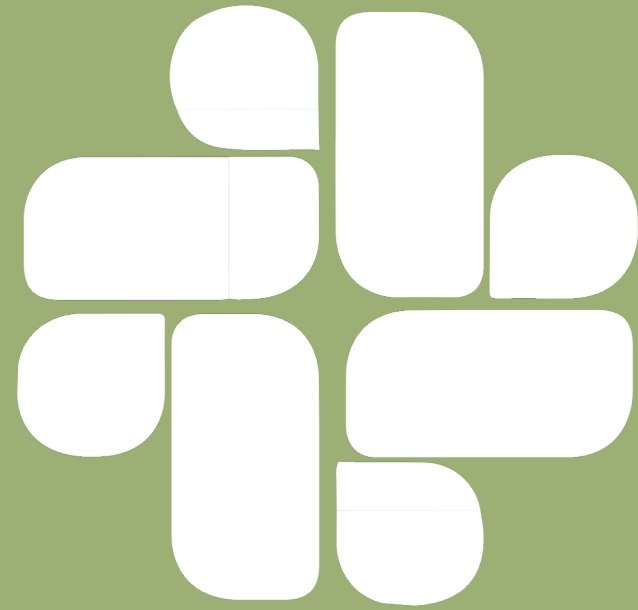




THE  
COUNSELLING  
HUB

## OUR GOALS FOR TODAY



Understand how stress and trauma affect our wellbeing.

Spot early signs of burnout and compassion fatigue.

Practice simple tools to manage stress.

Create a personal self-care plan.

Strengthen team connection and a culture of care.

## CHECK IN



Whats your name?

What do you personally expect from this session?

# TRAUMA & STRESS





## WHY UNDERSTANDING STRESS & TRAUMA MATTERS



Stress and trauma shape how we think, feel, and work



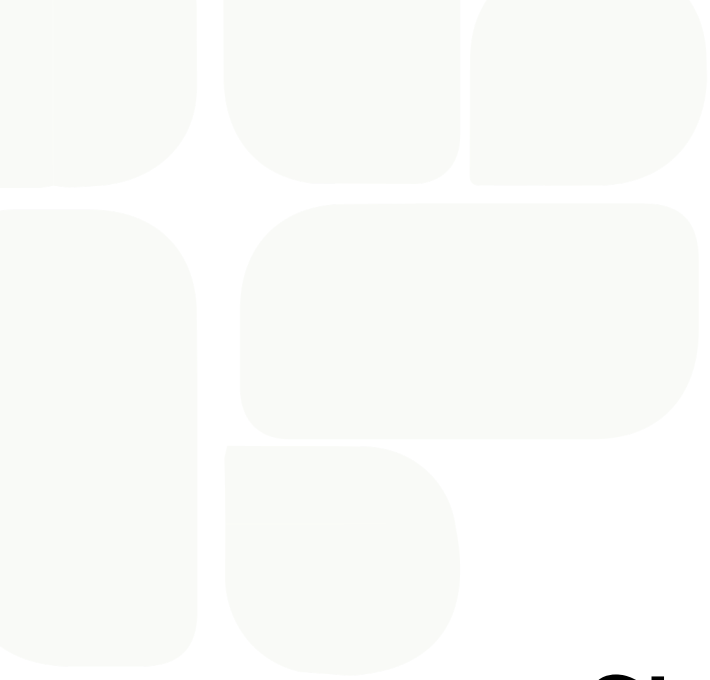
Understanding them builds awareness and resilience



Early recognition helps prevent burnout

**Caring for others  
starts with caring  
for ourselves**





## WHAT IS STRESS?

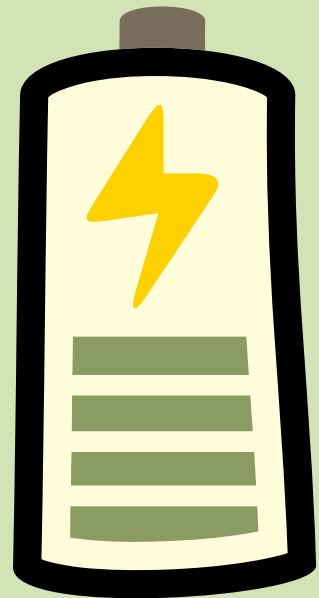
**Stress = our body's natural reaction to challenge or demand.**

- Some stress is useful and motivating, but constant stress without recovery can harm wellbeing.
- Everyone experiences stress differently: What feels stressful to one person may not to another.

