

Recharge, Recover and Lead

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Introduction

Educators and educational leaders work in challenging and high-pressure environments with a high level of accountability, chronic stress, and pressure. This project sought to provide a supportive framework that included mental health literacy and emotional learning tools to assist educators in adopting practices that led to a stronger sense of self while leading.

- The 2013 *Gallup-Health-ways Well-Being Index* found that 46% of teachers in K-12 settings report high levels of daily stress during the school year. This level of stress is similar to that of nurses (46%) and physicians (45%) and is the highest (along with nurses) among the 14 professional categories included in the study ([Gallup, 2014](#)).
- The APA's Center for Organization Excellence found that approximately 33% of Americans reported having chronic work stress ([APA, 2013](#)). This is a concerning statistic, because stress-related disorders are costly for employers (e.g., through absenteeism and lost productivity; [DHHS, 1999](#)) and are associated with numerous negative mental and physical health outcomes for workers ([APA, 2015](#)).

Logic Model

Outcomes

- Administrators served through the Recharge, Recover and Lead program will report reduced chronic stress and will weekly use coping strategies to improve productivity and wellness.

Outputs

- Administrators indicated fewer days in a month where stress negatively impacted them emotionally or physically.
- Administrators acknowledge growth areas as related to increased use of stress reduction strategies and techniques to manage emotional responses to stress.

Activities

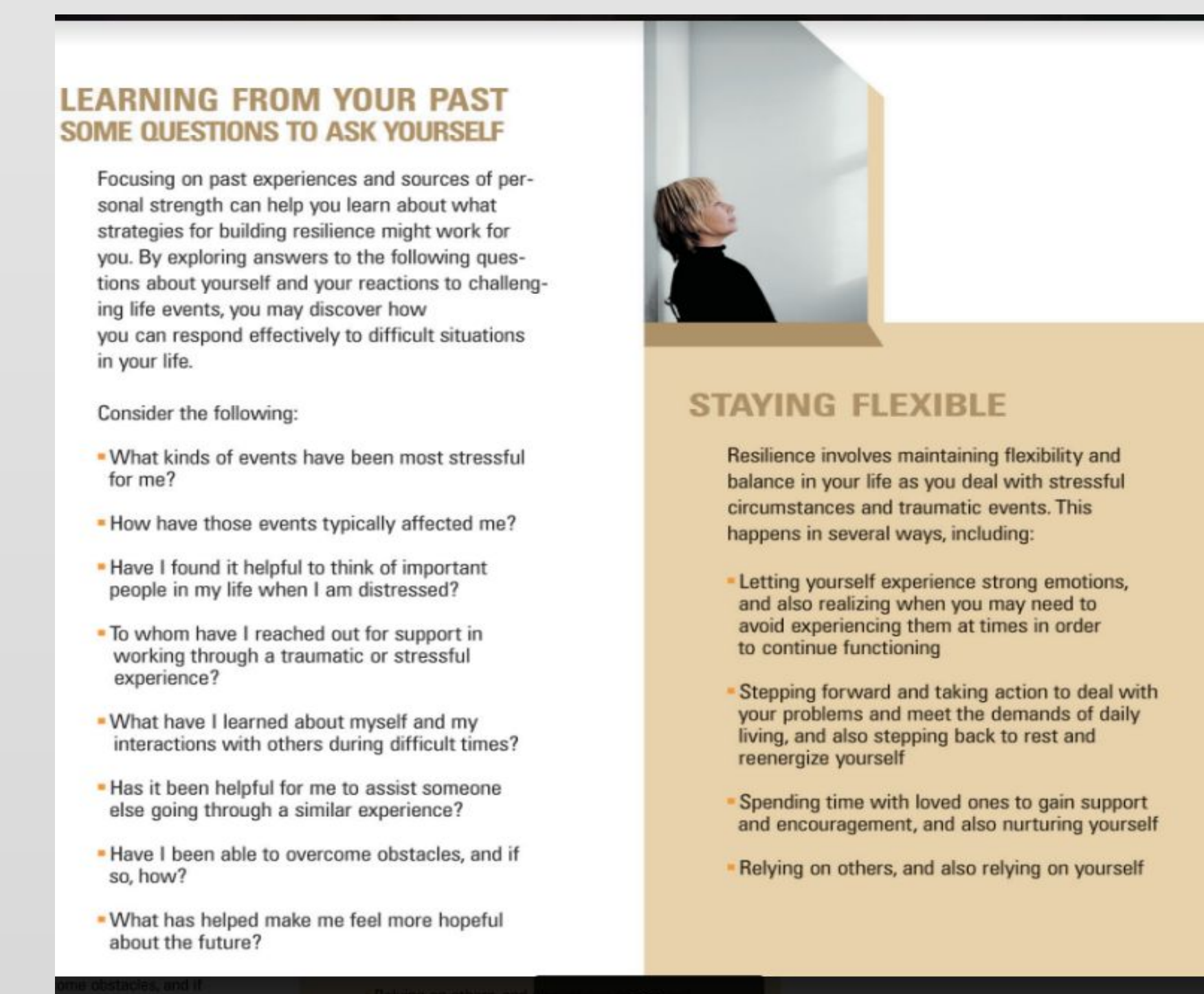
- Mindful Monday Emails to provide support resources to discuss in individual and small group sessions.
- Individual counseling sessions to discuss stress-reducing techniques and address specific issues to improve overall wellbeing.
- Small group sessions to discuss shared experiences and to collaboratively reflect and build a support system.

Inputs

- Basic technology tools (e.g., emails, online calendar scheduling, video conferencing software for remote sessions, when desired)
- Time for counseling sessions delivered individually (1.5 hours each) and in small groups (2 hours each), over the course of 10 months
- Feedback mechanisms, in order to target small group sessions on topics requested by administrators
- Access to professional development resources and literature, in order to share stress-reduction tools via weekly emails

Impact

We practiced stress management and mindfulness techniques through psychoeducation during individual counseling sessions and small group support sessions. The goal was to reduce the number of days where this stress negatively impacted performance and productivity. The initial survey was the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) survey to define and measure burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma. An exit Google Survey measured the number of stress impacted days in a month, implementation of strategies, and areas of most growth. The exit survey showed that 9 of 10 administrators reported a reduction of stress impact days from 10-15 in a month to 5 or less. Administrators rated the most significant areas of growth by a rating scale as self-regulation, self-awareness, and improved interpersonal communications.



Left: 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique
Intersanctum Therapy
Right: Reflection Tool
helping.apa.org

Critical Assessment

The most significant barrier was finding time in the schedule of each individual administrator without the sessions becoming another stressor in their busy day. I had to be flexible and provide multiple methods to meet with each administrator, including face-to-face and remote distance counseling.

Also, COVID limited our ability to meet in person as small groups, fortunately the initial sessions led to self-led small group interactions between the administrators. I also had to help the participants understand this was not professional development to be a better leader but a leader who knew how to manage the impacts of chronic stress and create a more balanced self.

The most common element we discussed in our individual sessions was personal growth and emotional management, which led to reflection. Personal growth comes from taking intentional time to reflect on those practices that worked well and those that did not and being willing to adjust. This ASF project challenged me to become a more deliberate observer, listener, and reflector of myself and others.

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