

Cause and Effects of Stress

At work I do a good job at:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Is my job stressful? _____

What are the causes of stress at my job?

What are the effects of stress upon my co-workers? Myself?

What do you like about your work?

Exploring My Spirituality

What gives my life meaning?

Find a safe space and spend some time answering the following questions. Attempt to be honest, and if you get stuck move onto the next question, you can always return to that question at another time. Use your answers here as insight for writing your covenant.

1. Awareness of the “Other”: What do I value or hold as “sacred”?

2. Sense of Responsibility: How am I responsible for the world around me?

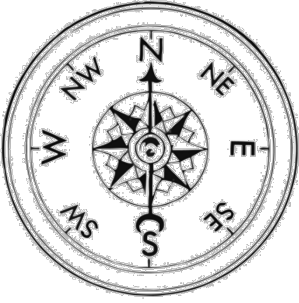
3. Sense of Vocation: What is my reason for being?

4. Sense of Community: Am I caring and am I cared for?

5. Sense of Repentance: Am I reconciled with self and others?

6. Ability to be Present: Am I focused on past, present or future?

7. Faith: How does my 'small story' fit into a bigger "story"?



Covenant Exercise

An empowering covenant:

A covenant is designed to provide its author with direction, purpose, and motivation towards actualizing all of his/her potentials both professional and personal. It is your MORAL COMPASS. It is written in an active and declarative voice and should empower its writer with a clear vision of his/her “best self”. . . the person we are becoming. This exercise is designed to help bring into focus your “best-self” and identify pathways to facilitate the continued evolution towards this goal.

Represents the deepest and best within you.

It comes out of a solid connection with your deep inner life.

Is the fulfillment of your own unique gifts.

It's the expression of your unique capacity to contribute.

Is transcendent.

It's based on principles of contribution and purpose higher than self.

Addresses and integrates all four fundamental human needs and capacities.

It includes fulfillment in physical, social, mental, and spiritual dimensions.

Is based on principles that produce quality-of-life results.

Both the ends and the means are based on true north principles.

Deals with both vision and principle-based values.

It's not good enough to have values without vision, you want to be good, but you want to be good for something. On the other hand, vision without values can produce Hitler. An empowering mission statement deals with both character and competence; what you want to be and what you want to do with your life.

Deals with all significant roles in your life.

It represents a lifetime balance of personal, family, work, community- whatever roles are yours to fill.

Is written to inspire you - not impress anyone else.

It communicates to you and inspires you at the most elemental level.

(Adapted from Covey, 1997)

Start to create your vision and mission for yourself. Complete each unfinished sentence (one min).

It is my covenant. . .

To live. . .

To work. . .

To continue. . .

To love. . .

To be. . .

To become. . .

To believe. . .

To promote. . .

To strive. . .

To seek. . .

Connection / Support Network

It is important to work within a team and be able to utilize them for your own support. You simply cannot do good caregiver work if you are isolated. You need to utilize a care network made up of individuals we trust and respect. You need to turn to these individuals on a regular basis (depending upon the intensity of your caregiver work) to receive support and to dilute the effects of your work.

Important functions of a support network:

Sharing Narratives (Primary and Secondary).

You have learned the value of narratives in helping heal the effects of caregiver stress. By sharing narratives you are able to regulate the experiences to the past, so that they stop intruding into the present and impeding or intention. You need to regularly share your personal and professional experiences that are intruding into your thoughts and dreams. This may be personal trauma from your past or it may be the experiences witnessed through your work and the people you help. Anything that is still causing you discomfort is appropriate.

Empower to Confront.

It is nearly impossible to see the ways in which you are becoming affected by the secondary stress and perceived threat associated with your work. Add to this the fact that most individuals have learned to deny symptoms until they produce a crisis. This is why it is important to pick two or three people from your support network and empower them to confront you when they see you becoming symptomatic and/or habitually breaching your integrity. You will want to empower them to “push” through your defenses and remind you of your covenant, asking them to “get in your face” even if you get irritated with them.

Telling on Ourselves.

Hopefully, you recognize the futility of avoidance, denial, suppression, and procrastination as stress-management strategies. It does not take looking too deeply to see that those strategies actually increase your levels of perceived threat and lower your resiliency – not to mention derailing your intentionality and covenant. Secrecy is a potent virus that causes spiritual sickness. You want to be free of these ills and for that reason you seek the value in externalizing and sharing with your trusted network the places that you are engaging in habitual breaches of our integrity. As you begin to engage in this proactive self-care, it gives you a good, clean feeling that you are maturing as you turn away from old ineffective coping towards your own integrity.

Accountability.

After you “tell on yourself,” your support network can become a source of accountability as you witness your commitment to bring your behavior into alignment with your code-of-honor. They can gently remind you by periodically asking you how you are doing in this particular area. You are much more likely to follow through on commitments that have been witnessed by others.

Training Your Network.

It is your responsibility to train your support network to be maximally supportive. Be careful to select people who sincerely want to help. When you are speaking to them, they may or may not “guess” how to be helpful to you. They may even perceive threat, wondering if they are really being helpful. You can help them relax by letting them know what you need from them and that you just need them to listen. Be respectful of their time by asking them when will be a good time for them and prepare what you will need to talk about. It is good practice to limit your time to about twenty minutes. Offer to do the same for them.