

Stress First Aid Essentials

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Learning Objectives

- 1. Describe the main components of stress first aid**
- 2. Identify practical 'Stress First Aid' action strategies customized for you**
- 3. Have Fun!**

Let's Check In

Starting with a Few Well-being Action Strategies:

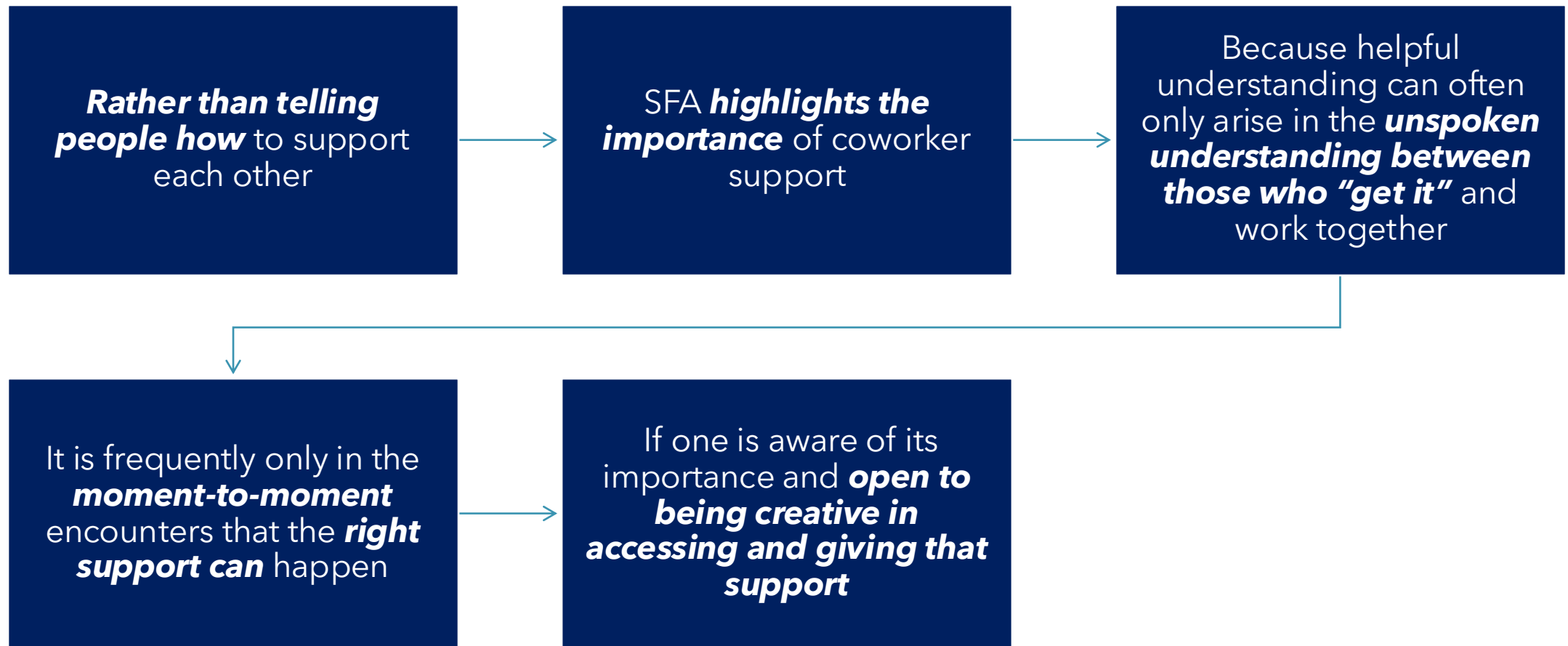
- Noticing
- Acknowledging
- Validating
- Relating



Four Causes of Stress Injury



(Watson, 2020)



How is Stress First Aid Different?

