Sonya Budeva
Teodora Todorova

EMPOWERING PRACTITIONERS IN SOCIAL WORK FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES

Handbook with tools and techniques

EPSWRA

Erasmus+

EMPOWERING PRACTITIONERS IN SOCIAL WORK FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES

Handbook with tools and techniques

First Edition

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EMPOWERING PRACTITIONERS IN SOCIAL WORK FROM RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Find out more at our blog: https://epswraproject.art.blog/ and our Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/Epswra-Project-277292906295720

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PREFACE

Training and learning methodologies are changing in the field of social work, and there is an increase in the use of technology, best practice sharing and reflective practice. The EPSWRA project has collected and evaluated useful and practical approaches and techniques for two years across seven countries.

The experience and knowledge gained over the project have been compiled into this guide, which seeks to capture and transmit some of the wisdom and progress made, as well as markers to what to avoid.

The first part of the guide includes good practices for prevention and coping with burnout syndrome, as self-care techniques, supervision, time-management, professional networks and others.

The second part describes good practices for empowerment of helping professionals in decision-making and their daily work, as volunteering, community engagement, collaboration and other.

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INTRODUCTION

The helping professions are necessary and important professions for every member of our society. Helping professionals have consistently high demands placed on them. They help vulnerable populations in highly regulated settings that can be challenging to navigate. Helping professionals are often driven to help those in need and a complicated system in which to perform this job increases the stress level of helping professionals. Some helping professionals experience high demands and low pay; while others experience the threat of being exposed to violence and non-traditional working hours. Some helping professionals experience limited support, high staff turnover, limited access to resources, and instability in funding sources for their salaries. All of these factors, and many more, can contribute to high workplace stress and even lead to burnout.

The risks for professionals in social sphere having high stress levels are not only related to the professionals themselves, but to the clients they work with. A helping professional who is experiencing high levels of ongoing stress may have more non-working days due to the physical symptoms of stress and the mental fatigue. They may also experience a low morale and feeling of dissatisfaction in their daily job. Professionals exposed to chronic stress are at higher risk of mistakes in their work. They may also experience more interpersonal conflicts at home and in the workplace. These conflicts may lead to a decreased level of support both on and off the job. Finally, chronic stress may lead to an increased level of burnout among helping professionals, leading to high turnover rates in the places that employ helping professionals (Thorn, Sh. E., 2011).Research shows that social work client outcomes are strongly linked to the health and culture of an organization and its employees.

Stress and burnout among social work practitioners have received increasing attention in the literature. Social work is strongly client-based, with workers being involved in complex social situations. There is a commonly held belief that social work is a highly stressful occupation as a result of conflicting roles, status, functions and contexts. Social workers often have little control over whom they see, the nature and length of contacts with clients, the range of expert functions they will be requested to carry out, and the value placed by others on their work. Social workers face ever increasing pressures as the problems they deal with reflect the societal changes and the increasing stress of everyday life. In addition, the last decade has seen a transformation in the nature and practice of social work, as a result of administrative, societal, and political change (Lloyd, C., King, R., Chenoweth, L. (2002)

Empowerment is key for the prevention of occupational risks and for the support of social workers in small settlements.

Empowerment is understood as a "process by which individuals and groups learn to improve their skills, moving from a state involving lack of power where their decision-making capacity at various stages is very limited, to a state in which they are capable of influencing and exercising control over various areas of their lives". In social work, for empowerment to be possible, professionals focus on the development of strengths, potential and skills of individuals, families, groups and communities – though their problems are not to be forgotten. Intervention is directed mainly at evaluating positive aspects, which will help in overcoming difficulties. Empowerment is fundamental for the achievement of sustainable development, since it is only by helping people build skills and empower themselves that people will be encouraged to learn to act on their own account and resolve their future difficulties by relying on their own personal resources (Vizcarro, M., 2014).

Photo by j.dudzinski

GOOD PRACTICE – WHAT IS IT?

There is at present no agreed definition of what constitutes a good practice. Different definitions and evaluation criteria have been used. A review of different publication confirms however that there are several recurrent elements that can be drawn upon to form a working definition.

Definition of good practice

The Global Program for Social Work and Social Development states that it is essential to promote "standards of practice in social work and social development that enable social workers to facilitate the outcomes of sustainable social development".

However, before these standards can be outlined, it is necessary to know: what is good practice and what are the criteria that determine good practice?

Good practice:

- is an initiative that has been proven to work well (process evaluated) and produces good results (results evaluated) and is therefore recommended as a model;
- is a sustainable and effective experience, with clear goals and clearly defined target groups. It is a model that aims to empower the target group, leverage existing structures and have broad support among target groups, and therefore deserves to be shared so that more people can embrace it;

- as far as social assistance organizations are concerned, good social work practice is a successful experience that generates positive and lasting change and adds quality to people and professionals;
- is commonly defined as a technique or method that, through experience and research, has proven reliably to lead to the desired result.
- a technique or methodology that through experience and research has proven reliably to lead to the desired result;
- is not only a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model;
- is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it.

To summarize what is good practice, it is: an appropriate policy/approach/program or intervention implemented in a real environment; which is judged in terms of adequacy and fairness; and is effective and efficient with regard to the results obtained.

A good practice could thus potentially be defined as: An action or a set of actions that, based on quantitative and/or qualitative evidence, has been demonstrated to have had a positive and tangible impact on a given problem or challenge, thus resulting in enhanced better protection and empowering of practitioners in social work sphere (IASC, 2008).

These practices need to be shared and adopted to benefit more people.

It would be good to note that a good practice is not necessarily perfect. Rather it can be seen as representing the best available solution to a specific problem in light of available resources and the working environment in a given context.

Criteria for good practice

The following set of criteria determines if the practice is "good practice":

- Effective and successful: 'good practice' has proven to be an effective way of achieving a specific goal; it has been successfully accepted and has a positive impact on individuals and/ or communities. The extent to which the intervention is successful in achieving the desired result in the optimal way.

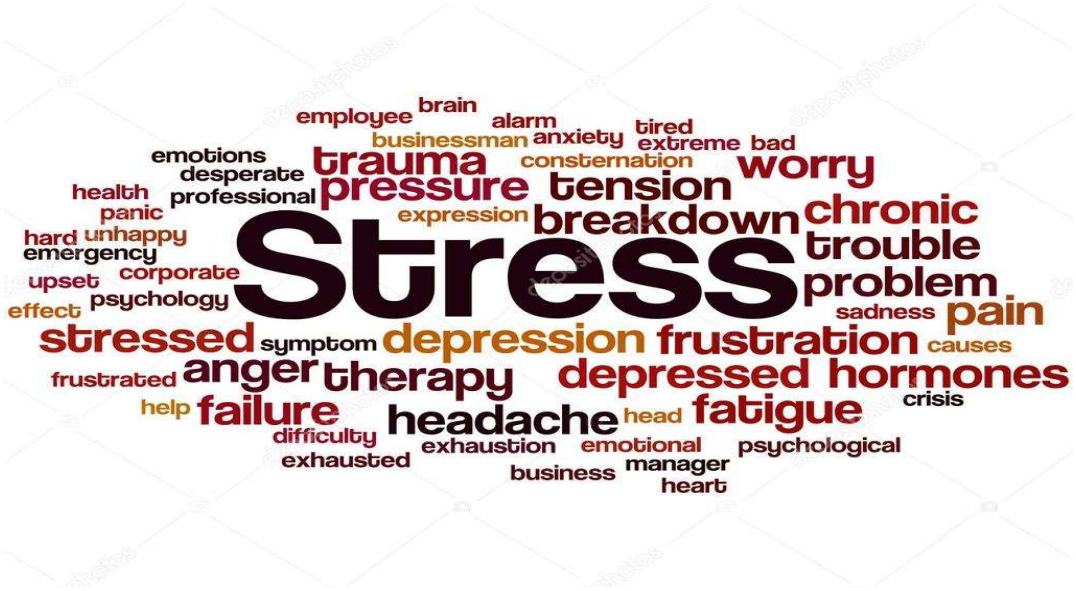
- Economically and socially sustainable: 'good practice' meets current needs and enables future needs to be addressed. It assesses the practice's ability to

sustain itself in the long term with the resources available, adapting to the social, economic and other requirements of the context in which it is developed.

- Technically feasible: Technical feasibility is at the heart of "good practice", which means it is easy to learn and apply.
- Applicable and adaptive: 'good practices' must have potential for reproduction and therefore be adaptable to similar objectives in different situations. Make it possible to transfer them to other contexts/ countries/ regions or to scale them to different populations/target groups.
- Reduces crisis risks: 'good practice' contributes to reducing crisis risks.
- Appropriate timeline: measure/ approach that has been in place for at least one year.
- Some evidence of sustainability: measure/ approach that provided funding or other support (involvement of a number of stakeholders) for several years.
- Involvement of relevant stakeholders: A wide range of stakeholders (parents, employers, civil society, experts, etc.) must be involved. It appreciates the involvement of stakeholders throughout the life cycle of the process, as well as the ability of the practice to promote cooperation between different sectors.
- Relevant: the practice addresses the needs and priorities of the stakeholders. Do it appropriately.
- Consistency: whether this practice is consistent with overall policies and codes of conduct, including relevant legal and ethical standards and guidelines.
- Respect for and protection of human rights: the aim of practice is to improve the protection of people and / or communities. The rights of the target groups and other citizens are guaranteed.
- There can be introduced procedures for quality assurance: approach with existing processes for quality assurance, including information on indicators, methods or tools used during application.
- Opportunity for internal or external evaluation: an approach that can be assessed on whether the intended results have been achieved.

GOOD PRACTICES FOR PREVENTING BURNOUT AND DEAL WITH IT

STRESS



Stock Image & Photo/ Photo by kataklinger

According to Hans Selye, stress can be defined as non-specific response of the body to requirement in order to adapt, no matter if to pleasure or pain. The same stressors may induce different responses in different individuals, depending on the conditions or interaction with the environment. Lazarus advocated a psychological view in which stress is "a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being." However, the stress is not inherently deleterious. Each individual's cognitive appraisal, their perceptions and interpretations, gives meaning to events and determines whether events are viewed as threatening or positive. Personality traits also influence the stress equation because what may be overpressure to one person may be exhilarating to another (Budeva, S., 2016).

There are two main types of stress. Eustress, which is positive stress and distress, which is negative stress.

Eustress is the most common form of stress. You may feel it before performing in front of people or taking a test or after having an argument with someone. The factors that lead to eustress only result in short-lived changes in stress hormone levels in the body. Normally, this type of stress does not last long and will not have long-term negative health effects. Eustress is actually thought to be necessary for healthy development. This is because it teaches the brain how to respond to stress in a healthy way. However, being exposed to any type of stress for a long period of time can lead to serious health problems.

Distress may be acute (short term) or chronic (long term). Acute stress (or episodic stress) is caused by events like the loss of a friend or family member or the breakup of a relationship. These events have a greater impact on the body than everyday stress. If not managed properly, the stress from these events can lead to negative brain changes. However, this stress can be managed if you are in a supportive environment and have positive interactions with others that help to decrease stress levels. Chronic stress (or toxic stress) is often the most long-lasting and damaging form of stress. It is caused by stress factors such as physical or emotional abuse, bullying, neglect, and addiction. Toxic stress can lead to lifelong physical and mental health issues. These health issues occur because the stress changes the way that the brain communicates with itself and the rest of the body (Let's Talk Science, 2020).

On a typical day, the human brain receives and sends trillions of messages. Some of them are delivered by the brain's "couriers of happiness", known as the endorphin system, and others are transmitted by "couriers of sadness". Usually both types of messages are in balance. The presence of stress creates problems with the "couriers of happiness". The more stress - the less delivery of "happy messages". The longer the stress lasts, the "sader messages" become and the more the distress increases. A person falls into a chemical imbalance - so-called over-stress or distress. One begins to feel "crushed" by life - feels tired, lacks energy, experiences a lot of pain, feels sad, depressed and desperate. Everyone inherits to some extent the ability to send and receive "happy messages" in the brain. The more these messages, the more often the individual perceives stress as something fun, useful and interesting without feeling bored. The amount of stress that an individual can deal with without disrupting the functioning of the "couriers of happiness" is called "stress resistance" or "stress tolerance". This stress tolerance is inherited and in most people it is sufficient to cope with daily stress. Usually one feels good. Of course, everyone has short periods of chemical imbalance, but for about 10% of people, this accompanies their lives. I.e. one in ten people has low stress tolerance, which means that the "happiness couriers" of these people cannot cope with everyday stressors. They are under the influence of a permanent over-stress, which leads to various mental and physical disorders.

Psychological resilience is the overall characteristic of a person that ensures his/her resilience to frustrating and stressful influences. It is formed simultaneously with the development of the personality and depends on the type of nervous system, on the experience of the personality, on the environment in which it develops, on the developed previous habits and on the level of development of the basic cognitive structures of the personality.

Resistance to stress is accepted in different ways:

• As the ability to withstand intense or unusual stimuli that are a signal of danger and lead to a change in behavior;

• As the ability to withstand strong arousal and emotional stress arising under the action of stressors;

• As the ability to withstand activities with high activity.

Decisive in the development of psychological resilience is the cognitive attitude to problem situations, which can be divided into three groups: difficult life situations; difficult situations related to the performance of a task; difficult situations related to social interaction. The processing of information about the problem situation is carried out through a cognitive, evaluative and emotional process. These three aspects influence the further behavior of the personality. Psychological resilience depends on the individual's ability to adequately reflect the situation. The inability to deal with a problem increases tension, a feeling of helplessness, loneliness, failure, etc. In order to be able to adapt and overcome difficulties, you need to have a positive image of yourself (Budeva, S., 2014).

Stress goes through several phases:

The **first stage** of stress is the reaction of anxiety /phase of shock/ expressed in mobilization of all resources of the body, especially physiological and biochemical, that contribute to fast defensive reaction, often called the "reaction of fight or flight." Some individuals cannot withstand such a mobilization and the impact of intense stressors can cause acute stress reactions. At this stage, the individual is in "standby mode".

The **second stage** - adaptation or resistance, it begins when the body is ready to cope with the harmful factors. In this period, there is an increased resistance to stress. The adaptation reserves from the first stage continue to operate, the individual feels self-assured.

If the action of causing stress factors not is not stopped, there comes the **third stage** of stress - exhaustion. The adaptive capabilities of the organism are lowered. An alarm signal reappears as the first stage, but now amid low energy adaptation. In this period there appears a desperate need from outside help to remove stressors or psychological maintenance of the system of adaptation. The third stage is associated with the development of the burnout syndrome.

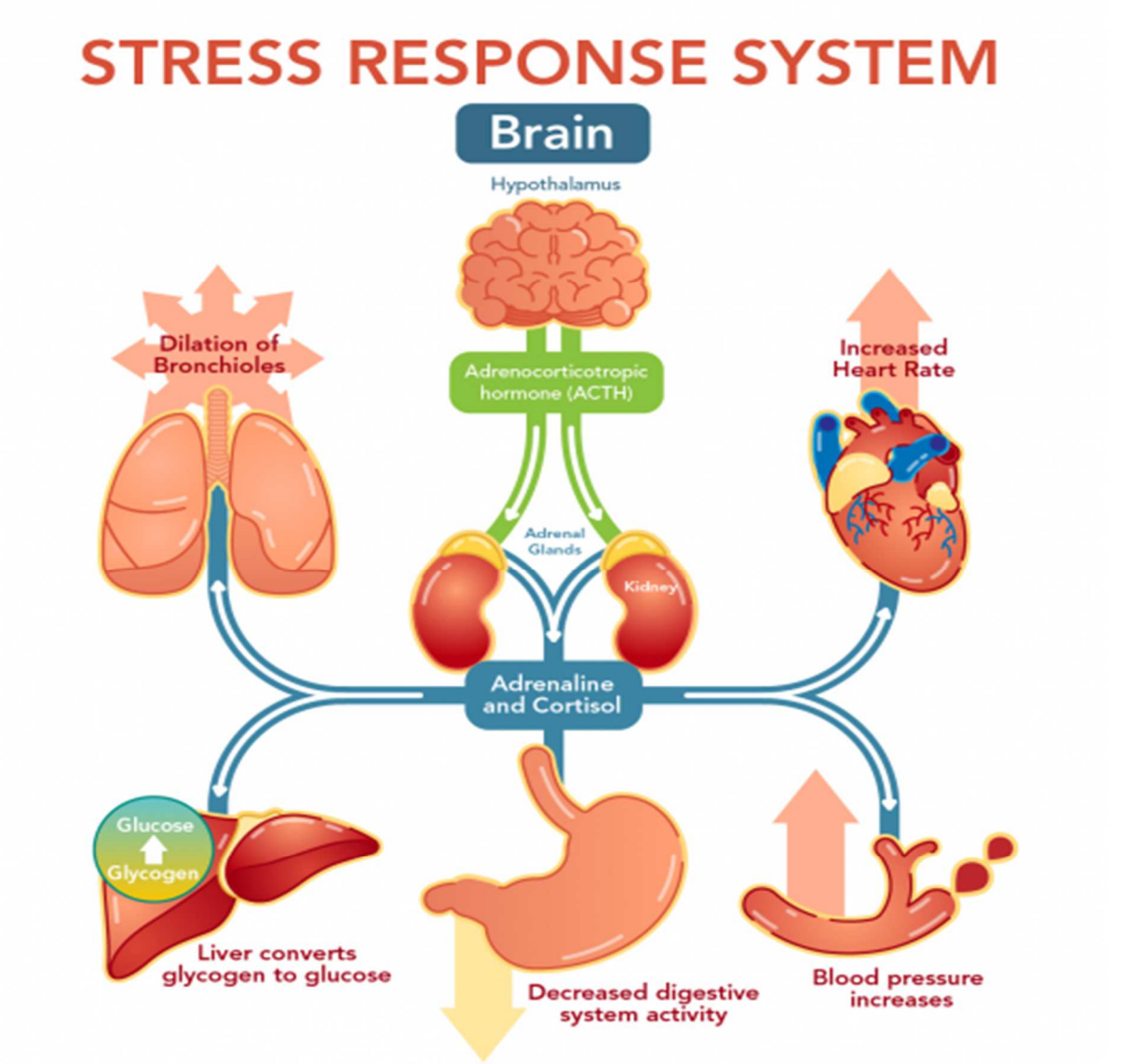


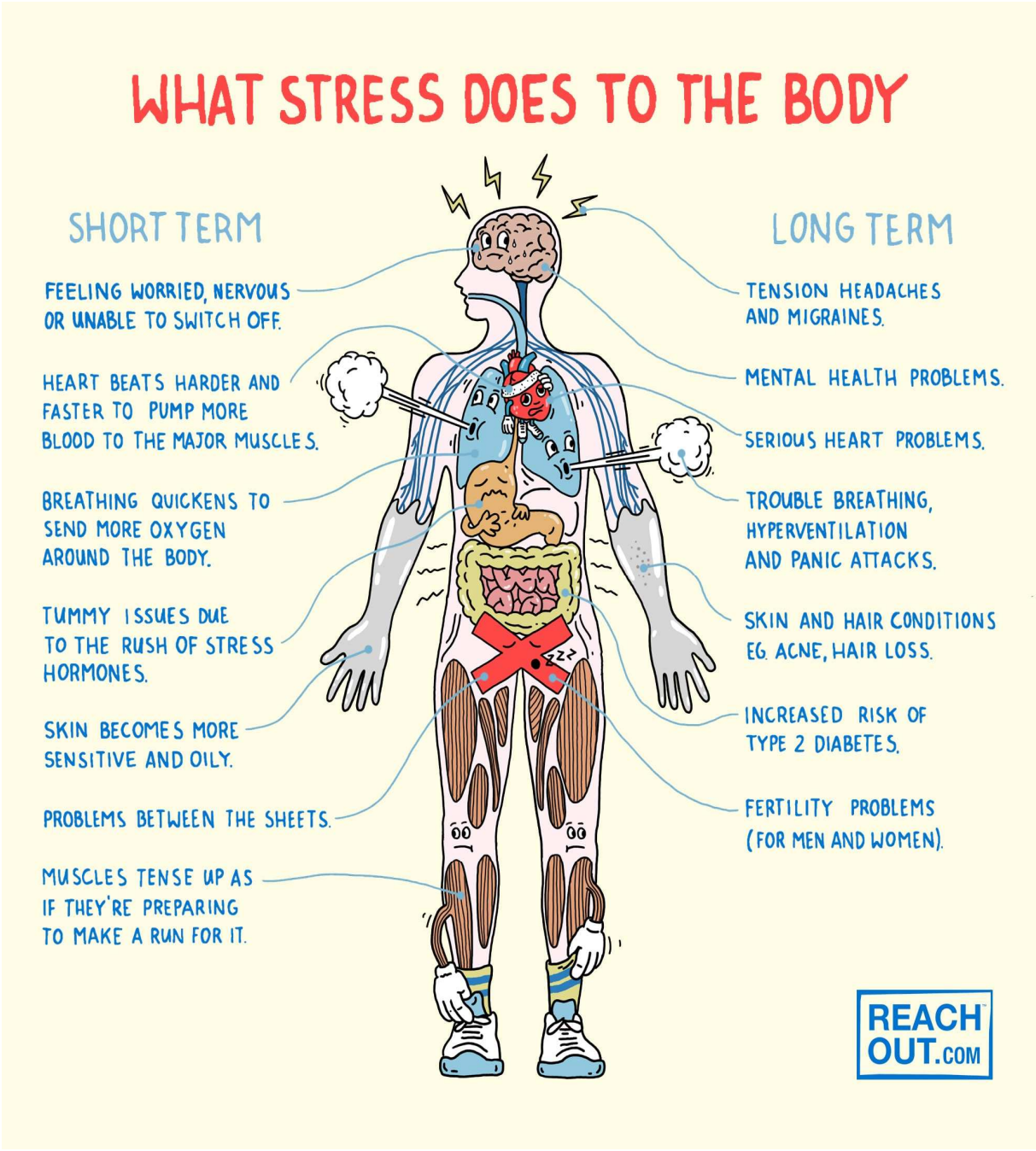
image by VectorMine via iStockphoto

Stress is a biological response to things that happen to you. If you perceive a situation as stressful, the hypothalamus region of your brain begins the stress response. It starts by sending a message to the pituitary gland. The pituitary gland then sends a message to the adrenal glands. The adrenal glands are found on top of your kidneys. These glands then release the stress hormone cortisol.

During the stress response, your breathing and heart rate increase and your blood pressure goes up. With the help of cortisol, your liver will break down molecules and release more sugar (glucose) into the blood. An increase in blood sugar level provides more energy for the body. This is critical for the fight or flight response. The increase in energy helps you to escape from or deal with a stressful situation. It also helps the body to return to a normal state afterward.

It is possible for people to adapt to moderate levels of stress over time. If you experience a stressful event over and over, the prefrontal cortex, or the command centre of the brain, recognizes the stressor and tells your hypothalamus that stress response is meant to be short-lived. Experiencing repeated or long-term stress means that cortisol levels in the body stay high.

But if your body experiences high levels of stress hormones over an extended period of time? The stress eventually becomes unhealthy. Over time, high levels of cortisol actually start to wear down the brain and other body systems (Let's Talk Science, 2020).



STOP (Adapted by one of the My Home Life facilitators, Jude Ryan, from a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction technique)

This is a quick and simple technique to decrease stress and anxiety.

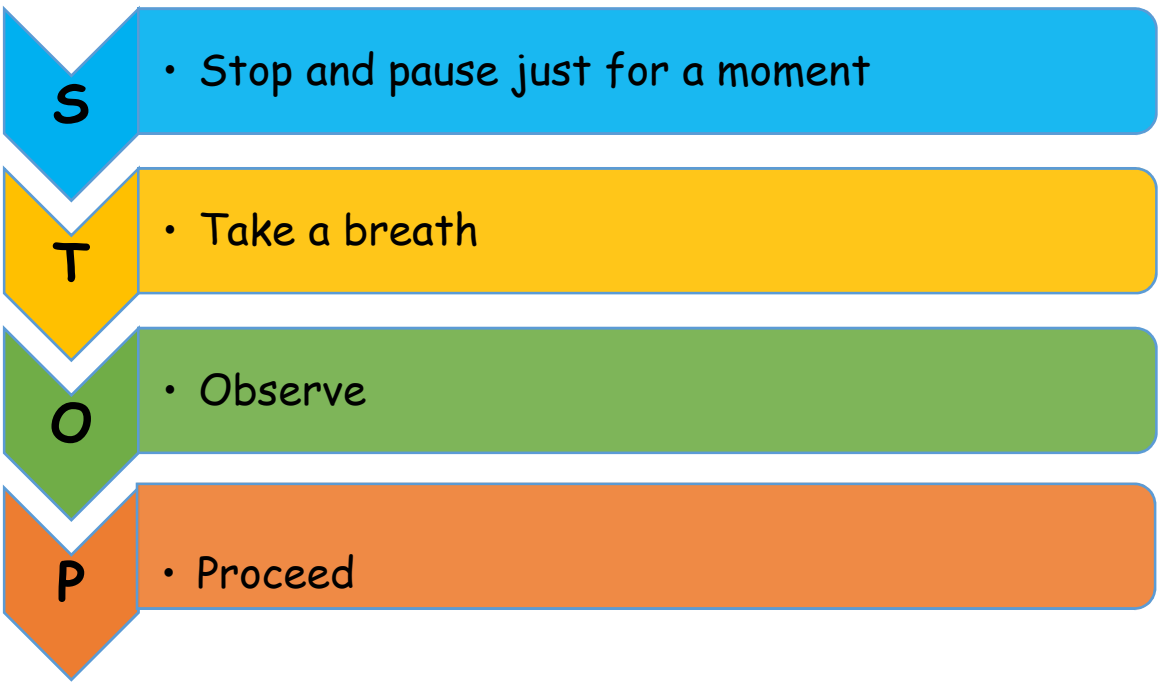
By taking a moment to stop and pause, to take a breath and to observe your thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations you can start to become more aware of what's happening inside yourself and you can then choose to proceed and respond more effectively and positively.

This quick exercise can be really helpful and revealing. You may notice that your mind is racing, or your neck and shoulders are tense. You may even notice that you've been sat at the desk for hours and missed taking a well-earned break.

Or maybe it's simply time to remind yourself that you matter too and that giving yourself some self-care could be beneficial.

This is simple!

- First thing in the morning, STOP before jumping out of bed and starting another day.
- Mid-day STOP in time to re energise yourself for the afternoon.
- Just before going to bed to STOP and let the day finish and the night begin.



Holmes And Rahe Stress Scale

This stress assessment model was created in 1967 by psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe as a method to evaluate the effect of stressor life events on the immune system and thus generate the likelihood for the individual to suffer from health issues that can be linked to stress.

The items in the scale are each awarded a number of points that differentiate their stressor effect. These are called "Life Change Units".

Instruction:

Please, read the items of the scale and recall events that have happened during the previous year. To use the scale, simply add up the values for all of the listed life events that have occurred to you within the past year. If a particular event has happened to you more than once within the last 12 months, multiply the value by the number of occurrences. Enter your value total at the end of the list.

Stressor	LCU	Stressor	LCU
1. Death of a spouse	100	23. Child leaving home	29
2. Divorce	73	24. Trouble with in-laws	29
3. Marital separation	65	25. Outstanding personal achievement	28
4. Imprisonment	63	26. Spouse starts or stops work	26
5. Death of a close family member	63	27. Beginning or end school	26
6. Personal injury or illness	53	28. Change in living conditions	25
7. Marriage	50	29. Revision of personal habits	24
8. Dismissal from work	47	30. Trouble with boss	23
9. Marital reconciliation	45	31. Change in working hours or conditions	20

10. Retirement	45	32. Change in residence	20
11. Change in health of family member	44	33. Change in schools	20
12. Pregnancy	40	34. Change in recreation	19
13. Sexual difficulties	39	35. Change in church activities	19
14. Gain a new family member	39	36. Change in social activities	18
15. Business readjustment	39	37. Minor mortgage or loan	17
16. Change in financial state	38	38. Change in sleeping habits	16
17. Death of a close friend	37	39. Change in number of family reunions	15
18. Change to different line of work	36	40. Change in eating habits	15
19. Change in frequency of arguments	35	41. Vacation	13
20. Major mortgage	32	42. Major Holiday	12
21. Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	43. Minor violation of law	11
22. Change in responsibilities at work	29		

Score:

150 points or less - a relatively low amount of life change and a low susceptibility to stress-induced health breakdown

150 to 300 points - 50% chance of health breakdown in the next 2 years

300 points or more - 80% chance of health breakdown in the next 2 years, according to the Holmes-Rahe statistical prediction model

HOW STRESSED ARE YOU?

Source: Headington Institute

Please note: this scale is not a clinical diagnostic instrument and is provided for educational purposes. It merely identifies some of the more common symptoms of stress. If you have any concerns about your state of emotional health, you should consult with a mental health professional.

INSTRUCTIONS: In the last month, how often has the following been true for you? Write the number that fits your reality on the line before each question.

Never - 0

Seldom – 1

Sometimes – 2

Often – 3

Always - 4

1. I feel tired. ……

2. I find it very hard to relax or "wind-down." ……

3. I find it hard to make decisions. ……

4. My heart races and I find myself breathing rapidly. ……

5. I have trouble thinking clearly. ……

6. I eat too much or too little. ……

7. I get headaches. ……

8. I feel emotionally numb. ……

9. I think about my problems over and over again during the day. ……

10. I have sleeping problems (e.g., trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, trouble waking up, nightmares, etc). ……

11. I have trouble feeling hopeful. ……

12. I find myself taking unnecessary risks or engaging in behavior hazardous to health and/or safety. ……

13. I have back and neck pain, or other chronic tension-linked pain ……

14. I use caffeine or nicotine more than usual. ……

15. I feel overwhelmed and helpless. ……

16. I have nervous habits (e.g., biting my nails, grinding my teeth, fidgeting, pacing, etc). ……

17. I forget little things (e.g. where I put my keys, people's names, details discussed during the last work meeting). ……

18. I have stomach upsets (e.g., nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, gas). ……

19. I am irritable and easily annoyed. ……

20. I have mood-swings and feel over-emotional. ……

21. I find it hard to concentrate. ……

22. I have trouble feeling that life is meaningful. ……

23. I am withdrawn and feel distant and cut off from other people. ……

24. I use alcohol and/or other drugs to try and help cope. ……

25. My work performance has declined and I have trouble completing things. ……

TOTAL SCORE: ……

INTERPRETATION GUIDELINES

0 – 25: A score in this range suggests that you're probably in great stress-shape!

