

The Well-being Handbook

Tools & Tactics to Help You & Your Organization
Heal from Stress, Burnout, and Trauma

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Table of Contents

The Purpose of This Book1

CHAPTER 1:
How I Got Interested in Mental Health Issues2

CHAPTER 2:
A Culture of Well-Being Matters More Than Ever..... 5

CHAPTER 3:
How Did We Get So Depleted? 7

CHAPTER 4:
The Spectrum: Not Everyone is Impacted in the Same Way..... 9

CHAPTER 5:
Many Have Moved from Stress to Trauma..... 11

CHAPTER 6:
Why Healthcare Professionals are Reluctant to Seek Help 14
(Stigma and the “Resiliency” Misunderstanding)

CHAPTER 7:
Measuring: Why We Need to Assess Where People and Organizations Are Right Now 17
(Assessment Tools for Individual and Organizations)

CHAPTER 8:
Solutions: Leader Tools and Tactics That Replenish Cultures 24
 Become an Empathetic Leader
 Create a Culture of Well Being
 The Power of a Well-Run Organization

CHAPTER 9:
A Closing Thought 38

About the Author..... 40

The Purpose of This Book

Thank you for your interest in *The Well-Being Handbook*. A quick word before we get started: this book isn't meant to be a treatment plan. It is more of a guide to help leaders start the conversation about mental health.

The first step in dealing with issues like stress, trauma, and burnout is to create a safe environment to talk about them and how they impact well-being. It is my hope that this book will help reduce the stigma around mental health issues and encourage people to get help when they need it.

Not every tool and tactic to follow will apply to every organization. Feel free to personalize these resources as needed.

Chapter 1

How I Got Interested in Mental Health Issues

Since my early thirties (around 1982) I've been interested in wellness, stress, resiliency, burn-out, and trauma, but these subjects hit home hard in 2014.

My only sibling, my sister Susan, was at Moffitt Cancer Center with pancreatic cancer. Dr. Pamela Hodul did a Whipple procedure on September 12. It lasted thirteen and a half hours. Now, my sister was not a good candidate for the Whipple procedure and understood the risk. My sister had the procedure because she believed it was her only chance.

At the time, my sister was the caregiver for my parents. I lived far away and traveled a lot, so she took on most of the responsibility. My sister never had children. She was totally devoted to mother and father. My mother said to her, "Please don't leave me." She took that to heart and decided to have the risky operation.

And as it turned out, Susan lived three months, passing away on December 1, 2014. During that time, she received excellent care from a team of remarkable physicians. Dr. Hodul was the one we got to know best. We saw her cry for my sister more than once. Like most physicians, she cares deeply about her patients.

In addition to the emotional turmoil caused by losing patients you've desperately tried to save, Dr. Hodul kept a brutal schedule. She worked six days a week, coming in at 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. and staying well into the night. And the surgeries themselves were grueling. In fact, Dr. Hodul was so physically exhausted and emotionally depleted after Susan's thirteen and half hour surgery that

she cried. While I felt I understood the pressures healthcare providers deal with, I learned much watching the caregivers of my sister.

During this time, I received a phone call from George Ford, MD, a physician in San Antonio, Texas. He shared with me that he'd followed my work. He felt that I had some impact in health-care, and that it would be helpful if I would shine a light on the issue of physician burnout and the high suicide rates. He and I started collaborating, and in 2015 we released a book called *Healing Physician Burnout: Diagnosing, Preventing, and Treating*. This book is more relevant today than ever.

I've been able to continue my work in this area of well-being, stress, burnout, and trauma education. Besides having gotten to work with Dr. Ford, I'm on the board of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, a well-known national behavioral health organization, particularly noted for their work in the area of addiction.

I serve on the board of TriHealth in Cincinnati, Ohio. This helps me see the impact of COVID-19 from a board perspective. Mark Clement, TriHealth's president and CEO, sends a weekly report to the board that updates us on exactly what's going on with the organization. I also serve on a board called Bethesda, Inc. which provides funding for many great healthcare initiatives in the Cincinnati area.

Healthcare education is an area that's long been close to my heart. I served on the board of AUPHA (the Association of University Programs in Health Administration) for many years. More recently, I've joined the board of CAHME (the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education). Both of these experiences have given me a window to the tremendous impact stress and change have on students and faculty—particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which we'll discuss later.

I was lucky enough to meet Mark Goulston, a physician whose focus is on trauma and suicide prevention, years ago when he asked me to be on his podcast to talk about burnout, as well as Diana Hendel, a pharmacist who was the CEO of Long Beach Medical Center when they had a traumatic experience involving an employee who shot two supervisors. Mark and Diana were nice enough to ask me to write the foreword for their book that came out in 2020 titled *Why Cope When You Can Heal? How Healthcare Heroes of COVID-19 Can Recover from PTSD*.

Now for a personal note: I am also interested in wellness issues because of my own experiences. I've struggled with own mental health, including alcoholism and depression. In my thirties, I hit an emotional wall and started therapy. (For me, therapy has not been a "one and done" event; over the last 39 years I have benefited from therapy on numerous occasions.) At the time, the therapist pointed out to me that when she gave me positive feedback, I rejected it by my words and body language. I turned away. Yet when she gave me more constructive or less than positive feedback, I

accepted it. She concluded that one of the reasons I felt so depressed was that I filter out the positive and let in only the negative.

I've observed that many of us in healthcare do this. As a group, we are perfectionists, we are hard on ourselves, and, in our quest to care for others, we often don't take the time to care for ourselves. This reality, especially in light of the incredibly difficult year and half we've just been through, has created a sense of urgency for me.

All of these things came together for me and deepened my interest in burnout, stress, trauma, and well-being. I started searching for tools and techniques to help assess these problems on both individual and organizational levels. (Treatment plans designed to deal with stress will positively impact trauma; however, these plans probably won't reach people in trauma to the degree necessary.) I also started looking for ways to assist organizations and leaders in dealing with mental health stresses and remove the stigma around mental health.

Now, it has all culminated in the creation of this book. My hope is that *The Well-Being Handbook* will be a guide to assist organizations in creating a safer environment to have conversations regarding stress and trauma. My hope is that it will provide a resource each organization can personalize for their specific situation.

We all have the opportunity to help the workforce in the area of well-being, stress, and trauma.

Chapter 2

A Culture of Well-Being Matters More Than Ever

Healthcare organizations have always cared about staff’s well-being—and COVID-19 has upped the need to go even further. Doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals are battered and bruised right now. They’re struggling to process what they’ve experienced over the past year and a half.

They need to be healthy to care for the patients who count on them—even as they cope with routines, lives, and futures that have been turned upside down.

This is not a “soft” issue. Patient outcomes are at stake. Staff well-being and engagement are connected to the patient experience, which in turn is linked to clinical outcomes. My first book, *Hardwiring Excellence*, talked about this web of connections. I have covered them in other books as well. My latest book, *The Calling*, is about replenishing ourselves, our teams, and our organizations.

It’s the employee’s passion, purpose, and sense of worthwhile work that drives results and organization performance. We have a sacred trust not only to get them through COVID-19, but to help them go on to thrive on the other side. We owe it to them to give them the tools and support they need to heal from the trauma they have faced and continue to face every day. We owe it both to the patients we serve, and the healthcare providers who want to help them.

Stress and burnout have always been an issue with healthcare workers. Over the past few decades, the problem has gotten worse. The external environment, with all its rapid changes and

pressures, has created an environment of stress, depression, anxiety, and, in many cases, burnout. And of course the pandemic has brought even more light to this topic.

It's urgent that we tackle this issue right now. With post-COVID-19 burnout continuing to be a huge problem, there's too much suffering to ignore. Plus, burnout is highly contagious. When doctors and nurses are emotionally exhausted, others around them catch it. If we know that pockets of burnout exist, we need to deal with them before they cascade through the organization. Think about the future of our industry. There is no next generation of healthcare workers if the current ones are not healthy.

As they always do, medical professionals will lead the way in combatting burnout and destigmatizing mental health issues. The groundwork has already been laid. Even as this book was coming together, professional athletes were breaking their silence. Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka made headlines when she withdrew from the French Open after refusing to speak to the media, citing mental health concerns. Closer to home, my friend and business partner, the professional golfer Bubba Watson, has openly discussed his ADHD and his struggles with anxiety.

All of this has opened the flood gates for a broader discussion around anxiety, depression, and burnout. Let's advance the conversation inside healthcare and work to be a part of the solution. Our time is now.

Before we talk about solutions for replenishing healthcare organizations, let's take a look at how we got to this point.

Chapter 3

How Did We Get So Depleted?

Most people enter healthcare with a full emotional bank account. They start out engaged and inspired, with a deep desire to be helpful and useful, and they can't wait to get started. Just go to a nurse's pinning ceremony and see how excited they are. Watch a doctor get their white lab coat in medical school. Notice their excitement when they're accepted into a residency.

Non-clinical people are just as excited to get a job in healthcare. Hospitals and healthcare practices tend to have great reputations in the community, the job likely has a good benefit plan, and they're feeling really good about being part of the healthcare profession.

The challenge is that while people start out full of passion, there tend to be a lot of more natural withdrawals from the emotional bank account, many of which we have no control over.

In healthcare we experience challenging things on a daily basis. Consider what it's like for a clinician caring for a seriously ill or injured person. At times, despite their best efforts, they just can't save that patient. While they do heroic work every day, doctors and staff are human. The loss of a patient is a huge withdrawal from the emotional bank account.

In addition, work/life balance provides unique situations for healthcare workers. For example, you're an ICU nurse. You get a call from the school saying your daughter got a bump on the head and is probably okay, but you will want to come get her. When you do front line care, especially when you're caring for very sick patients, it's just not always possible to break away like it is for people in other jobs.

Leaders have additional struggles. There are so many things that cannot be controlled, like payments. With the stroke of a pen, reimbursement can change drastically. And when this happens, cuts, changes, and delays are often inevitable. A reduction in force may need to take place. Needed improvements may be postponed. These are messages that are hard for leaders to deliver and hard for staff members to hear. They can be huge emotional bank account withdrawals.

Everything I've just described is what happens in normal times. But what happens when a global pandemic takes place? Stress, anxiety, and trauma escalate tremendously.

As they worked on the frontlines of COVID-19, some healthcare professionals contracted the virus. Those who were fortunate enough to escape the virus worked every day in fear of being infected. Supply chains struggled in the pandemic; there were PPE shortages. Work hours were long and exhausting, and the trauma that came from seeing so much suffering and death was immeasurable.

Then, lockdown thrust us into unknown territory. As with everyone else, the pandemic didn't just affect work, but home life, too. Healthcare workers had to deal with challenges like virtual schooling, the job loss of family members, and a sense of isolation. Balancing work and home life was particularly hard for them. While people in other industries could work from home, healthcare professionals didn't have that option. (This made managing kids who were being homeschooled even more difficult.) On top of all this was the constant worry of bringing COVID-19 home to their families.

It may have seemed like healthcare leaders did not realize how much stress and trauma were being experienced by clinicians and staff. At times, the need to have all boots on the ground made it hard to provide resources. There were so many unknowns. No one realized how long the pandemic would go on. (Remember "two weeks to flatten the curve"?)

Also, at the beginning of the pandemic, the world really celebrated "healthcare heroes." While still feeling appreciated, the situation has led to exhaustion and self-doubt for some in looking at staying in healthcare.

At the time all of this was going on, we've had to deal with political, cultural, and social upheaval. It's been an incredibly challenging year in almost every possible way. And on top of these challenges is a pervasive sense of grief that life has changed forever. Even as we navigate this underlying sense of loss, we must also grapple with fears of new variants that are emerging in some parts of the country.

Chapter 4

The Spectrum: Not Everyone is Impacted in the Same Way

People went through this disruption together. Almost everyone is feeling some level of mental and emotional distress, but it's not manifesting in the same ways.

Think about the pain scale that is used every day in healthcare. One patient may have an injury or illness and rate the pain as a three or four. Another one with the same injury or illness may rate their pain as a nine or ten.

The same is true of mental pain. It exists on a spectrum. One person who worked in a hospital during the pandemic might have been in a state of stress for a while but kind of bounced back when things eased off a little. Another person might have moved into burnout. Yet another person may have been deeply traumatized and is still experiencing moments of PTSD.

Before we go any further, let's define our terms. What *are* stress, burnout, and trauma?

Stress is essentially a term for the way an individual responds to a disruptive event. I've seen it described as a physical, mental, or emotional tension. In small doses, stress is not a bad thing. It makes us productive and adds excitement to life. But when those feelings of stress get to be too much or go on for prolonged periods of time, we can have physical and emotional symptoms—from fatigue, to headache, to upset stomach, to high blood pressure, to irritability, to anxiety and depression.

When stress goes on and on with no relief, over time it may lead to *burnout*. As I explain in the book *Healing Physician Burnout*, psychologist Christina Maslach described burnout as having three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and a feeling of ineffectiveness.

When someone is burned out, they're not just exhausted temporarily. They're exhausted all the time. A good night's sleep or vacation won't fix the problem. They're so depleted that they can barely function, let alone give it their all at work. Their performance suffers. They make more mistakes. Even completing simple tasks can feel impossible.

Obviously, a person suffering from burnout is no longer as engaged and passionate as they want to be. They've stopped being able to see that their work has purpose and that they make a difference. They may feel like they're putting in a lot of hours but not making an impact or changing anything. This is a very dangerous way for a healthcare professional to feel.

Our health suffers when we're burned out. The condition has been linked to depression, memory loss, sleep problems, weakened immune systems, and even cardiovascular disease. People may turn to alcohol or other substances in an attempt to self-medicate.

So where does *trauma* come in? We'll talk more about this in more detail in the next section. For now, trauma is a whole different level of stress. A traumatic event is something we've never experienced before. It actually changes the way we look at the world. It can even lead to PTSD.

Now, let's back up for just a minute and talk about another condition: languishing. Adam Grant recently wrote a really interesting [article](#) on this subject in the *New York Times*. He says languishing, which is a term coined by sociologist Corey Keyes, is not burnout and it's not depression. He describes it as a feeling of stagnation and emptiness and says it might be the dominant emotion of 2021.

If you're languishing, you are not suffering from a mental illness, but neither are you flourishing. You're kind of stuck in the middle. Adam Grant calls it "an absence of well-being." This is important because languishing puts us at risk for major depression and anxiety disorders down the road. The *Times* article also cites a study suggesting that people who are languishing are also more likely to suffer from PTSD.

It seems to me that languishing is the perfect word to describe the underlying feeling of disruption so many of us notice these days. And because things are not likely to get back to "normal" any time soon—if ever—that feeling of disruption may be with us for a long time. That's one reason we need to make wellness a priority. People shouldn't have to settle for languishing.

If we can catch mental health issues early, when people are in the languishing phase, we can intervene and potentially prevent things from getting worse.

Chapter 5

Many Have Moved from Stress to Trauma

Healthcare has always been stressful work. It always will be. This is why as an industry it has been so focused on burnout over the years. And while burnout has certainly not gone away, another issue has joined it during the past year. Trauma. So many healthcare workers report feeling traumatized in the wake of COVID-19. Some are even dealing with PTSD.

Earlier I mentioned Drs. Mark Goulston and Diana Hendel. I wrote the foreword for their book *Why Cope When You Can Heal? How Healthcare Heroes of COVID-19 Can Recover from PTSD*. They also wrote another book—*Trauma to Triumph: A Roadmap for Leading Through Disruption (and Thriving on the Other Side)*—that focuses on organizational trauma.

I've learned so much from Drs. Goulston and Hendel. In *Trauma to Triumph*, they say all the chaos that's swirling around in the external environment—not just COVID-19 but also massive changes in technology, business, culture, and society—has caused a major shift. The intensity, frequency, and duration of these changes have moved us past the usual “whitewater” we've always had to navigate and into something much more serious. We've crossed over from stress and into the realm of trauma.

These authors explain that trauma is fundamentally different from stress. While stress upsets our balance in the moment, we can get through it and move on with our lives. Trauma sends us into survival mode. It makes us feel that our life or at least our livelihood is threatened and it changes how we look at the world.

Trauma happens when people are unsure of the future. With stress there is a belief that things can get back to or close to normal. With trauma there is the realization that it may never get back to what it was.

For example, my oldest grandson was burned severely seven years ago and spent a month in a burn unit. He has skin scarring that, while fading, will always be there. Today, his scars remind him of the incident. He is also reminded any time he sees fire. He will never be exactly the way he was.

When I interviewed Dr. Hendel on my podcast, she said we are all experiencing collective trauma as a nation, due to COVID-19 and the undercurrent of fear and uncertainty it continues to create. Most of us think of trauma as a single horrific event, but it can also happen gradually, like the frog in the pot of water that's slowly turned up to the boiling point. One day we find ourselves in a world that's very different from how it used to be and we wonder "Will we get through this?"

In both books, Drs. Goulston and Hendel describe how a traumatic experience sends people into *fight, flight, or freeze* mode. This can manifest in different ways. People may cling to their competence zone, even though the old ways of doing things no longer work. Employees might come across as aggressive, belligerent, or "difficult." Also, traumatized people may speak of life in terms of "before" and "after." (Most of us are probably hearing that a lot with COVID.)

Some years back, Dr. Hendel was a CEO at a hospital that experienced a horrific workplace shooting. She later went on to become a student of organizational trauma. What she learned is that, in the aftermath of a traumatic event, there is a brief period of camaraderie that's often followed up by blame and finger pointing. People divide into factions. Eventually, deep polarization can occur.

People may suffer trauma on an individual level, but there is also organizational trauma. When organizational trauma occurs, communication and trust can break down. Often, there is a shake-up in roles and responsibilities. Workers feel powerless and hopeless. Productivity suffers. Plus, it creates a huge sense of loss.

It's so important that leaders learn the signs and symptoms of trauma. It is the only way we can recognize that a staff member may be in trouble and help them get the right kind of help. When we address stress with actions like mindfulness, eating better, exercising, and so forth, it will also help with trauma—*some*. However, coping skills and resilience building are not enough. Leading people through trauma is partly about helping them heal, but it's also about creating stability, keeping everyone unified, and forging a path to a thriving future.

