

**CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN PEER SUPPORT**  
**Supporting Our Wellness in the  
Workplace**

**Support**  
**House**



Centre for  
Innovation in  
Peer Support

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## Acknowledgements

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## WELLNESS DEFINITION

“Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.

Tenets of Wellness:

- Wellness is a conscious, self-directed, and evolving process of achieving full potential.
- Wellness is multidimensional and holistic, encompassing lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment.
- Wellness is positive and affirming” (National Wellness Institute).



## SELF-CARE DEFINITION

“Self-care is the act of caring for ourselves in ways that increase or sustain our wellness.”

- Centre for Innovation in Peer Support



## BURNOUT DEFINITION

“Burnout... describe[s] the physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed at work.”

(Mathieu, 2019)

# Signs of Burnout

This section is adapted from: (Bourg Carter, 2013).

## Chronic fatigue

- Physical and emotional exhaustion, feeling drained and depleted
- Dreading what lies ahead

## Trouble with sleep and Insomnia

- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep or an inability to sleep

## Forgetfulness/impaired concentration & attention

- Forgetting things, difficulty focusing, things piling up

## Physical symptoms and increased illness.

- Chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, gastrointestinal pain, dizziness, fainting and headaches can all be signs of burnout
- You may also experience a loss of appetite or changes in weight
- Because your body is depleted, your immune system may become weakened, making you more vulnerable illness
- Medical assessment with any of these is important

## Mental health concerns

- Dr. Bourg Carter specifically identifies Anxiety and Depression as signs of Burnout
- These include tension, feelings of guilt, worry and worthlessness, you may feel trapped. These may interfere with your ability to do your work well
- We believe that people may experience a number of mental health related concerns

## Anger and irritability

- Anger and “irritability often stems from feeling ineffective, unimportant, useless, and an increasing sense that you're not able to do things as efficiently or effectively as you once did.”
- This can interfere with personal and professional relationships and our ability to do our job well
- It can destroy relationships and careers

## Loss of enjoyment

- May start with work but can extend to all areas of life
- You may avoid tasks or work altogether

## Pessimism, Feelings of apathy and hopelessness

- May include negative self-talk
- May extend to relationship issues and distrust with people at work
- Feeling you cannot count on anyone
- May feel like nothing is going right or matters, might sound like “what’s the point?”

**Isolation and detachment**

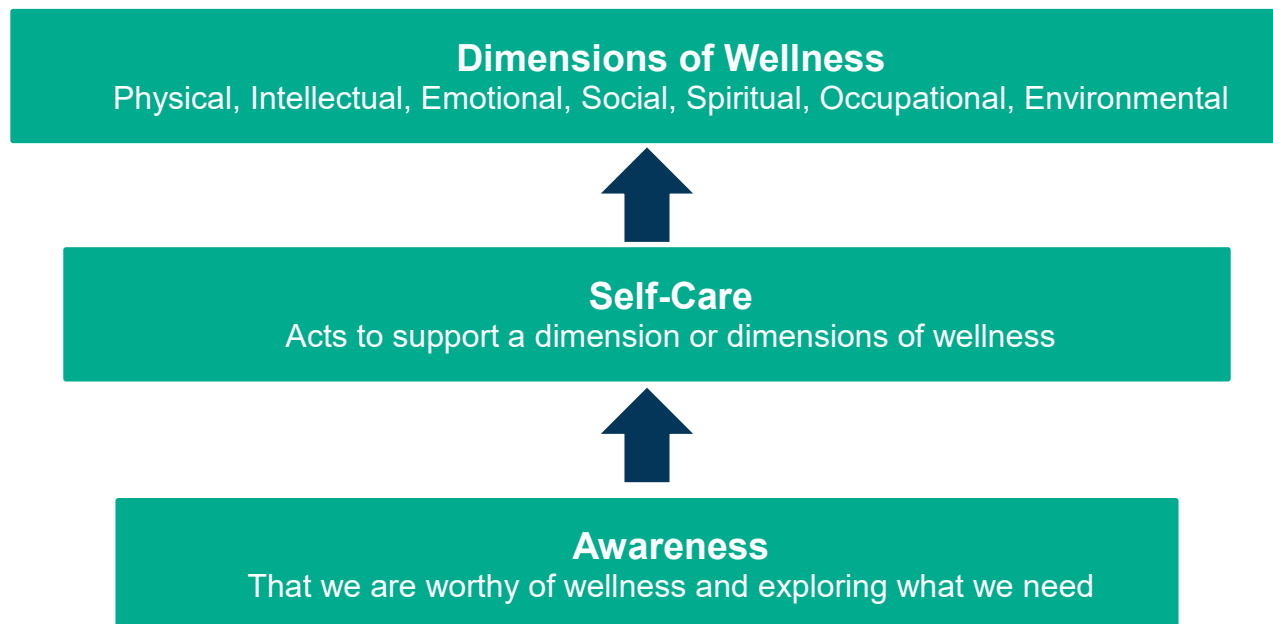
- Avoiding social and work situations
- Becoming angry when someone speaks to you
- Feeling disconnected from others and your environment
- Avoiding situations and work

