



CTR

CRISIS & TRAUMA RESOURCE INSTITUTE INC.

WELLNESS STRATEGIES FOR THE HELPING PROFESSIONAL



Helping Communities And Organizations With Issues Of Crisis And Trauma

WELLNESS STRATEGIES

FOR THE HELPING PROFESSIONAL

Experiencing compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma or burnout is, unfortunately, a common occurrence among caregivers. In this workshop, participants will identify the causes, signs and symptoms of stress and also measure their own current level of stress and burnout. Several techniques and interventions to decrease stress will also be demonstrated, practiced and discussed. It is extremely important for caregivers to remember to take care of themselves in order to best serve their clients. This workshop will assist participants in strengthening their own self-care awareness.

Wellness Strategies for the Helping Professional ©
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While many licensing boards, professional colleges and associations accept CTRI workshops for continuing education credits, the following associations and organizations have approved CTRI as an Approved Continuing Education Provider:

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About CTRI

CTRI is a leading provider of professional development training throughout North America. The primary focus of our organization is to provide services that help individuals, schools and communities affected by or involved in working with issues of crisis, violence and trauma.

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THE IMPACT OF STRESS

Caregivers in the helping profession face a variety of exhausting and stressful situations. Caregivers who are exposed to repeated or intense stress in their jobs are vulnerable to long term stress reactions themselves. These situations may lead to one or several of the following conditions:

Stress

Stress results from situations that tax both our physical and emotional resources. Our body and mind get ready to meet the demands, which can have both positive and negative results. When it is excessive, constant or overwhelming, stress can lead to negative effects.

Burnout

Burnout is a state associated with constant stress related to one’s vocation. Things have become *too much* all the time and one’s energy and resources are depleted. Burnout often includes a grief response – grief that we are not as effective as we want to be.

Interestingly, in jobs that include demands to work interpersonally with others, we may have a noted benefit of *good stress* from this. People will often report an added sense of accomplishment. However, when this same stress continues and accumulates, it can turn into burnout or more serious conditions.

What are some examples of “good stress” that comes from working with people?



Ongoing research on the effects of helping professions has resulted in additional concepts and terms describing the particular impact of working directly with people and their life problems.

Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion fatigue is the experience of symptoms coming from tension and preoccupation with clients' needs or from being witness to distressing stories. Because one must utilize empathy and emotional energy to listen, connect and guide someone who is under duress, physical, emotional and intellectual exhaustion may result. This can be described as the "cost of caring too much and too often." A helper may feel this impact very quickly when exposed to others' stress and trauma, or it may only occur after a period of time.
- Compassion fatigue is considered a normative *work hazard* that can be expected for many helpers, since the very requirements to do one's job well are what put one at risk.



Vicarious Traumatization

- In addition to the symptoms of compassion fatigue, many researchers describe how helpers who work with traumatized people in particular can experience a transformation of their own identity and sense of self. For example, a helper's expectations of being able to feel safe in the world, trust others and be capable of managing her or his own emotional responses can feel compromised.
- Typically this is a result of cumulative stress and fatigue from empathically attuning to people who have been impacted by trauma.

Other terms used for these experiences are second shock or secondary traumatization.

Common Symptoms

- Re-experiencing elements of the primary trauma survivors' stories through imagery, nightmares or recurring thoughts.
- Difficulty sleeping, restlessness, irritability, general anxiety or panic.
- Withdrawal and avoidance of reminders of work or clients.
- Disconnection from self and from loved ones.
- General helplessness and reduced sense of efficacy.
- Loss of hope and connection with meaning.
- Reduced energy and impaired immune system.

WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO REDUCED WELLNESS

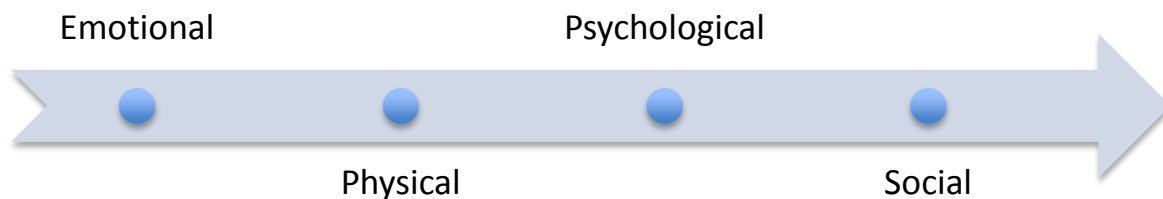
Contributing Factors

- Increased exposure to clients with trauma.
- High level of empathic response and motivation.
- One's own unresolved experiences of stress, crisis and trauma.
- Lack of experience or specialized training for the demands in one's job.
- Struggling with boundaries or with knowing the limits of one's role.
- Professional isolation or lack of supervision.
- Similarities between a client and self – age, gender, profession, etc.
- Perception of lack of value or respect for one's role.
- Increases in other life stresses (family, relationships, health, finances, etc.)

Contributing Attitudes

- "If I care enough and work hard enough, everything will be okay."
- "I am the only one who cares enough or who can help this person."
- "I work best alone and don't need others' help."
- "I just need this one to go right to make it all worth it."
- "People in my life support me in my work and understand my need to work long hours and invest much of my emotional energy at work."

Consider what areas hold vulnerability for you.



THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF STRESS

Daily Life – People strive for a general state of balance or equilibrium. There are normal everyday stresses – like being late for work, a flat tire, caring for a sick child. Despite these stresses, *most* of the time *most* people retain a general state of balance.

Coping and Supports Necessary – One works through the impact and re-establishes balance.



Additional Stress – There may be sudden major stress or an accumulation of additional stressors that cause the equilibrium to shift and tip into unbalance. Many people can shift back after a period of time by relying on familiar coping strategies. If not, a person may become stuck and coping strategies become less effective.



Additional Symptoms of Stress

Physical

- Immobilization, disorientation, numbness
- Headaches, nausea, fatigue

Psychological and emotional

- Anxiety, fear, helplessness
- Confusion, distraction
- Moodiness, depression

Behavioural

- Hyperactivity, restlessness
- Irritability, lashing out
- Withdrawal, isolation



As stress increases and effective coping decreases, symptoms can compound. At any point, with enough support and additional strategies, a person can expand their capacity to adapt and re-achieve balance.

PHASES OF WITHDRAWAL

When stress is mounting it is normal for a person to go through incremental phases of reduced functioning, sometimes without even realizing it is happening.

Phase 1: (“Too”) High Functioning

- Committed to all tasks
- Always involved and available
- Willing to do anything asked – losing sight of limits
- Having to work hard at refuelling through high calorie intake, escapism

Phase 2: Becoming Disillusioned

- Begin to avoid certain people or tasks
- Use of humour may be inappropriate
- May have lapses of concentration
- Beginning to doubt self



Phase 3: Withdrawing

- Loss of enthusiasm for work, life, family
- Many people and tasks are now major irritants
- Issues at work affecting personal life, and vice versa
- May develop a “royal attitude problem” – becoming abrasive
- Making decisions or concessions one normally wouldn't

Phase 4: Complete Disengagement

- A complete disdain for many people or tasks
- Loss of all patience and sense of humour
- Serious thoughts of leaving or quitting – just wanting to give up
- Possible signs of depression, panic, hopelessness

The sooner a person can access additional support or additional strategies to cope with their stress, the easier it is to turn this around and return to a state of equilibrium. It is also common that a person won't return to the exact same state as before – sometimes enduring great stress changes a person. Many describe this as contributing to greater resilience with more wisdom and capacity.

BURNOUT, COMPASSION FATIGUE AND VICARIOUS TRAUMA TEST

Using the scale of 0 – 5, indicate how these statements reflect your actions and feelings in a general way over the last few weeks.

5 = Very often; 4 = Often; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Occasionally; 1 = Seldom; 0 = Rarely

- ___ 1. I am NOT happy and content with my work life.
- ___ 2. I feel drained and exhausted from giving so much.
- ___ 3. I am preoccupied with the stories of traumatization I have heard.
- ___ 4. I feel apathetic about work.
- ___ 5. I feel down after working with those I help.
- ___ 6. I think too much about traumatic experiences of a person I help.
- ___ 7. I feel trapped by my work as a caregiver.
- ___ 8. Because of my work as a caregiver I have been “on edge”.
- ___ 9. Outside of work I avoid certain situations because they remind me of the experiences of those with whom I work.
- ___ 10. I don’t like my work anymore.
- ___ 11. Because of my work as a caregiver I am exhausted.
- ___ 12. I have intrusive thoughts of stories I have heard from those I am helping.
- ___ 13. I feel overwhelmed with the amount of work I have to do.
- ___ 14. I wonder if I make a difference through my work.
- ___ 15. I have flashbacks connected to my client.
- ___ 16. I work too hard.
- ___ 17. I become overwhelmed when thinking about working with certain clients.

- ___ 18. I experience troubling thoughts about events of a client when I am not working.
- ___ 19. I feel I am working more for money than for personal fulfillment.
- ___ 20. I have felt trapped by my work as a caregiver.
- ___ 21. I have involuntarily recalled my own traumatic experience while working with a client.

Scoring

Write the number you wrote for each question on the blank below. Total the columns.

Burnout	Compassion Fatigue	Vicarious Trauma	
___ 1.	___ 2.	___ 3.	
___ 4.	___ 5.	___ 6.	
___ 7.	___ 8.	___ 9.	
___ 10.	___ 11.	___ 12.	
___ 13.	___ 14.	___ 15.	
___ 16.	___ 17.	___ 18.	
___ 19.	___ 20.	___ 21.	
___	___	___	TOTALS

- 0 – 14 = Low Risk
 15 – 21 = Moderate Risk
 22 – 28 = High Risk
 29 – 35 = Extremely High Risk

While no universally applicable cut-off score can be used under all circumstances, in most cases, a higher score indicates a higher level of distress.

*Consider what your score means to you.
 What does this motivate you to consider paying attention to?*

GETTING SPECIFIC WITH YOUR SITUATION

What impact from your work are you noticing in your **Cognitive** functioning?
Examples: low concentration, spaciness, apathy, whirling thoughts, self-doubt.

What impact are you noticing in your **Emotional** functioning?
Examples: helplessness, fear, depression, anxiety, overwhelmed, shutting down.

What impact are you noticing in your **Behavioural** and **Physical** functioning?
Examples: irritability, impatience, appetite or sleep change, abuse of substances, headaches, fatigue, body aches, lowered immune system, difficulty breathing.

What impact are you noticing in your **Interpersonal** functioning?
Examples: withdrawal, change in sexual interest, isolation, lashing out, loneliness.

