



Transitioning Back to Work

Created and prepared by Nancy Boyle; Village Business Institute Employee Assistance Program Trainer



1. Discuss the realities of change and transition



2. Examine the effect of stress on communication



3. Tips for helping yourself and team through the transition

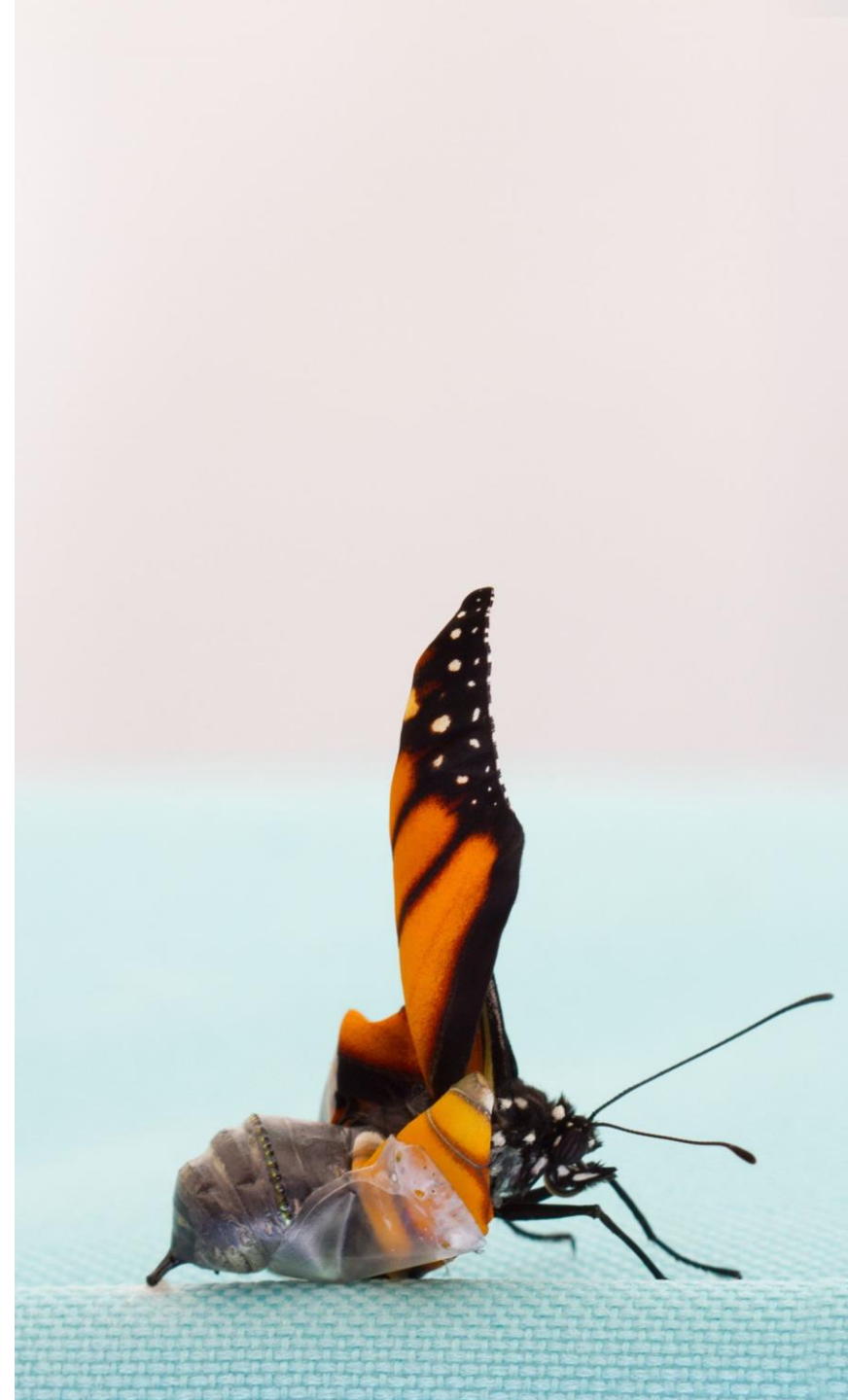
Learning Objectives:

Transition

- is what a person experiences internally, i.e., confusion, uncertainty, loss, fear, or anger

Change is a process –

- it is continual and has predictable patterns. Change takes place outside the individual, i.e., restructuring, new program focus, work force expansion, or downsizing.