**Lack of productivity and poor performance**

- Feeling unproductive even with long working hours
- To do lists grow and you feel overwhelmed
- We also recognize that you may see changes to how well you are able to perform the tasks and role of your position

# The Process of Wellness

The process begins with awareness that we are worthy of wellness and with that, exploring what it is that we need in order to feel well. Once we understand what it is that we need we can take action to support the area of need. These actions will support one, or many dimensions of our wellness, contributing to our overall wellbeing.



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*“Self-care should not be something we resort to because we are so absolutely exhausted that we need some reprieve from our own relentless internal pressure... True self-care is not salt baths and chocolate cake, it is making the choice to build a life you don’t need to regularly escape from.”*

(Wiest, 2021)

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# Dimensions of Wellness

This section is taken from: (Sunderland et al., 2013; Stoewen, 2017).

The Mental Health Commission of Canada has identified these areas of wellness as important to understand in the training of peer workers:

## Physical

- Caring for your body to stay healthy now and in the future

## Intellectual

- Growing intellectually, maintaining curiosity about all there is to learn, valuing lifelong learning, and responding positively to intellectual challenges
- Expanding knowledge and skills while discovering the potential for sharing your gifts with others

## Emotional

- Understanding and respecting your feelings, values, and attitudes
- Appreciating the feelings of others
- Managing your emotions in a constructive way
- Feeling positive and enthusiastic about your life

## Social

- Maintaining healthy relationships, enjoying being with others, developing friendships and intimate relations, caring about others, and letting others care about you
- Contributing to your community

## Spiritual

- Finding purpose, value, and meaning in your life with or without organized religion
- Participating in activities that are consistent with your beliefs and values

## Occupational/Vocational

- Preparing for and participating in work that provides personal satisfaction and life enrichment that is consistent with your values, goals, and lifestyle
- Contributing your unique gifts, skills, and talents to work that is personally meaningful and rewarding

## Environmental

- Understanding how your social, natural, and built environments affect your health and well-being
- Being aware of the unstable state of the earth and the effects of your daily habits on the physical environment
- Demonstrating commitment to a healthy planet

