Your Survival Guide for Creating Balance and Managing Work-life Stressors

My name is Allison Johnstone and I have been with Magellan for 23 years as a case manager. The objectives today are to describe the root causes of imbalance and name some strategies and tools that you can use to manage stress and reestablish balance. First we want to begin with the definition. It is the body's reaction to harmful situations -- whether they're real or perceived. When you feel threatened, a chemical reaction occurs in your body that allows you to act in a way to prevent injury. This reaction is known as "fight-or-flight," or the stress response. Before we move on, I'd like to note that not all stress is bad. In small doses, stress can help you accomplish tasks and prevent you from getting hurt. for example, if you're driving down the road and you see a car swerve in front of you and you slam on your brakes to avoid hitting the car or if you see someone following you and you want to get somewhere safe or if you want motivation to complete a project. Our bodies are designed to handle small doses of stress. But, we are not equipped to handle long-term, chronic stress without ill consequences. Next we will look at the root causes of stress and you can see there are multiple areas. And what causes stress for one person may not be of concern to someone else. What one person finds stressful another may find invigorating. Your stressors are personal to you and are often the root of feeling off balance. the number one stress according to surveys is work stress and 40% of U.S. workers admit to experiencing work stress, and one-quarter say work is the biggest source of stress in their lives. there are a lot of causes of stress. Being unhappy in your job Having a heavy workload or too much responsibility Working long hours ,Having poor management, unclear expectations of your work, or no say in the decision-making process .Working under dangerous conditions Or Being insecure about your chance for advancement or risk of termination ,Having to give speeches in front of colleagues ,Facing discrimination or harassment at work, especially if your company isn't supportive or Loss of a job . There can be many stresses in life that can cause problems. Examples include Death of loved one or significant other ,Getting married/divorced Financial issues ,Moving ,Chronic Illness/Emotional problems such as depression, anxiety, anger, grief, guilt, low self-esteem or substance abuse, Family/child issues or Trauma such as a natural disaster, theft, rape, or violence against you or a loved one . And the trauma in terms of natural disasters doesn't mean that you were directly involved in it and we will get involved in that in the little bit. So indirectly can cause stress.

>> It is kind of obvious today that we have a workplace stress because we are doing this presentation for everyone. We wanted to take a moment and find out what things stress you the most and I will read some of those off. Someone said HOA member in our homeowners association, I have a good friend who is been on that board and he has said that it is extremely stressful. We have people with serious things like the death of the parent and juggling everyday life. Someone said I have two teenagers. That can be a lot. We have people with health issues and trying to work with health issues. A lot of finance stuff. Also just dealing with coworkers and bosses, going to college, trying to keep up with the house elderly parents and young children and we have a lot of different reasons that people are feeling stressed today. We deal with those on a day in and day out basis. Thank you for answering that.

>> I appreciate those answers and they are all very valid. There are a multitude of stressors in life. So we have taken a moment to define what stress is, but let's look at balance as well. Balance is subjective and fluid in it's definition it's hard to come up with one way to describe it. This quote from Diane Barth does a nice job of summing up balance, "Finding balance is a lifetime project. It is ongoing. It is not a finite goal at the end of which you will have a peaceful, calm and meaningful life. Balance is a way of living. It is a process." There are so many things that we have to balance in our lives work, family, play, leisure, relaxation, caring for others, caring for ourselves, social consciousness, political consciousness,