What impact are you noticing in your **Spiritual** functioning?
Examples: questioning meaning, loss of purpose, hopelessness, anger, despair.

VARIABLES IN BEING ABLE TO STAY WELL

Just as many aspects of one's life can be affected by stress, there are many pathways to bring more health and wellness and bring one toward greater balance.

Personal Variables

- Develop practices for managing strong emotions.
- Positive self-image and motivation to care for oneself.
- Personal wellness: sleep, diet, exercise.
- Sense of humour and connection with others.
- Develop spirituality practice in one's life.

Social Variables

- Positive support network that is accessible and responsive.
- Time spent in leisure and recreational activities that are different from work.
- Connection to one's culture or spiritual community.

Professional and Workplace Variables

- Access to clinical supervision and mentorship.
- Appropriate training for job expectations.
- Motivation and enjoyment of the type of work of one's job.
- Sense of accomplishment: reasonable satisfaction with one's own efforts.
- Ability to emotionally separate from experiences of clients.

Other: *What else buffers the stress that can come from helping others?*

ELEMENTS OF MAINTAINING WELLNESS

Any change is stressful, so it can be helpful to think of one area or step that might be focussed on. Putting energy in one focussed area can start to free up more energy for the next step.

Raising Awareness: What Is the Context? What Is Your Body Telling You?

Identify the situation(s) – What are the signs and symptoms signalling distress? How is your physical health reflecting the stress? Can you identify the internal and external factors contributing to the distress?

Our Reaction and View of the Situation

Take a step back and check your perspective. Does your reaction and view match the reality of the situation? Is it a minor event causing major stress? Are other factors escalating the impact and distress you are feeling?

Grieving Losses

Often when change occurs or is needed, endings and losses are involved – of dreams, hopes, expectations, health, abilities, relationships or opportunities. Acknowledgment and space to grieve can help shift hurt, anger and disappointment into an expanded perspective for the future.

Problem Solving

Identifying what needs attention or making steps toward change can be a process in itself. Once a focus is identified, it can be helpful to have a process to break the issue down into smaller pieces and develop a plan to move forward.

Response to the Situation

What are the coping skills utilized to lessen the symptoms of stress during and following a life stressor? Are they effective? What others might be utilized?

- Re-fuelling and addressing the depletion of burnout and stress overload.
- Finding resources to match current needs.

Creating Balance in Our Life – Making Larger Changes

This is also prevention! Having one's life in order prior to occurrence of a larger crisis can increase your capacity for handling this kind of stress. There is also a growing recognition of **vicarious resilience**: when we need to stretch, learn and heal ourselves, this brings added capacities, perspective, energy and wisdom beyond just reducing symptoms.



These ideas will be expanded over the next number of pages.

WHAT IS YOUR BODY TELLING YOU?

One of the most immediate signals that we are out of balance is a decline in our physical health. Although many factors can be affecting our health, often the impact of helping others and absorbing stress from this work is overlooked.

Ways Your Body May Be Communicating Overload

Craving Physical Comfort or Numbing

- Sugary or high carbohydrate food
- Overusing alcohol or drugs (prescription or illicit)
- Over-exercising or lethargy; over-sleeping

Overactive Stress Responses

- Anxiety or panic
- Jittery, restless, difficulty concentrating, dizzy
- Headaches, body aches, chronic pain, numbness
- Nausea, disrupted appetite

Spilling Over

- Anger or rage
- Lashing out verbally or physically
- Flushing, sweating, gritting teeth, running away
- Helplessness to control reaction

Shutting Down

- Depression symptoms: no appetite, over- or under-sleeping, irritability, lethargy, tiredness, heaviness
- Feeling of collapse; slumping posture
- Increase in weight, particularly in mid-region
- Diabetes, chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, other health diagnoses
- Avoidance and difficulty completing basic daily activities



OUR VIEW OF THE SITUATION

Stepping back to get a realistic view of the context, situation and our own place in it is very helpful to sort out possible distortions in our interpretation.

Common Cognitive Distortions

All-or-Nothing Thinking

When things are seen in extreme categories – things are either all good or all bad. This perspective leaves out all the possible variations and degrees.

Overgeneralization

When conclusions are drawn based on a single incident. This perspective will over-apply one experience or interpretation to many situations.

Discounting Positives

When positive experiences are rejected by insisting they don't count for some reason or other. This perspective reflects a tendency toward seeing the negative or fearful outcome first.

Jumping to Conclusions

When one makes a negative interpretation even without definite facts. This perspective jumps over actual facts or possible differences between situations.



Catastrophizing

When the worst is always expected – making mountains out of molehills. This perspective zooms to a conclusion of the most feared or worrisome sort. Sometimes this can seem like a protective mechanism – being prepared for the worst.

Personalization

When all the blame is placed on oneself for the cause of some negative external event. This perspective disregards how others also have influence over a situation and how there are many things we have absolutely no control over.

Others?

CHALLENGING COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

While it can sometimes be easy to get stuck in a certain way of thinking, the practice of critically thinking about the situation can help one move beyond the distortion. Practicing identifying cognitive distortions can make them more unlikely to arise. The ability to catch a distortion allows a person the option to shift perspectives.



1. What is the situation that you are struggling with? Describe as many significant features as you can.

2. Identify what possible cognitive distortions might be at work.

3. Identify evidence both supporting and challenging the negative thought. Is there a reasonable chance your perspective is false? That it is correct?

