

Information Section

Welcome to Trusted Care's First Aid Mental Health Toolkit. This kit is not a panacea but rather a tool to help you manage your own mental health and wellbeing as well as a resource to provide you with the confidence to reach out to the myriad of specialised services available.

What is Mental health?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as 'a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to her or his community'. Mental illness can affect anyone, of any age and background. However, with support most people can and do recover. Achieving and maintaining good mental health and wellbeing is important for everyone.

How common are Mental Health Issues?

An estimated 1 in 6 working people suffer from mental illness. It is likely that you will encounter these issues in the workplace.

How much does mental illness cost?

11 billion dollars annually in Australia. 3 to 4 sick days are taken each month for untreated depression.

What is the role of work in mental health and wellbeing?

Work can be beneficial for an individual’s wellbeing particularly in favourable working conditions. Work provides people with a sense of purpose, acceptance within society and an opportunity for development. Workplaces can play an active and significant role in maintaining the health and wellbeing of their workers as well as assisting in recovery from mental health issues. Reducing the stigma of mental health can lead to better outcomes for everyone. Below are some facts and myths about mental illness.

Myth	Fact
Mental Illness only affects a few people	1 in 5 people experience mental illness
Mental illness is caused by personal weakness	Mental illness is not a character flaw. It is caused by genetic, biological, social and environmental factors
People with mental illness can pull themselves out of it	A mental illness is not caused by personal weakness and it is not cured by personal strength
People with mental illness never get better	With appropriate treatment people can and do recover from mental illness
Mental Illness will permanently reduce your capacity to function in a work environment	During periods of mental ill health productivity may be affected. But recovery generally brings a return to previously functioning levels

Trusted Care workplaces should stay alert to the signs and symptoms of mental health problems.

Mental Health signs and symptoms

Signs and symptoms of Stress and Fatigue

- Physical and emotional exhaustion
- Feeling ineffective as a social worker

Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety

- Feeling nervous restless or tense
- Having an impending sense of danger panic or doom

Lack of patience and focus
Anxiety
Loss of enthusiasm about the work
Heightened irritability
Feeling emotionally drained
Sleep issues/fatigue
Loss of inspiration
Feeling distracted or unable to focus
Increased cynicism or negativity
Depression

Increased heart rate
Breathing rapidly
Sweating
Trembling
Feeling weak or tired
Having trouble thinking or concentrating
Having trouble sleeping
Digestive problems

Signs and symptoms of Depression

Sadness
Tiredness
trouble focusing or concentrating
unhappiness
anger
irritability
frustration
sleep issues (too much or too little)
no energy

loss of interest in pleasurable or fun activities
craving unhealthy foods
restlessness
worrying
drug or alcohol abuse
pain, like headaches or muscle aches
suicidal thoughts or tendencies
guilt
dropping out of activities

anxiety

poor performance at work or school

isolation

trouble thinking clearly or making decisions

What do mental health issues actually look like?

Follow the links below or alternative search “youtube” for the signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression and burnout to see how they appear to broaden your mental health understanding.

Stress	Anxiety	Depression	Burnout
(770) 6 Signs of Stress You Shouldn't Ignore - YouTube	(770) 10 Signs of Hidden Anxiety - YouTube	(770) 7 Signs Of Depression - YouTube	(770) 6 Signs You're Burnt Out, Not Lazy - YouTube
(770) How stress affects your body - Sharon Horesh Bergquist - YouTube	(770) Symptoms of Anxiety - YouTube	(770) Signs of Depression Kaiser Permanente - YouTube	(770) 7 Signs You're Burnt Out But Don't Realize It - YouTube
(770) Signs Your Body Is Stressed - Telltale Signs - YouTube	(770) Physical Symptoms Of Anxiety - YouTube	(770) Clinical Depression Signs & Symptoms (& How It's Diagnosed) - YouTube	(770) Burnout - Causes, symptoms and treatment - YouTube

Signs and symptoms of mental health issues may be an indication you are in need of self-care.