Be a Force Multiplier

Force Multiplication:

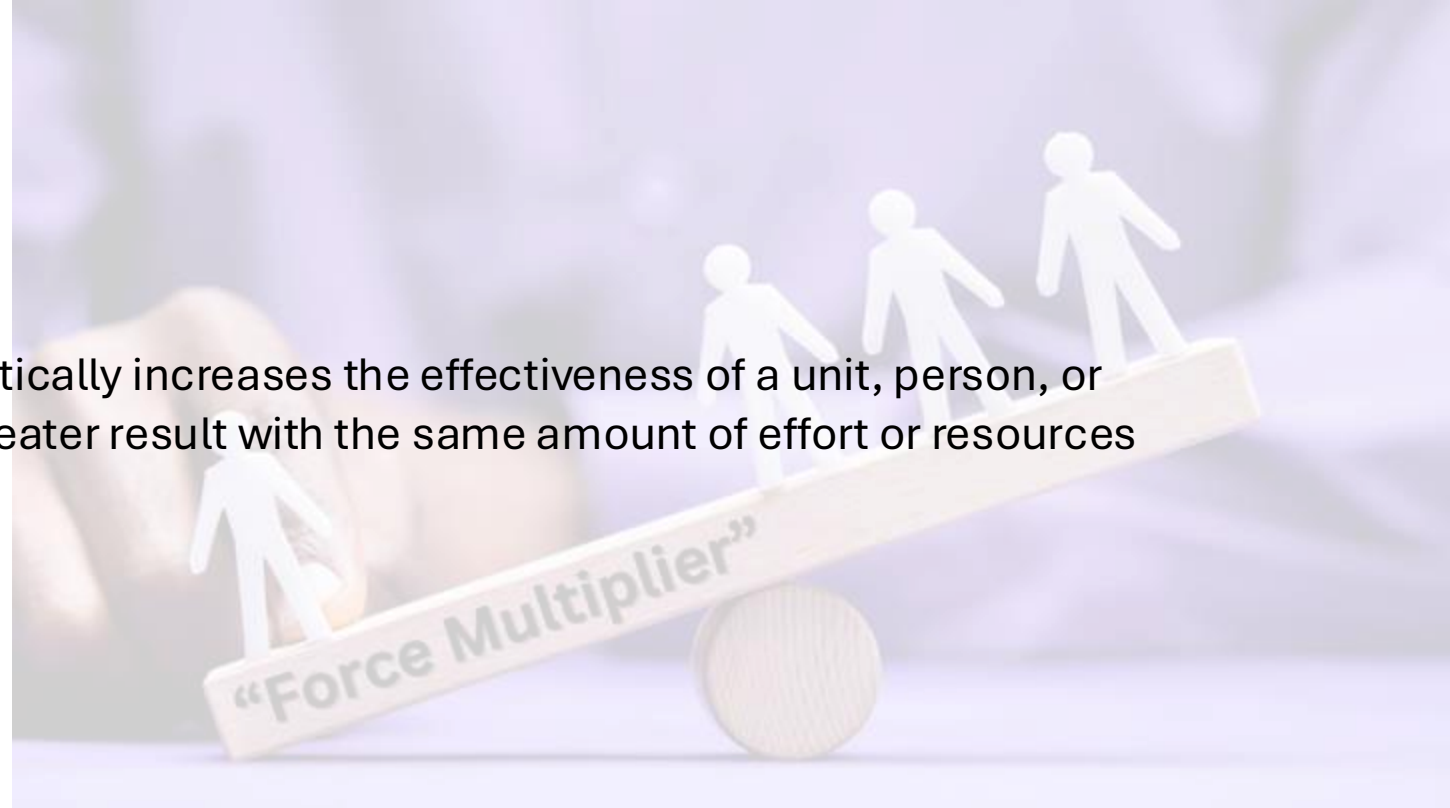
A concept where a factor, tool, or strategy dramatically increases the effectiveness of a unit, person, or system, allowing them to achieve significantly greater result with the same amount of effort or resources

To multiply impact focus on:

- Influence (what you can affect)
- Change or control (what you can effect)

What does this mean for teams?

- Builds true teamwork because collective effort multiplies results
- Especially effective in time of team stress for stability and balance
- Overall effectiveness of the team is improved through a focus on both individual and collective strengths
 - Respects Individuality
 - Gives meaningful recognition
 - Actively seeks opportunities to flex, reframe or pivot
 - Empowers self and others!



