



**PRACTICAL
TOOLKIT FOR
SOCIAL WORKERS
AND NOT ONLY**



Co-funded by
the European Union



Dear Colleagues,

We stand before you as authors of this toolkit, united by a shared passion for the well-being of human educators and social workers. With hearts committed to transformative education, we are thrilled to introduce this toolkit as a vital resource for your daily work.

Our journey in crafting this toolkit began with recognizing the incredible challenges that social workers in our teams face daily. You, the backbone of our communities, comfort suffering clients, navigate complex systems and often forget yourselves to support others. Yet, your unwavering passion for life and humanity is the very essence of what makes this profession so indispensable.

Our conviction in the effectiveness of these tools is founded on the tangible outcomes we've witnessed in our teams and community. Burnout prevention techniques, as you'll discover within these pages, extend far beyond social and educational work—they are universally applicable, with the potential to rejuvenate motivation and benefit organizations across sectors.

This toolkit is more than a manual, it is a promise. It promises to empower you with knowledge about burnout, its history, and its potential dangers. It offers practical skills and attitudes to deepen your personal practices for burnout prevention. Most importantly, it equips you with the tools to burn with passion to facilitate these practices for your clients, enriching their lives as well.

With Admiration,
[EPIONE](#), [Well-being Lab](#), and [WTZ CZersk Teams](#)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Neuroscience, psychology, and especially life teaches us that first of all, we are social beings. We have a deep need to be **CONNECTED** with others and to be there **FOR** others. [\[find out more\]](#). Inspirational life stories, the reality of each of us, and again studies in psychology and neuroscience claim that meaning in life is also very important for our well-being. [\[find out more\]](#) [\[find out more\]](#)

Many people naturally choose professions that combine these deep needs for connection, contribution, and meaning: social workers, educators, psychologists, doctors, nurses, teachers, leaders and managers, lawyers, accountants, and customer service. The nature of these professions means being in constant contact with others in a relationship that involves offering support or endorsement of a cause. This, together with the reality that traumatic events (war, natural disasters, global warming, disease, the recent COVID pandemic) can often lead to burnout syndrome.

1.1 ALL ABOUT THE BURNOUT – OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

The project is a 20-month cooperation partnership in adult education between **EPIONE** in Lithuania, **Well-being Lab** in Sweden, and **WTZ Czersk** in Poland. It is funded by the **European Union** and granted by **Švietimo mainų paramos fondas** in Lithuania under the Erasmus+ program. The project started on 28 February 2022 and ended on 27th October 2023.

The project was born from the realization between educators of social workers in partner organizations, who are leading groups of social workers, caregivers, and medical workers. It was understood that it is important to act and contribute to supporting these professionals through psycho-education activities and by providing the practical and effective tools that can enable them to find inner resources to continue experiencing their profession with passion and joy. The project addressed the needs of people who work in social care healthcare and education including social workers, nurses, activists, leaders of organizations, volunteers, volunteer leaders, educators, trainers, etc.

The project organized 3 training activities for the target groups:

"New Attitude" (Lithuania, 18 social workers)

"Wellbeing" (Sweden, 24 social workers)

"Modelling the Work" (Poland, 18 social workers)

Local workshops in partner countries (over 200 people)

The main goal of the project is to equip social workers/their managers with the tools to combat burnout, maintain their motivation, and stay at work rather than becoming ill or dropping out. To achieve this, the project raised the following objectives:

- increase the capacity of social workers to use anti-burnout practices;
- develop a toolkit for social workers and educators;
- measure the impact of mindfulness practices on prevention;
- create a pool of instructors for burnout prevention;
- raise awareness about burnout in social work, its threats, and the importance of equipping individuals with tools.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTERS

EPIONE (Lithuania, Project Coordinator) <https://www.epione.lt/>

Well-being Lab (Sweden) <https://www.wellbeinglab.org/>

WTZ Czersk (Poland)

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100068494657565>

1.2 FIELD RESEARCH - THE REALITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

In order to get a clearer picture of what activities would be useful in the 3 educational retreats and also to select appropriate tools for them and for this toolkit, we conducted research activities among people who work in social and healthcare, including social workers, nurses, activists, leaders of organizations, volunteers, volunteer leaders, educators, trainers, etc. in our communities. When we designed the present booklet we took into consideration the results of the mentioned study and the answers to the following questions:

* What tools respondents are interested in learning? The answers were: *Meditation and mindfulness; Yoga; Dance and Movement Therapy; Art Therapy; Breathwork; Empathy based communication; Nature based practices for stress reduction; Personal development; Team communication workshop for efficient compassionate communication and conflict management at work.

* What does work-life balance mean? Some of the answers were: "Doing things which charge me and which I enjoy and love doing, the more the better, choosing a work that I also like and enjoy doing, quality time with loved ones and also on my own, more free time, less work, setting my boundaries" Most of the respondents replied: "Taking care of my mental and physical well-being." It means to love my work so that it would feel like a hobby and only take projects that feel aligned with my values.

* What would help to have less stress? Participants answered: Better distribution of tasks, less procrastination and better planning of time, Flexible working hours; Work from home Ability to set own deadlines Safe non-judgemental space at work

This survey also revealed the real and legitimate needs of respondents: the need to understand burnout, the need for meaning, the need for connection, the need for validation and appreciation, the need to enjoy life, to relax, and to enjoy moments.

1.3.1 Aims of the toolkit

The aim is to provide a curriculum based on scientific research that will equip social workers with the necessary skills to effectively manage professional challenges which can lead to burnout syndrome. Additionally, the tools are also adapted to support the clients of social workers and educators. Our primary focus is to provide support to social workers and educators themselves, to establish a reliable and cohesive community, and act as role models for their clients.

1.3.2 Target audience

The toolkit is created primarily for social workers and human educators. The toolkit is designed to not only benefit social workers and educators but to be utilized by them in their work with clients.

1.3.3 Learning outcomes

The anticipated learning outcomes are:

- a solid understanding of the concept and history of burnout and its associated risks
- the acquisition of skills and attitudes necessary to deepen personal practices for burnout prevention,
- the ability to effectively implement these tools with the clients.

1.3.4 Toolkit content

The present toolkit contains the presentation of the project, psychological education sections on burnout, prevention, and recovery from burnout, and practical tools to support recovery from burnout syndrome. The systemic organizational component of burnout is also tackled.



2.UNDERSTANDING BURNOUT

2.1 Psychological education: what is it and why is it important

Psychoeducation - is a process that supports individuals to change to healthy behaviors.

Through psychoeducation, individuals can learn to identify symptoms, cycles, changes, or warning signs that might indicate the need for psychological support.

The process is proactive and empowers individuals to create and promote healthy behavior and lifestyles. Studies indicate that psychoeducation both contributes to the prevention and, if is the case higher compliance to the therapeutic process when needed.

According to specialists in neuroscience and psychology, both in the psycho-educational approach and in psychological interventions, it is important to refer to these four dimensions:

1. behavioral,
2. cognitive,
3. emotional,
4. physiological,

So we will take this into account within the psychological education process.

2.2 Burnout. What is it?

“Burnout” was first described in 1970 by the American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger.

Initially, it was used to describe the consequences of severe stress and high ideals in “helping professions”. Burnout is a psychological syndrome that occurs as a prolonged response to chronic interpersonal stressors, particularly in the workplace. Burnout is officially recognized by the World Health Organisation as an occupational syndrome. In most cases, when people talk about burnout, they mean professional burnout.

Whereas until recently the term referred only to the extreme risks faced by health professionals, police officers, firefighters, and those dealing with trauma and human services, today, burnout includes other categories of people, and, moreover, more and more cases are being reported among children and their carers, but also in other circumstances, such as family circumstances.

Still, recent studies suggest that work-related stress and burnout symptoms are much more prevalent among doctors, social workers, and health care specialists than among employees in other fields, even after adjustment of working hours and education levels.

2.3 Social workers: above average risk for burnout

Social workers are considered an occupational group at above-average risk for burnout.

High caseloads, high client acuity, and low pay are well-known causes of social worker burnout, and this has become even more significant during the pandemic. A recent study found that following the start of COVID-19, 26.21% of social workers met the diagnostic criteria for [2.1 post-traumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#), 16.22% reported severe grief, 63.71% reported burnout, and 49.59% reported secondary trauma.

[2.2 Compassion fatigue](#) is a condition that occurs when social workers internalize their concern for their clients to the point that they feel helpless and ineffective, ultimately losing their ability to feel compassion and empathy. Social workers may feel distant, detached, or even indifferent to their clients’ struggles. This disconnection is one of the hallmark signs of burnout. Strong emotional boundaries and self-care can help decrease the risk of compassion fatigue.

The reviewed studies, however, identified factors associated with burnout and ways to prevent burnout in social work. There is a commonly held belief that social work is a highly stressful occupation as a result of conflicting roles, status, functions, and contexts (Dillon, 1990; Gilbar, 1998; Rushton, 1987).

The healthcare workforce and social workers were affected by a high prevalence of burnout, especially in the context of COVID, mainly because:

- the precipitous re-organisation of health services with changing care profiles,
- the perceived loss of control caused by the sudden and dramatic increase in professional workload and the unpredictability of the increasing volume of patients with infection
- changes in the practice environment that reduce physicians' control over their work, undermine connections with patients and colleagues, interfere with the integration of professional life and thus lead to uncontrolled stress,

2.4 Types of Burnout

- financial pressures and administrative requirements from regulators have led to increased productivity demands, increased workloads, and reduced independence in many practice settings
- unprecedented levels of scrutiny from administrators
- prolonged isolation, lack of contact with family, and fear of illness, pressure, and public accusations have contributed to increased stress.

Another cause that acted as a precipitator for burnout during COVID-19 was a deprivation of the human need to connect.

Trust-building deprivation also made people more vulnerable to burnout. In office settings, informal interactions contribute to the establishment of trusting relationships. This trust-building does not happen naturally in virtual settings. Teams that move from personal to virtual settings gradually lose that sense of shared humanity and trust.

Three types of burnout have been described:

Individual burnout is fostered by excessively negative self-talk, neurosis, and perfectionism. In other words, it would occur when we set ourselves extremely high standards or, conversely, believe that nothing we do is good enough.

Interpersonal burnout is caused by difficult relationships with others at work or at home. It is not uncommon for an aggressive or hostile boss or co-worker to aggravate existing stress in the workplace to the point of burnout.

Organizational burnout is caused by improper people management, extreme demands, and unrealistic deadlines that overburden employees and threaten their performance and job stability.

2.5 Causes of Burnout

Mainly, burnout syndrome is caused by prolonged exposure to stress, mainly in professional life. People, work processes, and personality traits significantly influence the margin of tolerance and reactivity to stress. There is a bias around burnout syndrome that makes people feel it is caused solely by workload or an inability to cope with stress. But in many cases, the factors are beyond our control. That's why it's important to remember that burnout is rarely, entirely, caused by the choices we make.

Causes of job-related burnout often are:

- unclear responsibilities and expectations from the manager. Only 60% of employees say they are clear about what is expected of them every day.
- unreasonable time pressures. Some studies show that workers who spend 80% of their working time in meetings, on the phone, or answering emails have trouble completing their assigned tasks and projects. An unrealistic deadline that will not be met will create tension and overload for both the employee and the company team.

- unmanageable workloads. A busy to-do list causes subordinates to be overworked and overwhelmed by the workload, burn out, and make repeated mistakes.
- poor time management. Multitasking and context switching can consume 20-80% of daily productivity.
- lack of communication and support from managers According to a 2018 Gallup report, workers who feel strongly supported by their managers are 70% less likely to suffer from burnout. On the other hand, an indecisive, neglectful, or aggressive manager can make employees feel disconnected, frustrated, and cynical.
- rude and uncaring colleagues or leaders can lead to increased cynicism and pessimism about the workplace.
- unfair treatment, such as not recognizing merit and effort or rewarding and promoting people without real contribution, can cause employee disengagement and apathy.
- excessive collaboration. Collaboration is a necessary part of every work environment but when work seems out of the employee's control, the pressure can lead to burnout.
- lack of boundaries between work and free time (private life). Our culture makes it difficult to separate work from everything else. However, it is the inability to disconnect that causes daily stressors to combine and become exhausting.

2.6 Signs and Symptoms of burnout

More than intense stress, burnout syndrome associates affective and cognitive changes, causes depersonalization and an overwhelming state of exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. Burnout sufferers lose all motivation and energy.

One must pay attention to the following aspects which can be red flags:

Mental or physical fatigue. The first thing you might notice when you're exhausted is that you're tired all the time. Unchecked, exhaustion can quickly turn into chronic depression and begin to infiltrate all aspects of your life. Lack of energy can manifest itself in the early hours of the morning, you can wake up feeling sleepy, not feeling like working, and any task seems to require more energy than you have at that moment. This type of mental exhaustion can manifest itself physically, with increased vulnerability to cold and flu, nausea, and headaches. So listen to your body.

Cynicism and detachment You may be suffering from burnout if your feelings of detachment and cynicism won't go away or if you are constantly preoccupied with thoughts of how to get out of work and projects. There may be other ways of expressing this state, such as increased pessimism, lack of trust in colleagues, friends, and family, feelings of isolation, and disconnection from other people and your environment.

Decreased performance at work is a consequence of prolonged exhaustion and damage to the prefrontal cortex nerve circuits in the context of prolonged stress beyond the control of the employee.

Lack of motivation - you do not find the inner springs, or the enthusiasm to accomplish work tasks, you accomplish them with difficulty, late, or incompletely.

Obsessive work - Burnout is often reflected in continuing to worry and perform tasks even after hours, during free time, to catch up on work. But these activities take place at the expense of time to relax and unwind.