What is self-care?

Self-care refers to the activities that we deliberately choose to engage in on a regular basis to maintain and enhance our health and wellbeing. By incorporating self-care activities into your regular routine, like taking a walk or socialising with friends, you give your body and mind time to rest, reset and rejuvenate, so you can reduce or prevent the symptoms of stress and anxiety. Some self-care activities are provided below to get you started.

Part 1 - Self-care Exercises

Self-care exercise	Mode	Time	When
Mindfulness meditations (6 weeks)	online	2 to 10 minutes	3 x per week

Desired Outcomes

- Increased ability to sustain and direct attention
- More positive emotions (love, joy, gratitude and interest)
- Fewer negative emotions (anger, fear, guilt and stress)
- More likely to respond with interpersonal warmth and kindness
- Active coping behaviours

Materials Required

- Internet connection (computer/smartphone)
- Quiet space

Instructions

1. Log into YouTube on your smartphone, computer or tablet device
2. Search for and select the meditation that is most appropriate for you (search “mindfulness meditations”)
3. Select a meditation that is as short or as long as you are comfortable with
4. Ensure you are free from distractions and in a quiet space
5. Complete the meditation
6. Describe your experience below

Describe your experience in the table below: did you experience any positive outcomes or barriers to completing the activity? How might you go about overcoming these barriers?

Time taken	Feelings before meditation	Feelings after meditation	Barriers	Comments

Additional Online Resources (Links to YouTube Mindfulness)

- [\(695\) 2 minute mindfulness - visual mindfulness exercise - YouTube](#)
- [\(695\) 2-Minute Guided Meditation to Release Stress - YouTube](#)
- [\(695\) 2 Minute Guided Meditation for Grounding - YouTube](#)
- [\(695\) 2 Minute Meditation | Guided Meditation for Beginners - YouTube](#)



Self-care exercise Mode Time When

Yoga week (6 weeks)	online	15 to 30 minutes	2 x per
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Desired Outcomes

- Decreases in perceived stress

- More resilient to stressful situations
- Maintain and foster wellbeing and resilience
- Reduction in anxiety
- Improved health outcomes

Materials Required

- Internet connection (computer/smartphone)
- Yoga Mat
- Water bottle
- Quiet space

Instructions

1. Log into YouTube on your smartphone, computer or tablet device
2. Search for and select the yoga class that is most appropriate for you (search “yoga”)
3. Select a yoga class that is as short or as long as you are comfortable with
4. Ensure you are free from distractions and in a quiet space
5. Ensure that you have a yoga mat and water
6. Complete the yoga class
7. Describe your experience below

Describe your experience in the table below: did you experience any positive outcomes or barriers to completing the activity? How might you go about overcoming these barriers?

Time taken	Feelings before the yoga class	Feelings after the yoga class	Barriers	Comments

Additional Online Resources (Links to YouTube Yoga)

- [\(695\) Day 1 - Ease Into It - 30 Days of Yoga - YouTube](#)
- [\(695\) Day 2 - Stretch & Soothe - 30 Days of Yoga - YouTube](#)
- [\(695\) Day 3 - Forget What You Know - 30 Days of Yoga - YouTube](#)
- [\(695\) Day 4 - Yoga For Your Back - 30 Days of Yoga - YouTube](#)
- [\(695\) Day 5 - FEEL ALIVE FLOW- 30 Days of Yoga - YouTube](#)



Self-care exercise Mode Time When

Journaling (6 weeks)	online/offline	15 to 20 minutes	3 x per week
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Desired Outcomes

- Increase Achieve goals. When you use your journal to write down your goals, you can keep better track of your intentions.
- Track progress and growth, you can see your growth by viewing previous entries
- Gain self-confidence, by looking back at the challenges you've faced and seeing how far you've come
- Improve writing and communication skills

- Reduce stress and anxiety, writing can release negative thoughts from your mind
- Strengthen memory

