Baker’s Dozen of Mental Toughness

Your stress management and resilience toolkit

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Introduction

Medicine has become a battlefield. Low morale, intense workloads, decreasing resources, and exposure to trauma and high stress all mean healthcare and emergency services staff are under pressure like never before. This increasingly stressful work environment takes its toll on not only your health and personal life, but also your job performance.

This toolkit will provide you with a series of resources to increase and hopefully improve your resilience, strengthen your mental toughness and allow you to carry out your life to the best of your ability.

The skills outlined are easy to learn but for them to be useful to you, **you must practise** and practise until they become a habit embedded in the way you behave. Used regularly these tools will optimise your performance under pressure, enhance your life both at work and home and enable you to function better **but** it will take time and effort.

**It will be worth it.**
#1 CHANCE perspective

OPPORTUNITY S

NOWHERE

Should there be a space here?

PROBLEM

What do you see?

CHALLENGE

THREAT
#2 BECOME MORE optimistic

3 IS THE magic NUMBER

IT TAKES THREE POSITIVE EMOTIONS/ACTIONS TO BEAT ONE NEGATIVE ONE!

(UNLESS YOU'RE IN A RELATIONSHIP)
#2 BECOME MORE optimistic

PERMA

- Positive Emotions (feeling good)
- Engagement (finding flow)
- Meaning (purposeful existence)
- Achievement (sense of accomplishment)
- Relationships (authentic connections)
#3 Become a STRESS MANAGEMENT EXPERT
part 1: the HELICOPTER TECHNIQUE

Imagine flying up...

... and looking down on your situation.

In your 0-80 lifespan, how important was that incident?

Not important at all.
#3 Become a STRESS MANAGEMENT EXPERT

part 2: the STRESS BUCKET

**Here is a stress bucket**

**At work:**

**At the end of the day:**

**At home:**

So you need two things:

the bucket

And triggers to empty it!
Write down 3 things that went well for you in the last 24 hours.
#5 TAKE A BREAK TO meditate

BREATHE IN (4 secs)

HOLD (4 secs)

HOLD (4 secs)

BREATHE OUT (4 secs)

box breathing
GET BETTER SLEEP AT HOME

USE YOUR BEDROOM FOR TWO THINGS ONLY:

- Sleep
- Sex

OPTIMISE YOUR SLEEPING POSITION

- Lie on your non-dominant side

GET TO KNOW YOUR SLEEP CYCLE

- 11 PM: Bedtime
- 7 AM: Wake up

RESTLESS
AWAKE

BANISH THE BLUE LIGHT!

NO ELECTRONICS!
#6 STAY ALERT at work

**Know your dipping points**

![Graph showing dips in energy levels](image)

- 2-4 pm
- 1-3 am

12 pm 12 am 12 pm

If you need to stay alert, find time to have a quick nap.
#7 Improve your DECISION MAKING

the WRAP model

WIDEN YOUR OPTIONS

REALITY TEST YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

How will I feel about this in 10 minutes? months? years?

ATTAIN SOME DISTANCE

PREPARE FOR FAILURE

How will I cope?
#7 Improve your DECISION MAKING

Be aware of how your brain can respond:

**FAST**

or

**SLOW**

How many animals did Moses bring on the Ark?

2 of each!

Hang on, it was Noah - not Moses!!

Use pre-mortems

**ASSUME THE WORST HAS HAPPENED.**

**FAST FORWARD A MONTH AND LOOK BACK.**

**WOULD YOU HAVE DONE ANYTHING DIFFERENTLY HAD YOU KNOWN THE OUTCOME?**
ASK FOR help

Don’t be afraid to ask...

...and let go of the ego!

Use the expertise in the room
#9 Learn to deal with conflict

Anger is not a good way to deal with conflict...

Ouch! That really upset me... I know you work hard and I need to be clear about this.

... instead, be assertive and respectful of others.
DO PHYSICAL EXERCISE every day

the 7-MINUTE workout

1. Jumping Jacks
2. Wall Sit
3. Push-Up
4. Abdominal Crunch
5. Step Up
6. Squat
7. Triceps Dip
8. Plank
9. High Knees Running In Place
10. Lunge
11. Push Up & Rotation
12. Side Plank
#11 LEARN something new REGULARLY

HOW TO PEEL a banana!

TAKE THE BOTTOM END

SQUEEZE IT WITH YOUR FINGERS

PEEL BACK
VOILÀ!

ALSO CHECK:

HOW TO TIE your shoe laces

GO FIND OUT!

KEEP LEARNING

YOU DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW
AND YOU MAY NOT EVEN KNOW
WHAT YOU THINK YOU KNOW!
#12 TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

(and those you work with — so they can look after you!)

Are you:

HUNGRY?

LATE?

GROWLING

OR HANGRY?

ANGRY?

TIRED?

avoid these!
#13 Smile! & VISUALISE SUCCESS
References / Recommended Reading

CHANGE PERSPECTIVE
Duckworth, Angela (2016) Grit, Vermillion

OPTIMISM
http://losada.socialpsychology.org/
Seligman, Martin (2006) Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life, Vintage Books USA

MANAGE STRESS

GRATITUDE DIARY

MEDITATE
• Tan, Chade–Meng (2012) Search Inside Yourself: Increase Productivity, Creativity and Happiness, Collins

SLEEP
Littlehales, Nick (2016) Sleep: The Myth of 8 Hours, the Power of Naps... and the New Plan to Recharge Your Body and Mind, Penguin Life

DECISION MAKING
• Kahneman, Daniel (2011) Thinking Fast and Slow, Penguin
DEAL WITH CONFLICT
Harris, Thomas A. (1995) I’m Ok, You’re Ok, Arrow Books

EXERCISE

LEARN
• Oakley, Barbara (2014) Mind for Numbers: How to Excel at Math and Science (Even If You Flunked Algebra), Tarcher
• Ericsson, Anders (2016) Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise, Bodley Head

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF – HALT

SMILE
https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-mirror-neuron-revolut/

DEVELOP FLOW

For further resources and reading visit: https://www.walesdeanery.org/new-initiatives/resilience-medtrim/mental-toughness-resources