

## Individual Stress Recovery Supports Inventory

This inventory helps you identify resources and supports that are already working for you to recover from stress. It also helps you discover new ways to support your whole human system. This assessment is a beginning, incomplete, list of practices for adults that can help manage stress and support stress recovery processes. This list isn't all inclusive, there's no "ideal" set of practices, more is not better, and you may find one category of supports is more helpful to your physiology than others, it's all cool to discover.

You can do this inventory in one sitting, or one section at a time over the span of multiple weeks as a “stress support challenge.” The inventory involves you assessing what practices you may be using, and which ones you could explore using, to support stress recovery.

The categories of stress supports are based on research about what helps stress recovery physiology and can be a buffer for when someone experiences stress. The research is general to a handful of categories of practices rather than the entire list (for example being physically active, getting enough sleep and eating nutritious whole foods/fruits/vegetables are mainstays about supporting stress recovery. There are infinite variations and possibilities of what can support people in different circumstances, even when there isn't research on it. If there's something else you can think of that you use occasionally or frequently, add it. If something is unfamiliar please feel free to explore it as an ongoing process of discovery.

If you choose to use this inventory as a platform to exploring and trying on new practices, I recommend spending 20 minutes at the end of each week to complete that week's assessment and then try on one new practice a few times or daily in the next week to see what you notice. It can be helpful to check in throughout the day and noticed on a scale of 1 to 10 how activated are you feeling and how pleasant are you feeling. Then you can check back in with these feeling states when trying new practices.

A resource that goes further than this inventory for those who work in trauma-focused jobs and are exposed to secondary trauma is Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization for Helping Professionals Who Work with Traumatized Clients by K.W. Saakvitne & L.A. Pearlman (1996). New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Another great resource that goes further for educators working in schools is Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators by Elena Aguilar (2018). Jossey-Bass. Her book also has an accompanying workbook.

### Assessment 1– Self Care and Self Expression

Self care for stress recovery is intentional ways you take action to protect or promote your own health or well being that helps you recover from stress. Everything in this inventory is a type of self-care. Self-expression is expressing/releasing one’s thoughts, feelings, emotions and/or ideas by using languages (written, verbal, symbols, physical), methods (pottery, paint, music, etc.) and materials (foods, paints, papers, pens, beads, etc.) without harming oneself or others. This can include restorative ceremonies, traditions, rituals and recipes. Review the list below and rate each element for the frequency in which you practice it in an average month.

5= Frequently

4 = Occasionally

3 = Rarely

2 = Never

1 = It never occurred to me

#### Self-Expression & Self Care

- ☐ Wear clothes I like
- ☐ Decorate, organize, clean a space/object (e.g. room, desk, house, car, bike) the way I like it
- ☐ Sing, hum, rap, beat box, chant, or whistle
- ☐ Dance (i.e. short dance breaks or dancing alone when no one is around counts)
- ☐ Play an instrument to make music or other sounds I like
- ☐ Draw or paint
- ☐ Make pottery or other clay art
- ☐ Write (in a journal, stories, poetry, other forms)
- ☐ Make mixed media crafts (i.e. jewelry, healing creams, sculpture, mixed media, paper arts)
- ☐ Make food or beverages for fun (e.g. baking, cooking, tea ceremony, coffee)
- ☐ Make textiles (i.e. knitting, sewing, weaving, felting)
- ☐ Pursue projects or activities that are interesting to me
- ☐ Allow myself sexual release in a way that does not harm others
- ☐ Allow myself to feel emotions
- ☐ Allow myself to cry
- ☐ Allow myself to laugh
- ☐ Allow myself to express/release anger in ways that don’t harm myself & others
- ☐ Pray or engage in ceremony that has faith or traditional meaning to me
- ☐ Giving myself a relaxing ritual or tradition daily or weekly such as reading a good book, spending time with an animal ally, having a cup of tea, playing with spirit cards, etc.
- ☐ Use “transition” rituals in the morning, coming home from work, before bed, etc.  
Example: having a quiet cup of coffee or tea after awakening before looking at phone screens, talking to others in transitions, or listening to a podcast while commuting.
- ☐ Take time away from the phone and screens (turning them off)
- ☐ Additional activities that have meaning to me:

Which of the activities on this list is your favorite now?