Materials Required

- Internet connection (computer/smartphone) or alternatively a pencil/pen and notebook
- Quiet space
- Penzu/Momento/Grid Diary (Journaling apps) or use paper notebook

Instructions

1. Download one of the Journaling apps or alternatively find a suitable paper notebook for journaling
2. Begin the journaling process, the online apps will provide direction
3. For paper journaling, reflect on your day or your week
4. Continue writing for 15 minutes or until you are comfortable that you have sufficiently reflected your thoughts
5. Describe your experience below

Describe your experience in the table below: did you experience any positive outcomes or barriers to completing the activity? How might you go about overcoming these barriers?

Time taken	Feelings before journaling	Feelings after journaling	Barriers	Comments

Additional Online Resources

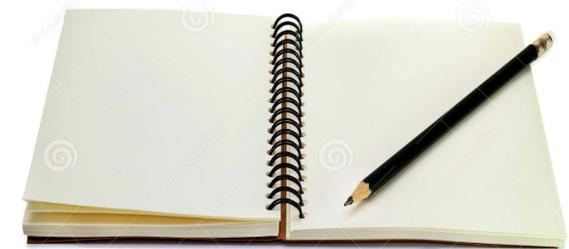
(Links to YouTube Journaling tips)

[\(809\) 9 JOURNALING TIPS for beginners | how to start journaling for self-improvement + 70 PROMPTS 📌 - YouTube](#)

[\(809\) 5 Easy Ways to Start Journaling 📌 - YouTube](#)

[\(809\) The Journalling Techniques that Changed My Life - YouTube](#)

[\(809\) 10 journaling tips and tricks \(for beginners\) - really easy!! - YouTube](#)



Additional Journaling Tips

1. Scribble or write a quote on the first page. Starting can be difficult, but once you have started it will become easy
2. Keep a prompt list of things that you have thought throughout the day or the week that you want to go back to and reflect on
3. Use a guided Journal – online Journals will have a theme and direct your writing which is easier
4. Embrace the mess – don't worry about how your journal looks, just use it to explore your thoughts and emotions
5. Don't edit your work as you go, just record your genuine thoughts as they come to you
6. Always carry your journal – if a thought occurs to you that you wish to explore later you can write it down
7. Write a letter to a former version of yourself
8. Write a letter to someone else
9. Write in different places
10. Turn off distractions
11. Use quotes as a starting point
12. Stay honest
13. If sentences are too difficult to start with, write lists instead

14. Write about right now:

- Sight – See everything around you and write it down
- Hear – Close your eyes in between paragraphs and listen to your world, then capture it in words
- Smell – You might want to go on a walk around your neighborhood, pausing to breathe and capture the scents
- Feel – Emotions? Fingertips? You decide!
- Taste – What flavors are actually in your favorite soda?
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Self-care exercise	Mode	Time	When
Positive Affirmations (six weeks)	online	5 to 10 minutes	2 x per week

Desired Outcomes

- Improved personal health behaviours and subjective health
- Less sadness and anger
- Improvement in mental and physical wellbeing
- Greater happiness, hopefulness and optimism
- Improvement in mental and physical wellbeing

Materials Required

- Internet connection (computer/smartphone)
- Quiet

Instructions

1. Log into YouTube on your smartphone, computer or tablet device
2. Search for and select a positive affirmation that is most appropriate for you (search “positive affirmations”)
3. Select a positive affirmation that is as short or as long as you are comfortable with

4. Ensure you are free from distractions and in a quiet space
5. Press play on the affirmation and listen to the audio
6. Describe your experience below

Describe your experience in the table below: did you experience any positive outcomes or barriers to completing the activity? How might you go about overcoming these barriers?