4. Are there other people you trust who are familiar with the situation, whom you could ask for their perspective? Is there additional information that would apply?

5. With your supports, come up with alternative thoughts or conclusions to apply to this situation. Test the thought to determine how it sounds and feels.

6. Encourage yourself to practice thinking of alternative explanations despite feeling convinced that the more extreme or possibly distorted thought is correct.

PROBLEM SOLVING

After examining our perspective and identifying what we do not have control over, often we can also identify areas that we do have influence over. Then we can generate possible steps of action focussed on these areas.

Step 1: Identify the specific area where you want to work toward change and where you have some leverage or actual influence.

Step 2: What is the outcome you are hoping for? How will you know it is better?

Step 3: What are the obstacles or challenges to obtaining your ideal outcome?

Step 4: What are possible steps to deal with these obstacles?

Step 5: Using the information you have gathered, what is a realistic first step toward your desired outcome?

Step 6: Evaluation – when will you stop to evaluate your steps and your plan? When evaluating your plan, consider if your desired outcome is not achieved – will you continue with the plan or start a new one? If starting a new one, go back to Step One. Consider, are there additional supports you can draw upon?

IDENTIFYING WHAT TO FOCUS ON

A common outcome of overwhelming stress is *avoidance*. Many people get stuck at Step 3, feeling torn about moving forward toward steps of action. Some additional processes can be helpful to clear the way.

Weighing Pros and Cons of Change

It is not unusual for a person to feel ambivalent, fearful or downright resistant to actual change. There can be many reasons fuelling these feelings, and they can be very confusing. Exploring the upsides and downsides of change can help provide some clarity, which generates energy.

The choice or decision you are exploring:

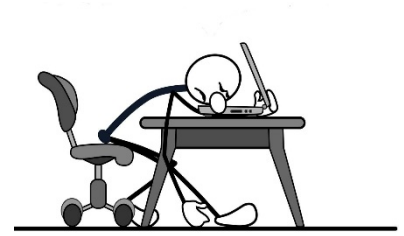
PROS	CONS

Grieving Losses with Change

When we gain clarity of an area that needs changing, we often have loss associated with this. This could be loss of past hopes, loss of a certain future, loss of expectations, or loss of a past view of oneself or of others. By facing these losses and giving ourselves room to grieve, this frees up energy to then look forward.

BUILDING YOUR RECOVERY PLAN

Once you have clarity around what change is needed and desired, as well as motivation, a more tangible plan is possible to begin a change process.



If you recognize you have elements of **burnout**, this can be an important place to start by re-fuelling and replenishing physical and emotional depletion.

1. Pay serious attention to basic self-care. What do you need to do to ensure:

Adequate nutrition and water in your daily routine:

Adequate daily rest:

*Adequate activity and exercise that you **enjoy**:*

When was your last physical check-up? What other health issues need attention? Physical ailments? Counselling? Relationship health?

2. What **boundaries** need attention in your professional life?

Are there tasks you can or need to say *No* to – or re-prioritize?

Are there conflicts or tensions that you can address?

3. Is there balance in your attention to **work and personal/family** demands?

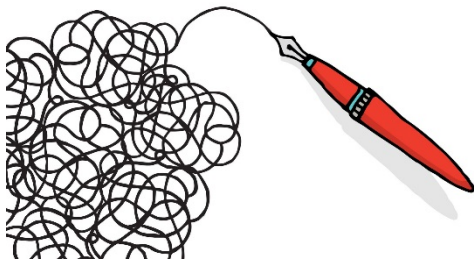
Do you have allocated time for administrative tasks, reflection, consultation and professional development in your work schedule? How can this be improved?

Are you thinking about work issues when you are at home or during personal time? Do you have strategies for “leaving work at the office?”

Are there personal or family stressors that are overwhelming you and affecting your ability to function at work? What steps can you take to attend to this?

What Other Areas Have Stood Out For You During The Workshop So Far?

Jot down thoughts or reminders of issues you want to think more about. Put a star beside the ones that stand out as the most urgent.



Commit to yourself that you will spend more time considering these areas of your life. You deserve it!

MAKING PLANS AND SETTING GOALS

Throughout this process of clarifying areas of need and setting plans for possible steps toward greater wellness, it is extremely important that we regularly step back and check if our goals and plans have the traction needed to help us build our wellness back to balance.

All Goals And Plans Should...

- **Be Specific**

Be clear about exactly what you want to do or achieve. Often we set goals that are too large or too vague. Practice breaking them down to more tangible and smaller goals.

- **Be Realistic**

Is it doable? Can you actually imagine yourself taking this step? This question will often highlight additional barriers we may need to pay attention to or have not thought of before.

- **Be Measurable**

How will you know when the goal is achieved? What will actually be different? How will others in your life know?

- **Have a Time Span**

When will the goal be achieved? When is it possible to take that first step? If this answer is unclear, identify a clear time to re-assess and adjust the plan or a goal to make it clearer.

Things to Remember

Goals must be believable.

Goals may need to be adjusted to new information.

Review your goals regularly.

If goals are not specific, they are not really goals.

Don't chisel your goals in stone.

Set goals in all areas of your life.

Put goals in writing.

Share your goals with someone you trust to encourage and challenge you.

