Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life

Workshop series



Participant handout

Name, claim and reframe: **Personal stress tools**

This resource isn't intended as a medical or mental health intervention. If you're currently experiencing challenges, please reach out for support. You could reach out to your health care professional, or your workplace wellness or employee assistance program.

Crisis lines in Canada: If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide or in a mental health crisis, call or text 9-8-8. To find mental health or community services in your area, call or text 2-1-1. If you're in immediate danger or need urgent medical support, call 9-1-1.

Please note: During the workshop you will work through an everyday stressor individually using the tools and techniques taught. This workshop is not meant to bring up significant stressors. If you are currently experiencing significant distress, seek out credible mental health support. The intention of this workshop is to develop strategies to better process life stressors. Please prioritize your own well-being and psychological safety during this session and feel free to excuse yourself if you need to.

Name, claim and reframe

These notes are private, for your self-reflection and benefit. You can decide if you'll share them with anyone or keep them to yourself.

Complete this in a quiet place where you will not be interrupted or consider using the audio prompts through a headset. You can find the audio by searching **Name, claim and reframe** at clwsmh.com or by clicking the link.

Date:

Name:

The situation:

Name

- ✓ Identify your thoughts
- ✓ Recognize when you experience a stress response
- ✓ Consider where you are on the continuum

What thoughts are (or were) going through your mind about your stressors?

Please be as specific as possible. Include any thoughts that evoke blame, anger, shame, self-doubt, fear or guilt.

Identify if you have experienced or are experiencing a stress response:

- [ ] **Fight or anger** – getting upset, angry, aggressive, critical, blaming, irritable, violent or argumentative
- [ ] **Flight or avoidance** – leaving a threatening or unsafe situation, feeling anxious, staying busy all the time to avoid confronting feelings, being a workaholic or avoiding people or places that feel unsafe
- [ ] **Freeze or shutdown** – being temporarily unable to move or react, or just continuing to do the same thing every day on autopilot
- [ ] **Fawn** – focusing on pleasing others to avoid conflict or improve feelings of safety, going along with what others are doing or asking you to do while feeling uncomfortable
- [ ] **None of the above**
- [ ] **Other** – briefly describe below

Where are you on the stress continuum?

Click or check the box that most closely describes your current state. Note that it's normal to fluctuate between thriving and surviving but when you're struggling or in crisis, consider reaching out.

☐ Thriving "I've got this"

- Calm and steady with minor mood fluctuations
- Able to take things in stride
- Consistent performance
- Able to take feedback and to adjust to changes of plans
- Able to focus
- Able to communicate effectively
- Normal sleep patterns and appetite

☐ Surviving "Something isn't right"

- Nervousness, sadness, increased mood fluctuations
- Inconsistent performance
- More easily overwhelmed or irritated
- Increased need for control and difficulty adjusting to changes
- Trouble sleeping or eating
- Activities and relationships you used to enjoy seem less interesting or even stressful
- Muscle tension, low energy, headaches

☐ Struggling "I can't keep this up."

- Persistent fear, panic, anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness
- Exhaustion
- Poor performance and difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Avoiding interactions with coworkers, family, and friends
- Fatigue, aches, and pains
- Restless, disturbed sleep
- Self-medicating with substances, food, or other numbing activities

☐ In crisis "I can't survive this."

- Disabling distress and loss of function
- Panic attacks
- Nightmares or flashbacks
- Unable to fall or stay asleep
- Instrusive thoughts
- Thoughts or self-harm or suicide
- Easily enraged or aggressive
- Careless mistakes and inability to focus
- Feeling numb, lost, or out of control
- Withdrawal from relationships
- Dependence on substances, food or other numbing activities to cope

Table adapted from: Whitlock, J. (2021, March 12). Assess your stress–where are you on the stress continuum? Retrieved March 27, 2023, from https://accelerate.uofuhealth.utah.edu/resilience/assess-your-stress-where-are-you-on-the-stress-continuum.

Claim

- ✓ Claim your power over your thoughts and beliefs
- ✓ Challenge the story you're telling yourself
- ✓ Be objective and practice self-compassion

If you were applying the most respectful interpretation, why might you or others respond as you did?

Think about the stress response, filling a void, managing a fear, meeting a need or avoiding pain.

What advice would you have for someone you cared about who had a similar experience?

How would you express care and compassion to someone who was struggling?

Reframe

- ✓ Ask yourself if your thoughts are helpful or harmful to you
- ✓ Recognize what you are and are not doing related to a healthy routine
- ✓ Consider what coping strategies could help you manage stress
- ✓ Be aware of coping strategies that may be unhelpful or problematic

What is important in a healthy daily routine for you?

What are you currently doing or not doing?

What coping strategies could be helpful now?

It may help you to:

- [ ] Challenge your thoughts about a situation. Does the thought help or harm me?
- [ ] Be aware of and avoid the tendency to use unhealthy coping strategies that negatively impact your health
- [ ] Share your experience with someone you trust – a clinician, peer support or another trusted person
- [ ] Try any relaxation technique that works for you such as deep breathing, mindfulness, meditation, yoga, a massage, a walk, enjoying nature, art, listening to music, gardening or writing
- [ ] Protect your physical health through nutrition or movement
- [ ] Use healthy distractions like puzzles, games, crafts, building or creating
- [ ] Focus on healthy sleep habits including intentionally resting when sleep is difficult, turning off screens, darkening the room, reducing the temperature, using a weighted blanket or going to bed and waking up at the same time every day
- [ ] Seek help or treatment when needed
- [ ] Other – describe below

Which unhelpful habits or strategies will you try to reduce or avoid, especially those you may have reverted to in the past when under stress?

This can include those strategies that result in overstimulation like fighting, over-working or over-exercising, or those that result in numbing like substance use, social media, television or isolation.



It's normal to feel uncomfortable when thinking about stress. Consider using a grounding exercise whenever you want to turn your attention away from stressors and focus instead on the present moment.

Come back to these notes if you want to track your progress:

- Are you still thinking the thoughts you had? Have they changed?
- Are you experiencing distress or a negative impact on your quality of life or relationships?
- Could you benefit from reaching out to a family member, friend, peer supporter or professional for help in moving forward? If you do, consider taking these notes with you to share as a starting point for dialogue.

Notes:

If you want to learn more about Name, claim and reframe, find resources here: workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/name-claim-and-reframe

Stress will happen.

Name it. Claim it. Reframe it.

Use this tool to minimize the ongoing negative impact.

When to ask for support

This Government of Canada page has a wide variety of resources for you to choose what is right for you.

www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html

For mental health services, help and support in your community, go to ementalhealth.ca where you can search for relevant resources based on what you need and your location.

If you feel you need help, reach out to someone capable of supporting you.

- No one knows what the experience was like for you, how it brought up previous difficult experiences, or how it has affected you
- While many may want to help, they may dismiss or minimize your experience
- Make sure you reach out to someone who really knows how to support you:
  - → A leader, advisor, mentor, co-worker who understands what you experienced
  - → A trusted peer supporter, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), spiritual advisor or family doctor
  - → A family member or friend who will not be traumatized by your experience
- If you want to visit a therapist or counselor:
  - → Find one who understands your experience
  - → Tell them what you want to change
  - → Ask how they will help you
- If you don't like the answer or feel they won't be helpful, ask someone else. If it isn't working, find someone else. Your wellbeing is worth the extra effort.

Notes:

All Workplace Strategies resources are available to anyone at no cost, compliments of Canada Life. To learn more, visit **clwsmh.com**.

Canada Life and design are trademarks of The Canada Life Assurance Company. 79-02402-07/25