Which of the activities on this list have you not tried much and you are intrigued by?

## Assessment 2 – Supporting Sleep & Nutrition

Getting regular nutrition from whole foods, fruits and vegetables and sleeping regularly helps the body's system recover and self-regulate. This helps the body's stress response system recover better than if sleep is erratic and if people are lacking regular nutrition. Review the list below and rate each element for the frequency in which you practice it in an average month.

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### Body Basics: Sleep & Nutrition

- ☐ Get regular sleep (every night)
- ☐ Take naps
- ☐ Get regular spans of sleep that's uninterrupted (i.e. 3-4 hours at a time) if working shifts
- ☐ Use deep pressure stimulation such as a weighted blanket or "hand/arm self hugs"
- ☐ Take time off for rest/recovery when sick
- ☐ Rest or have down time after a lot of activity
- ☐ Avoid screens (e.g. computer, phone, tv, etc) an hour before bed
- ☐ Keep all light out of the sleeping area (e.g. phone, alarms, lights, dark curtains, etc.)
- ☐ Wear earplugs to sleep in
- ☐ If you wake up in the middle of the night and are restless you get up and do something else or relocate to sleep elsewhere (a couch, the floor) instead of tossing and turning
- ☐ Have a bedtime routine that helps you relax (i.e. music, guided meditation, body scan)
- ☐ Avoid caffeine in the afternoons and evenings to help with sleep
- ☐ If work evening shift, use natural spectrum light to help regulate your internal clock and support day time sleep
- ☐ Avoid stimulating/engaging movies, music, books & conversations an hour before bed
- ☐ Take baths before bed instead of energizing shower
- ☐ Exercise earlier in the day instead of after dinner to support sleep
- ☐ Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, dinner or snacking equivalents)
- ☐ Eat whole, less processed foods
- ☐ Eat multiple (at least 3 servings, aiming for 5) fruits and vegetables every day
- ☐ Drink water every day
- ☐ Eat meals without looking at a screen
- ☐ Minimize alcohol
- ☐ Minimize junk food (e.g. processed, fried, salty, sugar)
- ☐ Additional activities that have meaning to me:

Which of the activities on this list is your favorite now?

Which of the activities on this list have you not tried much and you are intrigued by (i.e. the sleep hygiene elements)?

### Assessment 3- Physical Activity

Being physically active helps the body regulate blood sugar, oxygen, pH levels, and hormone levels among many other benefits. Physical activity also intentionally initiates the stress response and expands both its capacity for more pressure and to recover faster. Just 5 minutes of incidental physical activity at a time (i.e. walking to/from the bus) three times a day can make a big difference at preventing chronic disease when practiced daily. Review the list below and rate each element for the frequency in which you practice it in an average month.

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#### Physical Activity

- ☐ Walk or hike as an activity (e.g. walk the dog, walk in the neighborhood, walk to transit)
- ☐ Taking the stairs instead of the elevator whenever you only are going up 1-3 levels
- ☐ Interval training through an app (i.e. 15 minute workout)
- ☐ Physical chores (e.g. vacuuming, sweeping, gardening)
- ☐ Calisthenics, or exercises that rely on your own body weight, like push ups or pull ups or sit ups, etc.
- ☐ Stretching (can be done seated)
- ☐ Arm circles, upper back and neck stretches done as breaks between computer work
- ☐ Run or jog
- ☐ Play a sport
- ☐ Swim, aquerobics, swim-jogging, pool-related exercise
- ☐ Surf, stand up paddle board, kayak, canoe
- ☐ Dance – formal or casual
- ☐ Hula hoop
- ☐ Brain breaks (i.e. standing activities where you use both sides of your body in unison)
- ☐ Rock climbing
- ☐ Aerial arts
- ☐ Core training (e.g. Pilates, barre)
- ☐ Exercise class (e.g. spin class, weights, strength training, martial arts, tai chi, qi gong, etc.)
- ☐ Incidental activity – walking or rolling to and from the bus, train, etc.
- ☐ Additional activities that have meaning to me:

Which of the activities on this list is your favorite now?