Double Edged Sword of Values and Ideals

Strength	Guiding Ideal	Vulnerability
Placing the welfare of others above one's own welfare	Selflessness	Not seeking help for health problems because personal health is not a priority
Commitment to helping patients heal and supporting their families	Loyalty	Guilt and complicated grief after perceived failure or loss
Toughness and ability to endure hardships without complaint	Stoicism	Not aware of or acknowledging significant symptoms, impact or suffering (minimization of impact)
Following an internal moral compass to choose "right" over "wrong"	Moral Code	Feeling frustrated and betrayed when others fail to follow a moral code
Becoming the best and most effective professional possible	Excellence	Feeling ashamed; denial or minimization of imperfections that impede asking for help or guidance

Signs & Symptoms of Stress Injuries

Noted by Others

(Significant and persistent change in behavior or appearance)

- Not talking
- Isolating
- Anger outbursts
- Increased use of substances
- Making mistakes

Felt by Person

(Not feeling in control of one's body, emotions, or thinking)

- Numb
- Disconnected
- Short fuse
- Can't calm down or sleep
- Can't function as well at work or in relationships

STRESS SYMPTOM CHECK IN

Physical	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Aches & pains<input type="checkbox"/> Weight loss/gain<input type="checkbox"/> Indigestion/digestive issues<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep disruption/sleeplessness<input type="checkbox"/> Immune system problems<input type="checkbox"/> Medical symptoms of undetermined cause<input type="checkbox"/> Stress induced seizures<input type="checkbox"/> Increase sick leave use<input type="checkbox"/> Exhaustion/fatigue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Emotional extremes<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety/panic attacks<input type="checkbox"/> Crying easily or unexpectedly<input type="checkbox"/> Depression<input type="checkbox"/> Short temper<input type="checkbox"/> Frustration<input type="checkbox"/> Increased substance use<input type="checkbox"/> Giving up<input type="checkbox"/> Hypervigilance
Cognitive	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Loss of interest in things that once mattered<input type="checkbox"/> Decrease in quality of work/productivity<input type="checkbox"/> Decreased motivation<input type="checkbox"/> Decreased patience<input type="checkbox"/> Increased work errors<input type="checkbox"/> Increased lateness/absenteeism<input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness<input type="checkbox"/> Distorted thinking<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced Self-awareness<input type="checkbox"/> Trouble keeping up with usual workload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Relationship stress<input type="checkbox"/> Increased isolation<input type="checkbox"/> Increased complaining<input type="checkbox"/> Less tolerance<input type="checkbox"/> Irritability/ impatience/ intolerance<input type="checkbox"/> Social engagement with others declining<input type="checkbox"/> Closed off body language<input type="checkbox"/> Reduced personal boundaries<input type="checkbox"/> Less Volunteerism<input type="checkbox"/> Uncharacteristic changes in social behavior



Brainstorm

Use the chat:

In what situations do you KNOW or ANTICIPATE you might have a stress reaction?

The Stress Continuum (Simple)

Thriving <i>(Adaptive Coping, Effective Functioning)</i>	Reacting (Mild Distress)	Struggling (Persistent Distress)	Unwell (Unresolved Distress)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In control of your thoughts & actions• Feel motivated and competent to do your work• Mind and body are calm & steady	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• May feel mildly anxious, irritable or sad• May feel temporarily unmotivated, unfocused or distracted• May experience transient physical symptoms such as difficulty sleeping, headaches or stomach upset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less in control of your thoughts & feelings• May feel intense negative emotions like fear, sadness, rage• May use drugs or alcohol to numb intense feelings• May avoid friends & family	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Experiencing symptoms of stress that do not resolve• May feel unable to do your job or interact positively with friends or family• May be experiencing panic attacks, loss of control, nightmares, or flashbacks• May be at risk for developing dependency on drugs & alcohol and for developing suicidal behavior