TRANSFORMING THE IMPACT

Beyond burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma, describe the deeper impact that can occur. Again, being proactive to acknowledge and transform this impact can not only heal, but result in positive growth and prevent future stress.

Saakvitne and Pearlman (1996) drew the helping profession's attention to key areas that can be addressed, and their work remains a foundation to work with.

Safety – How can you attend to promoting reasonable safety in your own life and your loved ones' live? How can you avoid taking unnecessary risks?

Esteem – How can you take action to treat yourself with greater respect? Are you treating others respectfully in a way that seems congruent with your values?

Trust – Can you push yourself to take thoughtful risks and trust yourself? Do you allow yourself to risk trusting others? Where can you extend this capacity?

Control – In what areas of your life can you claim reasonable control and in what areas can you give yourself permission to let go of trying to control?

Intimacy – Are you nurturing healthy and helpful connections in your life?

Professionally – Do you have adequate support? How can you improve this?

Personally – Are you allowing others to be close to you? Can you build your engagement and connection within your family and community circles?

Building on these areas can create hope and openness, which can lead to absorbing **vicarious resilience** from the commitment, perseverance and courage you witness from the people with whom you work.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO FIND MORE TIME

In addition to the hard work of looking at core areas and factors contributing to stress in a helping role, it is always useful to examine the everyday context within which we operate. Examining where our energy and time goes can help identify areas where we can “grab back” some valuable resources for ourselves.

Think about your typical day. What and how are you doing things that take more time than they need to?

“I don’t have enough time” seems to always be a concern when trying to achieve a more balanced life. Following are some ways to create more time:

- Organize your space.
- De-clutter. Get rid of those papers you will never look at again.
- Manage phone and email use. Prioritize how many need to be attended to on a regular basis.
- Think about what time of day you have your *prime work energy*. Is this time being given to the most important parts of your role?
- Assess your screen time – break up the time you are sitting in front of a screen with small breaks, move around, engage socially.
- Be proactive with self-care – take time to plan more nutrition and water into your daily schedule.
- Get some exercise. Moving the body stimulates the brain and clears out toxins.
- Delegate tasks you do not need to do. Reach out and work with others to share the load – you don’t have to do it all by yourself.
- Practice sleep hygiene – ensuring you are creating the best conditions for restful sleep is a foundation to wellness.
- Say “No,” or say, “Let me think about it for a day and get back to you.”

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



WHEN STRESS BECOMES MORE SERIOUS

Even with the best-made plans, there are times when the impact of stress may become more serious and we may need additional support. Consider the following to identify if this is the situation for you or someone you know.

Depression

Problems and misfortunes are a part of life. Everyone experiences situations that cause a brief time of unhappiness, and sometimes even feelings of worthlessness and self-blame. *Most* of the time, *most* people return to a balanced state. However, depression becomes an illness when these feelings last several weeks and interfere with the normal functioning of life. Depression can be classified as mild, moderate or severe.

Symptoms of Depression

- Feeling worthless, helpless or hopeless
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Eating more or less than usual
- Having difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Loss of interest in taking part in activities
- Decreased sex drive
- Overwhelming feelings of sadness or grief
- Feeling unreasonably guilty
- Loss of energy, feeling very tired
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Experiencing symptoms of psychosis
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or stomachaches

Diagnosis

In addition to a noted change in a person's previous functioning, five or more of the following symptoms need to be present during a two-week period:



- Depressed mood for most of the day
- Loss of interest in activities
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Insomnia
- Feelings of restlessness or being slowed down
- Loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Indecisiveness or difficulty concentrating
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

During or after certain situations, most people experience some form of anxiety; with time or after implementing coping strategies, most people return to a state of balance. However, if a person continues to worry, or if the feelings cause them to avoid everyday activities, it is possible that they have an anxiety disorder.

Symptoms

Chronic, exaggerated worry, tension and irritability that appear to have no cause or are more intense than the situation warrants. Physical signs can include restlessness, trouble falling or staying asleep, headaches, trembling, twitching, muscle tension or sweating. These symptoms interfere with normal daily functioning.

Diagnosis

Someone may meet the criteria for generalized anxiety disorder if they spend at least six months worrying excessively about everyday problems.

You May Need More Help If...

- You have trouble functioning normally after a period of time
- You feel overwhelmed or out of control
- You are not taking care of yourself

If the information on these two pages feels applicable for you, consider the following additional steps.

- **Calling a Counsellor for Help**

Sometimes trauma symptoms worsen and ordinary efforts at coping don't seem to work very well. A counsellor can help you process the event and help you return to your normal functioning.

- **Talking to a Doctor About the Incident**

A doctor can take better care of your physical health if he or she knows about your trauma symptoms, and doctors can often refer you to more specialized and expert care.

- **Taking Prescribed Medications**

If trauma symptoms worsen you may want to consult your doctor about taking medications that are able to improve your sleep or reduce anxiety or depression.

APPENDIX

Dealing with Fear and Anxiety

Often people who have experienced a traumatic event have feelings of fear and anxiety. Fear has many aspects:

- We have *thoughts* about the situation and about it being dangerous in some way.
- We have the *feeling* of fear.
- We sometimes experience *physical reactions* – such as tension, becoming sweaty or having an increase in heart rate.
- We *react* in certain ways – we may cry, leave the situation, etc.

When we have feelings of anxiety it is important to go through these three steps.

Step 1 – Remember it is normal to have feelings of anxiety in various situations. The feeling you have will not cause you harm, so tell yourself, *It's ok to feel this way*.