What's the Difference?

Change

- Occurs outside the person
- Relatively quick
- Focuses on the future
- Drives to commitment

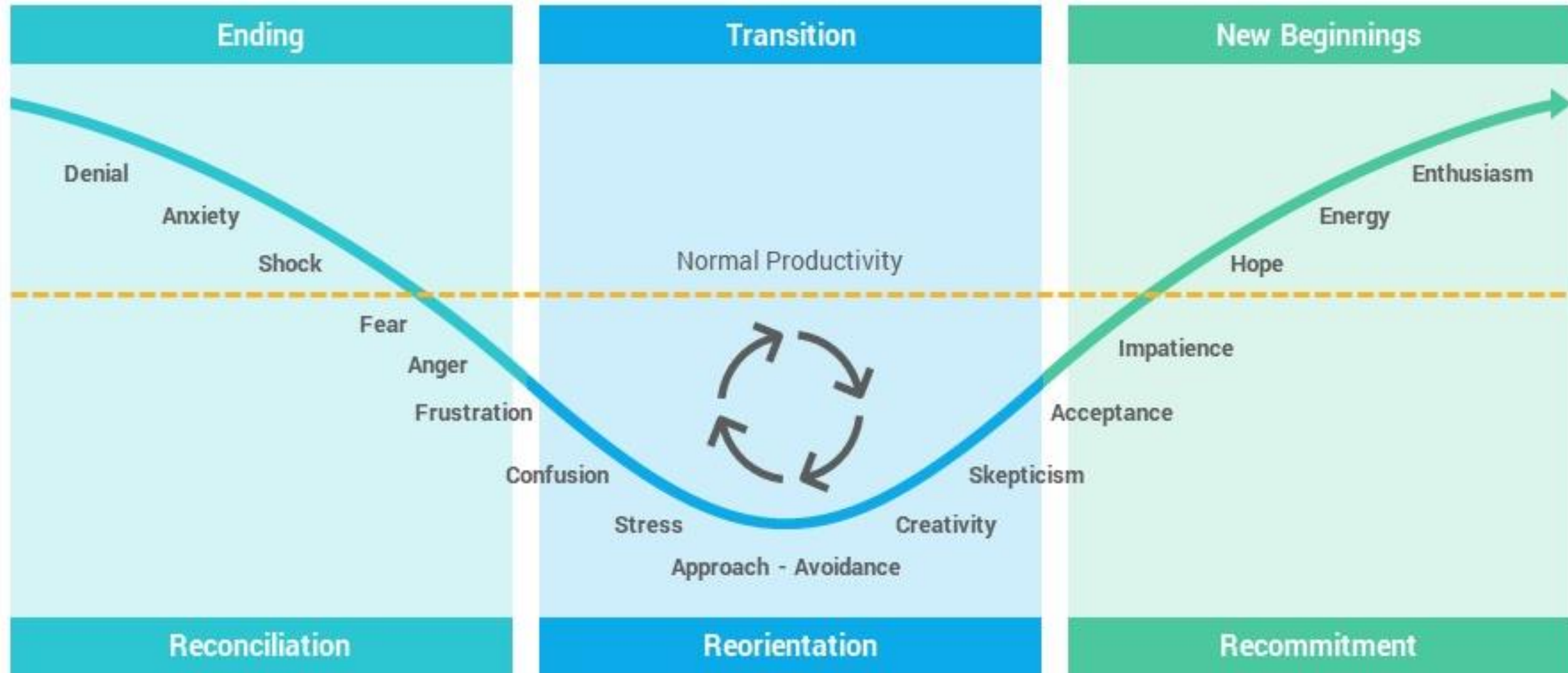
Transition

- Occurs inside the person
- Takes much longer
- Stresses the need to manage endings
- Recognizes a neutral zone