Stress Continuum Check-in Scale

Thriving “I got this”	Reacting “Something isn’t right”	Struggling “I can’t keep this up”	Unwell “I can’t survive this”
Calm and steady with minor mood fluctuations	Nervousness, sadness, increased mood fluctuations	Persistent fear, panic, anxiety, anger, hopelessness and sadness	Disabling distress and loss of functioning
Able to take things in stride	More easily overwhelmed or irritated	Exhaustion	Nightmares or flashbacks
Consistent performance	Inconsistent performance	Poor performance and difficulty making decision and focusing	Unable to fall or stay asleep, careless mistakes, or inability to focus
Able to take feedback and to adjust to changes in plans	Increased need for control and difficulty adjusting to changes	Avoiding interactions with family, friends, and others	Intrusive thoughts
Able to focus	Trouble sleeping or eating	Fatigue, aches and pains	Thoughts of self-harm or suicide
Able to communicate effectively	Activities and relationships are not as enjoyable or interesting and may be stressful	Restlessness and disturbed sleep	Easily enraged or aggressive, withdrawal from relationships
Normal sleep patterns and appetite	Muscle tension, low energy, headaches	Self-medicating with substances, food or other numbing activities	Dependence on substances or other numbing activities

Stress First Aid in Action



The 2 Core Actions and 5 Key Factors

The Core Actions of Stress First Aid – **Check** and **Coordinate** – are the foundation for any supportive measures taken. These actions are continuously in play when implementing the Stress First Aid Model. Once you have checked in with a distressed colleague, then you can coordinate your next action and use the evidence-informed **Key Factors** to determine your next step. These include:

1. **Safety**
2. **Calm**
3. **Connect**
4. **Self-Efficacy**
5. **Hope**

(Watson, National Center for PTSD, 2021; Schwartz Center for Compassionate Care, 2024)

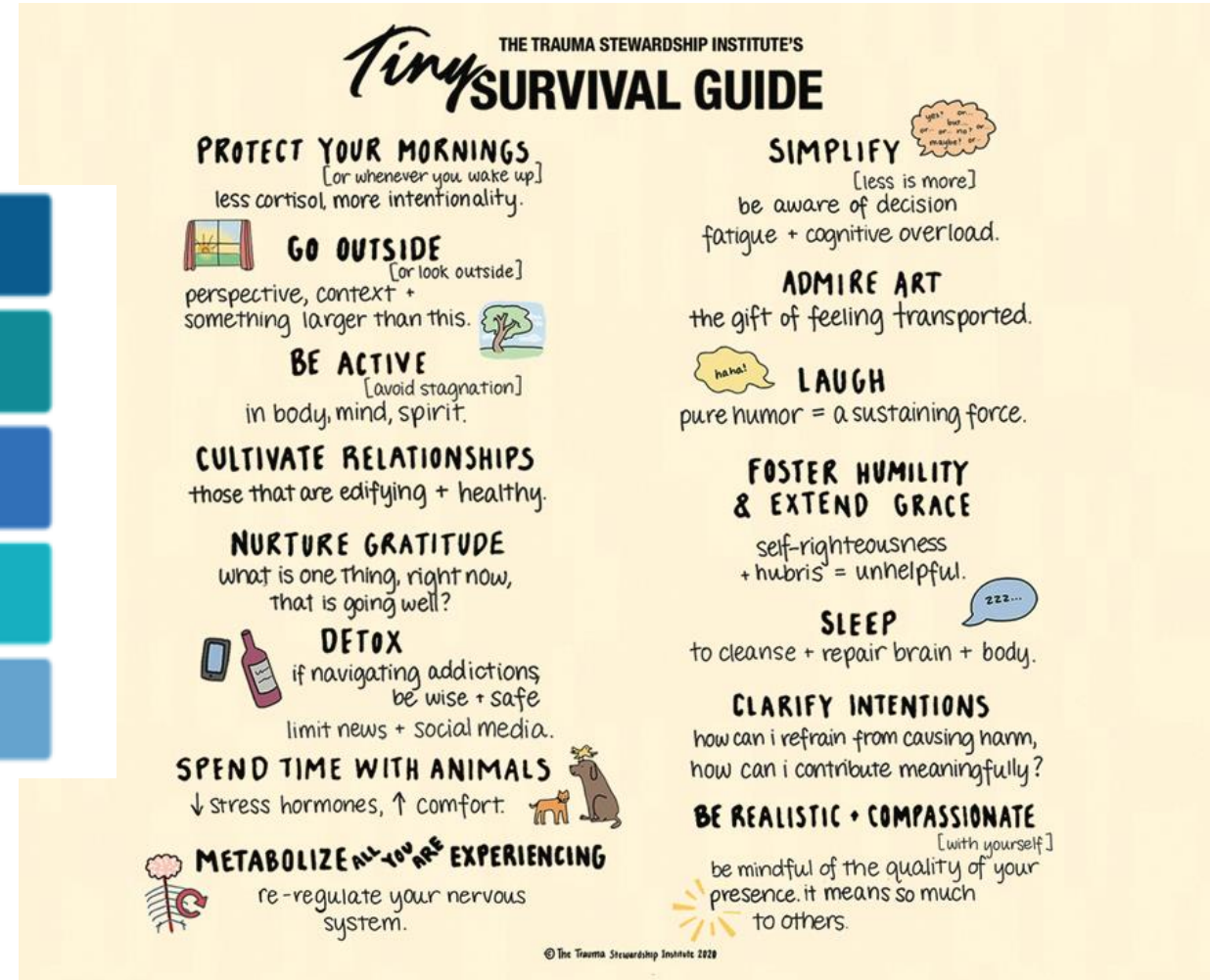
Ready "Thriving"	Reacting "Surviving"	Injured "Struggling"	Unwell "In Crisis"
Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep up to date on information Set clear boundaries Fact check 	Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain boundaries Prepare for the long term Focus on building small, practical habits 	Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for help in establishing routines and maintaining boundaries with a service like WA EAP 	Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on small, actionable and positive behavior changes Get physical distance from stressor