environmental consciousness, religious beliefs and activities, physical needs to name only a few of the issues most of us are balancing, often without realizing it, all of the time. "Finding balance" in our lives is so important, yet it is so hard, that there are mountains of books and articles about it." other contributing factors to stress can be things like worry. Fear and uncertainty and when you hear on the news regularly about global warming and toxic chemicals, it can cause you to feel stressed because you feel like you have no control over those events. And even though they are rare events the coverage in the media may make them seem more likely to occur than they really are. You can be worried you won't finished a project at work or have enough money to pay your bills this month. Another one is attitude and perception. How you view the world or a particular situation can determine whether it causes stress. For example, if your television set is stolen and you take the attitude, "It's OK, my insurance company will pay for a new one," you'll be far less stressed than if you think, "My TV is gone and I'll never get it back! What if the thieves come back to my house to steal again?" Similarly, people who feel like they're doing a good job at work will be less stressed out by a big upcoming project than those who worry that they are incompetent. Unrealistic expectations can be a contributing factor. No one is perfect. If you expect to do everything right all the time, you're destined to feel stressed when things don't go as expected. Any major life change can be stressful -- even a happy event like a wedding or a job Promotion take adjustment. More unpleasant events, such as a divorce, major financial setback, or death in the family can be significant sources of stress. Your stress level will differ based on your personality and how you respond to situations. Some people let everything roll off their back. To them, work stresses and life stresses are just minor bumps in the road. Others literally worry themselves sick. We are going to discuss some of the most common signs of stress. We'll categorize these as emotional, physical, cognitive (thoughts), and behavioral. As I go through these, I'd like you to note what symptoms you've personally experienced related to stress. so let's start with Emotional symptoms of stress include: Becoming easily agitated, frustrated, and moody ,Feeling overwhelmed, like you are losing control or need to take control .Having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind .Feeling bad about yourself (low self-esteem), lonely, worthless, and depressed .Avoiding others . Next physical them symptoms can include low energy, headaches, upset stomach, a rapid heartbeat, insomnia, frequent illnesses, loss of sexual desire, Nervousness and shaking, ringing in the ear, cold or sweaty hands and feet ,Dry mouth and difficulty swallowing . Next we will look at cognitive symptoms and that can include things like constantly worrying about things. Racing thoughts, forgetfulness and disorganization, inability to focus, poor judgment, being pessimistic and only seeing the negatives. And finally, behavioral symptoms include changes in eating habits, over eating or under eating, procrastination Increased use of drugs, alcohol, Cigarettes, Nail biting, fidgeting and pacing are all behavioral symptoms.

>> What are symptoms that you experience when you are stressed out? I know that there are some that I have and we also have some things that you didn't think about. So we have migraine headaches and we were talking about that earlier. Low energy, short tempered, feeling overwhelmed, some people there are physical things that happened. Someone talked about having a bloody nose and it seems like an odd thing that we know ourselves well enough that when we are stressed for whatever reason that those kinds of things happen. Feeling irritable and not being able to sleep at night or having a racing mind. Feeling depressed, lonely, having gastrointestinal is juice or being withdrawn. Having a hard time getting your brain to shut off. Over eating

>> I also see one that says they experience a lot of these except behavioral once. And it can vary from person to person.

>> Very interesting. I see a lot of repeated things. So we are all dealing with the symptoms and we need to have a balance from time to time.

>> We want to talk about sleep hygiene and that has been in the news a lot and you've probably seen articles about that. But the people, you know, don't get good sleep or have good sleep hygiene and so we are going to go through some of these. But we have a question first. Actually, we are good. No, I'm sorry. I wanted to ask someone. Yes, I did one ask people about this because I'm curious about it. I have trouble sleeping at night and I've had to do a lot of different things to help me sleep and I had this debate with family members and friends about how much sleep at night we need and actually the CDC says we need 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night to feel refreshed and that is most of us. Some people, very few, that might need less and others need more. How many of you get 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night? Can you raise your hand if you do? If you are getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep per night? We have some great people. Lots of people are raising their hands and if I can give you a virtual high five, kudos to you because it is important to get sleep and Allison will talk about that a little bit and if you are struggling with it it is not abnormal. She has ways to help you with that.

