

Feeling Stressed?

Maybe you should S.T.O.P.



S

STOP and pause



T

TAKE A BREATH



O

OBSERVE your body, thoughts, feelings, emotions and physical sensations



P

PROCEED with greater awareness and intent



TEAM HUDDLE

Using Emotion Coaching to Build a Peer Support Culture

Peer support is a protective factor against the harmful impacts of stress. Perceived support among healthcare workers is related to an increase in patient safety, teamwork, participation, accountability and work-life balance. It is also related to a decrease in delays in care delivery, disruptive behavior and burnout. Emotion coaching is one way to provide peer support.

WHAT IS EMOTION COACHING?

Emotion coaching is a skill we can use at work with our patients and each other and also outside of work.

Emotion coaching has been researched for decades by Dr. John Gottman, a clinical psychologist out of the University of Washington. He studies factors that help or harm relationships.

The basic goal of emotion coaching is to validate a person's experience.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Emotion coaching is associated with all sorts of benefits in children and families (healthier peer groups, less substance use, better school performance) and in adult relationships (increased satisfaction with partner, stay together longer).

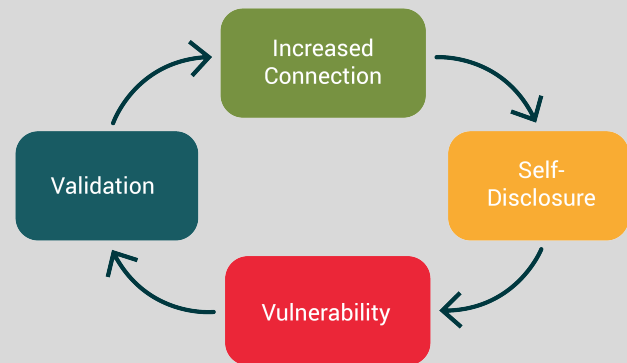
Emotion coaching can be helpful during happy, fun conversations and during stressful ones.

Find the complete step-by-step guide online at:
accelerate.uofuhealth.utah.edu/explore/wellness

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Emotion Coaching consists of four parts:

1. **Self-Disclosure:** A person shares some information with you.
2. **Vulnerability:** This sharing, even if it something very common ("Isn't it great to have a sunny morning?"), is a moment of vulnerability.
3. **Validation:** If you validate the person's comment ("It is really nice out."), then the person feels heard.
4. **Increased connectedness:** If a person feels heard, they are very likely to feel more connected to you and share a little more.



There are three simple ways to validate a person's experience.

1. **Reflect:** Share back with the person what you heard them say, like as if you were a sports commentator describing a play during a game. ("You're wondering what's going to happen.")
2. **Name the Emotion:** Acknowledge the emotion that the person might be experiencing as they describe their circumstance. "Sounds really frustrating" or "Sounds really stressful."
3. **Get Curious:** Ask more about the person's experience. "Tell me more about _____" or "How are you doing with all of this?"

Using Emotion Coaching to Build a Peer Support Culture

QUICK GUIDE

STEP 1: Ask your team to take a look at the example statements under the “Say This” column and see if they can label the statement as a “Reflection,” “Naming the Emotion” or “Getting Curious”

Say this	Not this
• That sounds really tough.	• At least you have a job.
• That sounds frustrating/scary/sad.	• You'll get over it.
• You're really worried	• You shouldn't feel that way.
• You're wondering what's going to happen.	• I don't know why you're so upset.
• I can tell how hard you're working.	• You should think more positively.
• Are you okay?	• Unsolicited advice.
• What are you doing to take care of yourself?	• Nothing.

STEP 2: Practice with a scenario. Read the statements out loud and ask team members to say in their mind how they would emotion coach. Then, give them the options below and have them tell you which one sounds more like emotion coaching.

Co-Worker: “That’s me, depressed.”	
<i>How would you respond?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What? Not you, we need you!” • “Yeah, a lot of people are feeling that way right now.”
Co-Worker: “I just feel tired all the time and I get overwhelmed so easily.”	
<i>How would you respond?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “You should probably get more sleep.” • “It makes sense. You’re doing a lot.”
Co-Worker: “I know. I just wish I knew when it was going to get better.”	
<i>How would you respond?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yeah, you can’t think about that.” • “Oh man, I hear you. Anything that you've done lately that's been helpful?”

STEP 3: Practice with each other. Get into pairs. Have each person think of something that went well over the past week. In each pair, have one person share what went well for two minutes, the other person will experiment with emotion coaching during this time. Then switch roles.

STEP 4: Reflect as a group on the following questions.

1. What did you notice during the exercise?
2. What was it like to emotion coach?
3. What was it like for someone to use emotion coaching with you?
4. What’s one thing you will take away from today?

