

Internal Auditor Well-being and Self-Care

Wellbeing and Self-care

Wellbeing and Self-care are important considerations for all people. It can be even more important for internal auditors whose work can be stressful when auditing and reporting difficult topics – often including engaging with difficult people.

Wellbeing can be defined as:

A positive state experienced by individuals and societies. It is similar to health and a resource for daily life determined by social, economic and environmental conditions. Wellbeing encompasses quality of life and the ability of people and societies to contribute to the world with a sense of meaning and purpose.

Adapted from (World Health Organization, 2021, p. 10)

Self-care is:

The ability of individuals, families, and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and to cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a healthcare provider.

Adapted from (World Health Organization, 2022)

What Impacts Internal Auditor Wellbeing?

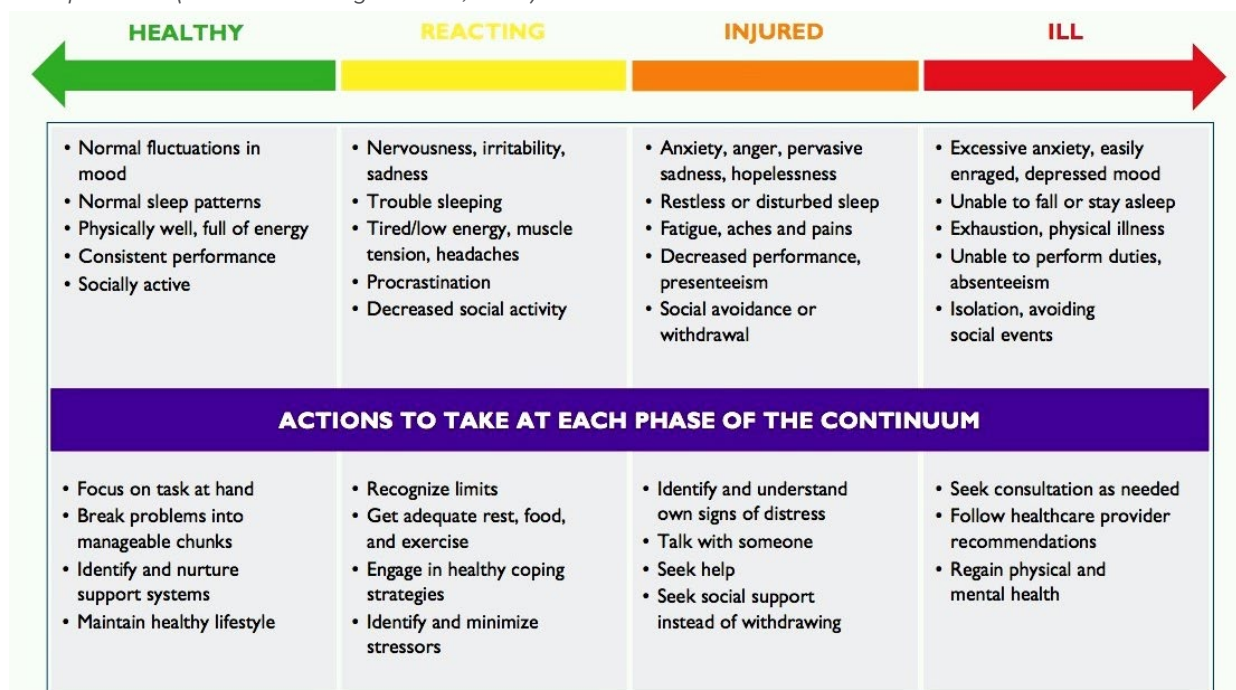
Internal audit professionals often spend all their time and energy looking after their clients and identifying how they can be resilient and do better, while putting their own wellness and mental fitness second.

Mental Health Continuum

If each of us was to assess where we are on the mental health and wellbeing continuum right now, how many could say that their physical and mental health and wellbeing was optimal?

There are a number of ways to assess your mental health including through sites such as Beyond Blue (Mental health check-in).

There are a range of mental health states from flourishing (a sense of fulfillment, purpose and happiness) to languishing (the void between depression and flourishing – the absence of wellbeing). A person who is languishing has no symptoms of mental illness, but they are not the picture of mental health and not functioning at full capacity.



Optimal mental health and wellbeing is characterised by positive emotions, resilience and high levels of functioning. Poor mental health and wellbeing may be characterised by negative emotions, low self-esteem, physical health problems and difficulty functioning. Along the spectrum, individuals may experience a range of mental health states including stress or anxiety, and more severe conditions such as depression or bipolar disorder.

It is important to note that mental health is not static and can change over time, depending on a variety of factors such as life events, genetics and personal or work environments. Psychological safety, health and fitness have emerged as a critical element of the work health safety (WHS) landscape for all of us. The Covid pandemic and global events such as war, terrorism and economic challenges have seen an escalating impact on wellbeing.