>> Thank you for all those responses. Sometimes we find it hard to Get enough sleep or it you go to sleep and wake up in the middle of the night and that has a lot to do with sleep hygiene and those of the habits that help us get quality sleep. We will go through some of the habits that will improve your sleep health. The first one is to power down and I cannot emphasize that enough. Remove electronic devices, such as TVs, computers, and smart phones, from the bedroom. Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bed . And even if you have a radio next to your bed or clock radio that has lights, when I am at home, I always turn the radio away from me so I don't see the light so it is not interfering with the melatonin that happens with bright lights. Don't take a lot of naps. Seal your mattress to protect from allergens and dust mites and so forth. They can be very helpful. Save your bed for sleep and sex. If you use it for other activities your brain will start to interpret that as a substitute for sleep a lot of times.

>> I used to have a habit of sitting in bed and watching TV a lot and I would feel drowsy and I thought that is what was making me go to sleep and I would get drowsy but I would wake up again from the TV screen. So it turned out that was one of the habits I had to change. I think a lot of people do it. Or reading in bed.

>> Control your environment. I know that can be difficult and make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and relaxing, and it has been shown through research that you should turn your storm the sat down thermostat down. Let me go back to this as far as stealing your mattress. If you go to target or store like that you can purchase mattress covers and you put those on your mattress and what it does is it blocks out dust mites and they are a major contributor to allergens and people that are sensitive and you can also buy pillowcases that will zip up so that dust mites stay out and it doesn't interfere with your sleep give you sinus issues.

>> Especially with people that have respiratory issues. That can be helpful.

>> And limit exposure to bright light and control noise. And people want to know how to do that. What I have found helpful is you can purchase a sound machine that has white noise or other kinds of relaxing noises that you can block out because noise will be there and it is hard to entirely block that out but it could help a little bit.

>> Someone mentioned that they do have a mode on their phone that they can turnout that blocks out the light to help them much videos. Everyone is different. And not all this will provide every single person.

>> And some of the smart phones you can set it for certain hours like until 1 AM and it will dim the light on your phone. The next one is to set your body clock. Be consistent. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning, including on the weekends and even on vacation .Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 7 hours of sleep. And the CDC has recommended 78 hours of sleep. Establish a relaxing bedtime routine. Some people will take a bath or read before bed Don't go to bed unless you are .sleepy. If you don't fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed. Maybe do some reading or relaxing activities and look for hidden caffeine and what you eat at night caffeine is a lot of things that people don't realize and actually caffeine can stay in your body for multiple hours so most researchers recommend not taking it after about 5 PM in the evening. It can last quite some time.

>> We have people making comments about the 65 degree temperature for the bedroom and different people have different needs, and, again, it is not right for everyone. But people asking about that.

>> A lot of the research that I looked into when they said to do that, they came up with 65 degrees. For some people that is cold and myself I preferred around 68. The difficulty is if it gets too hot in your bedroom, then for a lot of people it is hard to sleep. The 65 degrees is just a general guideline based on the research that they have done with people and what they thought would be ideal. Also with regards to eating avoid large meals especially in the evening and just have a light snack and reduce your fluid intake before bedtime. Exercise can help in moderation. Being physically active during the day can help you fall asleep more easily at night keep in mind that beds are for people and I know that there are a lot of pet lovers that like to have their dogs sleep in bed with them. If you have a dog or cat that is restless at night and jumping up and down, I have a cat of my own that does that is very active and can be disruptive. And use caution with sleeping pills. If you use them too often it can have a rebound effect and can make your insomnia worse.

>> Any advice for someone who sleeps with someone that snores? And someone mentioned earplugs.

>> Earplugs can work. That is tough and if someone is snoring, you don't want to have separate bedrooms. Sometimes trying to turn them over or someone said one of those machines. You might want to encourage them to get a sleep evaluation because that can contribute to snoring.

>> And the other person may not be getting quality sleep because they are interrupted from their own snoring and don't realize it. So going to the doctor might not be a bad idea for that.