Time taken	Feelings before the affirmation	Feelings after the affirmation	Barriers	Comments

Additional Online Resources (Links to YouTube Positive Affirmations)

[\(695\) 2 Minutes of POWERFUL Positive Affirmations - MORNING - 🧘 - YouTube](#)

[\(695\) 1 Minute of Positive Affirmations - YouTube](#)

[\(695\) 60 seconds affirmation #shorts - One minute positive affirmations - YouTube](#)



[\(695\) 42 Morning Affirmations \[KICK-START YOUR DAY!\] - YouTube](#)

Brisbane Locations for self-care activities

Connecting with others is another important aspect of self-care and the following locations may assist you in extending your self-care activities to include socialisation with others in person or online.

Mindfulness

Streamline Meditation (07) 3289 5181
Level 6, 140 Creek St. Brisbane

Brisbane Mindfulness Center 0413 842 013
31/133 Moray St. New Farm

Mindfulness Works Australia 1800 138 119
General Enquiries and Public Courses

Yoga

Bloom Yoga and Wellness 0458 077 615
409 Beaudesert Rd Moorooka

Stretch Yoga (07) 3210 6886
2/129 Margaret St. Brisbane

Flex Hot Yoga (07) 3899 3312
174 Bennetts Rd. Norman Park

Tai Chi

Marlene’s Tai Chi For health and wellness 0402 313 319

Australian Academy of Tai Chi (07) 3358 1955
80 Enoggera Tce. Paddington

Gold Dragon Tai Chi Academy (07) 3324 9652
27 Naracott St. Carina

Hiking

South Boundary Rd. Enoggera Reservoir 4520

600 Toohey Rd. Nathan 4111

Mogill Conservation Park
Chalcot Rd. Anstead 4070

Rock Climbing

Crank Indoor Rock Climbing (07) 3422 1121
537 Kessels Rd. Macgregor 4109

Urban Climb West End 1300 001 203
2/220 Montague Rd. West End, 4101

Rock Climbing Kangaroo Point 0437 078 301
Lower River Tce. 4169



Other Self-care domains	Example activities
Physical	Eat regular and healthy meals, good sleep habits, regular exercise, medical check-ups
Emotional	Engage in positive or rewarding activities, acknowledge your own accomplishments, express emotions in a healthy way
Spiritual	Read inspirational literature, self-reflection, spend time in nature, meditate, prayer
Professional	Pursue meaningful work, maintain work-life balance, foster positive relationships with co-workers, take breaks
Social	Healthy relationships, make time for family, schedule dates with partner/ spouse, ask for support from family and friends
Financial	Understand how finances impact your quality of life, create a budget or financial plan, make a plan to pay off debt
Psychological	Take time for yourself, disconnect from electronic devices, learn new skills, access psychotherapy or counselling support through your EAP if needed

Part - Coping Strategies

When faced with increased demands, we can use either positive or negative coping strategies. Below are a few examples of each. Which strategies do you use?

Examples of positive coping strategies	Examples of negative coping strategies	List your positive coping strategies
Slow breathing	Snapping or lashing out at others	
Listening to music	Smoking	
Exercising	Working through breaks	
Reading for pleasure	Skipping meals	
Connecting with friends	Drinking alcohol to excess	
Engaging in a hobby	Withdrawal from friends and family	
Going to the movies	Bottling emotions up	
Spending time with family	Social isolation	

List some of your coping strategies in the column provided. It's important to be honest when evaluating your behaviours. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed or angry, snappy with others, or unable to switch off the worries, it may be time to re-evaluate your coping skills.

Evaluating your coping strategy

Reflect

Reflect on your existing coping strategies. What's working? What isn't working?

Examine

Are there barriers to maintaining your self-care? Are there any small steps you can take to address these? Do you need to ask others for assistance?

Replace

Work towards reducing, and then eliminating, negative coping strategies. If you find yourself using negative strategies, then begin by choosing one action you feel is most harmful and identify a positive strategy to replace it.

Remember

Self-compassion is key here, everyone makes mistakes and occasionally uses negative coping strategies, this process is about recognising and replacing harmful behaviour.

