

# Stress First Aid Essentials

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# Healthcare Professionals Are Experiencing...

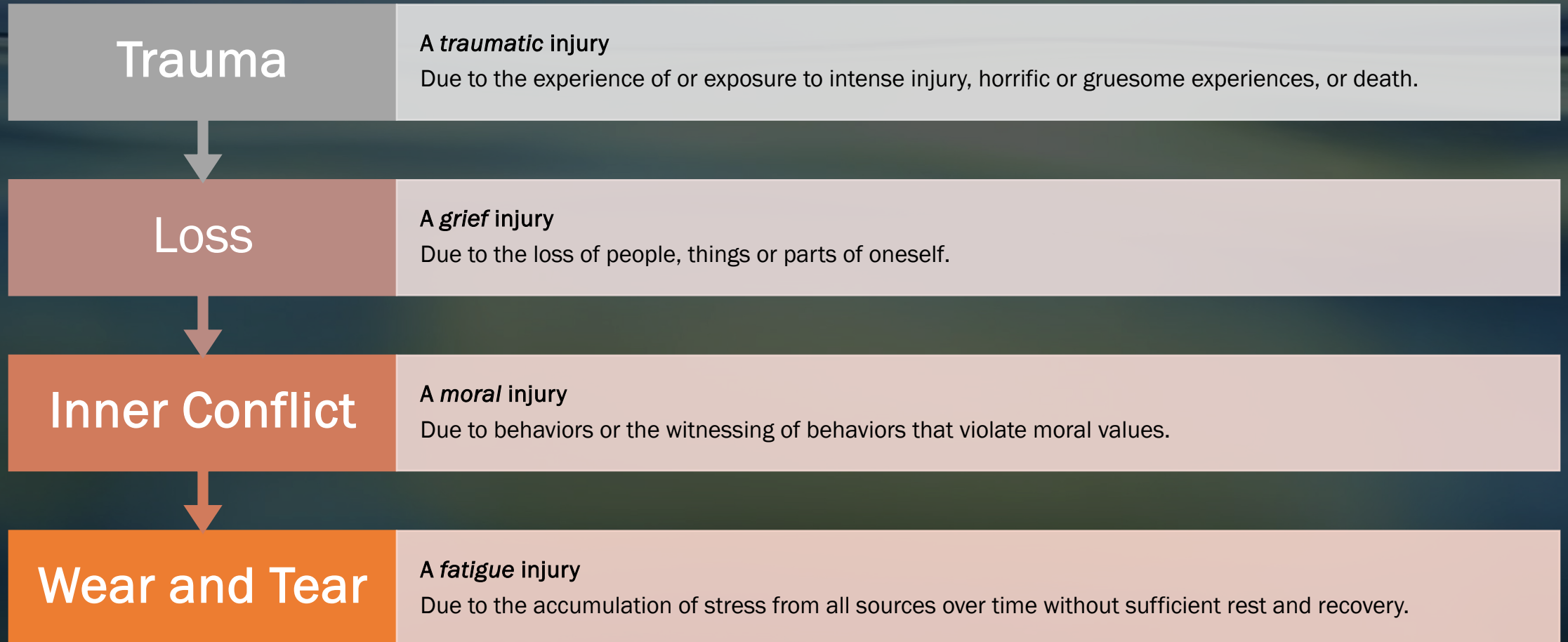
Depression and Anxiety  
up to 77%

Insomnia  
up to 40%

PTSD  
up to 60%

Burnout  
up to 70%  
(some studies show up to  
95% of some level of  
burnout with 40%  
experiencing severe burnout)

# Four Causes of Stress Injury



(Watson, 2020)

# Signs and Symptoms of Stress Injuries



## Signs (Noted by Others)

Significant and persistent change in behavior or appearance:

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



## Symptoms (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 Continuum Model

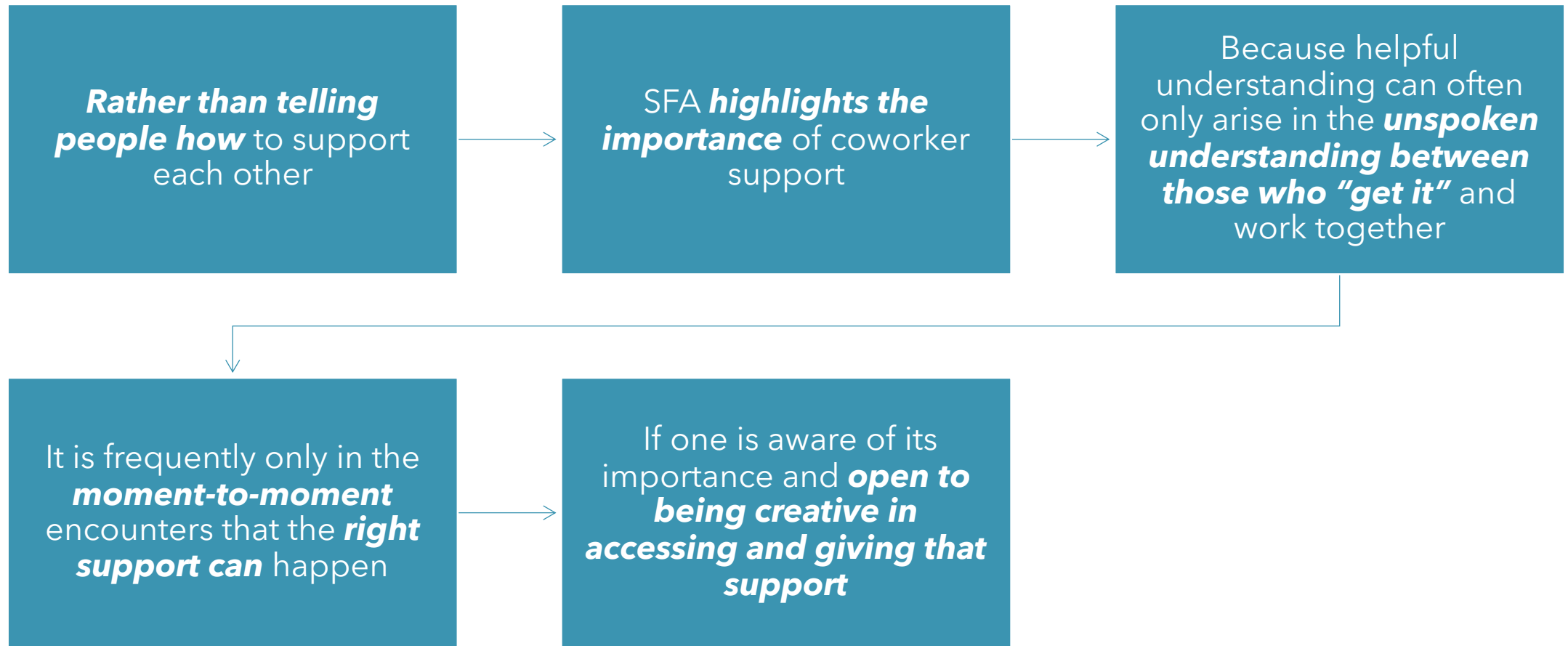
<b>READY</b> (Green)	<b>REACTING</b> (Yellow)	<b>INJURED</b> (Orange)	<b>ILL</b> (Red)
<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimal functioning</li> <li>Adaptive growth</li> <li>Wellness</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At one's best</li> <li>Well-trained and prepared</li> <li>In control</li> <li>Physically, mentally and spiritually fit</li> <li>Mission-focused</li> <li>Motivated</li> <li>Calm and steady</li> <li>Having fun</li> <li>Behaving ethically</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mild and transient distress or impairment</li> <li>Always goes away</li> <li>Low risk</li> </ul> <p><b>CAUSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any stressor</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling irritable, anxious or down</li> <li>Loss of motivation</li> <li>Loss of focus</li> <li>Difficulty sleeping</li> <li>Muscle tension or other physical changes</li> <li>Not having fun</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More severe and persistent distress or impairment</li> <li>Leaves a scar</li> <li>Higher risk</li> </ul> <p><b>CAUSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life threat</li> <li>Loss</li> <li>Moral injury</li> <li>Wear and tear</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of control</li> <li>Panic, rage or depression</li> <li>No longer feeling like normal self</li> <li>Excessive guilt, shame or blame</li> <li>Misconduct</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical mental disorder</li> <li>Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment</li> </ul> <p><b>TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PTSD</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Anxiety</li> <li>Substance use disorders</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptoms persist and worsen over time</li> <li>Severe distress or social or occupational impairment</li> </ul>