As assurance professionals navigating our way through what for some can be overwhelming impacts, it is critical we consider what self-care activities may be useful to support us to maintain or restore good health to improve wellbeing to sustain us in times when we feel overwhelmed, exhausted or burnt-out.

Some of you may even be experiencing the increasing issue of empathy (or compassion) fatigue. You have been looking out for your team, your clients, and may even have been supporting your family through illness or other difficulties, and you start to feel that you have nothing left in the tank. Your first step should be to recognise your own needs and priorities, and to incorporate self-care into your routines.

If you are experiencing less than optimum mental health, it is important to seek help and support from trusted family or friends, your workplace employee assistance program (EAP) if there is one, or a mental health professional who can help people move towards optimal mental health and wellbeing.

Self-care Activities

The following may already be a part of your normal routine, however by looking more closely at your self-care activities, you may be able to enhance what you are already doing, consider some new options and establish healthy habits. There are numerous Apps available to support you in each of these areas.

1. Physical

- › Eat healthy and regularly / be mindful of processed food and alcohol consumption / plan meals in advance to reduce unhealthy choices.
- › Exercise and move your body in a way that is enjoyable to you every day / schedule in a walk, run, yoga, cycling, cardio classes or Pilates. A

wearable smart device or your smartphone can help you see the results of your efforts such as keeping track of steps or minutes of activity.

- › Consider personal care regimes and preventive health checks.
 - › Get enough sleep / establish a routine / go to bed early / turn off electronics an hour prior to bed.
 - › Participate in fun activities such as movies / dancing / swimming / surfing in the ocean.
 - › Rest when ill or unwell / take the day off even if you are working from home.
- #### 2. Psychological / Emotional
- › Take time off from work, school and other obligations.
 - › Consider a hobby.
 - › Set boundaries / turn off your smartphone and email outside work hours.
 - › Learn new things unrelated to work.
 - › Express feelings in healthy and constructive ways such as talking / journalling / creating art.
 - › Recognise your own strengths and achievements.
 - › Go on vacations or day trips.
 - › Participate in wellness activities / retreats / massage / treatments / sauna.
 - › Do something comforting such as watch a movie / take a long bath.
 - › Laugh and smile.
- #### 3. Social
- › Spend time with your partner.
 - › Spend time with people you like.
 - › Call / write / reconnect with friends or family who are far away.
 - › Have stimulating conversations.
 - › Meet new people.
 - › Ask for help when needed.
 - › Do enjoyable activities with other people.
 - › Reach out to support family, friends and colleagues.
- #### 4. Spiritual
- › Spend time in nature at least two hours per week. The benefits of natural light / exposure to blue and green colours of water and plants / appreciating the sounds and scents of flora and fauna are both immediate and obvious. This could be as simple as walking by the ocean / sitting in a park while you eat lunch / having a small garden or indoor plant to enjoy.
 - › Meditate – establish a habit starting with 5–10 minutes per day. At night this can assist with

improved sleep. Examples are prayer / deep relaxation / mindfulness / breathing exercises. Even the natural rhythms of walking / swimming / running can be meditative.

- › Recognise the things that give meaning to life.
- › Act in accordance with your morals and values
- › Set aside time for thought and reflection or expressing gratitude – a habit of expressing gratitude supports development of a more positive mindset and increased motivation.
- › Participate in a cause / volunteer / fund-raise for worthy charities.
- › Appreciate art that is impactful – music / film / literature.

5. Professional

- › Improve your professional skills or learn new things related to your profession.
- › Say no to excessive or additional responsibilities / avoid multi-tasking – it is said to be unproductive and has a negative effect on brain function / find ways to engage in focused, single-task work for at least part of the day – Microsoft Outlook ‘focus time’ supports task scheduling.
- › Take on projects that are interesting or rewarding.
- › Make time to talk and build relationships with colleagues.
- › Take breaks during the working day.
- › Keep a comfortable and tidy work environment.
- › Maintain balance between work and personal life.
- › Start-of-day and end-of-day routines – write a task list for the day / write down issues, challenges, worries / brainstorm suitable actions to address them – when done at end of a work day it may assist to switch off and leave the work day behind.

Consistently engaging in a mix of Self-care routines and activities gives your mind and body the best chance of maintaining optimum physical and mental health and Wellbeing. The effects can include building resilience to the ongoing adversities and challenging environments in which we live and work, assist recovery, and contribute to personal and professional growth.

Acknowledgement

The content of this Factsheet has been informed by Deborah Goodyer in Sydney, Australia. Deborah is a Certified Internal Auditor and experienced assurance professional. She is a member of the International Meditation Teachers and Therapists association and holds Certificates in Meditation Teaching, Chair Yoga, and Holistic Counselling obtained through the Australian School of Holistic Counselling (a Mind Body Education provider).

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