26 – 50: A score in this range suggests that you may be experiencing a low to moderate degree of stress.

51 – 75: A score in this range suggests you may be experiencing a moderate to high degree of stress.

76 – 100: A score in this range suggests that you may be experiencing a very high degree of stress.

Remember!

Although some stress is good for you, too much stress can be harmful over time!

QUESTIONNAIRE: HOW STRESSFUL IS YOUR JOB?

(adapted by R. Karasek)

This test can give you a rough indication of how much stress you are under at work.

Answer Yes or No:

Demand

I have to work very hard

I am not asked to do an excessive amount of work*

I have enough time to get my work done*

Control

I have to do a lot of repetitive work*

I have to be creative

I have to learn new things

I have a lot of say about what happens

I have very little freedom to decide how I do my work*

Social support

I work with helpful people

I work with people who take a personal interest in me

My supervisor is helpful

My supervisor is concerned about my welfare

Scoring: Calculate a separate score for each of the three parts—demand, control, and social support. In each part, give yourself one point for every "yes" answer to the questions that do not have an asterisk (*). For those that do have an asterisk, give yourself one point if you answered "no." Jot down your three scores in the spaces below. Then write in the word that describes each of those scores.

Demand score: My job demands are _____

(Write "low" if your score was 0 or 1; "high" if your score was 2 or 3)

Control score: My control at work is _____

(Write "low* if you scored 0 to 2; "high" if you scored 3 to 5)

Social-support score: My social support at work is _____

(Write "low" if you scored 0 or 1; "moderate" if 2; "high" if 3 or 4)

Interpretation: High demand, low control and low social support all tend to Increase job stress. The more of those factors that you face at work — and the more extreme your score on each factor—the greater your stress. Jobs where are you experience all three tension - producing features are very stressful, while jobs with two such features generate moderately high stress. Those with only one stressful factor may be moderate or moderately low in stress, depending on how much the other two scores offset that factor. The least stressful jobs combine high control and high social support with low demand.

Stress management

Stress management is a process that helps an individual to control stress level by practicing self-care, relaxation and also imparts some techniques to handle stress when it occurs. It is a "set of techniques and programs intended to help people to deal more effectively with stress in their lives by analyzing the specific stressors and taking positive actions to minimize their effect" (Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine).

Stress Management Techniques & Strategies

Ambra Brown gives some useful tips. The techniques are categorized into three groups (Brown, A., 2021):

1. Action-orientated approaches: used to take action to change a stressful situation
2. Emotion-oriented approaches: used to change the way we perceive a stressful situation
3. Acceptance-oriented approaches: used for dealing with stressful situations you can't control

Action-orientated approaches allow you to take action and change the stressful situation.

- Be assertive - Clear and effective communication is the key to being assertive. When we're assertive, we can ask for what we want or need, and

also explain what is bothering us. The key is doing this in a fair and firm manner while still having empathy for others.

- Reduce the noise - Switching off all the technology, screen time, and constant stimuli can help us slow down. Make time for some quietness each day. You may notice how all those seemingly urgent things we need to do become less important and crisis-like. That to-do list will be there when you're in a place to return to it. Remember that recharging is a very effective way of tackling stress.
- Manage your time - If we let them, our days will consume us. Before we know it, the months have become overwhelmingly busy. When we prioritize and organize our tasks, we create a less stressful and more enjoyable life.
- Creating boundaries - Boundaries are the internal set of rules that we establish for ourselves. They outline what behaviors we will and won't accept, how much time and space we need from others, and what priorities we have. Healthy boundaries are essential for a stress-free life. When we have healthy boundaries we respect ourselves and take care of our well-being by clearly expressing our boundaries to others.
- Get out of your head - Sometimes it's best not to even try contending with the racing thoughts. Sometimes you just need a break. Distract yourself. Watch a movie, phone or catch up with a friend, go for a walk, or do something positive that you know takes your mind off things.

Emotion–orientated approaches are used to change the way we perceive stressful situations.

- Affirmations and imagery - The power of positive imagery and affirmations is now scientifically proven to increase positive emotion. When you think of a positive experience, your brain perceives it to be a reality. So, replace those negative thoughts with positive statements and challenge and change the way you see and experience the world.
- Cognitive Restructuring - a technique for understanding negative emotions and challenging the sometimes incorrect beliefs that cause them. Cognitive restructuring is a key component of Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).
- ABC Technique - The letters ABC stand for; A – adversity, or the stressful event. B – beliefs, or the way that you respond to the event. Then C – consequences, the result of your beliefs lead to the actions and outcome of that event. Essentially, the more optimistic your beliefs, the more positive the outcome.

Acceptance-orientated approaches are useful in stressful situations that you cannot control.

- Diet and Exercise - Be mindful of having a balanced and healthy diet. Making simple diet changes, such as reducing your alcohol, caffeine and sugar intake is a proven way of reducing anxiety. Another guaranteed way to reduce stress is exercise. It's proven to also be as effective as antidepressants in relieving mild depression.
- Meditation and physical relaxation - Use techniques such as deep breathing, guided visualizations, yoga, and guided body scans. These activities help relax the body.
- Build resilience - Resiliency is our ability to bounce back from stressful or negative experiences. To simplify, resilient people are skilled at accepting that the situation has occurred, they learn from what transpired and then they move on.
- Talk it out - Don't hold it all inside. Talk to someone close to you about your worries or the things getting you down. Sharing worries can cut them in half, and also give you a chance to laugh at potentially absurd situations. Many of our worries sound a lot less worrisome when we say them out loud. If you don't feel up to sharing, writing them down is also a great way to release them. Or maybe engage with an independent professional.
- Sleep - Getting a good night sleep is fundamental for recharging and dealing with stressful situations in the best possible way. While it varies from individual to individual, on the exact amount of sleep needed, an uninterrupted sleep of approximately 8 hours is generally recommended.

Self-Care Activities for Coping with Stress

(Markway, B. 2014)

Sensory - When you feel stressed and need a calm mind, try focusing on the sensations around you—sights, smells, sounds, tastes, touch. This will help you focus on the present moment, giving you a break from your worries. • Breathe in fresh air. • Snuggle under a cozy blanket. • Listen to running water. • Sit outdoors by a fire pit, watching the flames and listening to the sounds.	**Spiritual** - Getting in touch with your values—what really matters—is a sure way to cope with stress and foster a calm mind. Activities that people define as spiritual are very personal. Here are a few ideas. • Attend church. • Read poetry or inspiring quotes. • Light a candle. • Meditate. • Write in a journal.

- Take a hot shower or a warm bath.
- Get a massage.
- Cuddle with a pet.
- Pay attention to your breathing.
- Burn a scented candle.
- Wiggle your bare feet in overgrown grass.
- Stare up at the sky.
- Lie down where the afternoon sun streams in a window.
- Listen to music.

Pleasure - A great way to take care of yourself when you're coping with stress is to engage in a pleasurable activity. Take yourself out to eat.

- Be a tourist in your own city.
- Garden.
- Watch a movie.
- Make art. Do a craft project.
- Journal.
- Walk your dogs.
- Go for a photo walk.

Mental/Mastery - You can also give yourself a boost by doing a task that you've been avoiding or challenging your brain in a novel way. This can also boost self-confidence.

- Clean out a junk drawer or a closet.
- Take action (one small step) on something you've been avoiding.
- Try a new activity.
- Drive to a new place.
- Make a list.
- Immerse yourself in a crossword puzzle.
- Do a word search.
- Read something on a topic you wouldn't normally.
- Spend time in nature.
- Pray.
- List five things you're grateful for.

Emotional - Dealing with our emotions can be challenging when we're coping with stress. We tend to label emotions as "good" or "bad," but this isn't helpful. Instead:

- Accept your feelings. They're all OK.
- Write your feelings down. Here's a list of feeling words.
- Cry when you need to.
- Laugh when you can.
- Practice self-compassion.

Physical

Coping with stress by engaging the body is great because you can bypass a lot of unhelpful mental chatter. It's hard to feel stressed when you're doing one of the following self-care activities.

- Try yoga.
- Go for a walk or a run.
- Dance.
- Stretch.
- Go for a bike ride.
- Don't skip sleep to get things done.
- Take a nap.

Social

Connecting with others is an important part of self-care. This can mean activities such as:

- Go on a lunch date with a good friend.
- Calling a friend on the phone.
- Participating in a book club.
- Joining a support group.

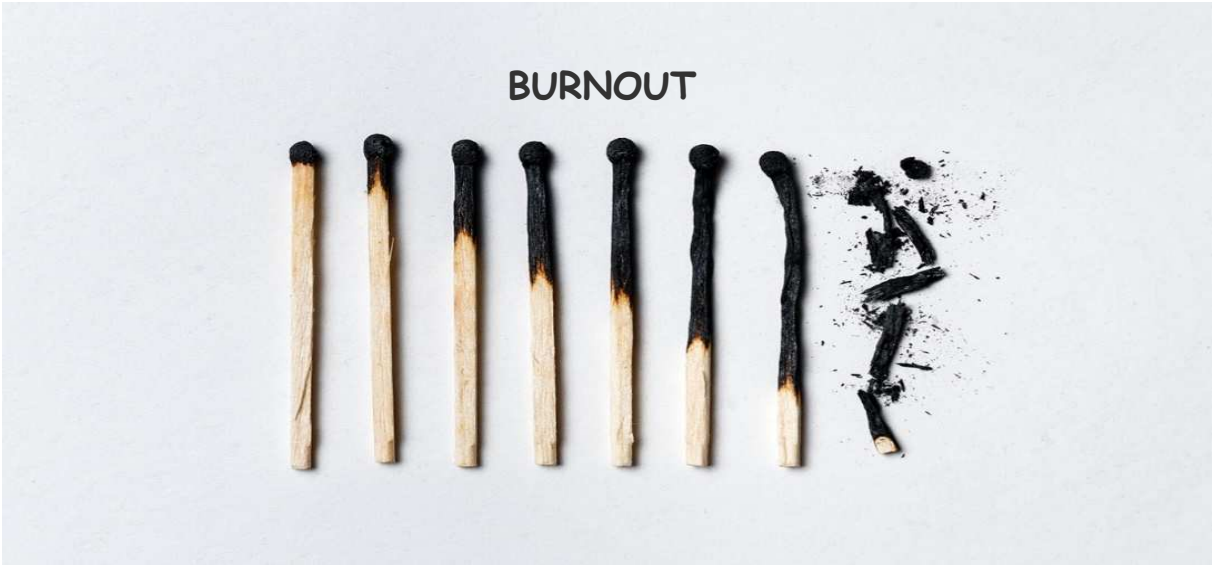


Photo by ZSV3207/Adobe Stock

Burnout syndrome is a state of emotional, physical and mental fatigue/exhaustion/ manifested in the professional sphere. Burnout is a state caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when the professionals are feeling overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. The persistent stress leads to losing of interest or motivation.

Burnout is defined as a chronic stress reaction and in practice, the roots of burnout theories are mainly in general stress theories, which emphasize the interaction between work characteristics and the employee.

Burnout is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do. It represents an erosion in values, dignity, spirit, and will – an erosion of the human soul (Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P., 1997).

Burnout is included in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an occupational phenomenon. It is not classified as a medical condition. It is described in the chapter: 'Factors influencing health status or contact with health services' – which includes reasons for which people contact health services but that are not classed as illnesses or health conditions. Burn-out is defined in ICD-11 as follows: "Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions: feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and reduced professional efficacy. Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life." (WHO, 2019)

The reasons for the burnout syndrome can generally be differentiated into two groups:

- Subjective /individual/ - linked to the characteristics of the individual, age, values, methods and mechanisms for individual psychological defense, personal attitude towards pursuing a professional activity, relationships with colleagues and relatives. To this group we can match the expectations of the results obtained from the professional activity, the tendency to self-sacrifice and others.

- Objective /situational/ - they are connected with the official responsibilities such as increasing the workload, unclear roles and responsibilities, inadequate social and psychological support and more.

The process model of burnout follows the theory of Christina Maslach. According to this model, the process starts from the mismatch between the employee and his/her work, which is assumed to causes stress. If the stressful situation is not solved, adjustment is not possible, or the situation remains unchanged, this will then lead to burnout symptoms, beginning with exhaustion and diminished capacity, through cynicism, and eventually to loss of professional efficacy. Finally, if not treated, burnout may lead to variety of physical, mental and social problems (Toppinen-Tanner, S., 2011).

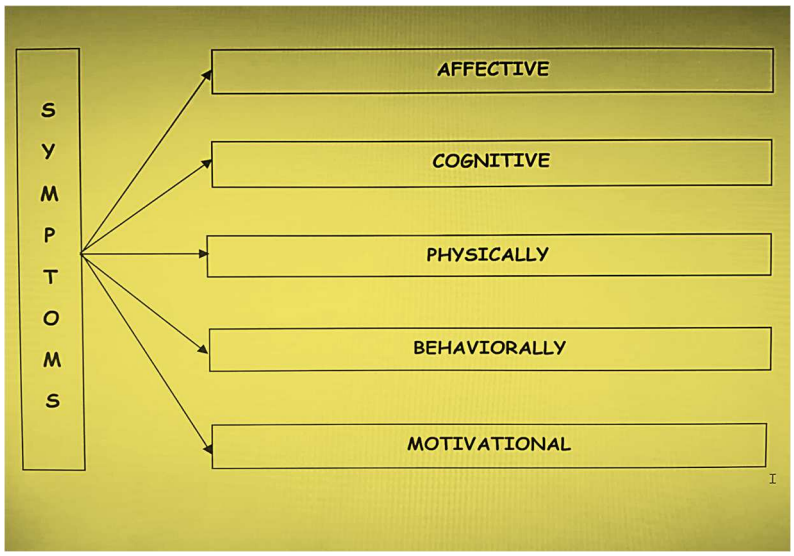
Stages of Burnout

Burnout is seen as a dynamic process, which evolves over time and is characterized by an increasing degree of Burnout. It is seen as a dynamic process, which evolves over time and is characterized by an increasing degree of expression. This process goes through various stages.

C. Maslach (1982) describes three stages of burnout:

1. The **first** stage in this model is emotional exhaustion and can also be described as a wearing out, loss of energy, depletion, debilitation and fatigue. This exhaustion in burnout refers to feelings of being emotionally overextended and is more emotional and psychological in nature than physical.
2. The **second** stage is depersonalization, which when broadly defined, refers to a negative shift in response to others and involves negative or inappropriate attitudes towards the recipients of one's service or care, loss of idealism and irritability, taking a cold, cynical attitude toward responsibilities.
3. Reduced personal accomplishment, the **third** stage, refers to a decline in one's feelings of competence and successful achievement of one's work, ineffectiveness, when people feel ineffective, they feel a growing sense of inadequacy (Budeva, 2016).

Symptoms that characterize the "burnout" syndrome



The variety of symptoms that characterize the "burnout" syndrome, in general, can be differentiated into five groups, which are listed below /W.B. Schaufeli & B.P. Buunk, 2003, quoted by S. Budeva, 2011 /.

Affective symptoms - there is a melancholy, sad and depressed mood, which changes very quickly. The general emotional background is negative, weak, "black" prevails. Emotional resources are depleted due to prolonged stress and energy expenditure. Another type of affective symptom is aggression and anxiety. Frustration tolerance is reduced, there is irritability, hypersensitivity, and the behavior is characterized by hostility and suspicion towards colleagues and clients.

Cognitive symptoms - feelings of helplessness and hopelessness - these are the most characteristic cognitive manifestations. The feeling of failure, which is experienced as inferiority and low self-esteem, is intensified, especially with regard to work. Memory and attention can be impaired, and thinking becomes rigid and fragmented. Customer relationships are characterized by pessimism, negativism, stereotyping and lack of empathy. Hypercriticism is emerging with regard to colleagues, supervisors and managers.

Physical symptoms - There is still no clarity about the link between burnout and morbidity. It is assumed that the consequences of burnout syndrome are reduced immune protection, frequent colds and flu, decreased appetite, exacerbation of chronic diseases, high cholesterol, hypertension, migraine attacks, gastrointestinal problems, cardiovascular disorders and others.

Behavioral symptoms - at the individual level there is a correlation between "burnout" syndrome and increased consumption of alcohol, cigarettes, coffee, drugs and medications, also a negative attitude towards themselves, colleagues,

relatives, limited communication. At the organizational level - frequent absence from work, change of job, reduced efficiency.

Motivational symptoms - motivation to work is lost, as well as diligence, enthusiasm, interest and idealism. There is resignation and disappointment with the profession and others. At the interpersonal level, this motivational crisis is experienced as a loss of sincere interest in customers, disinterest and discouragement.

The signs and symptoms of burnout

PHYSICAL	PSYCHOLOGICAL	WORK BEHAVIOUR
• Fatigue • Sleep disturbances • Difficulty sleeping • Difficulty getting up • Stomach ailments • Tension headaches • Migraine headaches • Gastrointestinal problems • Frequent colds • Lingering colds • Frequent bouts of flu • Backaches • Nausea • Muscle tension	Feelings: • Anger • Frustration • Depression • Boredom • Discouragement • Disillusionment • Despair • Apathy • Guilt • Anxiety • Suspicion • Paranoia • Helplessness • Hopelessness • Pessimism • Immobility • Resentment • Moodiness	• Dehumanization of clients • Victimizations of clients • Fault finding • Blaming other • Defensiveness • Impersonal, stereotyped communication with clients • Applying derogatory labels to clients • Physical distancing • from clients and others • Withdrawal • Isolation • Stereotyping clients • Postponing clients contact • Going by the book • Clock watching

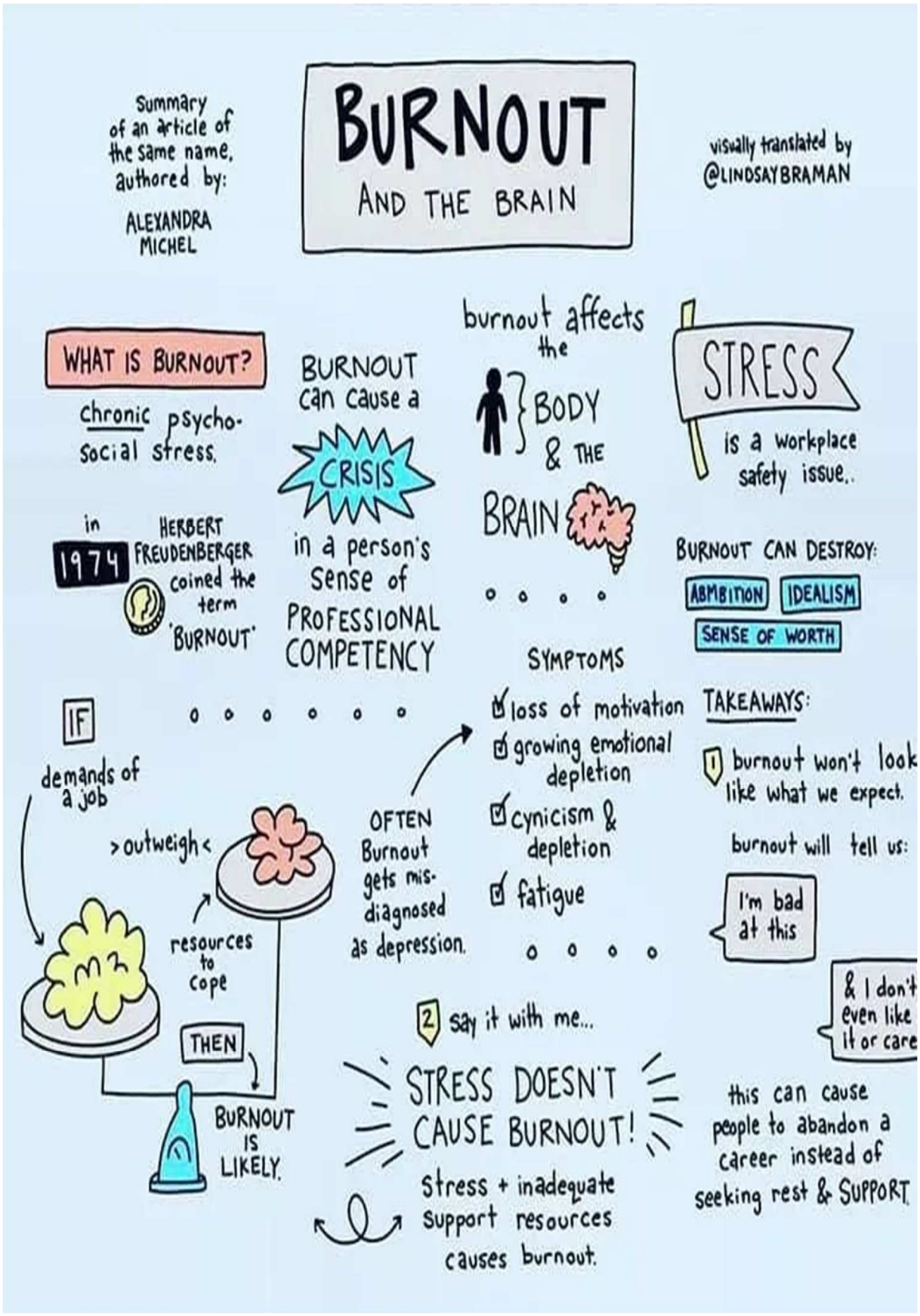
• Shortness of breath • Malaise • Frequent injuries • Weight loss • Weight gain • Stooped shoulders • Weakness • Change of eating habits	Attitudes: • Cynicism • Indifference • Resignation • Self-doubt Other: • Loss of empathy • Difficulty concentrating • Difficulty attending • Low morale • Decreased sense of self-worth	• Living for breaks • Absenteeism • Making little mistakes • Unnecessary risk taking • Use of drugs and alcohol • Marital and family conflict • Conflict with co-workers • Decreased job efficiency • Over commitment • Or under commitment

Source: Pines & Aronson, 1988

Resilience techniques:

Grant and Kinman (2012, 2014) discuss the following resilience techniques:

- enhancing skills in emotional intelligence, reflective practice, social awareness and empathetic skills
- stress management techniques such as relaxation and time management skills
- reflective thinking skills
- writing a reflective diary
- using supervision for reflective practice
- social skills
- peer coaching for support
- optimistic explanatory styles
- coping skills and flexibility
- mindfulness and relaxation
- cognitive behavioral techniques (CBT).



By Lindsay Braman

Burnout prevention measures

Organizational measures
• Clarity regarding the place in the structure, functions, rights and obligations of each assisting professional; • Creating a favorable psychological climate and paying special attention to the negative relationships between colleagues; • Discussing with employees the prospects for their professional development; • Development of traditions regarding the style of dress, daily meetings, joint collective recreation, etc. • Structuring and organizing the work so as to increase its efficiency; • Assisting young professionals in adaptation; • Optimization of the professional workload and introduction of additional material and moral incentives; • Providing an opportunity for greater initiative and autonomy in solving problems by the helping professionals themselves; • Providing opportunities for additional training and supervision.
Personal measures
• Setting and pursuing realistic goals - usually helping professionals expect miracles from themselves and their clients, which often leads to failure and frustration. It is necessary to look for small successes and changes, because they are real. • Celebrating small victories - although it is difficult to tell the difference between a small victory and the failure of the overall endeavor, it is important for the helping professional to look for small victories and "celebrate" them with his client. • Setting time and energy limits on the work - often helping professionals neglect their physical, psychological and emotional needs in the name of the client's needs.

• Mastering skills and habits for self-regulation - through alternative activities such as sports, nature walks, hobbies, communication with positive people, art activities, etc.

• Maintaining good physical shape - on the one hand burnout causes physical discomfort, but on the other hand physical and health problems are a good basis for the development of burnout syndrome.

• Professional development and self-improvement - focusing on the concept of lifelong learning.

• Emotional communication with colleagues - the desire to share and seek support from colleagues allows to reduce psycho-emotional stress, while joint efforts help to more quickly and effectively solve problem situations.

• Separation of professional from personal life - the transfer of professional problems at home further engage the helping professional analyst emotionally, do not give him the opportunity for complete rest, burden his loved ones.

• Seeking help - when the helping professional begins to feel signs of emotional exhaustion and / or depersonalization, it is necessary to seek help from a specialist. This will benefit him and his clients and the organization in which he works.

The Maslach Burnout Inventory

How do you perceive your work? Are you exhausted? How capable are you of shaping your relationship to others? To what degree are you personally fulfilled?

Indicate how frequently the following statements apply to you and add the points indicated on top of the respective box:

0 = Never

1 = At least a few times a year

2 = At least once a month

3 = Several times a month

4 = Once a week

5 = Several times a week

6 = Every day Never Every day

1 I feel emotionally exhausted because of my work 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

2 I feel worn out at the end of a working day 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

3 I feel tired as soon as I get up in the morning and see a new working day stretched out in front of me 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

4 I can easily understand the actions of my colleagues/supervisors 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

5 I get the feeling that I treat some clients/colleagues impersonally, as if they were objects 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

6 Working with people the whole day is stressful for me 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

7 I deal with other people's problems successfully 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

8 I feel burned out because of my work 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

9 I feel that I influence other people positively through my work 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

10 I have become more callous to people since I have started doing this job 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

11 I'm afraid that my work makes me emotionally harder 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

12 I feel full of energy 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

13 I feel frustrated by my work 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

14 I get the feeling that I work too hard 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

15 I'm not really interested in what is going on with many of my colleagues 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

16 Being in direct contact with people at work is too stressful 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

17 I find it easy to build a relaxed atmosphere in my working environment 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

18 I feel stimulated when I been working closely with my colleagues 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

19 I have achieved many rewarding objectives in my work 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

20 I feel as if I'm at my wits' end 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

21 In my work I am very relaxed when dealing with emotional problems 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

22 I have the feeling that my colleagues blame me for some of their problems 0 1 2 3 4 5 6

Overall score for occupational exhaustion (EE)

Add together the answers to questions 01. 02. 03. 06. 08. 13. 14. 16. 20

Overall score for depersonalisation/loss of empathy (DP)

Add together the answers to questions 05. 10. 11. 15. 22

Overall score personal accomplishment assessment (PA)

Add together the answers to questions 04. 07. 09. 12. 17. 18. 19. 21.

Degree of burnout

Beware if the totals of your EE and DP answers are both in the red area, and above all if your personal accomplishment assessment is also in the red!!!

Occupational exhaustion	EE < 17	EE 18 - 29	EE > 30
	Low degree	Moderate degree	High degree

Depersonalisation	DP < 5	DP 6 - 11	DP > 12
	Low degree	Moderate degree	High degree

Personal accomplishment assessment	PA < 33	PA 34 - 39	PA > 40
	Low degree	Moderate degree	High degree

EE Occupational exhaustion (burnout) is typically connected to a relationship with work that is perceived as difficult, tiring, stressful… Maslach sees this as different from depression, as it is likely that the symptoms of burnout would be reduced during holidays.

DP Depersonalisation or loss of empathy is characterised by a loss of regard for others (clients, colleagues…), and by keeping a greater emotional distance, which is expressed through cynical, derogatory remarks, and even callousness.

PA The personal accomplishment assessment is a feeling that acts as a "safety valve" and contributes to bringing about a balance if occupational exhaustion and depersonalisation occur. It ensures fulfilment in the workplace and a positive view of professional achievements.

SELF-CARE

The helping professionals tend to face undue and extra stress. Some practitioners functioning in the role of helper are far more concerned with their clients' well-being than with their own.

The approach to self-care is crucial for effectively managing occupational and personal stressors and for maintaining optimal wellness.

What Is Self-Care?

The World Health Organization defines Self-Care as the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote, maintain health, prevent disease and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health care provider. Self care encompasses several issues including hygiene, nutrition, lifestyle, environmental and socioeconomic factors. Promotion of self care is a means to empower individuals, families and communities for informed decision-making (WHO, 2013).

Self-care is the practice of taking an active role in protecting our own well-being, pursuing happiness, and having the ability, tools, and resources to respond to periods of stress so that they don't result in imbalance and lead to a health crisis. Self-care means asking yourself what you need, and following through on the honest answer.

Self-care empowers people to take their health and wellbeing into their own hands, giving them the incentive to improve their quality of life.

Self-care is what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness. It is a broad concept encompassing hygiene (general and personal), nutrition (type and quality of food eaten), lifestyle (sporting activities, leisure etc.), environmental factors (living conditions, social habits etc.), socioeconomic factors (income level, cultural beliefs etc.) and self-medication.

World Health Organisation (WHO)

EIGHT BENEFITS OF SELF-CARE

(APA, 2009)

1. Helps build resilience
2. Reduces occupational hazards such as burnout and compassion fatigue
3. Models healthy behavior for clients
4. Promotes quality of caring
5. Increases the capacity for empathy
6. Fortifies relationships with clients and others
7. Enhances self-esteem and confidence
8. Contributes to realistic goal setting

International Self-Care Foundation (ISF) proposes that a framework for self-care can conveniently be visualised and organised around seven 'pillars' or 'domains':

1. Health literacy – includes: the capacity of individuals to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions
2. Mental Wellbeing – includes: knowing your body mass index (BMI), cholesterol level, blood pressure; engaging in health screening.
3. Physical activity – practicing moderate intensity physical activity such as walking, cycling, or participating in sports at a desirable frequency.
4. Healthy eating – includes: having a nutritious, balanced diet with appropriate levels of calorie intake.
5. Risk avoidance or mitigation – includes: quitting tobacco, limiting alcohol use, getting vaccinated, practicing safe sex, using sunscreens.
6. Good hygiene – includes: washing hands regularly, brushing teeth, washing food.
7. Rational and responsible use of products, services, diagnostics and medicines – includes: being aware of dangers, using responsibly when necessary.

The seven pillars illustrated schematically by ISF:

The focus of the International Self-Care Foundation is on self-care in the preservation of wellness in healthy people, to help prevent the epidemic of lifestyle diseases. Self-care is usually the first treatment response to everyday health conditions and common ailments. Overall, an estimated 70% to 95% of all illnesses are managed without the intervention of a doctor. Knowing when to consult a healthcare professional is a self-care skill under pillar 1 (health literacy) and pillar 2 (self-awareness).

How to Build a Self-Care

1) We need to change the way we look at mental health.

2) Let's stop trying to go it alone.

When we take the time to create space in our schedules for others; when we organize and meet up with our friends and social groups; even when we exchange a few thoughtful emails, we are building communities of care and, therefore, fueling the self-care revolution.

