

**ASCO<sup>®</sup>**

# Resilience Skills Training Program

Session 2: Get Into Your Resilience Zone

## Facilitator Guide

### SESSION 2: Get Into Your Resilience Zone

#### Key points:

- Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of low personal accomplishment. An example of emotional exhaustion is the feeling that “I can’t do this anymore.” An example of cynicism is the feeling that “no good deed goes unpunished.” An example of low personal accomplishment is “No matter how hard I work, I never get on top of these demands.”
- Some early warning signs are: feeling irritable, not having any sense of positive outcomes from your work, not wanting to participate in learning that at a prior time you would have done, feeling tired even before you get to work, having more conflict with your significant other or friends or colleagues, feeling discouraged.
- Mindfulness practice is a way of paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment we are in, and doing so in a manner that observes rather than judges. It pulls us from the everyday “automatic pilot” back into the moment we are in by noticing our thoughts, feelings, urges, behaviors and body sensations. We, all of us, can become caught up in action. Mindfulness is a skill that allows us to “back up and observe” so that we may consider how to “participate”. It also helps us notice our emotional reactions and how they affect our actions. As a general skill, mindfulness helps all people get out of their “heads” and into their bodies and the moment. Mindfulness helps to balance the thinking and feeling part of human experience and keep it focused on the here and now. We will use mindfulness to increase our awareness of all the skills we will be learning and trying to put into practice during this course.
- Tracking your own activation through mindfulness and journaling can help you see patterns in when you feel stressed and how you react.
- Once you start to notice patterns, you can point yourself towards a constructive way of coping. Once you see the pattern (feeling behind makes me stressed), usual outcome (rumination), and more constructive action (take a 2 min break and reprioritize), you’ll be better equipped.

#### Timetable & Talking Points:

00:00 – 00:10 **Check-in** = What happened when you paid attention and tried to use your strengths? Pairs 3 minutes, then highlights from the group. Or, simply have a group discussion.

00:10 – 00:20 **Reflect** = A time when you were really revved up, and another when you were kind of shut down: what was happening?

00:20 – 00:30 **Learn** = Tracking your activation, sounds, thoughts, and mindfulness. Review observations of thoughts and how to label a thought as mental event vs fact.

#### How do I recognize the early warning signs of burnout?

- Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of low personal accomplishment. An example of emotional exhaustion is the feeling that “I can’t do this anymore.” An example of cynicism is the feeling that “no good deed goes unpunished.” An example of low personal accomplishment is “No matter how hard I work, I never get on top of these demands.”
- Burnout results from working overtime in situations where (1) an individual’s ability to cope is constantly tested and (2) the system is designed in ways that don’t allow for enough autonomy, fairness, community, reward, control, and shared values.
- Once established, burnout is very hard to reverse, so proactive prevention is important.

- Some early warning signs are: feeling irritable, not having any sense of positive outcomes from your work, not wanting to participate in learning that at a prior time you would have done, feeling tired even before you get to work, having more conflict with your significant other, friends or colleagues, feeling discouraged.
- Another way to think about this is to notice when you're engaged in your work—and when you're not engaged. In many ways we think this is a more useful frame than burnout.

### **Tracking how you're feeling is a key first step**

- So many of us have learned to go on automatic pilot, it's easy to not even be aware about how we're behaving—and studies show that physicians are often not aware of early burnout. While automatic pilot may seem efficient at times, we lose a good deal of information about our present moment experiences. We introduced mindfulness last session. Learning to focus on our moment to moment experience helps us become more aware of our thoughts and feelings and how they can affect our behaviors and decisions. Mindfulness also helps with creating space and acceptance for whatever is there: and in the world of oncology, that may be sitting with painful realities.
- Another proven way to build your awareness is to reflect on your day. We'll give you a worksheet to do this—just fill out what happened yesterday. For every hour that day, write the main thing you were doing. Then go back through your list and rate each thing on a 1 to 10 for how much you enjoyed it, and how engaged you were doing it. Truly enjoying something or being “in the moment” engaged would be indicators of your resilient zone. So, something you didn't enjoy at all would be a 1. Something you really enjoyed would be a 10. When you're way out of something you enjoy, or way out of something you felt engaged in, you are probably out of your resilient zone.
- Once you've tracked your ups and downs, I'll ask you to discuss one up and one down with a partner. Only discuss something you are comfortable sharing. Then notice if what happened yesterday helps you see patterns in when you are in your resilient zone, and when you're not in it.
- It is common for people who engage mindful awareness and do this kind of tracking to see patterns. Our goal is to begin to describe our patterns as just that: patterns. So, I might notice I have worrisome thoughts, or I might notice I interpret more personally if I feel under pressure at the end of the day. We begin to put labels on these patterns, and it becomes easier to observe them beginning. At that point, we are more able to make decisions. We can redirect ourselves or coach ourselves to react differently. If there is an option where we can participate and stay connected to our resilient zone, even better. Changing how you cope is possible and useful—there is evidence about this from studies that have involved thousands of people.

