



Past the Pandemic
STRESS MITIGATION PLAN
Behavioral Health Workforce

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Stress Continuum for Behavioral Health Workers

The Stress Continuum Model is a self-assessment tool that provides a visual representation and vocabulary for discussing stress injury. It is focused on the needs of the individual and is intended to help you recognize and understand how stress is affecting you personally, so you can respond to it in a way that feels meaningful, impactful, and sustainable for you. More specifically it is designed to allow you to recognize and name signs of stress accumulation, and respond using strategies that are effective for you.

To help you brainstorm what your own Stress Continuum might look like, we put together the following table with some examples of thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, and patterns in each "zone" of the Stress Continuum Model, which we compiled from statements taken from fellow colleagues working in the behavioral health field.

READY	REACTING	INJURED	CRITICAL
<p>I feel/am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cool, calm, collected • Boundaried • Energized • Exercising/moving regularly • Finding joy in and out of work • Seen, heard, and supported • A strong sense of self and purpose • Connected 	<p>I feel/am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hurried, restless, tense, anxious • Procrastinating • Self-critical • Less tolerant/Judgmental • More distracted • Desire to avoid/escape • Need to process stress more frequently • Desire more connection 	<p>I feel/am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dread for hard things/complexity/work • Tense, tearful and/or fatigued • Struggling to show compassion and empathy • Not sleeping well • Not myself • Unattuned to the needs of self, kids, colleagues and/or partner 	<p>I feel/am:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overworking/Underworking • "Checked out" • Shame and guilt for not being able to help • Low, angry, anxious, hopeless, reactive, isolating • Totally depleted • "Numbing out" with screens/substances • Unable to look toward the future

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Stress Continuum Worksheet

We now invite you to take a moment to reflect on your own experience of times when you have found yourself in each of the four zones of the Stress Continuum Model. In particular, consider:

- Thoughts, attitudes, worldviews, and self-talk that occupied your mind
- Actions, behaviors, and habits you engaged in
- How you felt in your body and were able (or unable) to navigate your day
- How your personal and professional relationships felt and functioned

READY	REACTING	INJURED	CRITICAL
I feel/am:	I feel/am:	I feel/am:	I feel/am:

Battery Snapshot Worksheet

Think of your body and nervous system as a battery, which requires a reliable, consistent source of energy in order to function. Fill in your current charges and depletions. Revisit your Battery Snapshot frequently. The faster we can identify the signs and origins of our battery drains, the more likely we are to be able to reduce them or counter them with choices and actions that recharge us.

Charges

-
-

Depletions

-
-



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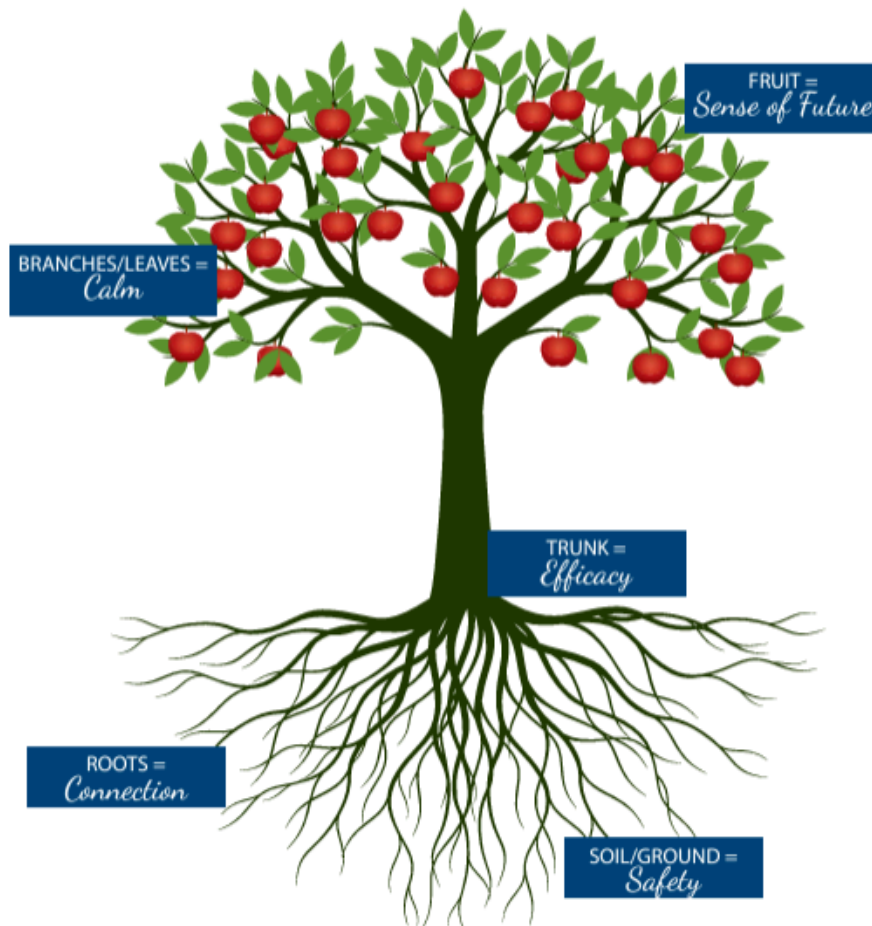
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Individualized Resiliency Plan