(Watson, 2020)

# Factors in Recovery From Adversity and Stress



(Watson, 2020)



# How is Stress First Aid Different?

READY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
<p><b>SAFETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay informed</li> <li>Face facts</li> <li>Set boundaries</li> </ul> <p><b>CALM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change expectations</li> <li>Be patient</li> <li>Keep balanced</li> </ul> <p><b>CONNECT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apart But Connected</li> </ul> <p><b>SELF-EFFICACY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritize what to expend energy on</li> <li>Plan and adapt</li> <li>Focus on prevailing</li> <li>Problem solve</li> <li>Make routines</li> <li>Seek mentoring/ training</li> </ul> <p><b>HOPE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Live by values</li> <li>Find gratitude</li> <li>Faith / philosophy</li> </ul>	<p><b>SAFETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take a marathon approach</li> <li>Build healthy habits</li> <li>Set boundaries</li> </ul> <p><b>CALM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be disciplined about taking breaks</li> <li>Identify unhelpful thoughts</li> <li>Practice helpful thoughts</li> <li>Focus on what you can control</li> </ul> <p><b>CONNECT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek specific support</li> </ul> <p><b>SELF-EFFICACY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build resilience skills</li> </ul> <p><b>HOPE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make time to reflect</li> <li>Seek mentoring / support</li> </ul>	<p><b>SAFETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get help with setting routines and boundaries</li> </ul> <p><b>CALM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rest and recuperate</li> <li>Build tiny health habits</li> </ul> <p><b>CONNECT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask for targeted or sustained support</li> </ul> <p><b>SELF-EFFICACY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify unhelpful ruts</li> <li>Tackle one issue at a time</li> </ul> <p><b>HOPE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask for assistance in reframing unhelpful thoughts</li> <li>Remind yourself that you don't need to be perfect</li> </ul>	<p><b>SAFETY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make small positive behavior changes</li> </ul> <p><b>CALM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pause...take a time out</li> <li>Distance from stressor to reduce agitation</li> </ul> <p><b>CONNECT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get formal behavioral health treatment</li> <li>Find a mentor</li> </ul> <p><b>SELF-EFFICACY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regain lost ground</li> <li>Rehabilitate as you would a physical injury</li> </ul> <p><b>HOPE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconnect with values</li> </ul>



# Double Edged Sword of Values and Ideals

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

(Watson, 2021)



# STRESS SYMPTOMS CHECK-IN

## Physical

- Aches and pains
- Weight loss/gain
- Indigestion/digestive issues
- Sleep disruption/sleeplessness
- Immune system problems
- Medical symptoms of undetermined cause
- Stress induced seizures
- Increased use of sick leave

## Emotional

- Emotional extremes
- Anxiety/panic attacks
- Crying easily or unexpectedly
- Depression
- Short temper
- Frustration
- Increased drinking
- Giving up
- Hypervigilance

## Mental

- Loss of interest in things that once mattered
- Decrease in the quality of work/productivity
- Decreased motivation
- Decreased patience
- Increased work errors
- Increased lateness/absenteeism
- Forgetfulness
- Distorted thinking
- Reduced self-awareness
- Trouble keeping up with workload

## Social

- Marital/partnership stress
- Increased isolation
- Increased complaining
- Less tolerance
- Irritability / impatience / intolerance
- Social engagement with others dropping off
- Closed off body language
- Reduced interpersonal boundaries
- Less volunteerism
- Uncharacteristic negative changes in social behavior

Other:

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# Brainstorm

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



# Brainstorm: Strategies

**Be as specific as possible**

Physical Strategies @ Work

Emotional Strategies @ Work

Cognitive Strategies @ Work

Social Strategies @ Work

# Let's TAP In

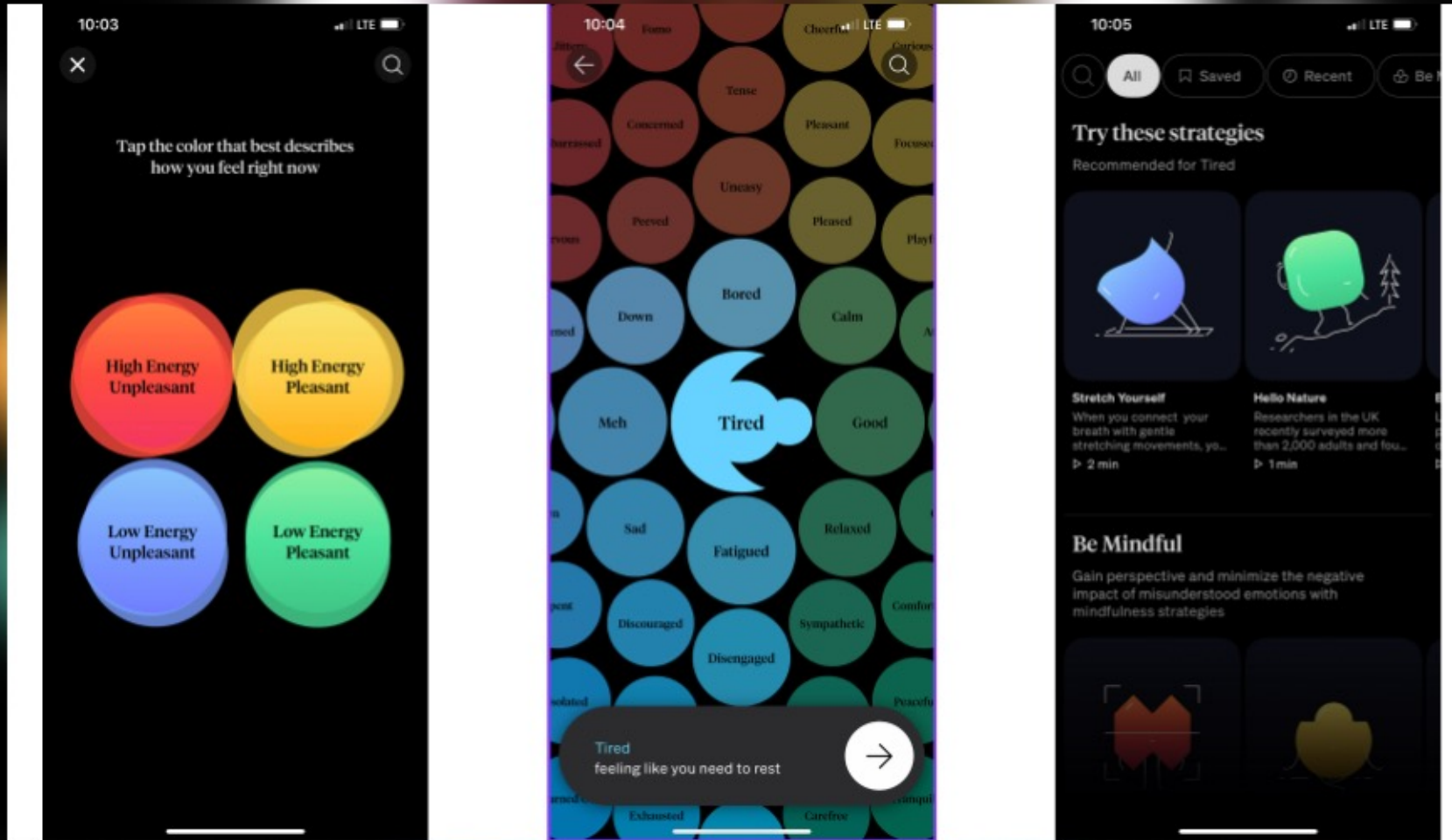
**T**ake a breath and pause

**A**cknowledge your thoughts, feelings, body sensations

**P**roceed with a plan (choose: what is the next best thing I can do right now?)



# “How We Feel” App // Yale School of Medicine



# After Work Checklist

At the end of your workday, take these steps to decompress.