>> Thank you for all those great suggestions. Now we are going to look at time management and the very first thing I want you to understand about time management is no matter how organized we are, there are always only 24 hours in a day. Time doesn't change. All we can actually manage is ourselves and what we do with the time much time we have. Many of us are prey to time wasters that still time that we could be using more productively. And you have to look at what the time bandits are. To spend too much time reading emails on Facebook or making personal calls? In a survey by salary.com, 89 percent of respondents admitted to wasting time every day at work, with roughly 62 % waste between half hour and an hour. Tracking daily activities helps to form an accurate picture of how much time you spend on various activities, which is the first step to effective time management. as far as creating time

management goals, a good place to start is by eliminating your personal time-wasters. For one week, for example, set a goal that you're not going to take personal phone calls or respond to non-work related text messages while you're working. The objective is to change your behaviors over time to achieve whatever general goal you've set for yourself, such as increasing your productivity or decreasing your stress. So you need to not only set your specific goals, but track them over time to see whether or not you're accomplishing them . There are time management tools out there whether it is a software program or a phone app in the first step to physically managing your time is to know where it's going now and planning how you're going to spend your time in the future. A software program such as Outlook, for instance, lets you schedule events easily and can be set to remind you of events in advance, setting time limits is important and prioritizing things. You should start each day with a session prioritizing the tasks for that day and setting your performance benchmark. If you have 20 tasks for a given day, how many of them do you truly need to accomplish? So you need to look at what is the most important things. Delegation is also recommended and it is one of the hardest things to do for most people but it's okay to let other people carry the load. It share the tasks you'd be better off leaving to someone else, so you can make the most of the time that you have. another recommendation is to establish routines. While crises will arise, you'll be much more productive if you can follow routines most of the time. For most people, creating and following a routine lets them get right down to the tasks of the day rather than frittering away time getting started.

>> We do have a question. I can tell you someone already made a comment and it is interesting but I want to share this and if you can please answer is and click on that icon. Someone mentioned they like to set a time to look at personal emails but also said I need to do that at home. It is just as important at home.

>> Especially when you get home and you have all those other things to do to take care of your family or pets or so on.

>> It can be stressful. So let's see what people say. Get to work early to get everything together. Put time limits on my tasks at work. Track activities, make lists, prioritize. Use the Fitbit. I track everything. Manage time wasters. Be consistent. Absolutely. Set reminders. It is helpful to get tasks in your mind that you need to do and what I find helpful is if you do it the night before, rather than when you wake up and you can reduce your stress levels.

>> Going to the store and making a list before hand can save us time because we don't have to sit here and you don't have to figure out what you need. Thank you everyone. I wanted to ask you how many of heard about self compassion if you've heard about that raise your hand. So I'm going to let Allison talk about that and then we have another question for you in just a moment.

>>So we're all on the same page, I want to share a definition from Dr. Kristen Neff, an expert on the topic. "Having compassion for oneself is really no different than having compassion for others. Think about what the experience of compassion feels like. First, to have compassion for others, you must notice that they are suffering. If you ignore that homeless person on the street, you can't feel compassion for how difficult his or her experience is. Second, compassion involves feeling moved by others' suffering so that your heart responds to their pain (the word compassion literally means to "suffer with"). When this occurs, you feel warmth, caring, and the desire to help the suffering person in some way. Having compassion also means that you offer understanding and kindness to others when they fail or make mistakes, rather than judging them harshly. Finally, when you feel compassion for

another (rather than mere pity), it means that you realize that suffering, failure, and imperfection is part of the shared human experience. "

>> Thank you, Allison. So when hearing that definition, which is talking -- I'm sure most of us have recognize that we feel compassion and she talks about seeing homeless person and the emotions that come along with that, to notice that someone else might be suffering for one reason or another, we have self compassion and we are talking about that same compassion toward herself. If you really think about it, how many of you on a regular basis practice self compassion? You can be as compassionate to yourself as you are to other people. Can you raise your hand? I see a lot of people raising their hand. I think a lot of people are. And I would say kudos to you for those who are practicing this wonderful technique.