Bridges Transition Model

William Bridges Transition Model



Stage 1: Ending, Losing, and Letting Go

When people realize that change is on the way, they may:

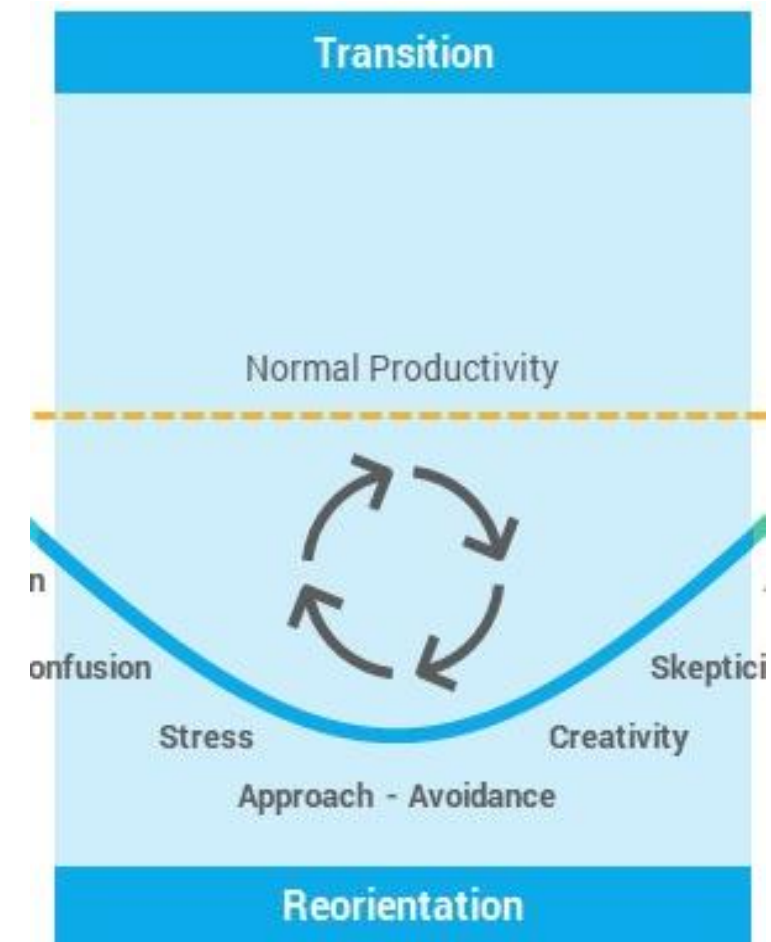
- Feel afraid
- Enter denial
- Become angry
- Feel sad
- Feel disorientated
- Feel frustrated
- Experience uncertainty
- Undergo a sense of loss



Stage 2: The Neutral Zone

You are likely to notice the following reactions:

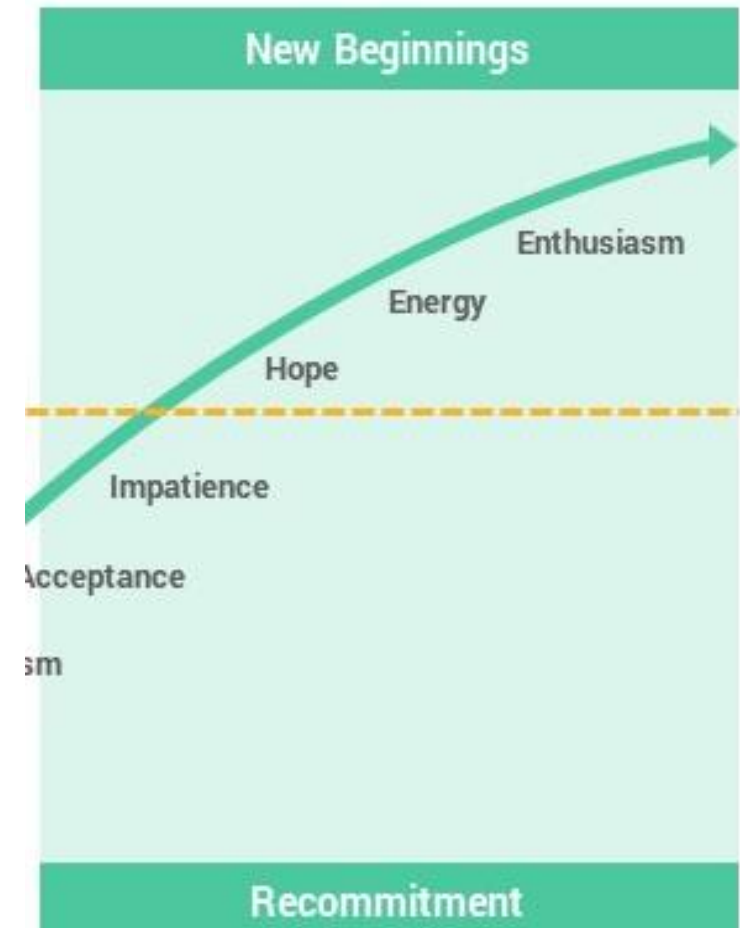
- Employees or individuals show that they resent the change.
- Morale is low, and productivity suffers.
- They are skeptical about the change initiative.



Stage 3: The New Beginning

Now, the emotions people experience become far more positive:

- They feel energized
- They want to learn more
- They feel committed to their role





Covid-19's impact on the workplace is ***all-encompassing***.

Employers worldwide are trying to work out what will be the ***'new normal'***.



Realities

- ▶ Many feeling uneasy
- ▶ Views, beliefs and perceptions challenged
- ▶ Impact on workplace
 - ▶ Inability to concentrate
 - ▶ Increased incident of error
 - ▶ Lapses in memory
 - ▶ Increase in absenteeism
 - ▶ Tendency to overwork
 - ▶ Increased arguments
 - ▶ Isolation from others



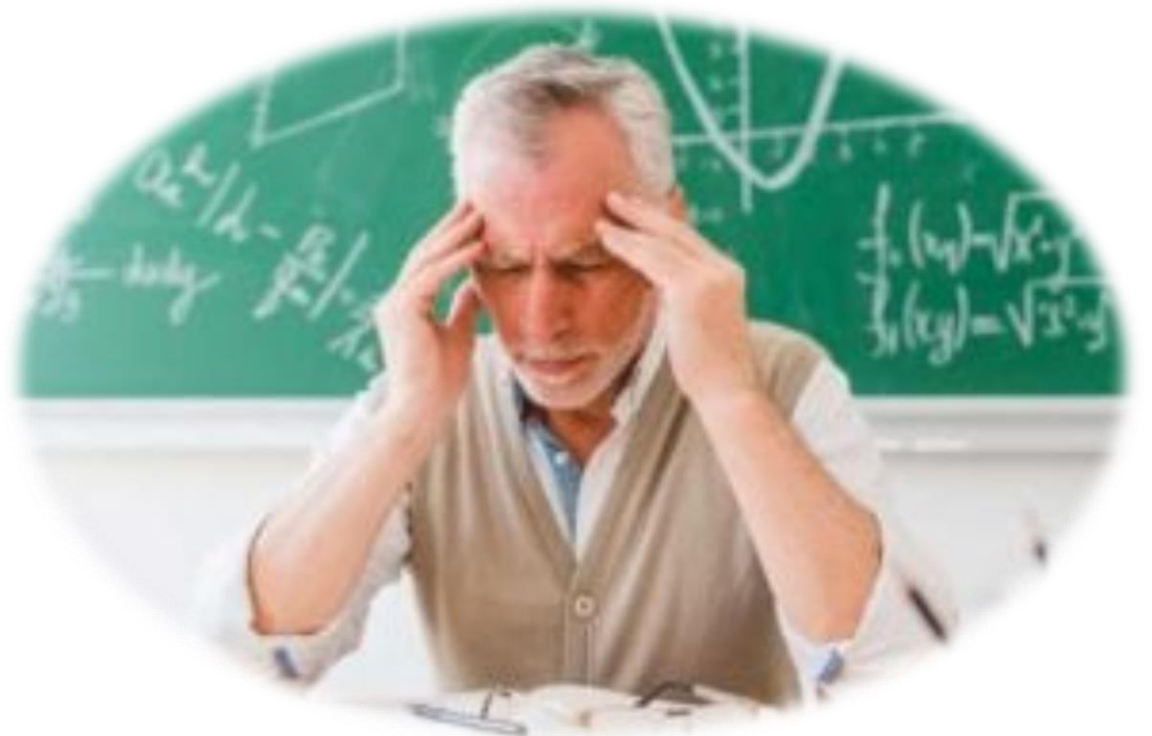
Anxiety and stress can't be eliminated, and a healthy amount of stress leads to productivity and creativity.