3) Exhaustion leads to shorter attention spans, increased emotional volatility, and poor decision-making.

If we burnout, it will be replicated by our staff, volunteers, children, and others in our sphere of influence. To create a culture of self-care we must be willing to model a sustainable work pace.

4) Ask reflection questions to yourself.
In the effort to move from reflection to action, and to build momentum to climb that next peak, we should ask ourselves key questions that will help us improve our own self-care habits and that of those around us. These questions may include:

- How does the quality of my work diminish due to the lack of my own self-care?
- Which habit(s) negatively affect(s) my self-care and what new behavior can I substitute it with?
- Do I have a self-care plan in place to ensure I follow-up on this new behavior and have I shared this plan with others who will hold me accountable?
- How will I track my progress along the way?
- The modern self-care movement needs to start as a practice to avoid burnout, rather than as a response to it. The movement must demand that individual put their health and wellness first without feeling guilty for doing so.

How to Create a Self-Care Plan *(www.mindful.org)*

1) First, create an activity list organized around different parts of your life. One of the easiest ways to start is by breaking up this task into several categories, for example: Work, Physical Fitness, Emotional Life, Relationships & Community. For each area write down the activities or strategies that you can call on, that are authentic to you and contribute to your well-being. Some examples include spending time with friends, being active, mindfulness meditation, and a confidence to create healthy boundaries. Have fun, be creative, and most importantly, be real with yourself about what works for you and what does not.

2) Second, note any barriers that may be in your way and how to shift them. As you write down each activity, ask yourself what barriers might get in the way of you being able to accomplish it.

3) Third, share your plan with your closest friends.

Do not forget to rely on your network of self-care friends, your community of care.

A Few Ways to Practice Self-Care Today

Allow yourself to unplug from the news and social media for a few days. Turn off your alerts and notifications, turn off the TV, and do not access social media. If you must access it for work or otherwise, limit your time and do not engage or comment on posts. It is not forever-it is a few days of peace and being off the net.

Recognize when you are in need of self-care and then respond to that need. Sometimes taking time for self-care may affect the lives of those around you (for example, you need to take the day off from work or ask someone to watch the kids). Inform those around you that you are responding to a personal need but do not feel the need to ask for permission.

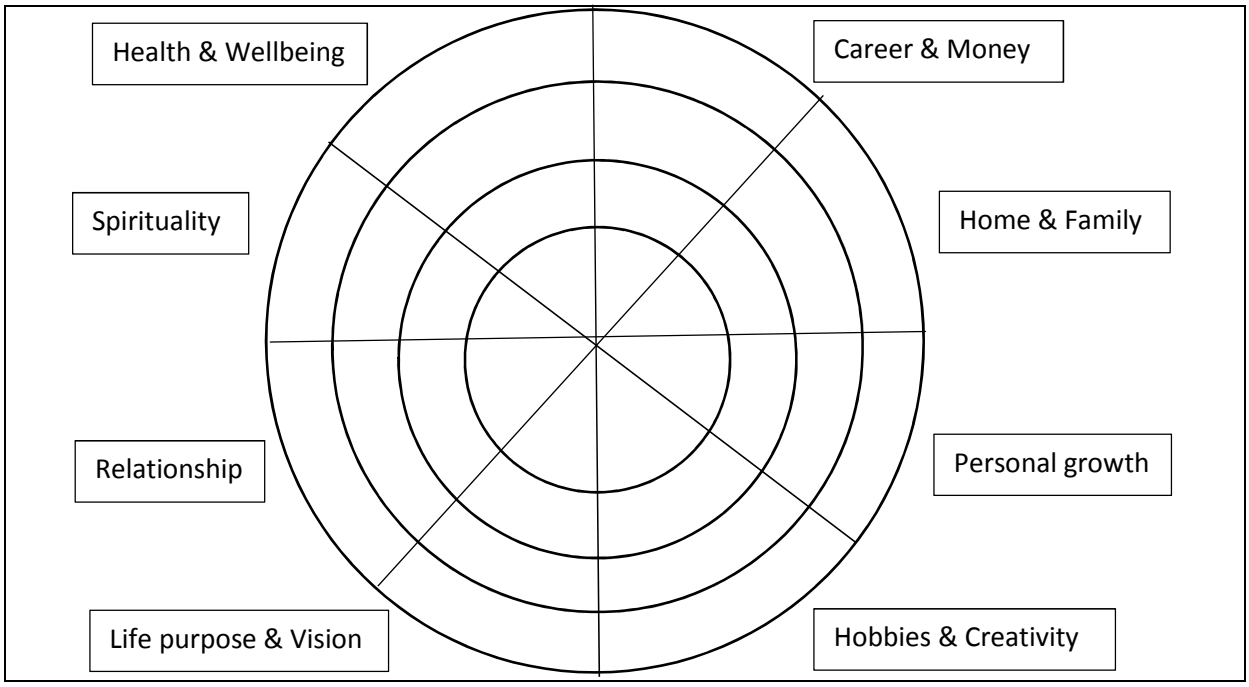
Have a self-care checklist ready that has dozens of options tailored just for you. These self-care options can range from scheduling a mid-day call with a friend to drawing a bubble bath. Having this list ready is important because when you are on the verge of burnout, you may not have the capacity to come up with the options at that moment.

CALENDAR **30-day health and self-care challenges**		
Day 1 Do a deep breathing exercise	Day 11 Budget 20 minutes of spa time	Day 21 Try a 5-minute meditation
Day 2 Cath up with a friend	Day 12 Practice a favorite hobby	Day 22 FaceTime with family
Day 3 Schedule something fun	Day 13 Get distracted by a movie	Day 23 Do something outside
Day 4 Donate something you never use	Day 14 Go to bed 30 minutes earlier	Day 24 Book a date night
Day 5 Do 30 minutes of yoga	Day 15 Drink just water today	Day 25 Take 10 minutes to read
Day 6 Plan a healthy meal	Day 16 Schedule a game night	Day 26 Say no to something

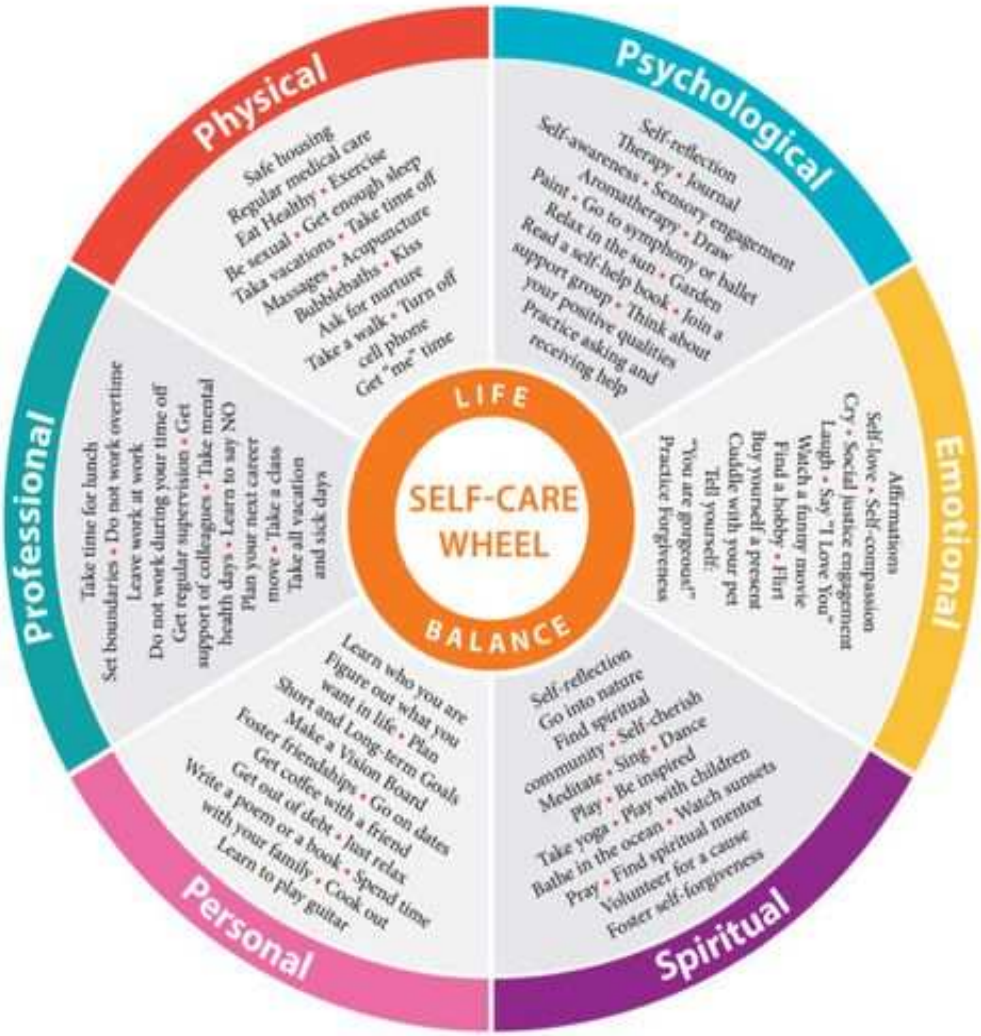
Day 7 Ask for help	Day 17 Set a mini goal	Day 27 Go for a walk
Day 8 Listen your favorite music	Day 18 Cross an item off your to-do list	Day 28 Watch a silly video
Day 9 Unfollow negative social media accounts	Day 19 Compliment someone	Day 29 Write down something good that happens
Day 10 Have a phone-free night	Day 20 Plan a night in with friends	Day 30 Adopt a new habit

Work task (huffpost.com by Larissa Marks)

For each section of the circle diagram below, consider how fulfilled you feel in that area. Draw a dot in between the center of the circle and the outer circle to represent the amount you feel fulfilled in that area, with the center representing 0% and the outer edge representing 100%. Connect each of the dots to create a shape - most likely it is a starburst. As you look at the shape on the diagram, what are your thoughts and insights?



SELF-CARE WHEEL



This Self-Care Wheel was inspired by and adapted from "Self-Care Assessment Worksheet" from *Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization* by Saakvitne, Pearlman & Staff of TSI/CAAP (Norton, 1996). Created by Olga Phoenix Project: Healing for Social Change (2013). Dedicated to all trauma professionals worldwide. Copyright @ 2013 Olga Phoenix, All Rights Reserved.

www.OlgaPhoenix.com

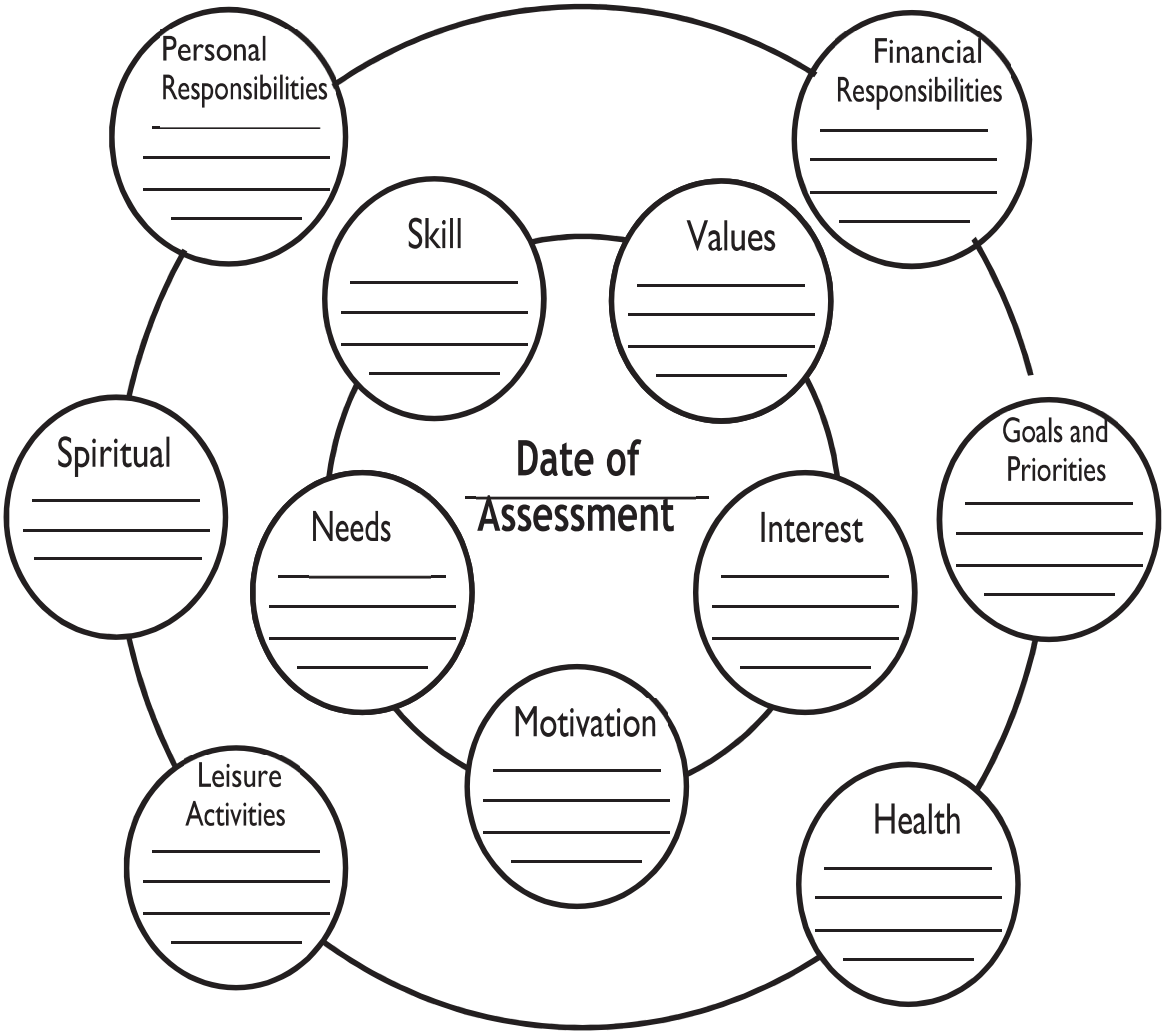
Features of Wellness week		
Emotional	Personal: • Peer support • Mentoring • Respectful conflict resolution	Organizational: • Peer support group • Formal mentoring programs • Employee assistance programs
Physical	Personal: • Regular exercise • Healthy eating • Sleep hygiene	Organizational: • Access to facilities for rest and for exercise
Social	Personal: • Maintain your personal community • Develop your professional community • Role model respectful behavior	Organizational: • Healthy work culture • Leadership training • Conflict resolution training • Communication training • Organized social events
Intellectual	Personal: • Reflective practice • Ongoing professional development • Facilitate the educational development of your colleagues	Organizational: • Access to professional development and learning • Awesome and excellent meetings • Without blaming during team meetings
Occupational	Personal: • Realistic self-expectations • Reflective practice • Ask yourself: Why you do? What you do?	Organizational: • Regular feedback • Regular breaks • Regular annual leaves • "No blame" culture
Spiritual	Personal: • Mindfulness practice • Journaling • Gratitude • Random acts of kindness	Organizational: • Mindfulness training • Resilience training • Respect for differing beliefs and attitudes
Financial	Personal: • Professional financial advice • Understand your own financial circumstances and risk	Organizational: • Fair and equitable pay • Optimizing salary plan

Self-Assessment (adapted by Social Work Tech, 2014)

Why Complete a Self-Assessment? Completing a self-assessment takes a snapshot of your life, where you are at right now, and helps you to determine what is important to you at this moment.

Directions: In each space reflect on what is going on in your life in each of these parts of your life. Write a few words or phrases that capture what it is happening or needs to change.

Measuring Progress: In a few months (and without looking at previous self-assessments) complete another one to see where you are. What changed? How are things the same or different? What do you want to work on?



blessingmanifesting.com

Consider the following **self-care pointers:**

- Make personal and professional self-care a priority.
- Honestly assess your psychological and physical health. Focus on prevention rather than simply on remedying problems such as inactivity, over commitment or poor nutrition.
- Find time for activities that are personally restorative such as brisk walking or other forms of exercise, yoga, pleasure reading, journaling, meditation and massage.
- Avoid isolation. Identify sources of social support and use them. In addition to close family members and friends, sources of social support might include local civic groups or spiritual organizations, for example.
- Establish and maintain professional connections that offer an opportunity to discuss the specific nature and stressors of your work. Consider when it may be helpful or necessary to tap into peer support groups or consultation, make connections with colleagues through professional associations or engage in personal psychotherapy. Pay attention to possible warning signs such as feelings of helplessness, emotional swings, tendency to ruminate, loss of empathy or disconnecting from family and friends.
- Take occupational risks seriously, and be aware of the particular risks facing practicing psychologists. If necessary, educate yourself more fully about topics such as professional burnout, vicarious traumatization, compassion fatigue and colleague assistance. Incorporate this learning into your professional training and continuing education.
- Develop realistic and reasonable expectations about work and your capabilities at any given time. Make appropriate accommodations or adjustments – such as limiting your caseload or consulting with peers – in light of professional stressors and risks that you are experiencing.
- Pay attention to the need for balance in work, rest and play. If your schedule is packed, be prepared to say "no" to additional demands on your time. Take vacations or other appropriate breaks from work. Monitor carefully the substances and/or processes you use for relaxation or entertainment.
- Pursue opportunities for intellectual stimulation, including some outside the profession. Nurture interests apart from your work.
- Take steps to enhance your career satisfaction.
- Adopt a long-range perspective, recognizing that you likely will have different needs at various stages of your career. Beginning to engage in self-care practices as an early career professional can help them become a habit.

captivatingcrazy.com

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness has become a very wide concept, with a growing body of interpretations.

Mindfulness involves intentionally bringing one's attention to the internal and external experiences occurring in the present moment, and is often taught through a variety of meditation exercises. It is the practice of purposely bringing one's attention in the present moment without judgment, a skill one develops through meditation or other training.

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention that originated in Eastern meditation practices. It derives from Buddhist traditions and based on Zen and Tibetan meditation techniques.

Mindfulness is the practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened or complete awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences on a moment-to-moment basis (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Why is Mindfulness considered a Psychological tool?

Mindfulness is now seen as a psychological intervention not just because it is proven to lower stress and improve focus, but because it also works to regulate emotions. It's a practise that first helps you to recognise and accept what you really feel, and then helps you to run your emotions.

Mindfulness doesn't just mean sitting still and meditating. It is about paying attention to yourself and your environment, being truly present in the moment.

Regular practice will improve your ability to focus without distractions and intruding thoughts. It also improves positive thinking through pushing negative thoughts out of your mind and will ultimately help reduce stress in your everyday life (Moore, C., 2020).

Mindfulness is a popular term to describe the act of being present in the here and now. This is similar to the term grounding, which is more often used by psychologists to describe the method of returning our thoughts to our experience in the present moment. Mindfulness practices include meditation and yoga, but can also include coping methods such as identifying your feelings, acknowledging your emotions without judgment, and, generally speaking, practicing kindness for yourself and how you feel (Dellasanta, J., 2017).

Scientific evidence from numerous studies proves the benefits of mindfulness (Moore, C., 2020):

1. Improved Working Memory - mindfulness meditation has been empirically linked to enhanced working memory capacity and working memory capacity also increases.

2. Heightened Metacognitive Awareness - this describes being able to detach from one's own feelings and mental processes—to step back and perceive them as transient, momentary occurrences rather than 'who we are'. In the Buddhist sense, this would relate to 'knowing' and 'freeing' the mind.

3. Lower Levels of Anxiety - controlled trials find support for its impact on alleviating symptoms of anxiety. Similar results have also been found in studies on social anxiety disorder.

4. Reduced Emotional 'Reactivity' - there is also evidence to support the role of mindfulness meditation in emotive 'reactivity'.

5. Enhanced Visual Attention Processing - those who practiced mindfulness meditation showed greater attentional functioning through better performance on tests of concentration, selective attention, and more.

6. Reduced Stress - mindfulness training has also been linked to lower stress levels. And also displayed greater positive states of mind and fewer post-traumatic avoidance symptoms, such as loss of interest in activities.

7. Managing Physical Pain - mindfulness may help to manage chronic pain and help patients improve their quality of life.

Source: nextgengovt.com

Mindfulness techniques (by Dellasanta, J., 2017)

Mindful breathing technique

Find a quiet place. Take a seat or stand up straight, with your head over your heart, and heart over your pelvis. Close your eyes.

- Inhale through the nose for 4 seconds. Take a slow, even inhale rather than a big gulp of air. Do not rush.
- Pause at the top of your breath and hold for 1 second.
- Exhale slowly through the nose for 4 seconds. Rather than releasing your breath all at once, exhale with intention for all 4 seconds.
- Pause at the end of your exhale for 1 second before repeating.
- Inhale again through the nose, and repeat the steps above.
- Continue breathing this way until you can notice a change in the way your body and mind feels.

The 5-senses grounding technique

Before beginning this exercise, practice the mindful breathing technique above 2 or 3 times to begin calming your body and your mind.

- Look around your immediate environment.
- Name 5 things you can see. This can be as simple as a bird, a table, a pencil.
- Name 4 things you can touch. This can be something like your hair, the grass, or a pillow.
- Name 3 things you can hear. Be sure to name external sounds, like a dog barking or a car passing by.
- Name 2 things you can smell. For example, perfume or flowers.
- Name 1 thing you can taste. Maybe it's gum, or coffee.

Mindfulness Exercises (by Ackerman, C.E., 2020)

1. The Raisin Exercise

This is a great introductory exercise for beginners to start practicing mindfulness since it can be attempted by anyone with any kind of food (although one with an interesting or unusual texture, smell, or taste is best).

Pay careful attention to:

The way the raisin looks; How it feels; How their skin responds to its manipulation; Its smell; Its taste.

Focusing on the single object of the raisin is meant to bring the participant's mind to the present, to what is right in front of them. We may be used to raisins, and not used to taking time to actually notice them.

2. The Body Scan

Try this 30 minute guided narrative by expert and founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Jon Kabat Zinn:

Step 1: the participant lying on their backs with their palms facing up and their feet falling slightly apart. This exercise can also be done sitting on a comfortable chair with feet resting on the floor;

Step 2: the participants lie very still for the duration of the exercise, and move with awareness if it becomes necessary to adjust their position;

Step 3: the participants begin scanning by bringing awareness to the breath, noticing the rhythm, the experience of breathing in and expelling out. Should not try to change the way they are breathing but rather just hold gentle awareness on the breath;

Step 4: next, the participant guides attention to the body: how it feels, the texture of clothing against the skin, the contours of the surface on which the body is resting, the temperature of the body and the environment;

Step 5: the participant guides awareness to the parts of the body that are tingling, sore, or feeling particularly heavy or light, the participants note any areas of their body where they don't feel any sensations at all or are hypersensitive.

A typical Body Scan runs through each part of the body, paying special attention to the way each area feels. The scan usually moves systematically through the body, e.g. starting at the feet and moving upwards as follows: Toes of both feet; The rest of the feet; Lower legs; Knees; Thighs; Pelvic region; Abdomen; Chest;

Lower back; Upper back; Hands; Arms; Neck; Face and head; The "blowhole" (Fleming & Kocovski, 2007).

After the Body Scan is complete, the participant feel ready to come back to the room, she/he can slowly open eyes and move naturally to a comfortable sitting position.

3. Mindful Seeing

It is a simple exercise, requiring only a window with some kind of a view.

Step 1: find a space at a window where there are sights to be seen outside;

Step 2: look at everything there is to see. Avoid labeling and categorizing what you see outside the window; instead of thinking "bird" or "stop sign," try to notice the colors, the patterns, or the textures;

Step 3: pay attention to the movement of the grass or leaves in the breeze. Notice the many different shapes present in this small segment of the world you can see. Try to see the world outside the window from the perspective of someone unfamiliar with these sights;

Step 4: be observant, but not critical. Be aware, but not fixated;

Step 5: if you become distracted, gently pull your mind away from those thoughts and notice a color or shape again to put you back in the right frame of mind.

4. Five Senses Exercise

All that is needed is to notice something you are experiencing with each of the five senses.

Notice five things that you can see - Look around you and bring your attention to five things that you can see. Pick something that you don't normally notice, like a shadow or a small crack in the concrete.

Notice four things that you can feel -Bring awareness to four things that you are currently feeling, like the texture of your pants, the feeling of the breeze on your skin, or the smooth surface of a table you are resting your hands on.

Notice three things you can hear -Take a moment to listen, and note three things that you hear in the background. This can be the chirp of a bird, the hum of the refrigerator, or the faint sounds of traffic.

Notice two things you can smell - Bring your awareness to smells that you usually filter out, whether they're pleasant or unpleasant. Perhaps the breeze is carrying

a whiff of pine trees if you're outside, or the smell of a restaurant across the street.

Notice one thing you can taste - Focus on one thing that you can taste right now, at this moment. You can take a sip of a drink, chew a piece of gum, eat something, notice the current taste in your mouth, or even open your mouth to search the air for a taste.

5. The 3-Step Mindfulness Exercise

Step 1: step out of "auto-pilot" to bring awareness to what you are doing, thinking, and sensing at this moment. Try to pause and take a comfortable posture. Notice the thoughts that come up and acknowledge your feelings, but let them pass. Attune yourself to who you are and your current state.

Step 2: bring awareness to the breathing for six breaths or a minute. The goal is to focus attention on one thing: your breath. Be aware of the movement of your body with each breath, of how your chest rises and falls, how your belly pushes in and out, and how your lungs expand and contract. Find the pattern of your breath and anchor yourself to the present with this awareness.

Step 3: expand awareness outward, first to the body then to the environment. Allow the awareness to expand out to your body. Notice the sensations you are experiencing, like tightness, aches, or a lightness in your face or shoulders. Keep in mind your body as a whole, as a complete vessel for your inner self. You can then expand your awareness even further to the environment around you. Bring your attention to what is in front of you.

Notice the colors, shapes, patterns, textures of the objects you can see. Be present at this moment.

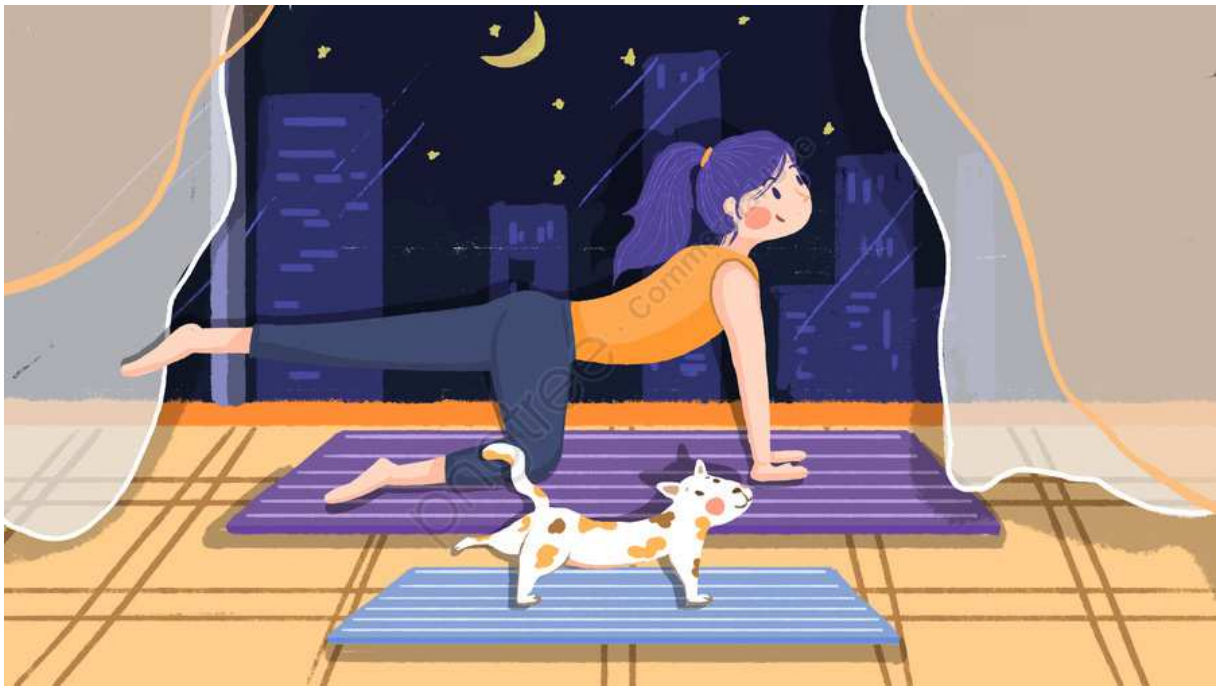
When you are finish the exercise, open your eyes slowly and try to carry that mindfulness with you as you go about your day.

6. Observe a Leaf for Five Minutes

This exercise calls for nothing but a leaf and your attention.

Pick up a leaf, hold it in your hand, and give it your full attention for five minutes.

Notice the colors, the shape, the texture, the patterns. This will bring you into the present and align your thoughts with your current experience.



YOGA

Yoga is a five-millennia-old practice that has changed over time. The word "Yoga" means "unity, wholeness, integration of all components." In Yoga, the body, breath and mind are seen as a union of these multi-dimensional aspects of every human being.

Yoga cultivates health and wellbeing (physical, emotional, mental and social) through the regular practice of a range of many different techniques, including postures and movement, breath awareness and breathing exercises, relaxation and concentration, self-inquiry and meditation.

