

Self care for clinical staff



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Keeping afloat for you,
your family and our patients

Self care for clinical staff

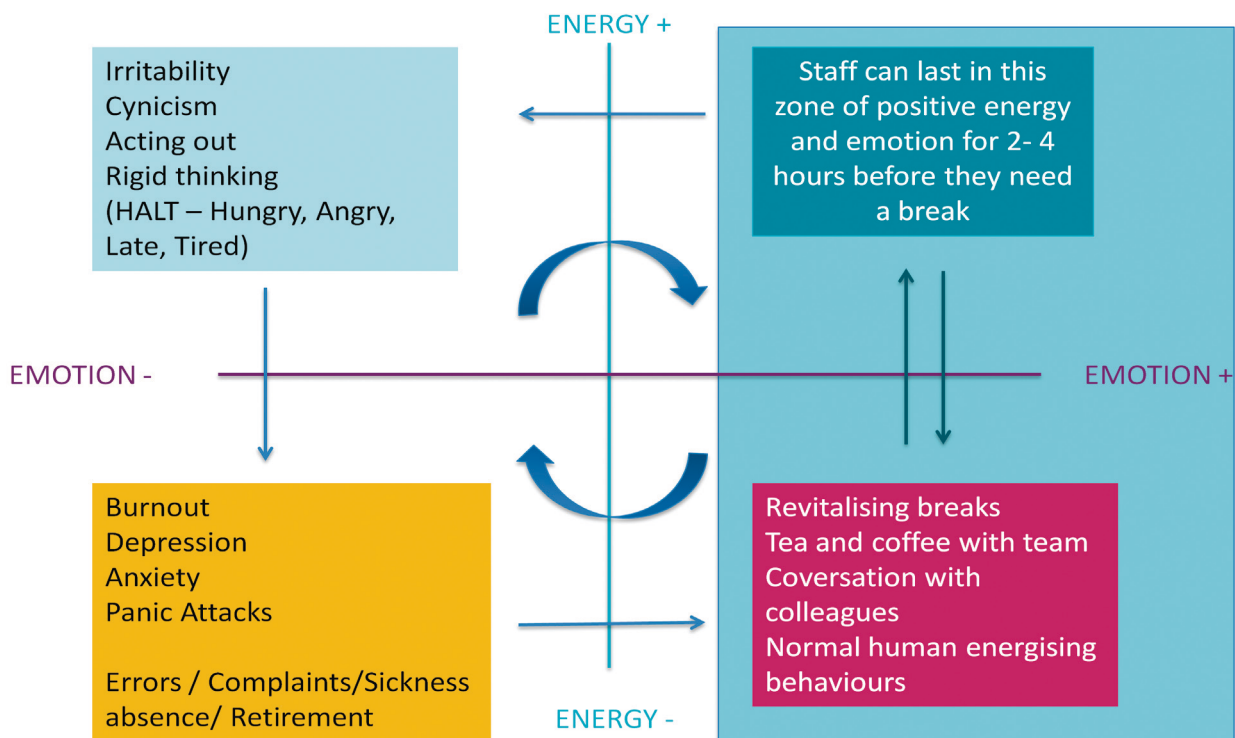
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(Tell someone and check - are you safe to be at work?)	

What's the problem?

Working in clinical practice can be tough and people who choose to work in this area are caring people who want to give their best to others in need. The nature of the problems we deal with, the often relentless workload, long shifts, missed breaks all contribute to the likelihood of such caring people to get worn down and burn out. Whilst the system itself must adapt and appreciate that keeping the staff well must be a priority to motivate and retain people in practice, there is a lot we can do to anticipate things we, ourselves, will find difficult. Self care planning is intended to help staff think about things they already know they find challenging or upsetting and to plan, for themselves, how they will recognise when they are struggling and to act to get help, or take a break when (not if) needed. Everyone will have dealt with difficulties in their lives and having already successfully managed these, most people will have skills they can draw on to help them when clinical work gets tough.

