



Department of Psychiatry

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

# Balancing your Mental Health in a Pandemic: Mitigating Health Professional Burnout as a Stress Injury

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**BRAIN HEALTH** for all, for life.

# Disclosures



*We have no conflicts of interest with any commercial interests/ineligible companies.*

# Objectives



Participants will learn signs and symptoms of mental health distress and burnout.



Participants will learn the Stress Continuum as a self-awareness tool to mitigate impact of stress and burnout.



Participants will learn positive self-care strategies and importance of "charging your battery".



Participants will learn when and how to seek help or suggest help to others.



# What is mental health?

- How we think.
- How we act.
- How we feel.



→ How might COVID affect these things in our life the past year?



# Signs of a mental health issue developing

\*(notice changes for the individual)



## Physical

- Changes in sleep
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Panic attacks
- Headaches, stomach aches, dizziness, nausea
- Unexplained aches & pains
- Low libido
- GI issues
- Irregular menstrual cycle

## Psychological

- Loss of interest or not feeling joy from things that normally bring joy
- Impaired memory or concentration
- Mood swings or lack of emotion
- Indecisiveness or confusion
- Irritability or getting angry easily with others (“snappy”)
- Feeling down, not yourself, “off,”
- Feeling overwhelmed constantly
- Feeling hazy, foggy or blank
- Hallucinations or Delusions
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Persistent worrying or rumination
- Anger, sadness, anxiety, guilt, apathy

## Behavioral

- Lashing out on others
- Crying spells
- Isolating / desire to withdrawal from others
- Use of drugs or alcohol
- Neglecting responsibilities (i.e. not showing up to lecture or lab)
- Decrease in personal appearance or hygiene

## Other contributors

- Relationship problems
- Others showing concern
- Recent trauma (i.e. car accident, assault, robbery)
- Major life changes (moving, marriage, child birth, relationship ending, loss of loved one)

## Symptoms of Burnout

Physicians who are burned out may experience many symptoms, including:<sup>8,9</sup>

- ☐ Absenteeism
- ☐ Reduced job satisfaction
- ☐ Decreased self-esteem
- ☐ Increased medical errors
- ☐ Insomnia
- ☐ Withdrawal and isolation
- ☐ Decreased productivity
- ☐ Feelings of anxiety
- ☐ Being irritable with patients
- ☐ Exhaustion
- ☐ Feelings of depression
- ☐ Suicidal ideation
- ☐ Changing careers or early retirement
- ☐ Impaired concentration and attention
- ☐ Relationship problems both at home and at work
- ☐ Use of alcohol or other drugs, including prescription drugs, to cope
- ☐ Feeling detached from peers, patients, family and friends
- ☐ Experiencing dread before going to work

**Emotional exhaustion**  
**Depersonalization**  
**Reduced personal accomplishment**





# Noticing signs of burnout

- Notice changes in you
- Notice how you cope and deal with day-to-day stress
  - Does it feel harder, heavier, or more difficult to get by?
- How are you showing up to your day? Your relationships?
- Notice *any changes* in patterns of sleep, appetite, or energy
- “I just need to push through this”
- Pretending a problem doesn’t exist and expecting it to go away on its own does not work!



