

SWORD workbook:

# KFP 5 Wellbeing

## Quick Wins



## Quick Win 5.1: Six steps to managing conflict

### Step 1: Consider how to achieve a mutually desirable outcome

Be aware that one party 'losing' to the other is likely to escalate conflict rather than resolve it. Perceived loss encourages people to try to re-establish fairness through competition, criticism or disengagement.

### Step 2: Encourage people to communicate human-to-human

Recognise that conflict compromises people's fundamental need for respect, competence, autonomy and social status. Encouraging one party to see that the other party is 'just like them' tends to encourage trust and the use of positive language and behaviour.

### Step 3: Anticipate people's potential reactions and rehearse your responses to them

Before having a difficult conversation, thinking through how the other party might react to what you say can expose weaknesses in your argument. It can also help ensure your message will be received in the way intended, and stop the other person becoming defensive.

### Step 4: Substitute blame and criticism with curiosity

Blame will escalate conflict, encourage defensiveness and lead to disengagement, whereas adopting a learning mindset will encourage people to explore potential solutions where both parties can win.

### Step 5: Ask for feedback on how you managed the conflict situation

Showing fallibility can disarm opponents, as this is a quality that inspires trust in leaders. Ask people how you could have handled the situation more effectively.

### Step 6: Assess psychological safety in your organisation

Conflict is much less likely if people feel able to make mistakes without fear of criticism or retribution. A psychologically safe environment (see KFP1 Secure Base and 'Using HSE resources to manage psychosocial risks' above) that encourages moderate risk-taking and curiosity will make conflict resolution easier for all.

Adapted from Delizonna (2017)

## Quick Win 5.2: Tips to improve your work-life balance

### Have regular breaks away from your desk

This will help reduce the intensity of work and get you in the habit of switching off.

### Identify a corridor between work and home

People who do emotionally demanding work often need to 'decompress' before moving into their personal life. Consider how you can transition between work and home, physically and mentally: change your clothes, have a shower, cook a meal, or go for a run. Mindful walking can be a good way to switch off. It helps you become more aware of your bodily sensations and encourages you to tune into your environment as you walk. (See [here](#) for some guidance from Headspace.)

### Use your diary to schedule activities that you enjoy

Planning your leisure time well in advance will help make sure you do get opportunities to switch off.

### Establish an unwinding ritual

For the last 30 minutes of your working day, only start jobs that you can complete easily. Alternatively, spend time clearing your desk.

### Find a restorative place

Spend 15 to 20 minutes somewhere you feel happy and relaxed. This could be a favourite chair or a place in the garden.

### When you think about work after the working day, are you are problem-solving or ruminating?

Problem-solving can provide solutions and insights; ruminating will drain your mental and physical energy. So, try to make sure any thoughts about work are restricted to the former.

### Disconnect

Disconnecting yourself from the outside world for a while will help you switch off and recoup your energies.

### Write a daily exit list

Jotting down what you need to do the next day will help clear your mind and provide a sense of control and resolution. Mentally prepare yourself as you review your activities for the following day.

### Switch off when you commute home

Try not to see commuting as extra work time; read a book or talk to a fellow passenger if you're on public transport, or listen to music in the car.

### Do something different:

It is particularly replenishing to use a totally different skillset during leisure time. So, for example, join a choir, or learn a foreign language.

### Get another perspective

Regular input and advice from a mentor or a coach can be liberating. Anticipating opportunities to talk about concerns with a trusted person can help people contain difficult emotions and to switch off.

### Quick Win 5.3: How to be 'e-resilient'

Develop an organisational policy on email use and etiquette, with input from staff.	Remember that email is a key part of the job, so should be included in job descriptions and when estimating workload.	Lead by example: managers are powerful role models for email behaviour. Unless it's an emergency, don't send emails out of hours (or else use the delay function).
Consider limiting (or even banning) the use of the 'reply all' function.	Limit the use of 'OK' and 'thank you' emails – instead use 'thank you in advance'.	Encourage people to review their email strategies – are they purposeful and efficient, or reactive and habitual?
Process and clear an email whenever you check it.	Switch off email notifications – they can cause stress and anxiety.	Be aware that 'switching' between email and other types of work can add up to two hours to your working day.
Use blocks, filters and folders and keep up with digital housekeeping (e.g. maintaining folders, deleting files, etc.).	Manage other people's expectations: an 'out of office' notification means just that.	Consider picking up the phone if emails are more than 3 paragraphs, or if messages fill the screen.
Remove email from your phone and other personal devices.	Develop 'rules of engagement': set boundaries and decide when you will read emails and when you will switch off.	Take email vacations – disconnect for half a day a week, or even longer.

## Quick Win 5.4: Expressive writing

Research suggests people who regularly engage in expressive writing tend to feel happier and more satisfied. Writing about negative feelings and life experiences can help us reduce stress, depression and anxiety, and discourage unhealthy rumination; it can even improve immune system functioning and physical health. There is also evidence that writing about positive experiences can be beneficial for wellbeing.

Research with social work students (Grant et al., 2014) has found that writing in diary form about their emotional reactions to practice significantly improves students' reflective ability and empathy, and reduces feelings of distress. Several mechanisms are thought to underlie the benefits of expressive writing. Because it involves thinking about experiences as well as expressing emotions, writing helps people process their thoughts and give meaning to their experiences. There is also evidence that expressive writing can improve emotional regulation skills, which is a key aspect of resilience for practitioners.

In order to get maximum benefit, people should write every day, but this doesn't need to take up much time. Studies suggest that expressing emotions in writing for only two minutes a day can improve wellbeing (Burton & King, 2008). There is no one 'correct' way to do this, but these tips may help:

Try writing in the third person to give you some distance, and even a new perspective.

Write about your emotional responses to specific situations: i.e. those that evoked negative feelings (e.g. fear, confusion, embarrassment or frustration) and those that were positive (e.g. satisfaction, pride or a sense of meaning).

Make a note of what you were doing and who you were with; this can help you identify patterns to your emotional reactions to different situations and individuals, and can encourage a more in-depth understanding of your emotions.

Writing about emotions can be helpful, but it may not be effective for people who are experiencing ongoing or serious mental health challenges. Any personal reflections on emotional reactions to work experiences should always be kept in a secure location.

### Quick Win 5.5: Learning to be mindful

Several apps are available that introduce people to mindfulness principles and offer guided meditations; these can be customised to individual needs and contexts. For example, 'one-minute mindfulness' exercises can help people recover after difficult meetings and switch off from work when they get home. Grant and Kinman recommend:

[Buddhify](#)

[Headspace](#)

Both require subscriptions, but others are available free of charge.