For more well-being resources, visit:  
[NursingWorld.org/](https://www.nursingworld.org/)  
[TheWellBeingInitiative](https://www.thewellbeinginitiative.org/)

## ✓ Review

Acknowledge a challenge you faced, take a deep breath, and let it go.

## ✓ Reflect

However small, consider and appreciate three positives in your day.

## ✓ Regroup

Offer support to your colleagues—and ask for help when you need it.

## ✓ Reenergize

Turn your attention to home. Focus on relaxing and resting.



## Be as specific as possible

### Physical Strategies @ Work

- Push on wall for 30 seconds
- Muscle tension/release
- Hum
- Stretching, Breathing
- Block box
- Stomp
- Get outside (or to a window) if you can
- Physical distance

### Emotional Strategies @ Work

- Use an assessment tool (i.e., stress continuum) and notice the impact to you
- Name it to tame it (Feelings wheel)
- Write it down/throw it away
- 3 good things daily
- Celebration
- Random acts of kindness
- Call a counselor or spiritual care in real time

### Cognitive Strategies @ Work

- Lists
- Use tools (scripting, acronyms, T.A.P. in)
- When you can, focus on one thing at a time
- When making your "brain" or shift plan, stop briefly and ask, "where am I in this plan?"
- What is something activating that I can stop doing for a period of time (news, social media, friends/family that are activating)

### Social Strategies @ Work

- Intentional connection (new coworkers, preceptor, mentor, educator, assistant nurse manager, manager)
- Use your new support of this new grad cohort
- Peer Support (local or national programs)
- Join debriefs or Community Support sessions as needed (process as you go)
- Thank and celebrate with others



UW Medicine  
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MEDICAL CENTER

CARE4U



Call/text 206.519.7721 | uwcare4u@uw.edu | bit.ly/uwcare4u



### Employee Assistance Program 877.313.4455

- 24/7 Call a Counselor for in the moment support
- Three FREE counseling sessions for you or anyone in your household per instance or issue; relationship counseling also offered
- eap.wa.gov Organization Code: UW

SAFECAMPUS



### Safe Campus: Violence Prevention & Response

- UW's violence prevention and response program
- 206.685.7233 | safecampus@uw.edu
- M – F, 8am – 5pm, excluding UW holidays
- In urgent or dangerous situations, call 911



### Spiritual Care & Wellbeing: Individual and Team Support

- Montlake Campus: Pager 206.598.9174 (24/7)
- Montlake Oncology: Phone 206.598.3891 (M-F 0800-1630)
- Northwest Campus: Pager 206.969.1499 (M-F 0900-1800)



### Peer Support: 1:1 Emotional Support

- Refer yourself or a colleague
- Available for ALL staff, faculty & trainees
- Talk in your same job, role or other identity marker that has been through a similar circumstance
- faculty.uwmedicine.org/p2p
- Call/Text 206.519.7721



### Employee Mental Health Support Program

- UW Medicine employees and their household members who live in Washington State may receive help navigating a variety of mental health resource options
- Includes supportive conversations with a Psychiatrist or Psychologist
- faculty.uwmedicine.org/uw-support-resources

## Stress Continuum Model

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The Stress Continuum Model is a visual tool for assessing your own and others' stress responses. Individuals closer to green are healthy and 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 our distress.

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

## Emergent Mental Health Resources

Call 988

Text any message to 988

Chat 988lifeline.org

TTY Users: Dial 711 then 988

We can all help prevent suicide. The 988 lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals.

# References

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11. Watson, P., & Westphal, R.J. (2020). *Stress First Aid for Health Care Workers*. National Center for PTSD. Retrieved from [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov).