

# Working from Home: Managing stress during the ongoing pandemic


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**Geisinger**

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# Objectives

- Discuss the impact working from home has on the stress response
- Identify problems with prolonged stress
- Learn practical ways to build resilience and foster growth



**NOTE:** for increased benefit, you are encouraged to take notes and develop ideas for yourself and your team

STAGE 1: HAPPINESS



STAGE 2: MANAGING THE CHAOS

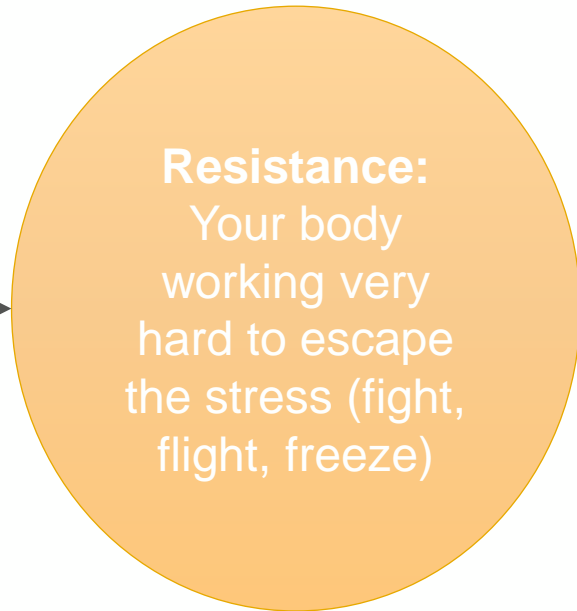


STAGE 3: TRYING NOT TO LOSE SOCIAL SKILLS





# The stress response



Stress is a natural process that occurs in response to a threat – this can be external (seeing a bear in the woods) or internal (fear that the world will end). This is a part of the human experience. It's inevitable. COVID-19 is a real-time threat and thus will initiate this response in most people at some times.

# EFFECTS OF STRESS ON THE BODY



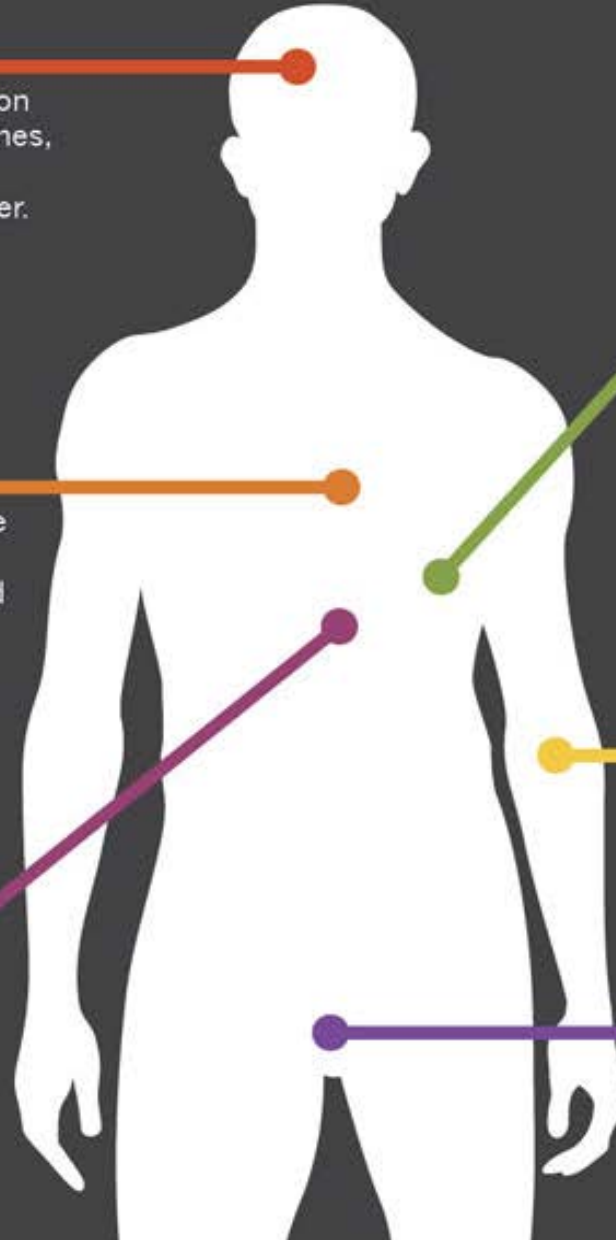
Lack of concentration and energy, headaches, dizziness, panic, depression and anger.



Increased heart rate and blood pressure leading to increased risk of high cholesterol and heart attack.