Part 3 - Nutrition

How the food you eat is directly related to your mental health

Nutritional psychiatrists argue that the food culture and dietary contents of what we eat hugely affect our brain functions. Practically, the brain depends on certain nutrients to function. Almost all the body functions highly depend on the nutrients supplied by your diet.

The four Australian Mental Health Nutrition Guidelines

Guideline 1 - achieve and maintain a healthy weight, be physically active and choose amounts of nutritious food and drinks to meet your energy needs

Adults should be active most days, preferably every day. Each week, adults should do choose option A, B or C

Options	Type of activity
A	2.5 to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity - such as a brisk walk, golf, mowing the lawn or swimming
B	1.25 to 2.5 hours of vigorous intensity physical activity - such as jogging, aerobics, fast cycling, soccer or netball
C	an equivalent combination of moderate and vigorous activities.

Include muscle strengthening exercises on at least two of those days.

Muscle strengthening exercises
Push ups
Pull ups
Squats or lunges
Lifting weights
Household tasks that involve lifting, carrying or digging



Doing any physical activity is better than doing none. If you do no physical activity right now, start by doing some, then slowly build up to the recommended amount.

Guideline 2 - Limit intake of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol

How to limit sugar, salt and alcohol
Limit intake of foods high in saturated fat such as many biscuits, cakes, pastries, pies, processed meats, commercial burgers, pizza, fried foods, potato chips, crisps and other savoury snacks.
Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added salt.
Limit intake of foods and drinks containing added sugars such as confectionary, sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials, fruit drinks, vitamin waters, energy and sports drinks.
If you choose to drink alcohol, limit intake.



Guideline 3 - Care for your food; prepare and store it safely

Food safety and storage
Keep high-risk food at 5 °C or below or above 60 °C to avoid the temperature danger zone and food poisoning.
Store raw foods below cooked foods.
Store food in suitable, covered containers.



Food degrees)	Avoid refreezing thawed foods.	can be spoiled within 2 hours in the food temperature danger zone (between 40 and 140
	Check and observe the use-by dates on food products.	
	Take special care with high-risk foods	

Guideline 4 - Enjoy a wide variety of nutritious foods from these five groups every day:

- Group 1: Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain
- Group 2: Vegetables and Legumes/beans and/or high cereal fiber varieties
- Group 3: Lean meats and poultry, fish
- Group 4: Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat
- Group 5: Fruit, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

Part 4 - Helping Others

Tips for helping others (colleagues, friends, family)

Recognise your limits

Ask yourself “am I willing to have this conversation with this person?” You should decide what level of support and care you are realistically able to provide. Explain to your work colleague that you may only be able to provide a listening ear, but you will also be able to let them know about other types of support that are available.

Stop

Stop what you are doing and give them your full attention. If you are busy and can't give them your time at that moment suggest an alternative time that is convenient for both of you. Make sure you keep it.

Listen

Find a space where you will not be disturbed and you can give them your full attention. Resist the temptation to ask lots of questions or interrupt, let them tell their story at their own pace and in their own way. Ask questions later if you feel they are important but take the time to listen carefully and properly.

Body Language

Be aware of your body language. To show you are listening, face the person and give them your full attention.

Reserve Judgement

Listen without making judgements about what they are saying. Resist the temptation to jump in with solutions, however, don't agree with them about something you are not comfortable with. In some instances, you may have to provide them with a gentle 'reality check'.

Clarify

Check that you have fully understood what they are saying and seek clarification on the things you aren't clear on.

Break Issues Down

You can assist the person by helping them recognise where they can start to take action, by identifying the most immediate issues or ones that will provide some early relief

Offer support not solutions

It is not your job to solve their problems, but you may know of someone who has faced similar challenges, or resources they can access that can assist them.

Keep Issues Separate

Keep the issue you are discussing separate from other issues in the workplace (unless their concern is a workplace issue) and resist the temptation to talk about your own concerns and troubles in response.

Follow Up

Let them know that you are available if they want to talk further. Finish the conversation by checking that they are clear about what has been spoken about and what is the next step for them.