For years I have shared that a skill every leader needs is the ability to lead change. Today I feel every leader needs skills beyond what have been needed in the past in managing individual stress

as well as individual and organizational trauma. It is vital for the health of the individual, the company, and the community that trauma is identified and action taken. If unprocessed and untreated, trauma can be extremely harmful to all.

The first order of business, though, is to get comfortable with the subject. As Drs. Goulston and Hendel put it, we need to be willing to name, claim, and frame trauma. This is hard for a lot of people because we're used to thinking in terms of stress. Also, many of us tend to have a stiff upper lip mentality. We believe we should "just move on" or "just get over it." But being willing to label a crisis as trauma sets us up to address the impact on individuals and the organization—and to overcome any resistance we might face from people who just aren't used to talking about mental health, let alone acknowledging that they might be struggling with it.

Chapter 6

Why Healthcare Professionals Are Reluctant to Seek Help

Sometimes healthcare professionals have mental health issues that require attention, but often they don't seek help. There are a few reasons why this is true. One is the stigma issue.

Mental health is stigmatized across many professions, but particularly in health care. Healthcare tends to be a “just get over it” culture and people can be rather stoic.

People might not feel comfortable speaking up when they are struggling for fear they may be perceived as weak. This perpetuates the “culture of silence” in healthcare that can make people feel very alone. (This was a problem even before COVID-19, but the isolating effects of the pandemic made it even worse.)

In a perpetually stressful and busy “all hands on deck” industry like healthcare, time off to rejuvenate and repair might be hard to come by. Plus, I think people keep on keeping on simply because they care so much. That's how mission driven they are.

In addition, people also have real concerns about privacy. They don't want mental health diagnoses on their record and worry about confidentiality issues. Some won't even seek medical treatment in their own organization because of privacy issues (in many cases people have to get treatment in the same hospital they work in). This mindset is even more pronounced around mental health issues. People fear they will be penalized later. They also have added concerns about professional repercussions, as their mental health history could impact their careers.

The “Resiliency” Misunderstanding

Resiliency has been the cornerstone of our industry’s mental health approach, but it has been misunderstood. This has created a bit of a problem. Resiliency doesn’t mean that you simply push through and suck it up, no matter the circumstances. Yet many times people may think that being resilient means they must keep going no matter what.

It’s in healthcare workers’ DNA to want to be helpful and useful. They run to danger, not from it. But sometimes they are so busy being helpful and useful to others they’re not helpful and useful to themselves.

As an industry, healthcare emphasizes resiliency so much that people can be reluctant to admit they are not doing well. They push through and don’t take care of themselves. People tend to skip the self-care step.

Plus, the media’s constant celebration of healthcare workers’ resilience, courage, and selflessness—while driven by pure intentions—can reinforce the impulse to keep going. People may feel the need to live up to this image and are reluctant to express their pain or struggles.

All of this reinforces the stigma around mental health (toughen up, move through pain, pull yourself up by boot straps, etc.) It promotes denial and discourages you from seeking much needed help.

This is an even bigger issue for minorities (women and people of color). These populations are the most vulnerable, yet are often even more reluctant to ask for help.

They don’t want to be seen as complainers. They already struggle with belonging. If they’ve just gotten the job and are feeling isolated or excluded, they may try to tough it out due to “last hired, first fired” concern.

This is also a generational problem. Young folks are less likely to endure and suffer through the way their predecessors did. They value quality of life. Long, irregular work hours and weekend calls sometimes interfere with that. Yet older employees may judge younger ones for being soft. This will create a talent drain if we don’t fix as a profession.

By the time the burnout, stress, and trauma manifests in the workplace, it is usually pretty serious. With many people, work is the last place the suffering manifests. By the time it shows up at work, the rest of their lives are probably in shambles. People will sacrifice in other areas of their lives to continue to perform at work. People equate success in life with success at work. As long as they are able to keep their job, they still think they are doing ok.

Work has to be the first line of defense, as healthy people create healthy organizations. This means it is urgent that we not only fix the systemic factors that work against wellness and create burnout (more on this later) but that healthcare gets intentional and assertive about dismantling the culture of silence that keeps people trapped in unsustainable circumstances.

The first part of getting employees the help they need is being assertive about breaking down the stigma around stress, trauma, and other mental health issues. Part of this is about making sure leaders receive education on how to recognize and deal with these issues, which we will address a little later.

Make it very, very clear that it is not only “okay” to let you know when they are struggling, it is expected and urgent. People need to know it’s safe to ask for the care they need without negative consequences or jeopardy to their careers.

Leaders have to be careful not to promote a “sweep it under the rug” mentality. The pace of business often promotes that mindset. As leaders, we must acknowledge the reality of the struggle employees are having (stress, anxiety, accelerated pace of change). Until we do that part, we won’t be in a good position to figure out just how serious the problem is inside our own organization.

Before we can focus on solutions, of course, we must assess individual employees and the organization as a whole—and that’s the subject of the next section. Given what a sensitive subject mental wellness is, we need to handle the process with kid gloves. Privacy and discretion matter! Have the same consideration as with other personal health situations.

Measuring: Why We Need to Assess Where People and Organizations Are Right Now

It is vital to assess before treating. As we discussed earlier, there are varying degrees of mental health issues, from languishing to stress to burnout to trauma. They need to be treated in different ways. With proper assessments, we can begin to make strides toward greater well-being for both individual employees and the entire organization.

Also, assessing is a great conversation starter. Sometimes people don't even realize how much they are impacted by stress. And, as we have already discussed, even if they do realize it they may not feel comfortable talking about it.

To get a good benchmark of where things are, we need to assess for wellness on two levels: *individual* and *organizational*.

One of the tools we're about to discuss allows individuals to assess themselves in private. As we mentioned earlier, healthcare professionals are reluctant to seek help. We need to create a safe environment where it's okay to talk about mental health and wellness. This assessment tool can be a great conversation starter and get people more comfortable having hard discussions.

The other two tools are meant to help you get a handle on how stress and trauma might be impacting your organization. The pandemic has been an earthquake, and the aftershocks will continue for a while. There will be other big changes in the future. How we address and adapt to them will determine how well our organization is able to fulfill its mission.

Stress and trauma don't impact any two individuals or any two organizations in exactly the same way. That's why it's so crucial to get intentional about noticing, assessing, and treating.

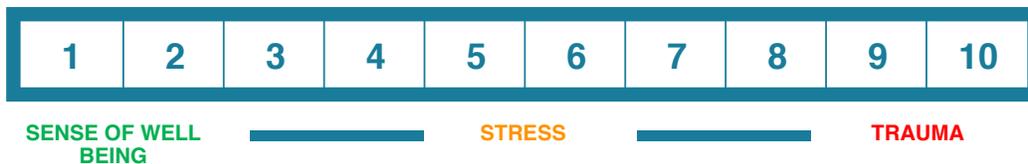
We're going to share a few tools for assessing both individuals and the organization as a whole. But first, here is a tool that can be used either way.

A Simple Emotional Pain Scale

We know that no two people experience stress the same way. Some people bounce back easily when they face crises or tough times. Many don't. They may struggle to varying degrees and some may move into trauma. It's a good idea to have a benchmark so you can see where people are right now in terms of emotional wellness. This simple tool will get you started. Note that it is similar to the physical pain scale we use with patients.

You can ask each person where they feel they are on the spectrum, or you can ask leadership where they think the organization is. Either way, it is a great way to get a feel for people's mental health. This is an easy tool for an anonymous survey.

Where would you rate yourself on this scale?



Where would you rate your organization on this scale?



Typically, when we give this assessment to healthcare organizations, we find that about 60 percent of people will say they're a 7 or above. About 30 percent of people we'll say they're somewhere between 4, 5, and 6. 10 percent of people will say they're at a 1, 2, or 3. Just as with we do with patients in a care setting, we need to assume they're right. Everyone has their own perception of and tolerance for emotional pain.

Next, we'll look at a couple of assessments that are a little more detailed.

Individual Assessments: Starting the Conversation About Self-Care.

In healthcare, people tend not to be great at self-care. As a profession, they tend to focus on others. They are passionate about that. To bring up a familiar analogy, they aren't putting our oxygen mask on first. We have a human responsibility to stay mentally and emotionally well.

The following assessment tool is a good starting point in a safe conversation.

Individual Assessment Tool: Where Do You Fall on This Spectrum?

One of the most important ways to improve employee well-being is to create a safe place for people to express how they are feeling, especially in times of great change or crisis. Remember, not all stress or trauma impacts everyone the same way. This simple chart identifies specific symptoms individuals may be experiencing and helps them pinpoint whether they need assistance.

Be on the lookout for these red flags in yourself. Many healthcare professionals are private by nature and reluctant to seek help. It may be helpful to give this chart to employees and let them assess themselves. Self-assessment is often the key to better health.

Employees, please look at this chart and see where you fall on the spectrum that ranges from "Thriving" to "In Crisis." The tools and tactics in the following pages may be able to help you manage stress and build resilience.

This is very important: If you ever find yourself becoming overwhelmed or drowning in despair, do not be afraid to ask for help. Remember, we all struggle at different times in our lives. It is those who care enough about themselves to seek the help they need who will find the strength, stamina, and resilience they need to go on to serve another day.



Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V. Evlander, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

When you look at this chart, you can see characteristics of people who are thriving, surviving, struggling, and in crisis. Most people are not going to fit perfectly in one column. There may be some areas where they are thriving but others where they're struggling. Think about how powerful it would be if every employee got a copy of this chart and then met with their supervisor to share how they're feeling in a very safe environment.

They might say, “Well, I’m calm and steady. I’m able to take things in stride. I feel I’m able to communicate effectively.” This person is thriving.

Someone else might say, “I’m being more easily overwhelmed and irritated. I’m having trouble sleeping and eating. I’m getting headaches.” This employee is moving into survival mode.

Others may confess they’re starting to self-medicate, feeling fatigued and exhausted, and having panic attacks. These folks are struggling and need help.

You may even have a few employees who are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide, are easily enraged or aggressive, and are making careless mistakes. You probably don’t have many in crisis, but you may have some, and you need to take immediate action.

Assessing the Impact of Stress and Trauma on the Organization

Since an organization is made up of human beings, and human beings are susceptible to stress and trauma, tough times will show up in various operational areas. Here is a quick tool that might help.

Organizational Assessment Tool: How Are Stress and Trauma Impacting Your Organization?

When things are hectic, we may not realize all the ways the organization is impacted. This framework helps leaders look at the different parts of an organization to assess how a stressful crisis, trauma, or period of intense change may be impacting them. Do you notice serious issues in any of these categories? This tool will help determine where to allocate resources.

The external environment will always create change. COVID-19 is the most recent source of upheaval, but it certainly will not be the last. The sooner we address and adapt to these changes as an organization, the healthier and more engaged our workforce will be—and the better we’ll be able to provide the level of care our patients deserve.

4 FRAME APPROACH



Adapted from Bolman and Deal

Let's look at each frame, one by one. The *Foundation* includes things like goal setting, making sure there's clarity and measurement, and that standard operating procedures are in place.

Under *People*, the focus is on employee needs; empowerment; making sure connections between coworkers, leaders, and others are in place; and investments in personal growth and development are being made.

Environment includes teamwork. Are the departments working well together? Do we have a way to deal with conflict when they disagree?

The *Purpose* area means worthwhile work in making a difference that truly inspires people, connecting to values, as well as rewarding and recognizing people for a job well done. What that does, particularly for an executive team, is provide a solution framework based on what is taking place in the organization.

Leading at any time, but especially during a traumatic event like a pandemic, requires a focus across all four areas. Here are a few examples: If a department lacks motivation and commitment, move to purpose, then people. If there's confusion around priorities and responsibilities, go to foundation with goal-setting, clarifying tasks, and measurement, then move into the environment. If an employee or an organization experiences uncertainty and anxiety about direction, start with environment.

Organizations are already working in all of these four frames, but when there's more stress and trauma than normal, it allows the leaders to dig deeper in each area.

FREE: *The Well-Being Tool Kit*

TriHealth, through Bethesda, Inc., received a grant to create an area in human resources to help their employees in many ways. Stress is one of them. As a board member, I received a copy of their stress management and support leadership tool kit. It blew me away when I saw it. In fact, they generously allowed us to include it as part of a resilience & well-being tool kit. The beauty of TriHealth is they're not just concerned with making healthcare better in Cincinnati. They want to help make healthcare better everywhere.

The Well-Being Tool Kit brings together some of the best stress management tools, tactics, techniques, and resources in the industry. When implemented properly and consistently, these best practices can help leaders and employees alike build the “resiliency muscles” to handle stress and even head off the long-term effects of trauma. (Visit <https://thegratitudegroup.com/tool/well-being-stress-and-trauma/> to download a copy of the tool kit.)

Healthcare workers are phenomenal people. They are great at helping others. Now they need to focus on getting better at taking care of themselves. I know every organization is committed to doing everything possible to help each person take ownership of their own well-being. An organization filled with people who strive to get better and better is the best resource for helping patients get better and better too.

In the next section we explore some tips and tools for breaking down barriers around mental health issues, refilling emotional bank accounts, and creating a culture of wellness.

Solutions: Leader Tools and Tactics That Replenish Cultures

The good news is there are plenty of things leaders can do to break down stigma, promote wellness, and create the kinds of organizations where mental health issues and burnout are less likely to take hold. Here are a few tools and tactics to help you on your journey.

Become an Empathetic Leader

Empathetic leadership has always been important. But it *really* matters right now. The COVID-19 pandemic and all of its fallout have created extreme, accelerated change in a very compressed time frame. People's lives at work and at home have been turned upside down. All of this has been very hard on their mental and emotional health.

When people are stressed and anxious, the ability to show empathy is the most important skill a leader can have. In challenging times, building trust and engagement really matters, and empathy is the cornerstone of those connections.

How do you become a more empathetic leader? First, it's crucial to know the difference between empathy and sympathy. When we have sympathy for someone, we feel sorry for them. When we have empathy, we understand, feel, and share their pain. We are able to put ourselves in their shoes. (Brené Brown says empathy is feeling *with* people, not just feeling *for* them.) When we feel empathy, we are able to make a real and meaningful connection with people and pave the way to help them find workable solutions.

Practicing empathy requires a very individualized approach. We must create a personalized and purposeful approach. We must build teams one human at a time. We must build a culture of wellness one human at a time. Here is what empathy looks like in action:

Get intentional about becoming a caring leader. When we shift our mindset and expectations, we truly “lean in” as leaders. This is when we’re able to make a real difference. And knowing that we changed someone’s life for the better is one of the best feelings we’ll ever experience.

Work tirelessly to break down the stigma. Talk openly about mental health issues. Give people a safe place to land. This begins with creating a culture of psychological safety, which is vital to a healthy company.

Psychological safety is the feeling that one can speak up with ideas, questions, concerns, or mistakes without punishment or humiliation. It might be one of the most important characteristics of a resilient organization. And it is certainly important in issues around mental and emotional wellness. When people feel safe to tell you the truth in general—when they are comfortable speaking up when they know they have a problem—you are more likely to take action early. The assessments we discussed earlier will help start healthy dialogue.

It is crucial to allow people to feel their emotions and talk about it when they are having a tough time. This is not a weakness. [Jay Kaplan](#), MD, FACEP, medical director of care transformation at LCMC Health in New Orleans, spoke as part of our month-long [Gratitude Symposium](#). He says we need to normalize and reframe feelings. He tells folks “The depth of your feelings is the depth of your humanity.”

Dr. Kaplan also talks about the importance of leaders sharing with employees how we are feeling. For instance: “I’ve felt sad; I’ve felt afraid; I’ve felt angry.” This gives people permission to do the same. In this way, we can make empathy a habit.

Be accessible. Letting people know it’s okay come to you with tough messages promotes openness and trust. Be willing to hear honest feedback about what’s wrong. It will build trust and make your organization stronger.

Be a good listener. This is a fundamental part of being a great communicator (which we will discuss later) and a vital part of showing others that you’re interested in them. When we strive to be interested rather than interesting, we show people we care.

When talking to others, listen actively. It’s all too easy to spend your time calculating your response and not really listening. Try to stay focused on understanding what the person is saying, both verbally and non-verbally. Summarize what they are saying, and confirm that what you think they said is actually what they meant. When people don’t feel heard or listened to, it’s upsetting. It damages relationships.

Build emotional bank accounts. Stephen Covey talks about the emotional bank account in terms of building trust with employees. I've always seen that bank account as the reservoir that feeds passion, purpose, and desire to make a difference. In healthcare, we're lucky because we are in an industry where employees show up with a fully loaded emotional bank account. They see their work as a calling.

I love to speak to a graduating class of nurses. These are some of the most engaged and excited people ever. They can't wait to start their journey. Over time, though, the nature of that work can drain the emotional bank account (not only for nurses but for all healthcare workers). It's up to leaders to make regular deposits to counteract the withdrawals.

Over the years, we've found some tactics that work well for keeping employees engaged and connected to the larger sense of purpose that keeps them going and to the organization as a whole. It creates a human connection that creates an invaluable support system. We have found that "connection equals protection." In other words, the more connected people feel, the more protected they are from the impacts of stress and trauma and the less likely they are to burn out.

Really get to know your people. It's critical that leaders get in the trenches and spend some one-on-one time with each employee. This focused time with them will allow you to look for signs of burnout, stress, and anxiety.

One great way to make sure this happens is to do regular leader rounding. In terms of engagement tactics, this one is a powerhouse. It really shows people that you care and that you understand they don't operate in a vacuum. Round on employees regularly with an eye toward finding out what's going on in their lives. Hardwire this practice.

Essentially, leaders put a system in place to make sure they regularly meet with each direct report. They ask a series of questions aimed at getting to know people and making sure they have what they need to do their best work. In the best of times, rounding is a tool for creating a great employee experience. In the worst of times, it's a lifeline for making a deep human connection, reducing uncertainty (and anxiety), and ensuring that employees are truly "okay."

As you are rounding, notice changes in work habits or workstyle, changes in communication (short, brief emails, when they would normally give expanded answers), missing meetings, disorganization, or anything that seems out of the ordinary. You may also check with your HR department to make sure you know what signs to look for that indicate people may be burned out, stressed out, traumatized, anxious, or depressed. Many organizations have amazing protocols for detecting problems for early intervention, including well-developed programs giving frontline leaders the skills to respond appropriately when they feel someone could be in trouble.