Cognitive problems - you may notice a decrease in your ability to concentrate, organize, and pay attention. You find that you have become forgetful and have difficulty remembering things. Lack of attention and concentration affects your ability to deal with negative items that arise that need immediate resolution, leading to increased personal and professional failures.

Changing sleep habits - insomnia, frequent awakenings, and changing sleep schedules can draw attention to mental and emotional exhaustion.

Frustration, irritability, and other negative emotions - feelings of disappointment, devaluation, irritation, criticism, lack of perspective, and pessimism predominate. If in other circumstances, negative feelings are transient, in burnout, they become dominant throughout the day.

Interpersonal problems at home and at work - manifested by escalating conflicts with other people, over-reactivity, decreased tolerance, or, conversely, blabbing, avoidance, or refusal to talk to colleagues or family members.

Lack of self-care - when faced with burnout, some people engage in unhealthy avoidance strategies, resorting to excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, drugs, sedentary lifestyles, high junk-food consumption, computer game addiction, and sleepless nights. Self-medication is another problem and could include sleeping pills to get to sleep, drinking alcohol at the end of the day, or drinking coffee to recover some of the missing energy.

Decreased satisfaction in general - the tendency to be dissatisfied, lack of professional, and personal satisfaction, feelings of waste, devaluation, and blockages often occur in this state.

Health problems - over a long period of time, severe chronic stress can create real health problems such as headaches, migraines, digestive problems, heart disease, diabetes, depression, and obesity.

In a nutshell, looking more closely into the relevant 4 dimensions connected to psychological well-being, burnout can manifest as follows:

1. At the emotional level: pessimism, anger, sarcasm, more conflicts in, relationships, lack of trust in others and suspicion, anxiety, depression, decreased self-esteem

2. At physiological level: increased risk of hypertension, atrial flutter, other cardiovascular diseases, depression and suicide, chronic fatigue, lack of appetite, frequent migraines, poor immune system, insomnia, high blood pressure, hormonal effects, IBS

3. At the cognitive level: altered memory – divide tasks into smaller tasks, altered executive functions such as difficulty with task planning, difficulty with decision making, lower cognitive flexibility, lower inhibition, and interference control, concentration difficulties

4. At the behavioral level: procrastination, tendency to be late at work often, lack of time management and focus, concentration difficulties, excessive consumption of alcohol, and drugs, social isolation, impulsivity, irresponsible behavior

2.7 Empathy and Burnout

As mentioned at the beginning of this brochure, we have this innate need for meaning and connection. And in order to connect with others empathy is one of the essential conditions. So let's take a closer look into this ability.

2.7.1 Types of empathy

To begin with, empathy has multiple meanings. Psychologists generally believe that this term encompasses different but interconnected ways to react to others' emotions. These are **emotional empathy** - sharing others' feelings, **cognitive empathy** - comprehending what others feel and its reasons, and **empathic concern**, which is also known as compassion - a desire to enhance someone's welfare. Drawing a distinction can be helpful, especially in medical and health care practice. Emotional empathy, particularly bearing the anguish of others, increases the risk of burnout and fatigue among physicians and other healthcare specialists, such as social workers, nurses, and psychologists. On the other hand, empathic concern can reduce the probability of encountering the same negative consequences.

To put it differently, caregivers do not need to choose between caring for their patients and their own well-being. Empathy can be both connecting and long-lasting when healthcare professionals sympathize with patients and families without becoming overwhelmed by their emotions.

This is especially practical considering a second angle: empathy is a skill. Many people tend to believe that empathy is an innate characteristic that is hardwired into our brains and encoded in our DNA. Actually, it is more of a skill. Empathy is partly determined by our genes, but our experiences also affect how we empathize. In other words, we can intentionally increase, broaden, and enhance our ability to care by making choices and adopting habits. [3.1 [find out more](#)]

2.7.2 Empathy Burnout. What is it?

It is important to understand and differentiate between the above-mentioned empathy types in order to prevent empathy burnout.

Being constantly exposed to the suffering of their patients, health care workers are the most vulnerable professional category for this type of burnout. This is why it is important to recognize early signs and symptoms and act upon them as soon as possible.

Empathy burnout is characterized by a sense of emotional exhaustion, decreased empathy and compassion, and reduced satisfaction from helping others. It occurs when individuals consistently and excessively engage in empathetic responses without taking care of their own emotional needs. Over time, the constant exposure to the emotional struggles and trauma of others can leave individuals feeling overwhelmed and drained.

The symptoms of empathy burnout may include physical and emotional exhaustion, feelings of detachment or depersonalization, irritability, resentment, cynicism, and decreased motivation and job satisfaction. It can also manifest as increased interpersonal conflicts, decreased empathy and compassion for others, and a general sense of apathy.

Empathy burnout is often a result of chronic stress and a lack of self-care. When individuals are constantly focused on attending to the emotional well-being of others without taking time to recharge and address their own needs, they are at a higher risk of experiencing empathy burnout. It can have negative consequences on both the well-being of the individual and their ability to provide effective support and guidance to others.

By recognizing the signs and symptoms of empathy burnout and taking steps to address it, and continuing to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

2.7.3 Empathy burnout. How to cope?

Self-care and setting healthy boundaries are essential in preventing empathy burnout. Here are some strategies to implement:

1. Prioritize self-care: Dedicate time to activities that recharge you mentally,

emotionally, and physically. This can include practicing mindfulness, exercising, engaging in hobbies, or simply taking breaks when needed.

2. Practice self-compassion: Be kind to yourself and acknowledge that it's okay to have limitations. Allow yourself to make mistakes and learn from them, rather than being overly self-critical.

3. Set boundaries: Clearly define and communicate your limits in terms of time, emotional availability, and energy. Learn to say no when necessary and don't feel guilty about it. Remember that you cannot pour from an empty cup.

4. Seek support: Create a support system consisting of friends, family, or colleagues who understand the challenges you face. Sharing your experiences and feelings with others can help alleviate stress and provide emotional support.

5. Practice empathy towards yourself: Just as you empathize with others, extend the same compassion to yourself. Be aware of your own needs and take steps to meet them. Allow yourself to take breaks and recharge when needed.

6. Practice stress management techniques: Learn effective stress management techniques such as deep breathing exercises, meditation, or journaling. These can help manage stress and prevent it from accumulating.

7. Seek professional help if needed: If you feel overwhelmed or unable to cope with empathy burnout, consider seeking help from a therapist or counselor who can guide you through the process of addressing and managing burnout.

Remember that empathy burnout is common and can happen to anyone. By consciously prioritizing self-care and setting healthy boundaries, you can reduce the risk of experiencing burnout and maintain your ability to empathize and care for others effectively.

2.8 Burnout and Trauma

2.8.1 Trauma

Psychologists define trauma as the lasting emotional response that often results from living through or witnessing a distressing event. Experiencing a traumatic event can harm a person's sense of safety, sense of self, and ability to regulate emotions and navigate relationships

2.8.2 Vicarious Trauma

The concept of vicarious trauma was developed by Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995) to label the adverse changes that workers sometimes experience in their belief systems, cognitions, and worldview. For example, a divorce attorney may come to believe that healthy marriages are rare; or a therapist in an inpatient psychiatric unit may develop a belief that trying

to help others is pointless as they frequently return to the hospital suicidal. Vicarious trauma is experienced by a variety of professionals including healthcare workers, therapists, lawyers, law enforcement, case managers, advocates, activists, administrators, educators, students, supervisors, and leaders. Vicarious traumatization is possible in everyday life from hearing disturbing details of the traumatic experiences of others, on the news, and on social media.

Burnout is frequently, but not always related to vicarious trauma. Burnout is less trauma-related, though can certainly be fueled by trauma. Understanding and addressing vicarious trauma impacts on workers and colleagues is essential for all trauma-informed organizations.

The prevalence of burnout is alarmingly high among therapists and other healthcare workers. Multiple studies highlight vicarious trauma as a predictor of staff turnover and negative outcomes for staff, organizations, and clients (Deville, Wright, & Varker, 2009; Kim et al., 2018). A systematic review of burnout in psychotherapists (including 8,808 participants total) resulted in a finding of over half reporting moderate–high levels of burnout (Simionato & Simpson, 2018). Similarly, a study of over 400 psychologists resulted in 49% reporting moderate–high levels of burnout (Simpson et al., 2019).

Burnout has been demonstrated in various studies to impact professionals' physical and psychological well-being including sleep, medical issues, memory problems, mental health conditions, interpersonal difficulties, absenteeism and staff turnover, poor work performance, and misconduct (Simionato, Simpson, & Reid, 2019). “Hence, the ethical impact of burnout extends to our duty of care to clients and responsibilities to the employer” (Simionato, Simpson, & Reid, 2019, p. 470).

In the discussion of vicarious trauma and burnout, it is also important to highlight the potential that the organization and other systems have in fueling these experiences for staff. It can be tempting to frame these concepts as deficiencies on the part of the individual worker, but they are also manifestations of deficiencies in the system and organization within which services are provided. Bloom and Farragher (2013) write that “it is becoming increasingly clear that burnout is not a problem of individuals but of the environments within which people work”. 10

2.8.3 Post Vicarious Traumatic Growth

Post-traumatic growth (PTG) is a theory that explains this kind of transformation following trauma. It was developed by psychologists Richard Tedeschi, PhD, and Lawrence Calhoun, PhD, in the mid-1990s, and holds that people who endure psychological struggle following adversity can often see positive growth afterward.

Also, good aspects can occur. As studies indicate, the more meaning in one's work, the stronger the post-traumatic growth and the lower the incidence of burnout. [\[find out more\]](#)

2.9 Burnout and Depression

2.9.1 What are the differences?

How Can I Tell the difference between Depression and Burn Out?: I'm tired all the time and feel unproductive at work. How do I know if I'm depressed or burned out? What's the difference between burnout and depression? Burnout and depression are two distinct concepts, although they can share certain symptoms and have overlapping effects on a person's well-being. Burnout primarily arises from chronic workplace stress and is characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and decreased productivity. It is considered an "occupational phenomenon" rather than a medical condition.

On the other hand, depression is a clinical diagnosis that involves a persistent feeling of sadness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, and a range of emotional, cognitive, and physical symptoms. Anhedonia, the inability to find joy or pleasure in previously enjoyable activities, is a hallmark symptom of depression.

While burnout can lead to a lack of energy and decreased engagement in hobbies, depression can cause a fundamental loss of interest or enjoyment in activities that were once pleasurable called anhedonia. This differentiation suggests that burnout is primarily linked to work-related stress, while depression is a broader mental health condition that can affect various aspects of a person's life.

It is important to note that while there are similarities and overlaps, burnout and depression are distinct conditions that may require different approaches to treatment and management. Seeking professional help from therapists or mental health professionals can provide a clearer understanding of one's specific experiences and guide appropriate interventions.

As with burnout, people with depression may sleep too much or too little and may struggle to focus. People with depression may isolate themselves from others; they may feel like it takes a lot of energy to shower or eat. Depression can induce an overwhelming sense of sadness and

hopelessness. In severe cases, people with depression may start having thoughts that they are worthless, or that life is not worth living. These symptoms tend to last for at least two weeks.

A key differentiator is that burnout gets better when you step away from work. When you take vacation time or a [mental health day](#), you feel at least slightly recharged. Depression doesn't go away if you change your circumstances.

This means that someone who is experiencing burnout, which is typically caused by chronic workplace stress, and also has a genetic predisposition or a family history of depression, may be more likely to develop depression. Additionally, individuals who have gone through a traumatic event or major life change, such as the loss of a loved one or a divorce, may be at higher risk for developing depression as well.

It is important to note that burnout and depression are separate conditions, but they can coexist and influence each other. Burnout is characterized by emotional exhaustion, detachment, and reduced productivity, while depression involves feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in activities. However, the symptoms of burnout and depression can overlap and sometimes be difficult to differentiate.

Experiencing both burnout and depression simultaneously can significantly impact a person's mental and emotional well-being.

1. Cause: Burnout is typically caused by chronic work-related stress, while depression can have various triggers, including genetic factors, traumatic events, or chemical imbalances in the brain.

2. Symptoms: Both burnout and depression can lead to fatigue, lack of motivation, and feelings of emptiness. However, burnout often manifests as cynicism, irritability, and a decline in performance, while depression is often characterized by persistent sadness, hopelessness, and a loss of interest in activities (anhedonia).

3. Duration: Burnout is generally linked to chronic stress and can improve with proper rest and self-care. Depression, on the other hand, usually lasts longer and may not improve without professional help.

4. Impact: Burnout tends to primarily affect your work life, the exhaustion, when it hits, is all-consuming. Depression can impact multiple areas of your life, including relationships, physical health, and overall well-being.

2.9.2 Recovery processes

If you suspect you are experiencing burnout or depression, it is crucial to reach out for support. Some general tips:

1. Seek professional help: Consult a therapist or mental health professional who can assess your symptoms and provide appropriate guidance or treatment.

2. Prioritize self-care: Take time for relaxation, engage in activities you enjoy, practice mindfulness or meditation, exercise, and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

3. Set boundaries: Establish clear boundaries between work and personal life. Learn to say no when you feel overwhelmed and delegate tasks when possible.

4. Build a support network: Lean on friends, family, or support groups. Sharing your feelings and experiences can provide emotional relief and practical advice.

Remember, everyone's experience is unique, so it's essential to consult with a professional who can provide personalized guidance based on your specific circumstances.

2.10 Assessing Burnout

2.10.1 MBI - Maslach Burnout Inventory

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is a psychological assessment instrument comprising 22 symptom items pertaining to occupational burnout.

MBI is the first scientifically developed measure of burnout and is used widely in research studies around the world.