## Workplace Stressors and Self-Care Strategies

Dimension of Wellness	Possible Workplace Stressors	Self-Care Strategies
<b>Physical</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not taking breaks</li> <li>• Working at an unsustainable pace</li> <li>• Needing to work overtime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eating healthy<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Physical exercise / movement<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Engage in proper sleep hygiene<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Focus on your breathing and slow down your breathing rate<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Physical rest<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Staying hydrated</li> <li>• Switch between sitting and standing</li> <li>• Being aware of posture</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsupportive workplace relationships</li> <li>• Feeling uncomfortable asking for help</li> <li>• Not feeling cared for, heard or valued</li> <li>• Lack of setting boundaries that support healthy work life</li> <li>• Others' lack of respect for your boundaries</li> <li>• Feelings of guilt</li> <li>• Traumatic workplace event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set healthy personal and emotional boundaries<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Keep a sense of humour<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Focus on your daily accomplishments<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Avoid criticizing yourself unnecessarily,<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Ask people you trust for support<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Shut out media that includes disturbing images and messages<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Increase self-awareness through mindfulness meditation and narrative work such as journaling<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Write daily in a gratitude journal to help refocus your mind on the positive things in your life<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Emotional rest<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Be aware of the stories we tell ourselves – are there other considerations?</li> <li>• Can we hold others in high regard?</li> <li>• Can we avoid taking on guilt and responsibility that is not ours?</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affirmations</li> <li>• Being flexible in your approach to work</li> </ul>
<b>Spiritual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities conflict with your values and/or beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule meaningful activities for yourself<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Mindfulness<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Nurture your spirit using quiet reflection, meditation or prayer<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Spiritual rest<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Environmental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space is disorganized</li> <li>• Space is stressful</li> <li>• Space feels unsafe</li> <li>• Unsupportive seating/lighting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep your environment organized and tidy<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Post a list of what's valued, enjoyable or precious in your life on your fridge or somewhere you'll see it daily<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Sensory rest<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Stimulating or calming surroundings</li> <li>• Comfortable work station</li> <li>• Transitioning between work and home life</li> <li>• Additional ideas for working from home:</li> <li>• Separate space for work and life when possible</li> <li>• Shut the door or remove your work items from your space after</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being disconnected from your colleagues</li> <li>• Interpersonal commitments are not upheld</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing and maintaining a strong social support both at home and at work<sup>4</sup></li> <li>• Become more involved and connected with your friends, family or community<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Connect with people who care about you<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Social rest<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Support a healthy work environment</li> <li>• Building relationships and connection with colleagues and people in similar roles</li> </ul>

<b>Intellectual</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being uncomfortable saying “I don’t know”</li> <li>• Lack of learning and growth opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend relevant seminars and talks on mental health<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Mental rest<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Creative rest<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Engaging with materials and activities that interest you</li> <li>• Take courses and certificates</li> <li>• Building skills relevant to your work and professional growth</li> <li>• Asking for coaching or mentorship in areas you wish to grow</li> <li>• Listen to those with different expertise</li> </ul>
<b>Occupational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unmanageable Workload</li> <li>• Unclear priorities</li> <li>• Having to take on other people’s workload</li> <li>• Lack of role clarity</li> <li>• Lack of autonomy</li> <li>• Poor communication with colleagues/supervisors regarding work tasks</li> <li>• Contributions not being recognized</li> <li>• Organizational commitments are not upheld</li> <li>• Disorganized workplace structure</li> <li>• Constant high-stress activities</li> <li>• Colleagues/Supervisors do not role model healthy work habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stop multi-tasking – focus on one thing at a time<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Work at a reasonable, steady pace<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Break down seemingly overwhelming tasks and projects into smaller achievable parts<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Recognize and celebrate your small steps along the way<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Take regular assigned breaks<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Resist working unnecessary overtime<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Even if you must provide contact information in case of emergency, try to stay disconnected from work during vacation time as much as possible<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• If you’re feeling overwhelmed, ask for help, delegate tasks or reset priorities<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Learn to be comfortable with saying “I don’t know” if you don’t know<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Seeking role clarity - Knowing what is expected of you at work when unsure</li> <li>• Switching up the types of tasks done in a way to recharge</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting a reminder notification for the end of the work day</li> <li>• Communicating your needs to supervisors/colleagues</li> <li>• Changing your role or leaving your role</li> <li>• Attending communities of practice</li> </ul>
<p><sup>1</sup> Baynton, M &amp; Workplace Strategies team. (2021, February 26). Prevent burnout. Workplace Strategies for Mental Health.</p> <p><sup>2</sup> CAMH. Is there a cost to protecting, caring for and saving others? Beware of Compassion Fatigue.</p> <p><sup>3</sup> DeBara, D. (2021). How to leverage the 7 types of rest to be your happiest, most productive self. Trello.</p> <p><sup>4</sup> Mathieu, F. (2019). What is Compassion Fatigue. Tend Academy.</p>		

# The 7 Types of Rest

This section is adapted from: (deBara, 2021; Mulji, 2021).