>> If you realize your hard on yourself you are not alone. Most people are harder on themselves than other people. To understand this let's talk about the three components that make it up.1. Self-Kindness vs Judgment Research shows self-kindness is associated with wellbeing; on the other hand, self-judgment is associated with fear and is shown to increases the stress hormone cortisol. We often say things to ourselves that we'd never say to others. A lot of our suffering is at our own hands. Compassion is different than empathy. Compassion is wanting to alleviate the suffering. The second component is common humanity versus isolation. This is understanding that suffering is a normal part of the human process. Everyone has problems and issues. If this is normal, then how can I deal with them. The third is mindfulness versus over identification. This mindfulness is becoming aware that we are suffering. We first have to recognize we are suffering so we can turn towards the painful feelings and address them. In case you're still not convinced self-compassion is helpful, let's talk about some of its benefits. Some of the benefits can be increased motivation, less fear of failure, personal accountability, better coping and resilience, greater compassion and empathy, less social comparison, healthy behaviors like better eating. And then on the flipside there are negative aspects. You can develop mental health problems things like anxiety and depression, criticizing yourself, rumination, thinking about a problem over and over, perfectionism, expecting things to be perfect, having a lack of energy and I would add in their addictions as well.

>> I'm going to take you through a self compassion exercise and what I like about it is it is so simple to do and we will do it together right now and I will give you a few minutes to do this and go through it and put your full effort into it. I ask you to do that for your own self. After today you will be able to do this rather quickly and easily at any time because it is that simple. This is adopted from the work of Dr. Kristen Neff. She is quite an expert in this field, so if you want to look up more about self compassion and get more exercises, you can look up her name in your browser and you will find all kinds of information from her. I'm going to give you some examples of statements and ask you to ink about something and then give you some statements to state yourself and those are in the three categories that we talked about and I will ask you to think about those for a while and feel the compassion towards yourself. As we start on this journey together, think about a situation that you dealt with in your life and it can be something that was a long time ago if it still brings back emotions for you and it can be something that is happening now. But recall the situation in your mind and I will give you some silent time to do that. Think about what the situation is and how you feel about it emotionally and physically. And what discomforts do you feel when you think about the situation. I can tell you most recently I went through few health challenges in there times when I'm impatient for the healing to happen and if you have ever had an injury and you wait for it to heal you might recognize it is one of those times and will I

ever be back to normal again and how will this affect me. And sometimes I would give myself a talk about it and I can feel the tenseness that I had as I think about that. So that is a situation that I'm thinking about. I will give you a few moments and think about how your body reacts and if you have butterflies in your stomach and if you are tense or is there anything going on at this point as you think about this situation. I will give you a minute to think about that, so please begin now. Okay. Hopefully you have a situation that you are thinking about. I want you to think about a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest. How compassionate do you feel about yourself with the situation. Number one would be you don't feel compassion and you feel impatient with yourself and you catch yourself saying negative things and why is this going faster and those types of things. So rated on a scale of 1 to 10 for the situation. I'm going to go through some statements that I would like you to state yourself and as I go through them I will allow you a few seconds to continue to say another statement that will help you feel more compassion toward yourself. First are mindful statements and we talk about mindful statements those are recognizing that we are suffering and we are turning toward that suffering and understanding that it is there and we are mindful that it is occurring. So here are some statements that you can say to yourself. This is a moment of suffering. This hurts. Ouch. This is stress. I will give you about a minute and let you think about other statements like that that acknowledge the feelings that you have about this situation. I would like you to think for a few moments about a statement about common humanity and these are statements that help us to understand that what we are going through is common to us as human beings. An example of that would be Other people feel this way. I'm not alone. this is a moment of suffering. We all struggle in our lives. Again, I want to give you a moment to just sit and repeat these phrases to yourself. Common humanity statements. Lastly these might feel a little uncomfortable and do this the best that you can and I will give you some options what is really helpful if you show compassion to yourself is in one way or another touch yourself whether it is to put your hands over your heart or if you're in a room by yourself and you can do that, that would be great and put your hands over your heart or you can cross your arms in front of you if you were to give someone a hug and put your hands on each of your arms and give yourself a soothing touch. Think about it if you have a child and you would put your hand on the back or if someone you loved were having hard time and you would give them a touch in order to help soothe them and let them know that you feel compassion for them. Try and do this in some way, shape, or form. And I will give you some self kindness statements to state yourself and I will say the statement and then you just repeat it in your own mind. May I be kind to myself .May I give myself the compassion that I need .May I learn to accept myself as I am .May I forgive myself .May I be strong. May I be patient . As you think about that situation that I had to bring up at the beginning of this exercise, you rated yourself about how much self compassion you had on that 1 to 10 scale and 10 being you are highly compassionate to yourself and 1 being very little. How compassionate do you feel towards yourself after completing this activity? If you are feeling more compassionate towards yourself, can you raise your hand and let us know? A lot of people raising their hands. Wonderful. I hope you can see how easy this is and how simple it is, especially, we took a little bit longer today to do this but if you practice this, you can bring this up on your own very quickly and it can be used day or night and sometimes we wake up in the night and that is the hardest time when we feel anxious we wake up and think about things and we can say these compassionate statements to ourselves and use them when we are having trouble in those times. Someone asked if I could repeat the first one. I'm thinking that might be the first one. Is that when you are asking about? The first one is May I be kind to myself. Hopefully that answers it for you. Again, look up Dr. Kristen Neff and she has some