The MBI aligns with the World Health Organization's 2019 definition of burnout as a legitimate occupational experience that organizations need to address, characterized by three dimensions:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- Increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
- Reduced professional efficacy [[find out more](#)]

2.10.2 BAT – Burnout Assessment Test

The BURNOUT ASSESSMENT TOOL (BAT) is a scientifically validated questionnaire that allows you to determine the risk of burnout quickly and at a glance. [[BAT](#)]



3. RECOVERING FROM BURNOUT

3.1 Support and treatment

Can be useful to work with a multidisciplinary team, involving a coach or mentor, together with a mental health specialist. Together you will explore and assess options and solutions such as those listed below.

1. Take a day off or a break from work if possible, to give yourself some relief from your symptoms.
2. Consider if a career change might be necessary, although this can be a difficult decision to make.
3. Set boundaries by turning off work notifications during certain hours and finding time to relax after meetings or tasks you dread.
4. Find meaning in your job by mentoring a colleague or focusing on tasks that interest you more.
5. Engage in exercise to relieve work-related tension, and make sure to take breaks from screens and distractions.
6. Start small by engaging in simple activities like taking a short walk, a walk in nature, or trying out a yoga session, knowing that even a little movement can help. And stay curious about how things will settle down later.
7. Keep a list of coping mechanisms that have worked for you, such as calling a friend or going for a run, and refer to it when needed.
8. Pay attention to what actually helps you feel better in the moments when you feel bad, and focus on those activities rather than forcing yourself into practices that don't resonate with you. You may be curious to try new things. Art Journaling, dance, yoga, pottery, photography, collage, poetry. You'll only know if they suit you if you try them on. So stay open and curious
9. Observe yourself: what kind of empathy do you tend to disclose? Have in mind, especially if you work in helping professions (caregiver, helping professional, medical nurse, medical doctor) that the most beneficial in the long term is empathic concern (a desire for someone else's wellbeing to improve) rather than emotional empathy (vicariously sharing others' feelings).



4. SELF CARE PRACTICES

4.1 Assess personal Burnout risk factors as social worker

4.1.1 The body and the mind

To prevent it is important for individuals to prioritize self-care, set boundaries, and seek support from others. This may involve engaging in activities that promote relaxation and stress reduction, seeking therapy or counseling, practicing mindfulness and self-compassion, and seeking support from colleagues, friends, or family members.

For your mind

- practice more cognitive empathy (inferring what others feel and why)
- prioritize, plan, create mind maps and strategies

For your soul

- do more of what makes you happy! Spend time with dear ones, hug them, play with your pet, listen to your favorite music, tap into your spirituality, and engage in daily practices - such as praying [\[find out more\]](#), practicing gratitude and empathic concern (a desire for someone else's well-being to improve) rather than emotional empathy(vicariously sharing others' feelings)

Daily routines

- move, meet friends, be socially active, volunteer, be in nature, meditate

For your body

- sleep well, look into the light every morning [hydrate, get quality nutrients, supplement your diet – talk to a physicist before – have in mind that it is difficult to cover all nutritional needs from food]

To improve signs and symptoms at the physiological level it is important to:

- *First and most importantly, see a medical doctor if physiological symptoms are causing high distress !!!
- sleep at least 7 hours /night. Sleeping less will affect our immune system, cognitive performance, and general well-being. More on sleep and its importance, [here](#)

Some scientific behavioral tools can be:

- invest in the hygiene of your sleep - science-based information [here](#) and [here](#)
- for increased immunity and optimal sleep, get light in your eyes early in the morning ([168](#)) [How to Get Better Sleep with Andrew Huberman | The Proof shorts EP 205 - YouTube](#)
- regenerate the body and the brain during the day with non-sleep deep rest or yoga nidra sequence [\[reference\]](#)
- meditation is another ancient practice that needs no further proof of its benefits. Meditation is one of the most important self-care tools with numerous benefits for well-being. [More to discover here](#)
- The most popular meditation apps
- Another very effective tool in RAPIDLY (as seconds) reducing stress which can be used anytime anywhere is our breath. People can reduce stress while ...being involved in your life with physiological signs -2 INHALES, THE FIRST BEING LONGER THAN THE SECOND, FOLLOWED BY A LONGER EXHALE. Take up to 5 minutes to find out more! <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Sva2A9yXiM4>
- sports - more than because of the endorphins (the natural painkiller) fitness and improved stamina, sports have other benefits for our body and mind. [Check more about it here](#)

yoga – ancient science of yoga has proven in several studies to be the most effective tool to work on trauma. Not only increases flexibility and strength in the body, but also has numerous benefits for the mind, and researchers from medicine, neuroscience, and psychology continue to unravel more therapeutical benefits of this ancient philosophy. [Here you can explore how yoga suits you and your routine.](#)

Since on a cognitive level burnout syndrome may lead to altered memory executive functions, difficulty with decision making, and concentration difficulties suitable tools to apply regularly can be:

- task planning - divide tasks into smaller steps
- time management
- decision making
- meditation

As behaviors in burnout often are procrastination, the tendency to be late at work appears.

-Useful tools can be – tasks planning, time management, problem solving

-More problematic behaviors can be excessive consumption of alcohol, and drugs. In this case, one must contact a mental health specialist, in order to get support and prevent addiction.

4.1.1 Stress and stress management

Stress is a natural physical and emotional response to perceived threats or demands. It can be caused by various factors such as work pressure, personal life issues, financial difficulties, or health problems. While a certain amount of stress can be beneficial as it motivates individuals to perform better and overcome challenges, excessive or prolonged stress can be harmful to one's overall well-being.

Some studies suggest that the impact of stress correlates with one's beliefs about the stress ."The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another."

William James

Simply said, if one thinks about stress as being a fuel for achieving goals - it will not have the same negative effect on one's health as if the belief is that stress is bad.

Stress management refers to the strategies and techniques used to cope with and reduce stress levels. It involves recognizing the signs and symptoms of stress, understanding its causes, and taking proactive steps to manage it effectively.

Here are some common stress management techniques:

1. **Self-awareness:** Recognize and identify the signs and symptoms of stress in your life, such as irritability, headaches, or difficulty sleeping.
2. **Time management:** Plan and prioritize your tasks to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Break larger tasks into smaller, manageable chunks and set realistic deadlines.
3. **Relaxation techniques:** Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga.
4. **Exercise:** Engaging in regular physical activity can help reduce stress. Exercise releases endorphins, which are known to boost mood and relieve stress.
5. **Healthy lifestyle:** Maintain a balanced and nutritious diet, get enough sleep, and avoid excessive caffeine, alcohol, and tobacco consumption.
6. **Support system:** Seek support from friends, family, a community, or a support group. Sharing your feelings and concerns with others can provide a sense of relief and perspective.
7. **Time for hobbies and interests:** Engage in activities that bring you joy and help you relax. Having hobbies or pursuing interests can provide a healthy outlet for stress.
8. **Set boundaries:** Learn to say "no" when you feel overwhelmed or when taking on additional responsibilities would add to your stress levels.

9. **Seek professional help:** If stress becomes unmanageable or starts to interfere significantly with your daily life, consider seeking help from a mental health professional.

Overall, stress management is about finding healthy and effective ways to cope with stress and prevent it from negatively impacting your mental, emotional, and physical well-being. It is a lifelong process that requires self-awareness, practice, and finding a balance between work, personal life, and relaxation.

4.2 Mindfulness and meditation for stress reduction

In the workplace, mindfulness involves focusing one's attention on the current moment and experiencing it fully without judgment or distraction. This can be accomplished through a variety of approaches, including concentrated breathing, meditation, and body scans.

There are various advantages to practicing mindfulness at work. Mindfulness practitioners experience lower stress levels, improved attention and concentration, increased creativity and problem-solving abilities, and more emotional intelligence. Furthermore, mindfulness has been shown to promote job satisfaction and work-life balance.

Mindfulness has also been shown to improve organizational outcomes. According to research, organizations that encourage mindfulness practices have reduced employee turnover rates, better team collaboration and communication, and more employee engagement and productivity. Furthermore, mindfulness training has been shown to reduce workplace conflicts and improve performance.

Organizations can give mindfulness training programs, create quiet areas for meditation or relaxation, encourage short breaks for mindfulness exercises, or integrate mindfulness into leadership development programs to implement mindfulness practices in the workplace. Because individual devotion may not be sufficient to sustain the practice, organizations must build a supportive atmosphere that appreciates and promotes mindfulness activities.

Overall, the growing popularity of mindfulness in the workplace reflects its potential to enhance individual well-being and organizational performance. By fostering mindfulness, organizations can create healthier and more productive work environments, benefiting both employees and the organization as a whole.

As mentioned before, perhaps the biggest influence on bringing mindfulness from the East to the West, at least recently, was Jon Kabat-Zinn.

There are seven key attitudes of mindfulness according to Kabat-Zinn:

- Non-judging- Be an observer of your own experience.
- Patience- Sometimes things happen in their own time. Allow for this.
- Beginner's Mind- or the inquiring mind of a curious child
- Trust - Simply choose to Trust. Accept that it's okay to make mistakes.
- Non-Striving- Be with yourself right now, in this moment. Pay attention to what happens rather than attempting to influence it.
- Acceptance - Things the way they are. It is what it is. Acceptance means peace, not resignation with regret.
- Letting Go- The mind likes to hang onto particular ideas, feelings, and circumstances, as we can see when we pay attention to our inner experience. Leave your experience as it is at this moment.

4.2.1 Types of Mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness can be easy and varied. Some examples include:

- Paying attention. It's hard to slow down and notice things in a busy world. Trying to take the time to experience the environment with all of the senses — touch, sound, sight, smell, and taste might be the way to escape. For example, when eating a favorite food, take the time to smell, taste and truly enjoy it.
- Living in the moment basically means trying to intentionally bring open, accepting, and discerning attention to everything done by one person- finding joy in simple pleasures.
- Focusing on breathing. When there are negative thoughts, try to sit down, take a deep breath, and close your eyes. Focus on the breath as it moves in and out of the body. Sitting and breathing for even just a minute can help.

There are also more structured mindfulness exercises, such as body scan meditation, sitting meditation, or walking meditation.



4.2.2 Breathwork

Andrew Huberman – Breath to relax – psychological sigh Another very effective tool in RAPIDLY (as seconds) reducing stress which can be used anytime anywhere is our breath. People can reduce stress while ...being involved in your life with physiological signs. Take up to 5 minutes to find out more! [here](#).

4.3 ZEST

If you think you are experiencing burnout or exhaustion depression it is important to see a mental health specialist. Can be a good moment to tap into your ZEST!

What is Zest?

”What hunger is in relation to food, zest is in relation to life,” says Bertrand Russell, in a quite accurate metaphor.

In psychology, the term refers to having vitality, enthusiasm, and passion for life. Research suggests that people with high levels of zest tend to have better mental and physical health and greater life satisfaction. It is a happy trait :)

A 2007 study of nearly 13,000 American and Swiss adults looked at three different ways to be happy: a life of pleasure, a life of engagement, and a life of meaning.

ow, it is not enough to know about it unless one also knows how to boost it!

1. **Get Social!** Have in mind what Lisa Feldman Barret - a psychotherapist and researcher who studies emotions states: People's words and actions can actually shape your brain. It's ironic but true: The best thing for your nervous system is another human and the worst thing for your nervous system is another human. So choose to be around people who are high on zest. [find out more]
2. **Take care of your body!** Minimum 7 hours of sleep, nutrients, supplements when needed, physical activity, hydration, and massage. And here technology can help: several apps and devices can serve us to better take care of our bodies! Choose the most suitable one.
3. **Look at the bright side of life, be optimistic!**
4. **Best Possible Self exercise**, where you journal about an ideal future in which everything is happening as well as possible, in all domains of life – can be a very useful practical tool. Ideal life visual board – where the best scenario is represented in all dimensions of life: health, home, physical environment, family, friends, love life, money, career, and personal development – is also a valuable map that leads to more optimism.
5. **Nature – feels also zestful.** Beyond our own experience, numerous studies confirm the positive influence being in nature has on our well-being. Unsurprisingly, people with a strong connection to nature are more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviors, such as recycling or buying seasonal food. This is likely to lead to further benefits if these pro-environmental activities can lead to natural improvements that we can enjoy further down the line. And also leads individuals to volunteer for green projects, which is another zest-boosting activity.
6. **Volunteering and helping others** - feels good and also increases zest for life! Studies have found that acts of kindness are linked to increased feelings of well-being. Helping others can also improve our support networks and encourage us to be more active.

4.4 Building Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to bounce back after a traumatic event or an adversity.

The Main Factors Contributing to Resilience according to positive psychology are:

Having a good support system

Maintaining positive relationships

Having a good self-image and having a positive attitude

Other factors that contribute to resiliency include:

Having the capacity to make realistic plans.

Being able to carry out those plans.

Being able to effectively manage your feelings and impulses in a healthy manner.

Having good communication skills.

Having confidence in your strengths and abilities.

Having good problem-solving skills.

4.5 Emotional Wellbeing and neuroscience

4.5.1 Dopamine

Dopamine is a substance in the body that is involved in the brain's reward system, and it is often called the "feel-good" hormone. Dopamine is linked to pleasant feelings and can be increased by activities you enjoy, like dancing or cooking, to sex, shopping, planning a holiday, getting enough sleep, exercising, meditating.

4.5.2 Serotonine

Serotonin is a substance in the body that plays a role in regulating mood, sleep, appetite, digestion, learning, and memory. Eating more tryptophan-containing foods (cashew, turkey meat, dark chocolate) getting more sunlight, getting more exercise and lowering stress levels, massage, socialization, activities with pets.