Calm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain balance Reset or redefine realistic expectations Maintain patience 	Calm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize break taking Notice and name unhelpful thoughts Practice hardwiring helpful thoughts 	Calm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize rest Build and practice small tiny habits focused on physical and mental health 	Calm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize taking breaks Pause, breathe and focus on minimizing exposure to stress or triggers
Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain social support with friends, family and coworkers Balance social and alone time 	Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek specific support like connecting with a peer supporter, mentor, or trusted friend 	Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for specific support though trusted friends, family or coworkers, peer support, spiritual care or counselors 	Connection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get formal support from a behavioral health professional like with WA EAP or a crisis counselor
Self-Efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize where energy will be spent Problem solve as you go Maintain routines Reach out to a mentor and brainstorm solutions 	Self-Efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice when you are using "should" language Focus on what you CAN control Build resilience by focusing on cultivating joy, awe, and gratitude 	Self-Efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on one thing at a time when able Notice unhelpful thoughts, feelings and behaviors and name them as such Prioritize actions within your control 	Self-Efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on recovery as you would for a physical injury Give yourself permission to take the time you need Practice focusing on what is going well
Hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean into faith & philosophy Stay connected to values Practice gratitude 	Hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get support from someone with experience like a mentor 	Hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind yourself that perfect is not a goal Get help with reframing unhelpful thoughts or feelings 	Hope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on reconnecting with your values Identify and name your strengths