Type of Rest	What it is	When it Might be Needed	Strategies & ideas
<b>Physical</b>	Resting your body	When you experience physical exhaustion/tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate sleep</li> <li>• Breath work</li> <li>• Naps</li> <li>• Stretching</li> <li>• Yoga</li> <li>• Massage therapy</li> </ul>
<b>Mental</b>	Giving your brain a break	When you're overwhelmed and struggle to calm your thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling breaks</li> <li>• Repeating encouraging mantras</li> <li>• Spending time in nature</li> <li>• Listening to music</li> <li>• Turning off devices for a while</li> <li>• Engaging in a grounding activity</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional</b>	Being authentic and honest with your feelings	When you get stuck in appeasing others or feel like you have to project a certain image of yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journaling</li> <li>• Freely expressing yourself</li> <li>• Having a heart-to-heart with someone you trust</li> <li>• Surrounding yourself with people you can be authentic around</li> <li>• Mental health services</li> <li>• Setting boundaries</li> </ul>
<b>Social</b>	Pursuing positive, energizing, and supportive social connections, or simply taking a break from socialization altogether	When their relationships leave them feeling drained and exhausted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spending more time with those who nourish and inspire you</li> <li>• Spending less time with those who may deplete your energy</li> <li>• Taking a break from socializing</li> </ul>

<b>Sensory</b>	Giving your senses a break	When your senses are overwhelmed with constant stimuli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limiting time on devices</li> <li>• Aromatherapy</li> <li>• Turning down bright lights or loud sounds</li> <li>• Incorporating moments of silence into your day</li> <li>• Shutting your eyes for a few moments</li> <li>• Taking time away from media</li> </ul>
<b>Creative</b>	Exposing yourself to artistic, nature-based, and innovative environments, without feeling the need to produce a creation—and feeling the sense of inspiration that comes along with them	When they feel stuck, uninspired, and unable to develop new ideas or solutions to problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading, listening or watching something inspiring</li> <li>• Letting go of the pressure to create</li> <li>• Nature walks</li> <li>• Surrounding yourself with inspiration</li> </ul>
<b>Spiritual</b>	Connecting with something larger than yourself	When you find yourself caught up in your challenges and can't see or connect with the bigger picture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading spiritual texts</li> <li>• Associating with like-minded people</li> <li>• Meditating or praying</li> <li>• Spending time in spiritual environments</li> <li>• Listening to spiritual talks</li> <li>• Volunteering your time to serve others</li> </ul>

# Supporting Your Wellness at Work

## Signs I am Burning Out

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## Supporting my Workplace Stressors

My Dimensions of Wellness	My Workplace Stressors	Self-Care Strategies That Work for me or That I Want to try
Physical	•	•
Emotional	•	•
Spiritual	•	•
Environmental	•	•
Social	•	•
Intellectual	•	•
Occupational	•	•

## DEBORAH Goal Setting Model

The DEBORAH Goal Setting Model may aid you in achieving workplace wellness goals.

<https://supporthouse.ca/resources/peer-resource-hub/provincial-systems-resources/>

## Is it Within my Control?

Within my Control	Somewhat Within my Control	Outside of my Control

## Communicating my Needs to Supervisors/Colleagues

I feel best supported in my role when....

- 
- 
- 

I'm having difficulty with...

- 
- 
- 

I'd like to try...