Find tips for implementing in clinic online at:
accelerate.uofuhealth.utah.edu/explore/wellness

WELLNESS CHAMPIONS

How to Practice Three Good Things

What is the “Three Good Things” practice?

“Three Good Things” is a quick and simple prescription for reducing burnout and increasing well-being. This exercise trains our brains to see and savor the good that’s always around us, even during difficult times. We can practice this approach by asking ourselves these two questions every day:

1. **What 3 things went well today?**
2. **How did these things occur? Or: How did I contribute to them?**

How does it Work?

1. **Make time:** Set an intention to practice journaling for a few minutes every day for 2 weeks. [Research shows](#) that just a couple of weeks can have effects that last 6 months to a year.
2. **Grab a pen and paper:** Write your observations in a journal or a notepad.
3. **Write down “three good things”:** Each night, write down three things that you are grateful for. Include what you noticed, how it made you feel, and why you think the event happened. Just a sentence or two will work but write more if you feel up to it.
4. **Anything counts:** The events you choose can be large or small. Don’t worry about grammar or spelling—the goal is just to record what you’ve noticed.
5. **Reflect:** After two weeks, take stock and see if you notice any positive effects of this practice on your life.

Tips for practicing Three Good Things

1. **We don’t practice “Three Good Things” to dismiss or negate hard experiences through toxic positivity.** We use it to acknowledge and care for our hard feelings, and to recognize the good that is present.
2. **For maximum effect, try this exercise right before you go to bed.** The thoughts we review in the hours before sleep [stay in our memories longer](#). Some [research](#) reveals that recognizing things we are grateful for helps us relax and sleep better.
3. **This exercise also helps us decompress and transition from one role to the next.** For example, reflect on your workday. Think about what went well, and what you contributed. These memories can give you a sense of satisfaction and allow you to release and focus on the next important task.
4. **Feeling negative? That’s okay.** If you end up focusing on negative things, acknowledge those experiences. Then, refocus your thoughts on the good memories. If you miss a day, it’s not a big deal—just start again tomorrow.

Suggestions for using with teams

1. **Check the emotional pulse of the team.** If folks are struggling, acknowledge those hard feelings first and explain your intention for doing this exercise. Remember that the purpose is not to negate people’s hard experiences. Allow people to pass if they wish.
2. **Reflect** on your intentions for suggesting this exercise.
3. **This exercise can be used as a check-in or in closing.** If there’s limited time, perhaps have team members journal their thoughts. Then encourage them to share one good thing verbally or divide into small groups or pairs for discussion.
4. **Dedicate a space** like a whiteboard or another forum to recognize a team member’s three good things each day.

TEAM HUDDLE

Assess Your Stress:

Where are you on the stress continuum?

Below are some simple action items for each stage on the stress continuum. It's important to note that it's okay to be at any stage of the continuum. This is about self-awareness, getting needs met, preventing symptoms from worsening and engaging in practical ways to bounce back.

Thriving "I got this."	Surviving "Something isn't right."	Struggling "I can't keep this up."	In Crisis "I can't survive this."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calm and steady with minor mood fluctuations • Able to take things in stride • Consistent performance • Able to take feedback and to adjust to changes of plans • Able to focus • Able to communicate effectively • Normal sleep patterns and appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervousness, sadness, increased mood fluctuations • Inconsistent performance • More easily overwhelmed or irritated • Increased need for control and difficulty adjusting to changes • Trouble sleeping or eating • Activities and relationships you used to enjoy seem less interesting or even stressful • Muscle tension, low energy, headaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent fear, panic, anxiety, anger, pervasive sadness, hopelessness • Exhaustion • Poor performance and difficulty making decisions or concentrating • Avoiding interaction with coworkers, family, and friends • Fatigue, aches and pains • Restless, disturbed sleep • Self-medicating with substances, food, or other numbing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disabling distress and loss of function • Panic attacks • Nightmares or flashbacks • Unable to fall or stay asleep • Intrusive thoughts • Thoughts of self-harm or suicide • Easily enraged or aggressive • Careless mistakes and inability to focus • Feeling numb, lost, or out of control • Withdrawal from relationships • Dependence on substances, food, or other numbing activities to cope
Now what?	Now what?	Now what?	Now what?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time to savor the good • Help others who are struggling • Keep using your go-to coping strategies • Let go of feeling guilty for feeling good (Yes, sometimes this happens!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to let go of some to-do list items • Add 1-2 coping strategies (exercise, limit social media) • Reconnect to purpose (What do I want to stand for right now?) • Use deep breathing to hold steady during difficult moments • Connect with support system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on meeting basic needs • Establish boundaries where possible • Inform supervisor and identify next steps for bouncing back • Let support system know (FYI: You aren't a burden for doing this.) • Consider a resilience consult: 801-213-3403 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with a mental health professional or team: 801-213-3403 • Arrange for time off, whether that is PTO or a leave of absence • Ask support system for help, including supervisor • Focus solely on the short-term • Let go of self-criticism & engage in self-compassion

Adapted from Colorado Healthcare Ethics Resource (2020) *The Stress Continuum*.