But there's a fine line and when employees become overly stressed, it takes a toll on both them personally and the overall health of the company.

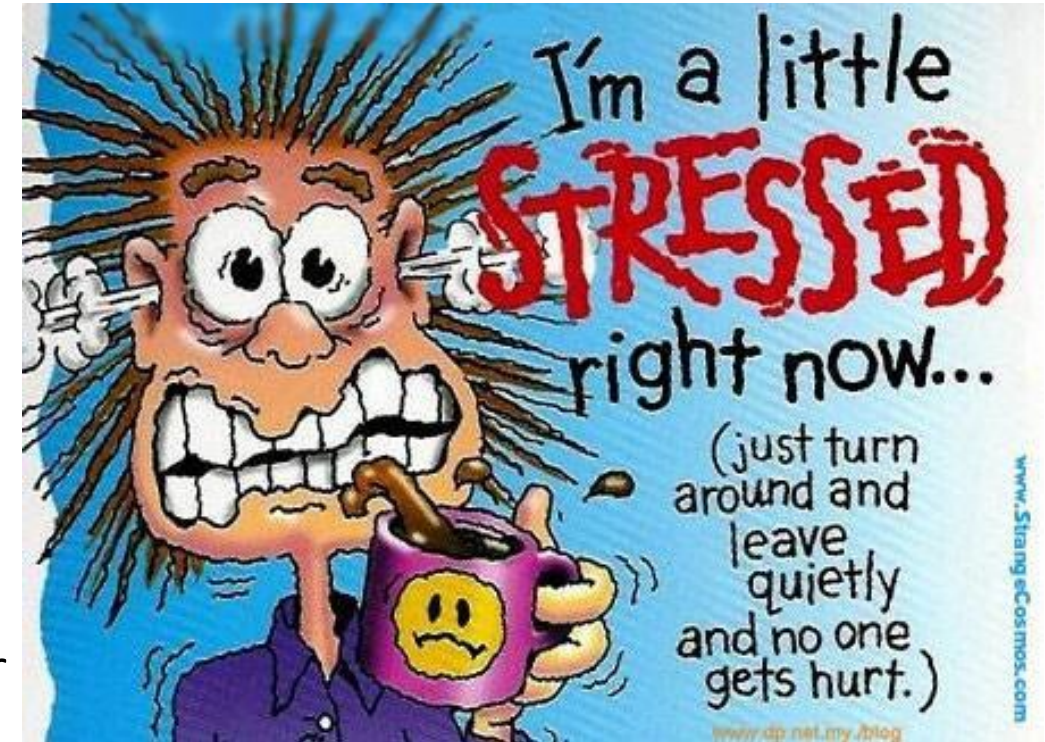
What is Stress?