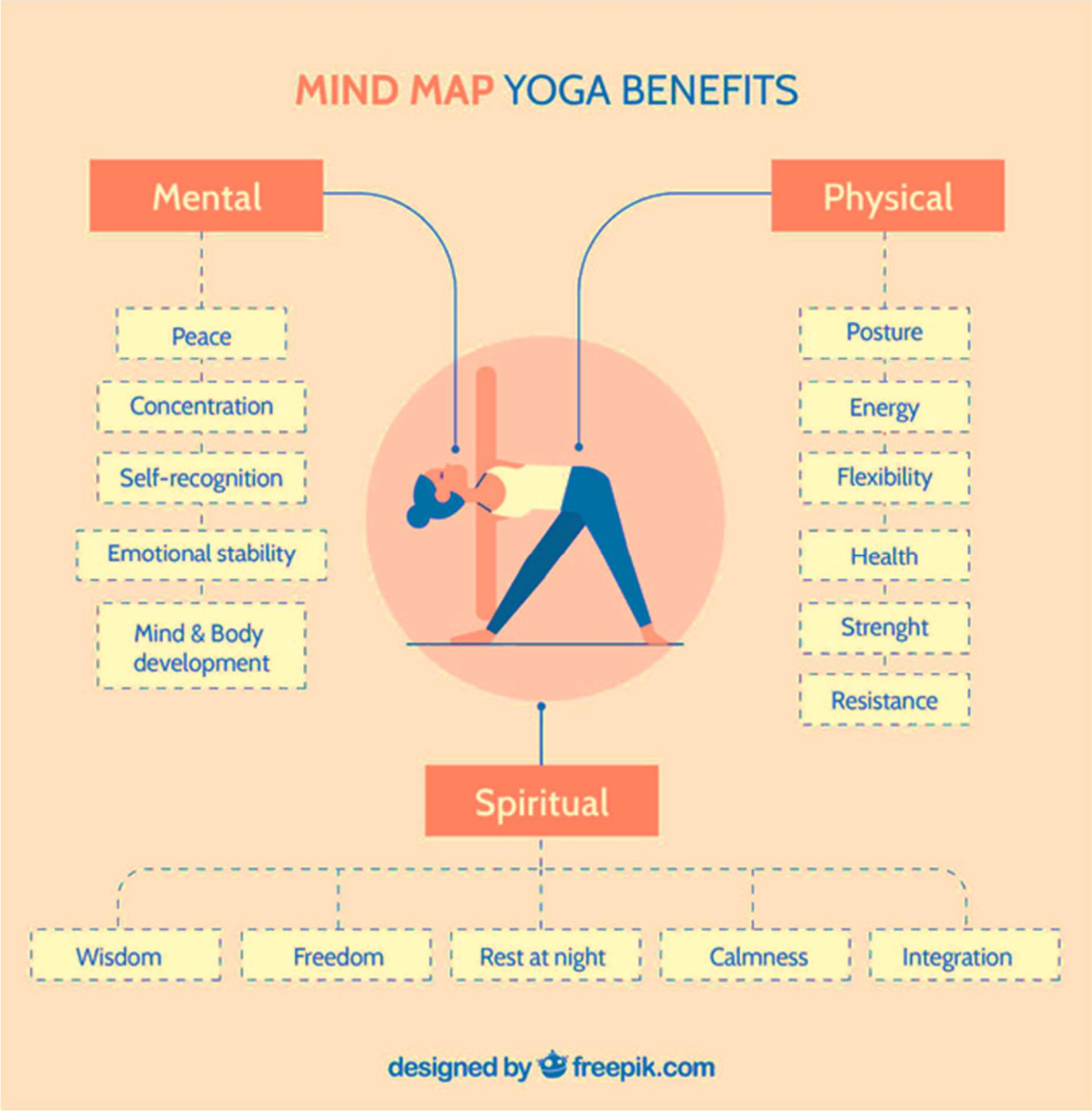
The purpose of yoga is to build strength, awareness and harmony in both the mind and body.

Modern yoga focuses on stretches and poses designed to stimulate inner peace and physical energy. Ancient yoga was less about fitness and more about mental focus and expanding spiritual energy. Nowadays, Yoga is popularized mainly as a physical exercise for good health and tone, but in fact it is an ancient science of self-knowledge and conscious evolution.

Yoga is a form of mind-body fitness that involves a combination of muscular activity and an internally directed mindful focus on awareness of the self, the breath, and energy (Woodyard, C., 2011).

Yoga's benefits

Studies show the practice, which combines stretching and other exercises with deep breathing and meditation, can improve overall physical fitness, strength, flexibility and lung capacity, while reducing heart rate, blood pressure and back pain. But there is a growing body of research documenting yoga's psychological benefits. Recent studies suggest that yoga may help strengthen social attachments, reduce stress and relieve anxiety, depression and insomnia. Researchers are also claim some success in using yoga to help post-traumatic stress disorder, reduce insomnia and as complementary treatment for depressed patients taking antidepressants (Novotney, A., 2009).



The Eight Limbs of Yoga

That there was more to yoga than just moving the body. Yoga is more than just a kickass workout. It is broke down into the following eight areas or "limbs," known as ashtanga (Martin, C., 2015).

The eight limbs are comprised of ethical principles for living a meaningful and purposeful life; serving as a prescription for moral and ethical conduct and self-discipline, they direct attention towards one's health while acknowledging the spiritual aspects of one's nature. Any of the eight limbs may be used separately, but within yoga philosophy the physical postures and breathing exercises prepare the mind and body for meditation and spiritual development. Based on Patanjali's eight limbs, many different yogic disciplines have been developed. Each has its own technique for preventing and treating disease. In the Western world, the most common aspects of yoga practiced are the physical postures and breathing practices of Hatha yoga and meditation. Hatha yoga enhances the capacity of the physical body through the use of a series of body postures, movements (asanas), and breathing techniques (pranayama). The breathing techniques of Hatha yoga focus on conscious prolongation of inhalation, breath retention, and exhalation (Woodyard, C., 2011).

MEDITATION

Andrii Symonenko/Adobe Stock

Meditation leads you to the now—that state of being where you are not worrying about the future or fretting about the past. Instead, you are able to concentrate on the moment and live without distractions. Meditation quiets the "me" center of the brain and allows you to be more present. It is simply the practice of continuously focusing all your attention on one thing in order to calm the mind and become inwardly aware.

Meditation is a mind and body practice that has a long history of use for increasing calmness and physical relaxation, improving psychological balance, coping with illness, and enhancing overall health and well-being. Mind and body practices focus on the interactions among the brain, mind, body, and behavior (NCCIH).

Meditation can be practiced in a variety of ways. You can do it for a minute a day or hours on end. As with the poses, there is no need to rush into meditation. Let your mind wander as many times as you want. As long as you keep coming back to a singular point of focus, you are meditating. Over time, the practice will get easier and you will start to see the benefits in your daily life (Martin, C., 2015).

There are many types of meditation, but most have four elements in common: a quiet location with as few distractions as possible; a specific, comfortable posture (sitting, lying down, walking, or in other positions); a focus of attention (a specially chosen word or set of words, an object, or the sensations of the breath); and an open attitude (letting distractions come and go naturally without judging them) (NCCIH).

Benefits of Meditation

Physical Benefits of Meditation

1. Can Reduce Pain
2. Lowers Blood Pressure
3. It Lowers Heart Rate
4. The Body Heals Faster
5. Anti-Inflammatory
6. Helps You Digest Your Food
7. Immune System Strengthens
8. Helps Prevent Asthma
9. Eases Premenstrual/Menopausal Symptoms

Social Benefits of Meditation

10. Decreases Feelings of Loneliness
11. Helps us Be More Compassionate
12. Reduces Social Isolation
13. Helps Create Positive Relationships

Cognitive Benefits of Meditation

14. Improves Working Memory
15. Increases Focus
16. Helps Work Better Under Stress
17. Improves Ability to Solve Problems
18. Decision-Making is Better
19. Helps You Learn New Things
20. Helps Visuospatial Processing

Psychological Benefits of Meditation

21. Helps You Sleep Better
22. Reduces Anxiety and Stress
23. Helps Regulate Mood Disorders
24. Improves Self-Esteem
25. Can Help Treat Addiction
26. Increases Self-Awareness
27. Helps Reduce Anger

How to Meditate

PLACE:

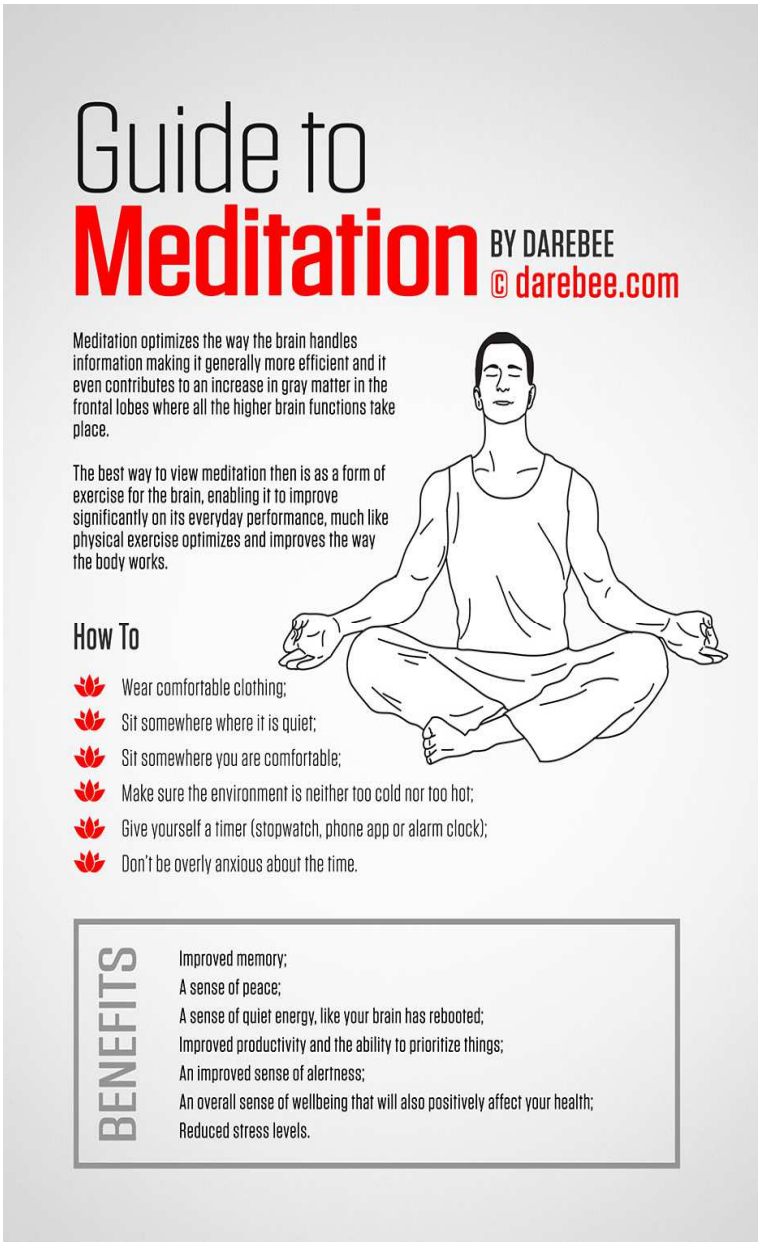
Find a spot where you will not be disturbed.

TIME:

The body is most relaxed in the mornings and evenings. However, if this does not work with your schedule, pick a time that makes sense to you and stick to it.

BODY POSITION:

When meditating, you want to be comfortable, yet stay awake. Many people find that sitting up straight in Easy pose or sitting against a wall on a blanket or bolster works great for them. However, if you are ill or have a medical condition that does not allow this, then by all means lie down.



THOUGHTS:

Your mind is going to wander, and that is normal. When this happens, just let the thoughts be. Do not put any judgment on them or try to change them. Let them pass and bring your attention back to the breath or the point of focus that is established in the meditation.

BREATH:

Focusing on the breath is a great way to stay in the present. However, the breath in meditation is not meant to be forced or controlled. Notice your breath as it is and observe.

LENGTH AND FREQUENCY:

It is best to meditate daily. If you can commit to 15 minutes a day, that would be ideal. Over time your practice will increase in length, but for now just make a daily commitment, even if it is for only a couple of minutes at a time. The benefits of meditation are cumulative, so whatever you can do is going to help you achieve results.

SPORTS

By interactimages

Sport is a good way to reduce stress. Moderately intensive sports improve overall wellbeing. This is very pleasant in case of stress, but it is also very important for people in a burnout. Physical activity can help lower your overall stress levels and improve your quality of life, both mentally and physically.

The physical benefits of exercise —improving physical condition and fighting disease — have long been established. Exercise is also considered vital for maintaining mental fitness, and it can reduce stress. Studies show that it is very effective at reducing fatigue, improving alertness and concentration, and at enhancing overall cognitive function. This can be especially helpful when stress has depleted your energy or ability to concentrate. Exercise and other physical activity produce endorphins—chemicals in the brain that act as natural painkillers — and also improve the ability to sleep, which in turn reduces stress (ADAA).

Exercise can be an effective component of a stress management program for many individuals and should be recommended to help those who are dealing with acute, acute episodic, or chronic stress.

The benefits of sports

• Sports provide relaxation	• Improve your ability to control weight
• Sports reduce depression	• Help you sleep better at night
• More energy through sport	• Strengthen your muscles and bones
• Feeling better through sport	• Strengthen your immunity
• A better mood through sport	• Lower your blood pressure
• Moving defragments your mind	• Boost levels of good cholesterol
• Exercise increases metabolism	• Sport improves the stamina and health
• Better social contacts	• Increases your self-confidence

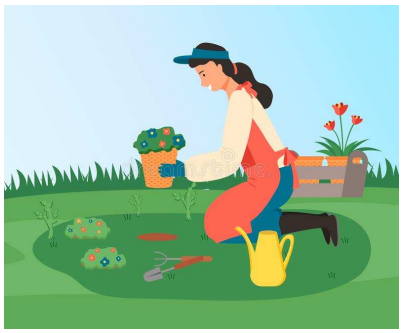
Just 30 to 45 minutes of exercise three times a week can make you feel much healthier and in control of your own life. Studies have shown that exercise can relieve stress, reduce depression and improve your cognitive function. Exercise also releases endorphins, chemicals that trigger positive feelings. Practically any sport will help us with stress or anxiety:

Here are some great ways to exercise (Howley, E., 2020, Griffin, T., 2020, LiveStrongGym, 2019, Waehner, P., 2020):

- *Take up running*. Running releases endorphins and can make you feel great after you do it. Try setting a goal for yourself, like running a 5k or 10k race. This will keep you motivated and make you feel more capable of meeting and tackling challenges.
- *Join a pool and swim a mile every other day.* Immersing yourself in water will make you feel stronger and will wash away any of your stressful thoughts. This is also a good activity if you have any joint or muscle pain. A full-body workout, swimming is great for the cardiovascular system and offers some resistance training elements too because water is denser than air and will resist your movements more than when you move on land. Being submerged in water can also be very soothing for some people and make for an even better reduction in stress.

- *Cycling.* Cycling is easy on the joints and can provide a heart-pumping workout.
- *Join a team sport, like bowling, volleyball, or softball.* You'll be able to make new friends and workout at the same time. In other words, you get the benefits of socialization AND exercising in one go.
- *Dancing.* Dancing can be a wonderful way to ease stress while getting a solid workout. It can also be an intensely social activity, which can also help foster a sense of connectivity and support, further helping you feel less anxious.

- *Take up hiking.* You'll feel less stressed if you spend more time in nature and exposed to fresh air.
- *Brisk walking.* Perhaps the simplest way to get some stress-busting exercise is to go for a brisk walk. 10-minute walk can be enough to restore calm and may be just as helpful as a 45-minute or longer walk when it comes to reducing stress and anxiety.
- *Strolling in the woods or along a beach.* Also sometimes called forest bathing, getting out in nature to enjoy a gentle walk in the woods or along a waterfront can do wonders for alleviating anxiety and stress.



- *Gardening.* Working in the garden can get you moving and more physically active than you might realize. Stretching, bending, digging and carrying plants, soil or a full watering can around the garden can work a range of muscles and elevate your heart rate slightly while helping you beautify your space and calm your mind.
- *Cardio sports: running, swimming, spinning, dancing* ... Going for a run, going for a swim, practicing any style of dancing or cycling have many things in common: they are aerobic sports, where blood circulation and cardiovascular capacity are improved.
- *High Intensity interval training.* Due to its characteristics, it is the ideal training for those people who have little time to play sports, which in itself can be a stressful factor. In just 20 minutes you can complete a good session.

- Choose any activity you like (running, walking, etc.)
- Warm up for 5-10 minutes
- Increase intensity (adding hills, incline, resistance and/or speed) so that you're working at Level 7-8 on this perceived exertion scale for 30-60 seconds.
- Reduce intensity and recover for 2 or more minutes
- Repeat intervals for 20 or more minutes

➢ *Circuit Training*. Circuit training can help you save time in your workouts. By combining exercises and moving quickly, you get fit and get more done in less time. As a bonus, the variety of exercises keeps your mind and body engaged, making your workouts more fun.

- Choose any activity you like (running, walking, etc.)
- Warm up for 5-10 minutes
- Increase intensity (adding hills, incline, resistance and/or speed) so that you are working at Level 7-8 on this perceived exertion scale for 30-60 seconds.
- Reduce intensity and recover for 2 or more minutes
- Repeat intervals for 20 or more minutes

➢ *Strength Training*. You may not think of lifting weights as a way to reduce stress, but it is another form of exercise that gives you an outlet for the buildup of tension and stress.

- Choose 8-10 exercises (one per muscle group) from the examples below: Chest, Back, Shoulders, Biceps, Triceps, Legs.
- Choose a weight you can lift 10-16 times for each exercise
- Do each exercise for 1-2 sets of 10-16 reps, focusing on your form
- Lift weights at least twice a week for best results.

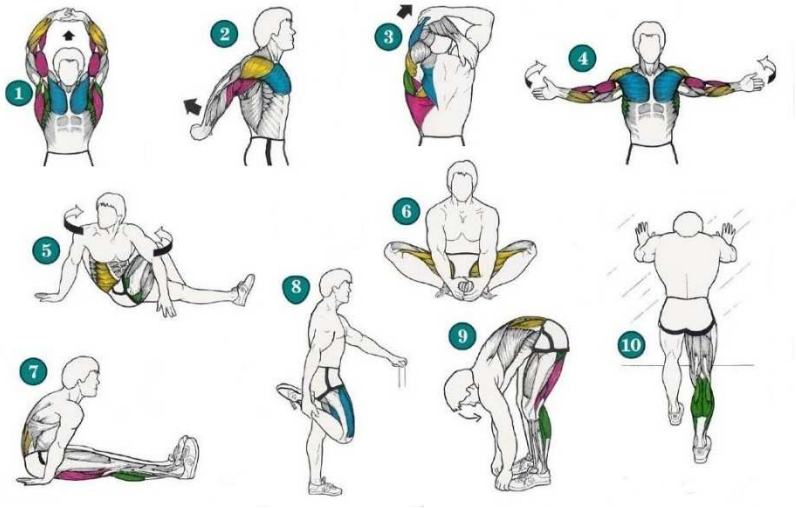
- *Boxing*. You do not need to stick in the ring with another person, you can choose options such as fitness level boxing, some sessions that help us to get rid of a burden and feel more relaxed or start kick-boxing.

- *Kickboxing*. Kickboxing is great for getting out your aggressions in a healthy way while feeling strong, powerful and in control. It also burns lots of calories and increases endurance.
  - Check with your local health club or martial arts studio for kickboxing classes.
  - Put on some music and combine your own kicks and punches for a homemade workout.
- *Walking*. Walking is a great way to simplify your workouts while reducing stress. You can breathe fresh air, get away from your problems and move your body all at the same time.
  - Put on a comfortable pair of athletic shoes
  - Go outside and begin walking briskly
  - Relax your shoulders, let your arms move in a natural rhythm and breathe deeply
  - Keep walking for as long as you can
  - Do not forget to come back home.

- *Pilates*. Pilates is like yoga in that it focuses on breathing, connecting to your body and improving how you carry yourself, making it a great choice for stress relief. Pilates also strengthens the core and the pelvic floor, which makes you stronger for other activities in your busy day. Try it: Start with basic Pilates moves, and mastering these moves will strengthen your core and give you a strong foundation for more difficult exercises: Neutral Spine; Arms Over; Angel Arms; Pelvic Clock; Knee Folds.
- *Yoga*. The different yoga postures help us to stretch and relax the different muscle groups of the body, without forgetting the control of

breathing. Try it: Perform each move listed below 5-8 times. Hold the last Corpse pose for several minutes: Sun Salutations; Cat Stretch; Warrior I; Warrior II; Triangle Pose; Corpse Pose.

- *Relaxing Stretch*. Find a 5-minute block of time and try each stretch below, holding each one for 15-30 seconds and breathing deeply. Focus on what you are doing and enjoy how the exercises feel.



  - Torso Stretch
  - Seated Hip Stretch
  - Shoulder Shrug
  - Standing Lower Back Stretch
  - Child's Pose.

- Useful for recovering from stress can be regular moderate to vigorous *aerobic exercise program*, such as the recommendations of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic exercise per week. Breaking the exercise into two 10- to 15-minute sessions, one before work and one at lunch time when possible, can help combat stress throughout the day (Jackson, E., 2013).

With regard to which exercise is best - the one you can stick to regularly and enjoy most. As to how much exercise you should get for stress release, there is no one-size-fits-all prescriptive amount that will magically alleviate all your stress. Rather, you should aim to work out as frequently as your schedule allows without putting yourself at risk of injury. If 10 minutes a day is all you can manage, that is way better than nothing. For reference, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends getting at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) to 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity exercise. Alternatively, you can aim for getting just 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) to 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity. Aerobic activity should be spread throughout the week for best effect (Howley, E., 2020).

Remember: Workout of low to moderate intensity makes you feel energized and healthy.

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LAISURE/RELAXING ACTIVITIES

Generally, leisure activities can be defined as voluntary non-work activities that are engaged in for enjoyment.

Different individuals have different leisure needs. People choose their leisure activities according to their particular needs, which will vary according to the environments and contexts involved. People will also make different leisure choices depending on where they are in their life cycle. As individuals age, they may begin to choose leisure activities that they would not have chosen in their earlier stages of life. Likewise, people may stop enjoying the leisure activities that they have previously enjoyed when they reach an older age (Shin, K., & You, S., 2013).

Doing the things you enjoy can be good for your health. Health benefits of leisure include physical, cognitive, emotional and social well-being.

When people engage in leisure activity, they have lower stress levels, better mood, a lower heart rate and more psychological engagement — that means less boredom, which can help avoid unhealthy behaviors. Leisure activity can provide immediate stress relief and other health benefits to just about anyone. But the activity must be mentally engaging — too many distractions can negate the effects (Leonard, J., 2015).

The benefits of relaxation techniques (Mayo Clinic, 2021)

• Slowing heart rate	• Improving concentration and mood
• Lowering blood pressure	• Improving sleep quality

• Slowing your breathing rate	• Lowering fatigue
• Improving digestion	• Reducing anger and frustration
• Maintaining normal blood sugar levels	• Improved coping abilities
• Reducing activity of stress hormones	• A boost in energy
• Increasing blood flow to major muscles	• A sense of calmness and confidence
• Reducing muscle tension and chronic pain	• Boosting confidence to handle problems

To get the most benefit, use relaxation techniques along with other positive coping methods, such as thinking positively, finding humor, problem-solving, managing time, exercising and reaching out to supportive family and friends.

The following activities can be restorative and can relieve stress. Try one of these next time you feel the need to restore balance in your life with a little leisure and relaxation (Ditch the Label, 2020, Harper, S., 2020, Scott, E., 2020):

- *Watch Television*. Too much television can cut into the time we have for regular-life activities, but tv can be an effective stress relief option as well.
- *Watch something funny*. Laughter relieves physical tension, reduces stress and increases immunity.
- *Get a Colouring Book*. Colouring in helps you chill out because it's very difficult to focus on other things when you're doing it.
- *Do Nothing*. While many people find it more challenging at first, literally doing nothing—thinking nothing, feeling nothing, doing nothing—is a wonderful stress management tool that can be utterly transformative. It`s a practice of meditation.
- *Have a banana*. When we're stressed out our blood pressure tends to rise but the potassium found in bananas can help to regulate this. Stress can also leave us feeling depleted but bananas give you a replenishing energy boost.
- *Do some baking*. The smell of baking can make people feel calm and comforted.

- *Play Games*. Online games connect us with our friends, people we enjoy but may not have the time to interact with as much as we'd like. Strategic games keep us mentally sharp and can bring out creativity. Casual games can provide a mental break. And then there are board games and group games, perfect for a family game night! Whether you choose a quick game of solitaire or a night of games with friends, don't forget to play. From board games, to cards games, engaging in social fun is the perfect antidote for work-related stress. Much like the effects on mental health of the previous two categories, playing games with family members, friends, or coworkers can reduce stress and disrupt rumination patterns. These benefits can also aid in the improvement in your immune system. Board games have an additional bonus. They strengthen social relationships, which is important.

- *Make Art*. Creating something meaningful, whether it be a poem, a painting, a drawing or some gorgeous art, can help you sink into a state of deep relaxation and focus on something other than work. At the same time, being creative serves as an act of self-expression, allowing you to offload some of the pressure or stress that tends to build up during the workday.
- *Curl up With a Good Book*. Whether you choose a thriller, a tea-cozy mystery, or comics, engaging with a good book is something that can be a wonderful stress management strategy. The physical and emotional "time-out" that a good book provides, combined with the mental escape, are all great for helping us remove ourselves from whatever stressful situations we may be facing in life.

- *Cook up a face-mask*. Yep, that's right, we are suggesting you mix up half an avocado, a teaspoon of honey, 2 tablespoons of hot water and smear it all over your face. Relax for 10 minutes to look and feel rejuvenated.
- *Drink hot water*. Learn from the tradition of Chinese healing and drink a cup of good ol', clean hot water. It will cleanse your system of toxins that have accumulated in the body and may be causing tension. You could try adding some lemon and vitamin C.

- *Have a massage exchange*. Exchange massages with a friend or relative. There are loads of tips online so you and your mate can enjoy the benefits of relaxation.
- *Watch a nature documentary*. Nature documentaries can sprinkle our minds with mood-lifting wanderlust and highlight the sheer scale of life which can in turn help us gain perspective of our own lives.
- *Turn up the music and dance*. Combining music and dance can help build self-esteem, lift your mood and reduce anxiety. Dancing may also help express emotions and experiences that are difficult to communicate in words alone.

Dancing is a great stress reducer because the cardiovascular activity triggers the release of endorphins, which are hormones that make you feel better. The rhythm and form of dance provides a satisfactory pattern that the human brain finds appealing. Furthermore, dancing helps create a bond between people and this personal connection can alleviate stress.

- *Support someone else*. Moving your attention outside yourself can help take the pressure of stressors in your own life and supporting others can also give you valuable insight for how to redress your issues. Seeing the impact you make in that person's life will also boost your self-esteem which in turn, can help de-stress.
- *Visit a museum or gallery*. Cultural centers provide a safe haven of positive distraction, reduce tension and inspire our creativity too.

- *Squeeze a stress ball*. Using a stress ball can help alleviate tension by promoting muscle relaxation and providing a general sense of release.
- *Chew gum*. Chewing gum for a few minutes can help release anxiety, improve your mood.
- *Call an old friend*. Speaking to an old friend can reduce stress levels and no doubt the nostalgia will get you smiling and laughing too.
- *Keeping a diary*. Venting all those thoughts and emotions onto paper can make your feelings and problems seem less intimidating. Journaling, or even just jotting down your feelings, is good for the mind. Putting your feelings into words actually produces therapeutic effects in the brain. Visualizing certain words on paper activates the prefrontal region of the brain and

lowers its amygdala response, which tends to trip when your body is in danger. In other words, writing your feelings down literally calms the brain.

- *Snuggle up with a pet*. Cuddling your pet can help reduce anxiety through the release of oxytocin in your brain, ease feelings of social rejection and make you feel cared.
- *Watch cute animals on YouTube*. Watching it can help reduce your stress levels and lift your mood.
- *Wash dishes*. You'll be surprised at how therapeutic it is. Concentrate on letting your mind and body experience the task with serene awareness (e.g. focusing on the smell of the soap, the feel of the dishes and the warmth of the water).
- *Organise your space*. Clean your room and reorganize your desk. Tidy room, tidy mind.
- *Drink green tea*. Green tea is a source of the chemicals which can help relieve anger.

- *Do a puzzle*. Try and crack a sudoku, a crossword or piece together a puzzle to unwind and get your mind into a state of relaxation.
- *Sleep well*. Whilst stress can interfere with sleeping, sleeping can also relieve stress.
- *Cook your fave dish*. Nourishing yourself with a good meal can help boost your sense of self-worth. Cooking can be a relaxing and rewarding process.
- *Light some candles*. Candlelight is known for its calming effects and scented candles have aroma-therapeutic properties which can improve well-being. Watching the flame of a candle can also be a great starting point for meditation.

- *Hum the tune of your fave song*. Humming can dramatically slow down your heart rate and ground you. It also has a relaxing effect on your face, neck and shoulder muscles.
- *Wake up and smell the coffee*. Smelling coffee actually reduces stress hormones.
- *Open the windows*. Not only does fresh air promote well-being and relax you, but getting more oxygen to the brain improves concentration and gives you the energy boost you need without the same sugar comedown of a chocolate bar.
- *Mix up your route*. Try riding your bike to work. Or if you walk everywhere, try taking different routes.

- *Take your brain on holiday*. Daydreaming can help you solve stressful problems, relax you and inspire creativity.

- *Have a bath*. Taking a dip in a hot bath will relax your muscles, enabling you to unwind both physically and mentally which can help prepare you for a good night sleep too.
- *Browse books*. Go to your local library and spend some time browsing their book selection in the peace and quiet. Sit back, relax and get lost in the good book you've found. Reading even for just six minutes can reduce your stress levels by two thirds.
- *Have a picnic*. Outdoor activities with friends or family can help reduce the stress providing a bonding experience that can alleviate feelings of social isolation.

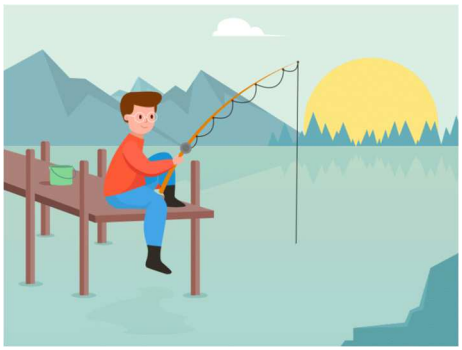
- *Buy a plant*. Not only does filling your room with flowers look pretty and purify the air, but being around plants can help people feel more relaxed and actually reduce your likelihood of developing stress related depression.
- *Munch some crunch*. It's important not to use food as a stress reducer as this can lead to unhealthy eating habits. But when you do reach for a snack, try some carrot sticks or a handful of almonds as this will help relieve stress by working your jaw muscles.

- *Get knitting*. Get creative using your motor skills to make repetitive motions that relieve stress. Give your brain a much needed break and if your thoughts get distracted, return to the movement. The rhythmic, repetitive movements of knitting can stimulate the release of serotonin, which is a hormone associated with calm, happy feelings.
- *Get a hobby*. Pursuing a new hobby is a fun way to break away from life's demands, as well as allowing you to build your self esteem, forge new friendships and express yourself, which all contribute to the reduction of stress. Activities like crocheting, painting, woodworking, or pottery are all great hobbies for anyone interested in reducing stress while also creating something practical or artistic. Alternatively, hobbies like painting and drawing are shown to increase emotional intelligence, hone communication skills, and, again, reduce stress.

