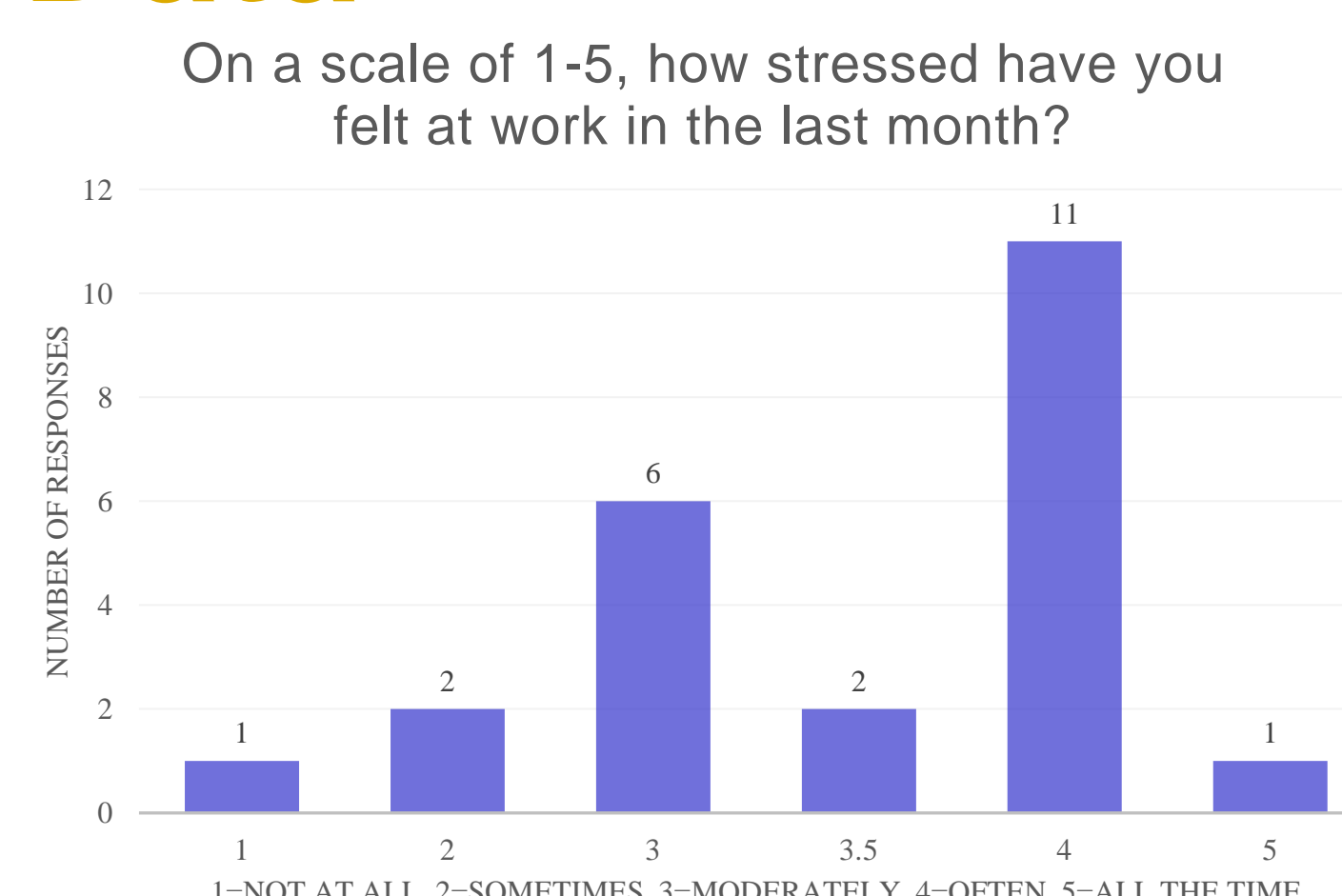


1 HUSC and 12 RNs volunteered to join the committee.



Preliminary Data

In pre-surveys with staff, nurses felt an average stress of 3.43 on a 1-5 scale. This indicates they feel stress moderately to often at work.