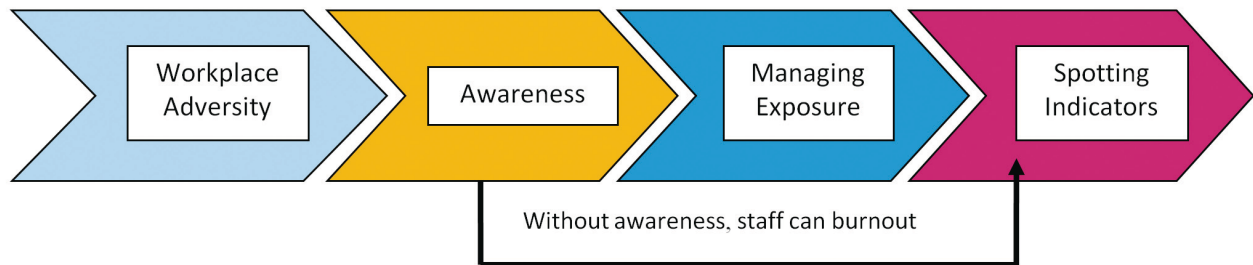
Staff undertaking emotionally challenging work need to keep their energy and enthusiasm up. A human being can only really keep up an activity requiring high energy and emotion for between 2 and 4 hours. They then need a break, preferably a break with other people with whom the building of relationships and the relaxed human contact can refresh their energy levels and allow emotions to settle. Without this, people eventually become emotionally drained, irritable and cynical and often do not behave at their best. At worst people become anxious and depressed, they make more mistakes and may end up in disputes – all of these can lead to absence from work.



Self care planning is aimed at helping us all spot the signs of our own struggles so we can help ourselves before we run into serious trouble which might impact on us, our families, and of course, our patients and colleagues.

Self care planning

By being aware of the sorts of challenges we may encounter at work and understanding ourselves as best we can, we can plan ahead to manage our responses when we find work tough.



Workplace adversity

There are lots of factors that can constitute workplace adversity in a healthcare environment. The distressing situations and pain our patients suffer, pressure of workload and often our interactions with other staff can all have an emotional impact on us. Rather than see these as a list of problems, it is important to recognise that each point is a place where intervention, either by ourselves or with the help of others, can make a difference.

Awareness

Awareness enables us to perceive and understand adversity, reflect on it and consider the outcomes of different courses of action. When we have awareness about how we are being affected by workplace adversity, we can make choices about how to manage our exposure, creating an opportunity to take action. Without awareness, we risk burning out.

Managing exposure

Managing exposure consists of behaviours and practices to promote self-care in the face of workplace adversity. These include;

Protecting

We can develop our own strategies to emotionally protect ourselves from adversity, and offload when overwhelmed. Being resilient does not mean being impervious to emotional concerns, but rather being aware of them, being able to understand them, and being able to share them with others. This includes maintaining professional boundaries and maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Over-reliance on protective strategies can lead to compassion fatigue.

Processing

The most common form of processing is reflecting and talking about challenges at work, often with someone who shares the experience. People process in different ways, it can be formal and/or informal, and written and/or verbal – whatever works for you.

Decontaminating

This is about finding restorative strategies that you can use to be rejuvenated and refreshed after difficult experiences, including developing supportive relationships both at and outside of work and/or undertaking physical or creative activities as an outlet. We are all different, but it helps to know what works best for you and how you will fit this in to your busy life.

Distancing

Strategies that physically distance us from the adverse situation. This can include short periods of time such as breaks or a few minutes to recover after a crisis. Sometimes we need to take a longer break, or doing something completely different for a while. You may want to talk through options with your supervisor or manager.

Managing exposure is most effective when a combination of these strategies are implemented in conjunction with support of colleagues, families and organisations.

Spotting indicators

We are all just human beings and our responses to the adversities at work will vary. Knowing ourselves well enough to spot the signs we need to take action to help ourselves, or get help from others, is crucial to prevent things getting out of hand. Some people find they notice they feel uptight, some will be irritable or perhaps weep readily, some are simply exhausted. You will also know when you have managed exposure well and what that feels like. You may have managed a coffee with a colleague to talk things through, or perhaps attended a debrief – some will go for a run after work or book some days off to have some “me time”. You will know or be able to have a good guess at what will work for you.

Remember – burnout is not a personal failure or lack of coping strategies, nor is it an end point. It merely means the process did not go as planned and personal challenges or systemic barriers prevented effective management of exposure. Planning ahead can, at least, cut down our personal risk. If things have not gone as planned, revisiting the process and your self care plan may result in a different outcome.

Making your self care plan

Reflecting and developing a self care plan can help us manage exposure to adversity effectively. This plan should be revisited whenever you remember (certainly it's a good idea just prior to an appraisal/IPR or supervisor meeting) and especially when you are feeling in need of support. We know that when people are feeling stressed they are more likely to isolate themselves, and yet stronger social support networks are one of the main things that help people to cope with adversity, so sharing your plan with other colleagues is likely to be of benefit (and will encourage them to do the same).

This self care plan is a **personal document** – just for you. You might find it helpful to discuss your needs with your supervisor or manager, but there is absolutely no obligation to do so. They might, however, ask if you have a self care plan as part of their responsibility for looking after you and your needs.

Remember – taking care of yourself (and your colleagues) is a priority. Managing exposure to adversity is everybody's job. Staff whose exposure to workplace adversity is thought about in advance and who are looked after effectively give better care to patients.

The next couple of pages give you a framework to think about the risks and adversity you are exposed to at work and how you may be equipped to deal with these and what ideas or help you might need to work on to look after yourself and who else might be able to help you. It is up to you whether or not you share this with your supervisor/appraiser or whether you simply keep it for yourself to check yourself out from time to time.

Start your care plan on the next page.

Self Care Plan

Workplace Adversity	
What types of adversity do I face? <i>Work content?</i> <i>Difficult colleagues?</i> <i>Values clashes?</i> What about outside work?	
What do I find most difficult to manage?	

Awareness	
What does my life look like when I am doing well?	
What are signs that I am struggling? What do I notice about myself? What do others notice about me?	

Managing Exposure

How can I protect myself from adversity?

How can I / do I process things I find to be adverse?

Who can I talk to?
On page 11 of this booklet there are a list of suggestions

What can I change?

What can't I change?

What relationships and activities help me manage my reaction to adversity?

How can I create distance from things I find to be adverse?

What do I need to avoid?

Indicators

What do I notice when I am beginning to struggle a bit?	
What is burnout like for me?	
What indicates I have managed exposure effectively? <i>Things I have overcome before</i>	
What can I learn from previous difficulties or burnout?	

On the following page you will find lots of ways of finding support either on a day to day basis or in times of crisis, there is something for everyone, whenever they need it.

Wellbeing maintenance

Self Care Plans: spend an hour or so planning how to keep yourself well.

Chat with colleagues, find out what others find tough.

Team nights out or quiet nights in - relax and unwind with colleagues, for others a quiet night in works.

Join Tea and Empathy Facebook group (there is also a closed Wessex group) not just for doctors.

'Live Well' areas of UHS staffnet - you can book courses via VLE, courses 'managing work life and stress, building resilience workshop, working with anxiety (your own and patient's).

Find a mentor or coach, email DavidPaul.Young@uhs.nhs.uk

Headspace App (meditation is proven to help manage stress) UHS staff members can have a year's free use. See Live Well area of intranet.

Conflict training – access via Trust or PIER website (paediatrics).

Keep Calm workshops – a stress management course for doctors.

NHS Every Mind Matters - refine your self-care plan www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/

Mindfulness based reflection sessions are held in the chapel every Thursday from 1:00 – 1:30pm.

Need something more?

Talk things through with one of the senior members of staff. There are lots of people who have worked here for years and have more than likely felt the same way or helped someone else through something similar. Talk to your supervisor, if you feel comfortable with them or ask around, people will know who the trusted people are.

Speak to the psychologist in your department.

My Possible Self in your app store – to help you manage anxiety and low mood.

Living Life - Free online courses covering low mood, stress and resiliency. <https://littf.com/>

Chat to one of the chaplains – any faith or none, they are there for you, tel: 023 8120 8517 or email: chaplaincy@uhs.nhs.uk

Employee Assistance Programme – Workplace Options is an organisation outside the Trust, it is free for all staff (their partners and dependents up to 21) and can help you address all sorts of issues from general wellbeing to free counselling and financial advice.

Free phone: 0800 243 458, SMS (for call back): 07909 341229

Email: assistance@workplaceoptions.com www.workplaceoptions.com

Junior doctors can meet with one of the Directors of Medical Education (via Debbi.Plumbley@uhs.nhs.uk).

There are other online places to get help too i.e. www.italk.org.uk or <https://moodgym.anu.edu.au/welcome>.

Need urgent help? (Tell someone and check - are you safe to be at work?)

Contact Occupational Health: ext. 4156, email: OccupationalHealth@uhs.nhs.uk

Speak with your local TRiM practitioner, email TRIM@uhs.nhs.uk

Your GP will be able to help. Samartitans tel: 116 123

BMA counselling 24/7 and Doctors Advisors service 0330 123 1245 see www.bma.org.uk

Based on work done by

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