# WHAT IS STRESS?

## *Two Faces of Stress*

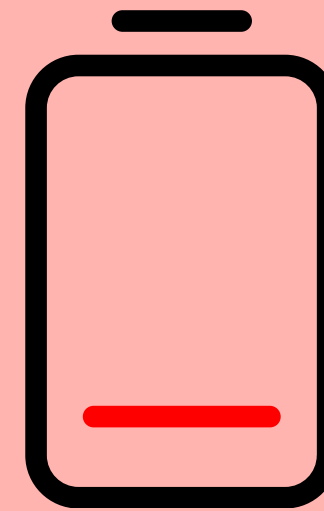
### EUSTRESS



Healthy challenge that motivates  
and enhances performance

Excitement, focus, sense of  
purpose

### DISTRESS



Negative stress that feels  
overwhelming or unmanageable

Anxiety, exhaustion, loss of  
control

**Where would you place these scenarios based on how you would experience them?**

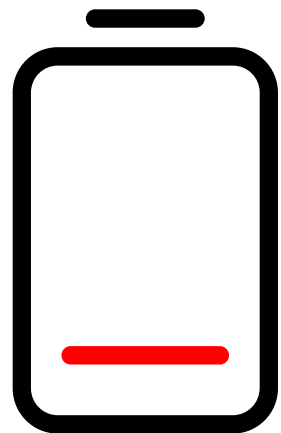
Preparing for an important presentation.

You're running late for work because of traffic.

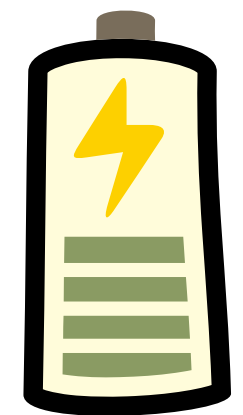
Dealing with ongoing paperwork and administrative pressure.

A supervisor observing you for feedback.

You take on a new leadership or mentoring role.



**DISTRESS**



**EUSTRESS**

## THE BODY'S PHYSICAL STRESS RESPONSE

- The brain releases adrenaline and cortisol to prepare for action.
- Heart rate, breathing, and muscle tension increase.
- This helps in short bursts, but if stress stays on too long:
  - Fatigue and sleep problems
  - Irritability and mood swings
  - Difficulty focusing and decision-making
  - Weakened immune system and burnout risk



Chronic activation affects both personal and professional wellbeing, draining energy, patience, and empathy.



## DIFFERENT TYPES OF STRESS

### How Stress shows up over time

Stress can show up in different ways over time. Recognizing which type of stress we're in helps us respond with the right tools.

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(Chu et al., 2024)



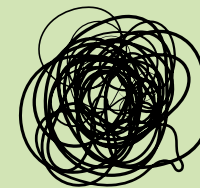
#### **Acute stress**

short-term stress from immediate stressors or challenging situation, fight or flight state



#### **Chronic stress**

stressor persists over an extended period, can lead to cumulative physiological and psychological effects



#### **Traumatic stress**

results from exposure to traumatic events like disasters, accidents, or violent acts

## WHAT IS TRAUMA?

- Trauma = a deeply distressing experience that overwhelms one's ability to cope.
- It can be **direct** (something you experience) or **vicarious** (something you witness or hear about).



## HOW TRAUMA AFFECTS US

- ① **Body:** fatigue, tension, sleep problems, headaches
- ② **Emotions:** anxiety, sadness, anger, numbness
- ③ **Thinking:** difficulty concentrating, over-alertness, self-doubt
- ④ **Relationships:** withdrawal, mistrust, irritability
- ⑤ **Work:** loss of motivation, reduced patience, burnout risk



## SECONDARY TRAUMA

Happens when we absorb the pain and trauma of others through empathy and repeated exposure.

- Common in caring professions: teachers, social workers, healthcare workers.
- Caused by hearing, witnessing, or supporting others' trauma stories.
- You don't have to personally experience the trauma to be affected by it. The body and mind can still start to react as if it happened to us.



## COMPASSION FATIGUE

**Compassion Fatigue = The emotional cost of caring**

- Emotional and physical exhaustion from giving support and care.
- Often builds gradually over time.
- Often overlaps with burnout and secondary trauma.