During the height of the pandemic in Winter 2020, 78% of staff had experienced burnout within the last 3 months.

Interventions

Individual Recognition

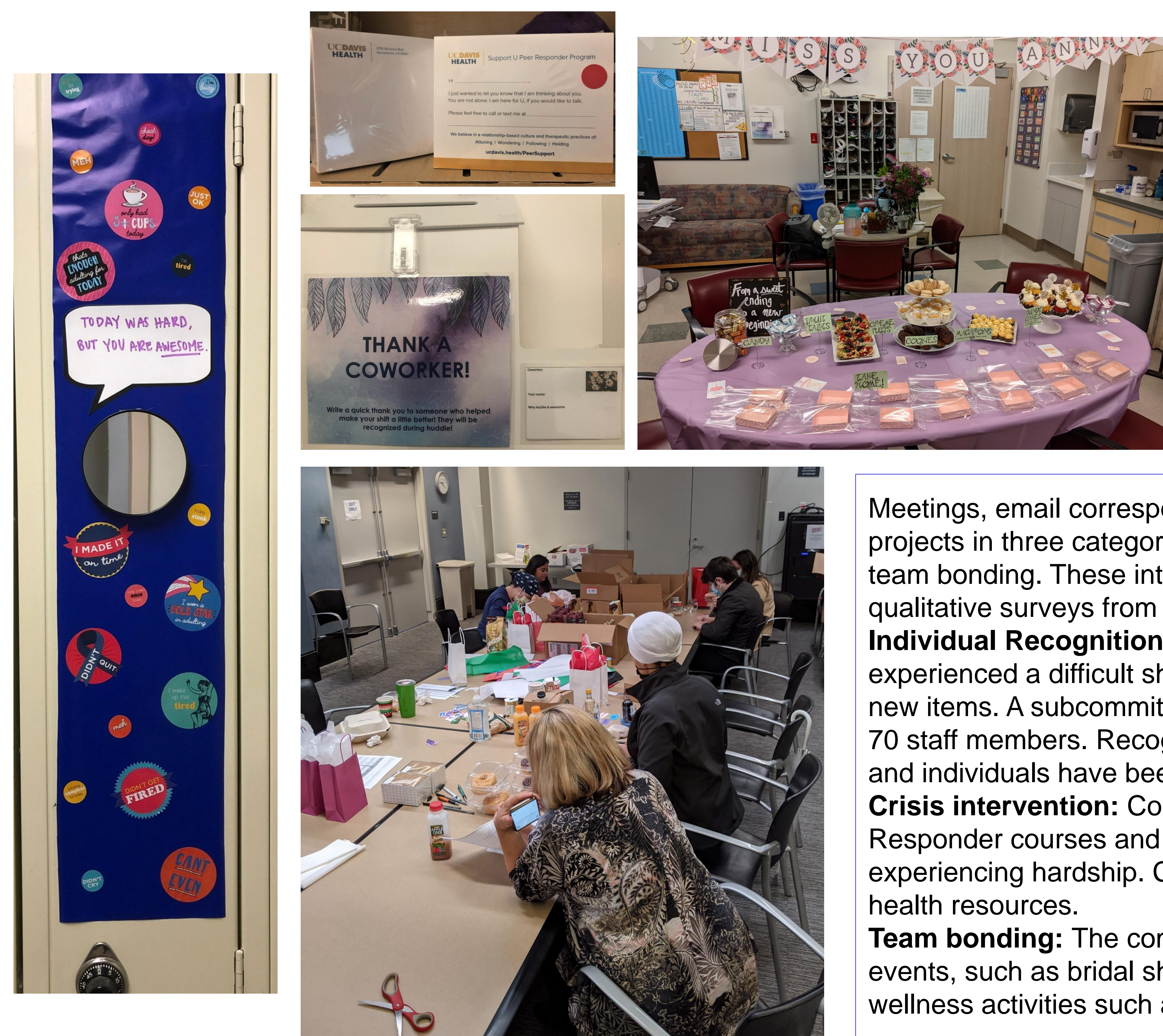
- Locker
- End-of-the-year gifts
- Kudos cards
- Staff member of the month