- *Get some sun*. Vitamin D can play an important role in your mental health but by the time it gets to those long winter months many of us are lacking in it. Keep calm and soak up all the sun you can and if you're running low, top up with vitamin D rich foods like oily fish and eggs.
- *Turn off all electronic devices*. Technology can be wonderful but they increase our stress levels. They can also disrupt your sleep which will only contribute to stress so make sure you switch them off an hour or two before bed.

- *Shopping*. Shopping can actually help reduce your stress levels. In fact, some refer to shopping as "retail therapy!"
- *Drink more water*. Even slight dehydration can lower our moods and it can increase levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. Dehydration can also cause your body to stop functioning properly which can result in anxiety.
- *Do your nails*. Spend some time looking after number one, feel relaxed and get creative with nail art too.

- *Listen to calming music*. Chilled out tunes slow down our pulses, lower blood pressure and decrease stress hormones. Listening to music for at least a half hour each day can lower your blood pressure, slow your heart rate, and calm anxiety and stress.
- *Listen to an audiobook*. It's much less effort than reading and there's a huge choice of podcasts online.
- *Fishing.* Fishing lowers your cortisol levels (known as the stress hormone). This positive effect can last for as long as three weeks after a fishing trip. While fishing you'll have the chance to soak up the sun. Vitamin D from the sun improves your immune system and promotes cell growth, helping to fight off illness and disease. By going fishing your main muscle groups, heart and lungs are all getting a good work out. Being outside and taking notice of the environment around you improve your ability to concentrate. It's also a great mood booster.



TIME MANAGEMENT

What Is Time Management?

Time management is the strategy of planning out your available time and controlling the amount of time you spend on specific tasks in order to work more efficiently.

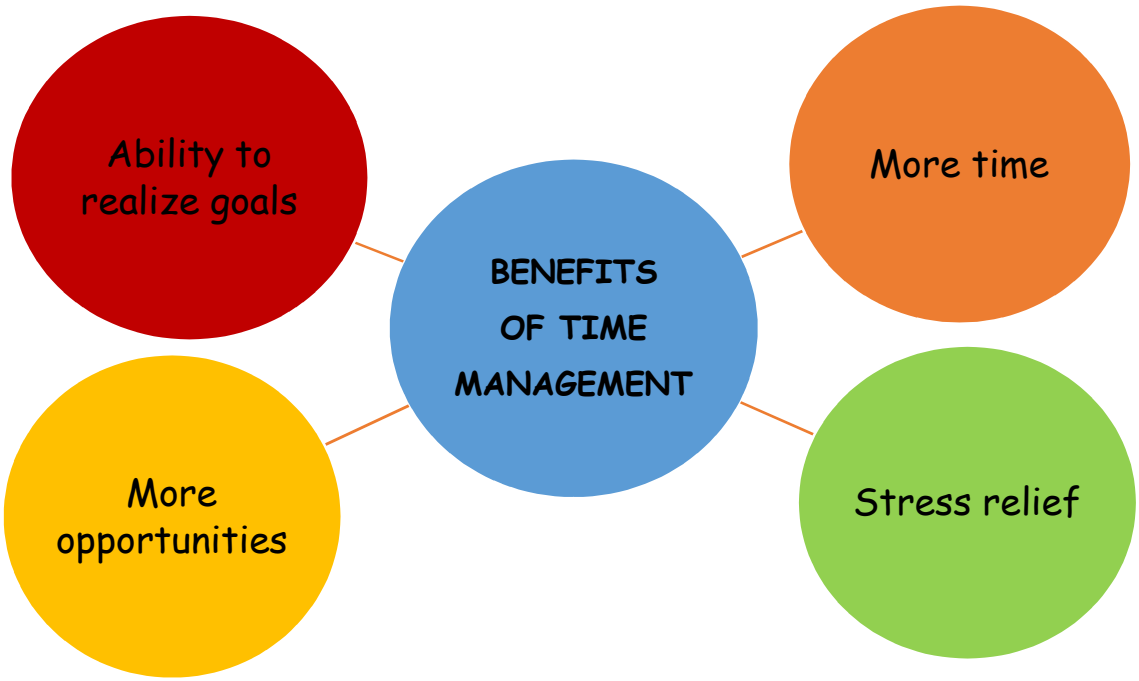
Time management is the ability to plan and control how someone spends the hours in a day to effectively accomplish their goals.

"Time management" refers to the way that you organize and plan how long you spend on specific activities and the benefits are enormous:

- Greater productivity and efficiency.
- A better professional reputation.
- Less stress.
- Increased opportunities for advancement.
- Greater opportunities to achieve important life and career goals.

Failing to manage your time effectively can have some very undesirable consequences:

- Missed deadlines.
- Inefficient work flow.
- Poor work quality.
- A poor professional reputation and a stalled career.
- Higher stress levels (Mind Tools, 201).



12 myths about work (Radev.N., 2007 by Michael LeBoeuf, 1982)

1. The more you sweat, the more you get - good results are not always associated with hard work and vice versa, hard work does not always lead to success.

2. Activity means productivity – do not confuse activity with productivity, because you can easily waste time and energy without efficiency.

3. Efficiency means effectiveness - effectiveness must precede efficiency, i.e. to achieve a goal, you must first know what it is.

4. Work at night - this myth leads to the false feeling that the results are proportional to the time spent. Working late at night is dangerous - we get the misconception that night and weekends are for work and we deteriorate our mental and physical health.

5. The best way to do the job is to do it yourself - this is wrong, because on the one hand, a person has limited opportunities, and on the other hand personal time is reduced.

6. The easiest way is the best - those who seek the line of least resistance live and work "day in and day out", these are usually losing people.

7. Hard work is a virtue - not every human activity is virtuous and noble, it can develop the potential of some people, but it can ruin others.

8. Work is not a pleasure - if you believe that work has only unpleasant sides, then you will see only them.

9. There is only one best way - formal education teaches us that there is always only one right way to solve a problem or give a correct answer, but this always

leads to creative rigidity and limited thinking. There are always at least two good ways to do something or make a decision.

10. More discipline means less freedom - we tend to assume that freedom and discipline are two different extremes, but freedom is not at the expense of discipline. One can be disciplined and feel free if one imposes self-discipline.

11. Justice and equality for all - the search for justice at work most often leads to escape from obligations and a feeling of unhappiness. Instead, start enjoying your work and your life.

12. We work best when we are under pressure - this is an excuse to postpone work. When we work under pressure and short deadlines, we are more likely to make mistakes, and the more we make mistakes, the more likely we are to lose confidence.

Day mode - tips and rules

Don't plan many activities	Leave more time between activities /for unforeseen situations/	Record not what you can do and what you need
Your plan should be flexible	The most important thing is done first	Alternate activities during the day - complicated with light, boring with interesting
Break large and complex tasks into stages	Plan breaks and pleasures between activities	Plan not only for tomorrow, but also for the near future
	Do not be afraid to give up your plans	

Time Management Questionnaire

(by Advanced Corporate Training)

Scoring: 2 = Always 1 = Sometimes 0 = Never

• I do things in order of priority _____

• I accomplish what needs to be done during the day _____

• I always get assignments done on time _____

• I feel I use my time effectively _____

• I tackle difficult or unpleasant tasks without procrastinating _____

• I force myself to make time for planning _____

• I spend enough time planning _____

• I prepare a daily or weekly "to do" list _____

• I prioritize my list in order of importance, not urgency _____

• I am able to meet deadlines without rushing at the last minute _____

• I keep up-to-date on my reading and research assignments _____

• I prevent interruptions from distracting me from high priority tasks _____

• I avoid spending too much time on trivial matters _____

• I spend enough time on work-related activities _____

• I plan time to relax and be with friends in my weekly schedule _____

• I have a weekly schedule on which I record fixed commitments such as work hours _____

• I try to do the most important tasks during my most energetic periods of the day _____

• I make constructive use of my commuting time _____

• I periodically re-assess my activities in relation to my goals _____

• I have discontinued any wasteful or unprofitable activities or routines _____

• I screen and group my telephone calls to allow for control over telephone interruptions _____

• I judge myself by accomplishments of tasks rather than by amount of activity _

• My actions are determined primarily by me, not by circumstances or by other people's priorities_____

• I have a clear idea of what I want to accomplish during the forthcoming quarter _____

• I am satisfied with the way I use my time _____

Results

45 to 50: You have outstanding time management skills

38 to 44: You have strong time management skills

30 to 37: You are managing your time fairly well, but sometimes feel overwhelmed

25 to 36: You work career is likely to be stressful and less than satisfying unless you take steps to begin to manage your time more effectively

Less than 25: You need to work on your time management skills

TIME-MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Identifying Time Stealers and Arresting Them (by Lavender Coaching, 2011)

How much of your work day is actually productive? Most of us spend countless number of hours on repeating tasks we have already done, reacting to situations that should never have arisen, and ranting about how much we have to do and what little time we have to do them in. In order to figure out where all our time is going we have to become aware of our actions.

- Keep a journal of what you do with the time you spend at work for at least one week. This can be extremely tedious and seem to take up even more of your precious time, but in order to improve time management we have to become aware of where our time goes.
- After you have completed your log, analyze it. Look for time stealers. Time stealers are anything that reduces your effectiveness in the workplace. Examples include: doing work that you should have delegated, spending too much time answering or sending email, unnecessary telephone conversations, interruptions by other employees, long-winded meetings, rushing through projects that should have been completed at an earlier date, trying to accomplish too many things at once, redoing other people's work because it is not up to par, doing tasks more than once, lack of skills or knowledge, poor planning, lack of sleep, inability to say "no", and lack of a plan for your day. Complete that for a week or two.
- After you have compiled your log, take a look at it and identify the most frequent time stealers that reduce your effectiveness in the workplace.

Kanban Board

Kanban is a Japanese word meaning a billboard or signboard. The main idea of the Kanban board is to have a visual board that helps you to track progress on your goals. Visualizing your workflow and tasks on a Kanban board helps you better understand your processes and gain an overview of your workload. With this new level of transparency, you will quickly identify problematic work stages, and by improving those, your team will soon work more efficiently.

Kanban is a method for managing the product creation process with a focus on continual delivery while not overburdening the development team. Kanban is a process designed to help individuals and teams work together more effectively. In kanban, the workflow is visualized into a board, called a "Kanban Board". A Kanban Board can be a bulletin board or white board or an online board. The board has various coloumns which represent the steps in your process and each column has tasks or work items that support your process (Reddy, S., 2019).

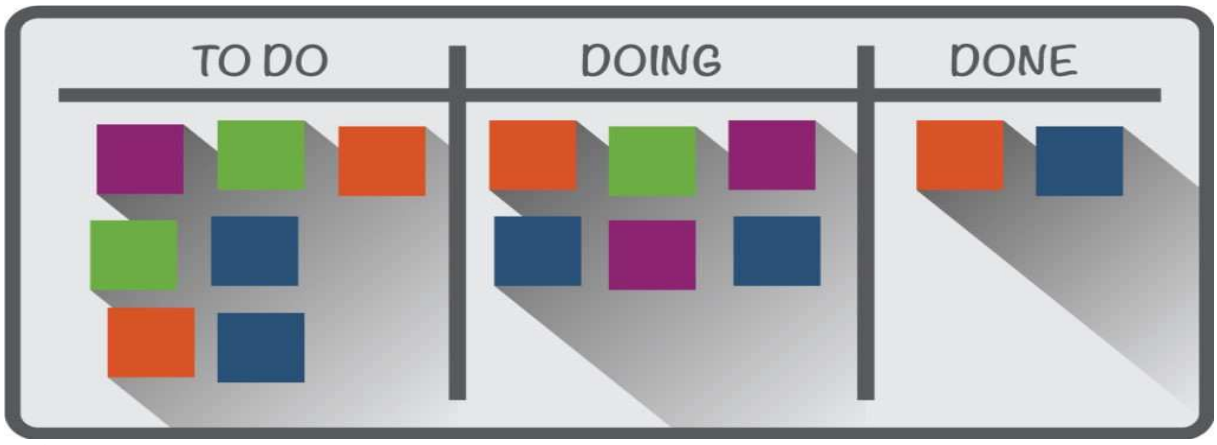
Kanban boards use Card, Column, Swimlanes, and WIP Limits to enable teams to visualize and manage their workflows effectively. Let us introduce you to the main components more closely:

Kanban Cards – This is the visual representation of tasks. Each card contains information about the task and its status, such as deadline, assignee, description, etc.

Kanban Columns – Each column on the board represents a different stage of your workflow. The cards go through the workflow until their full completion.

Work-in-Progress Limits – They restrict the maximum amount of tasks in the different stages of the workflow. Limiting WIP allows you to finish work items faster by helping your team focus only on current tasks.

Kanban Swimlanes – These are horizontal lanes you can use to separate different activities, teams, classes of service, and more (Kanbanize.com, 2021).



Medium.com

Steps:

- You should draw several columns on the whiteboard,visualizing the stage of each specific task. The columns on the blackboard are usually:
  - To Do
  - In Progress
  - Done
- Then you need sticky notes. Every sticky note represents a task that needs to be completed. You simply write the name of the task that needs to be completed. You can use different colors of sticky notes for different types of tasks. Every sticky note represents a task that a team or individual has to perform. You simply write what must be done on the sticky note (name of a task). Sticky notes can be of different colors for different types of tasks. On every note, you can also write additional data, like the estimated scope of the task in hours, task owners and other information.
- After you have the big board and sticky notes with tasks, you simply stick the notes in one of the columns, depending on the phase the task is in.

If you followed all the steps, you should have a nice visual representation of your tasks and in which stage they are. Based on your progress, you move sticky notes through these columns (Kos, B., 2020).

The Eisenhower Matrix (www.eisenhower.me)

The Eisenhower Matrix, also referred to as Urgent-Important Matrix, helps you decide on and prioritize tasks by urgency and importance, sorting out less urgent and important tasks which you should either delegate or not do at all.

"What is important is seldom urgent and what is urgent is seldom important."

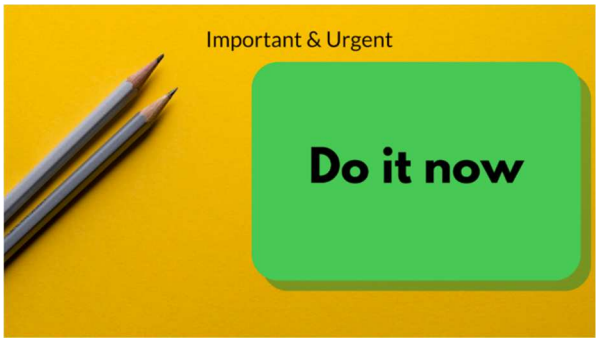
Dwight Eisenhower, 34th President of The United States

Eisenhower recognized that great time management means being effective as well as efficient. In other words, we must spend our time on things that are important and not just the ones that are urgent. To do this, and to minimize the stress of having too many tight deadlines, we need to understand this distinction – urgent and important:

- **Important** activities have an outcome that leads to us achieving our goals, whether these are professional or personal.

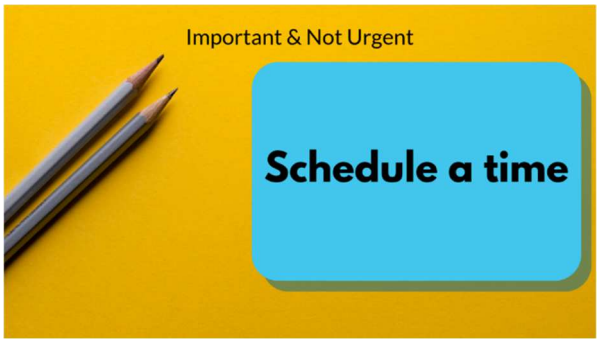
- **Urgent** activities demand immediate attention, and are usually associated with achieving someone else's goals. They are often the ones we concentrate on and they demand attention because the consequences of not dealing with them are immediate.

Prioritizing tasks by urgency and importance results in 4 quadrants with different work strategies:



① Do First

First focus on important tasks to be done the same day.

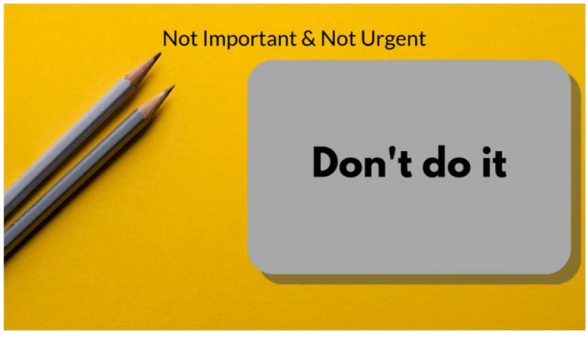


② Schedule

Important, but not-so-urgent stuff should be scheduled.

③ Delegate

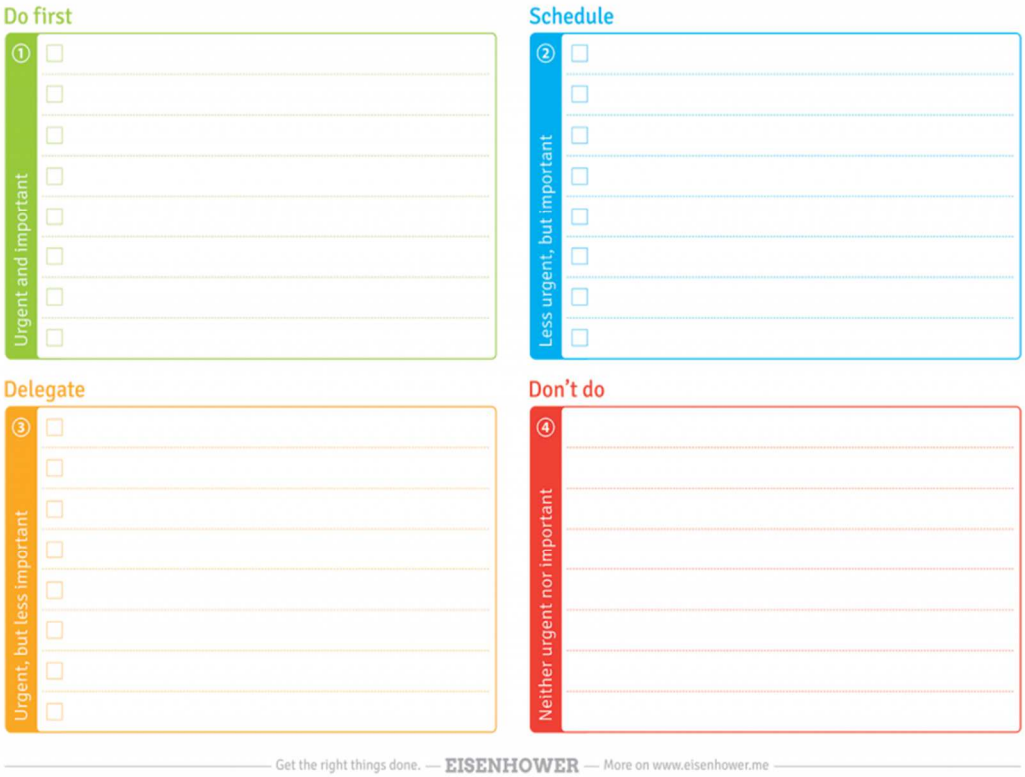
What's urgent, but less important, delegate to others.



④ Don't Do

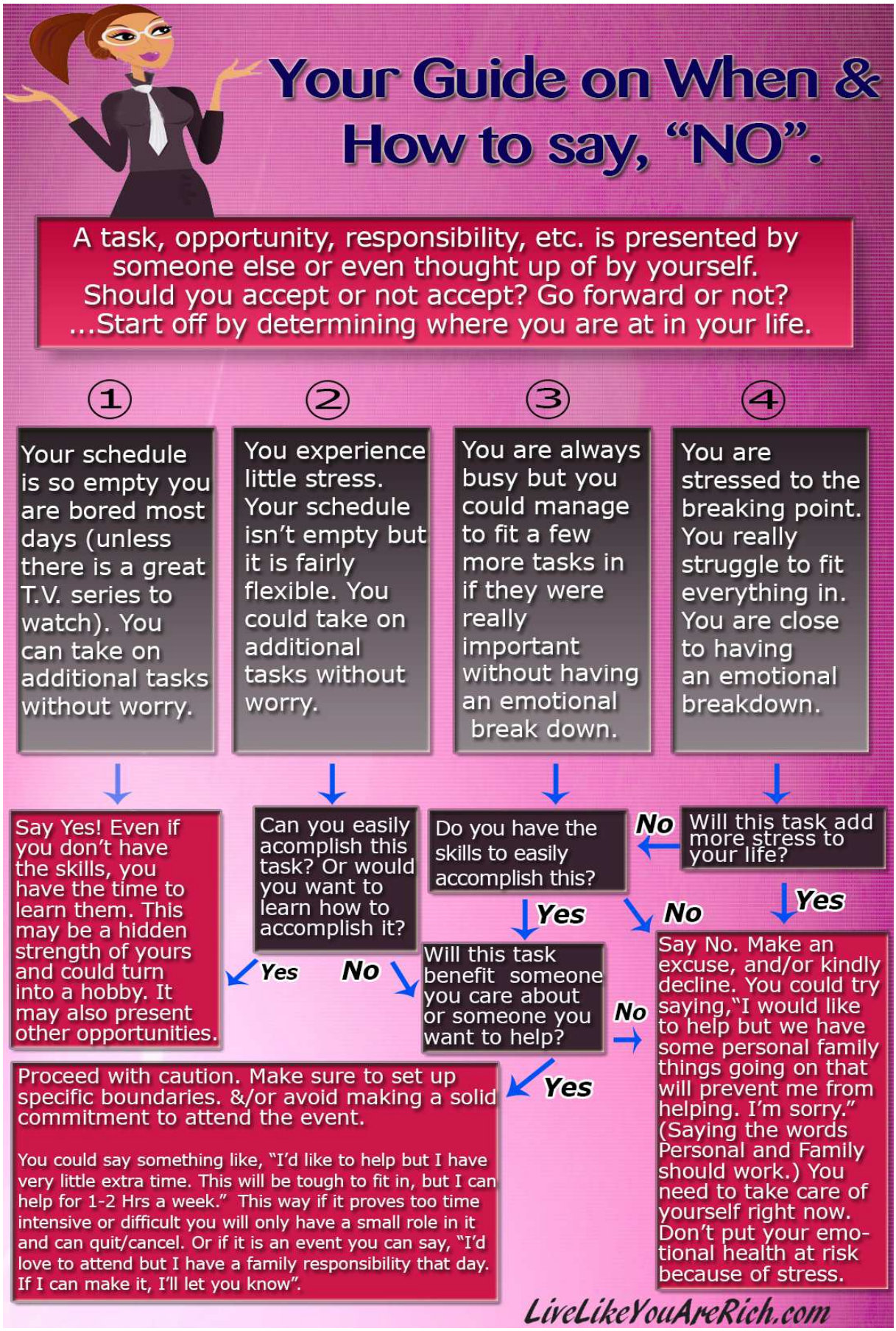
What's neither urgent nor important, don't do at all.

The Eisenhower Decision Matrix



How to Say "No" (Walsh, R., 2008)

- Beware the automatic "yes." You may have gotten into your time-crunch because you have a very hard time saying "no." But you've learned by bitter experience that it's much harder to get out of something later than to turn it down now.
- Buy time. Unless you're already certain of your response one way or the other, ask for time to think about it. This is both a reasonable and a truthful response. You really do want and need time to think about it. Realize, however, that you will have to respond eventually, and by delaying your response, you may have created a situation in which others believe that you have tacitly agreed. Your delay also may make it very difficult ultimately to decline because no time is left to recruit a replacement.
- If the answer is "no," say "no." Say it gracefully, but say it. "I'm really flattered that you'd think of me. Thank you so much. But I'm going to have to turn the opportunity down." And then shut up!
- Deflect the conversation. Decline the offer and suggest an alternative. "Thank you for thinking of me, but I'm going to have to decline. I bet Bill would be perfect for the job, don't you?"
- You don't have to give a reason. We want people to continue to think well of us. So we share our reasons.


Your Guide on When & How to say, "NO".
A task, opportunity, responsibility, etc. is presented by someone else or even thought up of by yourself. Should you accept or not accept? Go forward or not? ...Start off by determining where you are at in your life.
1
Your schedule is so empty you are bored most days (unless there is a great T.V. series to watch). You can take on additional tasks without worry.
2
You experience little stress. Your schedule isn't empty but it is fairly flexible. You could take on additional tasks without worry.
3
You are always busy but you could manage to fit a few more tasks in if they were really important without having an emotional break down.
4
You are stressed to the breaking point. You really struggle to fit everything in. You are close to having an emotional breakdown.
Say Yes! Even if you don't have the skills, you have the time to learn them. This may be a hidden strength of yours and could turn into a hobby. It may also present other opportunities.
Can you easily acomplish this task? Or would you want to learn how to accomplish it?
Yes
No
Do you have the skills to easily accomplish this?
No
Will this task add more stress to your life?
Yes
No
Yes
Will this task benefit someone you care about or someone you want to help?
No
Yes
Proceed with caution. Make sure to set up specific boundaries. &/or avoid making a solid commitment to attend the event.
You could say something like, "I'd like to help but I have very little extra time. This will be tough to fit in, but I can help for 1-2 Hrs a week." This way if it proves too time intensive or difficult you will only have a small role in it and can quit/cancel. Or if it is an event you can say, "I'd love to attend but I have a family responsibility that day. If I can make it, I'll let you know".
Say No. Make an excuse, and/or kindly decline. You could try saying,"I would like to help but we have some personal family things going on that will prevent me from helping. I'm sorry." (Saying the words Personal and Family should work.) You need to take care of yourself right now. Don't put your emotional health at risk because of stress.
LiveLikeYouAreRich.com

TEAMWORK

Good teamwork is an essential component of effective social work delivery, and an integral ingredient of many aspects of social work practice. Teamwork is how a group of people come together to collaborate and cooperate in achieving common objectives.

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishment toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.
Andrew Carnegie

Maximize Your Meeting Productivity (Walsh, R., 2008)

1. Don't set up a meeting merely to distribute information; use email. Summarize the important points so no one will miss them, and circulate the complete report for people who need all the facts.

2. No meeting should be planned or attended that does not have an agenda and schedule including ending time.

3. The best meeting agendas include the expected outcome or decisions. This alerts attendees that they are not meeting to just discuss, but are expected to deliver a result.

4. Even if it is not your meeting, you should be fully prepared to discuss the topic(s) and have information to back up your points. You were not invited just to look pretty.

5. Most meetings, unless they require maximum creative input, should be scheduled in the afternoon. Most people are more mentally alert and productive in the morning, and should use that time on important tasks.

6. Start the meeting on time. Inform latecomers what topic is under discussion, but don't back up and don't apologize. Respect the time of those who are punctual.

7. Results of every meeting should be recorded — decisions reached, actions required, individuals responsible for the actions, and their expected completion

dates. Attendees and stakeholders should receive a summary of the results after the meeting.

8. If the group has made a decision to assign an action to an individual, but there is disagreement about what that action involves, do not spend meeting time discussing it. Ask interested parties to send suggestions directly to the person responsible.

9. Don't use the meeting to discuss new business. End promptly and schedule another meeting if necessary.

10. The agenda for a problem-solving meeting should request each participant to bring a possible solution to the meeting. The better-informed and prepared each attendee is, the more productive the meeting will be.

11. Encourage all attendees to contribute their opinions, even if contentious, as long as they are to the point. Do not ridicule any ideas, do not criticize any participants. Most people want to conform with others, but creative ideas come from a environment that fosters diversity and individual expression without fear of reprisal.

12. Don't let participants ramble or get off the subject. The meeting leader has a responsibility to keep the meeting under control and on subject.

13. If the meeting's goal is to resolve a dispute, sit near or have eye contact with your allies, and try to separate your opponents.

14. Review the meeting's results at its conclusion so that future meetings can be improved.

15. Try to keep the number of meeting attendees to a maximum of eight.

16. Don't waste time on visual aids if they are not visual and dramatic, if they are hard to read or understand, or if the information is more effectively rendered in written handouts.

17. Don't hesitate to schedule a meeting when necessary. If problems crop up and hard decisions are needed, it is better to get the people together and solve the problem quickly.

The effective teamwork matrix

What is the purpose of the matrix?

This matrix will help assess the effectiveness of your teamworking practices. The column headings identify six key aspects of effective teamwork. The rows represent levels of progress towards best practice – with level 0 the lowest.

How to complete the matrix

Decide which column to start with, then find the cell which best describes your teamwork practices. Mark this with a cross. Do this for each of the columns. Joining the crosses will give you a profile of team effectiveness. It will help you to assess the balance of your team management and to identify which aspects of teamwork could be improved.

How to interpret the profiles

The examples show a balanced matrix and an unbalanced one. Peaks indicate where team management is well-developed, troughs where there is still scope for improvement. Good balance at high levels in every column is an indication that your team is well managed.

balanced

unbalanced

Effective teamwork assessment matrix

	Key elements of effective teamwork					
	Team identity	Shared vision	Communication	Collaboration and participation	Issue negotiation and resolution	Reflection and self-assessment
Progress towards best practice						
Level 4	The team takes ownership of the problem and accept joint responsibility for its achievement.	The team has a shared vision and set of objectives, developed collaboratively and reviewed regularly.	Team members actively and openly share their knowledge and ideas around the whole team.	Familiarity, honesty, mutual trust and full participation harness the collective expertise of the team.	Divergent views are welcomed as a source of energy and a spur to the team's creative problem-solving.	The team regularly review members' roles and their impact on the team and acts on the outcome.
Level 3	The team recognises that its members have individual and team goals and tasks are framed accordingly.	The team has developed for itself both a shared vision and clear objectives.	Team members communicate information and knowledge around the team.	All members are given opportunity to contribute and build on suggestions from others.	Sources of disagreement are addressed openly and resolved head-on through constructive negotiation.	The effect on the team of each member's different roles and responsibilities is clearly recognised and discussed.
Level 2	The focus of team is on the task that individual members need to solve.	The whole team is working to a set of common objectives.	Team members communicate information when others need it.	The team seeks ideas, proposals and solutions from all its members.	Team members are prepared to explain their underlying assumptions and negotiate options.	Different roles and responsibilities are discussed from time to time.
Level 1	Team members take limited interest in issues that lie outside their own immediate area of responsibility.	Members of the team are clear about their objectives but the team has no shared vision.	Individuals are protective of their own information and share reluctantly in response to specific request.	Team members prefer to work to alone and give more priority to their own concern than to those of the team.	Contentious issues are skated over or avoided completely; conflict is dealt with only superficially.	The team acknowledges its members have several roles and responsibilities but they are not reviewed.
Level 0	Team members concern themselves only with their own responsibilities.	Team members, lack a common vision and clear objectives.	Information is passed to team members strictly on a 'need to know' basis.	Insularity, lack of trust or power struggles reduces participation and collaboration.	Conflicting opinions remain unaddressed and consequently slow progress.	The team places no value on considering and negotiating how they work together.