Brainstorm: Your Unique Strategies

Safety	Calm	Connection	Self-Efficacy	Hope

Strategy @ Work Brainstorm

1. Notice
2. Metabolize/Process
3. Minimize Additional Activations



Outside the Window Of Resilience

Hyper-Arousal = Stuck on On

Anxiety, anger, hyperactivity, panic, restlessness, digestive problem, emotional flooding, chronic pain, sleeplessness, irritability



WASHINGTON STATE

Help Starts Here.

Washington State Employee Assistance Program

Hypo-Arousal = Stuck on Off

Depression, chronic fatigue, low blood pressure, poor digestions, exhaustion, numbness, pain, dissociation, disconnection

After Work Check List

Review

- Acknowledge a challenge you faced today
- Take a deep breath
- Let it go

Reflect

- Consider and appreciate three positives in your day
- Savor them just a little longer than you would normally

Regroup

- Check, Choose, Coordinate
- Ask for help if you need it
- Check on someone else if you have space

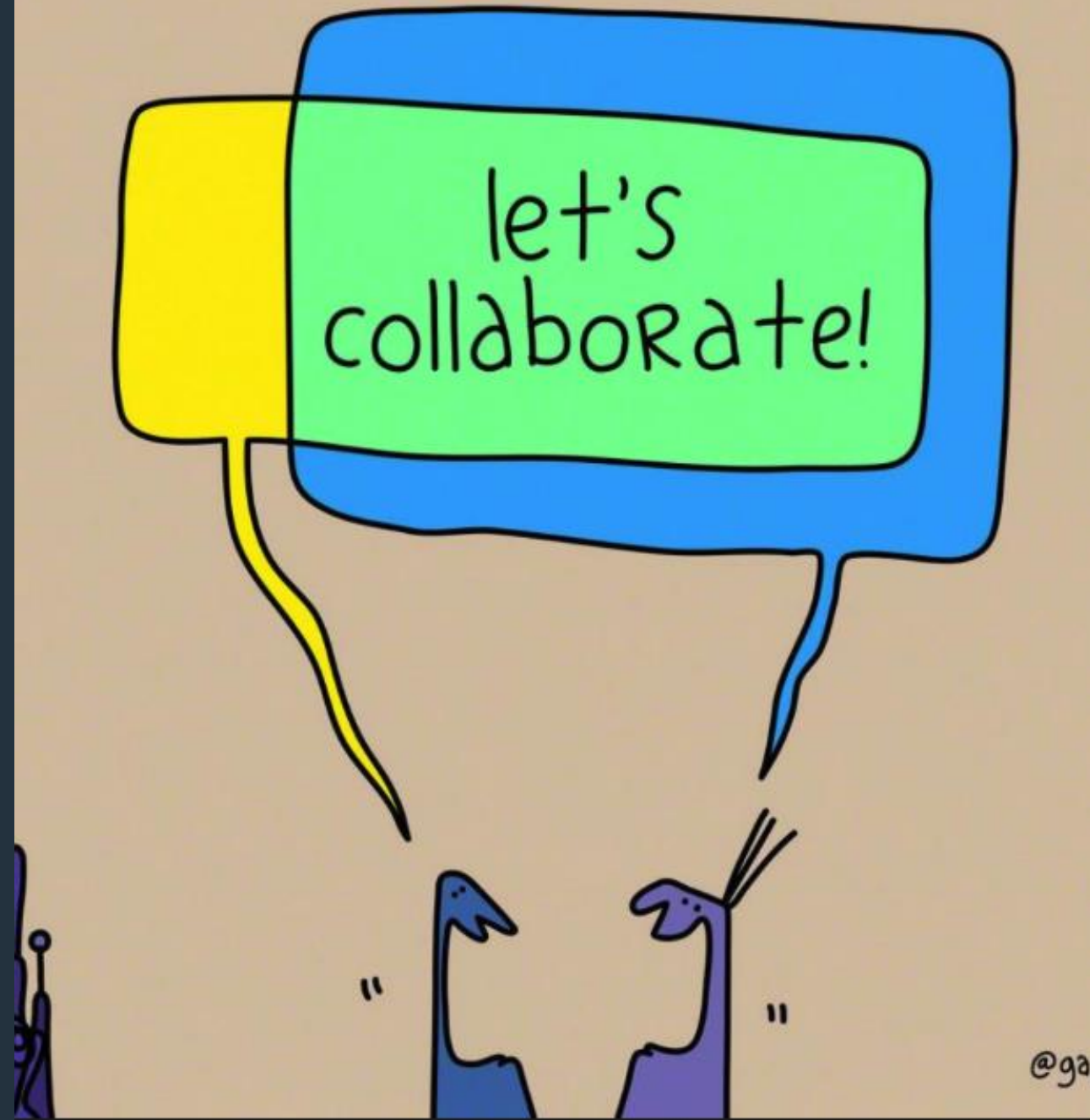
Reenergize

- Turn your attention to what is next in your day
- Is there a moment of rest, calm, excitement, joy to bring attention to?