Pay attention to people’s personal struggles. Maybe you can help. Dr. Kaplan points out that, as leaders, we may have no idea what employees are experiencing and feeling. We don’t know if they’ve lost a family member or a good friend. We don’t know if their partner has lost their job. We don’t know if their kids are struggling. The purpose of meeting one-on-one is to determine what they most need and to alleviate their issues where you can. There may be things you can do to help that they’ve never considered.

When you ask what an employee needs, don’t just say, “I understand.” Ask what you can do and get very specific about what you can do for them at this moment to make things better. When [Liz Jazwiec, RN](#), an authority on leadership, employee engagement, and service excellence, spoke as part of our month-long [Gratitude Symposium](#) she said, “Ask what people need from you. Not what they need from the Universe, but from you.”

Meet people where they are. Rather than placing expectations on employees—focusing on how they “should” feel or behave—seek to understand their perspective. Acknowledge and validate how they are feeling. Feeling understood is a powerful human need.

Try not to take things personally. What you’re seeing may have nothing to do with you and very little to do with work. Life happens and it’s not easy to leave negative emotions at the door.

Acknowledge even if you can’t change it. People may be frustrated and disappointed by some things happening in the workplace. You don’t always have to fix the problem. We may know someone is having a hard time, but if we can’t change it, we might sweep it under the rug. What people often want is to be heard and understood, even if you can’t change it. It might just be taking ten minutes out of your day to sit with people and acknowledge what they are going through. Sometimes if we don’t have an answer, we simply avoid the conversation and trust starts to break down.

Shift Your Perspective. We have a lot of trouble stepping out of our own shoes and into someone else’s. When they tell their story, we can’t hear it because we are too mired in our own story. We’re thinking “You think you have it rough? What if you had to deal with my problems?” Try to approach every interaction from a place of “How can I put myself in this person’s shoes? What can I do to make their life easier?”

Leaders are always looking for the perfect employee. It’s just human to want to deal with “easy” people. It makes our lives smoother and more pleasant. But being a leader has never been about easy, smooth, and pleasant. We learn the most from those who challenge us. They are the ones who push us to grow.

Approach every employee interaction through a lens of “what does this person need?” rather than “what is this person doing wrong?” The role of a leader is to have a positive impact on the

person. Ask why they are behaving the way they are. Maybe they're scared or confused or worried. We know stress and trauma can manifest as belligerence, lashing out, resistance to change, etc.

Once we peel back the layers and see the fear that's causing employees to behave this way, it changes everything. Instead of being aggravated, we feel empathy for them, which in turn frees us to act with compassion. And we quickly come to see that every "challenging" employee is an opportunity to make a difference in someone's life, and also to grow as leaders and as people.

This allows us to help people when they are on the brink of burnout or in the throes of a mental health crisis. Even better, when we practice these skills regularly, we might help prevent them from getting to that point in the first place.

When we are able to see our employees' struggles and help them alleviate issues, it fulfills us in a deep way. It replenishes our emotional bank accounts, connects us to that crucial sense of meaning and purpose, and goes a long way toward preventing and healing burnout. (In other words, it re-engages us, and engagement is the opposite of burnout.)

Create a Culture of Well-Being

It's important to get intentional about creating a great place to work. One of the most empathetic things we can do as leaders is to improve our work environment and culture. Here are just a few ways we can go about creating a culture of wellbeing:

Rethink the EAP program. Of course, no matter how much you do to try to destigmatize these kinds of wellness issues, people still may not be willing to speak up. That's why part of the leader's role is to gently intervene where needed. This might mean referring someone to the employee assistance program, or EAP.

I think many times people don't understand the employee assistance program so they don't use it when they should. It can help in finding all sorts of services for an individual. I have found over the years, when somebody would come to me about an employee who was dealing with very difficult issues, I would ask "Did you refer them to the EAP?" and they would say no. It wasn't that they didn't want to refer them; it just wasn't top of mind. It's also okay at certain times in the discipline process to make a mandatory EAP referral. You're not trying to be nosy or invade their privacy, but you want to make sure the person is seeking help.

Healthcare organizations have great benefit packages, but one of the least utilized benefits is the EAP. One of the most used pharmaceuticals is antidepressants. It's wonderful that antidepressants are available and help so many people. However, it's also good to combine therapy with the medication.

One idea that has a lot of promise is rethinking and expanding the EAP. Organizations could take it out of the Human Resources sphere and make it more than a treatment—make it a prevention-focused wellness initiative. We could move the EAP from being where people go when they are in distress to being more of a resource to help people stay well. This is one way we can promote personal resilience skills. Organizations could hold wellness checks for mental health. I think this is a great way to help create cultures of well-being.

Promote Collegiality and Teamwork. [Dr. Stephen Beeson](#) did a presentation for [The Gratitude Symposium](#). In it, he talked about the fact that a sense of collegiality, community, and belonging is the most powerful countermeasure to burnout. He clearly explained how the best antidote to the exhaustion, cynicism, and disconnection that come with burnout is being part of a strong, collaborative team.

Dr. Beeson described what he called the “camaraderie and sense of esprit de corps” that honors and values each and every team member. He used simple language and a lot of specificity to show the kind of team that helps remedy burnout, the kind that feels good to be a part of. The thing I liked most about his presentation is that he decoded the very specific behaviors that make a team collegial and create a sense of belonging.

Here are a few of the particular behaviors that the best teams exhibit:

They often describe their team as their family, their tribe.

They look out for each other and check in on each other.

They have fun together. They pick on each other, they have March Madness competitions, they have Fitbit competitions.

They ask things like “What did you do over the weekend?”

They lift each other up. We all have hard days and hard moments and hard circumstances in our lives, but when we have a team to rely on, we can get through them.

These teams purposely operate with low authority gradients. This means people aren’t afraid to speak up if they suspect someone above them is making a mistake.

They freely share and harvest ideas from one another. There’s this sense of wanting to tap into the best ideas of the people on the team.

They recognize and appreciate and have gratitude for one another.

They position each other well, to patients and to colleagues.

They bring hope and belief to one another.

They create a real sense of belonging, which is a fundamental human need. It means more than just having other people around you. There's a lot of loneliness in healthcare, especially where people have traditionally been trained to be self-reliant and go it alone.

Everyone feels valued and appreciated and challenged and coached and mentored as part of the team they're in.

It would be great if this kind of team happened naturally, but it doesn't. It has to be deliberately shaped. The right leader behaviors need to be consistently in place. (Dr. Beeson notes that "bullhorn and mandate" won't cut it.) From my own experience, it may help to show employees what right looks like by capturing behaviors like the ones above in a Standards of Behavior document that everyone signs off on.

As Dr. Beeson notes, when you successfully cultivate and nurture this kind of connection among employees, they will say "I love coming to work. I love my team. I love my family, I love my tribe, and I'm super proud of them. I love those people. I couldn't imagine going anywhere else."

Also, he made a great point about how all of this creates *intrinsic accountability* inside your culture. This is a more powerful driver than external accountability which is driven by outside forces. Intrinsic accountability boils down to "you can count on me."

When we can create strong, connected, collaborative teams where people feel they belong, we find employees are willing to do a lot for their coworkers. Even in the toughest circumstances, they will keep pressing forward. They will find a way. Once that kind of culture is in place it can change everything for your organization.

Model healthy behavior. Take vacations. Don't work extreme hours. Get help if you need it (and don't try to hide it). The leader often sets the tone for what people feel comfortable with. Some or all of this advice may go against the grain for many leaders, but that only shows how deeply embedded these expectations are. We need to play a fundamental role in making the shift. Here, as in other areas, leadership is an inside job.

Make a practice of looking for what's right. We tend to look for what's wrong, almost by default. Balance out this tendency by training yourself to see what's going well. Recognize the behavior you want repeated. You may find that your employee gets less "challenging" quickly. Maybe what's also happening is that you're seeing the good that was already there.

Dr. Kaplan talks about showcasing "legacy moments," which are those times in which an employee made a difference in someone's life. This is a great way to connect people back to the sense of meaning that helps prevent and heal burnout.

Say **“thank you” sincerely and often.** Gratitude is contagious. And even if doesn't change things for you, as the saying goes, it changes you for things.

Recognize small wins and daily progress. This is a good strategy for the employee and for you as a leader. We have to look for the little things that worked today and learn to find joy in those. Everything is a process and when change comes rapidly (as it has this year), it's easy to get overwhelmed and feel really behind.

That's why we need to get in the habit of what Liz Jazwiec calls “finding the glimmers,” which is basically a way of looking in the mirror and saying “You were enough today.” We need to acknowledge these small wins and remind employees to do the same.

Finding and celebrating small wins helps counteract that “hamster wheel” feeling that nothing you do matters. When we can help people see that they are competent and effective, they do have a positive impact on others, and they do make a difference, it goes a long way toward alleviating burnout. Studies show you don't need big accomplishments to feel good about your work. What you really need is a sense of daily progress.

Reward and recognize people where they are. My experience is it is easy to fall into the trap of recognizing only when someone goes above and beyond. But just going to work every day in healthcare, with its ups and downs and pressure to provide great care, is worthy of being recognized. Taking this approach can have an amazing impact.

For example, when I was at Holy Cross, we held a hospital-wide celebration when we hit the 40th percentile in patient satisfaction. Then we raised the bar and said, “Now our next goal is to get to the 60th percentile, then 75th, then 90th, then 99th. Eventually we were in the top one percentile in patient experience!

Behavior that gets rewarded and recognized gets repeated. Not only does it lead to great results, it replenishes emotional bank accounts, builds strong relationships between leaders and staff, and create the kind of culture where talent wants to be.

Encourage a culture of gratitude. At times we all want to change what's happening around us. Most of the time, we can't. What we *can* do is shift our perspective. We can see the world from a place of gratitude, and that leaves little room for focusing on the things that weigh us down and make us miserable.

Throughout my life, I have found that, when we deliberately come from a place of gratitude, even if our circumstances don't change, the way we perceive them *does*. When we replace negative, stressful thoughts with positive ones about the things we're grateful for, we dramatically change how we experience life. Grateful people are happy people.

I recently came across an [article](#) from *Psychology Today* that I thought was so interesting. The author, neuroscientist Alex Korb, PhD, writes about research that shows gratitude's profound impact on the brain and on our lives. A regular gratitude practice can help us sleep better, exercise more, experience less pain, and be happier in general.

Here are just a few of its insights:

Gratitude influences our behavior. Studies found that people who kept gratitude journals were more optimistic. They also showed increases in determination, attention, enthusiasm, and energy. That's not surprising. What is surprising is the regular focus on gratitude actually influenced their behavior. Not only were they happier, they got more exercise.

Grateful people get more sleep, have less depression and anxiety, and feel fewer aches and pains. One study discussed in the article explains why all of this is: Study subjects who showed more gratitude also showed more activity in the hypothalamus (which controls essential bodily functions and influences metabolism and stress levels) and impacted the neurotransmitter dopamine (which makes us feel good and prods us to repeat the thing we just did).

Understand what gratitude is and what gratitude isn't. Gratitude is about appreciating the positive aspects of our situation, NOT focusing on how our life isn't as bad as others'. This insight comes from a study on young people who kept gratitude journals. Those whose journals focused on comparing themselves to others didn't get the same benefits as those who journaled on what they were grateful for.

A grateful disposition can rewire the brain. Gratitude engages our brain in a virtuous cycle. It's hard to focus on both positive and negative stimuli at the same time, so it makes sense to give our mind lots of gratitude fuel. As Korb writes, "Once you start seeing things to be grateful for, your brain starts looking for more things to be grateful for."

When we understand how a grateful brain works, we'll see why making gratitude a daily (or even hourly) practice is a smart thing to do. A short-term effort isn't the solution. Instead of going on a "negativity diet," we need to make a complete lifestyle change around gratitude.

When we look for things to be grateful for every day, when we express it publicly, when we say thank you sincerely and often—and when we do these things both at work and at home—we train our brain to make gratitude our default setting.

Not only does this change our own life, it changes the lives of those around us. It paves the way for building stronger relationships.

By making the daily decision to focus on what is going right in our life, we naturally focus less on what's wrong. We spend less time dwelling on the past and worrying about the future. We live

in the present, which is where life happens, and where we can make deliberate choices to shape our world for the better.

Leverage the power of good communication (*especially in times of crisis*). Frequent, multi-pronged communication is important even in the best of times. Being transparent and keeping people informed not only helps you manage change, it reduces anxiety, builds trust, and keeps people engaged (which is, of course, a major antidote for burnout). Yet, even if we think we're communicating well, in times of crisis we almost certainly need to do even more.

A great example is how TriHealth, a \$2.1 billion health care system in Cincinnati, Ohio, handled communication during the COVID-19 pandemic. I had the privilege of interviewing CEO Mark Clement on my [Busy Leader's Podcast](#). During our conversation, he explained how TriHealth took a \$100 million loss in the first months of the pandemic. During hard times, you expect emotional bank accounts to be depleted, but when you handle things the right way, you can actually strengthen relationships and positively impact the entire organization.

Mark believes (and so do I) that being able to provide consistent, well thought out, real time communication is one of the most crucial leadership competencies. In fact, great communication is what differentiates managers from leaders. Managing is dealing with operations in a stable environment. Leading is more about navigating change and bringing everyone to a higher level of performance. It's about creating followers.

The right kind of communication alleviates anxiety. It keeps people engaged and connected (to each other and to their sense of purpose). It keeps organizations nimble, adaptive, highly aligned and able to innovate. Communication is always important, but in a time of uncertainty and rapid change, it is absolutely vital. It actually helps build your resiliency because it helps people manage the change and apply what they learn in future times of hardship.

When you realize how large TriHealth is, it's clear that keeping everyone up to date with consistent messaging is a major challenge. The system has more than 12,000 employees, about 1,200 employed and aligned physicians, and 150 unique sites of service. They care for more than 600,000 members of the community.

When COVID-19 hit, TriHealth used video technology to reach distributed stakeholders quickly and effectively. This allowed them to bring everyone at every level together more often. At the same time, they doubled down on on-the-ground tactics like leader rounding (executed safely, of course). Fortunately, they had the right culture in place, which helped them navigate the crisis.

Here are few insights I have learned from Mark Clement and other communication experts, as well as from my own observations over the years:

There are two dimensions to communication: *what's being said* and *how you say it*. In regard to what's being said, get intentional about communication and make it a priority. Share “good news,” but also be honest about impediments. Uncertainty requires transparency and openness. When explaining your decisions (especially the tough ones), start with the “why.” Then, connect back to your vision. At TriHealth, communication always links back to the system's vision of getting health care right, improving the health of the community, improving the experience of care, and delivering greater affordability and value while creating a more engaged physician community and team member community.

For the second dimension—how to say it—hardwire delivery of these messages into the fabric of your organization. Hardwiring moves your communication from being sporadic and scattershot to being unified and consistent. Just make sure you have a good way to cascade the same messages from senior leaders to middle managers to the front line. TriHealth used everything from Leadership Development Institutes to Town Hall meetings to monthly senior leader meetings to daily huddles and weekly rounding. Other options you might choose from are employee forums, hospital message boards, emails, and videos. Do what works for you.

Adjust the frequency as needed. Dial it up when things are more urgent; then bring it back when appropriate. In the height of the COVID crisis, TriHealth was holding weekly town halls and leadership meetings to push out talking points in their communication cascade. Once things settled down a bit, they've moved back to a monthly basis.

Make sure leaders are highly visible during times of trauma. Even if there is a spokesperson or call center in place, people want to hear from you, the leader, as much as possible.

Communicate in ways designed to reduce anxiety. For example, Liz Jazwiec suggests you might want to update your team every day at 10:00 a.m. like clockwork. If you're not sure, say, “We don't know.” You don't have to sugarcoat things. She adds that what you can do is *acknowledge*, *ask*, and *appreciate*—and constantly affirm your belief in the capability of the team.

Intentionally address rumors and elephants in the room. While the impulse can sometimes be to ignore these things or pretend they don't exist, it's best to get them out in the open.

Don't shy away from giving bad news. If there will be furloughs or pay cuts it's better to say so. (On the other hand, if that's not going to happen, say that too. Transparency means sharing good news as well as less good news.)

Acknowledge fears and anxieties. Don't minimize them with pep talks or platitudes. A big part of empathy is letting people know you understand their perspective.

Be a great listener. Often leaders don't want to hear pain or anger or other difficult emotions, but times of crisis or uncertainty are when it is most important for people to be heard.

“Play offense” in communication. This is a method for a) making sure people are getting info the way they want, and b) holding them accountable for reading it. Meet with your team and find out what excellent communication looks like to *them*. Have them give specific examples of times communication was great as well as times it fell short. Then ask them how and when they want to receive information. Once all details are agreed upon, and leaders start following these standards, the numbers of people who say “no one told me” should dramatically drop.

Great cultures depend on great communication. The more clarity people have, the better. In good times, great communication accelerates your performance. In hard times, it will save you. It’s just too important to leave to chance.

Storytelling. Stories are great communication tools. I’m not just talking about sharing facts and answering questions. That type of communication matters, too, but connecting on an emotional level is even more vital. I’ve always been a fan of good storytelling. Why? Because stories connect to the heartstrings. They make things real for the listener. When we tell stories about that doctor or nurse who saved a life or made a profound impact, what people hear is “my work makes a real difference.”

Stories are also great teaching tools. When we connect a story to a behavior, we inspire employees to do more of that behavior.

Storytelling helps connect people back to meaning/purpose/passion. This actually goes a long way toward helping people with burnout, since cynicism/disconnection from your work is a key component.

Stories also build community. They help staff members to see that, however deeply they are struggling, they’re not alone. I feel one of the most important things leaders can do is give people space and time and attention to tell their COVID-19 stories. People want to be heard. Sharing their stories helps them process their anxiety, grief, and other strong emotions.

All of the above tools & tactics are actions leaders can take to promote wellness on an individual level. But sometimes treating employee stress and burnout also requires taking a close look at how the organization operates. Are there systemic issues that need to be addressed?