great stuff. And Victoria said it is surprising how hugging myself was. It feels awkward and it is silly, but when you do it, there is something about it.

>> Human touch can be amazing even to yourself because it is a way to tell yourself how much you care and you are giving yourself a hug and that can be remarkably effective.

>> Enclosing I want you to think about the information that you learned and share with us something that you will do to decreased your stress level and provide more balance in your life. What is something that you will commit to doing starting right away. Exercise, be patient with yourself. We have a lot of people saying compassion. We realize we are not as compassionate to ourselves as we think we are. Unplugged before bed. Use the self kindness statement. Don't be so hard on yourself. Time management. Make a to do list. I like that. I see we have a lot of people saying similar things.

>> Sticking to a sleep schedule. You work hard and then what happens is over time it messes up your sleep cycle and it actually helps to improve not only how much you sleep at your quality.

>> Let me remind you that if you want more information on this topic or other health and wellness topics, please feel free to contact your EAP. Your EAP program is here to help you and your family members. please reach out to your human resources. We have a few questions and one of them that comes up is about the sleep issue. One about blackout curtains.

>> There is evidence that the darker your environment is, the more quality of sleep, because some people will use a sleep mask and it locks out light. I can give you my own personal example. I am in St. Louis and it gets dark earlier and I went to Calgary and at 11 PM at night I noticed there was a light coming and it is 11 PM and someone mentioned, we have these blackout curtains and it really helps because I was not used to having that much light and certainly the darker you can get the bedroom, the better it will be for you.

>> Great. With time for one more question and -- is there any coalition of wasting time with working too much. Many countries believe that we work too much?

>> That is a fantastic question and I am from another country myself. There is that perception that Americans work a lot more hours than other people in other countries and that can interfere not only with time management and what we call multitasking and you might feel that you are accomplishing a lot putting in extra hours of work, but what happens over time is not only do you get more stressed but you're constantly pushing yourself to achieve more in the can have a detrimental effect. And then you are not as effective in your personal life as well as your work life because you are so stressed and you stay up late and you work hard because you feel it is important. And I think for some other countries they may be put more of an emphasis on home life and that kind of thing and that is what this whole balance idea is and where it comes into play.

>> It looks like this is all the time that we have. Thank you for joining us. I would remind you to fill out this closing poll and rate your satisfaction with today's webinar. Click on the radio button next to your answer and it might look as if your answer is not being tallied, but if you click on their it will register your vote and please click on that and we would love to hear from you. If you want to give us comments about what we can do better, we would love to hear. Thank you for attending and have a wonderful rest of your day. This does and our webinar.