- 
- 
- 

Could we explore...

- 
- 
-


# Appendix




## Three Minute Breathing Space

This exercise is taken from: (Tikasz).

### THREE MINUTE BREATHING SPACE

Developed by Diana Tikasz, MSW, RSW



FIRST MINUTE	SECOND MINUTE	THIRD MINUTE
		
<p><b>NOTICE ANY SOUNDS YOU HEAR</b></p> <p>What sounds are near or far? Notice how the sounds arise and disappear Every time that you notice your thoughts wander, simply and without judgement, return to the sounds</p>	<p><b>NOTICE ANY BODY SENSATIONS</b></p> <p>What parts of your body are warm or cold? Notice the sensations of contact with the chair or with your clothing Whatever you notice is perfectly fine and does not need to be changed in anyway. Just notice.</p>	<p><b>NOTICE YOUR BREATH</b></p> <p>Where do you notice your breath- is it at the nostrils, the chest, the belly? Notice the expansion and the settling of the body as you breathe Can you follow the full inhale and exhale of breath?</p>
<p>For more information and other downloadable resources, go to <a href="http://www.TENDacademy.ca/resources" style="color: white;">www.TENDacademy.ca/resources</a></p>		

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## Connecting With our Emotions Exercise

- Today, I am grateful for \_\_\_\_\_.
- I was/will be kind to myself today when I \_\_\_\_\_.
- I am happy I did \_\_\_\_\_ today.
- I accomplished \_\_\_\_\_ today.
- Three kind things I want to say to myself are \_\_\_\_\_.
- I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_. I can \_\_\_\_\_.



# Ergonomic Office Workstation Setup Checklist

This checklist is taken from: (EWI Works).



## Is your desk ergonomically set up?

Use our Workstation Setup Checklist to ensure that you're set up for success. Use the diagram to see what factors we consider when setting up your desk.



- 1. Monitor Height**  
Set the top of screen to eye level.
- 2. Monitor Distance**  
The monitor should be 18-36" from your eyes. Single monitors should be positioned closer, and dual monitors should be positioned farther.
- 3. Keyboard & Mouse**  
Keyboard and mouse are beside one another, at the same height, and close to the front edge of the work surface. The desk or keyboard tray is adjusted to your elbow height.
- 4. Desktop Arrangement**  
Frequently used items are positioned within an arm's reach of your seated position.
- 5. Shoulders**  
Shoulders are low and back. No reaching forward. Armrests are adjusted to your elbow height (elbows bent to 90 degrees)
- 6. Backrest**  
Backrest is adjusted to provide lumbar support in the lower back. Backrest angle is adjusted between 90 - 110 degrees.
- 7. Knees**  
Knees are bent at 90-120 degrees. There is 2-3" of space behind the knee and the front edge of the seat.
- 8. Feet**  
Feet are fully supported either on the floor or on a footrest.
- 9. Break**  
You have taken a microbreak in the last 30 minutes
- 10. Postural Break**  
You have taken a short walk around your work area within the last hour.

[ewiworks.com](http://ewiworks.com)

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## Workload Overview Template

Tasks	Weekly	Monthly
<b>Meetings</b> (Internal and External)		
<b>Administration</b> (Emails, planning, preparation)		
<b>Direct Service</b> (groups, one to one meetings, work on behalf of people engaging in services etc.)		
Total Hours		

## Additional Resources to Explore

Professional Quality of Life Measure:

[https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/dfc1e1a0-a1db-4456-9391-18746725179b/downloads/ProQOL\\_5\\_English\\_Self-Score.pdf?ver=1622777390411](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/dfc1e1a0-a1db-4456-9391-18746725179b/downloads/ProQOL_5_English_Self-Score.pdf?ver=1622777390411)

Resilience, Burnout & Meaning:

<https://www.tendacademy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Resilience-Balance-Meaning-excerpt-Self-Care-Questionnaires-Dr.-Pat-Fisher-2016.pdf>

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