The Power of a Well-Run Organization

A healthy organization really requires a two-pronged approach, a focus on the individual and the organization. We often treat stress and burnout solely as an employee problem. We approach it by treating the employee. This makes sense, but it’s only part of the solution. Along with helping

individuals build resilience and manage stress and burnout, we need to look at how we might be exacerbating the problem.

In other words, we need to do more than generate coping mechanisms. We need to fix the problems that frustrate people. Upstream interventions to deal with the cause of stress and burnout are better than downstream tactics to deal with them after they happen.

Stress and burnout often originate from not being a well-run organization. Certain practices create a culture of chronic burnout: heavy workloads, leaders who may not be well-trained in areas like communication, processes and procedures that generate unnecessary problems, etc. On the other hand, a well-run organization has a huge impact on people's well-being.

One of the things I wrote about in *Healing Physician Burnout*, with Dr. Ford's help, is that sometimes we treat the symptoms of stress and burnout and not the root cause. By that I mean, if somebody acts out, we're going to deal with the acting out. If things are getting in the way of their performance, whether it be lateness, inconsistency, or caustic behavior, we're going to address those symptoms. But are there some root causes creating the symptoms? If so, we certainly need to address these issues too. That is why in *Healing Physician Burnout* we focus so much on creating the kind of culture that makes it easy for doctors to practice medicine.

It's a good idea to take a best odds approach for employee wellness. Create a well-run organization and a culture that sweats the small stuff. Often it is the little things that lead to stress and eventually to burnout. It's the "pebbles" we trip over, not the Grand Canyon. The little road blocks that keep us from being as helpful and useful as we want to be can turn into hugely frustrating stressors. A well-run organization really impacts people's well-being.

A huge part of the leader's role is giving people the tools they need to do the job. Training, of course, needs to evolve with changing circumstances. Right now, it is really important that leaders are well-versed in the fundamentals.

Sometimes we drift away from the fundamentals a little. But in times of crisis, we must bring ourselves back to them and make sure they are hardwired. We need their good results, and the structure they provide, more than ever.

In times of great stress and uncertainty, it may also help to understand the Job-Demand-Control-Support (JD-CS) model. This popular theory, published in 1990 by Karasek & Theorell, can help an organization tackle burnout at scale. Essentially, high job demands and heavy workloads place a lot of stress on employees. However, individuals can better manage this stress when they feel a sense of control over their job and a sense of support from their supervisor and colleagues.

You can see how this requires well-trained leaders who know how to strike the right balance between giving employees autonomy and knowing when and how to intervene.

Not Less Work, More Meaning

Also, as we've touched on throughout, leaders need to know how to help employees connect back to that sense of meaning and purpose. Often, when people are burned out, our immediate thought is "decrease their workload." We all know, of course, that this is not always possible, especially in healthcare. But also, it's often not the right answer anyway. Many times, the key to healing burnout is not less work, it's more meaning.

Being able to shape employees' work lives is not easy. That's why leadership is a skill set, one that must be mastered. No one is born knowing how to lead. And few are able to "pick it up" when they're made interim leaders, as people in healthcare so often are.

Great leadership takes training, and plenty of it. Creating the conditions that create a culture of mental wellness is an integral part of that training. Every leader behavior, every tactic, every process and every procedure that goes into creating a well-run organization either supports that wellness or detracts from it.

We owe it to our clinicians and staff—and, of course, our patients—to create high performance organizations.

A Closing Thought

As we discussed at the start of this book, there are many natural withdrawals from people's emotional bank accounts. That's why healthcare organizations must be great at making deposits. Leaders are not immune from withdrawals from our own emotional bank accounts, either. To help others heal, we must first help ourselves heal. We need to become experts at *replenishing*—ourselves, our employees, and our organizations.

My new book *The Calling* (September 2021), is meant to help those working in healthcare to keep their emotional bank account overflowing. It starts by identifying some common barriers that can subconsciously prevent us from keeping our bank account full. Then it lays out some mind shifts, tools, techniques, and best practices—*replenishers*—that help refill and renew the sense of passion that can get temporarily depleted.

The good news is we *can* build replenishment into our culture. We can hardwire tools and tactics that create consistent processes and behaviors, and, ultimately, consistent outcomes. We can benchmark departments that are performing well, harvest those best practices, and transfer them to other areas. We can teach the phases of competency and change so people know what to expect when we ask them to do something new.

There are ways to communicate that reduce anxiety, create engagement, and resonate with people's values. We've discussed many of those ways in this book. We can reward, recognize, and say thank you (gratitude is a powerful force). We can use storytelling to connect people to the

difference they make. Many of these replenishers seem like small acts but, done consistently, they will have a huge impact.

People in healthcare need replenishing more than ever. The past year and a half has left so many of us stressed out, burned out, and traumatized. And COVID is certainly not the last disruptor we'll face. Healthcare will always be defined by change, which is why our emotional bank accounts need constant refilling.

We need to be at our strongest so we can manage this onslaught of change without getting overwhelmed. We need to keep getting better and better to meet the challenges the future will bring. By creating cultures of replenishment, we can live up to our human responsibility to our patients, our clinicians, our employees, and ourselves.

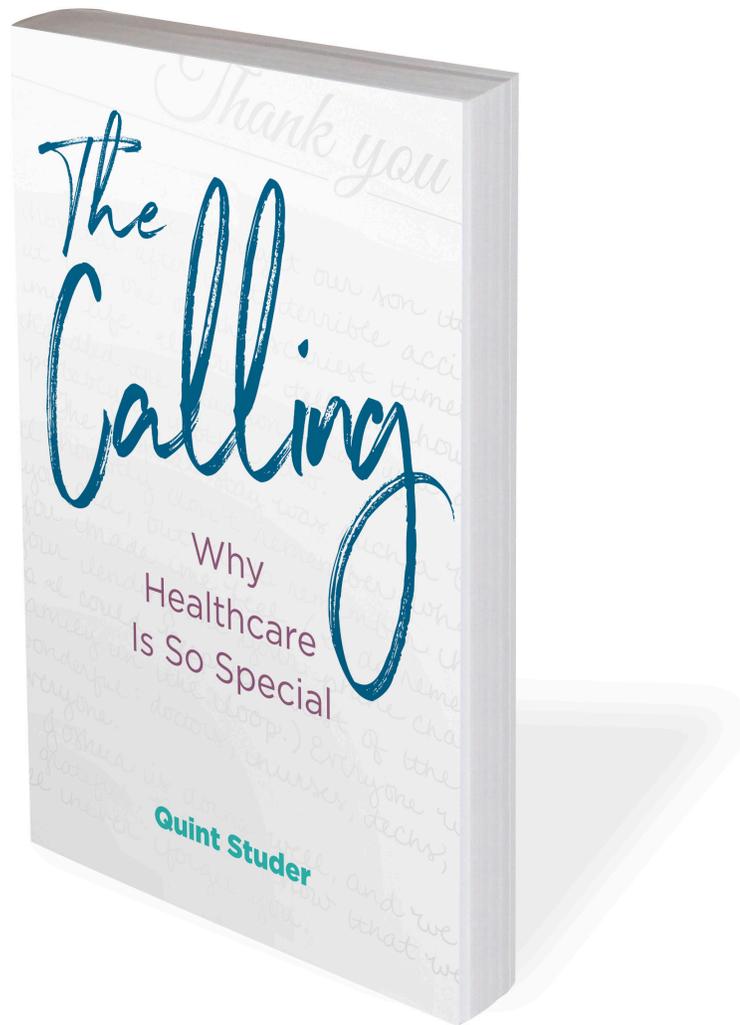
About the Author



Quint Studer has spent decades in healthcare. He worked for multiple healthcare systems, the last stop being president of Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, Florida. In 2000, he founded Studer Group®, a healthcare and education coaching company. The company was sold in 2015, and Studer left in 2016. He went on to found the Studer Community Institute, a not-for-profit whose mission is to improve the quality of life for people. He has authored many books, with several listed on bestseller lists. He serves on several healthcare boards and is a frequent speaker, workshop facilitator, and mentor to individuals and organizations. The tools and techniques Quint has created over the years are now staples in healthcare systems throughout the world. His newest

book, *The Calling: Why Healthcare Is So Special*, is aimed at helping healthcare professionals keep their sense of passion and purpose high.

For more information on Quint, please visit www.quintstuder.com, www.studeri.org, or www.thegratitudegroup.com.



NEW from Quint Studer!

One challenge we in healthcare face is keeping our passion and purpose high. In *The Calling: Why Healthcare Is So Special*, Quint zeroes in on the barriers that can hold us back, then moves on to the replenishers that keep our emotional bank account full—or refill if we’re running on empty. He shares a lifetime’s worth of stories and insights that enlighten, inspire, and showcase the many gifts of healthcare people.

To order *The Calling*—or the audiobook version read by Quint—please visit www.thegratitudegroup.com.

The Well-Being Tool Kit



Hello from Quint Studer

Dear Healthcare Leader:

The work we do is deeply meaningful, yet it has never been easy. For decades our industry has had to cope with continuous change. Now COVID is bringing even bigger challenges. We all need to be at our strongest and healthiest so we can care for the patients who count on us—even as we cope with routines, lives, and futures that have been turned upside down.

That's why this tool kit is so important. It brings together some of the best stress management tools, tactics, techniques, and resources in the industry. When implemented properly and consistently, these best practices can help leaders and employees alike gain the psychological coping skills they need to handle stress and even head off the long-term effects of trauma.

This tool kit starts out with two assessment tools.

One tool allows individuals to assess themselves in private. As a rule, healthcare professionals are reluctant to seek help.

We need to create a safe environment where it's okay to talk about mental health and wellness. This tool can be a great conversation starter.

The second tool is meant to help you get a handle on how stress and trauma might be impacting your organization.

The pandemic has been an earthquake and the aftershocks will continue for a while. There will be other big changes in the future. How we address and adapt to them will determine how well our organization is able to fulfill its mission.

This [video](#) shares a fresh look at stress and trauma and offers tools to help measure an individual's well-being as well as an organization's. It also offers techniques on ways to help the workforce in well-being.

A special thank-you goes to Mark Clement, president and CEO of TriHealth, a healthcare system based in Cincinnati, Ohio. He graciously allowed us the use of components of the organization's Stress Management & Support Leadership Tool Kit as we developed this project. You will see some of TriHealth's amazing tools beginning on page 48.

As a profession we focus on caring for others. Too often we are so focused on others (not to mention so busy) that we may not make self-care a priority. But we've all heard the analogy about putting on our oxygen mask first. We all have the desire to stay mentally and emotionally well, so we will have the inner resources to help patients heal.

Healthcare people are the most passionate and committed people in the world. I hope that this tool kit will be helpful to you, the healthcare professionals who work for you, and the patients, families, and community members whose lives you touch.



Quint Studer

Quint Studer Bio



Quint Studer has spent decades in healthcare. He worked for multiple healthcare systems, the last stop being president of Baptist Hospital in Pensacola, Florida. In 2000, he founded Studer Group®, a healthcare and education coaching company. The company was sold in 2015, and Studer left in 2016. He went on to found the Studer Community Institute, a not-for-profit whose mission is to improve the quality of life for people. He has authored many books, with several listed on bestseller lists. He serves on several healthcare boards and is a frequent speaker, workshop facilitator, and mentor to individuals and organizations. The tools and techniques Quint has created over the years are now staples in healthcare systems throughout the world. His newest book, *The Calling: Why Healthcare Is So Special*, is aimed at helping healthcare professionals keep their sense of passion and purpose high. He also recently created a downloadable e-book titled *The Well-Being Handbook: Tools & Tactics to Help You & Your Organization Heal from Stress, Burnout, and Trauma*.

For more information on Quint, please visit www.quintstuder.com, www.studeri.org, or www.thegratitudegroup.com.

Table of Contents

Individual Assessment Tool	1
Organizational Assessment Tool	3
Resiliency Resources	4
Resiliency During Tough Times	5
Resilience in Stressful Times	7
Fostering Resilience	8
Identifying and Coping with Job-Related Stress	9
Tips for Coping with Stress	11
How Well Do You Cope with Stress?	14
Tips to Relax and Reduce Stress	16
How to Stay Motivated	17
Learning to Accept Change	18
Why Mindfulness Matters	19
Depression Warning Signs	20
Creating a Self-Care Plan	21
Tips for Increasing Energy	22
Building Resilience and Healthy Habits (PPT)	23
Group Exercises	33
Stress management	
Individual Exercises	36
Stress assessment	
Other On-Demand Resources	47
Coping with COVID-19 video series	
TriHealth Tool Kit	48
Meditation series	
Mindfulness apps	
Stress management group exercises	
Virtual fitness channel	
Virtual presentations	

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

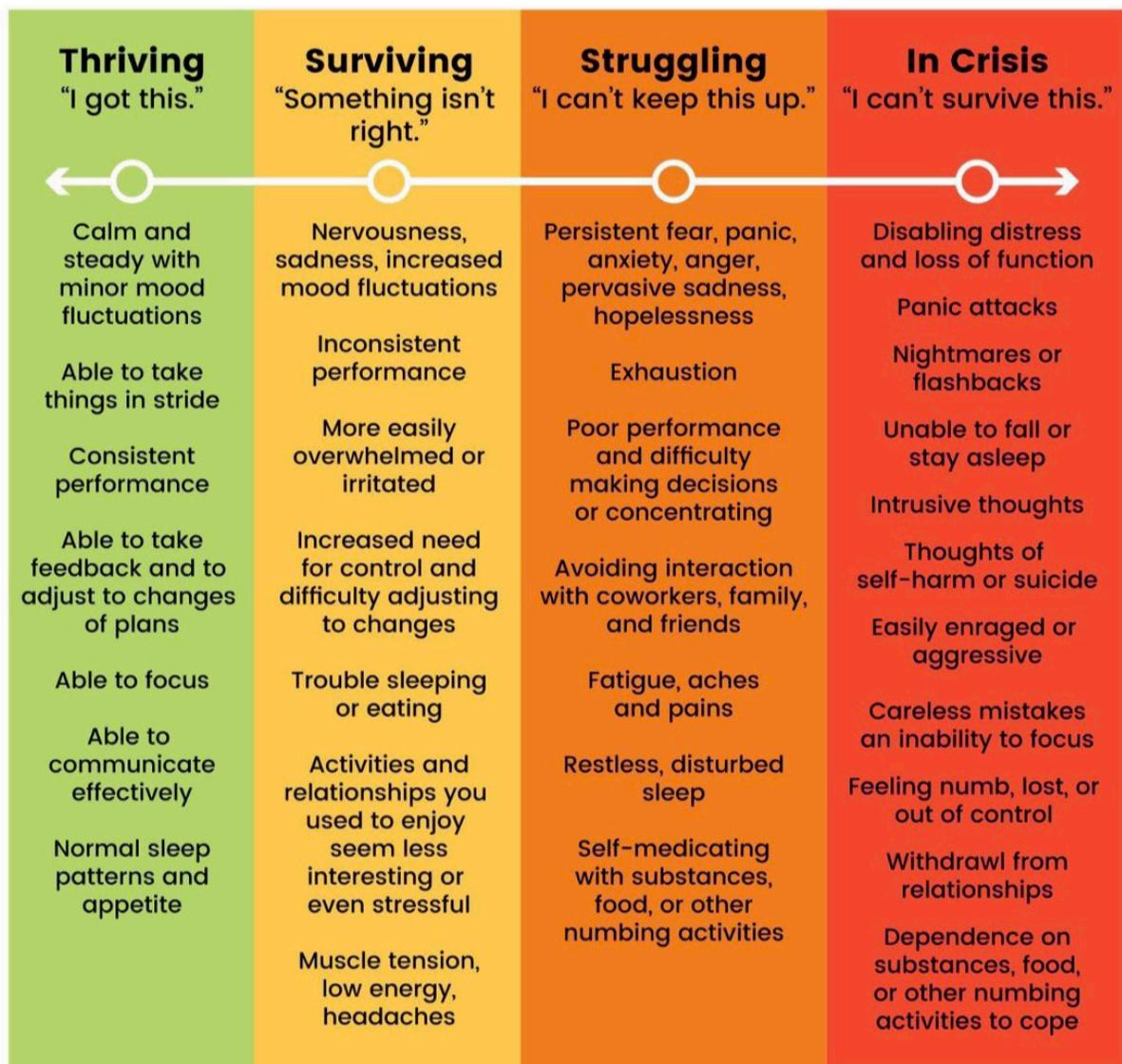
Where Do You Fall on This Spectrum?

One of the most important ways to improve employee wellbeing is to get people to take notice of how they are feeling, especially in times of great change or crisis. Not all stress or trauma impacts everyone the same way. This simple chart identifies specific symptoms individuals may be experiencing and helps them pinpoint whether they need assistance.

Leaders, be on the lookout for these red flags in yourself and your employees. Many healthcare professionals are private by nature and reluctant to seek help. It may be helpful to give this chart to employees and let them assess themselves. Self-assessment is often the key to recovery. Hopefully this will be a conversation starter.

Employees, please look at this chart and see where you fall on the spectrum that ranges from “Thriving” to “In Crisis.” The tools and tactics in the following pages may be able to help you manage stress and build resilience.

This is very important: If you ever find yourself becoming overwhelmed or drowning in despair, do not be afraid to ask for help. Remember, we all struggle at different times in our lives. It is those who care enough about themselves to seek the help they need who will find the strength, stamina, and resilience they need to go on to serve another day.



Adapted from: Watson, P., Gist, R., Taylor, V. Evlander, E., Leto, F., Martin, R., Vaught, D., Nash, W.P., Westphal, R., & Litz, B. (2013). Stress First Aid for Firefighters and Emergency Services Personnel. National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOL

How Are Stress and Trauma Impacting Your Organization?

When things are hectic, we may not realize all the ways our organization is impacted. This simple framework helps leaders look at the different parts of an organization so you can assess how a stressful crisis, trauma, or period of intense change may be impacting them. Do you notice serious issues in any of these categories? This assessment tool will help you determine where to allocate resources.

The external environment will always create change. COVID is the most recent source of upheaval but it certainly will not be the last. The sooner we address and adapt to these changes as an organization, the healthier and more engaged our workforce will be—and the better we'll be able to provide the level of care our patients deserve.