Stress is the body's chemical reaction to a perceived or real threat of a harmful situation.



Realities of Stress

- ▶ Stress and out-of-control emotions
- ▶ People who feel stressed may...
 - ▶ Become easily frustrated or angry
 - ▶ Cause people to pull away
 - ▶ Misunderstand another person's intentions or what they are trying to communicate
 - ▶ Affect their ability for public speaking



Stress Questionnaire

Answer yes, even if only part of a question applies to you. Take your time, but please be completely honest with your answers: Answering yes or no

I frequently bring work home at night

Not enough hours in the day to do all the things that I must do

I deny or ignore problems in the hope that they will go away

I do the jobs myself to ensure they are done properly

I underestimate how long it takes to do things

I feel that there are too many deadlines in my work / life that are difficult to meet

My self confidence / self esteem is lower than I would like it to be

I frequently have guilty feelings if I relax and do nothing

I find myself thinking about problems even when I am supposed to be relaxing

I feel fatigued or tired even when I wake after an adequate sleep

Stress Questionnaire

I have a tendency to eat, talk, walk and drive quickly

I often nod or finish other peoples sentences for them when they speak slowly

My appetite has changed, have either a desire to binge or have a loss of appetite / may skip meals

I feel irritated or angry if the car or traffic in front seems to be going too slowly/ I become very frustrated at having to wait in a queue

If something or someone really annoys me I will bottle up my feelings

When I play sport or games, I really try to win whoever I play

I experience mood swings, difficulty making decisions, concentration and memory is impaired

Stress Questionnaire

I find fault and criticize others rather than praising, even if it is deserved

I seem to be listening even though I am preoccupied with my own thoughts

I find myself grinding my teeth

Increase in muscular aches and pains especially in the neck, head, lower back, shoulders

I am unable to perform tasks as well as I used to, my judgment is clouded or not as good as it was

I find I have a greater dependency on alcohol, caffeine, nicotine or drugs

I find that I don't have time for many interests / hobbies outside of work

A **yes** answer score = 1 (one), and a **no** answer score = 0 (zero).

Scoring

4 points or less:

You are least likely to suffer from stress-related illness.

5 - 13 points:

You are more likely to experience stress related ill health either mental, physical or both. You would benefit from stress management / counseling or advice to help in the identified areas.

14 points or more:

You are the most prone to stress showing a great many traits or characteristics that are creating un-healthy behaviors. This means that you are also more likely to experience stress & stress-related illness e.g. diabetes, irritable bowel, migraine, back and neck pain, high blood pressure, heart disease/strokes, mental ill health (depression, anxiety & stress). It is important to seek professional help or stress management counseling. Consult your medical practitioner.



Supporting Your Team...

- Respect individual reactions
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!
- Be available
- Monitor work processes, results, and behaviors; motivate and encourage employees
- Share the possibilities and expectations of the future
- Be a role model, support the changes

Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Communicating with Transparency

- Acknowledge concern
- Acknowledge uneasiness about the unknown
- Be willing to listen to personal & professional concerns

Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Communicating with Transparency

- Communicate consistently
- Anxiousness increases with a lack of information

Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Communicating with Transparency

- Address rumors & innuendos
- In times of stress, concentration and memory are impacted.
- Overcommunicate for clarification purposes

Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Physical Well Being

- New measures to protect physical health
- Fitness challenge
- Support mental health and improve productivity



Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Remember Self Care

- Maintain normal schedule
- Acknowledge feelings and thoughts
- Spend time with likeminded loved ones
- Practice mindfulness and relaxation



Create a daily routine

Keep it simple

Set your alarm

Time block your day, so you have a start and an end time

Take your breaks and lunches and

Plan to transition time to end your workday

Use Apps to Create Structure and Boost Mood

Break Apps

- [Stand Up! The Work Break Timer](#) For iPhone and iPad, this app allows you to customize your preferred break time to your specific work schedule. You can set reminder intervals in increments ranging from five minutes to two hours. And, it even provides a seven-day history so you can see how well you're doing at taking your regular breaks.
- [Randomly RemindMe](#) An Android app that you can use to remind you not only to take breaks, but to engage in other healthy habits like drinking water or exercising. Fully customizable for daily, weekly, and monthly reminders.