These 5 evidence-based themes have been identified as aiding in psychosocial resiliency following mass disasters or traumas. For our purposes, reflect on these categories as also being themes of your battery “charges” and “depletions”. Brainstorm and list examples next to each theme of how it is being met or points of struggle in your personal and professional life.



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Individualized Resiliency Plan

Reflection Exercise

Think about a recent stressor or ongoing issue you've been experiencing at work.

Which of the five themes of resilience is this stressor impacting or stemming from?

Why has this issue caused stress for you lately? And, are there other stressors/depletions you are experiencing that may be causing this issue to feel more stressful?

With this issue in mind, what might you need to better fulfill this area of psychosocial resilience? If it is not within your control, are you able to meet the theme in a different way in your life somehow?



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Relationship Battery

People Who
Charge Me:

People Who
Deplete Me:

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Relationship Stress Continuum

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

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

Reflect...

What do you **GIVE** in your relationships?

What do your relationships **NEED** in order to be “recharged”?

How can you **EXPRESS** what you need?



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Role Management Table

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

Role	What's involved in showing up for this role?	What meaning do I get from this role?	What are the social connections related to this role?	How does this role energize my battery?	How does this role deplete my battery?



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Mindfulness Awareness Attention Scale (MAAS)

Below is a collection of statements about your everyday experience. Using the 1-6 scale below, please indicate how frequently or infrequently you currently have each experience. Please answer according to what really reflects your experience rather than what you think your experience should be. Please treat each item separately from every other item.

1	2	3	4	5	6
almost always	very frequently	somewhat frequently	somewhat infrequently	very infrequently	almost never

- 1. I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later.
- 2. I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking of something else.
- 3. I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happening in the present.
- 4. I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.
- 5. I tend not to notice feelings of physician tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention.
- 6. I forget a person's name almost as soon as I've been told it for the first time.
- 7. It seems I am "running on automatic" without much awareness of what I'm doing.
- 8. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.
- 9. I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve that I lose touch with what I'm doing right now to get there.
- 10. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I am doing.
- 11. I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time.
- 12. I drive places on "automatic pilot" and then wonder why I went there.
- 13. I find myself preoccupied with the future or past.
- 14. I find myself doing things without paying attention.
- 15. I snack without being aware that I'm eating.

Scoring: To score the scale, simply compute a mean (average) of the 15 items.

(Brown & Ryan, 2003; Carlson & Brown, 2005).



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Calm Transitions Exercise



Instead of...

- **Running** overtime on sessions and giving my client five extra minutes
- **Rushing** through meals or scheduling over my lunch break
- **Pushing** through task after task when I'm noticing my energy fade
- **Jumping** out of my car to run to my next appointment, run errands, or enter my home
- **Ignoring** that tension headache, neck pain, shoulder soreness, etc.
- **Rushing** into my next client session or work meeting

I can pause to...

- End my sessions on time and **do something kind** for myself for five minutes (stretch, eat a snack, etc.).
- Put my **lunch breaks on my calendar**, honoring that time as a real appointment.
- Take a **walk outside**, stand up and stretch, or step out of my office to chat with a colleague.
- Take a **moment to breathe**, noticing the quality of my breath and any tension in my muscles.
- **Set an alarm** to schedule an appointment with my doctor or massage therapist.
- **Pause** to notice how my body is feeling. Do I need to use the bathroom or eat something? Are there any other personal/physical needs I can address to be fully present with others?

Self-Compassion Activity

As helpers, caregivers, and providers, it is important for us to be able to simultaneously hold compassion for others while providing self-compassion for ourselves.

Mindful self-compassion has been found to improve well-being, reduce stress and anxiety, and decrease the risk of burnout and compassion fatigue.

Try repeating this phrase entitled “**Compassion with Equanimity**”, either during difficult and taxing moments of caring for others, or as a ritual practice to start your work day.

**Everyone is on their own life journey.
I am not the sole cause of this person’s suffering,
nor is it entirely within my power to make it go away,
even though I wish I could.
Moments like this are difficult to bear,
yet I will still try to help if I can.**