WELLNESS CHAMPIONS

How to Practice Self-compassion

Self-compassion is the ongoing practice of relating to yourself kindly and fairly. It is especially helpful during times of stress and suffering. Practicing self-compassion increases well-being and resilience to stress and trauma. It has also been linked to healthier behaviors (like more exercise and less substance use), greater motivation, confidence, and sense of personal responsibility.

It also improves our pro-social or supportive relationship behaviors.

The Three Elements of Self-compassion

Dr. Kristin Neff and colleagues have identified three elements of self-compassion. Though each element can be practiced individually, self-compassion includes a combination of mindfulness, common humanity, and self-kindness.

Mindfulness	Self-kindness	Common Humanity
<p>What it is: Being aware of the physical, emotional, or mental pain of the moment.</p>	<p>What it is: Treating ourselves with kindness, considering our own needs.</p>	<p>What it is: Remembering that these experiences are normal and part of being human.</p>
<p>Why it works: The act of putting feelings into words sends soothing neurotransmitters to the limbic system.</p>	<p>Why it works: Reduces stress hormones, like cortisol, and increases oxytocin, which helps us feel calm and safe.</p>	<p>Why it works: Builds connection with others, bringing depth to emotion and fostering compassion.</p>
<p>How to do it:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scan the body for pain or tension 2. Label the emotion (e.g., anger, sadness, shame) 3. Articulate the feeling: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm tense" • "I'm activated" • "This is painful." • "This is heavy." • "This feels so big right now." 	<p>How to do it:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a few deep breaths 2. Adjust the body for comfort 3. Stretch or move gently 4. Take a soothing action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer yourself a warm touch—place a hand on the part that hurts, a hug, massage, belly breathing, etc. • Say words of affirmation, "I am doing my best." "I don't know the answer, but I can sit here and breathe." • Have a cup of tea or coffee, a good meal, a glass of water, etc. • Say no; ask for help. 	<p>How to do it:</p> <p>Acknowledge that you are not alone in your experience with phrases like these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I'm not alone in feeling this way." • "Others get stuck sometimes." • "This is part of being human." • "I'm human too; I'm not perfect." • "Life isn't perfect."

Adapted from "What is self-compassion." Available at <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

Five Facilitation Tips for Teams

1. **Talk about it.** Bring up the topic before problem-solving or debriefing. Share some of the facts and mention the myths below.

Myths	What the research ¹ suggests:
Self-compassion is a form of self-pity.	Self-compassionate people tend to brood less about their misfortune. ²
Self-compassion means weakness.	"Self-compassion is one of the most powerful sources of coping and resilience available to us. When we go through major life crises, self-compassion appears to make all the difference in our ability to survive and even thrive." ¹
Self-compassion will make me complacent.	Self-compassion strengthens personal accountability. ³
Self-compassion is narcissistic.	"Self-compassionate people are better able to remain emotionally stable, regardless of others." ⁴
Self-compassion is selfish.	"Self-compassion helps people sustain the act of caring for others." ¹

2. **Encourage each other.** Build a supportive culture by reminding each other to respond to ourselves with compassion. ("What would you say to someone else if they were in this situation?")
3. **Recognize acts of self-kindness** when checking in with teams or individuals. ("I'm so glad to hear that you are taking time to recover on your days off.")
4. **Incorporate this skill** with other exercises from the Wellness Champions toolkit, like [check-in questions](#) and the [positive psychology](#) tools.
5. **Get creative!** Use an audio guide in a meeting. Invite the Resiliency Center to facilitate a "self-compassion break" during a huddle or meeting. Put up the quick guide companion to this article in common areas.

References

1. *The Five Myths of Self-compassion* (2015).
2. *Rumination and Worry as Mediators of the Relationship Between Self-compassion and Depression and Anxiety* (2010).
3. *Self-Compassion Increases Self-Improvement Motivation* (2012).
4. *Self-compassion and Reactions to Unpleasant Self-Relevant Events: The Implications of Treating Oneself Kindly* (2007).
5. *Self-compassion as a Prospective Predictor of PTSD Symptom Severity Among Trauma-Exposed U.S. Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans* (2015).

Find the complete step-by-step guide online at: accelerate.uofuhealth.utah.edu/explore/wellness