Which of the activities on this list have you not tried much and you are intrigued by?

### Assessment 4 – Building Supportive Relationships

Stable, supportive relationships are a stress recovery support. Even supportive relationships can hit bumps and involve stress. Practicing listening and expressing ideas, needs, and feelings can help build supportive relationships that can weather storms over time. Review the list below and rate each element for the frequency in which you practice it in an average month.

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#### Building Supportive Relationships

- ☐ Make time to see partner, friends, family, and co-workers (and practice social distancing in Covid19 times)
- ☐ Make time to reply to phone calls, emails or other contact from friends or family
- ☐ Make time to talk with partner, friends, family or co-workers
- ☐ Communicate what I appreciate about co-workers, friends, family and partner
- ☐ Display acts of affection for people I care about (e.g. hugs, cards, high-fives)
- ☐ Use “I” statements where I own my feeling/thinking experience without blaming others when communicating (i.e. “I feel sad” instead of “you made me feel sad”)
- ☐ Identify internal stories and share them (i.e. “the story my mind is telling is...”) when there’s confusion, conflict, hurt feelings or potential misunderstanding
- ☐ Give the gift of listening attentively with friends, family, partner and co-workers
- ☐ Identify what I’m saying “yes” to when I say “no” to something else
- ☐ Identify what I’m saying “no” to when I say “yes” to something else
- ☐ If I find myself saying “yes” or “no” automatically, inquiring internally why I said the yes or the no, and then returning to the decision if I find I’m unconsciously caretaking someone else’s needs while not honoring mine.
- ☐ Clarify the parameters of responsibilities I say yes to
- ☐ Accept and respect other people’s “no” as their boundaries, even if I don’t like it
- ☐ Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- ☐ Be open to new friendships, social experiences and to community
- ☐ Communicate my needs and desires
- ☐ Communicate my concerns or fears
- ☐ Negotiate for my needs
- ☐ Ask for help when I need it
- ☐ Ask questions if I don’t understand what someone said or meant
- ☐ Share a fear, hope or secret with someone I trust
- ☐ Allow others to do things for me
- ☐ Additional activities that have meaning to me:

Which of the activities on this list is your favorite now?

Which of the activities on this list have you not tried much and you are intrigued by?

### Assessment 5 - Mindfulness

Mindfulness is intentionally bringing the attention to the present moment and letting go of any analysis or judgment that arises as a practice. It is also a natural state of being where you find yourself fully engaged in your current thinking, feeling, emotional, and sensing experiences.