4.5.3 Oxytocin

Oxytocin, which is often referred to as the "love hormone," is crucial for childbirth, breastfeeding, and fostering strong connections between parents and children. It may also boost the development of trust, empathy, and bonds in relationships. Physical intimacy often results in an increase in its levels.

4.5.4 Endorphin

Endorphins are natural painkillers. The quantities of these chemicals may also go up when you participate in activities that make you feel good, like eating, exercising, or having sex. ([Link](#))



5. SCIENCE BASED TOOLS FOR SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES AND CLIENTS TO PREVENT BURNOUT

5.1 Prioritizing

5.1.1 Wheel of life

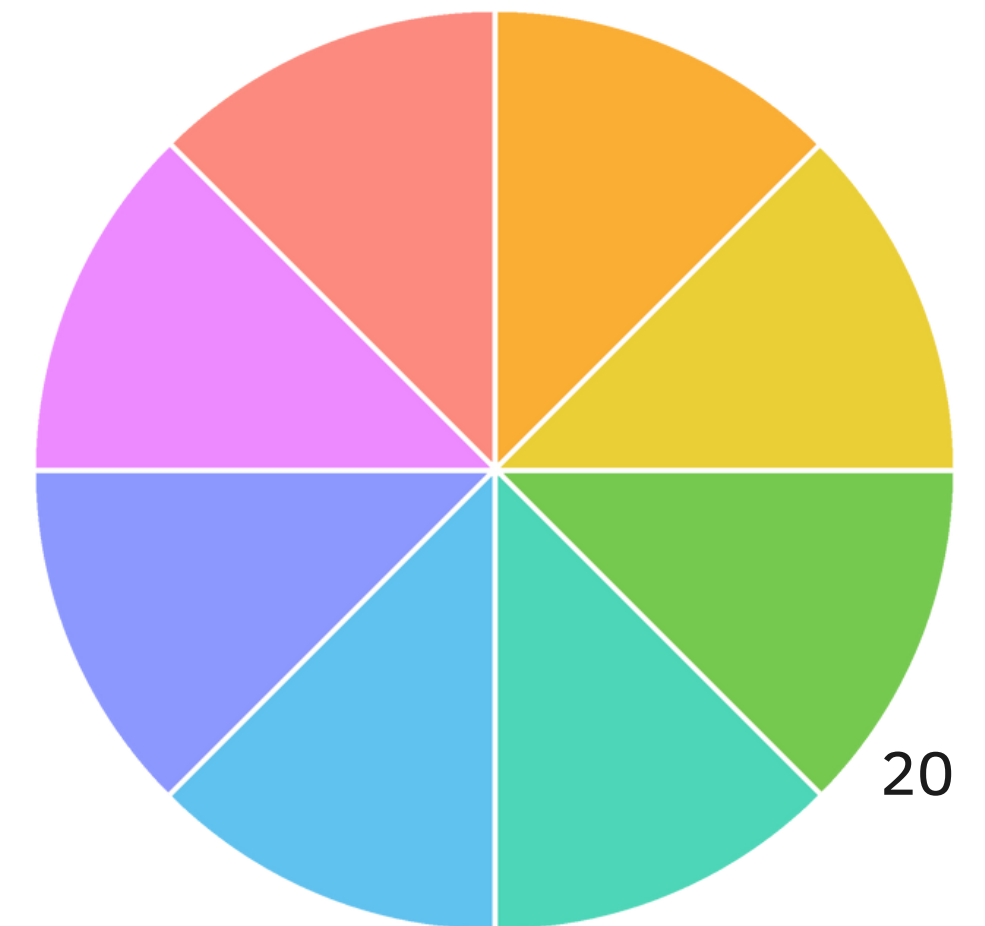
One practical and easy-to-use visual tool that can be helpful is the Wheel of Life coaching tool. This tool can help to assess to which extent we are satisfied with certain areas of our lives. Certain parts get a majority of our attention, while others get none or very little. Perhaps your career is going well, but there is no longer time for family and friends, or work is unsatisfying and there is no growth or learning.

“After all, your mental well-being is underpinned by finding high levels of meaning within your daily tasks and activities. If the many aspects of your being find balance, then life satisfaction, the fulfillment of basic psychological needs, and contentment usually follow (Eakman, 2016)”. According to Eakman (2106), your life moves out of balance “when the fulfillment of basic psychological needs has been thwarted within ongoing patterns of day-to-day occupations” and it causes harm to your wellbeing.

The original idea behind the Wheel of Life came from industry pioneer Paul J. Meyer in the 1960s to help people realize their goals and also support prioritization and transformation.

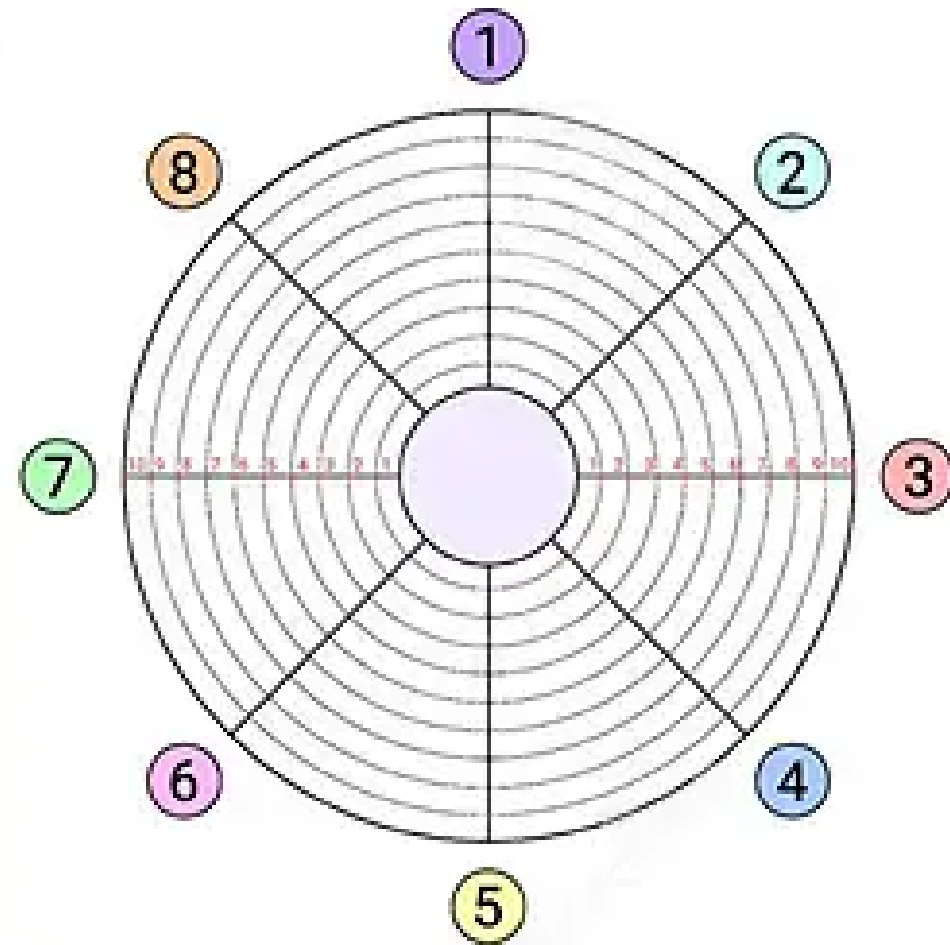
The wheel typically consists of between eight and ten categories essential for a fulfilling life. Segment names vary, but the themes are usually similar, for example:

- Money & Finances
- Career & Work
- Health & Fitness
- Fun & Recreation
- Environment (home/work)
- Community
- Family & Friends
- Partner & Love
- Personal Growth & Learning
- Spirituality



A score is placed in each segment to reflect the current level of satisfaction.

Wheel of life



Find a balance

Areas of life

① now _____ _____	⑤ now _____ _____
goal _____ _____	goal _____ _____
② now _____ _____	⑥ now _____ _____
goal _____ _____	goal _____ _____
③ now _____ _____	⑦ now _____ _____
goal _____ _____	goal _____ _____
④ now _____ _____	⑧ now _____ _____
goal _____ _____	goal _____ _____

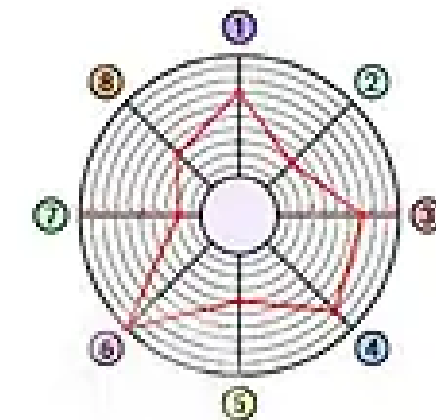
How to use

Identify the important areas of life that you want to evaluate.
You can write your own or use these:

- ① Relationships (love, family)
- ② Friendship, relationships in society
- ③ Health (physical)
- ④ Mental health, the spiritual part of life
- ⑤ Career, professional activity
- ⑥ Finance
- ⑦ Hobbies, fun, entertainment
- ⑧ Individual growth

Then rate each area on a scale of 1-10 and mark it on the wheel.
Use these points to build a circular graph.

Example:



The wheel clearly shows which areas need improvement.
Write the situation "now" and "goal" for improvement.
Strive to fulfill your goals and find a balance!

5.1.2 Time management – 4P

Time management – it is tightly connected with prioritization and once the wheel of life exercise has been done, a tool for time management can be useful. Not only does managing your time correctly improve your life balance and allow time for hobbies and activities, but it also improves your mental health and well-being.

One model that can make time management easier is the 4P model which stands for:

PRIORITIZING – organizing tasks based on importance and urgency ultimately helps to ensure that the most critical tasks are completed first and that the remaining tasks are completed on schedule. Also prioritizing is about saying no to not important tasks or some requests of others. Saying no is okay when this means finalizing important tasks and also...when it means saying yes to yourself.

PLANNING – First and very important, get an agenda. There is a plethora of digital tools at hand but if it works better for you, a classic paper-pen agenda, is perfect. And schedule tasks according to importance and urgency. Deleting, Delegating, and Deferring tasks can be also part of planning.

PRODUCTIVITY – is simply about focusing on the task and achieving goals. This also comes with a boost in dopamine, which makes us feel good.

POSITIVITY - A can-do attitude will increase motivation and auto efficiency. Positive thinking can also help you identify tasks that are important and urgent, making it easier to manage your time effectively. Taking regular breaks can help to keep you refreshed and motivated, allowing you to focus on your tasks.

5.2 Self Knowledge

Together with psychological education self-knowledge plays an important role in preventing and supporting mental health.

5.2.1 Role atom*

***Role atom** – The role atom, sometimes called a role diagram, is a simple depiction of all the major roles that one holds in their life. Jacob Levi Moreno's personality theory suggests that the self is composed of all of the roles one plays in their life and that a healthy personality has a wide role repertoire (1953). In preventing burnout, creating one's diagram can bring more clarity to professional roles and support the individual to become the architect of his professional role.

As in the image below, using circles, draw yourself at the center of the page and other circles to represent roles that you play in your life