# But isn't stress bad for us?



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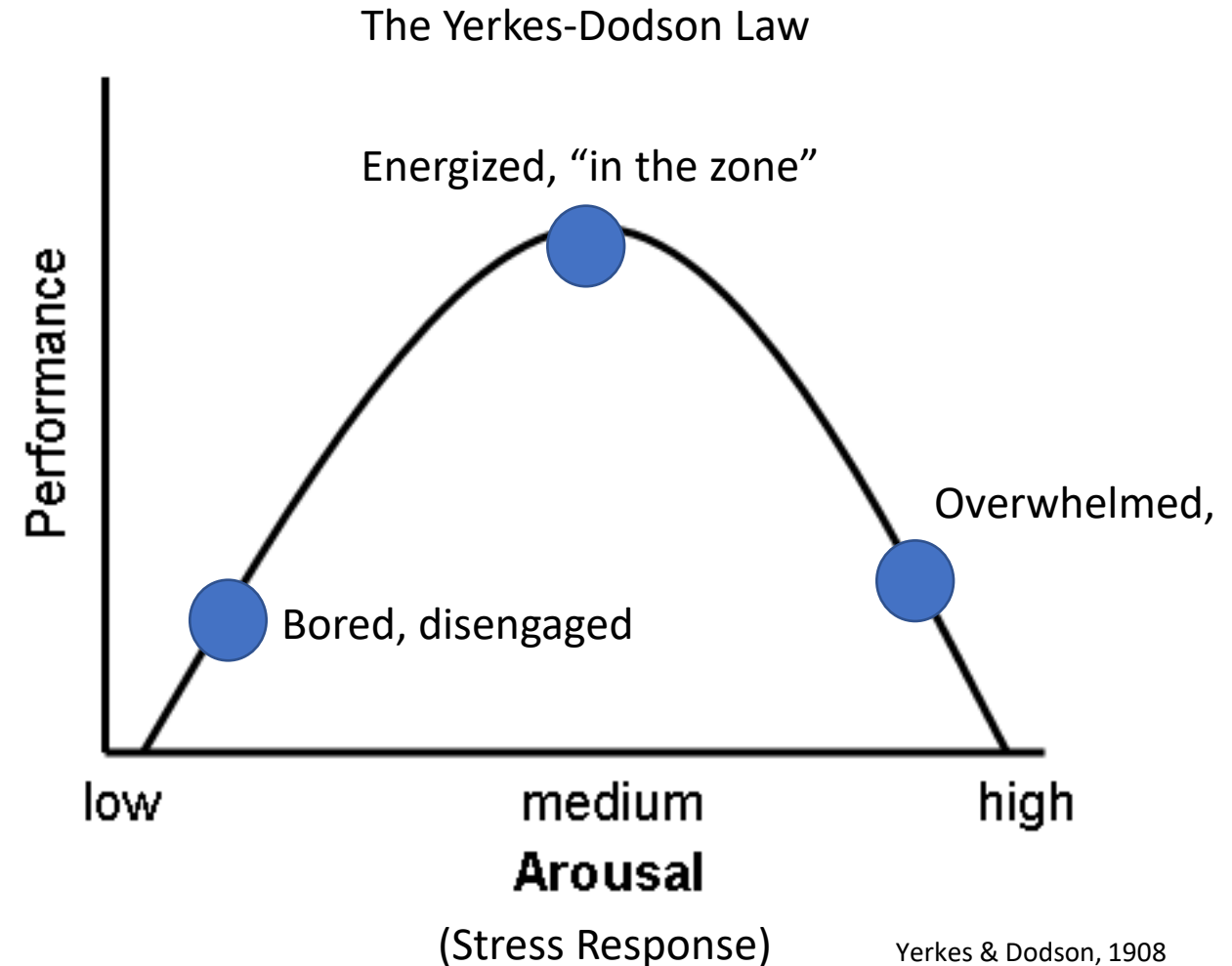
**BRAIN HEALTH** for all, for life.

The biological stress response can go from adaptive and performance enhancing to maladaptive and performance impairing when:

1. It is triggered too easily
  - “I get anxious/worked up/irritable about the smallest things”
2. The response is overly intense
  - “Flying off the handle”, Panic attacks
3. It lasts too long and doesn't shut off: **CHRONIC STRESS**

*The Yerkes-Dodson Law (The Goldilocks Principle of Stress)*  
Optimal performance and adaptation for any given situation occurs when the stress response is “just right.”

Used with permission, Novick, 2020





# RESPONDER STRESS CONTINUUM

## READY

Sense Of Mission  
Spiritually &  
Emotionally Healthy  
Physically Healthy  
Emotionally Available  
Healthy Sleep  
Gratitude  
Vitality  
Room For Complexity

## REACTING

Sleep Loss  
Change In Attitude  
Criticism  
Avoidance  
Loss Of Interest  
Distance  
From Others  
Short Fuse  
Cutting Corners  
Loss Of Creativity  
Lack Of Motivation  
Fatigue

## INJURED

Sleep Issues  
Emotional Numbness  
Burnout  
Nightmares  
Disengaged  
Exhausted  
Physical Symptoms  
Feeling Trapped  
Relationships  
Suffering  
Isolation

## CRITICAL

Insomnia  
Hopelessness  
Anxiety & Panic  
Depression  
Intrusive Thoughts  
Feeling Lost Or  
Out Of Control  
Blame  
Hiding Out  
Broken Relationships  
Thoughts Of Suicide

# STRESS CONTINUUM QUOTES IN HEALTH CARE

## READY

*Cognitively I say...*

"I'm looking forward to..."  
"This is really challenging,  
but I can do it"  
"How can I help you?"  
"I need to recharge"  
"I see your point"

*Physically I feel \_\_\_\_\_*  
*Emotionally I feel \_\_\_\_\_*  
Others notice I may act  
\_\_\_\_\_

## REACTING

"I don't feel like myself"  
"I'm just holding on until  
this is over"  
"I'm sick of wearing  
masks, I'm just going to  
risk it"  
"I just can't keep up"  
"I'm tired and drained"  
"I'm not doing enough"

## INJURED

"I can't do this anymore"  
"It's just a matter of time  
until I get sick"  
"What's next?"  
"I can't handle this much  
longer"  
"Nobody understands  
what I'm going through"  
"I'm too busy to ask for  
help"

## CRITICAL

"What I do doesn't matter"  
"I don't know who I am  
anymore"  
"I'm slowly unravelling"  
"It's never going to get  
better"  
"I feel like I'm  
suffocating"  
"This feels like the  
apocalypse"  
"I give up"