Brainstorm: Your Unique Strategies

Safety	Calm	Connection	Self-Efficacy	Hope

Group Brainstorm
Document Live
Link



Putting it all together

1 WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF MY STRESS?

- Trauma** Psychological and emotional response to a distressing event that overwhelms coping ability, linked to experiencing pain and suffering yourself (primary trauma) or witnessing pain and suffering (secondary or vicarious trauma).
Examples: Witnessing an unexpected death or intense suffering (i.e. a pain crisis), being assaulted or other incidents of workplace violence, experiencing bias or harassment.
- Compassion Fatigue** The emotional and mental exhaustion that can arise from caring for others, specifically when the compassionate energy we expend exceeds our ability to regenerate that energy.
Examples: Working in a caring profession, regularly taking on the emotions of others, caring for someone who is suffering or who requires a lot of emotional energy.
- Burnout** A state of mental and/or physical exhaustion resulting from prolonged exposure to stress; can stem from feeling overworked or unsupported.
Examples: Excessive workload/hours, unsafe (physical/mental) work environment, lack of support or appreciation, giving consistent feedback with no results, setting unrealistic expectations for yourself or others.
- Grief** The deep and complex response to losing something or someone important to us.
Anticipatory grief: grief over an impending loss or death, occurring prior to the loss.
Disenfranchised grief: grief outside traditional relationships, often unrecognized or invalidated.
Examples: Patient death, decline, or relapse, supportive leader/coworker resigning, workplace changes that result in loss.
- Moral Distress** Occurs when we do, witness, or fail to prevent something that goes against our moral or ethical beliefs; arises when we are aware of a problem but unable to enact the solution because of internal or external constraints.
Examples: Providing treatment that you think is futile, wanting to honor a patient's autonomy while wishing they were making different choices, errors in patient care, miscommunication that results in a negative outcome, tension between interdisciplinary team recommendations or care plans, inability to provide care due to lack of time/resources/staffing or other barriers.

2 WHAT EMOTIONS AM I FEELING?



3 WHERE DO I FIT ON THE STRESS SCALE?

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Able to focus	Trouble sleeping or eating	Fatigue, aches and pains	Thoughts of self harm or suicide
Able to communicate effectively	Activities and relationships are not as enjoyable or interesting and may be stressful	Restlessness and disturbed sleep	Easily enraged or aggressive, withdrawal from relationships
Normal sleep patterns and appetite	Muscle tension, low energy, headaches	Self-medicating with substances, food or other numbing activities	Dependence on substances or other numbing activities

The Stress Continuum is an evidence based visual tool for assessing stress responses. Individuals closer to green are most ready to respond when stressful situations arise. Awareness and communication of where we're starting from is crucial when determining how much additional stress we can safely take on and how much support we need in managing our stress responses or injuries.

*Hint: In the orange (struggling zone) we are most at risk AND least likely to ask for help.