Crisis Intervention

- Trained peer responders
- Crisis cards and posters with resources

Team Bonding

- Individual and team celebrations
- Virtual bonding sessions



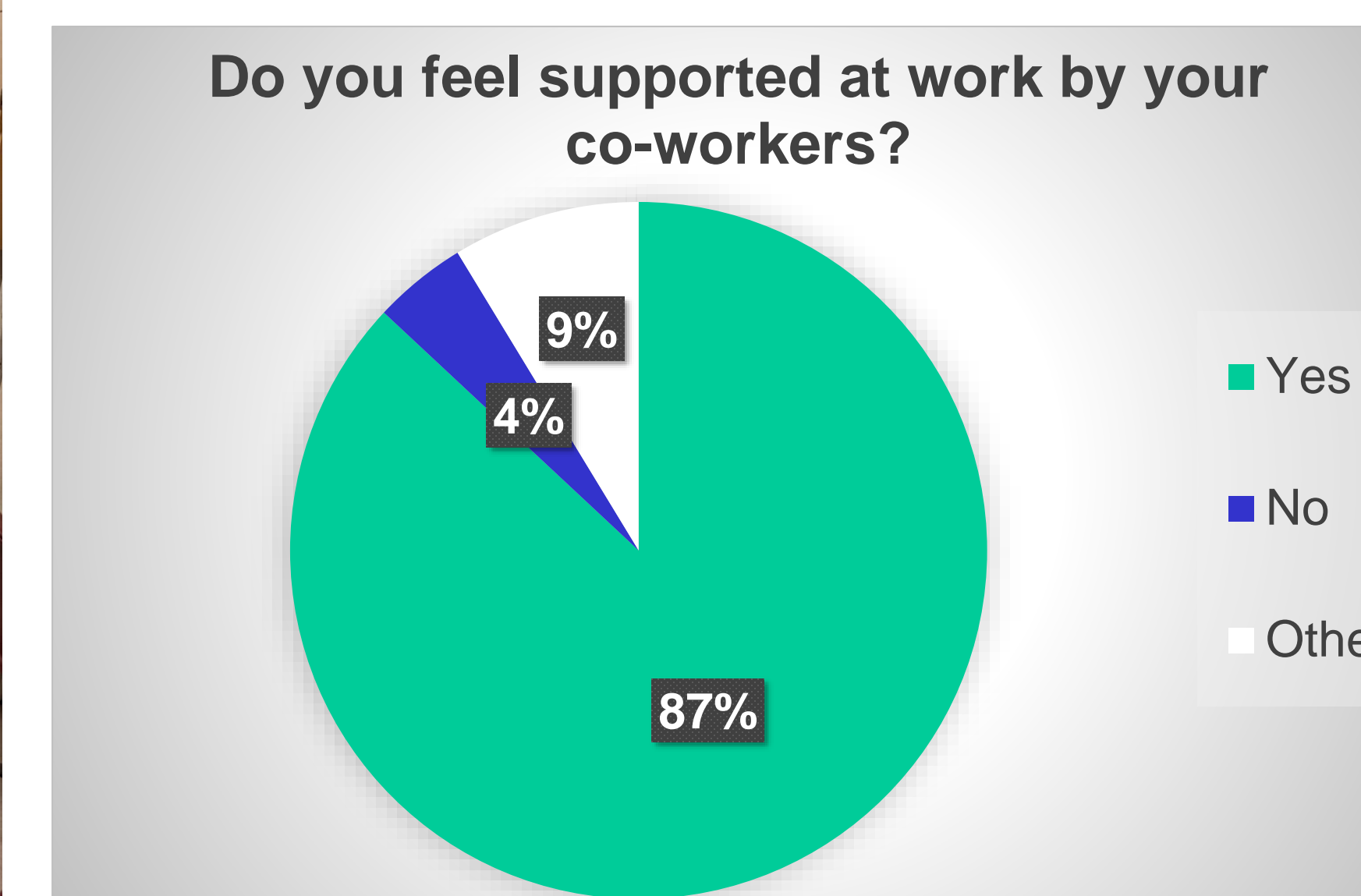
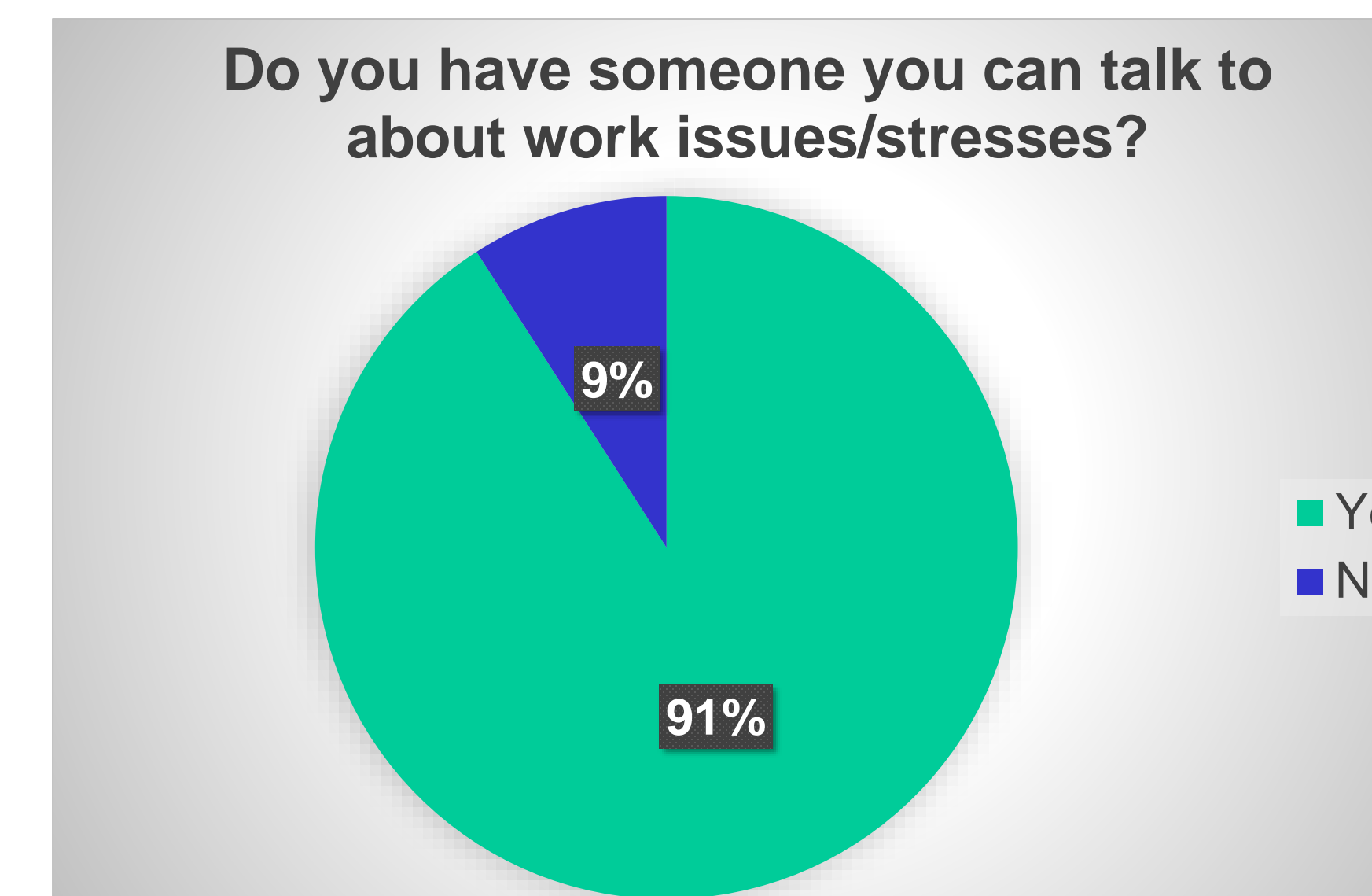
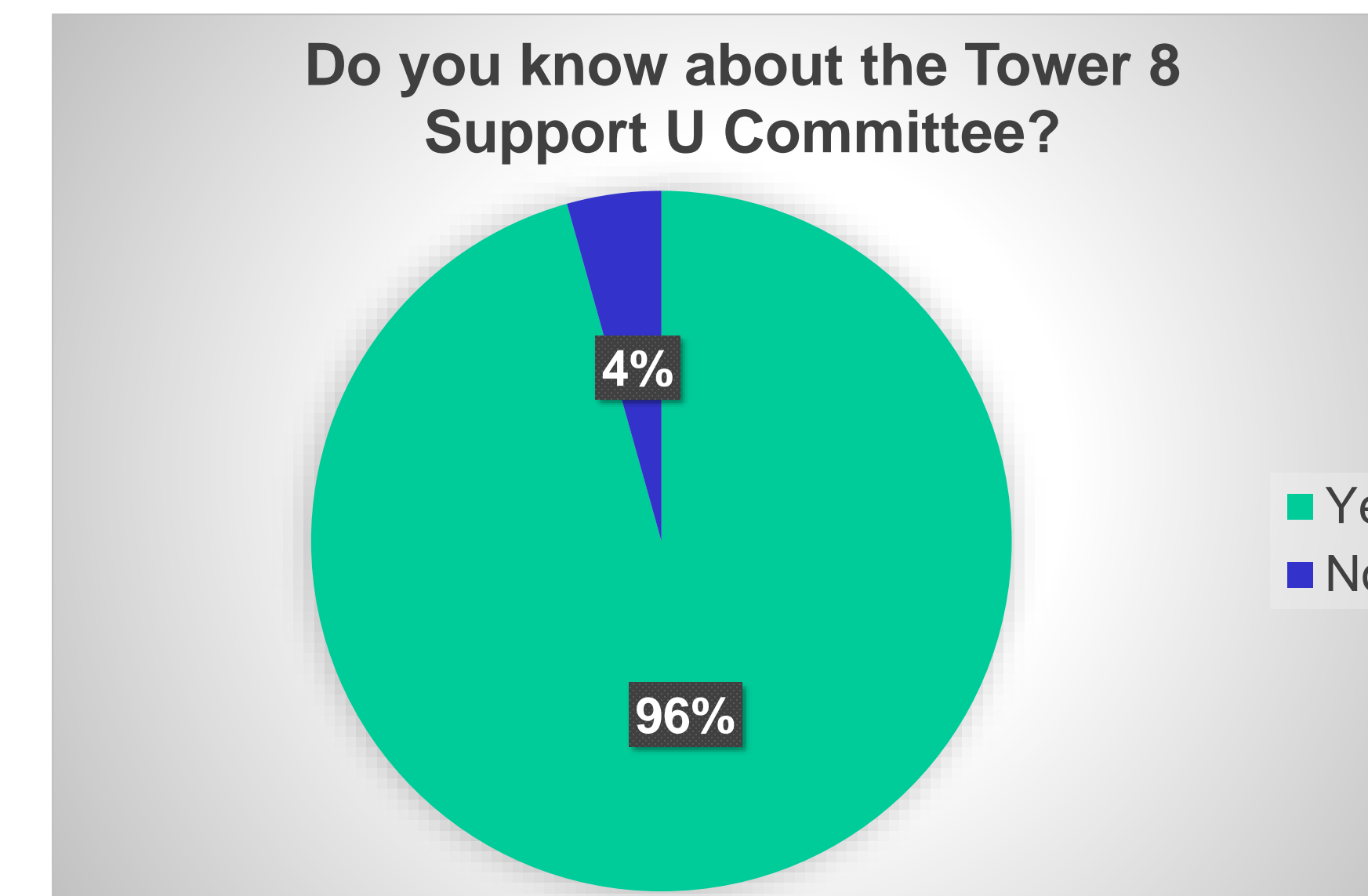
Meetings, email correspondence, and surveys led to the implementation of projects in three categories: individual recognition, crisis intervention, and team bonding. These interventions have been adjusted by evaluating qualitative surveys from participants.