Change in worldview



# STRESS CONTINUUM FOR THE TEAM

## READY

Transparency  
Vulnerability  
Requests for help  
met with Support  
Connection  
Team approach to  
overwhelm  
Curiosity Culture  
**Mission  
Satisfaction**

## REACTING

Normalizing  
depletion  
Staff dreading  
work  
Mistakes are  
personal  
Transactional  
communication  
Requests for help  
are criticized  
**Mission drift**

## INJURED

Resources scarce  
Rigid perspectives  
Members  
undervalued  
Communication  
Silos  
Suffering in silence  
Helplessness  
**Mission fatigue**

## CRITICAL

Cliques and  
hierarchy  
Lack of trust  
Gas lighting  
Culture of blame  
Vulnerability  
punished  
Fear at work  
Hopelessness  
**Moral Injuries**

Mission Satisfaction/Mission Drift



# COVID-19 Stress Continuum

**Minimize exposure** – Avoid unnecessary exposure. Schedule exposed check ins.

**Potential** – Awareness of stress injury formation

[MOI: overwhelmed, emotional connection, helplessness, error/guilt, isolation, near-miss, fatalities]

**Signs & Symptoms** – Ready | Reacting | Injured | Critical *(See below)*

**Follow up** – On-site debrief, one-on-one, peers/leadership, incident support

**Plan for exposure** – Utilize peer, leadership and provisional help (for you & team members)

## IMPACT → INJURY

### Signs & Symptoms

| READY  | REACTING  | INJURED   | CRITICAL  |
|--|---|---|---|
| COVID-19; <i>This is going to be hard, but we can do this.</i>   | COVID-19; <i>and the government isn't doing anything.</i>   | COVID-19; <i>I'm going to hide until this is over.</i>  | COVID-19; <i>My life is over.</i>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm alarmed (and I'm going to look for resources)</li> <li>• Sense of Mission</li> <li>• Realistic, concerned but moving forward</li> <li>• Appropriate cleaning and social distancing</li> <li>• PBR – Pause, Breath, Repeat</li> <li>• Supporting other team members</li> <li>• Creative connection</li> <li>• Outward focus</li> <li>• Motivated to respond</li> <li>• Awareness and planning</li> <li>• Solution Driven</li> <li>• Kindness to self/others</li> <li>• "We're all in this together"</li> <li>• Practicing Gratitude</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm alarmed (and there's not enough to go around)</li> <li>• I don't like Teleworking</li> <li>• Short Fuse</li> <li>• Fear based cleaning and isolation</li> <li>• Communication breaking down</li> <li>• Feeling there is a lack of communication</li> <li>• Changes in personality</li> <li>• Fatigue/weariness</li> <li>• Teamwork breaking down</li> <li>• Decrease in high performance</li> <li>• No longer sharing ideas or</li> <li>• Temporary sleep issues, eating issues, distress</li> <li>• Spinning at work, not able to complete tasks</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm scared (and I can't stop watching the news)</li> <li>• Lack of motivation to leave the house</li> <li>• Physical symptoms</li> <li>• Exhaustion</li> <li>• Withdrawal</li> <li>• Emotional numbness</li> <li>• Increased use of numbing tools such as alcohol.</li> <li>• Performance degrading</li> <li>• Defeatist attitude</li> <li>• Complaint Driven</li> <li>• AVOIDANT- "this doesn't involve me, so I don't need to engage."</li> <li>• "This is never going to end."</li> <li>• Highly Individualized- every person for themselves."</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm terrified (and I can't breathe)</li> <li>• Hopelessness</li> <li>• Can't sleep</li> <li>• Depression</li> <li>• Thoughts of Suicide</li> <li>• Damage to relationships</li> <li>• Feeling lost or out of control</li> <li>• Unable to work</li> <li>• Complete disengagement</li> <li>• Giving up</li> <li>• Paranoia and Isolation</li> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Can never get enough supplies</li> <li>• Feelings of scarcity</li> <li>• Blaming others</li> <li>• Panic</li> <li>• Beating yourself up</li> </ul> |



# NUMBING AND SURVIVAL TOOLS

**If you know how you numb, you'll know  
when you're numbing.**



Exercise

Over/under Sleeping

Shopping

Stress eating/snacking

Alcohol/Drugs



Working/Productivity

Binge Watching TV

Technology/mindless  
scrolling

Control

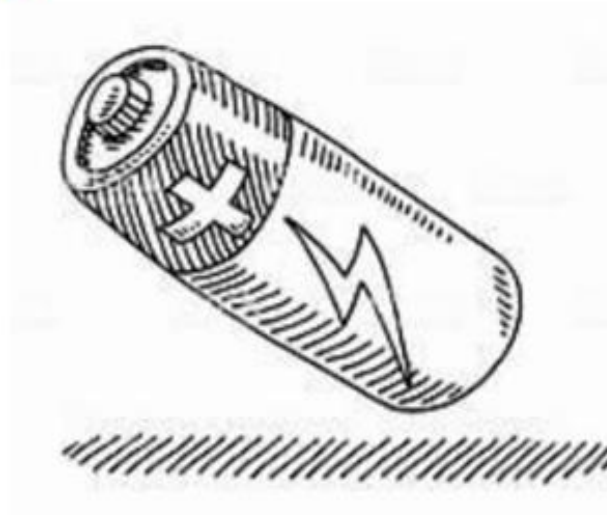
Avoidance, anxiety, anger  
or blame in relationships