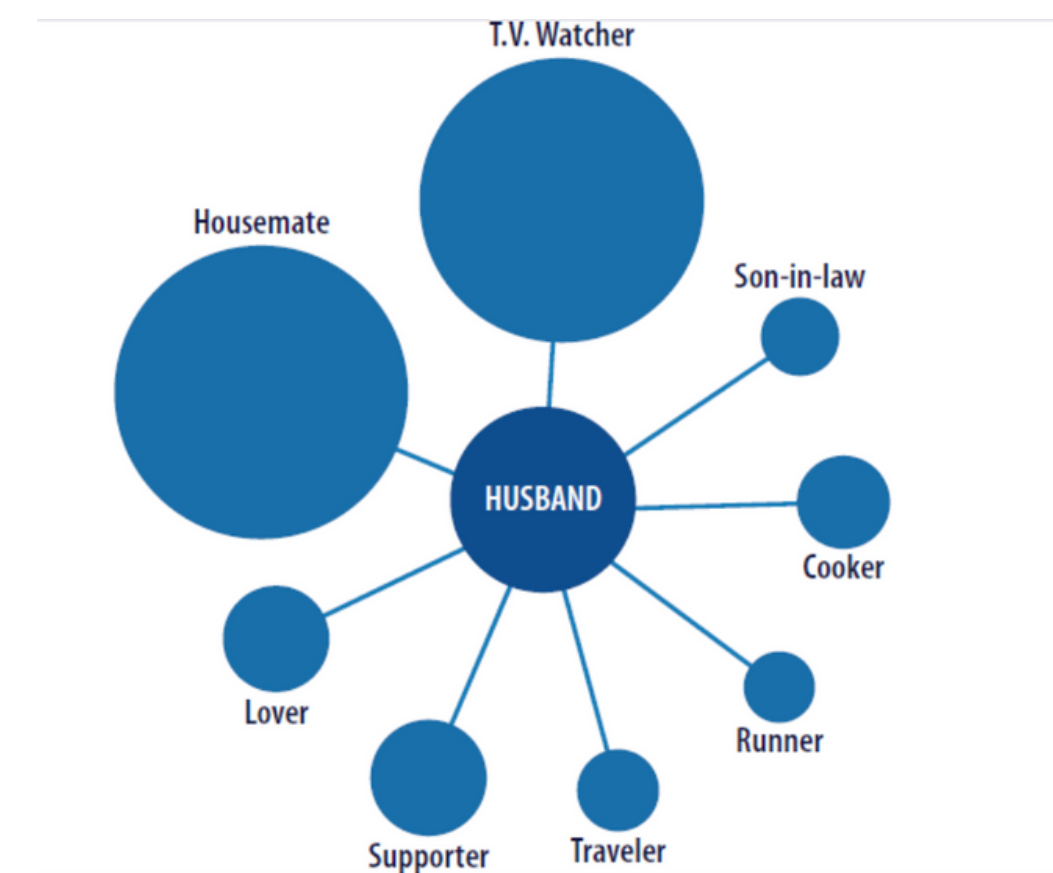
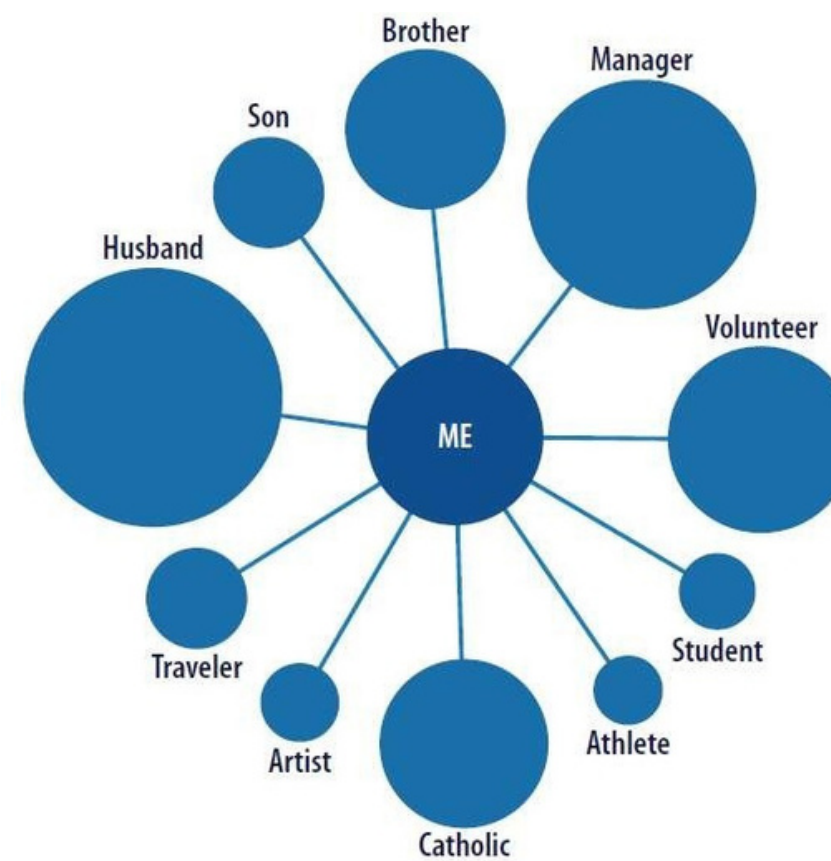
Taking into consideration size and proximity, draw circles to represent the significant roles in your life based on the space they take up in your life

How can be the role diagram useful in preventing (or even treating) burnout? Burnout syndrome is by definition connected with professional role(s), therefore might be easier to observe imbalances when the professional role is dominant.

Processes such as role training, role creation, or role development can contribute to a more fulfilling and balanced life.

Also part of this tool, sub-roles can depict of the individual's experience in one role.

EXAMPLE:



***THE ROLE ATOM self-exploration tool was conceptualised within the present brochure as in the book "Social Work, Sociometry, and Psychodrama: Experiential Approaches for Group Therapists, Community Leaders, and Social Workers", author dr. Scott Giacomucci**

5.2.2 Problem solving

***What exactly problem-solving is? Problem-solving is a complex talent to master. It takes critical thinking, decision-making, creativity, and data processing. A meticulous method is used by effective problem solvers to break down major issues into smaller, easier-to-handle parts.**

The 7 stages relational/problem-solving model of D'Zurilla and Nezu can be a guide in finding a solution to a problem. According to this protocol, these stages are:

*Develop a positive orientation towards problem-solving - carefully observe your bias, are you generally oriented to action or to analyze?

*Recognition and identification of the problem

*Clear selection and definition of the problem

*Generating solutions - brainstorming

*Decision making - what is the best solution serving the purpose of the individual or of the group

*Implementation of the solution - action plan divided into daily, weekly, and monthly plan

*Review the process





6. BUILDING AN ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE TO PREVENT BURNOUT

6.1 Systemic causes of Burnout in organizations

A Gallup survey of 7,500 full-time employees found the top five reasons for burnout are:

1. Unfair treatment at work.
2. An unmanageable workload.
3. Lack of role clarity.
4. Lack of communication and support from their manager.
5. Unreasonable time pressure.

The results are similar to the results of the study we conducted, within our project.

These causes are all systemic — meaning they aren't unique to a specific individual but something that is ingrained in the workplace culture

6.1.1 General labour regulation preventing burnout

Some standard labor regulations around the world are:

- A cap on hours worked per week
- A cap on overtime
- Maternity and parental leave
- Restrictions on when employees can be contacted
- Flexibility regarding when and where employees can work
- Paid leave and vacation days

These kinds of regulations can help drastically reduce employee burnout rates.



6.2 Trauma informed leadership

6.2 TRAUMA-INFORMED LEADERSHIP

Recent findings suggest that organizations can mitigate the potential hazards of burnout, and vicarious trauma by creating organizational structures that prioritize workers' well-being, peer support, supervision, and professional development.

It isn't much of a stretch to conclude that an organization committed to trauma-informed care is also an organization that workers find more pleasurable and meaningful to work within.

Leadership style also influences burnout rates in the workplace. Recent studies show that trauma-informed leadership prevents burnout in organizations.

Trauma-informed leadership is a practice based on respect that motivates people to overcome the barriers that hold them back from achieving.



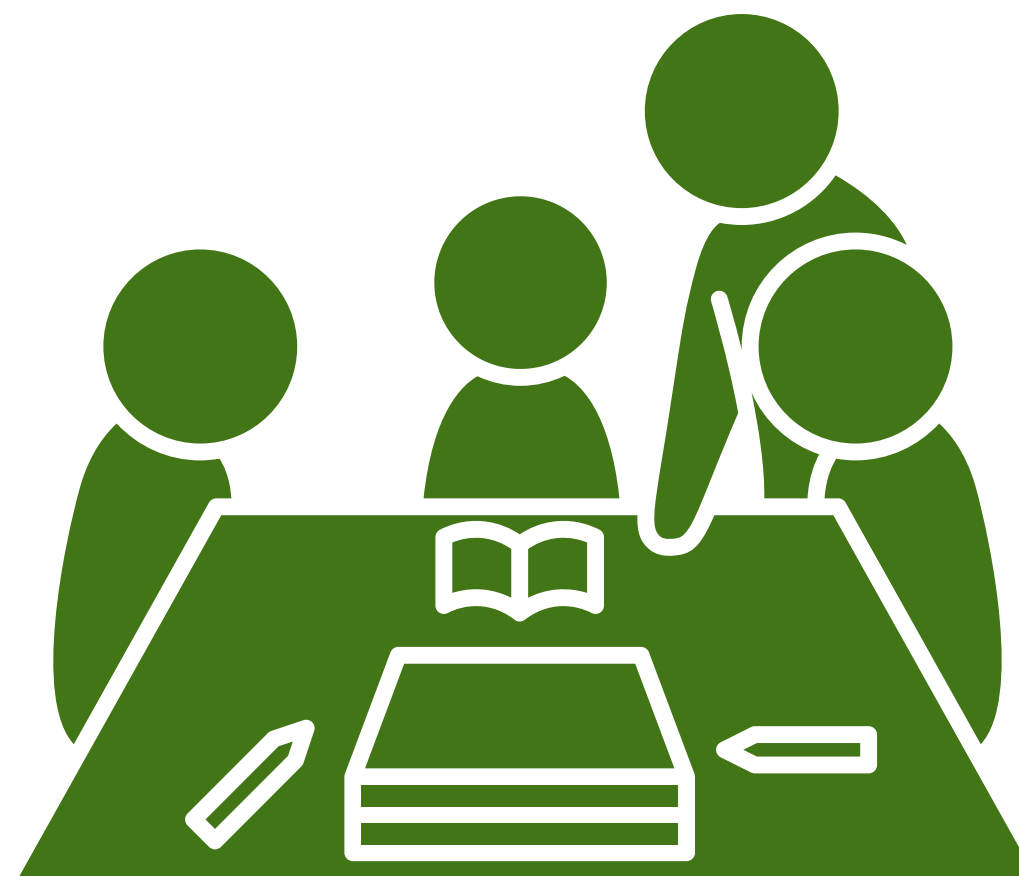
A trauma-informed leader is one who knows how to use compassion and understanding to minimize the occurrence of trauma in their workplace and support rather than re-trigger traumatic responses in the people the leader leads without sacrificing productivity and organizational goals.

Trauma-informed leaders help their people become more resilient and create conditions in which their workers can thrive and grow.

It is a leadership process that benefits everyone.

Trauma-informed leadership has at its core these 6 principles:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Mutuality and Collaboration
- Peer Support
- Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Cultural, Historic, and Gender Issues





As we conclude this comprehensive toolkit, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to every social worker who dedicates their life to serving others. Your unwavering commitment, empathy, and tireless efforts make a profound impact on the lives you touch.

In the pages of "All About the Burnout," we have explored the depths of burnout - the shadows it casts and the toll it takes. But remember, this toolkit is not just a guide; it's a testament to your strength, a beacon of hope, and a reminder that you're not alone in this journey.

May your passion for helping others burn eternally, a flame that fuels your actions and warms the hearts of those you touch. May your resilience shine brighter than any darkness you encounter. In the face of adversity, may you rise like a phoenix, renewed and determined.

Remember, you are not alone in this journey. Reach out when the embers of burnout threaten to engulf you. Your fellow social workers stand beside you, unified in the pursuit of a brighter tomorrow.

"In the quiet moments of self-care, in the strength of camaraderie, and in the joy of making a difference, may your fire burn bright - not as a source of exhaustion, but as a beacon of unwavering compassion."

With deepest respect and admiration,
EPIONE, Well-being Lab, and WTZ Czersk Teams

FINAL WORDS



TRAINER POOL

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- **Karina Minda**

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- **Teodora Paucean**

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- **Ieva Ugne Ulianskaite**

<https://www.salto-youth.net/tools/toy/ieva-ulianskaite.5184/>

- **Milda Dapkeviciute**

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www.unfolded.me

- **Milda Kerpiskiene**

<https://rupiusau.lt/team/milda-kerpiskiene/>

RESOURCES

- 1.1. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/232518458_Loneliness_Human_Nature_and_the_Need_for_Social_Connection
- 1.2 <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.2044-8295.1992.tb02429.x>
- 1.3 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17439760.2015.1137623?journalCode=rpos20#:~:text=Coherence%20means%20a%20sense%20of,having%20a%20life%20worth%20living.>
- 2.1 <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/>
- 2.2 <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/compassion-fatigue/>
- 3.1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7426106/>
- 4.1 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33184960/>
- 4.2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/18/well/mind/mental-health-day-ideas.html>
- 5.1 <https://www.mindgarden.com/117-maslach-burnout-inventory-mbi>
- 5.2 <https://burnoutassessmenttool.be/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Test-Manual-BAT-English-version-2.0-1.pdf>
- 6.1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivDqfmicrAI>
- 6.2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5MulMqhT8DM&t=7s>
- 7.1 <https://www.sleepdiplomat.com/podcast>
- 7.2 <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/4e2JWsL4nt0>
- 7.3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKGrmY8OSHM>
- 7.4 <https://www.hunimed.eu/news/12-science-based-benefits-of-meditation/>
- 7.4.1 <https://www.forbes.com/health/mind/best-meditation-apps/>
- 7.5 <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Sva2A9yXiM4>.
- 7.6 <https://www.keckmedicine.org/blog/6-reasons-why-team-sports-are-good-for-your-health/>
- 7.7 <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithkassandra>
- 8.1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kSZKlupBUuc&t=35s&pp=ygUYcGh5c2lvbG9naWNhbCBzaWdoIHNoY3J0>
- 8.2 https://advice.theshineapp.com/articles/five-easy-ways-to-be-happier-backed-by-science/?utm_source=Shine&utm_medium=Blog
- 8.3 <https://ideas.ted.com/author/lisa-feldman-barrett/>
- 9.1. <https://www.healthline.com/health/happy-hormone>



APPENDIX

TOOLS

to tap into your

ZEST



Co-funded by
the European Union



In the next pages of the present toolkit, you will find various tools aimed at contributing to an increased level of well-being. Practicing some of the following activities can also contribute to preventing burnout during the recovery process.

Disclaimer: please keep in mind that any behavioral optimization, self-improvement, self-knowledge, and therapeutical process is recommended to be done closely guided by a mental health specialist.



Thank yourself for caring enough about the quality of your life. Taking care of yourself first will allow you to be at your best and genuinely pour your resources into all the roles you fulfill. Keep in mind that there are inter-individual differences so your subjective experience while exploring the following tools might be completely different from other friends, colleagues, or family members' experience and this is normal. Also, the only way to tailor your self-care routine is by trying the following tools and choosing those that are aligned with your goals and can be integrated into your lifestyle. Stay curious, explore, and select to boost your zest.



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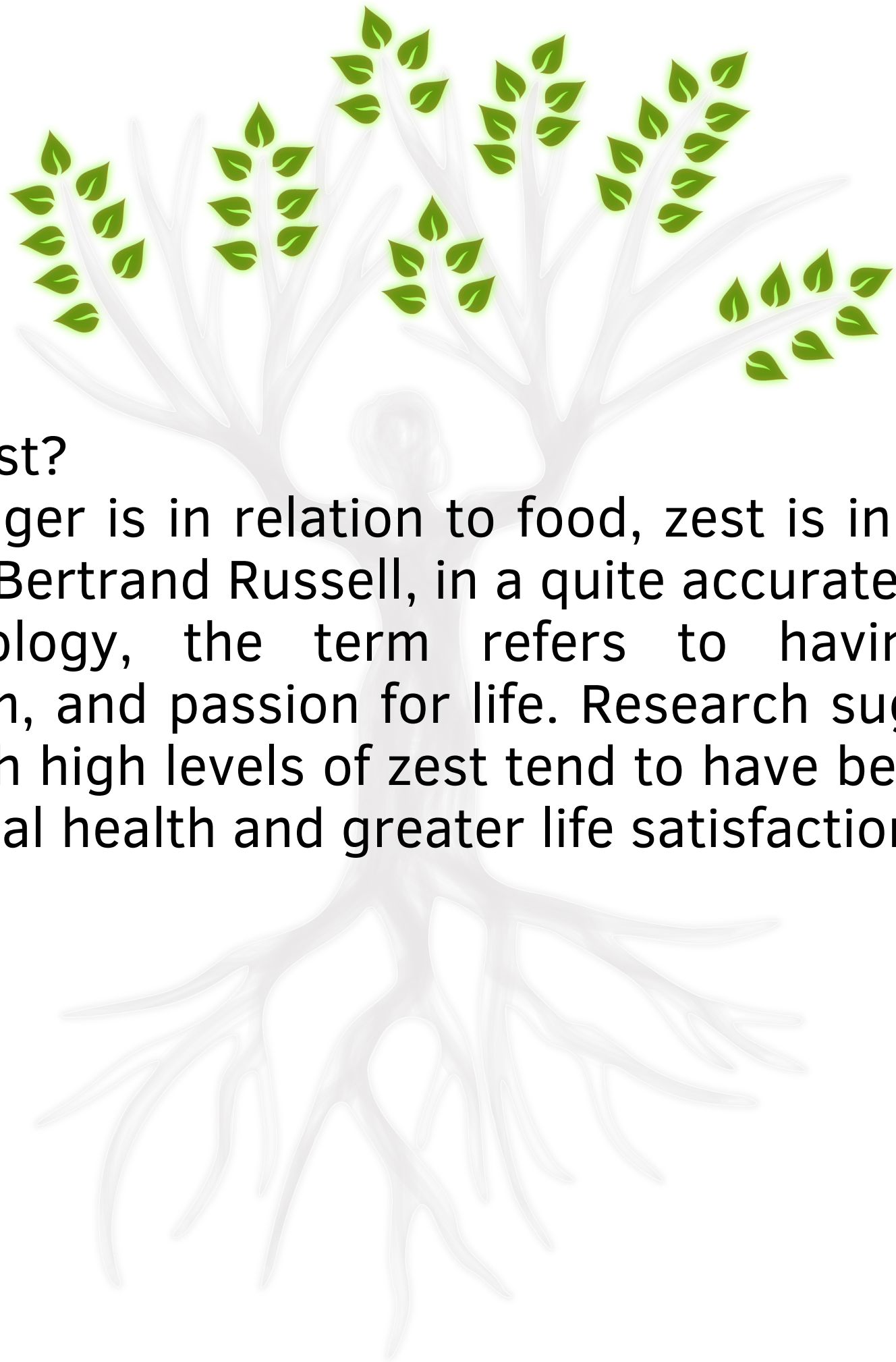


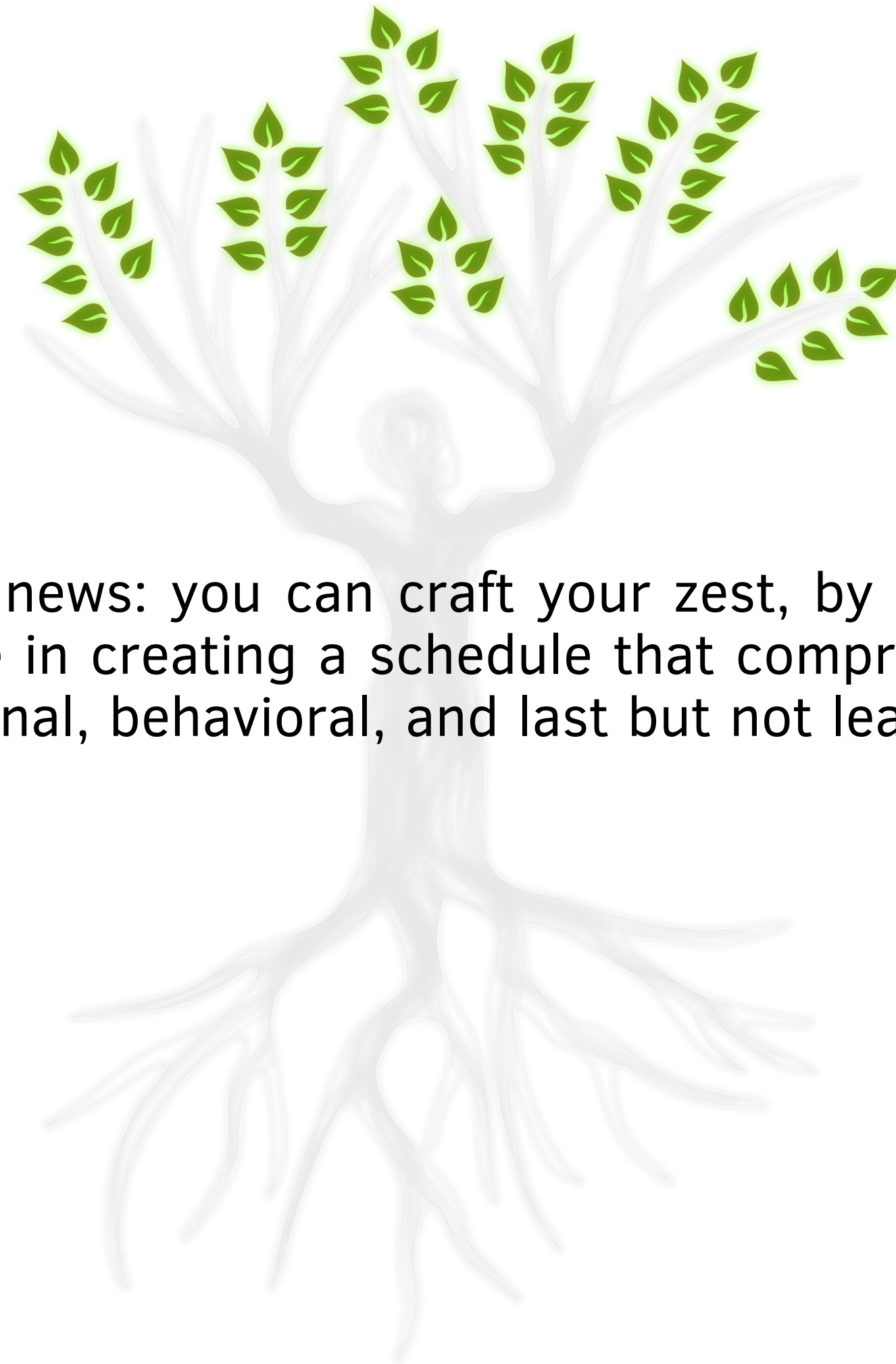
ZEST, WHAT IS IT?



What is Zest?

"What hunger is in relation to food, zest is in relation to life," says Bertrand Russell, in a quite accurate metaphor. In psychology, the term refers to having vitality, enthusiasm, and passion for life. Research suggests that people with high levels of zest tend to have better mental and physical health and greater life satisfaction.





And here is the good news: you can craft your zest, by creating a routine of certain habits. Engage in creating a schedule that comprises activities for the cognitive level, emotional, behavioral, and last but not least, activities for your physiological health.

1. WHEEL OF LIFE

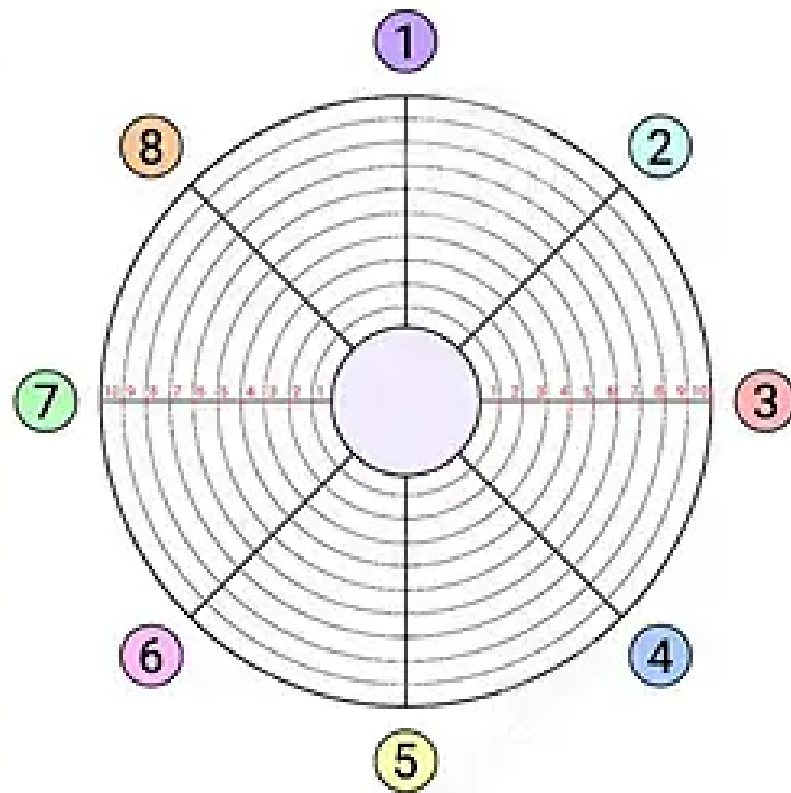


The original idea behind the Wheel of Life came from industry pioneer Paul J. Meyer in the 1960s to help people realize their goals and also support prioritization and transformation. The wheel typically consists of between eight and ten categories essential for a fulfilling life. Segment names vary, but the themes are usually similar, for example:

- Money & Finances
- Career & Work
- Health & Fitness
- Fun & Recreation
- Environment (home/work)
- Community
- Family & Friends
- Partner & Love
- Personal Growth & Learning
- Spirituality



Wheel of life



Find a balance

Areas of life

<p>① _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>	<p>⑤ _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>
<p>② _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>	<p>⑥ _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>
<p>③ _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>	<p>⑦ _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>
<p>④ _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>	<p>⑧ _____ now _____ _____</p> <p>goal _____ _____</p>

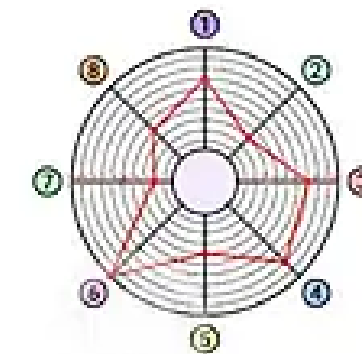
How to use

Identify the important areas of life that you want to evaluate. You can write your own or use these:

- ① Relationships (love, family)
- ② Friendship, relationships in society
- ③ Health (physical)
- ④ Mental health, the spiritual part of life
- ⑤ Career, professional activity
- ⑥ Finance
- ⑦ Hobbies, fun, entertainment
- ⑧ Individual growth

Then rate each area on a scale of 1-10 and mark it on the wheel. Use these points to build a circular graph.

Example:



The wheel clearly shows which areas need improvement. Write the situation "now" and "goal" for improvement. Strive to fulfill your goals and find a balance!

Wheel of Life is a tool that enhances clarity and highlights one's priorities. Clarity gives focus and confidence and creates a buzz of energy and excitement .

