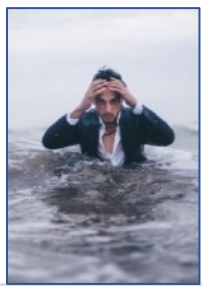


Self Care

Some ideas for “big impact” self-care methods *(and the science behind them)*.



Science Based Self-Care Strategies:

Gratitude



We are naturally predisposed to focus on the negative (that’s why humans are great problem-solvers)! On average it takes 5 positives to balance 1 negative. Science shows that if you take time every day to list 3 “Gratitudes”, you will improve your long-term happiness by programming your brain to increase its focus on positives. To help reset your perspective, you can also take a moment when you’re feeling stressed to list 2-3 things that are going right.

Awe



A feeling/sense of awe is also an amazing immune booster and happiness trigger for people- it gives us a sense of perspective and significantly reduces pro-inflammatory cytokines in our bodies. According to research, about 75% of awe occurs when out in nature. We have a natural resonance with the out-of-doors (“biophilia”). So take a walk outside! You’ll feel better for it.

Meditation/Mindfulness



There’s a reason you keep hearing about this one. One study showed measurable changes via MRI in the brain (growth in the pre-frontal cortex and shrinkage in the amygdala) from 20 minutes of meditation daily x 2 months. Those changes make it easier for us to respond logically to stressors, instead of being hijacked by our emotional “flight, fight or hide” responses. Check out apps like “Calm” or “Headspace” for brief, guided mindfulness activities.

What else can you do?

Maintain baseline health: Consistently try to eat well, exercise, and get quality sleep.

Network with coworkers who understand your specific stressors- One study from “The Happy MD” found that the #1 way to improve job satisfaction long term was to simply send physicians out to dinner once a month to network and debrief!

When away from work, protect that time. Time off is important- But it happens more effectively if you literally block time on your calendar for self care and social time. Make a list of priority activities, then schedule for them. Ensure that you are also getting time outside in nature.

The most stressful moments are created by situations that are high emotion and low control- Find people and methods that help you feel reassured, or help you regain choice/control in small ways.

Understanding and Addressing Our Reactions to Stress

Can you initiate your own First Aid Plan?

When people are physically injured we have an immediate first aid system we initiate. First we learn what symptoms indicate there's a problem. Then we assess, recognize, and treat. Mental/emotional injuries warrant the same kind of planning. What are your stress symptoms? How do you know when you're hitting your limits? When you hit a trigger, or symptoms of stress are becoming more noticeable, do you have a plan to initiate first aid?



Explore Your Personal Response

How do you react to difficult situations and powerful moments? List your reactions. This could be: body sensations like headaches or nausea, powerful emotions like anger or extreme sadness, or behaviors such as withdrawal, comfort-snacking, etc. Paying attention to your stress responses enables you to better address them. What are the hardest or most triggering parts of your job?

Your Expected Stress Reactions

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Your Stress Triggers

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

First Tier Response

What can you do in the moment?

(Take a break, ask for help)

Second Tier Response

What can you do when in a safe place?

(Take a walk, call a friend, bath & book)

Numbing or avoiding are normal stress responses, but avoid using them as your default.