# BATTERY SNAPSHOT

## What charges the battery?

Space  
Connection  
Sleep  
Movement  
Play  
Gratitude  
Innovation  
Mission Satisfaction



## What drains the battery?

Overwhelm  
Too much demand  
Broken systems  
Isolation  
Meaningless work  
Sleep deprivation  
Mission exhaustion



# BATTERY SNAPSHOT

## What charges the battery?

- ☐ Adequate sleep
- ☐ Connecting with friends and family
- ☐ Playing with my kids or pets
- ☐ Exercise or time outdoors
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



## What drains the battery?

- ☐ Long hours at work
- ☐ Not taking enough breaks
- ☐ Feeling isolated, not seeing others
- ☐ Increased demand at work/home
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐





# GREEN CHOICES



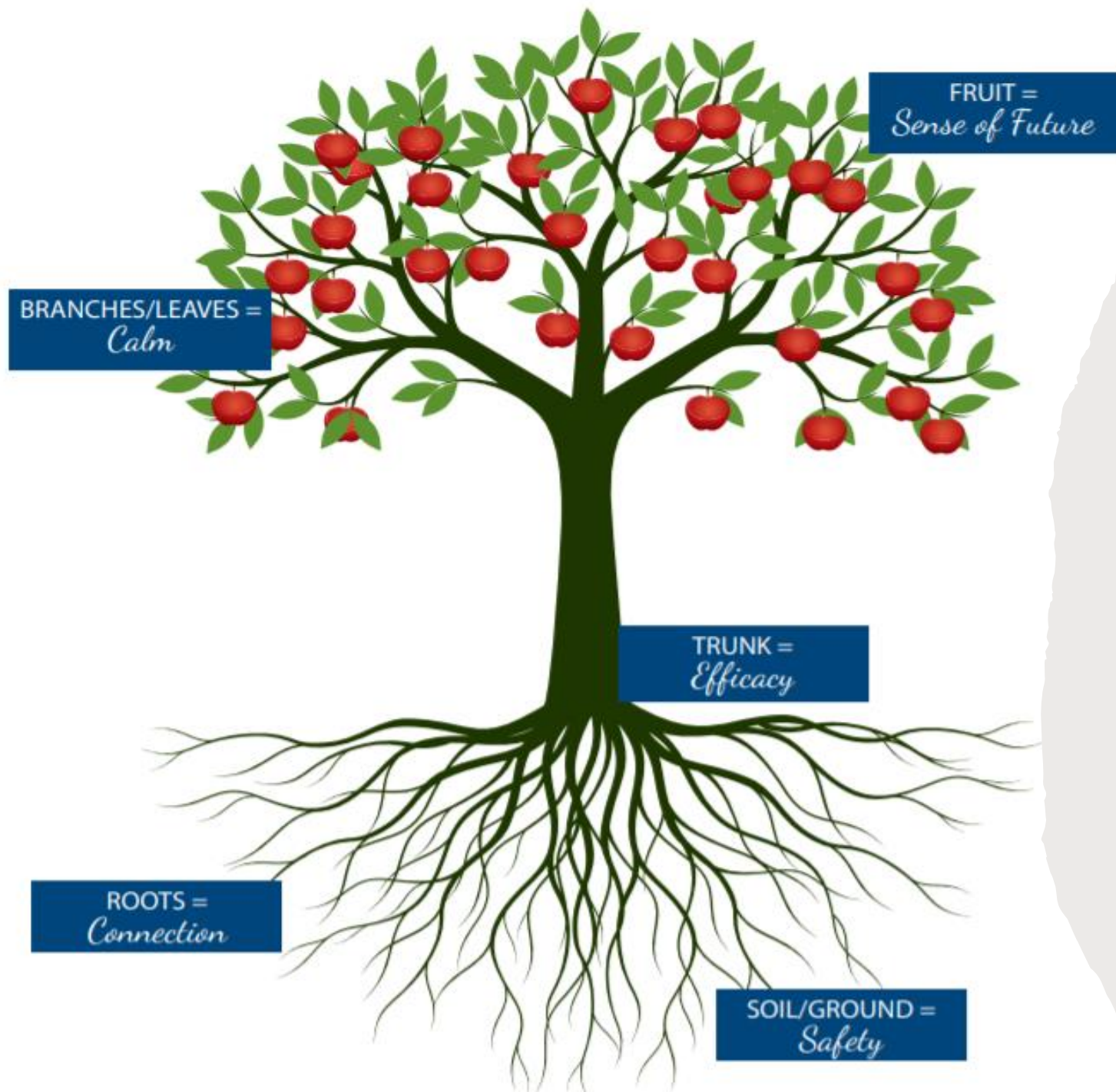
| Health                                      | At work  | Outside of Work                                   | Relationships   | Survival Tools  |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| 1.<br>Sleep 8 hours a night (5 days a week) | 1.<br>Reviewing what worked on a call vs. talking shit | 1.<br>Get to the mountains twice a month          | 1.<br>My 2 best friends known how I'm doing                 | 1.<br>One beer turns into four                          |
| 2.<br>Going on a run 3x a week              | 2.<br>Volunteer to teach a training                    | 2.<br>Have dinner with friends/family once a week | 2.<br>Choosing time with my family                          | 2.<br>Busyness/<br>Constant noise, too much screen time |
| 3.<br>Meditation/Prayer 4-5 times a week    | 3.<br>I am enjoying my work                            | 3.<br>I say "no" when I feel overwhelmed          | 3.<br>Spend time with people who aren't health care workers | 3.<br>Drinking coffee to stay awake                     |





What is YOUR Individualized Resiliency Plan?





# Individualized Resiliency Plan

- Five principles to guide and inform psychosocial intervention and prevention efforts following disasters and traumas. (Hobfoll, 2007: *Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence*)
- Your "IRP" is unique to you and is fluid, dynamic and evolving.

# Questions to guide you as you write your "IRP"



## **SAFETY**

Who do I feel I can be myself around?  
How much news or media do I need to engage in to be informed based on my values? Where do I feel safe?  
What health precautions do I take?



## **CONNECTION**

Who can I reach out to more? Have I expressed support or asked for the support I need when I need it? Who do I enjoy spending time with? What give me a sense of community?



## **EFFICACY**

Do you know what feels satisfying to you? Do you follow through with what you need when you need it? What impact did you make today/this week/this past year?



## **CALM**

What truly relaxes you or helps you return to your sense of self? What helps you lose your awareness or sense of time? How can you be more compassionate to yourself? Do you give yourself permission to relax?



## **SENSE OF FUTURE/HOPE**

What short term or long-term plans in your personal or professional life are you looking forward to? What gives you a sense of purpose, meaning and hope?

# Build capacity → **Staying Charged & Recharging when needed**

- Eat sensibly and regularly every day
- Get adequate sleep each night
- Regularly move your body
- Give yourself time to “bounce back”
- Promote teamwork/seek support when needed
- Manage expectations – 50/50 myth
- Practice healthy time management strategies
- Set good Boundaries/Limits
- Find calming practices that work for you



*“What can I do to fill my battery and trend toward green so I can be better as my self and thus in my relationships?”*

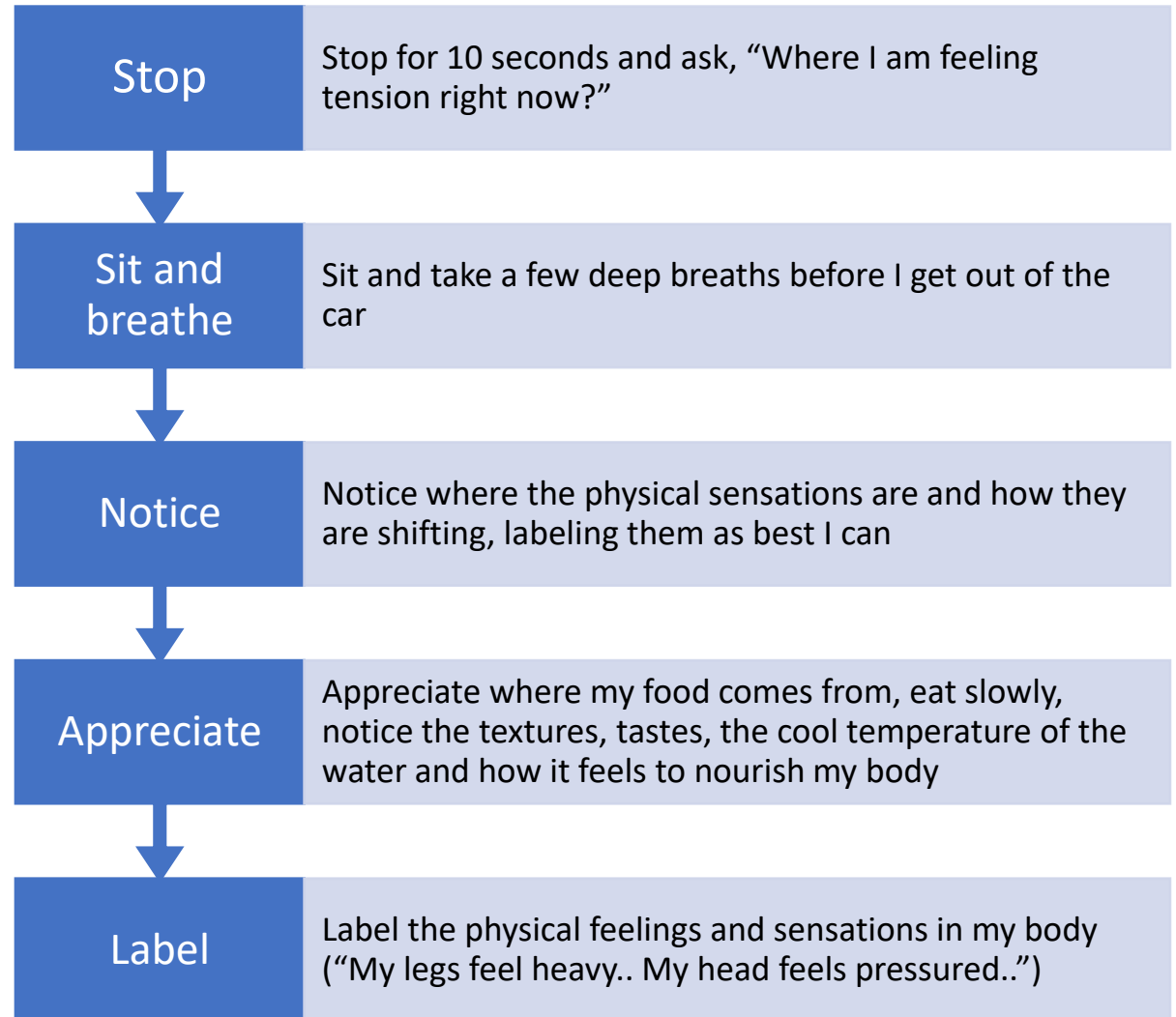


*Instead of...*



*Can I pause to...*

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Running     | into the next room or from place to place   |
| Jumping     | out of my car as soon as I get home/to work |
| Ignoring    | that headache or stomach in knots           |
| Rushing     | through my meals to eat or drink            |
| Complaining | about how tired I am                        |



# Boundaries → **Staying Charged**



What can “give”? How are you recharging?



Be flexible with yourself. Ask yourself what YOU need right now, knowing how to do that and answer honestly (efficacy) and giving that to yourself



Who or what can you say “no” to?



Let go of Perfectionism (no human should be asked to do what we are doing)



What truly is a CRISIS? What can wait?



Is anything in your reserve tank? If not, something has to give.



What are some SPECIFIC examples about what this can look like in the workplace?





# What is Self-Efficacy?

- ***Self efficacy*** refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1986, 1997)
- ***Self efficacy*** reflects **confidence** in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment.
- Role of **connection** ↔ **efficacy**



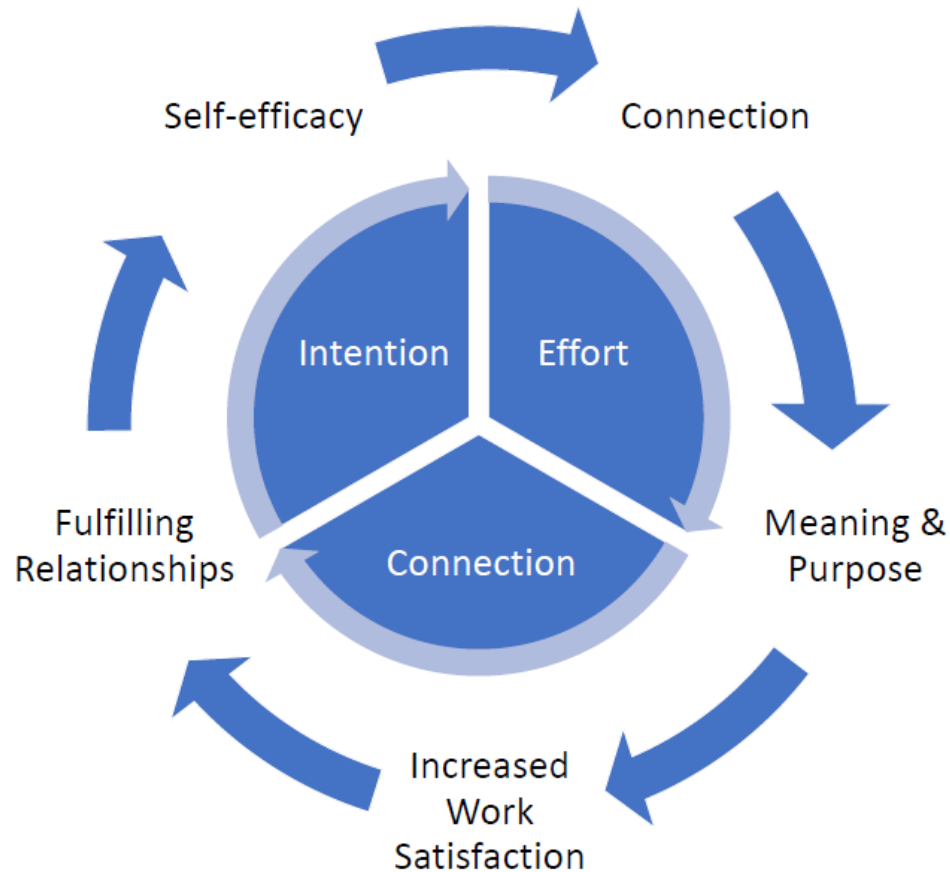
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# Build capacity → **A note on Self Efficacy and Perfectionism**