2. ROLE ATOM AND ROLE MODEL



*Role atom – The role atom, sometimes called a role diagram, is a simple depiction of all the major roles that one holds in their life. Jacob Levi Moreno's personality theory suggests that the self is composed of all of the roles one plays in their life and that a healthy personality has a wide role repertoire. (Scott Giacomucci - Social Work, Sociometry, and Psychodrama
Experiential Approaches for Group Therapists, Community Leaders, and Social Workers)





In connection with burnout syndrome, the role atom is a useful tool to observe more clearly to which extent the professional role(s) are dimensioned in a way that gives meaning and joy, thus fueling zest, or on the contrary, they drain one's energy. In Fig. 1 there is an example of how a role diagram can be represented

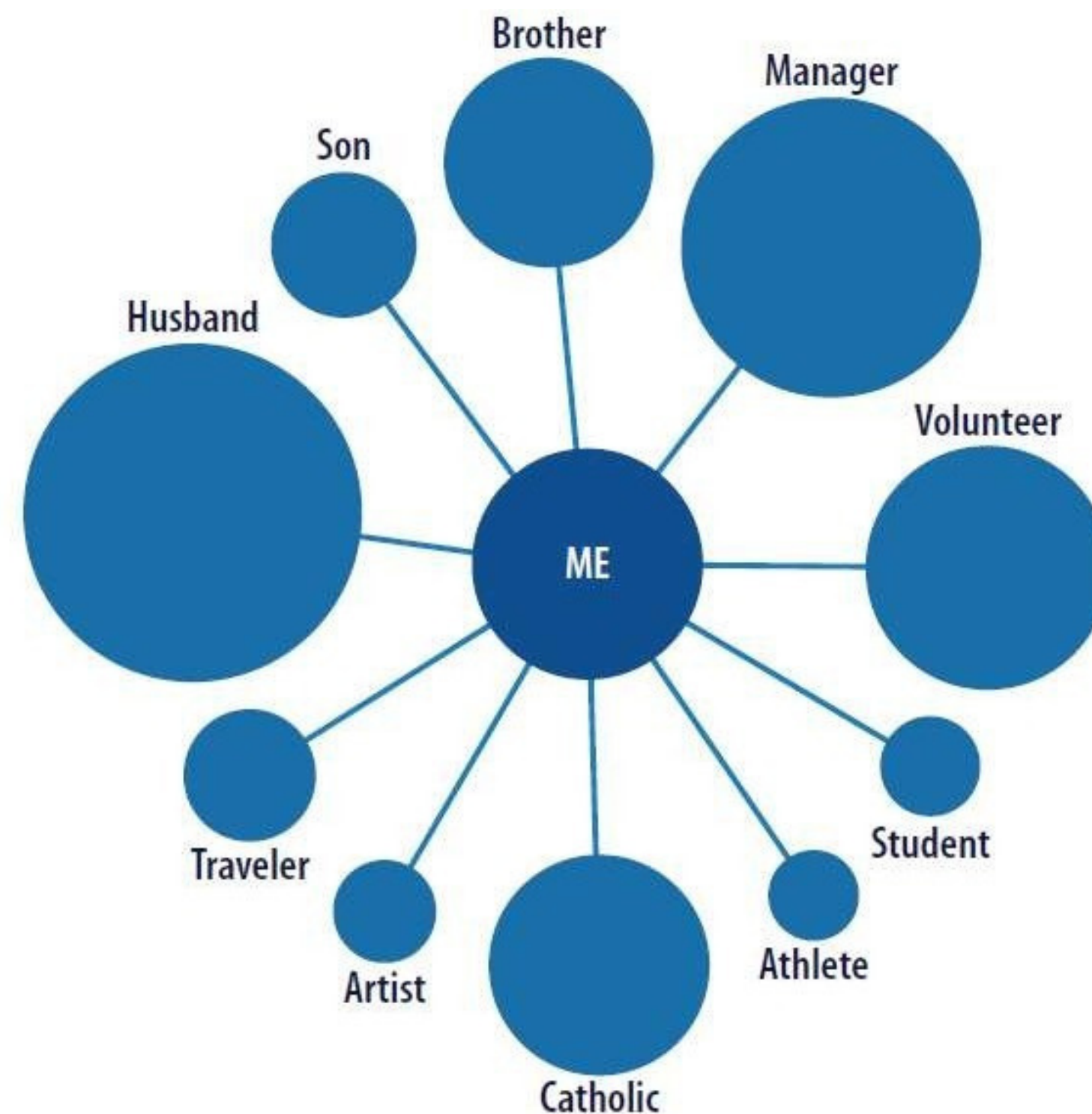


fig.1

3. SOCIAL ATOM



Relationships are important. The right relations feel zestful.

" The best thing for your nervous system is another human and the worst thing for your nervous system is another human." - Lisa Feldman Barrett - neuroscientist. This is why having a healthy social network is nourishing for our mental health.

The social atom tool was created by J L Moreno and presented within this brochure as in S Giacomucci 's book - Social Work, Sociometry, and Psychodrama Experiential Approaches for Group Therapists, Community Leaders, and Social Workers - p.83



A social atom is created by drawing one's self in the center of a page, surrounded by one's closest relationships. Circles are used to represent females, triangles for males, and squares for non-human entities or objects, as represented in Fig. 2. The social atom tool is useful in assessing one's social network. Some healthy relations might need more investment of time, some might need more assertiveness, and some might need some...distance. Relations should be healthy and nourishing. The good news is that relations can be improved with care, attention, and tools like assertive communication, conflict management and prevention.

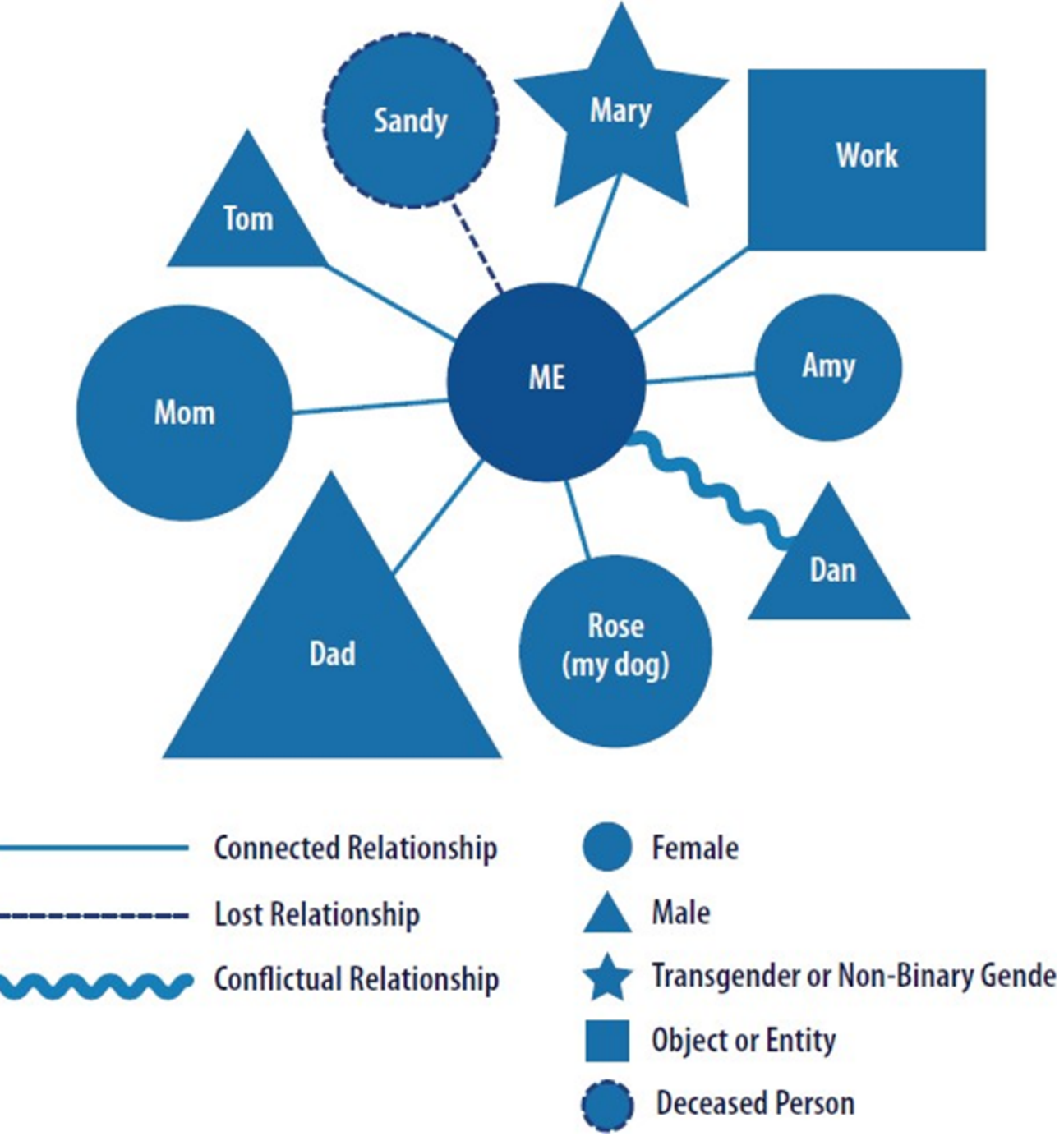


fig . 2

4. ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION



ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION is the key element of healthy and nourishing relations.

Also, it is part of an overt relational contract where both parties feel safe, respected, and seen.

Jaques Salome, founder of the ESPERE method, says that it is useful to develop and master the concepts of :

- *receiving - with an open heart and with gratitude
- *giving - without expecting anything in exchange
- *asking for what we need
- *refusing - what does not suit us.

It also shows another way of communicating with those around us and sharing individual differences in everyday life, enabling us to develop and evolve as individuals as well as to have creative and safe relationships.

Assertive communication

Assertive communication emphasizes the importance of both /all parts' needs.

During assertive communication, a person stands up for their own needs, wants, and feelings, but also listens to and respects the needs of others.

Assertive communication is defined by confidence, and willingness to compromise.

A person during the conversation:

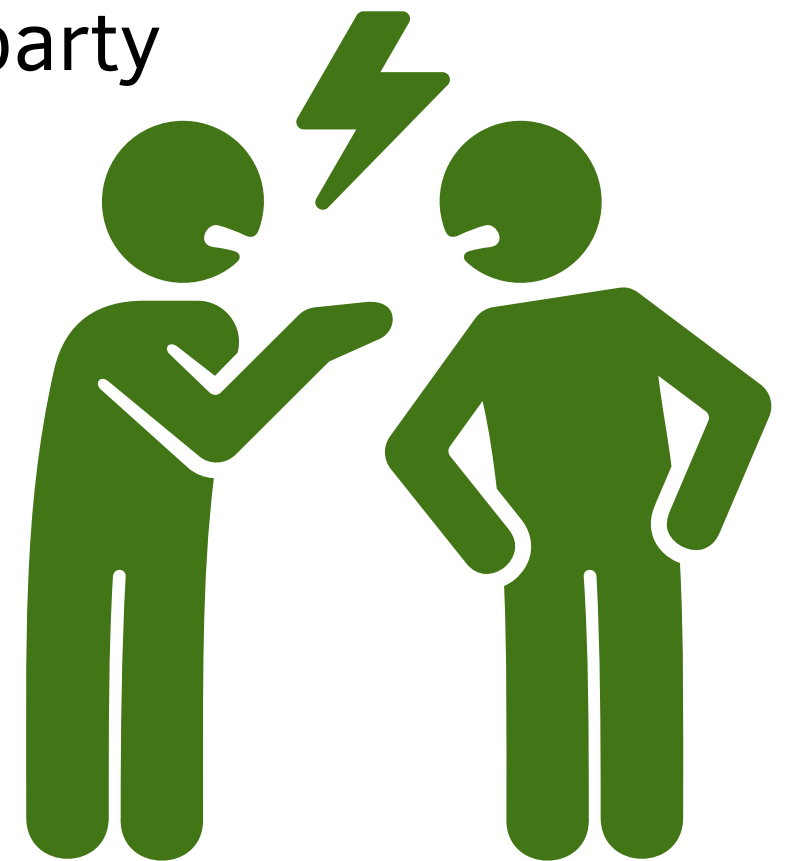
- Listens without interruption
- Clearly states needs and wants
- Willing to compromise
- Stands up for own rights
- Confident tone/body language
- Good eye contact

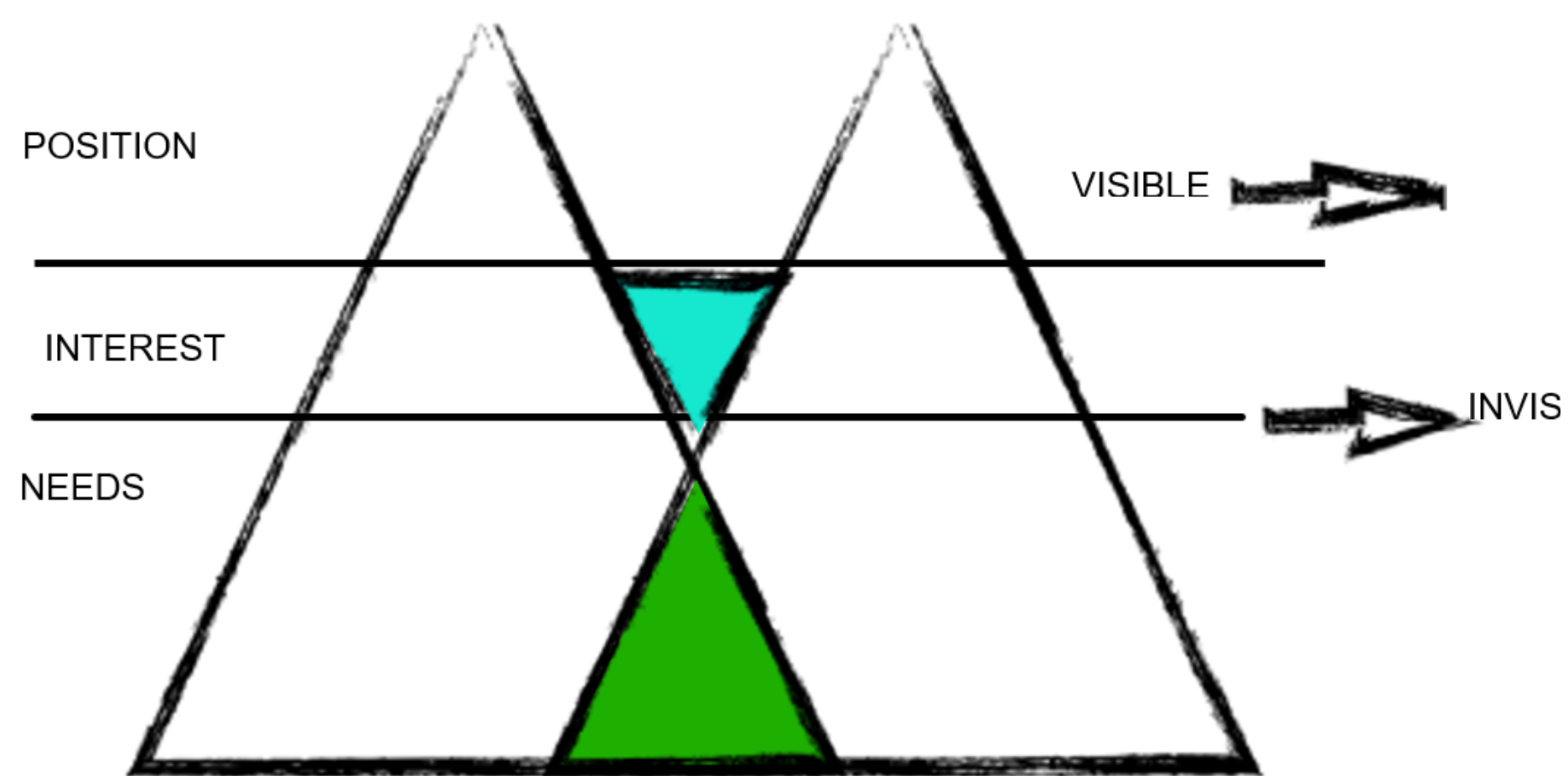


5. CONFLICT RESOLUTION



There is a plethora of conflict resolution models out there. For simplicity of usage, our choice is the PIN model. The distinction between Positions, Interests and Needs (PIN) of parties in conflict is a classic tool used in conflict analysis and resolution. This tool helps us to make a difference between the statements of each party and the emotions that are behind them, thus a tool for opening communication channels





1. **POSITION:** Your initial response or solution to the situation
 Ex: Lindsay says “John should talk less in the meeting” and John says “this group would not exist if it wasn’t for me”

2. **INTEREST:** What is important to you in this situation? Your fears and concerns

Ex: Lindsay thinks “I want more spaces to share ideas” or “I’m concerned people leave the group if there is so little room for other ideas” and John says “I want this campaign to win” or “I’m concerned people will leave the group if it hasn’t got clear direction” BUT in common they both think: “I want this group to thrive”.