Upset stomach, acid reflux, pain ulcers and change in appetite leading to weight gain.



Suppressed immune system leading to illness and high levels of inflammation.



Joint pain and lowered bone density, muscle tension, tightness, and protein breakdown.



Decreased hormone production leading to reduced fertility and sex drive.



# Common emotional response

The fight, flight, freeze response

## Irritability (Fight)

- You may experience frustration towards your colleagues, the system, the general population, or the government.
- **Fight** – posting angry posts on social media, increased irritability at work or at home, increased motivation to help



## Anxiety (Flight)

- You may experience increased anxiety due to uncertainty of all the changes, fear of exposure to the virus, or spreading the virus to your family.
- **Flight** – anxiety tells us to run away from these threats (e.g., isolating as much as possible, not coming to work when we need to)



## Stuck (Freeze)

- You may be feeling stuck or in a fog, not sure what to do - paralyzed.
- **Freeze** – this may look like trouble making decisions, unable to come up with an answer quickly, deferring to others.

# Poll

I would rate my current well-being as:

- Outstanding
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

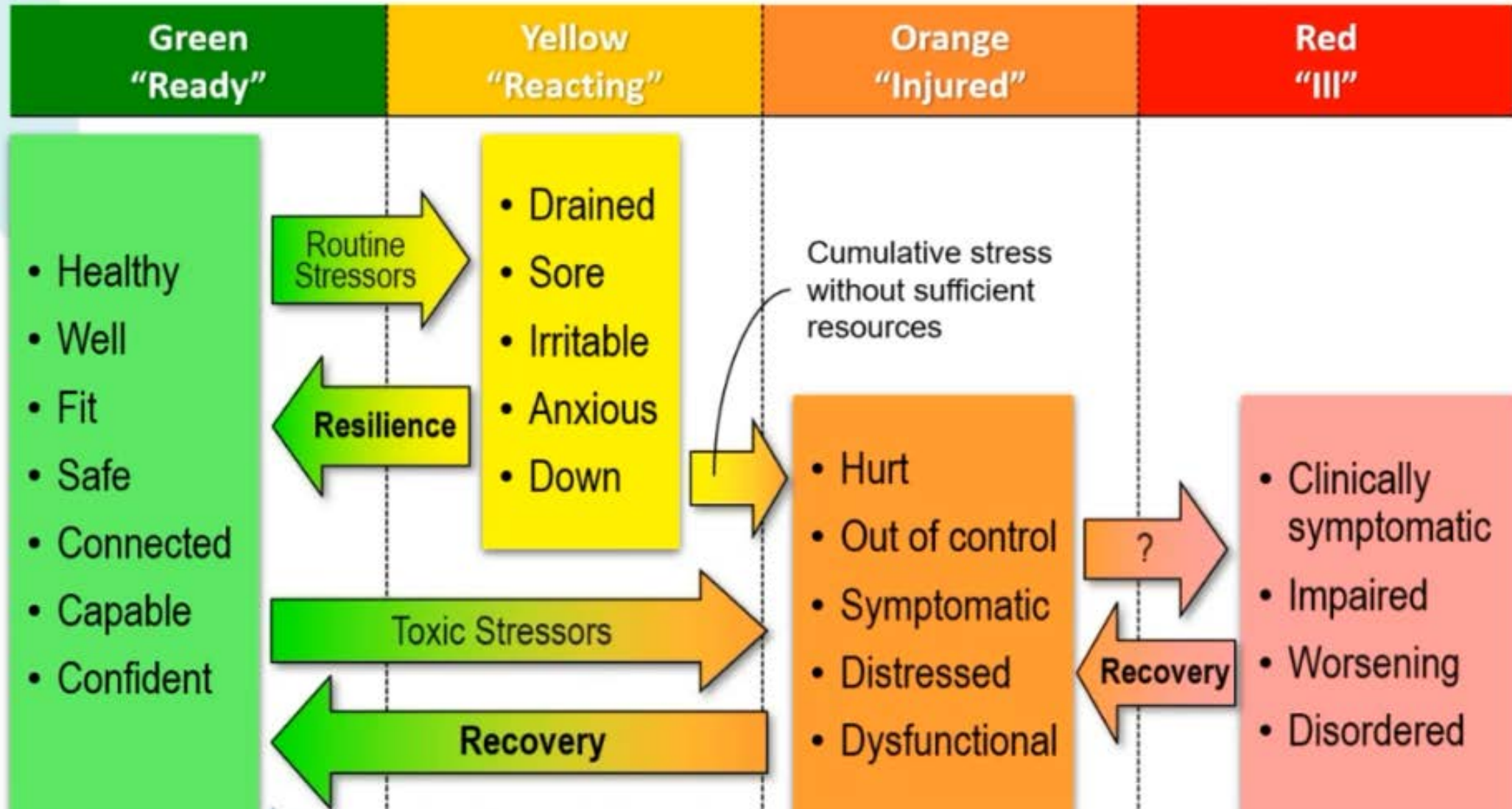
# Poll

I would rate my team's current well-being as:

- Outstanding
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- Poor



# Recognize Stress Zone Transitions: Demand::Resource Balance



# Poll

How has the pandemic affected your mental and emotional health?

