

# WHAT CAN I DO WHEN MY WELL(ness) RUNS DRY?



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CRITICAL-CARE NURSES

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# DISCLOSURES

**THERE ARE NO RELEVANT FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIPS TO DISCLOSE**



## INTENDED OUTCOMES: PARTICIPANTS WILL BE ABLE TO...

- Describe “Emotional Inflammation”
- Identify ways the body, mind and spirit react to difficult emotional situations
- Discuss strategies that foster the ability to moderate reactivity & restore equilibrium
- Relate tactics fellow participants find useful in coping with the challenges of turbulent times





# POLLING QUESTIONS

## HITTING THE “PAUSE” BUTTON: ARE YOU FEELING...

1. Unusually stressed out, techno-stressed, on edge, anxious, fatigued, lonely?
2. Bombarded with bad or alarming news & others' unpredictable moods?
3. “Emotional whiplash” – mood swings of sadness, fear, anger, hopelessness?
4. Agitated, foreboding, spiraling emotions, hyper reactive, hypervigilant?
5. Helpless, inadequate, cynical, apathetic, distracted, sleep-deprived?



# EMOTIONAL INFLAMMATION (EI)

- A condition similar to post-traumatic & even pre-traumatic stress.
- Takes a toll on body, mind & spirit.
- May cause loss of a sense of well-being, quality of life, ability to function.
- May result in a loss of the capacity for compassion, empathy & altruism.
- Physical, emotional & spiritual **reactions** to EI are personal... our own styles or types.
- Emotional reactions (or “reactivity”) vary based on temperament, past experiences, genetics, thought patterns, personality & lifestyle.



# UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY” (ER)

- ER represents survival strategies that have helped us thrive in life situations.
- ER is not inherently healthy or unhealthy, adaptive or mal-adaptive.
- There are four Types of Emotional Reactivity: both primary & situational.
- Understanding the Types helps us deal with different personality styles & communicate more effectively with others-especially in times of conflict.



# TYPES (OR STYLES) OF EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY\*

**REVVED-UP**

**RETREATING**

**MOLTEN**

**NERVOUS**

\*LISE VAN SUSTEREN, MD & STACEY COLINO



# EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY: NERVOUS TYPES

- They often feel anxious, worried, fearful.
- They may not know what is really bothering them, making them feel unsettled, afraid.
- Multiple “alarms” may distract & prevent *specific unidentified fears* from bubbling up.
- If unable to understand or turn off the reactivity, that can be a source of internal stress.
- Their “sixth sense” signals Nervous Types when something is “not quite right.”
- Tend not to miss warning signs; falsely reassure everyone when great/small danger lurks.
- Reactivity can be an important instinct attuned to potential threats & evolving conditions.





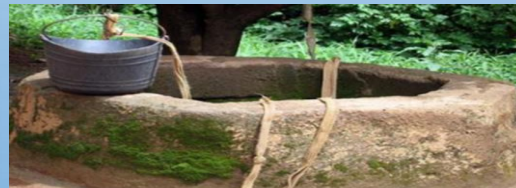
## EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY: REVVED-UP TYPES

- They often appear hyperreactive, endless things that could, should or think *must* be done.
- They may *seem* proactive, but their activity may help them avoid what is upsetting them.
- They may act impulsively under stress or negative emotions, resulting in compromised self-regulation.
- They may feel committed to righting the wrongs of the world with their energy & goodwill.
- They often need to deliberately & consciously execute their actions so as to see their work done uniquely well.



# EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY: MOLTEN TYPES

- They often appear irritated, even angry and/or indignant.
- They may feel embattled, shortchanged, frustrated, &/or fed up that the world is a mess.
- Aggravation may make them feel inclined to push back against conflictual values.
- They may feel a need to express annoyance to get others to be more responsible & accountable.
- They may be susceptible to occasional bursts of outrage, sarcasm or righteousness.
- *Anger inhibition* can increase blood pressure & other unhealthy outcomes. Change occurs when they use their energy to fuel, channel & direct social change with constructive action.



# EMOTIONAL REACTIVITY: RETREATING TYPES

- They often have a tendency to freeze, detach, withdraw, zone out or “go numb.”
- They may believe deep down that what they feel or do doesn’t make a difference.
- They may feel a sense of powerlessness, depletion, despair &/or resignation.
- When feeling physically & emotionally spent, unmotivated & unfocused, belief in their ability to effect meaningful change may erode & they may retreat further.
- They may get stuck in negative states of mind becoming more vulnerable to depression.
- They may benefit from slowing down, reflecting on some of the more *abstract issues* they are struggling with on an emotional level.





# POLLING QUESTIONS

## How do you relate to the Reactivity Styles?

1. Are there one or two types you found your self “landing” in – especially during the last few months?  
**A)** YES    **B)** NO
2. Which one(s)? **A)** Nervous    **B)** Revved-Up    **C)** Molten    **D)** Retreating

## Many health systems have been providing COVID-19 respite & resilience resources for staff.

3. Has your organization provided COVID-19 “wellness” resources for staff? **A)** YES    **B)** NO
4. Were they helpful? **A)** YES    **B)** NO





# THE RESTORE PLAN: STRATEGIES TO RECOVER BALANCE & CULTIVATE RESILIENCE IN LIFE & WORK

- Recognize your feelings.
- Evaluate what pushes your “buttons.”
- Steady your body’s natural rhythms.
- Tamp down emotional flames.
- Attend to your body.
- Reclaim Nature’s gifts.
- Exercise personal power.



# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: RECOGNIZING YOUR FEELINGS

**The first crucial step in calming emotional inflammation: honestly & accurately interpreting feelings so as to be able to address them constructively.**

- Observe emotions as useful information without demonizing or glorifying them.
- Address feelings directly by communicating & responding effectively.
- Attach a name to an uncomfortable feeling can help ease it (float on a “word cloud.”)
- Take your emotional pulse regularly to avoid needing a “mood transplant STAT!”
- Untangle the knot of emotions taking up space inside you.



# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: RECOGNIZING YOUR FEELINGS

## The Word Cloud



# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: EVALUATING YOUR “BUTTONS”

**Personal & shared triggers contain messages about what’s important, what frustrates you and/or what makes you mad.**

- Try remembering the last time you *didn’t* feel this way.
- What other situations have evoked a similar emotional response in you?
- There is a tendency to hide our painful buttons, the ones that often get pushed even by ourselves.
- Emotions dredge up old business & can confuse perceptions of what happened in past experiences.
- List issues & let your “true feelings” flow; jot down the first 3 to 5 words that come to mind; number each issue based on how likely it is to get you riled up.
- Map your bodily sensations; often the body registers emotions before the mind does.
- You don’t have to believe everything you think! Thoughts don’t have to manipulate your emotions.





# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: STEADY YOUR BODY’S NATURAL RHYTHMS

**The body registers the effects of stress & chaotic schedules with utter disregard for the harmonious rhythms the body has evolved to need.**

- Honor your circadian rhythms; “power down” into darkness.
- Create a sleep schedule. Identify your sleep “sweet spot.”
- Brighten mornings; darken evenings. Adjust indoor lighting.
- Establish a bedtime for electronic devices.
- Set the stage for sound sleep.
- Try to schedule key tasks, (e.g. those requiring strong reasoning or decision-making skills or physical strength & power) to coincide with your peak performance times.



# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: TAMP DOWN EMOTIONAL FLAMES

**We may not be able to control the morass of distressing events recurring on the world stage, but we can wield some control over how we think about and respond to them.**

- Mind Shift: Remove or reduce negative influences on your thinking patterns.
- Control the flow of inflammatory information by closing the gates when appropriate.
- Develop a curious mind. Correct cognitive distortions.
- Engage in deliberate emotional regulation to prevent your mind from hijacking feelings.
- “Cognitive Reframing.” Use critical thinking skills to reframe your own thoughts:
  - a. *All or nothing thinking* b. *Catastrophizing* c. *Jumping to conclusions* d. *Overgeneralizing* e. *Overthinking*
- Mindfulness Practices: *Meditation, Guided Imagery, Journaling, Yoga, Art, Music, Gratefulness.*



# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: ATTEND TO YOUR BODY

**“Every act of self-care is a powerful declaration: I am on my side.”** (Susan Weiss Berry)

- Mind your medications. Tip the bacteria balance in your microbiome.
- Consider integrating the Anti-Inflammatory Food Pyramid into your diet. (Andrew Weil, MD)
- Regular exercising strengthens emotional resilience against prolonged effects of stress.
- Cultivate ways to use your personal decompression valve to unwind, relax & restore your emotional equilibrium: guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, breathing.
- Maintain a consistent sleep-wake pattern for healthy, quality sleep & dialing down emotional reactivity.
- Manage oxygen-carbon dioxide flow & ratio using the 5-6-7 breathing rhythm to decompress regularly.





# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: RECLAIM NATURE’S GIFTS

**“Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It will never fail you.”** (Frank Lloyd Wright)

- Biophilia – the love of living things or nature relatedness. (Erich Fromm, Social Psychologist)
- “Nature-deficit disorder” – the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, higher rates of physical & emotional illnesses.” (Richard Louv)
- *Solastalgia*: emotional distress brought on by seeing or imagining irreversible damage to treasured places in the natural world.
- Green environments, times & places that evoke natural sensory experiences of wonder & awe. Bonding with animals can reset our internal equilibrium, physiologically & psychologically.
- Harnessing the power of aroma therapy reduces anxiety & improves the quality of sleep in healthy people as well as those with various medical conditions. Scents such as lavender & vetiver oil & aroma of vanilla reduce anxiety & improve quality of sleep in healthy people.





# THE “RESTORE” PLAN: EXERCISE PERSONAL POWER

**We reach our highest purpose and our full potential when we fill our lives with meaningful action, and pursue that action with a passion to do it well.** (Aristotle)

- It takes only 3.5% of the population engaging in non-violent protest to bring about major political & social change. (Erica Chenoweth, PhD – Harvard Kennedy School)
- Move from observing in silence to *making good noise*, from being a bystander to an upstander. “*If you see something, say something.*”
- Cultivate your carbon footprint.
- Adults who volunteer in *environmental stewardship* have more physical activity, better overall health, & fewer symptoms of depression over a 2 year period. (Researchers at Cornell University)
- Lead by example.



# GROUP PARTICIPATION



# REFERENCES

Van Susteren, L., MD, and Colino, S. *Emotional Inflammation*. Boulder, Colorado: Sounds True, Inc., 2020.

Van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score*. New York: Penguin Books, 2015.



The background is a light blue gradient, darker at the bottom. It is decorated with several realistic-looking water droplets of various sizes, some with highlights and shadows, scattered around the edges.

# Thank you!

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