Step 2 – Evaluate the danger. If your body is reacting as if you are in danger, is there really danger? Is the situation as dangerous as it feels? What is the evidence?

Step 3 – Use your coping skills. Realize you have ways to cope with the situation and utilize them.

Think of a situation that causes you anxiety.

List the reasons to think the situation is dangerous.

List the reasons to think the situation is not so dangerous.

List the ways you can cope to reduce the situation to make it less dangerous.

Positive Self-Talk

One of the most powerful influences on your attitude is what you say to yourself. How you respond internally to what happens to you will greatly influence your thoughts and feelings. By using your inner dialogue or self-talk you will begin to see things positively and look for the good in each situation. In the following statements, put an X by the statement that is positive self-talk.

If I do the thing I fear, the fear is sure to die.

I can't be afraid, or I'll fail again.

I'll just pause, I can handle it.

Don't slow down; I've just got to push on.

I should not be afraid.

It's okay to feel some fear.

I can manage my fear.

I've got to stop being afraid.

I have to do it.

I choose to do it.

I think I can handle it.

I know ways to deal with this.

One step at a time, I can handle the situation.

I can't handle it unless I take one step at a time.

Don't get nervous. I am in control.

I'm in control. Relax and take a deep breath.

I have succeeded in some ways.

I wasn't a total success.

Think of a situation right now that you feel unsure of or have anxiety over. Practice self-talk in that area... write it down.



Practicing Positive Thinking

Name a time or situation when you felt proud of yourself.

What is one thing you do exceptionally well?

What is a role or responsibility that you feel positive about?

What is a characteristic you like best about yourself?

What good thing do you do to cope with stress?

What is one thing you do to help yourself stay positive?

Name one positive way you stay healthy and take care of your body.

Journaling

Journaling involves writing your thoughts and ideas down. An actual journal may be anything from a spiral-bound notebook to a word processing document. People who find journaling helpful often talk about how the power of assigning words to thoughts provides insights and clarity to the situations.

Sections in your journal may be about different things. You might categorize your journal into areas such as:

- Venting
- Reflecting
- Planning
- Visualizing
- Ruminating
- Recap of day
- Affirmation

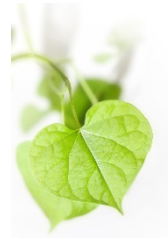


What is your experience with journaling?

What have you found helpful or unhelpful?

Self-Soothing Techniques

With Vision



Buy one beautiful flower; make one space in a room pretty; light a candle and watch the flame. Set a nice place at the table for a meal using your best things. Go to a museum with beautiful art. Go sit in the lobby of a striking old hotel. Look at nature around you. Go out in the middle of the night and watch the stars. Walk in a nice part of town. Fix your nails so they look pretty. Look at beautiful pictures in a book. Go to a ballet or other dance performance.

With Hearing

Listen to beautiful or soothing music, or to invigorating and exciting music. Pay attention to sounds of nature (waves, birds, rainfall, leaves rustling). Sing your favourite songs. Hum a soothing tune. Learn to play an instrument. Be mindful of any sounds that come your way.

With Smell

Use your favourite perfume or lotions, or try them on in a store; spray fragrance in the air. Light a scented candle. Put lemon oil on your furniture. Put potpourri in a bowl in your room. Boil cinnamon; bake cookies, cake or bread. Smell the roses. Walk in a wooded area and mindfully breathe in the fresh smells of nature.

With Taste

Have a good meal. Have a favourite soothing drink such as herbal tea or hot chocolate. Treat yourself to a dessert. Put whipped cream on your coffee. Sample flavours in an ice cream store. Suck on a piece of peppermint candy. Chew your favourite gum. Get a little bit of a special food you don't usually spend the money on, such as fresh-squeezed orange juice. Really taste the food you eat; eat one thing mindfully.



With Touch

Take a bubble bath; put clean sheets on the bed. Pet your dog or cat. Have a massage; soak your feet. Put creamy lotion on your whole body. Put a cold compress on your forehead. Sink into a really comfortable chair in your home or find one in a luxurious hotel lobby. Put on a silky blouse, dress or scarf. Try on fur-lined gloves or fur coats in a department store. Brush your hair for a long time. Hug someone. Experience whatever you are touching; notice that touch that is soothing.

Adapted from *Skills Training Manual for Treating Borderline Personality Disorder*, by Marsha Linehan.
© 1993 The Guilford Press.

Breathing Exercise

Deep breathing exercises are very effective for relieving stress. Breathing exercises release tension from the body and clear the mind, improving both physical and mental wellness.

We tend to breathe shallowly or even hold our breath when we are feeling stressed or anxious. Shallow breathing limits your oxygen intake and adds further stress to your body.

Need a Few Minutes to Relax?

Get comfortable in your chair. Loosen any tight, uncomfortable clothing. Let your arms rest loosely at your side. Allow yourself a few moments to relax (*pause*).

If your thoughts wander, just allow them to do so, while gently moving your attention back to the relaxation.

Take time to notice your breathing, gradually slowing down the rate of inhaling and exhaling as you become more comfortable (*pause*).

Now relax and enjoy the feeling (*pause*).

Close your mouth and relax your shoulders, releasing any tension that has built up (*pause*).

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Let the air you breathe in push your stomach out.

Hold your breath in as you slowly count to four.