Individual Recognition: Committee members bring individuals who experienced a difficult shift to choose something from a locker filled with new items. A subcommittee created personalized end-of-the-year gifts for all 70 staff members. Recognition cards were introduced on the huddle board, and individuals have been featured for going above and beyond.

Crisis intervention: Committee members attended the CPPN Peer Responder courses and offer a safe space to actively listen to staff who are experiencing hardship. Cards and posters were posted to provide mental health resources.

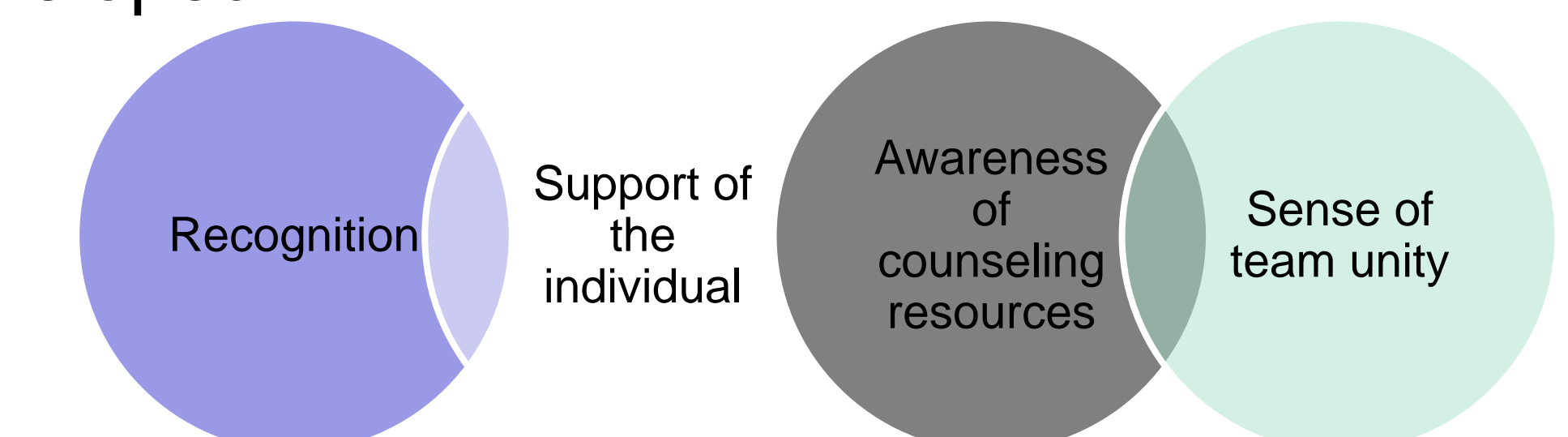
Team bonding: The committee hosts COVID-safe celebrations for life events, such as bridal showers and retirements. Virtual sessions offer wellness activities such as yoga, cooking classes, and healing circles.

Survey Results



Results

Feedback for the Support U Committee has been positive. Staff report “feeling appreciated when taken to the locker” and that “public recognition improves motivation.” Since the implementations of Support U, surveys show that 91% of staff have someone they can talk to about work-related stress. Staff feel more comfortable asking each other for help, and 87% reported feeling supported by peers. Although burnout is still present due to patient acuity and other pressures, a greater culture of teamwork has developed.



Conclusions/Further Study

When healthcare workers feel lack of gratification due to burnout, they can struggle to provide exceptional care for patients. Since implementation of the Tower 8 Support U Committee, nurses feel their efforts have been recognized and struggles have been addressed.

Limitations

Some limitations include lack of funding and personal stresses affecting engagement at work. Although there are limitations, peer support systems promote physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing, which leads to a sense of unity among teams. Through the widespread creation of Support U Committees, UC Davis Medical Center could benefit from improved staff satisfaction, a reduction in sick calls, and better patient outcomes.

Acknowledgements

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