# Poll

So much has changed with the advent of the pandemic creating a feeling of loss for all of us. What losses are you feeling the most at this time?

# Losses



Resilience  
and  
Growth



# WORK-FROM-HOME GUY

SPCA ALABAMA  
PETA GROUP

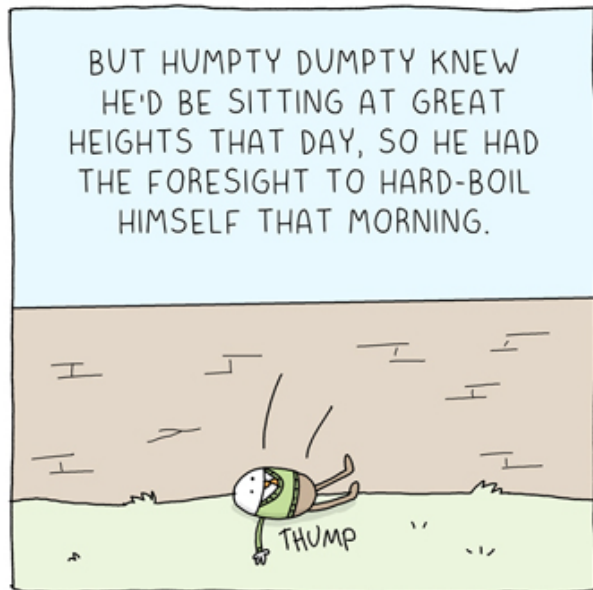
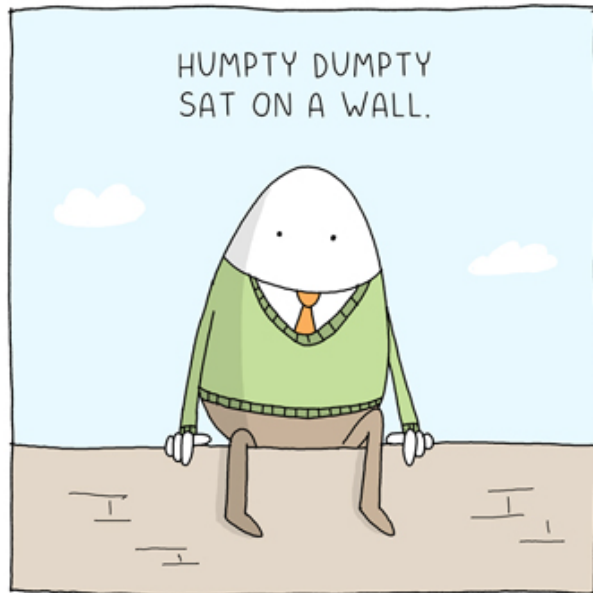


# Resilience

**Definition:** a psychological quality that allows some people to be knocked down by the adversities of life and come back at least as strong as before.

- Rather than letting difficulty overcome them, highly resilient people find a way to change course, emotionally heal, and continue moving toward their goals.
- How do we shift from the yellow, orange, red zone back to green?





## What helps you bounce back?

We've all been through stressful experiences in our lives. What helps you bounce back from stressful events?

How do you take care of yourself?

Can we increase our resilience?



# Building Resilience

## 4 Strategies



Prioritize Self-Care



Practice Self-Compassion



Practice Mindfulness



Emotionally Heal

# Self-Care Recommendations

If our basic needs are not appropriately met, we are all susceptible to emotional and physical vulnerability.



**EAT:** balanced and healthy diet with plenty of vegetables



**MOVE:** 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, moving every hour



**MOOD:** monitor your mood, ask for help, use relaxation and meditation to quiet your mind



**SLEEP:** prioritize setting a sleep schedule, shoot for 6-9 hours of sleep per night



**CONNECT:** build a social network in and outside of work, plan time outside of work to connect with friends/family



**HEALTH:** consistently follow up with medical providers, reduce unhealthy behaviors



**BOUNDARIES:** limit exposure to unhelpful media, set clear boundaries with work & home

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# Poll

How has the pandemic affected relationships within your teams?