4 FRAME APPROACH



Adapted from Bolman and Deal

Building Resilience & Healthy Habits

Resiliency Resources Guide

GuidanceResources®



Resiliency Resources

Resiliency During Tough Times

Of the many factors that go into successful change, whether personal or business-related, the most important may be resiliency. Resilience is the measure of our ability to welcome challenges, overcome adversity and get back on track to achieving our goals. With that in mind, here is some information on resilience amid changing times.

What is resilience?

Resilience is more than coping; it's about confronting crises and difficult situations without getting overwhelmed by them. Resilient people are better able to handle life's stressors and to adapt to changing situations. Being resilient can help protect you from depression, stress and anxiety, too.

Some of the characteristics of resilient people include:

- Strong relationships
- Self-motivation
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities
- Skills in communication and problem solving
- Self-awareness
- Emotional control

Resiliency in the Workplace

All business involves some inherent risk. Anyone in management understands that—or if they don't, they soon will. That's why resilience is such a useful tool in today's business world. Resilience means controlling your ego, not panicking in the face of a setback, and having the patience and ability to stay focused on long-term goals. Resilience can help you weather storms, remain steady and make rational decisions instead of being driven by emotion.

How can you cope with the regular changes inherent in business today?

There will always be periods of large growth, times of relative stability and times where the economy slows or recedes. To thrive, businesses must respond to these waves appropriately. While workplace upheaval can be stressful, there are things you can do to cope with this challenging environment:

Find a healthy balance. Your work is important, but it's unhealthy for you mentally, physically and socially if you live, breathe and sleep your job. Get off the rollercoaster and away from the stress and uncertainty by surrounding yourself with friends and family and finding positive outlets to spend your free time.

Be positive. There is only so much you can control. How you feel about your situation is one of those things. Look for the silver lining and practice positive self-affirmations—it can change your mood and outlook on life.

Look for the gray. Even though it may seem so, not everything is black and white or gain and loss. Search for the middle ground. It can be a far less stressful place.

How to Manage Anger and Stress

A new boss. A drop in headcount. A change in procedure... When facing change, it's fairly common for those in the workplace today to feel anger and stress. It's important, however, to remember that allowing such emotions to run you leads to mental, physical and social consequences.

If anger is getting the best of you, there are a number of steps you can take to manage it in a healthier way:

- **Relax and calm down.** Take deep breaths. Count to 10 and let the tension escape from your body. Try relaxation techniques such as meditation, yoga and progressive muscle relaxation.

- **Remove yourself from the environment.** If a person or situation is causing you to feel extremely angry, or if you feel that you cannot talk about your emotions or express your anger positively, excuse yourself and walk away.
- **Identify the source.** What exactly is making you angry? When you recognize the cause, approach it in a positive, productive way.
- **Think before taking action.** Carefully consider the consequences of your response. Will you regret saying what is on your mind? Is there a better way to express your anger than the first impulse that came to you? Do not overreact. Avoid making assumptions or guesses; know the facts before you speak out about someone or something.
- **Assert yourself appropriately.** If you feel strongly about something, do not hold back from saying what is on your mind. Let the other person know what you want. Be clear and direct in your message.
- **Divert your attention.** If there is nothing you can do to change the situation, (e.g., you are stuck in a terrible traffic jam that is making you increasingly irritated), think of something else. Focus on a pleasant thought, an upcoming vacation or a happy memory.
- **Find humor in the situation.** When appropriate, learn to laugh at life and conflicts with others. Break the tension and defuse the situation with a smile, a joke or a funny (but not sarcastic) comment.
- **Be patient.** Try to be tolerant and empathetic of others. Attempt to understand their situations and behaviors.
- **Find a substitute outlet for anger.** Instead of acting on an aggressive urge, find a creative outlet for your energy. Start an exercise program. Take up a physically challenging new sport like kickboxing. Try a new hobby or artistic endeavor such as painting.
- **Get advice from others.** If you simply do not know how to deal with an angry feeling or situation, ask friends or family for suggestions on how they got through similar situations.

There are also a number of ways you can alleviate stress in your day-to-day life. Here are 10:

- **Get enough sleep.** If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
- **Schedule a realistic day.** If you can't avoid back-to-back appointments, try to at least give yourself a few moments for a breathing spell.
- **Do not rely on your memory.** Write down appointment times, assignment due dates, etc. As an old Chinese proverb states, "The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory."
- **Be prepared to wait.** A paperback, crossword puzzle or cell phone game can make a wait in a post-office line almost pleasant.
- **Procrastination is stressful.** Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
- **Relax your standards.** The world will not end if the grass does not get mowed this weekend or if the sheets have to be changed on Sunday instead of Saturday.
- **Learn to say 'no.'** Saying no to extra projects, social events and activities you do not have the time or energy for takes practice.
- **Eliminate destructive self-talk.** "I can't ..." or "I'm too inexperienced to ..." are negative thoughts that can increase stress levels.
- **Take time for yourself.** Develop a belief that everyone needs quiet time every day to relax and be alone.
- **Turn off your phone.** Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect.

Resilience in Stressful Times

Keep in mind that stress doesn't always get better on its own. You may have to actively work on it, especially if the stress you have been facing is prolonged or intense. The following stress management techniques may help:

- **Scale back:** While it may seem easier said than done, take a close look at your daily, weekly and monthly schedule and find meetings, activities, dinners or chores that you can cut back on or delegate to someone else. If news reports or social media posts are contributing to your stress, try turning off the TV and the Internet until you feel better able to deal.
- **Prepare:** If you are feeling edgy already, try to stay ahead of additional stress by preparing for meetings or trips, scheduling your time better, and setting realistic goals for tasks both big and small. Stress mounts when you run short on time, so build a cushion into your schedule for traffic jams or slow public transportation, for example.
- **Reach out:** Make or renew connections with others. Surrounding yourself with supportive family, friends, co-workers, or clergy and spiritual leaders can have a positive effect on your mental well-being and your ability to cope. Volunteer in your community.
- **Take up a hobby:** It may seem cliché, but an enjoyable pastime can calm your racing mind and heart rate. Try reading, gardening, crafts, tinkering with electronics, fishing, carpentry or music—things that you don't get competitive or more stressed out about.
- **Relax:** Physical activity, meditation, yoga, massage and other relaxation techniques can help you manage stress. It doesn't matter which technique you choose. What matters is refocusing your attention to something calming and increasing awareness of your body.
- **Get enough sleep:** Lack of sleep affects your immune system and your judgment and makes you more likely to snap over minor irritations. Most people need seven to eight hours a day.
- **Avoid alcohol and caffeine:** While momentarily calming, both can contribute to stress and anxiety.
- **Get professional help:** If your stress management efforts aren't helpful enough, see your doctor or contact your Employee Assistance Program. Chronic, uncontrolled stress can lead to a variety of potentially serious health problems, including depression and pain.

Fostering Resilience

How resilient are you? During a personal crisis, some people are more resilient than others. Resilience is more than coping; it's about confronting crises and difficult situations without getting overwhelmed by them. Resilient people are better able to handle life's stressors and adapt to changing situations. Being resilient can help protect you from depression, stress and anxiety, too.

Resilience can be strengthened and nurtured in adults and children by improving self-esteem, developing a strong system of social support and taking care of your physical and mental health.

Maintain Strong Connections With Family and Friends

Having strong, positive relationships with others provides a cushion of acceptance and support that can help you weather tough times.

Avoid Viewing Problems as Insurmountable

You have probably handled and survived difficult situations in the past. Learn from these experiences and be confident that you will get through a current crisis, too.

Accept That Change is Part of Living

The reality is that certain things cannot be controlled. What's important is how you respond to the situation. Accepting the change makes it easier to move forward with your life.

Keep a Long-term Perspective and Hopeful Outlook

Even though your feelings may be overwhelming at times, try to stay positive. Set goals for yourself so that you can feel productive and purposeful every day, and create longer-term goals so that you have a direction for your future.

Take Care of Your Physical and Mental Health

It's especially important when you are feeling stressed to continue to eat a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and regular exercise. Alcohol and caffeine can increase stress levels; avoid or reduce consumption.

Get Support and Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

If you need help dealing with a personal crisis, or would like additional resources and strategies for improving your resilience, contact your employee assistance program for confidential counseling and other services.

Identifying and Coping With Job-related Stress

If you, your co-workers or employees seem to be more hurried, strained, tense or nervous than in the past, there is a good chance the cause of the anxiety is work-related stress. A recent study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) states that 40 percent of workers thought their job was “extremely” or “very” stressful. In addition, 25 percent of respondents felt their job was the No. 1 source of stress in their lives and that they felt “often or very often burned out or stressed by their work.”

Stress causes a variety of physical and emotional changes in people. Managers (and employees) should be trained to recognize the common signs of stress and burnout in other people. If you are aware and conscious of these signs you can implement specific changes in day-to-day activities to minimize (or even eliminate) job-related stress from your workplace.

Causes of Work-related Stress

A conflict with a supervisor... feeling overwhelmed with tasks and responsibilities... a noisy air conditioning unit... a longer-than-normal commute... There are number of things, from seemingly minor to undeniably large, that can cause a person to feel stressed-out in the workplace.

Causes of stress will vary from person to person and not everyone will feel anxiety from the same stressors (causes of stress). For example, some people thrive in work environments where they have to meet fast-approaching deadlines each day, such as in the news industry. Other people would find working under these conditions to be extremely stressful.

Sources of work-related stress commonly cited by employees include:

- Long or difficult commutes to work
- Disagreements with co-workers or supervisors
- Having disagreeable or difficult co-workers
- Experiencing verbal abuse
- Feeling overworked
- Feeling unappreciated
- Having difficult deadlines to meet
- Feeling underpaid
- Job insecurity
- Having to take work home to complete
- Diminished benefits
- Feeling tasks are monotonous, repetitive or redundant
- Working long hours
- Fear of physical violence in the workplace

Signs of Stress

Stress can manifest itself in a multitude of different physical or emotional changes in a person.

Physical signs of stress include:

- Headaches and migraines
- Stomachaches and ulcers
- Back and muscle pain
- Grinding teeth
- Feeling lightheaded
- Trouble sleeping
- Fatigue
- Poor appetite
- Panic attacks
- Difficulty concentrating
- Rashes, itching and hives
- Weight gain or loss
- A weakened immune system
- Increase in drinking, smoking or drug use (making it harder for the body to fight viruses and bacteria)

Emotional signs of stress include:

- Forgetfulness
- Excessive nervousness, anxiety and worry
- Increased anger and hostility
- Mood swings
- Depression
- Difficulty communicating
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Withdrawal from social interaction

Ways to Manage or Eliminate Stress

If you feel minor stress from your job or you are getting ulcers from the constant strain, there are things you can do to minimize the stress and anxiety your job is causing in your life. Here are some suggestions for coping with job-related stress:

- **Exercise before going to work:** Physical exertion is a great way to relieve or reduce stress, so try exercising a little before you go to the office. Put in some time on the treadmill or sign up for a morning spin class.
- **Take breaks during the workday:** If you have a job where you are at a desk all day get up and walk around for five minutes. Stretch your legs with a walk around your floor or building to clear your mind. Think about something besides work-related tasks while walking.
- **Smile:** It seems too easy, but simply having a smile on your face can help reduce stress levels. Think about how you interact with other people; do you not enjoy being greeted more by a smiling person than by somebody who is frowning or who looks mad? Give people a smile when you see them and watch your work environment slowly brighten up.
- **Avoid confrontational situations:** If there is a specific person you are having difficulty with at your job, try to avoid having interactions with them. Ask to work on a different team or on different tasks. Include other people in all conversations you have with the person so you do not feel isolated and alone with them.
- **Delegate tasks:** Many people try to do too much, even though they work in a “team” environment where many people are supposed to pull equal loads. Allow other people to do some of the tasks you enjoy less, so you can spend more of your time doing the work-related functions you enjoy.
- **Talk with your supervisor:** Employers do not want to have a burned out workforce. High job-related stress levels lead to high job turnover rates. Job turnover cost employers money. Your supervisor or HR department may have some suggestions for minimizing the stress you are feeling at work.
- **Take a vacation:** How long has it been since you were away from the office for more than a three-day weekend? There is a reason you get vacation days every year, and that is so you can take an actual vacation where you are not checking your e-mail or voicemail every two hours for messages. Go someplace, leave your work behind and spend time doing things for yourself, not for your employer.
- **Seek the assistance of a therapist or mental health counselor:** The stress and anxiety we feel can be minimized by our own efforts, but sometimes it is necessary to seek the assistance of a professional. They will have ideas and possible solutions you can use to reduce and eliminate work-related stress.

Resources

- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health www.cdc.gov/niosh/.

Tips for Coping With Stress

Stress is an inevitable part of our lives. We have all experienced it to some degree: during an argument with a parent or sibling; while speaking to a large group; while trying to finish a school project. Our experiences in an increasingly complex world constantly require us to adapt to changes and cope with stressors. Learning how to identify and manage stress can help prevent physical and psychological problems, increase your chances of future success and promote a longer, healthier life.

The way we think and respond to life's challenges promotes stress. For example, the more impatient, demanding, controlling or submissive we are, the more we are bound to experience stress. Stress can be a learned response to everyday life events.

Effects of Stress

To a certain degree, feeling stressed is a normal, healthy response to life's events and challenges. The ability to react under stress is crucial for human survival. Many experts define stress as the body's reaction to change. It is natural for our bodies to trigger a fight-or-flight response to potentially dangerous situations. A stressful stimulus promotes a chemical reaction that produces adrenaline and increases energy.

However, over time the body's continued response to regular stress can lead to an increase in blood pressure and heart rate, heightened anxiety and an overall strain on the system. Unrelieved tension builds up and may cause unhealthy symptoms.

Immediate physiological symptoms of stress include:

- Hyperventilation (rapid, shallow breathing)
- Profuse sweating
- Rapid heartbeat
- Increased urination
- Dizziness and lightheadedness
- Fatigue

Conditions linked to stress include:

- Musculoskeletal pain (e.g., backaches, neck pain)
- Migraines and headaches
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Gastrointestinal disorders (e.g., chronic heartburn, ulcers)
- Skin diseases
- Cardiovascular disorders (e.g., high blood pressure)
- Colitis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Diabetes
- Asthma

Behavioral symptoms of stress include:

- Irritability
- Social withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Bad habits (e.g., biting your nails or grinding your teeth)
- Forgetfulness
- Inability to act due to fear or indecision
- Lack of concentration
- Substance abuse

Ways to Cope with Stress

Seek support. Do not wait until you reach your breaking point. If you begin to feel stressed, talk to your parents, your guidance counselor or your friends. They may be able to provide new ways that you can try to help alleviate stress. It is important to recognize and admit that you are feeling anxious and stressed. Pay attention to your body's physical signs of stress (e.g., headaches, stomach discomfort). If the stress becomes overwhelming, talk to your parents about getting some professional help.

- Try to identify the causes of stress. By recognizing the real reasons behind your tension, you can learn to feel more in control and change the source of the stress. If you are not sure why you feel stressed, retrace your steps: perhaps it stems from a forgotten event from yesterday or last night's disturbing dream.

Ask yourself these five questions:

1. What is the worst thing that can happen?
 2. Is there anything more I can do to improve the situation?
 3. How will this outcome affect my life in the long run?
 4. What can I learn from this?
 5. What advice would I give to someone else in this situation?
- Accept stress as an everyday part of life. Often the best way to cope is to "go with the flow", to accept those stressors that you can not currently change.
 - Laugh and learn. Instead of getting irritated, laugh at life's annoyances and learn from your mistakes. Humor is a powerful tool in helping build resilience, the ability to bounce back from negative events.
 - Nurture those relationships that matter. More interpersonal contact with the right people can help relieve stress. Open up to others about your problems, and accept help when it is offered. Spend less time with negative, stress-inducing friends or acquaintances.
 - Develop a timeline of short- and long-term goals. List challenging but realistic objectives for yourself. Analyze and update these goals over time. Avoid setting unrealistic expectations and too many lofty goals. Attempt challenges that are doable, and tackle the easiest first.
 - Focus on the positives. Recognize that for everything that may go wrong, there may be multiple things that go right. Be proud of your accomplishments, and celebrate your successes.
 - Break from routines at school and at home. Monotony also can cause stress. Remember you can change the script of your life.
 - Examine your thought patterns. Often it is our thoughts that determine whether we interpret a situation as stressful. Listen to your inner voice to discover thought patterns that may be contributing to your overall stress level. Write down responses to that inner voice so that you can access these responses the next time you feel stressed.

Personal Life Tips

- Get enough rest. Doctors recommend getting at least eight hours of sleep a night.
- Exercise regularly. Swimming, running, brisk walking, aerobic exercises and other repetitive fitness activities are especially beneficial.
- Engage in fulfilling activities. Take a little time each day for something you like to do: a hobby, a walk with the family dog, an hour with a good book, a fun outing with friends, etc.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and other stimulants. These common drugs actually can induce stress and anxiety. A simple step like switching to decaffeinated coffee can have a real effect on your stress level.
- Avoid alcohol, tranquilizers and recreational drugs. These may contribute to anxiety and depression and an increased sense of loss of control.

School Tips

- **Try to exercise during lunchtime or if you have a free period during the day:** Simple steps like taking the stairs or walking for 15 minutes after lunch can have a positive effect on your stress level (and on your waistline too!).
- **Tackle one task at a time if possible:** List your assignments in order of priority, and complete one at a time. Tackle the easiest ones first. This can make you feel more organized and in control, leading to a sense of greater accomplishment.
- **Do not procrastinate:** Putting important tasks off can lead to increased worry. It is more important to get started than it is to complete the assignment perfectly. You can always use the first attempt as a rough draft.
- **Get organized:** Rearrange your locker and assignment notebook for maximum efficiency. Make sure you have a quiet area at home where you can study without interruption. Create lists and schedules to help you meet deadlines.