RuOK tips to starting conversations

www.ruok.org.au

Part 5 – Support Services

Support 24/7

Contact Number

Suicide Callback Service

Provides nationwide, professional telephone and online counselling for anyone affected by suicide including people concerned about a friend, family member or colleague, and can provide support in a crisis. The Suicide Call Back Service can provide up to six further telephone counselling sessions with the same counsellor, scheduled at times best suited to

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your needs.

Lifeline

Provides access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.

131 114

Mensline Australia

A national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family and relationship concerns. The service is available from anywhere in Australia and is staffed by professional counsellors, experienced in men's issues

1300 789 978

Beyond Blue Information Line

beyondblue Information Line is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related disorders in Australia.



Police/Ambulance/Fire

In an emergency phone 000 immediately

000

Other Services

Your general practitioner (GP)

Any GP in your local area can provide an accurate diagnosis, referral to psychologist or psychiatrist, and a Medicare mental health care plan (free counselling included) and visits remain confidential.

Employee Assistance Program

An Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a work-based intervention program designed to enhance the emotional and psychological well-being of employees. EAP provides free counselling (limited sessions). [About | Employee Assistance Program Professional Association \(eap.org.au\)](#)

Organisations offering counselling and support services

www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

www.SANE.org

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

www.beyondblue.org.au

www.reachout.com.au



Part 6 - Self-assessment

PROFESSIONAL QUALITY OF LIFE SCALE (PROQOL)

When you help people, you have direct contact with their lives. As you may have found, your compassion for those you help can affect you in positive and negative ways. Below are some questions about your experiences, both positive and negative, as a helper. Consider each of the following questions about you and your current work situation. Select the number that honestly reflects how frequently you experienced these things in the last 30 days.

1=Never 2=Rarely 3=Sometimes 4=Often 5=Very Often

- 1. I am happy. _____
- 2. I am preoccupied with more than one person I [help]. _____
- 3. I get satisfaction from being able to [help] people. _____
- 4. I feel connected to others. _____
- 5. I jump or am startled by unexpected sounds. _____
- 6. I feel invigorated after working with those I [help]. _____
- 7. I find it difficult to separate my personal life from my life as a [helper]. _____
- 8. I am not as productive at work because I am losing sleep over traumatic experiences of a person I [help]. _____
- 9. I think that I might have been affected by the traumatic stress of those I [help]. _____
- 10. I feel trapped by my job as a [helper]. _____
- 11. Because of my [helping], I have felt "on edge" about various things. _____
- 12. I like my work as a [helper]. _____
- 13. I feel depressed because of the traumatic experiences of the people I [help]. _____
- 14. I feel as though I am experiencing the trauma of someone I have [helped]. _____
- 15. I have beliefs that sustain me. _____
- 16. I am pleased with how I am able to keep up with [helping] techniques and protocols. _____
- 17. I am the person I always wanted to be. _____
- 18. My work makes me feel satisfied. _____
- 19. I feel worn out because of my work as a [helper]. _____
- 20. I have happy thoughts and feelings about those I [help] and how I could help them. _____
- 21. I feel overwhelmed because my case [work] load seems endless. _____
- 22. I believe I can make a difference through my work. _____
- 23. I avoid certain activities or situations because they remind me of frightening experiences of the people I [help]. _____
- 24. I am proud of what I can do to [help]. _____
- 25. As a result of my [helping], I have intrusive, frightening thoughts. _____
- 26. I feel "bogged down" by the system. _____

- 27. I have thoughts that I am a "success" as a [helper]. _____
- 28. I can't recall important parts of my work with trauma victims. _____
- 29. I am a very caring person. _____
- 30. I am happy that I chose to do this work _____

Based on your response, place your personal scores below. If you have any concerns, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health care professional.

In this section, you will score your test so you understand the interpretation for you. To find your score on each section, total the questions listed on the left and then find your score in the table on the right of the section.