Breathe out slowly through your mouth as you continue counting up to six.

Breathe in (*three, four, five, six*).

Hold (*two, three, four*).

Breathe out (*three, four, five, six*).

Breathe in (*three, four, five, six*).

Hold (*two, three and four*).

Breathe out (*three, four, five, six*).

Breathe in (*three, four, five, six*).

Hold (*two, three, four*).

Breathe out (*three, four, five, six*).

Breathe in (*three, four, five, six*).



Breathing Exercise – Continued

Hold (*two, three, four*).

Breathe out (*three, four, five, six*).

Breathe in (*three, four, five, six*).

Hold (*two, three, four*).

Breathe out (*three, four, five, six*).

Continue breathing in (*four, five, six*).

Hold (*two, three, four*).

And out (*three, four, five, six*).

Remember, if stray thoughts enter your mind, gently return your attention to the relaxation (*pause*).

Now, as you breathe out, silently and calmly repeat to yourself:

My breathing is smooth and rhythmic (pause).

My breathing is smooth and rhythmic (pause).

My breathing is easy and calm (pause).

My breathing is easy and calm (pause).

It feels very pleasant (pause).

If you would like, you may close your eyes now (*pause*).

Continue to repeat to yourself:

My breathing is smooth and rhythmic (pause).

My breathing is smooth and rhythmic (pause).

I am peaceful and calm (pause).

I am peaceful and calm (pause).

Continue to take deep, rhythmic breaths. Let the tension fade away each time you breathe out (*pause*).

If you have closed your eyes, gently open them (*pause*).

Return to your day peaceful, more focused and relaxed.



Visualization Exercise

We use visualization every day. Before you head off to the park or beach, you may have an image in your mind of the place. You may daydream about a beautiful place you want to go for vacation. These images usually put us in a positive mood and create feelings of relaxation. Visualization exercises can have the same effect.

Find a quiet place to sit...
Take some time to feel settled...
Take a deep breath... Close your eyes...
Let your body relax...
Take another deep breath...

Allow yourself to let go of stress,
any stress... relax...

Take another deep breath...
And keep moving deeper inside yourself...
Don't force anything...
Just be still...
Remember to breathe...
And to relax...

Keep your focus within yourself...
Moving deeper inside...

And let any thoughts just
Drift away like clouds in the sky.
When you catch yourself engaged in a thought,
Just take a deep breath...
And allow yourself to come back to your center...

Now, see a path in front of you and follow the path...
Take your time and notice what's around you...
Take a deep breath and smell the air...
Look at the flowers and listen to the birds...
Look up at the sky and notice the clouds...

In a little while, you will see a beautiful waterfall...
Watch the rainbows bouncing off the water...
Bend down at the edge of the water...



Visualization Exercise – Continued

Trail your hand through it...
Feel the Earth under you...

This is your special place...
No one else can come here without your permission...
Make this place your very own place...
Make this place the most peaceful, safe place you want to be in...
Whenever you need to be quiet and alone

You can come back to this place any time you want...
Any time you need to be quiet and alone...

When you are ready and there is no rush,
Say goodbye for now to your sacred place...

Begin coming back up the path...
Take your time and notice what is around you...
Take a deep breath and smell the air...
Say farewell to the flowers and birds...
Look up at the sky and notice the clouds...

Take your time coming back to the room you are in...
Enter very slowly and very gently...
Feeling completely refreshed...
And totally relaxed...



Visualization Exercise

Imagine a caterpillar. You can watch it crawling about on the tree where it lives. Attaching itself to a branch of the tree, the caterpillar starts to form its cocoon. Gradually it surrounds itself with golden, silken threads until it is totally hidden. Observe the cocoon for a few moments.

Now be inside the cocoon... Surrounded by the softness of silk... You rest in the warmth of the golden darkness... You are only dimly aware, so you do not know exactly what is happening to you, but you sense that in this apparent stillness a hidden, transforming intelligence is at work...

At last the cocoon breaks open, and a ray of light penetrates through a chink... As the light touches you, you feel a sudden surge of vitality and realize that you can shed the cocoon.



As you feel the cocoon falling away, you discover that with it you have shed the defences and supports of your safety and your past... You are now freer than you ever dreamed you could be; you are a beautiful, multicoloured butterfly... You soon realize that your boundaries have extended infinitely... You can fly... You find yourself dwelling in a totally new realm of colors, of sounds, of open space... You experience yourself flying... being supported by the air, being gently borne up by the breeze, gliding down, flying up again...

Below, you see an immense meadow full of flowers of every kind and color... You settle on one... then on another... then on another still, so gently that the petals are not even disturbed. You experience each flower as a different being with its own color and perfume... its own particular life and quality. Take your time to experience the many aspects of your expansion, your freedom and your lightness.

Your Own Visualization

Write your own visualization. Think of a place that brings you comfort. What would you see? What would you hear? What might you smell? What would you feel? What would you be thinking about?

Or...

Draw a picture of a place that would give you a sense of peace and comfort. What would be in this place? Who would be there? What might they say to you?

Muscle Relaxation Exercise

The body responds to stress with muscle tension, which can cause pain or discomfort. Progressive muscle relaxation reduces muscle tension and general mental anxiety.

Directions

Inhale and tense each muscle group (hard but not to the point of cramping) for four to ten seconds, then exhale and suddenly and completely relax the muscle group (do not relax it gradually). Give yourself 10 to 20 seconds to relax.