Relaxation 101

Try these techniques to help you relax and reduce stress:

- **Breathing exercises:** Drawing slow, deep breaths from the diaphragm (the spot just under your ribcage) promotes a more efficient exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide than chest or shoulder breathing. Exhale slowly and evenly. If you are highly stressed, try this while lying on your back.
- **Yoga and stretching exercises:** These can relieve tension, make your body more limber and flexible and produce an overall calming effect.
- **Meditation and imagery techniques:** By sitting in a comfortable, quiet environment, closing your eyes and freeing your mind from its many concerns for even a few minutes each day, you can learn to achieve relaxation quickly. Try concentrating on an image that symbolizes your stress, such as a giant ball that slowly begins to shrink; alternatively, let your mind go blank. Do not fight stressful thoughts. Instead, think of these thoughts as floating in one ear and out the other and being replaced in your mind by calmer images.
- **Progressive muscle-relaxation techniques:** These involve systematically tensing, relaxing and visualizing each major muscle group. For example, make a fist and hold it tight for at least five seconds. Feel the tension in your hand and arm. Finally, relax your hand, and visualize the tension escaping your body. Do the same with your other hand, your neck, your face, limbs, etc.

Resources

- The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH): www.nimh.nih.gov
- National Institutes of Health (NIH): <http://health.nih.gov>
- Mental Health America: www.nmha.org
- What is post-traumatic stress disorder?

How well do you cope with stress?

Do you frequently feel frustrated and exhausted from too much responsibility and too little time? Do you have trouble sleeping or finding time to relax? You may be having difficulty handling the stress in your life. Take this quiz to find out how well you cope with stress.

1. I feel I have a supportive social network.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
2. I actively pursue a hobby.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
3. I participate in at least one social activity per month.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
4. I am within 10 pounds of my ideal body weight.
 Yes (15 points)
 No (0 points)
5. I practice some form of deep relaxation at least three times a week. (Deep relaxation includes meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, imagery and yoga.)
 Yes (15 points)
 No (0 points)
6. On an average, I exercise 30 minutes per day.
 No (0 points)
 One day a week (5 points)
 Two days a week (10 points)
 Three days a week (15 points)
 Four days a week (20 points)
 Five days a week (25 points)
 Six days a week (30 points)
 Seven days a week (35 points)
7. I eat two nutritionally balanced meals per day. (A nutritionally balanced meal is low in fat and high in vegetables, fruits and whole-grain products.)
 No (0 points)
 Once a week (5 points)
 Twice a week (10 points)
8. Every week, I do something that I really enjoy.
 Yes (5 points)
 No (0 points)
9. I have a place in my home which I use for relaxation and/or solitude.
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
10. I practice time management techniques daily. (This includes planning ahead, keeping a calendar, prioritizing and setting deadlines.)
 Yes (10 points)
 No (0 points)
11. I smoke daily.
 Yes (0 points)
 No (30 points)
12. I can stop drinking after two alcoholic drinks.
 Yes (35 points)
 No (0 points)
13. I take medication (over the counter/prescribed) to fall asleep on a regular basis.
 Yes (0 points)
 No (35 points)
14. On an average, I bring my work home during the week.
 No (25 points)
 One day a week (20 points)
 Two days a week (15 points)
 Three days a week (10 points)
 Four days a week (5 points)
 Every day of the week (0 points)

Your Score

Add up your points to find out how well you cope with stress. To learn effective ways to reduce stress and improve your work-life balance using your employee assistance program, talk to the GuidanceResources representative at the ComPsych® table today, or call GuidanceResources at your toll-free number. Services are confidential and available at no cost to you.

145 points and above

Congratulations! You have an excellent score. You are able to handle stress in an effective and healthy manner.

101-144 points

You are able to cope with stress in an effective and healthy manner. Be sure to keep exercising, eating a healthy diet, relaxing and avoiding alcohol and tobacco.

51-100 points

You have adequate skills to cope with common stress. You can improve the way you handle stress with the following suggestions:

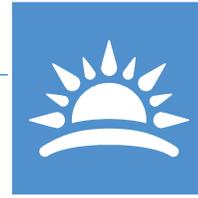
- Exercise for 30 minutes, at least three times per week.
- Take some time each week for an activity you enjoy such as pursuing a hobby, going for a walk, listening to music, reading a book or playing with a pet.
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals full of vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Avoid using medication, alcohol or other substances to help you sleep or relax.
- Stop smoking cigarettes.
- If possible, leave your work at the office.

0-50 points

You may not be effectively coping with stress. Your employee assistance program is a good place to learn healthy strategies for managing stress, learning to prioritize and finding resources to help you balance your work, family and personal relationships.

In addition, you can improve the way you handle stress with these suggestions:

- Exercise for 30 minutes, at least three times per week.
- Carve out some time for yourself each week to do the things you like to do, such as pursuing a hobby, going for a walk, listening to music, reading a book or playing with a pet.
- Eat regular, well-balanced meals full of vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Avoid using medication, alcohol or other substances to help you sleep or relax.
- Stop smoking cigarettes.
- If possible, leave your work at the office.



Tips to Relax and Reduce Stress

It is important to relieve your stress because it can lead to mild health problems such as insomnia and headaches. It can lower the body's immune system, increasing susceptibility to illness. It also may worsen or contribute to some more serious health conditions.

Some people are better at managing stress than others. Those people all cultivate the same habits:

Ten Habits of Effective Stress Managers

1. They know how to relax.
2. They eat well and exercise often.
3. They get enough sleep.
4. They don't worry about the unimportant stuff.
5. They don't get angry often.
6. They are organized and their life is not cluttered.
7. They manage time efficiently.
8. They have and make use of a strong social support system.
9. They live according to their values—their goals are aligned with what's important to them.
10. They have a good sense of humor.

None of us can escape the stress of daily living, but we can learn to manage it better and become better stress managers. Try the following tips to protect your physical and mental health from the strain of stress:

- **Try some deep breathing.** Take a slow deep breath—hold it for five seconds—then slowly exhale.
- **Learn and practice meditation.** Create peaceful mental images.
- **Take a mental health break.** Make some time each day to devote to yourself—sometimes even 10 to 30 minutes really can help.
- **Strive for balance in your life.** Make time for activities and people you enjoy.
- **Use your support system.** Share your feelings with a caring friend or family member.
- **Just say no.** Remember that it's OK to say no to requests that push you beyond your limits.
- **Take one thing at a time.** Focus on the task at hand and do it well.
- **Don't demand perfection.** Ease up on yourself and those around you.
- **Take care of yourself.** Be sure to exercise regularly, eat a well-balanced diet and get enough rest.
- **Plan ahead.** Factor in time for traffic or other delays so that you're more relaxed when you get to work or your appointments.
- **Develop a positive attitude.** Try to view negative situations in a positive way.
- **Remove the clutter in your life.** Clean your house, garage or workspace regularly.
- **Laughter is the best medicine.** Find what makes you laugh. When you're laughing, you don't have time to be stressed out. And, don't take yourself too seriously.
- **Curb Caffeine.** Stimulants such as tobacco and caffeine can rev up your nervous system, which increases stress.
- **Seek help.** At times, you may feel that your stress is difficult to cope with, or is interfering with your daily life. If the stress in your life becomes overwhelming, don't hesitate to seek professional help from your EAP.



How to Stay Motivated

Motivation is essential to setting and attaining goals. Research indicates that you can influence your own levels of motivation and self-control. To do so, you must figure out what you want, power through the challenges and start trying to be who you want to become.

Set Smart Goals

Having a roadmap for the future is a key element to well-being and success. Goals provide focus as well as a measuring tool for progress. They enhance productivity, bolster self-esteem and increase commitment so you are more likely to achieve whatever you set out to conquer. The simple fact is that when people have goals to guide them, they are happier and achieve more than they would without having them.

- Putting your goals in writing helps you to define them in detail. Be specific, use action verbs, have measurable outcomes and specify completion dates.
- Make a list of obstacles by thinking of everything that might stand in your way then decide what you can do about each obstacle. Shield yourself from distractions and temptations that may arise along the way.
- List the benefits of achieving your goal – list exactly what you hope to gain after achieving your goals.
- Identify subgoals. Be specific, defining exactly what you are going to do and when. Make sure each step is challenging but attainable.
- Get prepared and organized. When information is scattered about, you feel out of control and this undermines your motivation.
- Leave some room for mistakes and have backup strategies in place to attain your goals. Do not expect perfection.

Monitor, Feedback and Reward

Do not forget to chart your progress, whether it is with a high-tech online tracker or an old-fashioned fitness journal. Seeing incremental improvements can boost your motivation and help you make important changes in order to be successful.

Reward yourself for every successful step you take toward achieving your goal. Treat yourself to rewards that will motivate you to continue moving forward.

Enlist others for help if you need it and try to find someone with whom you share a common goal. Also, look for someone who has already achieved the goals you seek to reach and ask them for their insight on how to accomplish them.

Practice Makes Perfect

Do not give up easily. The closer you get to achieving your goals, the easier it gets. Self-control functions similar to a muscle becoming stronger with use. If you keep practicing self-control, you will eventually become better at it.



Learning to Accept Change

Learning to roll with change will lead to a happier and more fulfilling life. That doesn't mean ignoring feelings of sadness, anger, frustration or stress. These are normal responses to major life changes. But once you have acknowledged those feelings, it is important to move forward and focus your energy on what's possible.

The following are some simple, solid steps you can take to turn unexpected transitions into positive outcomes:

- **Reflect and refocus.** Take stock of your personal assets and express gratitude, such as, "I can deal with this. I still have my ability to think, my special talents, my skills and my aspirations. I'm grateful for relationships and for my family."
- **Ask yourself some important questions.** "How do I want to feel three months from now? What will it take to get there? What does my ideal week look like? What can I do to realize that? Who can help with that?"
- **Choose.** Decide what you want as the next chapter of your life. Simply choosing doesn't guarantee you'll get it, but the power of your intentions makes a huge difference.
- **Take action.** Start by visualizing how you want to feel or where you want to be three months from now. Work back from this goal until you find something small enough that you can do today, tomorrow or next week.



Why Mindfulness Matters

Stress is an inevitable part of our lives. We have all experienced it to some degree: during an argument with a partner; while speaking to a large group; while meeting a deadline at work. Our experiences in an increasingly complex world constantly require us to adapt to changes and cope with stressors. Learning how to identify and manage stress can help prevent physical and psychological problems, increase your chances of future success and promote a longer, healthier life.

Mindfulness, which is best described as the practice of being more aware in the present moment, is an effective way to respond to life's stresses. Examples of mindfulness include:

- Becoming aware of breath and feeling the stomach rise and fall with each breath
- Feeling the various physical sensations of an emotion
- Paying attention to all of the sounds in a room
- Noticing what happens in the body when there is stress
- Watching the thoughts that arise when there is boredom

It can be difficult to get your mind to slow down, but focusing on the now can help improve your physical, social and mental health. Practicing mindfulness can result in:

- Improved organizational skills
- An increase in self-esteem
- A sense of calmness, relaxation and self-acceptance
- A better quality of sleep
- A decrease in depression
- A decrease in overall anxiety and test anxiety
- A decline in negative emotions
- Fewer conduct and anger management problems



Depression Warning Signs

Depression is a treatable medical illness involving an imbalance of brain chemicals called neurotransmitters and neuropeptides. What are the symptoms?

- Prolonged sadness or unexplained crying spells
- Significant changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- Irritability, anger, worry, agitation, anxiety
- Loss of energy, persistent lethargy, and others

If you are feeling depressed, don't wait. Get help from your Employee Assistance Program today.



Creating a Self-care Plan

To feel your best, it is important to take care of yourself, especially when your job demands so much from you emotionally. Maintaining emotional resilience requires eating well, exercising, keeping work and home life balanced and maintaining good relationships. But there are times when even these things can't prevent stress and anxiety from creeping in. That's why self-care is so important. Taking a small amount of time out of your busy schedule just for yourself is key to handling all your duties while getting the most out of life. Try these tips to give yourself the attention you need to be your best.

Deep Breathing. Deep breathing focuses on using the diaphragm (the spot just under your rib cage) to draw slow, deep breaths into the lungs and to release them slowly. Take a couple of minutes every hour to practice some deep breathing.

Stretching. Stretching exercises can relieve tension, make your body more flexible and produce a calming effect. Even just shrugging your shoulders, stretching your arms and rolling your neck a few times a day can have positive effects.

Meditation and Visualization. Meditation involves "quieting the mind" by blocking out sensory input and distraction, while visualization involves using the brain's creative capacity to create a stress-free experience, much like daydreaming. Try to carve out 15 minutes daily to quiet your mind and body.

Muscle Relaxation. Progressive muscle-relaxation techniques involve systematically tensing, relaxing and visualizing each major muscle group. It is best to practice these techniques when you have about 20 minutes and are able to find a quiet place where you can lie down without being disturbed.

Calming Thoughts. Our thought patterns often cause or contribute to the stress that we are feeling. The next time you encounter a stressful situation, take a moment to tune into your thoughts and feelings. Write these thoughts down and then write down a more positive replacement.



Tips for Increasing Energy

Often, people turn to caffeinated beverages and energy drinks to give them the boost they need to get through the day. However, many of these drinks can result in a short burst of energy followed by a rapid crash. These lifestyle strategies can help eliminate this rollercoaster effect while boosting energy throughout the day.

Get a Good Night's Sleep. Getting between seven and nine hours of sleep per night is optimal. Aim to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on the weekends.

Get Moving. A brief bout of exercise (as little as 10 minutes) can improve energy levels and a person's mood. Physical activity, even walking, is a great energy booster.

Eat a Healthy Breakfast. People who skip breakfast are essentially running on empty. Keep breakfast healthy by incorporating sources of lean protein, healthy fats and whole grains, such as whole-wheat toast with peanut butter and a banana.

Stay Hydrated. Even slight dehydration can leave a person feeling tired and lethargic. Keep a tall glass of water or a water bottle with you throughout the day.

Reduce Stress. Stress has a major impact on energy levels. Try to take 20 minutes for yourself every day just to relax.

Opt for Whole Grains, Limit Sugar. Eating whole grains provides a slow and steady release of fuel (carbohydrates) into the bloodstream, keeping energy levels consistent and balanced throughout the day.

Turn Coffee into a Protein Drink. Put skim or reduced-fat milk in coffee instead of creamer. The protein in milk helps sustain energy levels, as well as providing some bone-building calcium.

Choose Healthy Snacks. Have a couple of snacks throughout the day that combine protein, fiber and a little fat, such as an apple and string cheese or yogurt and nuts. This helps to sustain energy levels throughout the day.

Building Resilience & Healthy Habits

Wellness within your reach (Healthy habit development)

The Wellness within your reach presentation reviews the “5 Steps to Behavior Change”, explains how to create S.M.A.R.T. Goals, and offers dozens of practical and motivational tips.

Moderated PowerPoint presentation:

<https://www.brainshark.com/1/player/hmk?fb=0&r3f1=12285605094d494e4654370c100d1f0f06594e21501a5714090c1e4023761e161b0d0845610360225607140e5651214f0256001113091b72134157040e155c4f&custom=hotmwellnessinreachbcb>

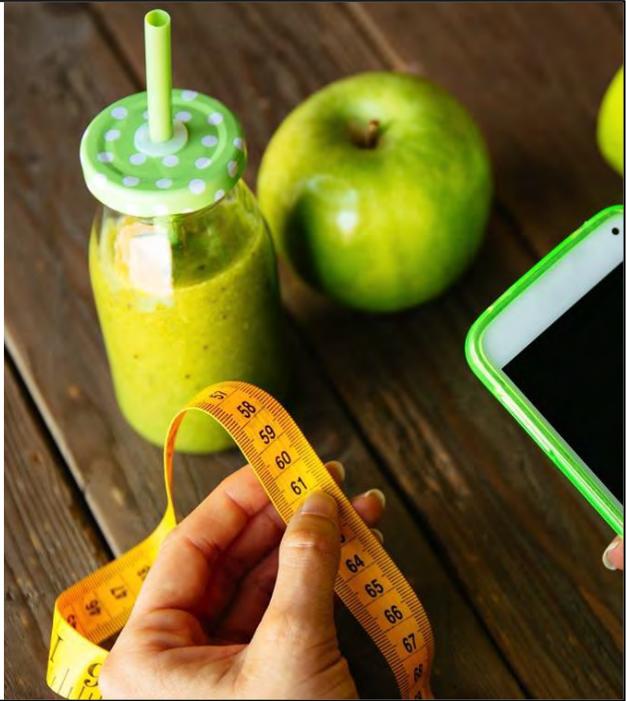
Slide Deck:



Tools and Resources

Sticking to a wellness program can be easy when you have the right tools and resources.

- ✓ Understand the Steps to Behavior Change
- ✓ Know where you are in the Cycle of Behavior Change
- ✓ Be able to distinguish between a “quick fix” and a true lifestyle change
- ✓ Have a wellness game plan



Stages of Change

Transtheoretical Model of Change

- A model of behavior change that assesses an individual's readiness to act on a new, healthier behavior.
- It provides strategies, or processes to guide the individual through the **five stages of change**.
- Individuals cycle through the five stages based on their readiness to change.



The *Transtheoretical Model* (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997)

5 Steps to Behavior Change

Step 1

Identify and understand the habits you need to change.

Step 2

Develop a plan for change.

Step 3

Put your plan into action and practice.

Step 4

Refine, reinforce, and maintain your plan.

Step 5

Problem solve and deal with any roadblocks and challenges.



The Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997)

The Cycle of Behavior Change



SUCCESS

Step 5:
Problem solve

Step 1:
Understand and identify

RELAPSE



Step 4:
Refine, reinforce,
and maintain

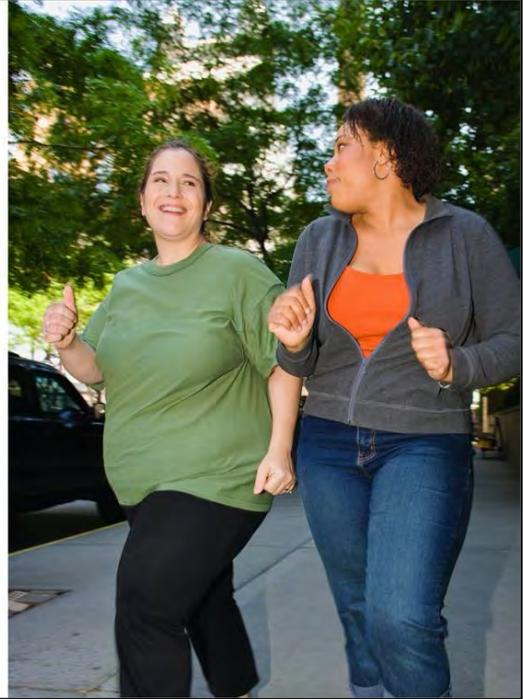
Step 2: Develop a plan

Step 3:
Take action and
practice

The Transtheoretical Model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska & Velicer, 1997)

Lifestyle Change

- ✓ **Begin where you are** and progress toward achievable goals that work for you.
- ✓ The **ideal approach** to lifestyle change employs wellness strategies that you can live with and adapt throughout your life.
- ✓ Lifestyle change **is not achieved** through a quick-fix program.
- ✓ Lifestyle change **is not an “all or nothing”** approach.
- ✓ **Work** with your friends, family, and co-workers for support.



Create A Game Plan

Identify your current health needs

- ✓ Get your preventive exams
- ✓ Take a wellness profile

Set goals

- ✓ Utilize the S.M.A.R.T. principles
- ✓ Identify the resources needed to achieve goals
- ✓ Keep your goals in front of you

Measure progress

- ✓ Designate one day/week to evaluate progress
- ✓ Visually record your progress
- ✓ Make adjustments if necessary
- ✓ Evaluate how you feel



S.M.A.R.T. Goals



Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Make it specific: A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal, answer the following questions:

- ✓ **Who:** Who is involved?
- ✓ **What:** What do I want to accomplish?
- ✓ **Where:** Where will my plan take place?
- ✓ **When:** When will I accomplish my goal?
- ✓ **Which:** Identify any requirements and constraints
- ✓ **Why:** The specific reasons, purpose, and/or benefits of accomplishing the goal



Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals (cont.)

Measurable – When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the sense of accomplishment that encourages your continued effort.



Attainable – A goal needs to stretch you slightly so you feel you can do it. You feel committed to achieving the goal. But if you set goals that are too far out of your reach, you probably won't commit to doing them. It's easy to get discouraged when you can't meet the goals you set.

Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals (cont.)



Realistic – To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective which you feel is “do-able.” Think about what is realistic for you and where you are at the moment. You can then devise a plan to achieve the outcome you desire.



Tangible – A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the five senses (taste, touch, smell, sight, or hearing). When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and it becomes attainable.

Overcoming Barriers

- ✓ **Make** time for exercise: It's key!
- ✓ **Allow** yourself to relax
- ✓ **Control** your mood and your food
- ✓ **Know** your nutrition
- ✓ **30 Days** of Wellness



Exercise is Key

- ✓ **Too busy?** Put a little skin in the game
- ✓ **Too busy?** Mark it on the calendar
- ✓ **Too busy?** Set a S.M.A.R.T. goal for exercise



Make Time for You

Lifestyle changes can be stressful. So give yourself permission to relax.

- ✓ **Go** for a walk
- ✓ **Read** a book
- ✓ **Write** in a journal, or start up a blog
- ✓ **Take** a bubble bath
- ✓ **Try meditation**, deep breathing, or yoga



Food and Mood

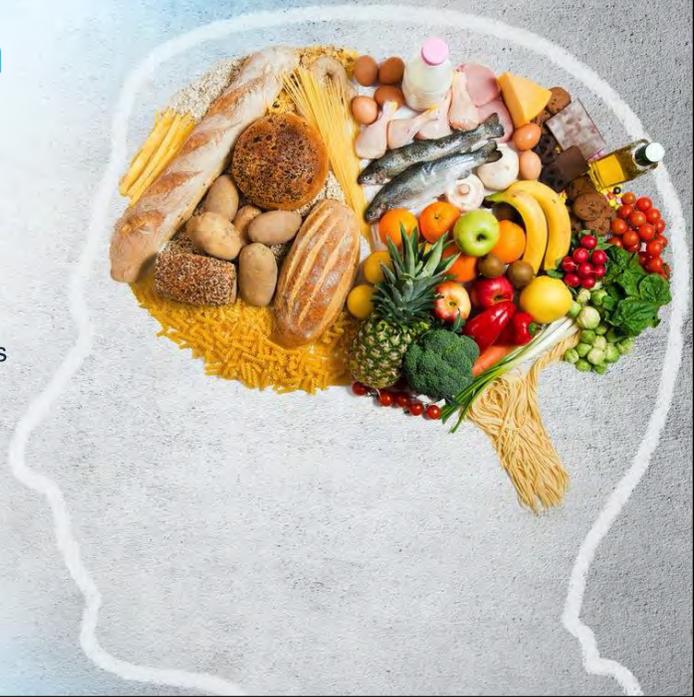
Don't let your mood determine your food

- ✓ Stress eating only results in more stress
- ✓ Take charge with resources available to you
 - Online Wellness Programs
 - Member Discounts



Nutritious Nutrition

- ✓ **Be** a mindful eater
- ✓ **Go** for quality not quantity
- ✓ **Focus** on whole foods and fiber
- ✓ **Eat** a rainbow of color
- ✓ **Sidestep** those high calorie beverages
- ✓ **Skipping** breakfast is not an option

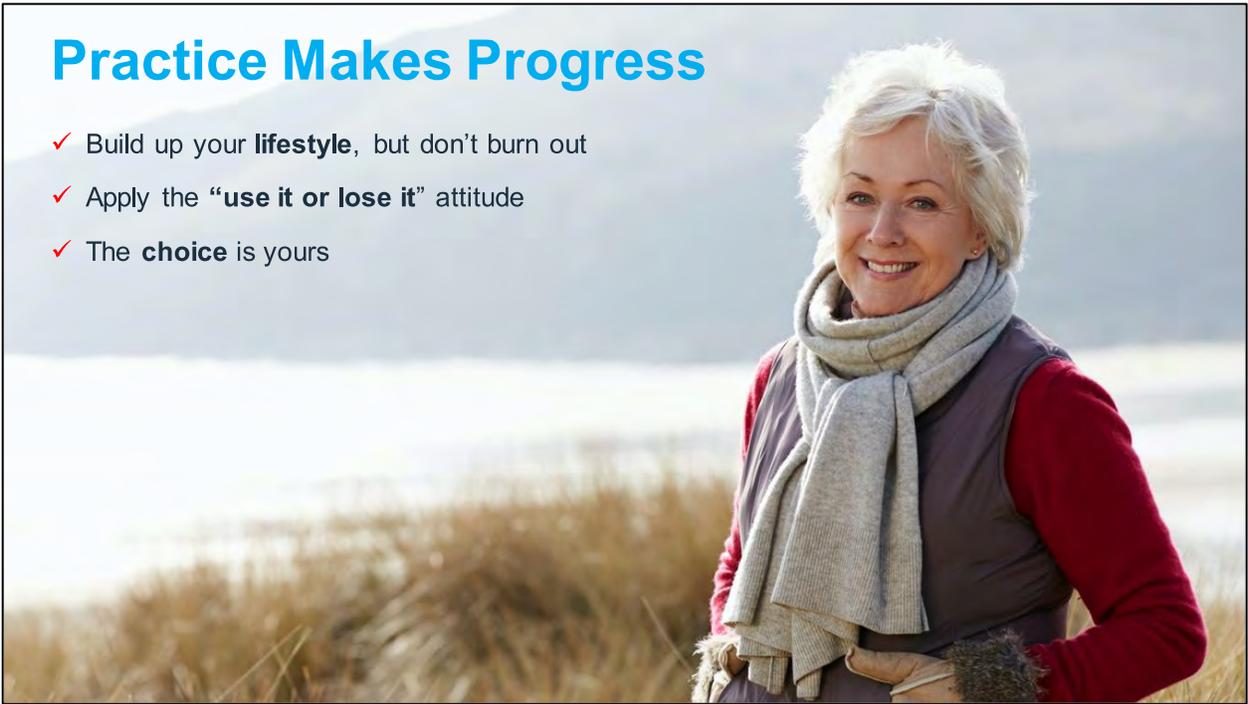


30 DAYS OF WELLNESS

1. Keep it simple. You don't need a nutrition degree to eat healthy. Start with your next bite.	2. Eat a piece of fresh fruit with every meal. Stock up and plan ahead.	3. Make today a "No Desserts or Sweets Day." Do you think you can do it?	4. Try a new, higher fiber cereal for breakfast. Look for at least 5 grams of fiber per serving.	5. Strive to drink 10 cups of water today. Say "NO" to calorie-laden beverages.
6. Set a goal to go one week without eating deep-fried foods.	7. Go to your Member website or favorite cooking website and download a new recipe to try.	8. Save 100 calories and forego croutons on your salad.	9. Count to 10. Strive to eat 10 servings of fruits and vegetables today. Yes – 10!	10. Leave a bite or two of food on your plate to help cut back on portions.
11. Slow down and put your utensils down between every bite.	12. Read the label of everything you eat today that comes in a package.	13. Say "NO" to vending machines and junk food and eat fresh fruit for your snacks today.	14. Check your refrigerator regularly to keep your produce well-stocked.	15. Try whole wheat spaghetti with your favorite sauce. Serve with a mixed greens salad on the side.
16. Set a goal to pack your lunch with healthy foods all week and take along healthy snack options too.	17. Try a new fruit today. There are 100s of varieties from which to choose.	18. Try brown rice. There are many options – quick-cooking, long-cooking or balsamic variety.	19. Switch to Romaine lettuce, spinach or other greens instead of iceberg lettuce.	20. Share a new healthy recipe with a friend or co-worker today.
21. Switch all of your breads, rolls, wraps and pitas to 100% whole wheat or whole grain.	22. Try a lower-fat milk: If you drink 2%, try 1%. If you drink 1%, try fat-free. Kudos if you already drink fat-free milk!	23. How big are your portions? Measure your servings today and compare to the food label.	24. Make it plain. Take your tea without sugar, creamer or flavored syrup today.	25. Instead of crunching on chips or crackers, crunch on raw veggies today.
26. Look at the calories before you eat snacks and ask, "Can I afford this today?"	27. Try ground turkey in place of ground beef. It's a great substitute for burgers, meatballs or meatloaf.	28. Eat vegetarian today. Choose beans or soy foods for your protein sources.	29. Save 100 calories and put mustard on your sandwich rather than mayonnaise.	30. Clean out your cupboards. Throw out the not-so-healthy foods and stock up on healthy choices.

Practice Makes Progress

- ✓ Build up your **lifestyle**, but don't burn out
- ✓ Apply the “**use it or lose it**” attitude
- ✓ The **choice** is yours



Refresh, Reinforce, Resilience

- ✓ **Refresh** your plan
- ✓ **Redefine** your goals
- ✓ **Resist** your old ways
- ✓ **Return** to healthy habits quickly
- ✓ **Reward** yourself
- ✓ **Resolve** the barriers
- ✓ **Rediscover** yourself



Group Exercises

Stress Management

What happens when we continue “burning the candle at both ends” until we reach physical and emotional exhaustion? Just like the candle itself, we risk burning ourselves out.

Burnout does not happen all at once. It might be a gradual acceptance of the pressures around you until everything is “too much” and you feel you can barely cope. If you are feeling this way, you are not alone. About 8.3 million American adults were reported to have experienced serious psychological distress in 2017 (“More Americans suffering from stress, anxiety, and depression, study finds,” 2018).

We may not be able to eliminate the stressors in our life, but we can improve our mental (and physical) wellbeing by changing how we react to stress.

Stress management group exercises are proven to be an effective way to reduce stress. In addition to being effective, group exercises are fairly easily to implement. Benefits of engaging in group exercises include a reduction in stress levels, improved ability to cope with and appropriately react to stress, and newfound empathy amongst coworkers.

Guidelines for five different stress management group exercises are provided on the pages to follow.

Exercise Name: Co-worker Support in Stressful Times

Time: 45 minutes for groups of approximately 10 team members

Materials: A piece of paper for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

This exercise works best with a team in which most have worked together for a while.

1. Ask everyone to write their name at the top of a piece of paper.
2. Then add the following two sentences to finish:
 - a. What I need my co-workers to do when I'm stressed is (finish the sentence)
 - b. What I need my co-workers NOT to do when I'm stressed is ... (finish the sentence)
3. The leader then collects the completed sentences and every member of the team is given a copy. Each member is then given the opportunity to say why these tactics are helpful.

Leader Discussion

Leaders can emphasize team members have different needs and we should not assume what we need or don't need is the same for others.

Source: Gail Page, Positive Pathways

Exercise Name: Favorite character

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: A piece of paper and a pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

1. Ask everyone to put the piece of paper behind their back
2. Ask everyone to either tear or draw their favorite Disney character
3. Give them two to three minutes to tear or draw their character
4. Have each person show the person next to them what they came up with

Exercise Name: Favorite character

Time: 5 minutes

Materials: A piece of paper and a pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

1. Ask everyone to put the piece of paper behind their back
2. Ask everyone to either tear or draw their favorite Disney character
3. Give them two to three minutes to tear or draw their character
4. Have each person show the person next to them what they came up with

Leader Discussion

Does it look like your character? Maybe not, but that was not the purpose of the exercise.

The purpose was to get you to think. Through this exercise, you opened up your creative, subconscious mind to attempt to depict the character you were thinking of.

Often times our best ideas don't come to us while we are at work. Why do you think that is?

While at work, we have so many tasks going on simultaneously that we bog our brains down. When our brains are so busy processing information, there isn't capacity left to think creatively. Don't let your brain get too busy to think.

Set aside specific time, on a regularly scheduled basis to practice mindfulness and access the creative, subconscious part of your brain. You can use this time to think through creative ways to solve a work or personal issue. The more provocative the thought, the closer you are to innovation. Ask yourself far-fetched "what if" questions, such as, "What if we generated revenue by turning the clubhouse into an Airbnb?".

Source: Duncan Wardle, Disney

Individual Exercises

Stress Assessment

Stress is a necessary part of our lives and can have both beneficial and negative effects. The stress response is primarily determined by our perception of an event, transition, or problem. Finding a balance in our lives and managing our stress can be a challenge. An important first step is recognizing the degree to which we are affected by the stress in our lives and then move toward strategies to make it better.

The follow series of self-assessment scales will help us determine the degree and type of stress we are experiencing and how well our stress coping skills are working.

Source: NYSUT Social Services

Symptoms of Stress

How frequently do you find yourself experiencing such problems as headaches, problems going to sleep or staying asleep, unexplained muscle pain, jaw pain, uncontrolled anger, and frustration? Using the table below, assess the frequency that you experience these common symptoms of stress.

Symptoms	Frequency of symptoms						
	Almost all day, every day	Once or twice daily	Every night or day	2-3 times per week	Once a week	Once a month	Never
Headaches							
Tense muscles, sore neck and back							
Fatigue							
Anxiety, worry, phobias							
Difficulty falling asleep							
Irritability							
Insomnia							
Bouts of anger/hostility							
Boredom, depression							
Eating too much or too little							
Diarrhea, cramps, gas, constipation							
Restlessness, itching, tics							

The more often you experience these symptoms of stress, the more likely stress is having a negative impact on your life. You may be so used to feeling a certain way that you assume this is normal. Look back over the Symptoms of Stress Table. Are there symptoms of stress that you would like to eliminate or change?

Perceived Stress Scale

A more precise measure of personal stress can be determined by using a variety of instruments that have been designed to help measure individual stress levels. The first of these is called the **Perceived Stress Scale**.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) is a classic stress assessment instrument. This tool, while originally developed in 1983, remains a popular choice for helping us understand how different situations affect our feelings and our perceived stress. The questions in this scale ask about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate how often you felt or thought a certain way. Although some of the questions are similar, there are differences between them and you should treat each one as a separate question. The best approach is to answer fairly quickly. That is, don't try to count up the number of times you felt a particular way; rather indicate the alternative that seems like a reasonable estimate.

For each question choose from the following alternatives:

0 – never 1 - almost never 2 – sometimes 3 - fairly often 4 - very often

- _____ 1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
- _____ 2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?
- _____ 3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?
- _____ 4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
- _____ 5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
- _____ 6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
- _____ 7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
- _____ 8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
- _____ 9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?
- _____ 10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Figuring your PSS score:

You can determine your PSS score by following these directions:

First, reverse your scores for questions 4, 5, 7, & 8. On these 4 questions, change the scores like this: 0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, 4 = 0.

Now add up your scores for each item to get a total. **My total score is _____.**

Individual scores on the PSS can range from 0 to 40 with higher scores indicating higher perceived stress.

Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress.

Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress.

Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high perceived stress.

The Perceived Stress Scale is interesting and important because your perception of what is happening in your life is most important. Consider the idea that 2 individuals could have the exact same events and experiences in their lives for the past month. Depending on their perception, total score could put one of those individuals in the low stress category and the total score could put the second person in the high stress category.

The Ardell Wellness Stress Test

Don Ardell developed a stress assessment that is unique in its holistic approach to stress. In chapter one, you learned about the importance of incorporating all dimensions of health in your understanding of stress. The Ardell Wellness Stress Test incorporates physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social aspects of health for a balanced assessment.

Rate your satisfaction with each of the following items by using this scale:

+ 3 = Ecstatic

+ 2 = Very happy

+ 1 = Mildly happy

0 = Indifferent

-1 = Mildly disappointed

- 2 = Very disappointed

- 3 = Completely dismayed

- _____ 1. Choice of career
- _____ 2. Present job/ business/ school
- _____ 3. Marital status
- _____ 4. Primary relationships
- _____ 5. Capacity to have fun
- _____ 6. Amount of fun experienced in last month
- _____ 7. Financial prospects
- _____ 8. Current income level
- _____ 9. Spirituality
- _____ 10. Level of self-esteem
- _____ 11. Prospects for having impact on those who know you and possibly others
- _____ 12. Sex life
- _____ 13. Body, how it looks and performs
- _____ 14. Home life
- _____ 15. Life skills and knowledge of issues and facts unrelated to your job or profession
- _____ 16. Learned stress management capacities
- _____ 17. Nutritional knowledge, attitudes, and choices
- _____ 18. Ability to recover from disappointment, hurts, setbacks, and tragedies

- _____ 19. Confidence that you currently are, or will in the future be, reasonably close to your highest potential.
- _____ 20. Achievement of a rounded or balanced quality in your life
- _____ 21. Sense that life for you is on an upward curve, getting better and fuller all the time
- _____ 22. Level of participation in issues and concerns beyond your immediate interests
- _____ 23. Choice whether to parent or not and with the consequences or results of that choice
- _____ 24. Role in some kind of network of friends, relatives, and/or others about whom you care deeply and who reciprocate that commitment to you.
- _____ 25. Emotional acceptance of the inescapable reality of aging

Total _____

Ardell Wellness Stress Test Interpretation

+ 51 to + 75 You are a self-actualized person, nearly immune from the ravages of stress. There are few, if any, challenges likely to untrack you from a sense of near total well-being.