Use Apps to Create Structure and Boost Mood

Meditation Apps

- One thing you might want to do on your work breaks, once reminded of them, is meditate. The apps below can help you do it.

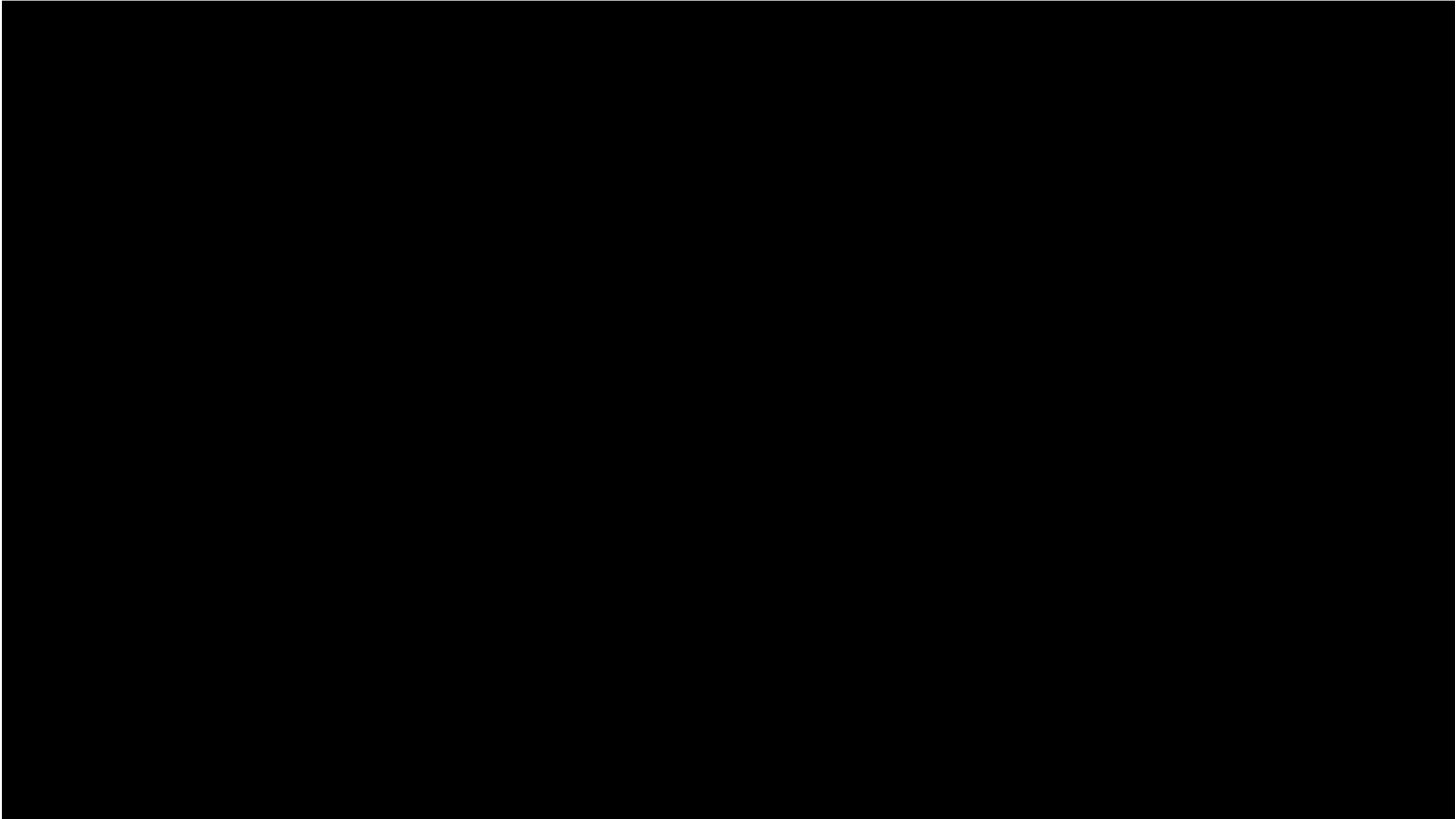
The Mindfulness App

- Available for [iPhone](#) and [Android](#), this app gives you timed sessions up to 30 minutes long (and as short as three minutes) for both guided and silent meditations. Customizable format with bells and nature sounds.
- [Headspace](#) Headspace offers an app for both [iPhone](#) and [Android](#) users. It offers lessons in meditation, breathing, living mindfully—and even sleeping, to restore yourself after your busy workday. Features courses that each have a series of guided meditations.

Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Remember Self Care

- Self-care activities
 - Listening to music
 - Watching cat videos
 - Taking regular breaks
 - Laughing with co-workers



Remember to be flexible and patient with yourself and others

Expect there to be an adjustment phase

Have realistic expectations and set reasonable priorities

Have a sense of humor

Look for and celebrate the good

Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Empathy

- Heightened feelings of stress and anxiety are unavoidable regardless of position in tough times
- Do not be afraid to share that you understand the feelings of anxiety & stress that your each other is experiencing.



Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Look for and Share the Positive

- In times of crisis we overlook the "good stuff" that give people hope
- Offer a positive outlook whether sharing positive stories regarding what businesses are doing to help people or sharing your thankfulness for the each other and team's dedication

Tips & Tools for Taking Care Yourself & Team

Recognize this is not a "business as usual" situation

- Acknowledging work is going to be impacted, slow down & reassure yourselves it is normal to feel apprehensive.
- Changes will happen, & you will get through it as a team.



Most Important

LAUGHTER