Muscle Groups and How to Tense Them

- Hands: Clench them.
- Wrists and forearms: Extend them and bend your hands back at the wrist.
- Biceps and upper arms: Clench your hands into fists, bend your arms at the elbows, and flex your biceps.
- Shoulders: Shrug them.
- Forehead: Wrinkle it into a deep frown.
- Around the eyes and bridge of the nose: Close your eyes as tightly as possible. (Remove contact lenses before beginning the exercise.)
- Cheeks and jaws: Smile as widely as you can.
- Around the mouth: Press your lips together tightly. (Check your facial area for tension.)
- Back of the neck: Gently stretch your head back.
- Front of the neck: Touch your chin to your chest. (Check your neck and head for tension.)
- Chest: Take a deep breath and hold it, then exhale.
- Back: Arch your back backwards.
- Stomach: Suck it into a tight knot. (Check your chest and stomach for tension.)
- Hips and buttocks: Press the buttocks together tightly.
- Thighs: Clench them hard.
- Lower legs: Raise each foot and point and curl it down.



Weekly Goals

Something I will do this week to meet my need for physical activity is...

Something I will do this week that will offer me a sense of accomplishment is...

This week I will avoid...

The *fun* things I will do this week are...

I will relax this week by...

Other...



What's Important

A philosophy professor stood before his class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with rocks, about two inches in diameter.

He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles of course, rolled into the open areas between the rocks.

He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He then asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous – yes.

“Now,” said the professor, “I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The rocks are the important things – your family, your partner, your health, your children – things that if everything else were lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter, like your job, your house, your car. The sand is everything else – the small stuff.

“If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued “there is no room for the pebbles or the rocks. The same goes for your life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have time for the things that are important to you.

“Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical check-ups. Take your partner out dancing. There will always be time to go to work, clean the house, give a dinner party or fix the disposal.”

“Take care of the rocks first – the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.”

Author Unknown



Dance Like No One Is Watching

We convince ourselves that life will be better after we get married, have a baby, then another. Then we are frustrated that the kids aren't old enough and we'll be more content when they are. After that we are frustrated that we have teenagers to deal with. We will certainly be happy when they are out of that stage. We tell ourselves that our life will be complete when our spouse gets his or her act together, when we get a nicer car, are able to go on a nice vacation, when we retire.

The truth is, there is no better time to be happy than right now. If not now, when?

Your life will always be filled with challenges. It is best to admit this to yourself and decide to be happy anyway. One of my favourite quotes comes from Alfred D. Souza. He said, "For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin – real life. But there was always some obstacle in the way, something to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life."

This perspective has helped me to see that there is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way. So, treasure every moment that you have. And treasure it more because you shared it with someone special, special enough to spend your time... and remember that time waits for no one.

So stop waiting until you finish school, until you go back to school, until you lose ten pounds, until you gain ten pounds, until you have kids, until your kids leave the house, until you start work, until you retire, until you get married, until Friday night, until Sunday morning, until you get a new car or home, until your car or home is paid off, until you are off welfare, until the first or fifteenth, until your song comes on, until you've had a drink, until you've sobered up, until you die, until you are born again to decide that there is no better time than right now to be happy...

Happiness is a journey, not a destination.

Thought for the Day

Work like you don't need money,
Love like you've never been hurt,
And dance like no one is watching.

Author Unknown



Stress Management and Lifelines

People who have strong supports are more able to deal with stress in their lives. Think about the people who are there to care for you and listen to you.

There are 3 different kinds of lifelines:

1. Emotional Lifelines – These are the people who listen to you and help you deal with your feelings. Family and friends are natural emotional lifelines.
2. Hands-on Lifelines – These are the people who give you practical help, such as someone who takes you shopping to get the supplies you need for a course or offers to feed your pet while you are away.
3. Informational Lifelines – These are people who give you the information you need that can provide help, such as a web site or help line.

Lifelines

Who can you talk to or call on for support? List four people and the type of lifeline support they give you.	
1.	2.
3.	4.



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CTRI WORKSHOPS AND SERVICES

Training

Our training is available in public, on-site and webinar formats. Below is a **sample** of the workshops we offer.

Trauma & Crisis Response Workshops

Crisis Response Planning
Critical Incident Group Debriefing
Trauma – Strategies for Resolving the Impact of Post-Traumatic Stress
Emergency Preparedness Planning
Walking Through Grief – Helping Others Deal with Loss

Counselling Skills Workshops

Anxiety – Practical Intervention Strategies
Brief Focused Counselling Skills – Strategies from Leading Frameworks
Counselling Skills – An Introduction and Overview
Depression – Practical Intervention Strategies
Disordered Eating – From Image to Illness
Ethics for Counsellors and Social Service Organizations
Helping Children – Practical Tools for Engaging and Supporting
Mindfulness Counselling Strategies – Activating Compassion and Regulation
Motivating Change – Strategies for Approaching Resistance
Working with Families – Strategies for Engaging and Helping

Youth Issues Workshops

Addictions and Youth – Creating Opportunities for Change
Autism – Strategies for Self-Regulation, Learning and Challenging Behaviours
Bullying – Responding for Prevention
Challenging Behaviours in Youth – Strategies for Intervention
Gender and Sexual Identity in Youth
Self-Injury Behaviour in Youth – Issues & Strategies

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Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention Strategies
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