Can lead to:

- Irritability or emotional numbness
- Reduced empathy
- Feeling detached or hopeless



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(Marshman et al., 2022)



## BURNOUT & ITS WARNING SIGNS

**Burnout = emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by chronic workplace stress.**

Early indicators:

- Feeling drained, detached, or hopeless
- Reduced sense of accomplishment
- Difficulty concentrating

# COPING STRATEGIES



## COPING IN THE MOMENT

*Pause, Breathe, Ground - Choose Response*

**When you feel tension rising, try this simple sequence:**

- ① **Pause:** Notice what's happening inside you.
- ② **Breathe:** Slow down your exhale.
- ③ **Ground:** Connect to the present moment through your senses.
- ④ **Choose:** Respond, don't react.

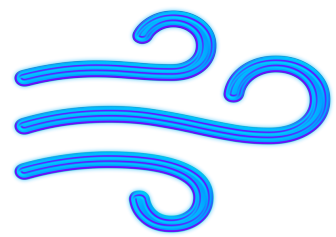




# PRACTICAL GROUNDING TOOLS

*Resetting the Body and Mind*

**Quick tools you can use anywhere:**



## **4-7-8 breathing:**

Inhale 4, hold 7, exhale 8.



## **Micro-movement:**

Stretch your shoulders, unclench your jaw, stand up.



## **5-Senses Check:**

Name 5 things you see, 4 feel, 3 hear, 2 smell, 1 taste.



## **Grounding object:**

Keep a small stone, bracelet, or sensory item to hold.



## BUILDING RESILIENCE

**Resilience is our ability to recover, adapt, and grow through challenges.**

- In our work, we face constant emotional demands.
- Building resilience means creating small habits like breathing, resting, connecting that protect our wellbeing and allow us to keep showing up with care.

## BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL TOOLKIT

Create your own set of coping tools.



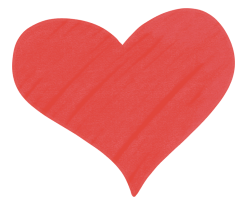
### **Physical:**

movement, breathing, rest



### **Social:**

talking with trusted peers



### **Emotional:**

journaling, music, therapy



### **Spiritual:**

reflection, prayer, nature



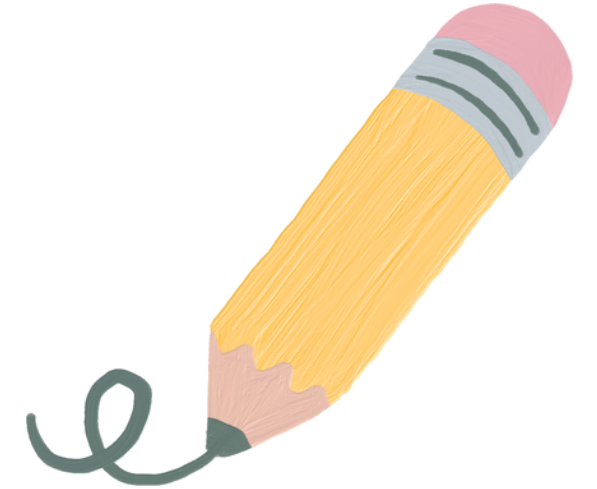
### **Mental:**

reframing thoughts, gratitude



# MY PERSONAL RESILIENCE PLAN

*Design Your Own Strategy*



**What will I start doing?**  
(Small new habits to try)

**What will I do more of?**  
(Things that already work for you)

**What will I let go of?**  
(Habits or expectations that drain you)

**Who can support me?**  
(People or systems that can help)



## PEER SUPPORT

*Wellbeing Is a Team Practice*

When we support each other, everyone becomes more resilient.

Peer support means:

- Checking in, not checking up
- Listening without judgment
- Noticing when a colleague is struggling
- Sharing emotional load and small acts of care
- Celebrating each other's efforts

# BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

*From Individual Care to Collective Wellness*

- Regular team check-ins on stress and capacity
- Safe spaces to talk about emotional impact
- Recognising effort, not just outcomes
- Encouraging breaks and boundaries
- Leadership modelling self-care
- Embedding wellness in supervision or meetings



## BUILDING A SUPPORTIVE ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE



**In small groups, discuss:**

What helps our team feel supported and energised?

What makes stress worse here?

What could we do more of, less of, or differently to care for each other?

## CLOSING REFLECTION & RESOURCES

Think about one insight or feeling you're taking with you  
today

How will you bring what you've learned into your daily  
work or life?





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