- **Flexibility** with oneself = Self Efficacy
  - Know what you need when you need it
  - Allow yourself to follow through with what you need
  - Allow yourself to cancel plans or change your mind to give yourself what you truly need
- Reduce perfectionism & practice **compassion** for yourself and others. Give yourself **grace**, and be **patient** with yourself!
  - *We can't expect ourselves to continue to show up the **same** way given a completely different set of circumstances, stressors, changes, and environment in this Pandemic.*



# Cycle of Connection



Cycle of Connection, Doria & Choi, 2020

When starting to feel *overwhelmed, stressed, shorter fused, or irritable*, it's probably a sign that you need more people in your corner.

→ What are your barriers in asking for help or support?

## STRESS CONTINUUM IN RELATIONSHIPS

| READY   | REACTING   | INJURED  | CRITICAL  |
|---|--|--|---|
| Fulfilled and Satisfied in Relationships  | Loss of Interest<br>Distanced from Others  | Inability to Resolve Conflict<br>Avoidant<br>Unsafe to Share     | Inability to Contribute<br>Relationships Feel Out of Control/Broken                               |
| <b>Feels:<br/>Valued<br/>Seen<br/>Heard<br/>Loved</b>   | <b>Feels:<br/>Distant<br/>Disengaged</b>   | <b>Feels:<br/>Conflictual<br/>Tension<br/>Blame<br/>Shame</b>    | <b>Feels:<br/>Disconnected<br/>Blaming Self or Others<br/>Lashing Out<br/>Isolating/Withdrawn</b> |
| Trust and Reliability<br>Emotionally Available<br>Open Communication<br>Supportive of Changing Dynamics | Takes a Lot of Energy to Get Together<br>Difficulty Practicing Active Listening Skills<br>Social Interaction is Often Draining | Distant from Others<br>Wanting to Isolate<br>Pushing Others Away | Apathy Toward Support<br>Feels Unsafe Physically or Emotionally<br>Contempt                       |

### CHANGE IN WORLDVIEW

*Adapted from Combat and Operational Stress First Aid by Doria, Choi & McGladrey, 2020*



## GETTING AND GIVING SUPPORT

Now try using your self-evaluation of where you are trending on the **RELATIONSHIP STRESS CONTINUUM** in combination with who you listed as your supports, and reflect on the connections you need right now. When starting to feel overwhelmed, stressed, shorter fused, or irritable, it's probably a sign that you need more people in your corner. So how can you reach out to get and give support?

reflect...



Recall a situation that you have been struggling with lately. Fill in the blank about how you could ask for support:



*"You may have noticed I've been \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, irritable/off/not myself). I've been feeling \_\_\_\_\_ lately. I'm struggling with \_\_\_\_\_ . I could really use \_\_\_\_\_ .  
Do you have space to talk something out with me?"*

It is also helpful to know when and how to suggest help to others. Research shows that people are more likely to seek help if a trusted person suggests it<sup>11</sup>. Don't underestimate the power of planting a seed of encouragement for those around you to address their mental health. Here is an example of what you might say:

*I noticed you have been \_\_\_\_\_ (list behavior or observable fact).*

*It sounds like you are \_\_\_\_\_ (list possible feeling or experience).*

*How may I help you? Would you be interested in talking to a mental health provider?*

*Example:*

***I've noticed you've been late to work and saying you feel it's hard to keep up with everything. It sounds like you are overwhelmed and trying to manage a lot. Would you be willing to talk to a support who may be able to help with your stress?***

Consider sharing a current statistic from the following page to normalize help-seeking behaviors and that **they (or you) are not alone!** Early intervention and seeking treatment when needed can decrease chronicity, improve prognosis, and reduce impact in someone's life.



# ROLE MANAGEMENT

Another important task in managing stress is recognizing that you cannot be all things to all the people in your life. Use the tools below to consider the different roles you identify with in your life, the expectations you have for yourself and that others have for you in each of these roles, and how you might need to adjust these expectations to reduce stress and increase self-efficacy. You may give yourself a rating or percentage, use a word or phrase, or provide any examples that come to mind when filling out the chart below.

| Roles   | How would I like to be able to show up? | How am I actually showing up? | Who might I dissappoint in this process? |
|---|---|-------------------------------|--|
| Worker<br>Partner<br>Friend<br>Child<br>Self-care<br>Parent<br><br><input type="radio"/><br><input type="radio"/><br><input type="radio"/><br><input type="radio"/> |   |                               |  |



reflect...



