

MONDAY – Sharpen Your Mind Day

Main Activity: Resilience – A Key to Work-Life Balance and Recognition

Introduction

Healthy workplaces do not just focus on the work and bottom line. They give considerable attention to the health of employees who are *doing* the work. In today's fast-paced technological world, it has become increasingly important for organizations to take proactive steps to ensure that their employees develop resiliency. Resilience is a term used to describe the capacity of an individual to cope with challenges and stressful situations.

Developing resiliency means developing the ability return to balance in the face of constant disruptions in our lives!

Goal of the activity

Employees will learn the importance of being resilient and develop techniques to apply in their daily lives to help them regain their balance.

Implementation of activity

1. Since this is the first activity of the week, be sure to send out an email or memo to all your employees to create awareness about the upcoming week. Add a reminder note about where employees can pick up their package for the Challenge.

Materials needed

- “Resilience – A Key to Work-Life Balance and Recognition” handout
- Recognizing Stress Symptoms worksheet
- Integrated Life worksheet

Supplemental suggested activities

- Invite a dynamic guest speaker to sow seeds of positive thoughts and actions
- Subscribe to daily newspapers and have it available at coffee rooms, cafeteria, and other areas where employees get together for meetings, lunch, or a quick chat
- Purchase some books listed under 2006 activity called “Leadership Enhancing Books” and have them available for employees to read. Consider books under the ‘Individual’ category.
<http://www.healthyworkplaceweek.ca/2006/activities.php>.
- Create five craft boxes and consider putting items such as construction paper, scissors, tapes, pins, Popsicle sticks, glue, craft wires, markers, and crayons in each box. The goal of this activity is to create something fun and the ‘best’ artwork/art piece will win a prize

Resilience: A key to work life balance and integration

New skills are required to thrive in today's rapid paced, fast changing technological era. Many Canadians are feeling worn out. We are burdened by increased workloads and stress. The technology that once promised us more free time is now blurring the lines between work and the rest of our lives. Given the high demands of the fast changing era that we live in, it's vital that we grow our resilience: the human capacity to bounce back - to face, overcome and be strengthened by change.

When the 'hurry up go fast' work culture dominates, we sometimes overlook our health and wellness, and how the daily choices we make affect our well-being. Developing resiliency means developing the ability to continuously return to balance in the face of constant disruptions in our lives!

Work life integration means finding a combination and balance of the key components of an integrated life that work together over time to enhance health. An integrated life includes Emotional, Spiritual, Social, Mental, Physical and Meaningful Contribution.

Healthy 21st century workplaces focus not just on the work but also on the health of the people doing the work. By using these tools to regularly check in with yourself and act on what you find, you can begin a conversation with your family and your team about putting health first.

First choose a couple of behaviours to work on and let your colleagues/significant others know what you are doing so you can support each other.

*A wise person should consider health the greatest of human blessings.
Hippocrates 460 - 400 B.C.*

Increasing resilience: living by the 3 R's (Recognition, Responding and Renewal)

- Recognition
- Responding
- Renewal

Growing resilience is an active process of Walking the Talk of Wellness on a daily basis. It is a lifelong journey of recognizing by being mindful, choosing responses and renewing ourselves daily as we adapt to change.

*"Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do."
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

Recognition means paying attention; being mindful of what is happening in your world at the external level and how it impacts your internal world.

Activity Part 1: Recognize your stress symptoms in each of the key components of an integrated life

- "In-the-moment" awareness of the impact of stress, and noticing what you are thinking, wanting and feeling (physically and emotionally) are central to recognition.
- On the Recognizing Stress Symptoms worksheet check-off all the symptoms you experience when working hard, feeling stressed or when your life seems out of balance. Notice that on this worksheet are some positive symptoms as well, such as excitement and enthusiasm that we often feel at the beginning of a big project, but sometimes lose as we get too overworked.
- Note the areas where you have clusters of negative stress symptoms for use in Activity Part 2

Responding occurs next. When recognition is not present we can often be in "reactive" mode to life rather than being in "responsive" mode where we exercise our own choices. The next exercise is designed to move from recognition of symptoms to responding in a positive way.

Activity Part 2: Choose key components to focus on

- Using the Components of an Integrated Life worksheet, determine which components you choose to focus on based on your clusters of negative stress symptoms. Select behaviours you'd like to develop to improve your resiliency.
- During Canada's Healthy Workplace Week (and over the next month), challenge yourself to work on developing at least three of the behaviours you've selected. Each time you recognize a stress symptom, take notice of your response - is it reactive or responsive?

For example, in Activity 1, one person ticked anxiety, mood swings and worrying in the Emotional Component. In Activity 2 he choose to focus on 'Being aware of and expressing emotions' with his life partner and colleagues he was close to. These steps will help to get at the root of his anxiety.

After you begin to focus on select behaviours to **renew** yourself and increase life integration, you will notice you become more resilient in your response to stress and periods of imbalance.

Renewal is the continuous process of finding purpose, meaning and passion as we move through the seasons of our lives. Renewing ourselves means constantly learning to let go of the things we cannot change with ease and grace, to accept the joys and challenges of life, and make daily choices that support our mind, body and spirit.

Activity Part 3: Strategic Reflection

Create daily quiet time to be mindful and sensitive to your internal state. Ask yourself, how am I doing in my life at this moment, and what do I need to let go of? For example, at the end of a full and busy workday, Doug pauses to reflect on his to-do list where three out of ten items are not completed. He recognizes he did his best work for the day, takes a deep relaxing breath and let's go of unrealistic expectations.

Resiliency in Action: *In the Ministry of Environment, during workplace change that impacted work life balance, individuals were asked to identify their stress symptoms and chose behaviours they would focus on to grow their resilience to workplace and life stressors. Teams supported each other by being flexible and adaptable to what was happening in the moment and made choices to support themselves, which ultimately supported the team.*

The result was that individuals and teams recognized workplace strain and worked together to create a culture where people actively support each other to live integrated lives. The outcomes were higher levels of workplace satisfaction, engagement and team performance.



Recognizing Stress Symptoms:

Place a tick next to your symptoms

Meaningful Contribution

- Bored
- Disengaged from work
- Negative mindset
- Fear of risk-taking
- Counting days, weeks, months to retirement
- Loss of meaning
- Creative*
- Engaged*
- Excited*
- Sense of making a difference*

Social

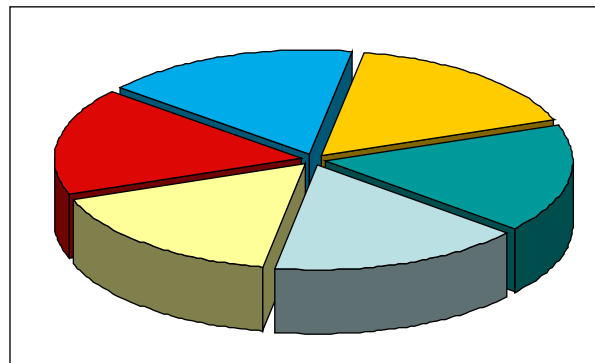
- Isolation/loneliness
- Intolerance
- Resentment
- Lowered sex drive
- Distrust
- Lack of intimacy
- Fewer contacts with friends
- Belonging*
- Support/connection*
- Happiness*
- Reaching out*

Emotional

- Anxiety/frustration
- The "blues"
- Mood swings
- Crying spells
- Irritability, lashing out
- Bad temper
- Nervous laughter
- Worrying
- Easily discouraged
- Little joy
- Excitement/enthusiasm*
- Feeling "on top of things"*

Spiritual

- Restlessness
- Emptiness/doubt
- Unforgiving
- Martyrdom
- Looking for magic
- Loss of direction
- Cynicism/apathy
- Peace & joy*
- Purpose*
- Order/coherence*
- Optimism*



Mental

- Forgetfulness
- Dull senses
- Low productivity
- Negative attitude/self talk
- Confusion
- Lethargy & boredom
- No new ideas
- Poor concentration
- "Flow"*
- Creative*
- Positive attitude/self talk*
- Growth through learning*

Physical

- Appetite/weight change
- Headaches/tension/fatigue
- Insomnia
- Colds
- Muscle aches
- Digestive upsets
- Pounding heart
- Accident prone
- Teeth grinding
- Increased drug/alcohol/tobacco
- Feel "up"/energetic*
- Strength & stamina*
- Feel "on"*

Note: Positive Stress Symptoms are italicized in blue text at the bottom of each category.



Components of An Integrated Life:

Place a tick where you want to focus

People who live life with a purpose, by staying occupied, involved/engaged are the ones more likely to live long and healthy lives.

*Dr. D. Lischitz,
Gerontologist*

Meaningful Contribution

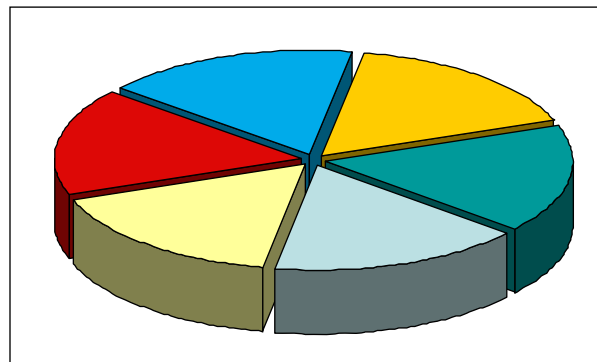
- Make a difference
- Find a sense of meaning, purpose, and contribution
- Being of service to others
- Bring out the best in myself and others
- Leave the world a better place

Social

- Pursue personal relationships linked to health
- Seek and maintain loving intimate relationships
- Find a sense of connection and community, belonging
- Perform acts of kindness towards others

Emotional

- Be positive and optimistic, finding joy in daily living
- Be aware of and express your emotions appropriately
- Accept what you can't change
- In changing times, find your place of choice to regain control
- Resist learned helplessness
- Stories - unhook from past = more choice



Physical

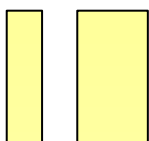
- Eat a balanced variety of foods to support your specific body's health needs
- Sleep 7-8 hours/night
- Get regular physical activity - stamina, suppleness, strength, stability
- Drink 8 cups of water daily
- Do breath work & relaxation
- Practice yoga- (61% seniors have flexibility issues)
- Laugh more
- Pay attention to the needs/messages of your body

Spiritual

- Find a sense of connection with the God of your understanding
- Become aware of your oneness with others and the natural world
- Get inspired
- Live from personal values
- Use prayer
- Practice meditation

Mental

- Become intellectually engaged
- Develop healthy beliefs - positive "can do" attitude
- See change as a challenge
- Practice gratitude, counting your blessings
- Stay in the now, savouring life's joys, having a playful attitude, laughing
- Develop the ability to quiet the mind and access intuition
- Take relaxation breaks
- Visualize; monitor self-talk
- Develop "possibility" thinking
- Have hobbies or interests



Eat like a Greek!* Plenty of fruits, veggies, whole grains, nuts, fatty fish, olive oil, small amounts of saturated (animal fat), and a glass of wine a day is associated with a 25% increase in longevity.

* <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg17924022.900-eat-like-a-greek.htm>