# Poll

What have team members done to support each other emotionally during the pandemic?

# Connection

## For Ourselves

1. Identify friends, family that you would like to stay connected to.
2. Set a goal to connect with them once per week/month (text, send a letter, video call)
3. Open up to others about how you are feeling.

## For Our Teams

1. Set up specific meetings and other opportunities to stay connected (the amount of contact may vary depending on the person and the job).
2. Create a safe space that allows others to open up about how they are feeling and what they need. Set an example by sharing your feelings.



# WORK FRIENDS



# Setting boundaries: Doing what works



## Work & Home

Set time limits

Do I need to answer that email now/today?

Create a space just for work (if you can)

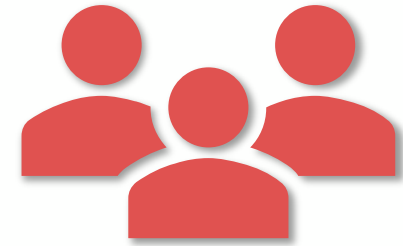


## Media

Limit media sources: news, social media, etc.

What helps you stay informed?

What increased my anxiety, worry, stress?



## Relationships

Prioritize relationships – family and friends

Increase social/virtual connection with those you choose



# Self-Compassion

“It’s simply giving the same kindness to ourselves that we would give to others.”

-Christopher Germer, PhD

## Self-Kindness

- Being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate.
- Being imperfect, failing, and experiencing life difficulties is inevitable



## Common Humanity

- “Human” means that one is mortal, vulnerable and imperfects.
- Suffering and personal inadequacy is part of the shared human experience.



## Mindfulness

- A non-judgmental, receptive mind state in which one observes thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to suppress or deny them.
- Putting our own situation into a larger perspective

(Germer & Salzberg, 2009; Neff, 2020)

# Mindfulness

Paying attention, in the present moment, non-judgmentally

# S

**Stop**

Just stop whatever you're doing. Stopping by definition, requires us to begin again. We can always begin again.

# N

**Notice**

What is happening within and around you?

# A

**Accept**

This is a tricky one. Whatever it is you're struggling with (time, work, fear, sleepiness, frustration) acknowledge it for what it is, without judgment.

# C

**Curious**

Ground yourself with questions about your experience and environment:  
What am I feeling?  
What do I need right now?

# K

**Kindness**

Respond to yourself and others (mistakes and all) with kindness and observe how that helps things get back on track.

# Mindfulness

Paying attention, in the present moment, to what is going on inside and outside of us, without judgment.

**S**  
**Stop**

Just stop whatever you're doing. Stopping by definition, requires us to begin again. We can always begin again.

## Resources:

Apps like Insight Timer, Headspace, and Calm

Books like the Headspace Guide to Meditation and Mindfulness or Wherever You Go, There You Are

Trainings like Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction

**K**  
**Kindness**

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right  
now?

# Emotionally Heal

Check in with yourself and reach out for help



## Self-Check

What emotions do I feel?

What do I need?

Have I prioritized my self care and well-being?

What am I thankful for?



## Take Action

Talk with a friend or family member

Plan a social event

Do something that brings you joy



## Reach Out

If you believe you're stuck in reaction or your stress isn't decreasing reach out for professional help

# **Growth: Next Steps**



# Growth – Next Steps

**Definition:** positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with a difficult situation

- Not just bouncing back, but bouncing back and finding meaning
- Learning from experiences and adjusting or making a change
- Who do you want to be moving forward?

Find a purpose

I stop compulsively consuming things that harm me, from food to news

I think how I can help others

Use my skills to service the ones in need

I hide how I'm really feeling

I start letting go of things that are out of my control

I show empathy to myself and others

I complain all the time

I identify my emotions

Who do I want to be moving forward?

**FEAR ZONE**

**LEARNING ZONE**

**GROWTH ZONE**

I transmit my anger and fear related emotions to others

I make myself aware of the situation and think about the best way to act

I live in the present and focus in the future

I forward all messages to others

I verify information before I share it

I keep myself emotionally happy and transmit hope

I acknowledge everyone is trying their best

I find ways to adapt to changes

I show gratefulness

I practice calmness, patience, relationships and creativity



# Time for a challenge...

- What did you learn today that you will take with you?
- What's one change you can make to increase your resilience and work toward growth?
- What's one change your team can make to improve resilience and work toward growth?



The background of the slide is a dense, overlapping collage of small, rectangular paper scraps in various colors including red, blue, yellow, green, pink, and white. Each scrap features a large, black question mark. The word "Questions" is centered over this background in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# Questions



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