Source: Constructing Excellence (2004b).

12 easy ways to improve workplace teamwork

(by Hannah Price, 2019)

1. The role of leaders. If you do not already have good teamwork at the grassroots level, then it is time for the leadership team to lead.

2. Communicate, every day, every way. Great teams communicate well and often, their members are happy to share ideas, brainstorm together, ask for feedback, and be contradicted. This does not mean team members always agree, but they are able to communicate through their differences to settle on a sound solution and continue moving forwards as a team.

3. Exercise together. It is means team building exercises. If you want to achieve your teamwork goals, find a way to work the exercises into your weekly/monthly contact with your team.

4. Establish team rules. Rules do not have to be a dampener, but they do have to exist to keep everyone aligned. You can write them down or just chat about them openly.

5. Clarify purpose. If a team does not understand the purpose of their work, their attention and enthusiasm can dwindle.

6. Recognize and reward. Recognized employees are satisfied employees and satisfied employees do better at work. Good ideas: Company or team-wide emails recognizing individuals/teams, In-person recognition and thanks, Promotions, Bonuses, Extra vacation days.

7. Office space. The needs of the team should be reflected in the workspace.

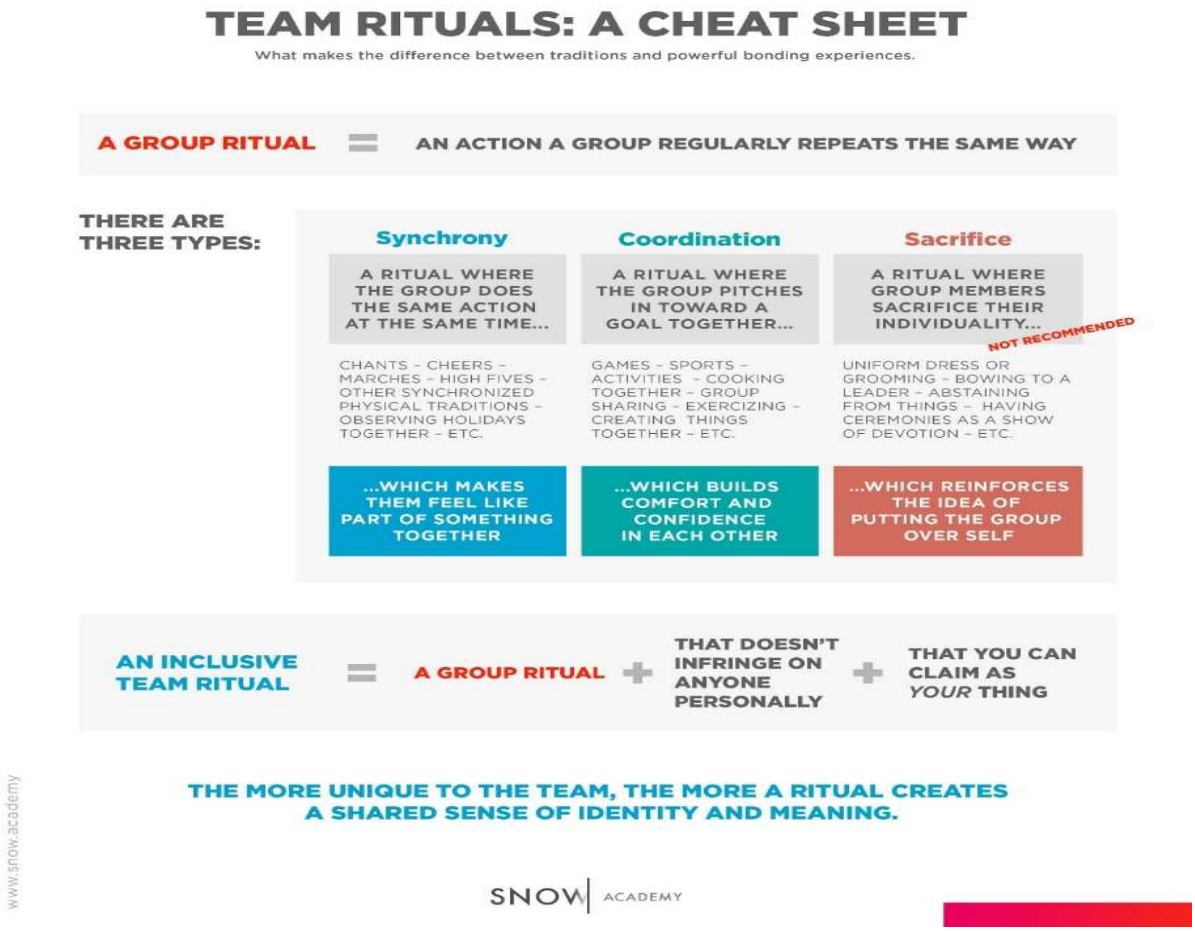
8. Take a break. Team building does not have to happen while you are actively working. One week, you could round up the team and grab a coffee together, or pick-up some sweet treats for your team on the way to work and gather for a morning chat. Getting together in a less formal setting will encourage better communication, sharing, and bonding between team members. Step outside to have one of your team meetings on foot.

9. Focus on strengths. According to Gallup research, employees who use their strengths every day are six times more likely to be engaged in their jobs.

10. Show gratitude. Start saying those magical words! Be thankful for the big and the small things that your colleagues bring to the table each day. It is important that your thanks are genuine and timely.

11. Accept differences. Problems arise when differences of opinion are not dealt with correctly - when people feel unheard, bullied, or disregarded.

12. Celebrate. Celebrating your success as a team will bring people closer together, encourage conversation, and boost happiness. Like recognition and gratitude, celebrations do not have to be big, but they should be frequent.



Good team rituals

The components of an effective ritual seem include the following (rapidstartleadership.com):

- **Small team**. As a social activity, rituals have to allow physical participation by group members; the larger the group, the more difficult this becomes.
- **Organic**. Rituals work best when developed from within, rather than when imposed from above; they are something members *want* to do, not *have* to do.
- **Tied to a value**. As a leadership tool, the most effective rituals are connected in some way to an organizational core value, and reinforce that value every time the ritual is performed.

- **Follows a script**. A simple, clear process that is familiar to everyone is best – there's a cue for when we do it, there are the things we do that are a part of it, and there's a clear ending.
- **Not directly useful**. Oddly enough, the purpose of the ritual is often more psycho-social than physical. It's as much about the doing of the thing together than about any specific, tangible outcome.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF TEAM RITUALS

Slow down and connect with Sweden's fika (Boogaard, K., 2020)

Part of everyday life in Sweden, fika is much more than taking a coffee break with colleagues – it's about finding time to slow down and connect with others in a meaningful way. Of course, coffee and a sweet pastry are encouraged. But, the ritual is more about carving out quality time. Each office can adopted their own version of fika. "For example, traditional fika every day at 3PM or fika as breakfast prepared by different teams on Fridays at 9AM. During the pandemic, you may kept your fika ritual going, with virtual fikas that happen over Zoom every single day.

Get on the same page with Japan's Chorei (Boogaard, K., 2020)

The Japanese have a daily morning all-hands meeting called the "Chorei" (pronounced cho-ray). The Chorei is attended by all company employees, and is used to unite the entire company around common goals and mission. It's usually not a long meeting (10 minutes is sufficient), and provides an opportunity for managers to get face time with their teams, as well as update everyone on that day's schedule, pressing issues, and any other recent updates they should be aware of. This proves that – even in the age of digital communication – face-to-face conversations cannot be replaced.

Have an online lunch date (Golf-Dupont, S., 2020)

This one comes from the engineering team that built the Trello app for Android. Once a month, the team links up via video conferencing over lunchtime. Team members can even expense up to $25 so they can join from their favorite cafe, order delivery, or cook up a little something special at home (because, real talk: heating up leftovers gets old).

Teatime (pragmaticthinking.com)

Food brings people together like nothing else, so why not create a team ritual around it? The ritual "Tea Time" starts with the scent of baked goods and tea wafting through the office. A cowbell sounds and people drop what they are doing, walk away from their computer screens and come together for ten minutes to drink a cup of tea and indulge in a sweet homemade treat. This time gives teams who work in different areas that chance to cross paths and share what they are working on, what is inspiring them and what they need help with. It helps promote collaboration and connection.

Reward and milestone celebrations (better-teams.com)

At the end of a project, end of the month, or anytime a major milestone has been completed, celebrate with the team. Pass out gift cards, order pizzas, give out certificates of appreciation, make special T-shirts, create a celebration dance or rap – anything that is celebratory and appreciated by the team.

Schedule weekly, monthly or quarterly team events (better-teams.com)

Plan regular times to get together to talk about the team or just to socialize. This could be over a meal, or might involve doing a fun activity together outside of work, such as an Escape Room or TopGolf. Name this event something fun such as, Wonderful Wednesdays or Fabulous Fridays.

Small successes of the week (jostle.me)

Have a casual Friday meeting: Chat about the small successes of the week. Use a post-it board to capture the success and get everyone involved; people write their achievements on a sticky note and put it on the board, then explain it to the group.

Small token mascot (jostle.me)

Have a small token mascot: A magic ball, a plastic figurine - that gets passed to the team member who was most successful or helpful in the past month. Have every team member contribute to this decision through an anonymous vote.

Rituals for Improving Productivity (rapidstartleadership.com)

- Convene a daily 10-minute stand-up huddle to set priorities for the day; have each person voice their "One Must Get Done" for the day.
- Take the meeting off-site once a month – a coffee shop, restaurant, library; get creative, wear distinctive clothing, take a group selfie, and hold a brain-storming session.
- Have an afternoon "stretch break" at an odd but significant time, maybe 3:37 pm; someone ring a bell, meet at the break room, stretch, and share how it's going.

Rituals for Celebrating Milestones (rapidstartleadership.com)

- Wear Hawaiian shirts the day after the team meets a key deadline or scores a big win, play Hawaiian music to start the day, ceremonially place a Hawaiian food on the conference room table.
- Have a golf/pizza party or other kind of outing after reaching a key goal.
- Celebrate work anniversaries and birthdays with a monthly lunch out; everyone writes an anonymous 3×5 card saying something positive about that person.

Rituals for Forming Connections (rapidstartleadership.com)

- Do something together for the community once a quarter – work at a food bank, adopt a park, find a need and fill it, then go have lunch together.
- Have a nomination process for conducting a monthly "Random act of Kindness" that you can all do together, then go make it happen.
- Check-in/Check-out – first thing in the morning circle up, announce a topic, like "weather" or "animal." Each person "checks in" based on how they are feeling. "I'm checking in as a cheetah today because I need to move fast to get this contract done."

Good for co-located teams (donut.com)

- Weekly team lunch where day-to-day business talk is outlawed

- Celebrating food-friendly holidays with an in-office buffet, like a nacho bar for National Tortilla Chip Day
- Pizza Fridays
- Curry and board game nights
- Exercise or stretch groups that call people together for midday planking or yoga sessions (even just 5-10 minutes)

Friendly for remote teams (donut.com)

- Weekly social time (30 mins) via Zoom with a conversation prompt like "What are your weekend plans?"
- Co-working time via Google Hangout or Zoom
- E-mailing gift cards for local cafés to remote employees for virtual coffee meetups
- Conversation cards for virtual meetups

Adaptable for all teams (donut.com)

- Monthly Fika breaks, a Swedish tradition of slowing down for coffee and conversation
- Team wide volunteering activities

and more good ideas ... (shanesnow.com)

- Start all large group meetings with a breathing exercise.
- Invent a company salute. Or gang sign. Or a special high five.
- Once a quarter, do a "desk swap" where everyone sits in someone else's digs for a week and gets to know some new neighbors.
- Post a different poll on the coffee machine every week, and let people put their name (or tally mark) down as the week progresses.
- Have a tradition of weekly "random coffee dates" where at the start of the week everybody in the company gets assigned a random person to go have a coffee with on Wednesday, where you're supposed to chat and get to know each other's stories. (This works with remote teams as well; bring your own drink and fire up your webcam for a 30-minute get-to-know-you.)
- Celebrate nontraditional holidays. Even better: invent your own holidays!

https://www.ritualdesignlab.org/

SUPERVISION

Professional supervision is central to effective social work. It is vital for practitioners' well-being, professional development and management oversight.

Supervision has an enormous impact on how staff work. It affects their confidence, motivation and competence. It affects how well they work with colleagues and how they feel about their job and their employer. All of which directly affects the quality of care we offer to the people using our services.

Bromberg (1982) defines supervision as a relationship between two people, one of who has the purpose of using it to improve his work with someone in his or her life and the other who has the purpose of helping him or her to do this.

Hess (1980) describes supervision to be a quintessential interpersonal interaction that has a general goal whereby one person (the supervisor) meets with another (the supervisee) in an effort to make the work of latter more effective.

Tony Morrison (2003) illustrates supervision to be 'a cooperative and facilitating process, which aims to: Develop the worker's effectiveness; Provide a suitable and appropriate forum for the worker to assure those to whom he or she is accountable that he or she is acting responsibly; Develop the worker as a professional person. Supervision is a process by which one worker is given responsibility by the organization to work with another worker in order to meet certain organizational, professional and personal objectives which together promote the best outcomes for service users (Morrison, T., 2005).

Munson (2002) also offers a clinical definition of supervision as an interactional process in which a supervisor has been assigned or designated to assist in and direct the practice of supervisees in the areas of teaching, administration and helping (Hughes, J.M., 2010).

Supervision is a crucial part of reflective practice and an integral part of social work. Supervision has, over the years, provided social workers with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and afforded them the necessary forum to reflect, evaluate, discuss and develop these innovative solutions (Hughes, J.M., 2010).

The purpose of supervision is therefore to improve the service, exercise a duty of care to staff, and support good morale and staff retention. Effective supervision should results in positive outcomes both for people who use services and for the staff who provide those services. Essentially, supervision is a work-focused discussion and/or activity that should provide structure and feedback on day-to-day work, improving practice by critical reflection and fostering. *Supervision involves*: A helping relationship within which a supervisee becomes more effective in their work; Task assistance (work-related guidance, clarification of expectations and workload management); Emotional support (including responding to stress); Learning and development (including reflection and effective feedback from supervisor to supervisee to support confident and safe practice). *Research suggests that good supervision has the following features*: It occurs regularly in a safe environment; It is based on a respectful relationship; The process is understood and valued, and is embedded in organizational culture (London Child Protection Procedures).

What are the benefits of supervision? (Care Council for Wales, 2012)

For the organization:	**For the professional social care worker:**	**For the service user:**
• Supporting the social care worker to understand the organizational values, also what outcomes the organization is working to and how they contribute to these. • Ensuring that service users and their carers receive a quality service.	• Supports the social care worker to be clear about his or her responsibilities and accountabilities and competent in his or her role. • The opportunity to reflect on, analyze and evaluate practice. • Enables setting, agreeing and reviewing SMART	• A worker is clear about their roles and duties and has had opportunities to discuss and develop their learning, enabling the provision of quality care services.

• Enabling understanding and implementation of policies and procedures. • Improving internal communication. • Sharing responsibility for achieving outcomes. • Promoting staff retention. • Reducing rates of grievances, sickness and complaints. • Supporting the social care worker to achieve the organization's outcomes and standards. • Promoting clear communication between the organization and the social care worker. • Ensuring that the social care worker has a manageable and appropriate workload. • Promoting good practice.	(specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) goals and objectives. • Provides constructive feedback. • Promotes consistency of practice. • Recognizes and values good practice. • Supports the health and wellbeing of the social care worker. • Supports people to understand their role in the social care workforce. • Reinforces clear professional boundaries. • Promotes self-confidence. • Identifies learning and development needs. • Identifies possible coaching and mentoring needs. • Develops team working. • Increases transparency and openness.	• A worker who has a clear understanding of the requirements of the Code of Practice for Social Care Workers.

It can be identified and defined **four different forms of supervision** (SSSC, 2016).

One-to-one supervision.

One-to-one supervision is widely used and the supervisor is usually the supervisee's line manager. Sessions are formally pre-arranged and take place in a confidential setting and protected place.

Shared supervision.

Shared supervision allows teams to share responsibility for supervising individuals. Shared supervision is still conducted one-to-one but the supervisor in this case will not be the supervisee's line manager, instead he or she will be a practitioner who has skills and experience relevant to the supervisee's current projects or caseload and so is able to provide specifically relevant support and/or mentoring.

Group supervision.

Group supervision is usually facilitator - led via a formal, pre-arranged process that is agreed by the supervisor and supervisees. The make-up of the group depends on the goals of the supervision. Group supervision complements, rather than substitutes, individual supervision, though it may reduce how often you need one-to-one supervision.

Professional supervision.

Professional supervision is for professionally qualified workers in social services. Professional supervision supports supervisees to maintain professional identity, knowledge and meet their post registration training and learning requirements.

Wonnacott describes **four different types of one-to-one supervision** (below), all have benefits and drawbacks (SCIE, 2013, SSSC, 2016):

Formal and planned as part of a regular supervisory pattern. This should be at the heart of the supervisory process but, if it is the only method, some of the emotional support and task assistance valued by supervisees may not be available in a timely manner. These provide consistency, predictability and regularity and are likely to facilitate the development of a positive relationship. They allow for the ongoing review of practice issues linked to supervision records (managerial function), as well as maintaining a focus on developmental needs. But there are drawbacks to relying solely on formal sessions, particularly in situations where there are fast moving practice developments. They may not be sufficiently responsive in unpredictable, challenging situations.

Formal, but unplanned and delivered in response to a crisis. The advantage here is that the supervisor is responding to the supervisee's immediate needs. These are responsive to immediate need and likely to be important in debriefing incidents or when making urgent decisions. They are an important aspect of management accountability and support. But relying on this form of supervision alone is unlikely to address ongoing professional development needs and may result in long gaps between sessions.

Informal but planned, such as arranging to drop in at the end of a planned session to see how things have gone. This may form an important aspect of the support role but care must be taken to record any issues that emerge. This may provide

support in circumstances where a more formal discussion is not possible. But there is a tendency to record these discussions poorly. There may be issues relating to the supervisee's support or development needs that need to be noted in their supervision record. It may also mean significant risks and concerns are not formally recorded and there may be lack of clarity regarding roles, responsibilities and actions.

Informal and unplanned, often referred to as 'corridor supervision'. This is responsive to immediate need but the supervisor may be rushed into immediate decisions and action. These may have some limited value in giving reassurance to the supervisee that their issues/concerns are heard. But it is far more challenging to record important issues relating to the development needs of the worker and/or practice issues, may get lost, with repercussions for plans and decision making in relation to people who use services, carers and/or workers. Discussions may breach confidentiality and it is likely that supervisee and supervisor move straight to action and overlook reflection and analysis. This may lead to flawed decision making, with consequences for all stakeholders. The status of the decision may be unclear.

Supervision can take many forms and social workers could also establish peer supervision and support. There may be an experienced social worker in your team or organization who may be able to facilitate this. You could also contact your principal social worker if you want to discuss the supervision arrangements within your organization.

Informal, 'in the moment' supervision can be an effective way to develop practice insights as it works with the heightened awareness and experiential engagement with the issues at the time. This should, however, be balanced with formal, scheduled supervision that allows for more holistic planning and reflection in a place and time that is dedicated for that purpose. Attention to the supervisory relationship and processes is of particular importance when supervision is conducted through online, telephone, video/web conferencing or other remote means. Participants are expected to actively attend to strategies that will maximize the quality of the engagement and communication so that the purpose, functions and standards of supervision can be achieved and maintained, as is expected in face to face supervision (AASW, 2014).

Work task (SSSC, 2016)

Do an informal audit of the kinds of supervision discussion you have at work. Think about the different kinds of supervision you experience. Does one approach tend to dominate and if so, why? Thinking about formal and informal supervision and about planned or non planned supervisions, what impact does each of these have on outcomes for:

- the people you are working with
- you as a worker
- your supervisor
- your organization?

How might you raise this issue in supervision and what changes, if any, would you like to make?

Key characteristics of effective supervision

(Rothwell, Ch., Kehoe, A., Farook, S., Illing, J., 2019)

1. When supervision is based on mutual trust and respect.

2. When supervisees are offered a choice of supervisor with regard to personal match, cultural needs and expertise.

3. When both supervisors and supervisees have a shared understanding of the purpose of the supervisory sessions, which are based on an agreed contract.

4. When supervision focuses on providing staff support the sharing/enhancing of knowledge and skills to support professional development and improving service delivery.

5. When supervision is regular and based on the needs of the individual (ideally weekly, minimum fortnightly). Ad-hoc supervision should be provided in cases of need.

6. When supervisory models are based on the needs of the individual. This may include one to one, group (peer supervision), internal or external, distance (including the use of technology) or a mix.

7. When the employer creates protected time, supervisor training and private space to facilitate the supervisory session.

8. When training and feedback is provided for supervisors.

9. When supervision is delivered using a flexible timetable, to ensure all staff have access to the sessions, regardless of working patterns.

10. When it is delivered by several supervisors, or by those who are trained to manage the overlapping responsibility as both line manager and supervisor.

Work task (SSSC, 2016)

Use the following prompts based on Bucknell's model to think about a relatively routine problem or issue (for you or for someone you work with) and how a clear focus on outcomes might help. You may want to use this exercise as a basis for discussion in supervision.

- What do you want to achieve or to change in the situation?
- What existing strengths or capabilities might help you?
- What might be the first step? This could include shadowing a work colleague, reading an article or listening to a podcast.
- How might you test out your ideas? This could include rehearsing something with a peer or your supervisor or taking on a new piece of work.

Recommended frequency and duration of supervision

(AASW, 2014)

The following are recommendations for the minimum frequency and duration of supervision for social work practitioners in different circumstances. Supervision may comprise one-on-one, group/peer supervision and informal/in vivo supervision. Formal supervision should account for at least half of the minimum supervision time.

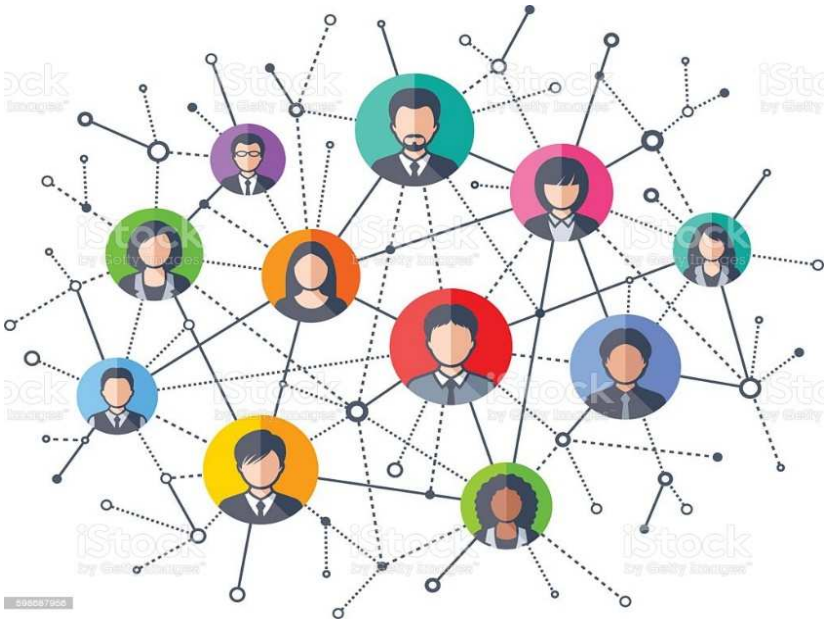
Level of Experience	Minimum frequency	Duration
New social work graduates with 2 years or less experience.	Fortnightly A minimum of half of the supervision comprises one-onone formal supervision.	60 minutes
Social workers entering a new field of practice, facing particular challenges, or reentering workforce.	Fortnightly	60 minutes

Social work practitioners with 2+ years' experience.	Monthly* * Some social workers who do not work in direct practice roles with clients may require less regular supervision. A minimum frequency of quarterly is recommended.	60 minutes
Social Work Students on Field Placement	1.5 hours formal supervision for every 35 placement hours. One-on-one supervision comprises a minimum of half of this time. Informal supervision is additional as required.	

Key message:

New employees, apprentices, trainees, volunteers and those members of staff where there are performance concerns may need more frequent supervision.

Where face-to-face meetings are problematic e.g. rural areas, some supervision sessions can be held via electronic means e.g. telephone, video etc.



PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS

'Network' is a word used extensively. It is used as a synonym for 'partnership', 'collaboration', 'alliance' and 'group', or more specifically to describe the relationships between people, groups or organizations. A 'social network' is a 'set of people or groups of people with some pattern of interactions or "ties" between them (Cunningham, F.C., Ranmuthugala, G., Plumb, J., Georgiou, A., Westbrook, J., Braithwaite, J., 2012).

A professional network is a group of people who have connected with one another for career or business-related reasons. Members, who are called contacts or connections, can share information, which may include, but is not limited to, job leads. They may also help one another solve work-related problems (D. R. McKay, 2019).

Networking for social workers involves building, maintaining, and leveraging professional contacts in the field. You can network at large conferences hosted by professional associations or by having coffee with a colleague who works in your department. Most networking begins with a face-to-face connection, though the internet has shifted the way we establish and continue professional relationships. For recent graduates, networking can help you find your first job even when you lack experience. For young professionals, growing your network can help you learn about and pursue new career paths within your field. For seasoned social workers, networking offers the means to share best practices and develop new skills (SocialWorkLicensure.org).

The rapid growth of social media has fundamentally changed the way people manage information about their personal and professional lives. There has been a substantial increase in the use of Internet communication using social media, including blogs, and an increase in the number of social networking sites available for use. Social networking sites are characterized by dynamic communication through computer mediated interactions in which participants share personal information and photos, and exchange thoughts and feelings. Social media provides for quick formal and informal collaboration with a number of people simultaneously. Social workers use the Internet to access research, collect data, provide online counseling, provide social support to a variety of groups, and advocate for social justice concerns. It also has the potential to help human service organizations raise funds (Halabuza, D., 2014).

Social media is a broad term, covering communication and interaction across a range of platforms and channels. The term 'social media' makes one immediately think of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. While these are useful tools, they are not the only tools available to workers. The Scottish Social Services Council (2017) defines social media as the online platforms you 'use to engage – to create relationships, have conversations and communicate with others'. It is a platform you use to upload content, share and interact with others, and is often closely associated with the rise in the use of digital technologies including smartphones and tablets (Jackson, R., 2019).

Social media and other forms of digital technologies are ubiquitous tools for communication in the 21st century, including in the lives of clients and communities served by social workers. Social work professionals need to understand how these tools work, and learn to use them for creating and maintaining professional relationships with colleagues, communities, and the vulnerable populations served by the profession, and disseminating information to communities of interest. There are several reasons why social work practitioners may not be engaging with social and digital technologies for networking and collaboration purposes. These include generational differences, lack of technology resources, lack of technological competency, lack of best practice guidelines, policy and ethical concerns or more personal reasons, values, or biases related to social media. However, competent and ethical practice

requires practitioners, educators, and students to be lifelong learners who stay up-to-date and share information about current news, practice knowledge, and the latest research findings. By learning to use social media for their own professional networking, social workers can increase their professional knowledge, share information with others, and find project collaborators (Hitchcock, L., 2019).

Communities of practice can provide an opportunity for professionals to communicate with other social service workers, both within their organization and outside; this is for many a positive therapeutic experience. The use of forums can provide a 'safe' environment among colleagues from similar backgrounds who can act as a sounding board and support network. There are opportunities for personal reflective practice; blogging and note-taking apps can provide useful opportunities for social workers to keep diaries which they can use to create a learning log. These have been shown to help the workforce at a personal level, but can also be useful for those in a leadership role to use anonymously as examples of good practice, or opportunities for improvement. Additionally, the social media provides potential opportunities for staff who work remotely to work more flexibly, allowing them to complete paperwork or attend meetings while they are out of the office through document sharing apps or video conferencing software, which can be used on tablet computers or smartphones (Jackson, R., 2019).

Quality-related performance is associated with a knowledge sharing network structure. Social influence in a network is positively related to professionals performance, social capital predicts overall job satisfaction, positive social climate protects employees against burnout, and employees with more co-worker ties have lower organizational turnover. To be that being in an effective network, which encourages communication and facilitates trust helps people feel good about their relationships, and to reciprocate positively with others to develop social capital. Positively functioning networks are likely to contribute more broadly to an effective organizational culture and climate. In this respect, networks can represent not just the social glue of professional interaction but the sociological building blocks of effective organizations (Cunningham, F.C., Ranmuthugala, G., Plumb, J., Georgiou, A., Westbrook, J., Braithwaite, J., 2012).

Here are some of the biggest **advantages of networking** (Michael Page, 2021)

- *Strengthen business connections*. Networking is about sharing, not taking. It is about forming trust and helping one another toward goals.
- *Get fresh ideas*. Your network can be an excellent source of new perspectives and ideas to help you in your role. Exchanging information on

challenges, experiences and goals is a key benefit of networking because it allows you to gain new insights that you may not have otherwise thought of.