Compassion Satisfaction Scale

Copy your rating on each of these questions and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table below.

1. ____ 6. ____ 12. ____ 16. ____ 18. ____ 20. ____ 22. ____ 24. ____ 27. ____ 30. ____

Total: _____

The sum of my compassion satisfaction is	My compassion satisfaction level is
22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Moderate
42 or more	High

Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale

Just like you did on Compassion Satisfaction, copy your rating on each of these questions on to this table and add them up. When you have added them up you can find your score on the table to the right.

2. ____ 5. ____ 7. ____ 9. ____ 11. ____ 13. ____ 14. ____ 23. ____ 25. ____ 28. ____

Total: _____

The sum of my secondary trauma questions is	My secondary trauma level is
22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Moderate
42 or more	High

Burnout Scale

On the burnout scale you will need to take an extra step. Starred items are “reverse scored.” If you scored the item 1, write a 5 beside it. The reason we ask you to reverse the scores is because scientifically the measure works better when these questions are asked in a positive way though they can tell us more about their negative form. For example, question 1. “I am happy” tells us more about the effects of helping when you are not happy so you reverse the score

*1. _____ = _____ *4. _____ = _____ 8. _____ 10. _____ *15. _____ = _____ *17. _____ = _____ 19. _____ 21. _____ 26. _____ *29. _____ = _____ Total: _____

For the starred items follow the table below, then add them up just like the other scales

You wrote	Change to
1	5
2	4
3	3
4	2
5	1

The sum of my burnout questions is	My burnout level is
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22 or less	Low
Between 23 and 41	Moderate
42 or more	High

What is Compassion Satisfaction?

Compassion satisfaction is about the pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well. For example, you may feel like it is a pleasure to help others through your work. You may feel positively about your colleagues or your ability to contribute to the work setting or even the greater good of society. Higher scores on this scale represent a greater satisfaction related to your ability to be an effective caregiver in your job. If you are in the higher range, you probably derive a good deal of professional satisfaction from your position.

If your scores are below 23, you may either find problems with your job, or there may be some other reason—for example, you might derive your satisfaction from activities other than your job.

What is Secondary Traumatic Stress?

The second component of Compassion Fatigue (CF) is secondary traumatic stress (STS). It is about your work related, secondary exposure to extremely or traumatically stressful events. Developing problems due to exposure to other's trauma is somewhat rare but does happen to many people who care for those who have experienced extremely or traumatically stressful events. For example, you may repeatedly hear stories about the traumatic things that happen to other people, commonly called Vicarious Traumatization. If your work puts you directly in the path of danger, for example, field work in a war or area of civil violence, this is not secondary exposure; your exposure is primary. However, if you are exposed to others' traumatic events as a result of your work, for example, as a therapist or an emergency worker, this is secondary exposure. The symptoms of STS are usually rapid in onset and associated with a particular event. They may include being afraid, having difficulty sleeping, having images of the upsetting event pop into your mind, or avoiding things that remind you of the event.

If your score is above 41, you may want to take some time to think about what at work may be frightening to you or if there is some other reason for the elevated score. While higher scores do not mean that you do have a problem, they are an indication that you may want to examine how you feel about your work and your work environment. You may wish to discuss this with your supervisor, a colleague, or a health care professional

What is Burnout?

Most people have an intuitive idea of what burnout is. From the research perspective, burnout is one of the elements of Compassion Fatigue (CF). It is associated with feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively. These negative feelings usually have a gradual onset. They can reflect the feeling that your efforts make no difference, or they can be associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment. Higher scores on this scale mean that you are at higher risk for burnout. If your score is below 23, this probably reflects positive feelings about your ability to be effective in your work.

If you score above 41, you may wish to think about what at work makes you feel like you are not effective in your position. Your score may reflect your mood; perhaps you were having a “bad day” or are in need of some time off. If the high score persists or if it is reflective of other worries, it may be a cause for concern.

If you have any concerns, you should discuss them with a physical or mental health care professional.