### *Creating better connections*

If you had to change how you're showing up in one or more of the roles you listed to reduce stress and align more closely with your values, what would that look like?

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How can you communicate more clearly with those impacted to gain support and help them understand what they can and should expect from you? *See example below.*

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What barriers prevent you from open communication and how might you confront or deal with them (e.g., fear of hurting or burdening others, people pleasing, social anxiety, time and burnout)?

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**Follow up with action:** To make myself better, I will \_\_\_\_\_.  
To make my relationships better, I will \_\_\_\_\_.

***"I am struggling to take care of myself and I'm feeling really stressed recently. I want to take 20 minutes to go for a walk first thing in the morning a few days a week to blow off some steam and I know that means I won't be helping to get breakfast ready. I hope you'll support me in this and help me find other ways to contribute."***

# Practicing self-compassion



Consider the “emotional weight” of the day and how you are going to cope with and let go of the day



Photo source: <https://i.huffpost.com/gen/1430206/thumbs/o-COMPASSION-facebook.jpg>



Getting outdoors, reading, baths, time with pets, massage, exercise, getting takeout from your favorite restaurant, watching your favorite movie, tea/coffee, chatting with friends, time with family, trying new hobbies, listening to stories & creating new memories.

***Remember this is still by no means a normal time. Any additional stressors are going to be felt in a heavier or deeper way.***

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# BATTERY SNAPSHOT

## What charges the battery?

- ☐ Adequate sleep
- ☐ Connecting with friends and family
- ☐ Playing with my kids or pets
- ☐ Exercise or time outdoors
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



## What drains the battery?

- ☐ Long hours at work
- ☐ Not taking enough breaks
- ☐ Feeling isolated, not seeing others
- ☐ Increased demand at work/home
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

STOP:

KEEP:

START:



# Takeaways from Today



- ☒ Label where you are “trending” on the **Stress Continuum**. What are some signs that you may be trending toward the yellow/orange or even red?
- ☒ Reflect on **Battery** Charges/Depletions often
- ☒ “Traffic light”: What can you **STOP** doing / **START** doing / **KEEP** doing?
- ☒ Name something you can say “no” to or do the bare minimum on.
- ☒ List 3 **supports** in your network you can go to when you need support.
- ☒ Name one thing that makes you feel good about your work (and just do that). Showing up is the best job we can do, for ourselves and others/our patients!



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# *Past the Pandemic: Coping in Covid*

*October 5 – November 9 Wednesdays at 8:00am*

COVID-19 HAS UPENDED CLINICIANS' SENSE OF ORDER  
AND CONTROL. SUCH DISRUPTIONS MAY LEAD TO  
SUBSTANTIAL STRESS AND A HIGHER RISK FOR BURNOUT.



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# Past the Pandemic: Series goals



- To recognize signs and symptoms of stress and burnout.
- Prevent impact of stress injury.
- Build competence in responding to stress in the Pandemic.
- Promote connection with other health care workers during this time.



PAST THE PANDEMIC  
*mental wellbeing*  
**TOOLKIT**

  
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Interested in Registering or more  
info on future work with Teams?

Email:

[Pastthepandemic@Cuanschutz.edu](mailto:Pastthepandemic@Cuanschutz.edu)



Register for  
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# Past the Pandemic: *Series Topics*



1. Stress and the Human Machine: Impact of Stress on Mind, Body and Living a Life You Love
2. Digging Deeper: How the Biology of Stress Informs Burnout Prevention
3. Managing What We've Lost: Mourning, Growing, and Finding Meaning
4. Staying Connected: Communication, Relationships, and Role Management
5. Sleep, Movement and Nutrition: Cultivating Your Human Machine
6. Use of Mindfulness Practices to Approach Burnout, Stress and Uncertainty

Co-facilitators for the Series: Mandy Doria and Leslie Choi  
ECHO Coordinator: Crystal Chapparo

Resources for each week were  
provided and posted for every topic.



# Resources

## **Well-being Support Line (for Healthcare Workforce & Educators in Colorado)**

- 303-724-2500 – Accepts calls and texts
- Staffed by trained volunteers from AMC and UC Denver with backup from licensed mental health professionals
- Can facilitate referrals to longer term treatment (UCHealth Virtual Behavioral Health) if needed

## **Physician to Physician Support Line**

- 303-724-1626
- Available for MDs and PhDs providing care to patients in Colorado and would like to talk to someone who is familiar with particular issues facing physicians

## **Colorado Crisis Services**

- 1-844-493-8255
- Text “TALK” to 38255
- <http://coloradocrisisservices.org>

## **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

- 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>

## **SAMHSA’s National Helpline**

- 1-800-662- HELP (4357)
- <https://www.samhsa.gov>



Visit [www.PastthePandemic.org](http://www.PastthePandemic.org)  
for more program offerings.  
*We hope to connect with you soon!*

[www.responderalliance.com](http://www.responderalliance.com)  
(podcasts, COVID-19 resources, other tools)



**BRAIN HEALTH** for all, for life.



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