- *Raise your profile.* Being visible and getting noticed is a benefit of networking that is essential in career building. Regularly attending professional and social events will help make your face known.
- *Advance your career*. Being visible and getting noticed is a benefit of networking that is essential in career building. Regularly attending professional and social events will help to get your face known.
- *Get access to job opportunities*. Expanding your contacts can open doors to new opportunities for business, career advancement, personal growth, or simply new knowledge.
- *Gain more knowledge*. Networking is a great opportunity to exchange best practice knowledge, learn about the useful techniques of your peers and stay abreast of the latest developments. A wide network of informed, interconnected contacts means broader access to new and valuable information.
- *Get career advice and support*. Gaining the advice of experienced peers is an important benefit of networking. Discussing common challenges and opportunities opens the door to valuable suggestions and guidance. Offering genuine assistance to your contacts also sets a strong foundation for receiving support in return when you need it.
- *Build confidence*. By continually putting yourself out there and meeting new people, you're effectively stepping outside your comfort zone and building invaluable social skills and self-confidence that you can take with you anywhere. The more you network, the more you will grow and learn how to make lasting connections.
- *Gain a different perspective*. It is easy to get caught up in the day-to-day of your professional realm and end up in a rut. By talking to others in your field or people with expertise in a particular area, you can gain insights that only come from viewing a situation with fresh eyes. Asking for opinions from contacts you trust can help you see things in a new light and overcome roadblocks that you might not have known how to circumvent otherwise.
- *Develop long-lasting personal relationships*. Of course, the point of networking is to develop professional relationships, but some of the strongest and most long-standing friendships are borne from work connections.
- *Get an answer to every question*. As long as you have a strong network of professional connections, you can be confident that someone within your sphere will be able to answer even your toughest questions.

Five Reasons to Network (NASW-NC)

1. *Opportunity*: Anytime you are around others (virtually or in person), you have the opportunity to meet people and uncover what they make have to offer to your life.
2. *Exposure*: Have you written new research? Starting a new practice? Found a new technique to share? Networking provides the opportunity to expose others to the wealth of professional knowledge you have, and to be exposed to theirs.
3. *Contacts and Relationships*: Whether finding a new job, a resource for your clients, or simply someone who simplifies your life; contacts are an essential part of the social work profession.
4. *Finding Common Ground*: Everyone enjoys the company of others who are like-minded. Our common interests help ignite our passion for the profession and encourage personal growth.
5. *Learning*: In the line for breakfast at a professional conference, or answering a post on social media; social workers who participate in networking gather information and ideas at a fast pace.

Networking Event "Do's" for Social Workers	Networking Event "Don'ts" for Social Workers
• *Set Goals:* Know what you want to accomplish before you attend a networking event. Having a goal can help you use your time wisely. • *Dress Appropriately:* Unless the event organizer specifically mentions an informal dress code, wear business-casual attire: dress pants or suit, skirt, button-up shirt, or its equivalent. It's best to avoid jeans, sneakers, and t-shirts. • *Bring Business Cards*: You meet many people at networking events, and business cards allow you to share contact information quickly so you can follow-up at a later date. Also, bring a	• *Distribute Paper Copies of Your Resume*: Stick to business cards at an event and incorporate your biggest accomplishments and qualifications. • *Use a Shotgun Approach*: A few meaningful conversations can yield better results than many superficial encounters. In advance of an event, identify individuals with whom you want to talk, and seek them out. • *Interrupt/Talk over Others*: Wait for the right opportunity to contribute to a conversation, especially when talking with a senior social work professional. Likewise, listen to what others say instead of simply chiming in

pen so you can write additional information on the back. • *Be Concise*: Stay focused, speak clearly, and give other people the chance to talk. • *Follow up on Connections*: To build a network, you must follow up. After an event, sort through business cards you have collected to prioritize those with whom you should follow up. Reference a detail from your conversation, or ask a question to encourage your connection to respond. Avoid following up on the phone unless the connection requested that you do so.	with an unrelated piece of information during a moment of silence. • *Be Intimidated*: Everyone attends networking events to meet new people. Don't worry that you might bother someone stop you from beginning a conversation. • *Neglect to Follow up on Connections*: If someone gives you his or her business card, respond either via email or social media. For important connections or when networking in social work management circles, send a handwritten note thanking the individual for his time.

Source: SocialWorkLicensure.org

Networking Tips for Social Media Beginners/Users

(by Kimmerly-Smith, J., 2016)

- *Start with your existing connections*. Most of us have accumulated phone, email, and Facebook contacts from colleagues, friends, and acquaintances we know in person. It is a great place to start to reach out to the people you already know to make sure you have added them on other social networks. Reach out to your fellow social media users. Once you feel confident with your founding network members, you can move to other applications. Start a conversation on network with a professionals. Stay polite, express genuine interest in that person, and support them before you share your personal goals.
- *Figure out where you want to be and whom you want to be like.* Sometimes learning how to network is a journey of self-discovery. In addition, people often like to share their wisdom and help those who are just starting out. You can also use the Advanced Search function to find professionals and career opportunities in your field.
- *Build your online presence*. Completing your LinkedIn or Facebook profile is like wearing a complete outfit to an interview: the more coordinated and put-together you are, the better the first impression. Let your experiences, personal preferences, activities, and interests express your identity on social networks, and do not limit yourself to just one platform.

Start a blog. Write a review. Check your email frequently. Write an article on your blog, and include quotes from experts about a topic that interests you.

- *Look for shared interests and things in common*. Social media groups are a great way to network based on shared interests: you can share files, create events, and start polls about any topic you want and with whomever you want.
- *Join professional networks*. Once you have found your career niche, you can find a "version" tailored to your own profession. However, do not just stop at joining in—you should actively coordinate groups within your existing networks to keep your connections (old and new) alive.
- *Formality is good, but personality is better*. Confidence always makes an impression on others, and part of that confidence involves reminding your network how they know you. Send a friendly note reminding your colleague where you met, through whom you met, or what organization you have in common. Sharing details about yourself can make you interesting and identifiable.
- *Practice the golden rule: help others in your network*. Being part of a community means supporting others and receiving support in return. Post job links, career fairs, and other professional events to your contacts in that field. Endorse the skills of former and current co-workers, as this will provide them with value and make them more likely to reciprocate.
- *Do not be afraid to ask questions*. Reaching out to others for help might seem scary, but the worst anyone can say to you is "No." Besides, professional development is all about cooperating with others, sharing your strengths, and allowing others to help you in your areas of weakness. Ask for advice or request an informational interview from a fellow professional in a courteous, friendly manner. How and when you ask is just as important as what you ask.
- *Use online tools to build more face-to-face connections*. The goal is to be both respectful and warm, and this can be done by taking the time to read about your connections and interact with them on a personal level. Once you have established a cordial online relationship, you can make your relationship even more personal with phone calls, notes, and even meetings.

Social media has the potential to be a revolutionary tool for social workers. The innovative, creative and informed staff, who use social media effectively with knowledge and support regarding practice, will help the profession to innovate and develop, and support the workforce to the benefit of practitioners, organizations and service users alike (Jackson, R., 2019).

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Photo: iHASCO

Resilience takes the focus away from an excessive emphasis on defects, deficits, passivity, vulnerability, risk and low expectations to an increased emphasis on positives, assets, strengths, protective factors, agency and the potential to see adversity as an opportunity for growth. This is not to suggest that resilient people will not be strongly affected emotionally by pressures, stress and traumatic events. They may well experience deep, profound feelings of frustration, anger, fear, regret, anxiety, sadness and hopelessness, but it is maintained that resilient people will experience negative emotions, intermixed with, or followed by, a range of positive emotions. Resilient people can be deeply moved by negative events, but are not overwhelmed by them in the long term. They learn new knowledge, behaviors and skills, with the help of internal and external resources to cope with present and future incidents. Resilience, therefore, can have proactive, as well as reactive elements involving anticipation, planning, prevention and actions that entails the use of assets and resources before events occur (Collins, S., 2016).

"Resilience: the capacity for flexible and resourceful adaptation to external and internal stressors" (Klohen, 1996)

Developing a professional resilience take effort, but it is a necessary step in ensuring a long and satisfying career in practice. It involves:

- protecting your own physical and psychological health;

- managing stress effectively;
- maintaining your emotional equilibrium;
- fostering supportive relationships at home and work; and
- maintaining boundaries between home and work life (Murphy, C., 2020).

The Predictors of Resilience in Social Workers and its Relationship with Wellbeing (L. Grant & G. Kinman, 2011, 2014)

Social workers who are more emotionally intelligent, more socially confident and reflective, and whose reflective abilities are more developed, tended to be more resilient to stress.

- Emotional intelligence has been defined as 'being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations: to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope'.
- Reflective thinking enables us to explore the dynamics of rational and irrational thoughts, emotions, doubts, assumptions and beliefs and the ways in which they impact on us as practitioners.
- Empathy is understood as the ability to adopt the perspective of other people: in other words, to be able to 'walk in their shoes'.
- Social competence consists of social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral skills needed for successful social adaptation. That encompasses social skills, social communication, and interpersonal communication.

Enhance Resilience and Emotional Intelligence (L. Grant & G. Kinman, 2011)

The following techniques are included: mindfulness; thinking skills (Cognitive Behavioral Techniques); utilizing supervision for reflective practice; peer coaching to enhance social support and promote wellbeing; self-awareness and action planning.

- Mindfulness refers to moment-to-moment awareness, or paying attention to the moment without judgement. More specifically, mindfulness has been found to be an effective stress management tool for social workers. The potential utility of mindfulness-based approaches in aiding the training and professional practice of health and social care professionals has been recognized as they can help facilitate active listening, promote self-awareness and enhance critical reflection.

- Peer coaching is based on a collaborative relationship that aims to facilitate the development of skills and performance through feedback, reflection and self-directed learning. Peer coaching is a particularly appropriate technique to enhance resilience as it can help individuals identify personal strengths as well as perceived weaknesses, and promote self-awareness and facilitate reflection on practice.
- Reflective supervision is focused on experiences, thoughts, and feelings directly connected with the work. Reflective supervision is characterized by active listening and thoughtful questioning by both parties. The role of the supervisor is to help the supervisee to answer her own questions and to provide the support and knowledge necessary to guide decision-making. In addition, the supervisor provides an empathetic, nonjudgmental support to the supervisee.
- Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is underpinned by the notion that how we think about events has a powerful influence on how we feel about them, and that our thoughts and beliefs are not facts but open to interpretation. CBT techniques can help people develop alternative strategies to manage emotional or behavioral problems by challenging the ways in which they think about situations.
- Self-knowledge is a key factor in stress management that encompasses all of the qualities that we found underpinned resilience. Gaining insight into what we do (or do not do) that make things better or worse during stressful times is the first step in enhancing wellbeing. Primary appraisal is made when the individual makes a conscious evaluation of an event as a harm or a loss, a threat, or a challenge. Secondary appraisal takes place when the individual asks himself or herself 'What can I do about it?' by evaluating the internal and external resources available to them that have the potential to buffer stress reactions.

TIPS FOR PROMOTING SELF-CARE AND BUILDING RESILIENCE (Murphy, C., 2020)

- *Build a network of support*. Resilient people tend to have strong social networks – family, friends and colleagues are great sources of support.
- *Manage time effectively*. You should always use your diary effectively. Also, attempt to schedule work tasks to ensure that you aren't left feeling rushed or emotionally exhausted and build in adequate breaks. Ensure that you give yourself time to process your emotional reactions to one case before moving onto the next.

- *Develop achievable goals and take action to achieve them*. Setting goals encourages a focus on the future rather than dwelling on past problems and present difficulties. Ensure that goals are achievable, and accept that setbacks are inevitable.
- *Be aware of your emotions*. Regularly reflect on your workplace emotions. This allows valuable insight into why you feel as you do and helps to identify patterns in behavior and reactions, ensuring that you can identify and challenge negative emotions and thoughts as they occur.
- *Prepare for, and make the most of, supervision*. Supervision offers a forum in which to discuss stressors relating to your practice. Use it as an opportunity for critical reflection, self-evaluation and problem-solving, listening to (if not also accepting) the advice of the supervisor.
- *Prioritize work–life balance and maintain firm boundaries*. It is crucial to establish firm boundaries between your working life and non-working life. This includes not working at a time where you need to be relaxing/recuperating. If you find that you spend your personal time worrying about work, then set some time aside each day for worry, putting worries to the back of your mind the rest of the time. Remember that excessive worry causes stress and can mean suffering twice – firstly, whilst you are worrying, and secondly, when the event that you are worried about comes to pass (which it might not!).
- *Make time for relaxation*. It is important to know your limits. By not giving some priority to your own needs and feelings, you risk burnout. Try to incorporate into your weekly routine opportunities for relaxation. These might be hobbies or pastimes or social activities. They may be things that you can do at work to keep you calm. It is also beneficial to book regular breaks from work and as you become an experienced practitioner, you will realize how often you require a scheduled break.
- *Reflect on experiences and adapt when necessary*. Resilient practitioners learn lessons from setbacks and problems. You can reflect on how you have previously overcome adversity and employ similar strategies when problems arise at work. Reframe stressful events as temporary and as learning opportunities. Resilient practitioners tend to frame stressful events as temporary and manageable, and as opportunities for learning and development.
- *Be kind to yourself*. Do not be overly critical of yourself – social work is a demanding and difficult job. Stay focused on doing your best and looking after yourself. Schedule regular treats, breaks and social interactions. Go home and relax. Give yourself permission to switch off, remembering that the social worker who is thinking about work even when at home is more likely to burn out.

GOOD PRACTICES FOR EMPOWERING SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS

SOCIAL SUPPORT

What is social support?

Social support means having friends and other people, including family, to turn to in times of need or crisis to give you a broader focus and positive self-image.

Why social support?

Social support enhances quality of life and provides a buffer against adverse life events.

Forms of social support:

- Emotional (sometimes called non-tangible) support refers to the actions people take to make someone else feel cared for.
- Instrumental support refers to the physical, such as money and housekeeping.
- Informational support means providing information to help someone.

How can social worker benefit?

- social support reduces the psychological and physiological consequences of stress;
- may enhance immune function;

- social support trough social networks, whether formal (such as a church or social club) or informal (meeting with friends) provide a sense of belonging, security, and community;
- is a literal lifesaver - supported people by close relationships with friends, family, or fellow members of a church, work, or other support groups are less vulnerable to ill health and premature death (https://phctheproject.org/the-importance-of-social-support/).

The social climate of a workplace is linked to occupational stress and burnout. Social support can decrease burnout and occupational stress, although little is known about the types of social support that are available to social field staff, and whether different types of support are related to burnout. There is an evidence that work-related support, particularly support from supervisors, may be particularly important in decreasing stress among helping professionals. A variety of distinctions have been made between various types of social support and the functions they serve. For example, social support may provide informational, emotional, or instrumental functions. Provision of certain types of social support within work and non-work relationships, such as instrumental support and reassurance of worth, may have a positive outcome on health and well-being, such as helping individuals cope with occupational stress and burnout (Woodhead, E.L., Northrop, L., Edelstein, B., 2014).

Social support is one of the most important buffers against stress. It is therefore important to identify potential sources of support from professional and personal networks. The social skills required for building and maintaining working relationships with service users, carers and other professionals – effective communication, self-confidence and the ability to be assertive – are equally important for developing successful social support networks amongst colleagues, family and friends.

Long recognized as an important modifier in the relationship between stress and illness, social support appears in the light of recent research to include emotional, informational and practical components. Health and mental health disturbances are more closely associated with inadequate than with unavailable social support. Individuals who report inadequate social support may lack skills in support-elicitation (Winefield, H., 1984).

Social support can be categorised by either the type of social support or by its source (House, J.S. & Kahn, R.L., 1985; Baruch-Feldman, C., Brondolo, E., Ben-Dayan, D., & Schwartz, J., 2008).

Typically viewed types of social support include:

- instrumental or practical support (e. g., practical help, assistance, or financial support);
- emotional support (e. g. comfort, sympathy, encouragement); and
- informational support (e. g. providing information which may help the respondent in problem solving, giving someone advice).

Another way of classifying social support is by source. In the working context, typical sources of social support are co-workers, supervisors, and the organisation in general. In the literature, these sources of social support are often termed as:

- 'perceived co-worker support';
- 'perceived supervisor support';
- 'perceived organisational support";
- support from non-work sources is usually provided informally by spouse or life partner, other family members, friends, neighbours, or formally by professionals outside the workplace (e. g. pastor, doctor, or therapist).

The concept of sense of community (SOC) has been developed to characterize the relationship between individuals and social structures, with four proposed elements: membership (i.e. the feelings of belonging), influence (i.e. a sense of mattering), needs fulfillment (i.e. feelings about the member's needs are met in the community), and emotional connection (i.e. the beliefs or commitment that members share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences.

Describing an individual's experience of community life, SOC focuses on the affective feelings of the members of a community for each other and for the community itself. The community can provide interdependence and mutual support as a setting of residency and relationships, and SOC serves as the resource for addressing an individual's psychological and social needs, such as affiliation and affection, thus positively affecting psychological well-being and promoting community development. SOC is related to various indictors of psychological well-being, including life satisfaction, mental health, and loneliness (Fengyan Tang, Iris Chi, Xinqi Dong, 2017).

TIPS HOW SOCIAL SUPPORT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE WORKPLACE (oshwiki.eu)

- Social support at work can have favourable outcomes both on employees (e.g., job satisfaction, increased well-being) and the organisation (e.g., commitment, productivity, and decreased absence turnover behaviour). However, organisations interested in implementing and enhancing social support must know that this requires some sensitivity.
- Before starting any measures, the organisation should examine if there is a request and need for it by their employees.
- The implementation of measures to cultivate/facilitate social support should never be perceived as forced, inappropriate, or unnecessary.
- A positive (organisational) climate and personal relationships between co-workers, as well as supervisor and employees are needed to create the relevant platform for implementation.

Individuals

- first step - create positive relationships to others. How? Add one or more person to own social network or strengthen existing relationships. Mutual appreciation, absent of antipathy is one of the characteristics of social ties;
- be aware of the concept of reciprocity – receiving social support means also will to give social support to others;
- articulate a need of help – What does mean? - seek and ask for help, appreciate support efforts from others.

Supervisors

- they play a central role in giving social support at the workplace - beneficial effects on employees' health, job satisfaction, productivity, and turnover intention;

- they organize trainings with focus social support - this increases their awareness for the need for support in others - and hence they provide support where needed and required.
- supervisors have to learn to distinguish whether instrumental support is needed or emotional support is more appropriate.
- they have to be aware of their status as a role model – what does it mean? - by giving their employees support, they, in turn, also encourage them to provide support to each other.

Organisations

- cultivate socially supportive environments – How?
  - by establishing structures and practical solutions, which enable employees to effectively and collaboratively work together;
  - they facilitate social communication and interaction;
  - their special focus has to be on groups, teams, and departments, where cooperation is enabled and rewarded;
  - they can create a so-called 'culture of mutual appreciation', which means that people are not afraid of asking for help and do not have to fear negative consequences;
  - trough transparent management of information;
  - by actively involvement of employees in central decision making processes;
  - create good working conditions;
  - use fairness and rewards as perceived organisational support

Professional support of supporters – How?

- use trainings, consultations, and supervision for supervisors – it is important to recognise the need for support and to give it;
- ask for support and say thanks – this is important for employess.
- use the so-called 'key person' in the organization – these are people in the organization with central duties -they usually help, listen, and give advice and feedback informally. Sometimes they need more appreciation. Their role in the organization is often underestimated, that is way they need special attention, they need training, and supervision; they need to receive rewards and appreciation.

Attention: The amount of social support at the workplace is not determined by age, gender, personality traits, or educational level of employees, but mostly by organisational factors: such as, job control and job content (Sundin, L, Bildt, C., Lisspers, J., Hochwaelder, J., & Setterlind, S (2006)

MULTIDIMENSIONAL SCALE OF PERCEIVED SOCIAL SUPPORT

(Zimet GD, Dahlem NW, Zimet SG, Farley GK., 1988)

Instructions: Read each statement carefully. Indicate how you feel about each statement.
Circle the "1" if you Very Strongly Disagree
Circle the "2" if you Strongly Disagree
Circle the "3" if you Mildly Disagree
Circle the "4" if you are Neutral
Circle the "5" if you Mildly Agree
Circle the "6" if you Strongly Agree
Circle the "7" if you Very Strongly Agree.

1. There is a special person who is around when I am in need. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 2.
2. There is a special person with whom I can share joys and sorrows. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. My family really tries to help me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 4.
4. I get the emotional help & support I need from my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 5.
5. I have a special person who is a real source of comfort to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. My friends really try to help me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. I can count on my friends when things go wrong. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8.
8. I can talk about my problems with my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9.
9. I have friends with whom I can share my joys and sorrows. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. There is a special person in my life who cares about my feelings. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. My family is willing to help me make decisions. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I can talk about my problems with my friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Scoring Information: To calculate mean scores:
Significant Other Subscale: Sum across items 1, 2, 5, & 10, then divide by 4.
Family Subscale: Sum across items 3, 4, 8, & 11, then divide by 4.
Friends Subscale: Sum across items 6, 7, 9, & 12, then divide by 4.
Total Scale: Sum across all 12 items, then divide by 12.
Alternatively, you can use the scale response descriptors as a guide. In this approach any mean scale score ranging from 1 to 2.9 could be considered low support; a score of 3 to 5 could be considered moderate support; a score from 5.1 to 7 could be considered high support.

Sample Questions to Assess Social Support Questions

(Demaray, Michelle & Malecki, Christine, 2014)

Who are the people who most care about you?

. How important is it that these people care about you?

. Is there anyone that you wish would care more about you?

Who are the people who give you advice and help you when you need it?

. How important is it that these people help you?

. Is there anyone that you wish would help you more?

Who are the people who tell you whether or not you did a good job on something?

. How important is it that these people give you feedback?

. Is there anyone who you wish would give you more feedback?

Who helps you get the things you need or teaches you the things you need to know?

. How important is it that these people give you things or information that you need?

. Is there anyone who you wish would give you more information?

Which of these people do you spend the most time with?

. Is there anyone you wish you could spend more time with?

Who do you feel most comfortable talking to if you have a problem about something? Why?

Do you feel like there are enough people in your life who would help you if you needed it?

Grow your support network (APA, 2019)

Cast a wide net. Look to different relationships for different kinds of support.

Be proactive. Often people expect others to reach out to them, and then feel rejected when people do not go out of their way to do so. To get the most out of your social relationships, you have to make an effort.

Take advantage of technology. Luckily, technology makes it easier than ever before to stay connected with people. Write an email, send a text message or make a date for a video chat.

Follow your interests. Join a club, sign up for a class or take on a volunteer position that will allow you to meet others who share your interests.

Seek out peer support. Consider joining a support group to meet others who are dealing with similar challenges like yours.

Improve your social skills. If you feel particularly anxious in social situations, consider talking to a therapist with experience in social anxiety and social-skills training.

Ask for help. If you lack a strong support network and are not sure where to start, there are resources you can turn to. Places of worship, senior and community centers, local libraries, local branches of national organizations may be able to help you identify services, support groups and other programs in your community.

ADDITIONAL TRAINING, EDUCATION, QUALIFICATION

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is an on-going, planned learning and development process, which improves practice, contributes to lifelong learning and enables career progression. CPD is the process 'through which professionals maintain and develop their knowledge and skills throughout their career to ensure that they retain their capacity to practice safely, effectively and legally within their evolving scope of practice'. CPD encompasses all learning as a social worker and values the whole spectrum of learning activities, including professional supervision, peer group learning, placements, training programs and higher level qualifications. This enables flexibility and choice about how to meet individual learning needs (BASW, 2012).

Beyond professional obligation, comes the ongoing need for personal growth and awareness to aid social workers in demanding and challenging roles. Compassion fatigue can be the outcome of the high levels of empathy required to be successful in the field compounded by the emotional demands of multi-problem clients who are served by social workers. Often this 'secondary traumatization' or 'burnout' is further expressed with empathy from personal distress, problems of others in the social worker's personal and professional network, and the social ills of society and the world. It is need for social workers to manage their personal reactivity to stressful work experiences and learn to use empathy more judiciously. These skills are part of lifelong learning beyond the practice skills frequently required in agency professional development plans (Mueller, C., King, M.D., 2018).

Lifelong learning enables social workers to continually update their knowledge and skills in order to provide relevant and effective services. Lifelong learning in social work addresses the continuous learning and transformation needed to be an effective social worker in the changing social, economic, and political environment.

Social work is a dynamic profession, requiring you to stay current in the field, whether it's applying the latest research, understanding a new regulation and its implications, maintaining your license or professional credential, or acquiring additional training to meet the needs of population. Lifelong learning in social work has advantages on professional and personal levels.

Lifelong learning can be summarized as a continuous, voluntary, and self-motivated pursuit of knowledge for both types of ongoing and consistent learning for social workers. Numerous benefits of lifelong learning have been identified including:

- enhanced understanding of the world;
- the provision of more and better opportunities for employment and careers;
- improved quality of life;
- boosts confidence and self-esteem;
- keeping the brain active;
- maintain and improve professional service delivery;
- acquisition of new knowledge;
- refinement of skills;
- challenging beliefs;
- reinforcement of professional attitudes;
- fun;
- openness to change when it occurs; and
- the impetus for change in the lives individual (Mueller, C., King, M.D., 2018).

Why additional training, education, qualification? Most often due to:

- need for professional development;
- to fulfill licensure requirement;
- application strengthening;
- need for self-improvement
- steering own social work career in the direction you want

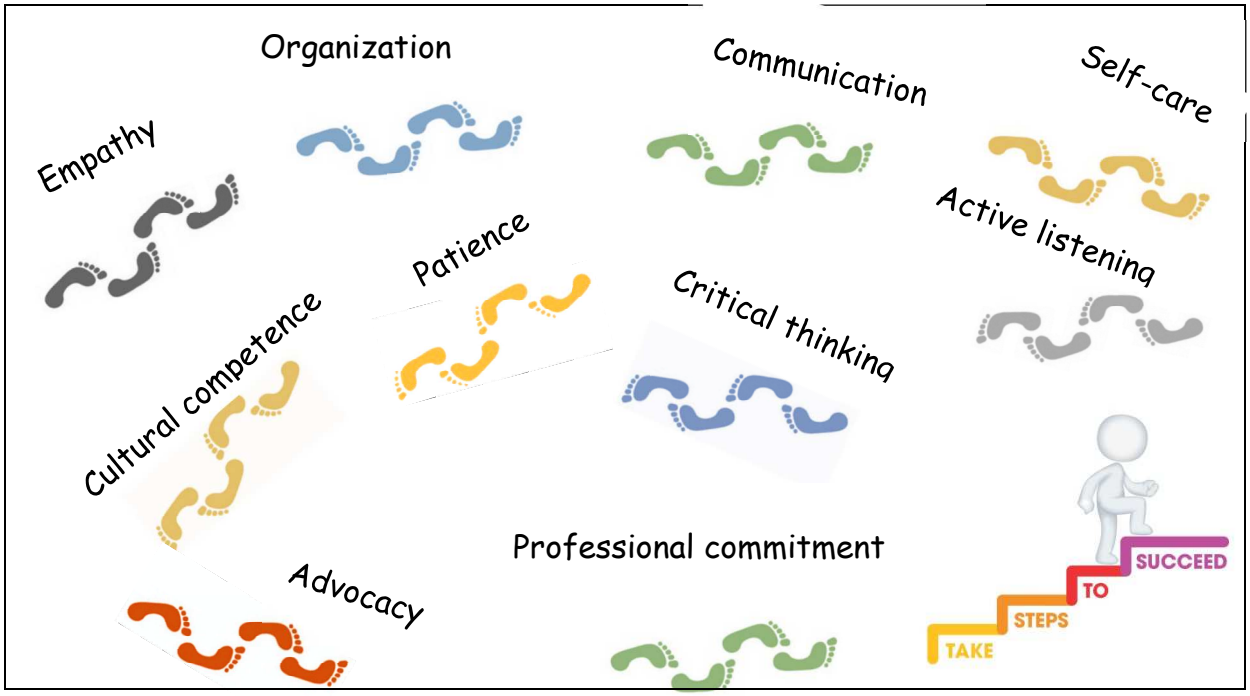
Continuing Professional Development should enable and support social workers to:

- develop professional capacity, professional identity and confidence over the course of their careers w make sound professional judgements, decisions and interventions based on evidence-informed practice
- update, extend and deepen knowledge, skills and analytical thinking to deal with increasingly complex and specialist work
- keep up to date with relevant research, learning from other professionals and service users
- work to the BASW Code of Ethics10 and support the rights of service users
- take responsibility for own personal growth and developing others
- value learning and widen the definition of what counts as useful activity
- reflect on learning in terms of outcomes for professional development and outcomes for service users
- use reflective practice to engage with new knowledge and skills so learning is always linked to action, and theory to practice
- understand how individuals learn best and have a personal development plan that reflects this meet re-registration requirements
- plan their careers and remain in the workforce (BASW, 2012).

Instruments and programs for education, qualification and training

- **bachelor degree** in social work – basic knowledge and skills for working with vulnerable groups on the basis of legal and ethical standards in social work, case management, human behavior theory, psychology and sociology ect.;
- a **master of social work** (MSW) degree from an accredited program - offers more professional opportunities in direct practice; paves the way to becoming licensed social worker (LCSW);
- hands-on training and learning from working professionals through **field experiences and labs;**
- **doctorate Degree** in Social Work;
- **on-line courses;**
- **webinars;**
- **online resources;**
- **conferences;**
- **peer-reviews in social work;**
- **publications;**
- **self-improvement activities.**

Social work is a dynamic and demanding profession. **Skills and qualities**, vital for all social workers:



What Competencies Social Workers Acquire During Their Education

(Field Education Manual, 2020-2021, Azusa Pacific University)

Competency 1: ethical and professional behavior

Competency 2: engagement of diversity and difference in practice

Competency 3: advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice

Competency 4: engagement in practice-informed research and research-informed practice

Competency 5: engagement in policy practice

Competency 6: engagement with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Competency 7: assessment of individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Competency 8: interventions with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Competency 9: evaluation of practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities

Competency 10: demonstration of ethical integration of faith and spirituality in social work practice (MSW) / critically analyze how Christian beliefs and values can be ethically integrated into social work practice (BSW)

Source: Dreamstime.com

E-learning

The main benefit of online programs is that they make social work education more accessible to learners in rural areas or areas otherwise underserved by schools of social work. Social workers in rural areas can participate in a variety of Web-based learning activities, including attending online lectures, watching videos, and interviewing virtual clients. The programs can have both synchronous and asynchronous elements, meaning learners will be expected to be online at specific times for some activities but will be able to engage in other activities on their own schedules and will practice skills in traditional centers. Schools offering Web-based courses use a variety of course-delivery tools, such as online videos, webcam discussions, and chat rooms.

The role of technology is growing within social work practice settings and social work programs. Infusing technology into field education may allow for placements in more remote locations and result in easier interaction and oversight from remote field faculty. With these technology-supported programs come new opportunities for technology-supported distance rural field placements. Barriers to technology such as inadequate high-speed internet in rural communities should be addressed as technology-supported rural field education is further explored. The many potential ways electronic or online formats could enhance and supplement rural social work field education is an area in need of further examination, particularly as advances in tele-social work and technology continue to grow (Wright, R.L., Harmon, K.W., 2019).