4 WHAT ACTIONS TO RECOVERY CAN I TAKE?

Ready "Thriving"	Reacting "Surviving"	Injured "Struggling"	Unwell "In Crisis"
Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep up to date on information Set clear boundaries Fact check 	Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain boundaries Prepare for the long term Focus on building small, practical habits 	Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask for help in establishing routines and maintaining boundaries with a service like WA EAP 	Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on small, actionable and positive behavior changes Get physical distance from stressor
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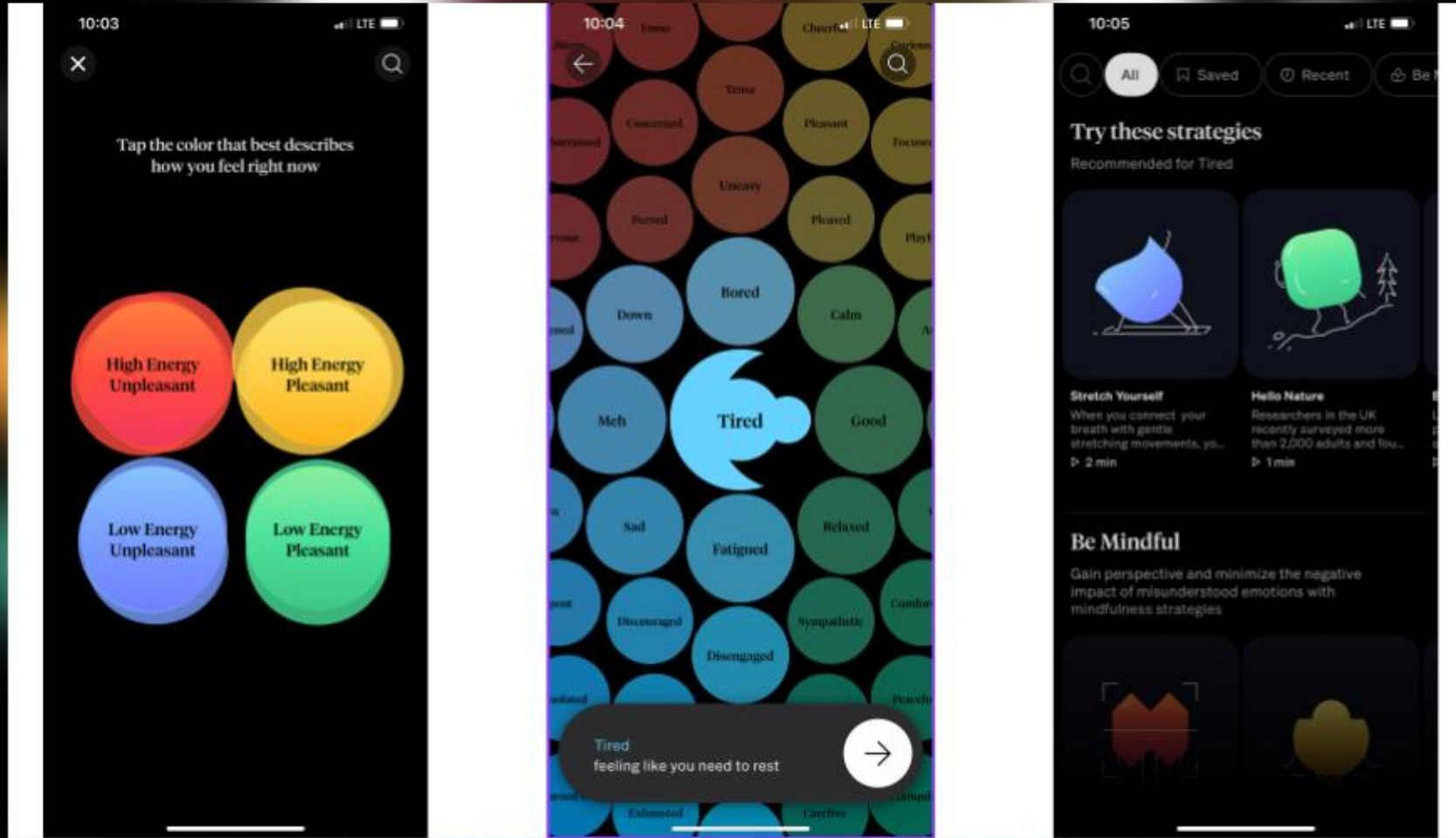


wordwall.net/resource/3373025



Feelings & Coping Wheel Mash Up!

“How We Feel” App // Yale Center for EIQ



System Well-being Resources

UW Medicine Well-being & Support Program

<https://faculty.uwmedicine.org/wellbeing-and-support/>

The Whole U

<https://thewholeu.edu>

WA EAP Employee Assistance Program

<https://eap.wa.gov>

877-313-4455

Access Code: UW

UW Medicine Peer to Peer

<https://faculty.uwmedicine.org/p2p>

UW SafeCampus

Violence Prevention & Support

<https://www.washington.edu/safecampus>

GME Wellness

For UW Medicine residents, fellows, spouses & partners

<https://sites.uw.edu/uwgme/wellness/>

Local Well-being Resources

HMC Well-being & Resilience

<https://one.uwmedicine.org/sites/hmc/resilience>

(Requires AMC log in)

UWMC Montlake & Northwest: CARE4U

<https://uwmedicine.org/uwcare4u>

(Requires AMC log in)

Fred Hutch Cancer Center (FHCC)

Support our Staff (SOS): visit site on TogetherNet

[Fred Hutch EAP Link](#)

Premise Health Clinic: <https://ourcampusclinic.org>

Community of Support

All sites. All Roles. Always Welcome!

These sessions offer a little structure, a lot of tools, and always a chance for open sharing in a private space with colleagues who “get it.”

1st Tuesdays: 1:30-2:30 pm ([Zoom link](#))

Meeting ID: 998 0507 3686

Passcode: CARE4U

3rd Thursdays: 7:30-8:30 am ([Zoom link](#))

Meeting ID: 982 1032 2994

Passcode: CARE4U

Need Urgent Help?

- Talk with a crisis counselor or crisis navigator 24/7
- Call or Text : 988



Scan for webinar evaluation



**THANK
YOU**

Stay in touch!

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References

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