### **What is a “resilient” zone?**

- We all operate at different speeds during the day—psychologists call this different levels of activation, or arousal (probably not something you think about much at work—but the psychologists have a technical meaning for this).
- When you have a lot to do, it's easy to fall into a habit of going on automatic pilot. This can be ok in short stretches. But in the long term, being on automatic pilot can turn into becoming a robot—where you don't take in anything that's going on around you, even when you're with a spouse or a friend.
- When we're at our best, our attention is focused, we're taking in the relevant data, we're making thoughtful decisions about how to act or react—this is what I mean by the resilient zone.
- If we're too revved up, we are all vulnerable to increased reactivity and impulsivity. We tend to overreact, or be overly concrete, and to go quickly to anger or dejection.

- If we're too shut down, we don't take in what's important, and stay withdrawn. In either case—too revved up, or too shut down, we're not staying connected to the present moment and we fail to draw on the best we are capable of.

### **When you're out of the zone, what do you do?**

- First, it's important to realize that we're all out of our resilient zones from time to time during the day. That's life. It's doesn't help to pretend that doesn't happen. We might want to build in some reminders to "check in" with ourselves. We might set our phones to cue us every two hours, or make an association that when we get on an elevator, we will remember to "drop back into the moment"
- After noticing what we are more able to coach ourselves and we might consider how to get back into our "resilient" zone. You've already learned in the last session about your positive strengths—so when you're finding yourself out of your resilient zone, one thing you can do is step back, and think, is there a way I could use one of my strengths?
- Dialectical reality and resilience: Change vs Acceptance: Maintaining awareness that we can change moments to increase our resilience is balanced by the reality that there are often times we cannot change the moment we are in. Just knowing that we are in an acceptance moment (i.e., I cannot change this situation for the patient or myself) can foster long term emotional resilience.

We'll be covering a variety of additional skills in the sessions that are coming up. So, don't worry if you don't know exactly how to deal with tough situations yet—today's session is a first step.

00:30 – 00:50 **Try** = [Experiential exercise] My activation yesterday. Complete the [handout](#) (page 5) JUST for YESTERDAY.

- **5 minutes** Fill out individually
- **5 minutes** Pairs discussion.
- **10 minutes** Group discussion.

00:50 – 00:55 **Prep** = Learning partners. I'll track myself one day—use another column on your [handout](#) (page 5) Spend a few minutes doing the day before, and report to my partner. Notice your ups and downs.

00:55 – 00:60 **Check-out** = "One word"

## Handout: A Stress & Resilience Diary

SESSION 2: Get Into Your Resilience Zone

**1. Think back to yesterday** (or the most recent day you were at work). Try to fill in as much as you can, don't worry about getting every detail.

<i>Time</i>	Main things you did (2 or 3 items is fine)	Rate your enjoyment or mastery (1 = none, 10 = lots)	Rate your stress, irritation or negative feelings (1 = none, 10 = lots)
<i>6 – 8 am</i>			
<i>8 – 10 am</i>			
<i>10 – 12 pm</i>			
<i>12 – 1 pm</i>			
<i>1 – 3 pm</i>			
<i>3 – 5 pm</i>			
<i>5 - 7 pm</i>			
<i>7 - 9 pm</i>			
<i>9 + pm</i>			

**2. Look for patterns**—things you did that triggered positive feelings and things that triggered negative feelings. Did this day capture your most common patterns? Are there other triggers for negative feelings?