Digital technology has transformed social work education. Technological innovations such as videoconferencing, live online chat, asynchronous podcasts, and webinars enable social work educators to reach learners whose personal circumstances and geographical locations make it difficult for them to attend school in person.

VOLUNTEERING IN THE COMMUNITY

Community Volunteering is the way in which a group of individuals from a community take part in social, charitable and environmental activities on voluntary basis. Volunteering clearly does not involve any remuneration. Its nature and essence, in fact, relates to the human need of helping others and advocate social causes. The purpose, therefore, is for a person to give his own contribution for the greater good (wiki.optimy.com).

Attracting human resources and the presence of local volunteers in solving problems of local communities has helped to solve the following tasks (Metelev, AP, Beletskaya, ES, Kozak, EM, 2018):

- Creates conditions for the citizens of a specific local community (from children to the elderly, from housewives to employees of private companies) to be volunteers - to help the development of their community;
- Increases the stability, sustainability and efficiency of the activities of organizations hiring volunteers and the recognition of the value of volunteering (NGOs, social institutions) as a result of increasing the resource base and respectively increasing the volume of services provided;
- Extends corporate social responsibility by helping companies create corporate volunteering programs.
- It adds additional resources to the work of helping professionals, which increases the opportunities for their effectiveness and reduces the risks of burnout.

Volunteering, as one of the basic foundations of civil society, embodies people's aspirations for good, peace, justice and security. Volunteering is becoming an important tool for solving social problems in education, health, culture, social support for various groups of the population, physical culture and sports, environmental protection and more. Volunteering is an expression of active citizenship (Metelev, A.P., Beletskaya, E.S., Kozak, E.M., 2018).

Anyone can become a volunteer if they have the right motive. The **main motives for volunteering** and voluntary work of people are(MEDRF, 2016):

- Realization of personal potential.
- Public recognition, sense of social significance.
- Self-expression and self-determination.
- Professional orientation.
- Acquisition of useful social and practical skills such as: computer skills; experience in interpersonal interaction; assistance skills; communication skills; interaction with different social groups; discipline; leadership; protection and assertion of the rights and interests of an individual and a group; delegation of powers; creative approach; initiative.
- Opportunity for communication, friendly interaction with like-minded people.
- Gaining experience for responsible leadership and social interaction.
- Opportunity for personal expression in different models of interaction, acquisition of skills necessary in life, necessary for responsible management and implementation of activities.
- Organizing free time.
- Fulfillment of social and religious duty.

The "technology" of volunteering

(Belanovsky, Yu., 2020)

1. A request for a specific good deed.

2. This good deed must make sense and be useful.

3. Anyone can be a volunteer. The volunteer has several hours of free time and a dream. This is his resource. And that's a lot.

4. The meaning of a good deed should be clear to the individual volunteer and in line with his dream.

5. There is a need for a volunteer manager who bears most of the responsibility for the preparation and the work itself.

6. The work of the volunteer should be organized so that the volunteer clearly understands his task and has everything necessary for the work.

7. Volunteering must be effective.

8. After his work, the volunteer must see the result of the work and be able to relate it to his dream.

9. The volunteer needs the opportunity for feedback, gratitude and support.

Basic principles of social volunteering (Alekseevskaya, L., 2020)

1. Volunteering is a voluntary work. No one has the right to force a volunteer to do what he does not want to do, what he does not agree with.

2. The responsibilities of the volunteer have limits. The volunteer offers help, but does not save the world. The volunteer is not Superman.

3. The volunteer does not help when not asked to.

4. The volunteer can afford to get help. The volunteer is also a human being.

5. The volunteer feels joy, is grateful, makes new friends - this is normal. The volunteer receives and gives, gives and receives.

6. Volunteering is a territory with free entry and free exit. At any time, the volunteer can understand that his volunteering time is over and give thanks.

There are two alternative **ways to work with volunteers** (MEDRF, 2016):
1. Partnership with a non-profit organization that fully organizes the work of volunteers and is responsible for their actions, provides resource, methodological, information support for the activities of volunteers.
The advantages of this method:

- the institution must not allocate staff, resources to work with volunteers
- the institution is relieved of the need to carry out a large volume of organizational work to attract, select, train and organize the work of volunteers. This work is done for him by an NPO partner (or several NPOs)
- the institution may share or completely eliminate the additional costs of organizing the work of the volunteers
- NGOs are responsible for the actions of volunteers
- the institution in many cases gets the opportunity to attract charitable funds and other resources from partner NGOs
- the institution gets a reliable partner - an NGO whose experience and resources can significantly improve the quality of life of the institution's clients

Disadvantages of this method:

- the institution must find an NGO - organizer of volunteer work with the necessary experience and resources
- the institution does not independently control the volunteers of the NGO and formulates the tasks of the volunteers together with the NGO-organizer of volunteer work.

2. Organization of the work of the volunteers from the forces / employees of the social institution

The advantages of this method:

- the institution creates a community of volunteers to whom it can directly assign tasks
- the institution does not need to seek and build interaction with a partner from an NGO

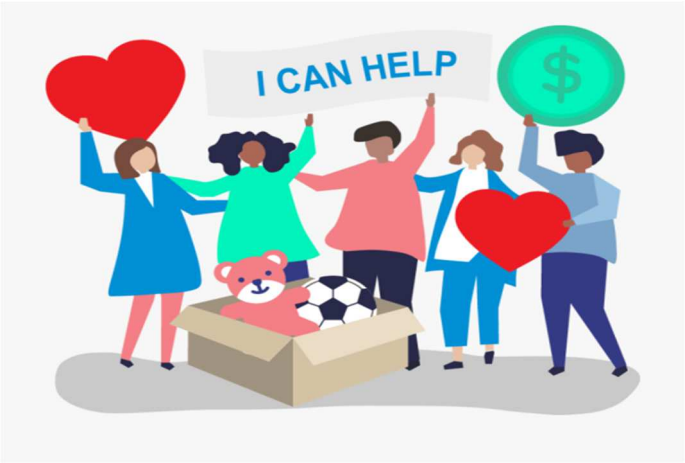
Disadvantages of this method:

- the need to allocate staff to work with volunteers
- the need to allocate additional resources to provide work with volunteers (premises, travel and subsistence costs, etc.)
- the need for the institution to regularly carry out a large volume of non-essential work on the organization of the work of volunteers, to select, train and accompany volunteers independently
- full responsibility of the institution for the activities of the volunteers
- inability to attract additional resources from partner NGOs.

HOW TO FIND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE RIGHT FOR YOU (moneycrashers.com)

- **Look for Opportunities Through Your Employer**
  - in cases where your employer has some sort of volunteer program, choose how to get involved (the program could be a formal one featuring organized volunteer days that double as off-site team-building opportunities; it could be more flexible in order to allow employees to receive paid time off while volunteering with organizations of their choice);
  - use volunteering partnerships of the company;
  - talk to human resources department of the company and ask for details how to look for volunteering opportunities.
- **Look to Organizations You Already Give Time To**
  - probably you are part of organizations that rely on volunteers;
  - You may also spend time at your local community center;
  - giving your time to these organizations could inspire you to become officially a volunteer
- **Identify Your Values**
  - think about your motives to be volunteer; motivations are diverse, so the organizations that needs your help;
  - make a list of the values that drive you, or the issues you care about, and then look for organizations with complementary missions and opportunities.
  - make a list of organizations that match your values
  - make contact with them and check how they correspond to your values;

For instance, if your primary motivation is to forge social connections with peers, you might look to organizations such as school groups that require interaction with other parents, neighborhood or homeowners association boards that involve lots of contact with neighbors, or collaborative projects such as Habitat for Humanity builds or litter cleanups.



If you're motivated to serve the less fortunate, you might target organizations that work with housing-insecure populations, people with disabilities, recent

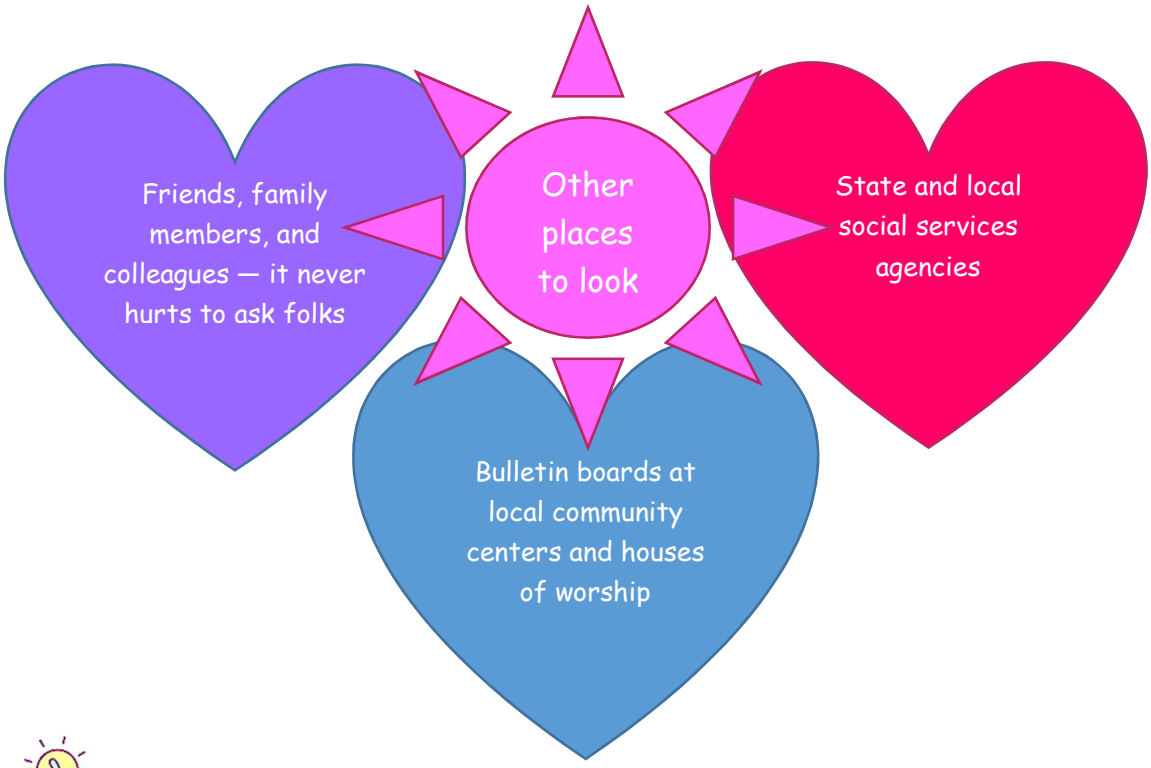
immigrants, or members of historically disadvantaged groups.

- **Identify Pressing Needs in Your Community or the World**
  - According to your values, prioritize the needs you have already observed in your community, state, country, or planet. Observations could come from news, other people, social media etc.
- **Put Your Existing Skills to Good Use**
  - Align your volunteering with your existing skill sets. Your skills and preferences also determine your volunteering.
  - Bear in mind that you need not limit your search to organizations whose primary functions align with your skills. Most non-profit organizations also need many of the same skills and services that for-profit companies ask of their paid employees
- **Consider Opportunities to Build Skills or Connections**

Volunteering is an opportunity to acquire new skills and create contacts.

  - Use your current skills to upgrade;
  - establish good contacts and relationships with organizations that offer volunteering;
  - Volunteering is an opportunity to start a career and gain experience to be used to start a paid job - use the right contacts and organizations to gain experience to start a career and get a recommendation for paid employment
- **Try to Involve the Whole Family**
  - Use the experience of your parents who have volunteered
  - learn from working in the community, so you will gain more knowledge and skills for altruism
  - Community service is a great way to underscore the inequities and injustices that permeate modern society. It's also an opportunity to spend more time with your family.
  - Look for volunteer engagements that welcome people of all ages and abilities, and schedule time for the whole family to participate
- **Use a Reputable Resource**
  - use reputable online and real-world resources to zero in on suitable, aboveboard community service opportunities.
  - Websites dedicated specifically to volunteering would be a useful source for finding organizations looking for volunteers
  - Your city or county website may have a section for prospective volunteers too.
- **Vet Prospective Charities Carefully**
  - trust in organizations looking for volunteers is important - do your due diligence on prospective volunteer opportunities before you apply;

- Once you find a well-run organization that aligns with your availability, values, talents, and objectives, work with your contact there to set a volunteer schedule that fits your life.
- If you're exploring a recurring engagement — say, a weekly or biweekly commitment — think carefully about how much time you can afford to donate. It's better to commit to shorter or less frequent volunteer hours up front and build from there than to take on an unmanageable workload right out of the gate.



Five tasks for organizing volunteers (Belanovsky, Yu., 2020)

The first task is to choose the right idea. The idea of volunteering must be universal, emotional and at the same time understandable and achievable. It must be attractive to as many people / citizens as possible.

The second task is to find and prepare a leader. Volunteers willingly organize around a person who participates in the process and relieves them of the burden of responsibility for the whole process. The leader must be competent and have resources and authority.

The third task is to organize the work of volunteers. The work must be organized, the roles and responsibilities - understandable, the resources - available.

The fourth task is to provide training and support for volunteers.

The fifth task is to organize a communication environment.

SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE COMMUNITY

Three Dimensions of Social Capital (Fultz, E., M. Tracy, 2004)

A conceptual framework for distinguishing between different dimensions of social capital has been developed by the World Bank (2000). The framework suggests that there are three basic aspects of social capital: bonding social capital, bridging social capital, and linking social capital.

1. Bonding social capital refers to the strong ties connecting family members, neighbors, close friends, and business associates.

2. Bridging social capital refers to networks of people with broadly comparable economic status and political power.

3. Linking social capital is a third dimension that in the past has been largely ignored. This refers to the vertical ties between vulnerable groups and people of influence in formal organizations (social inclusion). The dimension is critical to developing a sustainable social capital approach as it addresses the problem of exclusion (by overt discrimination or lack of resources) from the places where major decisions relating to welfare are usually made.

Social capital refers to:

- ✓ relationships and cooperation between people

- ✓ to existing organizations in the community that offer the opportunity to engage, communicate and show solidarity with people in difficulty.
- ✓ the collective value of all social networks and the tendency to follow reciprocal rules.
- ✓ The basic idea of social capital is that a person's family, friends and co-workers are an important asset to which he can resort to crisis situations or personal needs, and the same is true for groups (Woolcock and Narayan, 2000).
- ✓ Bourdieu defines social capital as a network of connections - networking can be understood as a process of building connections between people and groups and as a basic approach to professional action

Strategies Designed to Build Social Capital

(Fultz, E., M. Tracy, 2004)

- Decentralize authority to local government.
- Expand alternative social services, such as childcare, job training, skill development, life coping strategies, individual and family support programs, etc.
- Facilitate the development of NGOs that provide services directly to needy populations.
- Create partnerships among state-local, private-public agencies, women's and other interest groups, businesses and trade unions.
- Provide opportunities for volunteers.
- Include consumers as volunteers (family, parent, customer, etc.).
- Collaborate with local civic organizations (Rotary International, etc.).
- Utilize support from international initiatives (ILO, UNESCO, EU, Foundations).

The terms "social communities" and "social networks" have been around long before the days of Facebook. The first usage of "social network" predates the invention of the Internet by well over a century (Khoros Staff, 2018).

"First we lived on farms, then we lived in cities, and now we're going to live on the internet!" ('The Social Network', Dir David Fincher, 2010)

The social networking phenomenon has become firmly entrenched in international society. Sites such as Facebook, Twitter, 4Square, MySpace and Linked in, have hundreds of millions of users worldwide and have transformed the way in which people communicate and socialize with one another. It would be unrealistic to suggest that social workers should not engage in social networking sites on a personal level; however, it is important that social workers consider the ethical implications that may arise from their use of such sites.

What is the purpose of social networking?

Social networking serves as a way to connect individuals with other people and businesses to share information, ideas, and messages. Social networks can also increase recognition and self-esteem.

Why are social networks important?

Social networks are important because they allow people to develop relationships with others with whom they might not otherwise be able to connect.

Dimension of social network structure

- network **density** - number of existing relationships relative to the possible number
  Attention: Dense networks are more important for control and sanctioning than for information. Dense networks tend to generate a lot of redundant information (Burt, 2000)
- network **centralization** - in connected networks, high centralization corresponds with a high variance of the degrees of the points (Snijders,1981)
- **clustering and segmentation** - closely connected to the question of clustering and segmentation is the detection of dense clusters in a network. Discussion points are: (a) the influence of network structure on the diffusion of (new) cultural behavior within the network and (b) the influence of external events, especially of social programs, on the diffusion of (new) cultural behavior, and on the network structure (Baerveldt and Snijders, 1994)

Networking is one of the most important **skills** needed in almost all areas of activity. The term "network" originates in the field of technical sciences and is further promoted by modern information and communication technologies.

Network (short) - a system of social connections between entities or organizations. Networks are specific structures called links for interaction and cooperation between individual actors, initiated and developed on the basis of common interest, through one or more specific interdependencies. A network is a social structure composed of individuals or organizations, called nodes, which are connected by one or more specific interdependencies (Gotea, 2010). The network is a moral link of trust (Fukuyama, 2001). Networking is a barometer for community capacity development (Arpinte and Cace, 2008).

Social network is a social system in which a finite set of organizations (e.g., suppliers, distributors, financial institutions, universities, governments) directly or indirectly connect to each other by various social relationships (e.g., strategic alliance, interlocking, personal relationship, affiliation) and whose structural pattern will constrain or facilitate member organizations' behaviors through various mechanisms (e.g., information flow, knowledge sharing, resource complementary (Lauman, Galaskiewicz and Marsden's, 1978).

KEY TO SOCIAL NETWORKS IN COMMUNITY

- First known use of notion "social network" - 1845, in the meaning of a network of individuals (such as friends, acquaintances, and coworkers) connected by interpersonal relationships.

- They cover groups of people you already know or have already met; each of us is part of groups of friends, relatives, coworkers and acquaintances that we speak to and see on a regular basis;
- They are unique to each and every person who has one for this very reason;
- people in the group (network) communicate with each other, based on common education, work, interests and each participant in the group is a bridge to other people who can be admitted to the group in the role of friend or acquaintance;
- In social networks, the focus is on the participation - people with common interests can interact with each other and build relationships on the basis of trust with other members of the community;
- According to Matt Goddar, they are built by like-minded people who seek and give advice in order to reach better solutions. Social media researchers say that the people who give the most advice online have the most influence. These people are called opinion leaders. Social networks use traditional methods of connection, such as face-to-face conversations, but also new approaches, such as blogs, syndicated videos, social bookmarks, etc., which are called social media.
- they can be a key factor in determining how healthy a community is; they can create social supports that provide a buffer against the stressors that damage health.

Why join a network?

There are many reasons why people join such networks. We have selected for you the top 6 according to MEC:

- This is an easy way to get information,
- Professional relationships are established and existing ones are strengthened
- You increase the trust of others in yourself because people see you engaged and developing in your field, and many people already know who you are, what you do, how you do it.
- You have easy access to social events in and outside the field you are interested in.
- The web is about real relationships and real trust - something that is very difficult to establish outside the web.
- Let's not forget that it is fun - it's always fun when you're part of a community that shares your path

TIPS FOR NETWORKING IN SOCIAL WORK

Networking is a skill and requires practice. Take every opportunity to develop and deepen your network (professional, social).

- **Ask Questions**: keep a conversation going; you may learn something new and acquire meaningful information for your follow-up;
- **Leave your comfort zone and introduce yourself**. If you struggle with this, try to attend networking events with a friend or colleague so you can introduce yourselves together;
- **Create a bond with a fellow social work professional**;
- **Know What You Want** and prioritize events and activities and people that allow you to meet new people and talk about your accomplishments.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Some tasks or activities cannot be accomplished by professionals themselves only. Cooperation and support from related organizations or groups in the community is needed. Partnering local administrative bodies, religious leaders, women's groups, youth groups, entrepreneurs or business groups, environmental groups or government agencies can bring in much-needed additional resources, skills and knowledge to make self-care sustainable and effective (WHO, 2013).

Community Engagement is a broad term that covers a whole range of activities that encourage and enable individuals and communities to be involved, at the level they want, in what is going on in their area. This ranges from simply giving the community information, to working in partnership with the community in developing services in their local area (West Lothian Community Engagement Practitioners Network, 2015).

Communities usually consist of people from all walks of life who seem to have no relationship at all. Community members are together because of a common interest such as a hobby, profession, location, or cause.

WORLD AIDS DAY
1 DECEMBER 2019
UNAIDS
COMMUNITIES ARE THE BEST WAY TO REACH
People living with HIV
Adolescents and young people
Women and girls
Transgender people
Gay men and other men who have sex with men
Sex workers
People who use drugs
COMMUNITIES ARE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF A MODERN HEALTH SYSTEM
Promoting HIV prevention
U=U
Facilitating HIV testing
Helping pregnant women living with HIV to deliver HIV-free babies
Supporting people living with HIV to stay on treatment
Supporting men to access health services
Delivering HIV treatment at the doorstep
Monitoring stock-outs and the quality of services
COMMUNITIES make the difference
COMMUNITIES ARE THE TORCHBEARERS OF HUMAN RIGHTS
Acting to change laws that discriminate
Monitoring and alerting human rights violations
Speaking up against discrimination
Helping people claim their rights
EQUALITY
Standing up for sexual and reproductive health and rights
COMMUNITIES HAVE THE TRUST OF THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE
Standing up in solidarity
Offering safety
Reducing stigma in the community
Providing social support
Treating people with respect and dignity
INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES IS VALUE FOR MONEY
Developing a new generation of leaders
Allocating money where the needs are the greatest
Building local capacity and networks to respond to any crisis
Creating sustainable programmes with local networks
COMMUNITIES ARE LEADERS IN INNOVATION
Supporting the quest for a vaccine and cure
Adopting new technologies
Finding new platforms to reach people and provide services

Forms of community engagement

(The Guildford Community engagement strategy, 2011)

Informing

Providing information to keep you informed about what is happening, and help you understand an issue, service or a planned action, the alternative options and the available solution.

- Posters, postcards, fliers, banners, advertising and publications.
- Local newspaper press releases, publications, radio and TV interviews.
- Newsletters, letters, leaflets or summaries.
- Information stalls/open days/roadshows/exhibitions.
- Public and specific meetings, presentations, briefings.
- Website updates.
- Email, texts alerts, Twitter, webpage subscription, Facebook, MySpace, podcasts.

Consulting

Asking you for feedback, advice or opinion on a particular issue – stating what can and cannot be changed, often offering a number of options and listening to feedback.

- Questionnaires and surveys, structure feedback form, polls, surveys.
- Online surveys and e-consultation (via the internet).
- Face to face interviews/telephone interviews/video soapbox.
- Residents', citizens', user panels and community groups.
- Discussion/focus groups/forums/e-forum.
- Written consultation through letter or email.
- Consultation events/ workshops/ roadshows/ world café/ exhibitions/ general events/ festivals/ shows/ video cube.
- Online consultation, discussion groups and blogs.
- Public, neighborhood or specific meetings.
- Documents or information available in offices, public buildings or online.
- Verbal consultation with community representative.

Involving

Working together throughout the process to ensure that concerns and aspirations are understood and considered, encouraging people to put forward ideas, options, initiatives and actions.

- Activity weeks.
- Ballots and referenda.
- Public or specific targeted discussion meetings with interested parties.
- Public or stakeholder workshops to identify issues and shape options.
- Planning For Real events.
- Public visioning events, ideas competitions, interactive displays.
- Consensus conference (questioning experts before making recommendation).
- Online discussion forums.
- Review sessions.
- Participatory appraisal.
- Citizens' juries.
- Community-led plans (e.g. parish plans/neighborhood plans)/community action plans.
- Community development and capacity building.
- Participatory budgeting.
- Providing opportunities for community run services management.
- Comments and complaints.
- Interact with Members of Parliament, members of the Local Strategic Partnership Board, County Councilors, Parish Councilors, employees.

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS (WHO, 2013)

Local administrative bodies (Community council, Village council)

The local administrative body in any community is the most peripheral level of governance. Listed below are a few activities they can undertake:

- Social and health activities such as health education, group exercise, and vaccination can be organized in the community health centers.
- Referral Services: The local administrative body in consultation with a social center can establish a two-way referral system between the community, Primary Health Centre as well as local private practitioners.

- Community Information Centre: In addition to the community social center, the local administrative body can identify one place where educational materials, posters, newsletters, magazines, newspapers can be kept to be used as an Information center.
- Registration and maintenance of population records: births, deaths, marriages, migration.
- Disease and disaster surveillance: The local authorities can also set up a system to keep track of any disasters that the community is at risk for, any unusual health-related occurrences.
- Create awareness in the community about available social and health services and the community's rights.

Religious leaders

It is important to consider that one good way to approach any community can be through religious teachings, norms and influences. Education and informing programs are often more successful if religious organizations and leaders collaborate in advocating and educating the community on the benefits. If the leaders are properly sensitized and educated about the target group's needs, they may become important allies in helping achieve the objectives.

Self-help groups

Community Self-help Groups mean a group or a collection of people who have common interests or characteristics. They come together voluntarily, to do activities that serve their interests. Self-help groups can:

- Pressurize the local administrative body to respond to the requests of local people,
- Help in demonstrations of good practices
- Pressurize traders to provide cheaper products for some vulnerable customers.
- Run social campaigns.

Youth Groups

A youth group is usually a group of young people who meet and enjoy activities such as sports, music, videos and spend time talking about various issues. Youth groups can be important peer educators. They can be good advocates for promoting prosocial behaviors, playing sports, staying away from tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

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Useful tips

(West Lothian Community Engagement Practitioners Network, 2015)

Who should be involved?

Who you involve depends very much on what you are engaging on. To get the most from your engagement activity, it is useful to use a range of methods and techniques to achieve the widest possible participation. Local community networks and support organizations should be involved in identifying community stakeholders, their particular interests and needs and how best to engage with them. Issues to consider include:

- What impact the issue or proposals will have on these stakeholder interests?
- Who represents these groups?
- Are there existing community networks or forms of communication?
- Are their gaps in information which could be plugged through local knowledge?

There are many groups, organizations and individuals that represent a whole range of interests. These might include:

- Local residents or area-based groups
- Communities of Interest
- Faith Based groups
- Local community groups
- Voluntary groups
- Service Users
- Web-based or virtual groups

What time and resources are available?

The following types of resources will be required for most forms of engagement:

- Input by staff, volunteers and other interested stakeholders
- Background information on briefing papers on the issue(s) or plan proposals
- Communication & promotion
- Publication and printing of materials
- Resourcing local and voluntary groups to support people in understanding and responding to information and proposals; convene meetings; be involved in conversations; attending meetings and events.

HOW TO BUILD AND USE SOCIAL NETWORKS IN THE COMMUNITIES

- communicate with people – make it easy for them; communication is the foundation of all that you do, which means you need to make it really easy for the people to talk to you;
- take the easiest method for the people to communicate with them - how you communicate is essential;
- the more you give, the more you'll get back. Prepare for the next time you need a favor by helping others in your network. Think about what you can give to your colleagues and connections rather than simply thinking in terms of what they can do for you. When you need assistance later down the road, your network will likely respond enthusiastically
- involve your community in **your** passion – How? - via user generated content, when it comes to social media;
- use social media to interact with people; establish and maintain communication channels, exchange resources and coordinate collaborative activities;

- understand a community's social networks - generate knowledge of the characteristics of the community;
- take advantage of social networks in order to share and discuss potential positions and strategies;
- develop capacity for collective action;
- mobilize your partners to take the actions that will lead to improved community health, and mobilization must be sustained through leadership, communication, and motivation.

The main objectives of the networks set up at community level

- *Emotionally binding social capital* - connections are created to increase trust between people who know each other in their main groups (relatives, neighbors) This goal is to ensure the cohesion of groups and to support the team. It is typical for small communities.
- *Uniting social capital* - this is to create links between entities or organizations, institutions, with other persons outside the community, who do not know, but with whom they can share common interests or are willing to share economic opportunities. It encompasses a larger number and more diverse as groups of people, crossing the boundaries of close identity.

- *Binding social capital* intersects strata with different social, economic or political power. It examines the relations between groups in the event of an imbalance in their positions of power.
- *Trust* - an important factor for the development of sustainable and reciprocal links between network members

These six **guiding principles are the basis for best practice community engagement** (Community Engagement Guide, 2018):

1. Demonstrate integrity, trust and transparency. The levels of community influence and process for engagement must be clearly communicated from the start.

2. Show respect. Value all contributions made and the time given. Provide timely feedback.

3. Be inclusive. Ensure a diverse and representative range of stakeholders is engaged. Offer a range of accessible engagement opportunities to ensure that all people who may be affected by, or interested in, the outcome can participate.

4. Educate. Information provided should be clear, consistent and use common language wherever possible. Always educate the community on the relevant legislative, strategic and local context to allow them to make informed decisions.

5. Work together. The goal is to 'do with' the community rather than 'do for' the community. Foster relationships with partners and the community by developing a solid understanding of mutual obligations and reciprocal responsibilities and benefits.

6. Plan well. Strive to select a project scope and engagement activities that align with your objectives. Make it simple and convenient for the community to engage in the project/the idea.

What does the relationship between social networks and social communities? Bottom line, successful social networks must have some form of community for their members to interact and build their relationships. Without communities, social networks are merely glorified phonebooks and contact lists (Lithium Community - "From Weak Ties to Strong Ties: Community vs. Social Networks 3")

REMEMBER:

* SELF CARE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS TO MAKE HEALTH.

* SELF-CARE EMPOWERS PEOPLE TO TAKE THEIR HEALTH AND WELLBEING INTO THEIR OWN HANDS, GIVING THEM THE INCENTIVE TO IMPROVE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE.

* TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF IS SOMETHING TO TAKE SERIOUSLY - YOU ARE BETTER ABLE TO SUPPORT AND LOOK AFTER OTHERS IF YOU'RE DOING THE SAME FOR YOURSELF.

* EMPOWERMENT IS THE BEST WAY TO HELP PEOPLE DEVELOP SUSTAINED SELF CARE BEHAVIOURS.

* EMPOWERMENT MEANS BUILDING SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE THROUGH RIGHT INFORMATION, RIGHT SKILLS AND THE RIGHT SUPPORT.

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