+ 25 to + 50 You have mastered the wellness approach to life and have the capacity to deal creatively and efficiently with events and circumstances.

+ 1 to + 24 You are a wellness-oriented person, with an ability to prosper as a whole person, but you should give a bit more attention to optimal health concepts and skill building.

0 to - 24 You are a candidate for additional training in how to deal with stress. A sudden increase in potentially negative events and circumstances could cause a severe emotional setback.

- 25 to - 50 You are a candidate for counseling. You are either too pessimistic or have severe problems in dealing with stress.

- 51 to - 75 You are a candidate for major psychological care with virtually no capacity for coping with life's problems.

(Adapted from High Level Wellness: An Alternative to Doc, Drugs and Disease by Don Ardell)

Look back at the items in the Ardell Wellness Stress Test. Identify which items related more to physical health, to mental health, to emotional health, to spiritual health, and to social health. Do you see any patterns develop? For instance, are more areas of disappointment related to physical health than to social health? Remember, for holistic health we are seeking a balance in all dimensions of health.

Source: <http://faculty.weber.edu/molpin/healthclasses/1110/bookchapters/selfassessmentchapter.htm>

Stress Coping Resources Inventory:
A Self-Assessment

Instructions: People differ remarkably in their responses to potentially stressful events. For instance, about one in ten hostages comes out of captivity a mentally healthier person than when entering, while the others may face extreme emotional difficulty. What are the factors associated with coping success? The questions below relate to factors most closely associated with the capacity to cope successfully with stress. Circle the letter which lists the option that you choose. Answer each question as honestly as possible.

1. How frequently do you moderately exercise?
 - a. Daily or more often
 - b. Once or twice a week
 - c. Once or twice a month
 - d. Seldom

2. How often do you get a full, restful night of sleep?
 - a. Most every night
 - b. Four to five times a each week
 - c. Two to three times each week
 - d. Seldom

3. To what extent is your energy sufficient for our work and daily activities?
 - a. to a very great extent
 - b. to some extent
 - c. to little extent
 - d. to very little extent

4. How closely does your weight approach the ideal level?
 - a. My weight is at the ideal level
 - b. My weight is close to the idea level
 - c. My weight is not close to the ideal level
 - d. I am dangerously overweight (underweight)

5. To what extent do you eat a nutritious diet?
 - a. to a very great extent
 - b. to some extent
 - c. to little extent
 - d. to very little extent

6. Which of the following best describes your use of tobacco?
 - a. In no period of my life have I had the habit of smoking or chewing tobacco.
 - b. Early in my life for a short period I smoked or chewed tobacco
 - c. I stopped smoking or chewing tobacco over the past two years
 - d. I currently smoke or chew tobacco

7. Which of the following best describes your use of alcohol?
 - a. I do not abuse alcohol, and never have. (Abuse is defined as drinking more than two drinks within a short period such as an evening.)
 - b. Very occasionally I abuse alcohol.
 - c. I have a history of abusing alcohol, but am not presently abusing it.
 - d. I am presently abusing alcohol.

8. To what extent do you believe that you have a history of coping well with highly stressful situations?
 - a. to a very great extent
 - b. to a great extent
 - c. to a little extent
 - d. to a very little extent

9. How confident are you of being able to control your emotions in stressful situations?
 - a. I never let my emotions run away with me.
 - b. I seldom let my emotions run away with me.
 - c. I sometimes let my emotions run away with me.
 - d. I often let my emotions run away with me.

10. When things are not going well, how likely are you to view the situation as being temporary rather than permanent?
 - a. very likely
 - b. likely
 - c. unlikely
 - d. very unlikely

11. When something bad happens to you, how likely are you to exaggerate its importance?
 - a. very unlikely
 - b. unlikely
 - c. likely
 - d. very likely

12. When stressed by a complex situation, how likely are you to focus your attention on those aspects of the situation that you can manage?
 - a. very likely
 - b. likely
 - c. unlikely
 - d. very unlikely

13. When highly stressed, how capable are you of changing your thinking to calm down?
 - a. very capable
 - b. capable
 - c. incapable
 - d. very incapable

14. When confronted with a stressful situation, how likely are you to wait passively for events to develop rather than to take charge?
- very unlikely
 - unlikely
 - likely
 - very likely
15. Which of the following courses of action are you most likely to take when you have become thoroughly frustrated?
- identify an alternate goal and pursue it
 - pursue a relaxing activity
 - withdraw and feel sorry for yourself
 - vent your aggression on someone weaker than you
16. If you had worn an article of clothing one day and then found it to be flawed, how likely would you be to return it and ask for a refund?
- very likely
 - likely
 - unlikely
 - very unlikely
17. When an unexpected, negative event happens to you, how likely are you to actively seek information about the event and how to cope with it?
- very likely
 - likely
 - unlikely
 - very unlikely
18. How much decision-making power do you have in your family?
- more power than any other member of my family
 - as much power as any other member of my family
 - less power than most members of my family
 - less power than any other member of my family
19. How much decision-making power do you have in your working environment? (if not working outside the home at present, use your last job as a basis for answering this question.)
- more power than most members of my work team
 - as much power as any other member of my work team
 - less power than most members of my work team
 - less power than any other member of my work team
20. To what extent do you believe that events in your life are merely the result of luck, fate, or chance?
- to very little extent
 - to little extent
 - to some extent
 - to a great extent
21. What is your best guess as to the extent and quality of contact you had with your parent(s) shortly after birth?
- was given an above average amount of contact by happy parent(s)
 - was given an average amount of contact by happy parent(s)
 - was given an average amount of contact by unhappy (perhaps angry) parent(s)
 - was given a below average amount of contact by unhappy (perhaps angry) parent(s)

22. During your early childhood, to what extent was your mother both calm and generally permissive?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
23. How easily do you make friends in a strange situation?
- very easily
 - easily
 - uneasily
 - very uneasily
24. When highly stressed, how likely are you to ask friends or relatives for help?
- very likely
 - likely
 - unlikely
 - very unlikely
25. In comparison with other people, how likely are you to see others as threatening, uncooperative, or exploitative?
- highly unlikely
 - unlikely
 - likely
 - highly likely
26. How often are you confused about the intentions of others toward you?
- very infrequently
 - infrequently
 - frequently
 - very frequently
27. To what extent are you aware of practical, healthy ways of relaxing?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
28. How frequently do you pursue some highly relaxing practice?
- daily or more often
 - once or twice a week
 - once or twice a month
 - seldom
29. How often do you engage in a spiritual practice such as prayer, mediation, or inspirational reading to enrich your interior life?
- daily or more often
 - once or twice a week
 - once or twice a month
 - seldom

30. How connected do you feel to your conception of a higher power or to a worthy cause?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
31. To what extent do you believe your life has purpose?
- to a very great extent
 - to some extent
 - to little extent
 - to very little extent
32. How much contact do you have with what you would consider a spiritual community?
- very much
 - much
 - very little
 - none

Scoring Legend

Please note that the scoring legend has been derived rationally, not empirically. Nevertheless, you might find it interesting to compute your score for each of the scales below using the following legend: 'a' = 4; 'b' = 3; 'c' = 2; 'd' = 1.

- Wellness Scale (sum of scores for questions 1-7 divided by 7) _____
- Thought Control Scale (sum of scores for questions 8-13, divided by 6) _____
- Active Coping Scale (sum of scores for questions 14-20, divided by 7) _____
- Social Ease Scale (sum of scores for questions 21-26, divided by 6) _____
- Tension reduction Scale (sum of scores for questions 27-28, divided by 2) _____
- Spiritual Practice Scale (sum of scores for questions 29-32 divided by 4) _____
- Overall Score (sum of the scale scores above, divided by 6) _____

Interpreting Your Score. A perfect score on each scale would be 4. With this in mind, we might construct the following interpretive key:

- An overall score of 3.5+ suggests you may be a superior stresscoper.
- An overall score of 2.5-3.4 suggests you may be an above average stresscoper.
- An overall score of 1.5-2.4 suggests you may be an average stresscoper.
- An overall score of less than 1.5 suggests you may be a below average stresscoper.

Source: *'Write Your Own Prescription for Stress'*
 Kenneth B. Matheny, Ph.D., ABPP and Christopher J. McCarthy, Ph.D. ~ 2000

Other On-Demand Resources

Coping with COVID-19 video series

Coping with Uncertainty About COVID-19

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/361653968327770625>

Navigating Your Work From Home Transition

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5661341796463206413>

Why Can't I Stop Eating? How Emotions Impact Our Eating During the COVID-19 Pandemic

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7310056184047236363>

Managing Worry & Anxiety Amid COVID-19

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5849777199011950859>

Tools to Handle COVID-19-Related Stress

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1720001629480681227>

Self-Isolating Together During the Pandemic

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/7460106535889954059>

Being an Effective Manager During COVID-19

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/1835434957234423819>

Source: CompPsych (EAP)



Stress Management & Support Leadership Toolkit



TriHealth Resources & Programs to Help Your Team Thrive through Stressful Times

Meditation Series

Eight sessions to improved focus,
less stress and enhanced well-being



Despite common misconceptions, meditation does not require someone to clear the mind of all thought, nor does it demand years of practice to gain any benefit. In reality, anyone can learn to meditate, and many people report experiencing a benefit with just one session. However, the best way to understand the lasting benefits of meditation is through continued practice.

The **TriHealth Meditation Series** introduces participants to a variety of meditation practices. Each session reviews a specific type of meditation, its use and associated benefits, followed by a guided meditation practice led by a TriHealth Wellness Coach:

[Session 1: Mindfulness Meditation](#)

[Session 2: Body Scan](#)

[Session 3: Guided Imagery](#)

[Session 4: Focused Attention](#)

[Session 5: Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#)

[Session 6: Relax Under Pressure](#)

[Session 7: Visualization](#)

[Session 8: Breath Awareness Meditation](#)

Each recorded WebEx presentation lasts approximately 20 to 30 minutes. For additional information on meditation practices and other stress-reducing programs.

Benefits of Meditation

- Decreases Stress
- Promotes Clarity
- Increases Happiness
- Boosts Efficiency
- Lowers Blood Pressure
- Heightens Problem-Solving Abilities
- Reduces Anxiety
- Circumvents Burnout
- Improves Focus
- Reduces Pain
- Promotes Relaxation
- Enhances Overall Well-being

Mindfulness Apps



TEN
PERCENT
HAPPIER

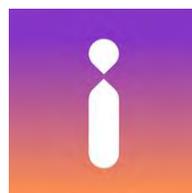
Ten Percent Happier is a Mindful Meditation App that allows you to listen to courses, podcasts, or books through the app to aid in sleep, stress, anxiety and meditation. Downloading the app gives you the freedom to listen to these options anywhere you are.



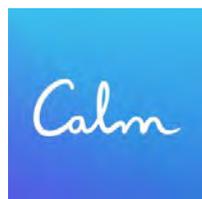
Sattva draws meditations from ancient vedic principles. In addition to 6-minute guided meditations to app features sacred sounds, chants, mantras and music by Sanskrit scholars.



Headspace is a mobile app that includes guided meditation, animations, articles and videos with the mission of improving health



Inscape is a meditation studio in NYC that provides an extension of their zen room where teachers guide you through mindfulness practice through the app. The meditations, music, and breathing exercises are available as recommendations based on your goals, time of day and familiarity with meditating.



Calm is an application both available on a computer and mobile app. Calm focuses on making the world happier and healthier with over 50 million downloads. Choices from Meditation, Sleep, Music, body, masterclass and scenes you are sure to find the right fit for your body.



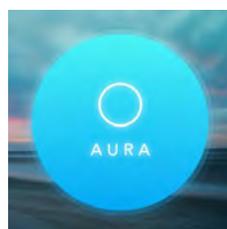
Smiling Mind was developed by a psychologist to encourage mindfulness practice as a pillar of wellness, similar to daily exercise, good sleep and healthy eating. The app features a 10-minute daily meditation broken down into age categories (7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16-18 and adults). There are also specific programs for group use.



Many of the most experienced mindfulness teachers are on this app. It allows you to pick and choose depending on how long you have to practice and what style you would like. Just set a timer and sit without guidance.



Simple Habit features five minute meditations from top mindfulness experts at google to former monks. You can also find coaching, motivational guides and bedtime stories on this app along with classic guided meditations.



Fans of Aura like it for its daily meditations, life coaching, nature sounds and stories based on the mood you select when opening the app. You can also track your moods for reviewing patterns.



Buddhify offers over 200 meditations to help with anxiety, stress, sleep, pain and tough emotions. With several different teachers, you are sure to find the voice and style that resonates with you.



Stress Management & Support Leadership Toolkit

Stress Management Group Exercises

Breathe!

Time: 30 seconds

Materials: None

Group Exercise Instructions

Start each Huddle or Team Meeting with this quick but effective stress reducer. Ask all team members to stand very straight, close their eyes, inhale deeply through the nose and raise their arms above their head. Then slowly exhale and lower their arms. Repeat this cycle for 30 seconds.

Leader Discussion

Emphasize that when we feel stressed, our breathing often becomes shallow and quick. If we take just 30 seconds to slow down and focus on taking deep full breaths, we can impact our stress level.

Trigger Points

Time: 45 minutes for groups of approximately 10 team members

Materials: A piece of paper and pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

- Ask each team member to write down 3 priority stressors they find difficult to manage.
- Ask them not to write their name on list.
- Collect the lists, shuffle then distribute them.
- Ask each team member to read the list they received and share how they would manage the stressful situations.

Leader Discussion

Emphasize that we all have different ways to manage our stressors. We can learn new stress management skills from each other through this discussion.

Ashok NaraYanan



Stress Management & Support Leadership Toolkit

Stress Management Group Exercises

Co-Worker Support in Stressful Times

Time: 45 minutes for groups of approximately 10 team members

Materials: A piece of paper and pen for each team member

Group Exercise Instructions

This exercise works best with a team in which most have worked together for a while.

Ask everyone to write their name at the top of a piece of paper.

Then add the following two sentences to finish.

1. What I need my co-workers to do when I'm stressed is ... (finish the sentence)
2. What I need my co-workers NOT to do when I'm stressed is ... (finish the sentence)

The leader then collects the completed sentences and every member of the team is given a copy.

Each member is then given the opportunity to say why these tactics are helpful.

Leader Discussion

Leaders can emphasize team members have different needs and we should not assume what we need or don't need is the same for others.

Gail Page, Positive Pathways

Negative Event Flip

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Flipchart Paper

Group Exercise Instructions

- Divide your team into two groups and distribute two flipchart papers to each group
- Ask each group to write down 3 sentences that describe a negative, stressful situation. For example, "My car broke down this morning on my way to work."
- Ask the groups to stick their flipcharts to the wall.
- Ask the groups to list as many positive points as possible about the negative situations on both flipcharts (theirs and the other group's) on separate flipcharts.
- Each group should work on its own.

Leader Discussion

Emphasize how changing perspective has an impact on how we experience stressful events. We can learn something from all situations, even negative ones, and the learning experience can alleviate our stress related to that event.

Skills Converged



Virtual Fitness Channel

TriHealth Corporate Health's online YouTube Fitness Channel allows employees to participate in a variety of live and previously recorded group fitness classes outside of a fitness studio. These can be done in an office setting or from the comfort of your home. All that is required is a computer or mobile device with access to the internet.

Class Specifics

All online group fitness classes are taught by degreed, certified health and fitness professionals from the TriHealth team. Our current video library consists of the following options:

- Cardio, strength, core and flexibility formats
- Classes ranging from 10-45 minutes in length
- Classes suitable for all levels of fitness from beginner to expert
- Classes requiring little to no equipment
- Tutorials on how to perform specific exercises
- One-on-one discussions with TriHealth team members

YouTube Channel Link

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHp4b63AlzKoTNCyfecz1Xg/playlists?view_as=subscriber

1. Type the address above into your internet browser
2. Save the address in your favorites
3. If interested, you can become a subscriber of the channel by clicking on the red "Subscribe" box

Disclaimer: TriHealth Corporate Health strongly recommends that you consult with your physician before beginning any exercise program. You should be in good physical condition and able to participate in the exercise.



Virtual Presentations

Workplace Wellbeing & Fitness



In addition to our existing programs, we have expanded our virtual presentation offerings to help meet the need for enhanced remote options. Each of the 30-40 minute, recorded WebEx presentations can be accessed by clicking the topic link.

- **Create Healthy Habits**

This presentation provides the foundation of building powerful habit goals to create new healthy habits that stick. Each participant also has the opportunity to create a personalized habit goal and action plan.

- **Reduce Stress and Build Resiliency**

This presentation offers both short- and long-term strategies to cope with stress and adapt quickly to our ever-changing environments.

- **Healthy Sleep, Healthy Mind, Healthy You**

This presentation reviews the health benefits of quality sleep, the consequences of inadequate sleep, and a variety of strategies to help participants get the sleep they need.

- **Reducing Muscle Tension in Times of Stress**

This presentation covers the different causes of muscle tension and how stress impacts musculoskeletal pain. It also covers a variety of strategies, other than stretching, to counteract and relieve muscle tension and pain. A recorded session for this WebEx presentation is not yet available; however, a session can be arranged for any size group. Call 513 891 1622 to schedule.

- **TriHealth Meditation Series**

This series walks participants through different types of meditations as well as guides them in actual meditation sessions to help discover what techniques or exercises work best for the individual.