3. **NEEDS:** That is not being met in this situation

Ex: Lindsay says “I need equality” and John says “I need to be effective” BUT in common they share “I need to be valued”

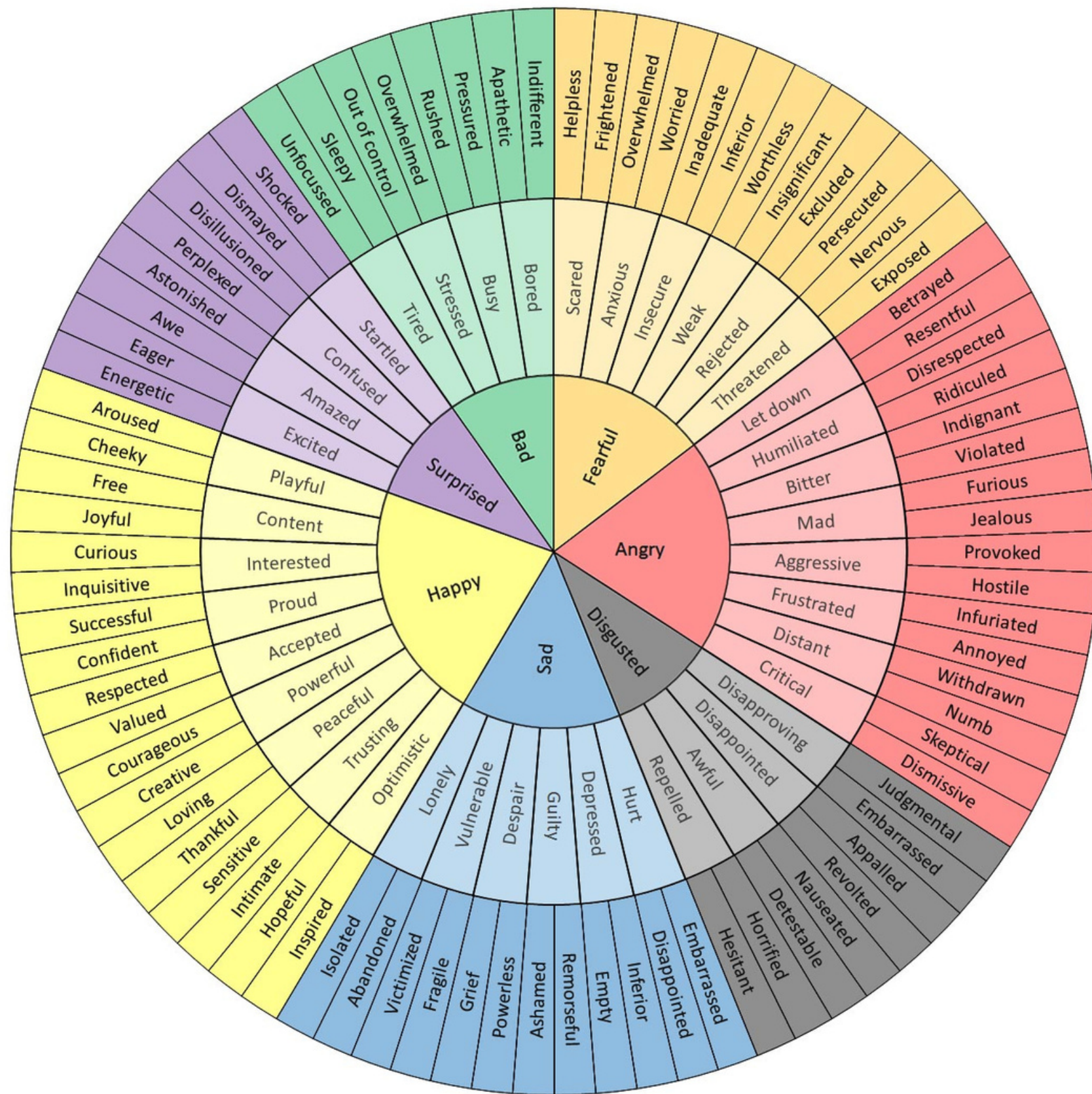
The parts hidden in a conflict show us the visible position is composed of interests and needs and some of them can be shared and they can be interconnected

6. WHEEL OF EMOTIONS



Emotions can deplete us from our zest or, on the contrary, can replenish it. Name it and tame it! It is that simple. Simply by naming your emotion you can decrease the bad...energy and increase the positive one! If you name that feeling out loud, it actually reduces how strong that emotion feels to us. And it's not just an isolated thing, it's been studied.





Wheel of Emotions, created by Robert Plutchik, Ph. D., is a very simple visual representation of emotions and can be useful to self-explore how we feel. The reduced intensity of the negative emotions after we have named them allows us to go one step further and ask:

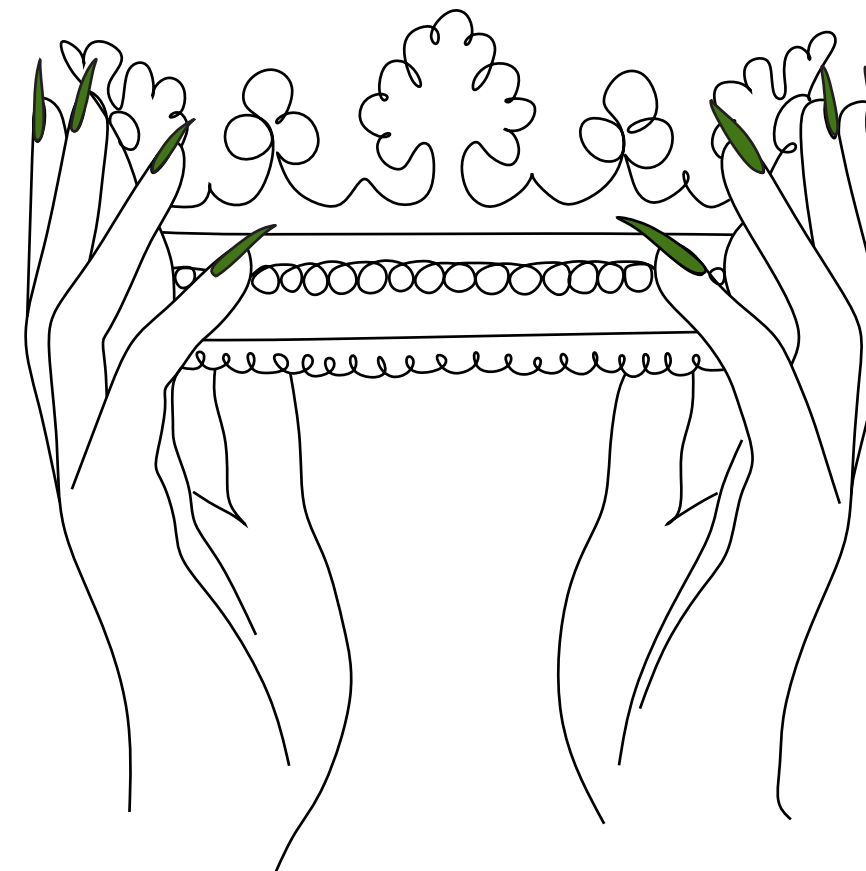
What choices do I have? What do I really want?

As for positive emotions, studies indicate that being aware of our feelings enables us to savor them more intensely.

7. BEST POSSIBLE SELF



Best Possible Self exercise, where you journal about an ideal future in which everything is happening as well as possible, in all domains of life – can be a very useful practical tool. Ideal life visual board – where the best scenario is represented in all dimensions of life: health, home, physical environment, family, friends, love life, money, career, and personal development – is also a valuable map that leads to more optimism.



Create a special sheet, journal, or board and personalize it according to your preferences. Represent significant areas for you, such as health, home, physical environment, family, friends, love life, money, career, and personal development. Write down, describing in detail the best scenario or outcome you want to experience in those areas of your life. Spend some time, afterward, visualizing your life having all the wishes fulfilled. Our brain can not tell the difference between reality and imagination but once create the scenario, will guide our behaviors into accomplishing it.



8. POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS



Positive affirmations can boost our zest by reminding us who we are, what our essence is.

Positive psychology states that studies indicate that when the brain recognizes traits or proofs from our past experiences, positive affirmations support us in creating the lives we want for ourselves.



1. Take time to create your timeline and remember 5 situations when you overcame difficulties or found a creative solution to a problem. You can remember situations from your childhood, teenage years, and adulthood.
2. Now write down what were the positive traits or character strengths you accessed within yourself to overcome those experiences.
3. Create your affirmation containing the (re-)discovered resources at the present moment using simple sentences such as I am creative, I trust life, etc.
4. Repeat it as a mantra or a prayer daily, maybe when you start your day, enjoying coffee:)



9. SPICE AND SAVOUR



Values are the most important aspects at the core of your being; they are the most vital components of your heart's desire. Values aren't about what you want to gain or achieve; they're about how you want to act or behave on a regular basis. Values determine how you wish to treat yourself, others, and the environment. There are no wrong or right values, and they differ from person to person because we are all unique as humans. Frequently used by psychologists, and coaches to support their clients to identify their values VIA is both easy to use and accurate. [Find out more https://www.viacharacter.org/](https://www.viacharacter.org/)

Along with our lives, some of our values might change. This is why it is recommended to self-assess our values periodically. Once you have identified the core values, you can add daily practices. One daily practice that will support our wellbeing is the SPICE AND SAVOUR exercise. Decide at the beginning of every day what will be the 2 values you decide to spice your day with and savor moments when you live those values along your day.

Religion, being or not a religious person, the type of spirituality is one of the most personal choices. Studies suggest that prayer has a tremendous positive effect on mental health. Also, it is worth it to check this perspective as well. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ivDqfmicrAI>



10. PRAYER



11. MEDITATION



Meditation is one of the best ways to tap into our zest. Studies confirmed what ancient philosophies seemed to know: meditation should be part of our daily routine as it:

- Relieves stress & anxiety
- Increases energy & vitality
- Improves health greatly
- Promotes spiritual growth





There are several ways to meditate. It is recommended to find the type of meditation that suits our daily schedule the best. One of the most simple ways to meditate is to connect to the present moment with all your senses:

V - visual - what do I see?

A - auditory - what sounds do I hear here and now?

K - what sensations do I perceive?

O - olfactory - what smells do I perceive?

G - gustatory - what taste I feel?

Immersed in the present moment, connect with your breath and ... just exist.



12. EMBODIMENT



Start practicing and being a healthy, happy human daily.

- Sleep minimum 6 h 30 mins (ideally 8) daily
- Yoga Nidra or nonsleep deep rest can help you recharge if you do not get enough sleep.
- Hydrate. Eat quality nutrients. Consider fasting for longevity.
- Take supplements, but check with your physician first!
- Please keep in mind that a healthy body is crucial for a healthy mind.
- Movement is also very important: yoga, dance, jogging, gym, long walks, team sports...choose the type of movement you ENJOY and make it a daily habit.



Being in nature awakens zest!

In a study of 20,000 people, a team led by Mathew White of the European Centre for Environment & Human Health at the University of Exeter, found that people who spent two hours a week in green spaces — local parks or other natural environments, either all at once or spaced over several visits — were substantially more likely to report good health and psychological well-being than those who don't. Two hours was a hard boundary: The study showed there were no benefits for people who didn't meet that threshold.

13. NATURE



“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.”

– Jack Kornfield

GOOD LUCK!



If you have reached here, it means you are ready to take responsibility for the quality of your life. Yes, your ZEST is your resource to overcome burnout and the previously described tools integrated into day-to-day life can support you in increasing your...hunger for life. Some of them might create meaningful insights, others might bring more ease by providing clarity, and others might open new sensorial ways to connect with life and your essence. I invite you to explore them and find YOUR answers in action. We will leave you with a piece of information and a piece of advice:

*science fact: studies show that in order to create a new habit we need between 18...to 254 days (P. Lally, 2010) depending on the habit and on the individual. So in your process of creating your new routine, try, persevere, ask for specialised support, observe, and...continue caring about yourself. You are the most important to deserve your care and then share it with others.

thank you



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