Arrows In, Arrows Out
5 Invitations for Daily Resilience

Susanna (Zan) Barry,
Senior Program Manager
Community Wellness at MIT Medical
Thank you
About me

• Originally from New York City, now in Boston
• 17 years at MIT
• Hodgepodge background
Fight,
Flight,
Freeze
Chronic stress reactions

• Cognitive – indecisive, forgetful, racing mind
• Emotional – worry, little joy, irritability
• Behavioral – increased use of substances, restlessness, critical of ourselves and others
• Physical – muscle tension, insomnia, eating changes
Internalized Fight, Flight, Freeze

- Fight internalized: Self-criticism
- Flight internalized: Self-isolation (over-distract, shame)
- Freeze internalized: Self-absorption (brain racing, but immobilized)

Invitation #1: Values and goals

• Remember that the pandemic is everywhere
• Many are frustrated with lack of progress on goals
• Dig deeper to find core values
AM: 1-minute values journal

What do I love today?
What is important to me today?
What is my most important boundary today?
PM: GLAD values exercise

1. G – gratitude
2. L - learning
3. A - accomplishment
4. D - delight
Is this the old way of thinking?

• Goal attainment
• Standards/perfectionism
• Control
Values journal: The losses
Values journal: The good things
Values activities

• VIA profile https://www.viacharacter.org/
• Daily resilience diary
• Values journal
• GLAD
Invitation #2: What is my most important boundary?
Ways to think about boundaries

• Reflect on core values and future goals.
• Create more structure than usual. Set small, manageable goals. Remember, right now is generally not a time of peak goal attainment. Set boundaries around news and worry.
• Create deliberate connection.
• Put rewards at the end of work, not before.
Productivity strategies

• Plan your timing, not your output
• Sprint and recover
• Use the power of “first-minute motivation”
• Finish by parking downhill
• Include a reward at the end
Boundary First-Aid

Warming up:

• What is one concrete task I can do right now?
• Start with 10-15 minutes
• Press pause
Remember: everyone has been in this situation.
Boundary First-Aid

Cooling down:

• HALT: Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired (Thirsty)
• The “I’ll just...” trap
• Set a floor and ceiling
Remember: you can’t unsee something.
Invitation #3: Cope-ahead planning

• Discuss and negotiate needs ahead of time as much as possible
  • Space
  • Technology
  • Do not disturb
Invitation #4: Decrease your body’s stress load

• Drink enough water
• Get appropriate exercise to reduce stress hormones
• Take eye breaks/massage
Support good quality sleep
Optimal quality sleep

• Sunlight before noon
• Relaxation technique
• 150 minutes of exercise per week
• Cool, dark, and quiet
• Wake up at around the same time each day
The benefits of better sleep
Reality check

• Less than 5% of the population has a genetic mutation allowing them to function normally on 6 hours of sleep per night.

He, Y. et al. (2009), Science 325(5942)
Shi, G. (2019), Neuron 103(6)
The relationship between cortisol and melatonin
Optimize melatonin

• Dim lights an hour or two before bed
• No screens
• Small screens, dim screens, nightshift mode
Decrease cortisol

• Massage and touch
• 150 minutes per week of exercise
• Music; dancing on a regular basis
• Laughter and humor
• Yoga, relaxation practices, and mindfulness meditation
Seasonal Light Changes

• Talk to a physician about lightbox/SAD lamp

• Lightbox and Seasonal Affective Disorder:
  • Johns Hopkins University
  • The Cleveland Clinic
  • The Mayo Clinic

• Informational purposes only: Wirecutter, The New York Times
Refresh by SleepRate: CBT app for insomnia

https://www.sleeprate.com/mit-full-plan/
Invitation #5: Access resources

• Fitness and wellness
• MIT Spouses & Partners Connect
• WorkLife and MyLife Services
Unwind Classes
Mon-Thurs via Zoom
12 and 5 pm EDT
Guided stretch and relaxation

bit.ly/mitwellness

CALL 253-CALM AND CARRY ON
Thank you!

Susanna (Zan) Barry
bars@med.mit.edu
bit.ly/mitwellness