#### Mindfulness

- \_\_\_ Notice and name my emotions
- \_\_\_ Notice and name how my body feels
- \_\_\_ Notice and name sensations
- \_\_\_ Notice and name my needs and desires
- \_\_\_ Notice how my thoughts, feelings, emotions and sensations shift and change
- \_\_\_ Meditate or use regular mindfulness practice (a contemplative practice using a focus point for your attention that you return to when your mind wanders, you can focus on a word, on a sound, on the breath, loving kindness meditation, self-compassion practices, using visualization, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Breathing practices (e.g. measured breathing)
- \_\_\_ Mindful eating (e.g. peel an orange slowly, smell it, eat and taste it slowly)
- \_\_\_ Mindful walking (e.g. feeling the ground beneath your feet and each motion of your body as you slowly walk forward)
- \_\_\_ Self-compassion practices (i.e. bringing kind awareness to thoughts, feelings, heart, body)
- \_\_\_ Squeeze and release practices
- \_\_\_ Deep pressure stimulation practices (e.g. “hand hugs” or weighted blanket)
- \_\_\_ Tai chi, aikido, qi gong or other relaxing meditative physical activity
- \_\_\_ Origami or other methodical craft activity that helps your mind relax
- \_\_\_ Make time for reflection
- \_\_\_ Make time to look at nature: rain falling, ocean, trees moving in the breeze
- \_\_\_ Deep, present, listening where you refocus on what a person is saying without thinking of what you want to say, without judging what they are saying, simply a present awareness
- \_\_\_ Be open to inspiration
- \_\_\_ Be open to not knowing
- \_\_\_ Be open to awe
- \_\_\_ Be open to spiritual, soulful, or whatever word resonates for you about your connection to being alive and all that we do not know or understand about this mystery
- \_\_\_ Additional activities that have meaning to me:

Which of the activities on this list is your favorite now?

Which of the activities on this list have you not tried much and you are intrigued by?

### Assessment 5 - Therapeutics

Sometimes it can help to call in additional trained mentor people supports – for example therapists can be a stable supportive relationship you develop over time. The “therapeutics” category is broad in that it includes anyone who is a licensed provider/community leader sharing a specific type of care, a cultural healing practice, or a therapy that you can learn and practice on your own. This category also includes using another element as a therapeutic support for example in forest therapy the natural ecosystem is the support, in aromatherapy different natural oils are the support, in light therapy a full spectrum light bulb is the support.

#### Therapeutics

- ☐ Get regular medical care for prevention
- ☐ Get medical care when needed
- ☐ Get regular dental care for prevention
- ☐ Get dental care when needed
- ☐ Make time for talk, narrative (story), cognitive behavioral, attachment, acceptance and commitment, or other language-centered therapy
- ☐ Make time for somatic, body-centered therapy (e.g. Trauma Release Exercises, Emotional Freedom Technique, Hakomi, Somatic Experiencing, Feldenkrais Method, Sensorimotor Psychotherapy, etc.)
- ☐ Make time for body care (e.g. massages, physical therapy, acupressure, acupuncture)
- ☐ Make time for healing arts therapy (e.g. dance, expressive arts)
- ☐ Make time for nature-based therapy (e.g. ecotherapy, forest therapy, wilderness therapy)
- ☐ Aromatherapy
- ☐ Light therapy
- ☐ Hydrotherapy
- ☐ Energy therapy (i.e. reiki)
- ☐ Spend time in nature without a therapist
- ☐ See spiritual leader for spiritual therapy such as shaman or pastor
- ☐ Additional therapies that have meaning to me:

Which of the activities on this list is your favorite now?

Which of the activities on this list have you not tried much and you are intrigued by?

## Stress Supports Inventory

**Inventory** – Review each week and write down your top 7 activities you have tried and like to do for stress supports. Make sure 2 of them are ones you can do in the moment in public.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

After you have this initial list, rank your favorite ones by noticing if you have a preference between “1” and “2,” circle the one you like the best. Then choose between “1” and “3”, “1” and “4” and so on. Keep ranking the choices against each other on a separate page using the format below.

1 / 2  
1 / 3   2 / 3  
1 / 4   2 / 4   3 / 4   4 / 5  
1 / 5   2 / 5   3 / 5   4 / 6   5 / 6  
1 / 6   2 / 6   3 / 6   4 / 7   5 / 7   6 / 7  
1 / 7   2 / 7   3 / 7

Count how many times each number is circled. Notice how you feel about the results.

- 1 =  
2 =  
3 =  
4 =  
5 =  
6 =  
7 =

Choose your final top 5 practices that are your “go-to” favorite supports.

### Optional Reflection Questions for Journaling:

1. What did you notice when you reflected on these stress supports?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Did you use any new practices from this inventory and if so what did you notice?