- Alleviate stress
- Fights off infection
- Boost brain health
- Lower blood pressure
- Improves your mood

Connections

Build a positive support system that is there for you and does not fuel your stress



TAKE CARE



OF YOURSELF

Taking care of yourself during times of distress

Remember to be kind to yourself

Everyone is struggling, there is comfort in numbers.

Remind yourself that you are having normal reactions to a stressful situation-don't label yourself "crazy" or beat yourself up for "not handling" your emotions.

There is no "right or wrong" way to react during times of distress

We need to find positive, healthy ways to care for ourselves so we can care for/support others.

Talk with others about how you are feeling, share your experiences.

Maintain as normal a schedule as possible, but don't overdo it.



**YOU GOTTA
NOURISH
TO FLOURISH**

Helpful Hints

Do things that feel good to you.

Check in with yourself and with others.

Ask “How am I feeling/What am I feeling?” to yourself and to others.

Identify others in your life that are supportive.

Practice relaxation techniques.

Meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, etc.

Reach out for help if things feel too overwhelming or you are struggling.

It is good to ask for help, don't be afraid/ashamed to say “I'm not okay right now”

Resources:

SHRM- Return To Work Quiz: Resource Guide Available via download

<https://www.shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/quiz/Pages/quiz-return-to-workplace.aspx>

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission-

Pandemic Preparedness for the Workplace and Americans with Disabilities Act

What you should know about Covid-19 and ADA Rehabilitation Act

<https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/pandemic-preparedness-workplace-and-americans-disabilities-act>

<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/what-you-should-know-about-covid-19-and-ada-rehabilitation-act-and-other-eeo-laws>



SHRM CEU Credit:
Activity number is 21-WAUAQ



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