



Pacing Ourselves in a Pandemic: Slowing Down When I Should

As spring arrives, the duration of this pandemic event is unknown. Like a long-distance endurance run, pacing yourself will be a key to staying effective and healthy over the whole distance. Physicians have a deep reservoir of resilience, and this can become depleted by this unprecedented public health emergency. The demands are relentless; personal energy is not limitless. Pacing includes being able to push hard while allowing for time to rest and replenish resilience as an individual and as a team.

Awareness of your day to day level of stress and wellbeing is the first step towards healthy action. A team or office check-in will promote self and team awareness. Below are tips on running a huddle to check-in including, noticing where you may be on a continuum of stress and wellbeing: feeling the weight of the moment yet up for the challenge to care for patients (yellow zone), noticing when one is beginning to struggle or feeling distressed (orange zone) or feeling exhausted and the emergence of health/mental health problems (red zone).

Fig. 1 Continuum of Stress and Wellbeing



Team or Office Check-Ins

Purpose: To provide team members a safe, trusted space to briefly check-in with each other, create a climate of mutual support and without any pressure share a highlight, an appreciation or a problematic moment all to lessen the risk of carrying home the challenges of the day or feeling alone with those challenges.

- Agree as team to briefly huddle and check-in at the end of the workday.
- Choose a facilitator to start the check-in and gather at a safe distance or virtually.
- Agree beforehand on the length of time – depending on the number of team members (5-15 mins) and sharing is brief.
- Choose an opening question or two to start the check-in, participation only requires your presence, and no one is required to share, e.g., “How are you doing as the shift ends? Anything you would like to share about your day – a positive highlight or a problematic moment? Any thoughts on where are you on the continuum today – the green, yellow, orange, or red zone of wellness and stress? What is one thing you will do to look after yourself after work? How can we help?”
- Facilitator guides the team to wrap as the time nears the allotted time.
- Going forward – pair up with a buddy for ongoing mutual support, a check-in and to nudge healthy habits.

Source: D’Agata, et al, 2019, Maunder, et al 2010 Moulton, et al, 2007, Nash et al 2011.