

Frontline Reset:

Energy Management on Shift

Participant Workbook

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Welcome!

You spend your days caring for others—but who's looking after you? This handout contains practical tools you can use immediately to manage your energy and reset stress during your shifts. Keep this somewhere accessible so you can refer back to it when you need it most.

The Reality of Frontline Care Work

Working in care means you face unique energy drains that traditional "self-care" advice doesn't address:

- **Emotional labour:** Managing your feelings while managing others'
- **Unpredictability:** Never knowing what the shift will bring
- **Constant switching:** Tasks interrupted every few minutes
- **Compassion fatigue:** Witnessing suffering daily
- **System constraints:** Not enough staff, time, or resources

The good news: You don't need more time, a bigger budget, or a new job. You need different strategies.

Understanding Energy Depletion

Energy depletion follows a progression:

Tired → Exhausted → Depleted → Burned Out

Watch for these warning signs:

- **Physical:** Headaches, trouble sleeping, getting sick more often
- **Emotional:** Irritability, detachment, cynicism
- **Work Impact:** Mistakes, decreased compassion, increased absences

The earlier you catch yourself on this path, the easier it is to reset.

Tool #1: The Energy Reset Matrix

This tool helps you identify what drains and restores your energy—and how quickly you can do it.

How It Works:

The matrix has four quadrants based on two questions:

1. Does this drain or give me energy?
2. Is this quick (0-5 mins) or does it take longer (5+ mins)?

Common Energy Drains in Care Work:

Quick Drains (0-5 mins):

- Interruptions and alert fatigue
- Emotional suppression
- Skipping bathroom breaks or water
- Rushing between tasks

Longer Drains (5+ mins):

- Difficult family conversations
- Complex care situations
- Documentation backlog
- Staff conflicts or tension

Energy Restorers You Can Use:

Quick Restorers (0-5 mins):

- ✓ Breathing reset (30 seconds)
- ✓ Hydration check
- ✓ Quick body scan
- ✓ Brief connection with a colleague
- ✓ Step outside for fresh air
- ✓ Gratitude pause
- ✓ Stretch at your station

Longer Restorers (5+ mins):

- ✓ Actual lunch break away from the floor
- ✓ Brief walk
- ✓ Team debrief after difficult situation
- ✓ Physical movement/stretching routine
- ✓ Call a friend or family member
- ✓ Creative outlet during break

WORKSHEET: Your Personal Energy Map

Use this matrix to identify your personal energy drains and restorers. Think about your last shift or a typical shift.

<p>Quick Drains</p>	<p>Quick Restorers</p>
<p>Longer Drains</p>	<p>Longer Restorers</p>

Tool #2: The Stress Reset System

When stress hits in the moment, use this three-step system to interrupt the cycle and regain control.

Step 1: NOTICE

Catch your stress signals early.

What are YOUR stress signals? Everyone's are different. Check the ones that apply to you:

Physical Signals:

- ☐ Tight shoulders or neck
- ☐ Clenched jaw
- ☐ Holding your breath or shallow breathing
- ☐ Rapid heartbeat
- ☐ Tension headache
- ☐ Stomach upset

Emotional Signals:

- ☐ Irritability or short temper
- ☐ Feeling overwhelmed
- ☐ Detachment or numbness
- ☐ Anxiety or worry
- ☐ Frustration

Mental Signals:

- ☐ Racing thoughts
- ☐ Can't focus or concentrate
- ☐ Forgetting things
- ☐ Indecision or confusion
- ☐ Mental fog

Behavioural Signals:

- ☐ Snapping at people
- ☐ Rushing and making mistakes
- ☐ Avoiding tasks or people
- ☐ Working faster but less carefully

My top 3 stress signals are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Step 2: INTERRUPT

Break the stress pattern before it takes over.

Try these techniques—you can do them while working:

The Calming Breath:

- Count the length of your regular inhale
- Extend your exhale by at least one count
- For example, if you inhale for 4, exhale for 5 or 6
- Repeat 3 times

The 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding:

- Name 5 things you can SEE
- Name 4 things you can HEAR
- Name 3 things you can TOUCH
- Name 2 things you can SMELL
- Name 1 thing you can TASTE

Other Quick Interrupts:

- Cold water on wrists or face
- Progressive muscle tension/release (squeeze and release each muscle group)
- Name the feeling out loud (in your head): "I'm feeling overwhelmed right now"
- Count backwards from 10

My favourite interrupt technique: _____

Step 3: CHOOSE

Once you've interrupted the stress response, choose your next action.

Ask yourself: **"What do I actually need right now?"**

Then choose from these options:

- ☐ Finish this urgent task, THEN take a break
- ☐ Ask a coworker for help
- ☐ Take 60 seconds to reset before continuing
- ☐ Reprioritize—what can actually wait?
- ☐ Communicate my need to my team or supervisor
- ☐ Do one quick energy restorer from my list

Remember: You're choosing your response instead of just reacting. That's where your power is.

Putting It All Together: Real Scenario

The Situation: It's 2pm. You haven't had lunch. Three residents need you at once. A family member is upset in the hallway. Your back hurts. You want to scream.

Using Your Tools:

1. **Energy Check:** "I'm in the red—I need a quick restore"
2. **Stress Notice:** "My jaw is clenched, my thoughts are racing" (physical + mental signals)
3. **Interrupt:** Three deep breaths right now (4-7-8 breath)
4. **Choose:** "I'll handle the immediate care need, ask my coworker to talk to the family member, then take 5 minutes to eat something and hydrate"

WORKSHEET: Your Next-Shift Action Plan

Make it specific. Make it doable. Make it yours.

My Commitment:

On my next shift, I will try:

ONE Energy Restorer: I will _____ when I notice my energy is low.

ONE Stress Interrupt: When I notice my stress signal (_____), I will use this technique: _____.

Link It to Something You Already Do: To help me remember, I'll do this self-care action every time I: ☐ Wash my hands ☐ Check the medication cart ☐ Document in the chart ☐ Walk past a certain location ☐ Other: _____

My specific plan: Every time I _____, I will _____.

Overcoming Common Barriers

"I don't have time." → These strategies take 30 seconds to 5 minutes—less time than staying stressed and making mistakes.

"My workplace doesn't support this." → These are things YOU control, not your employer. You're not asking permission to breathe or drink water.

"It won't make a difference." → Small, consistent resets compound over time. One breath won't fix everything, but 10 breaths a day for a month changes your nervous system.

"I'll forget to do it." → Link it to something you already do (see your action plan above). The more you practice, the more automatic it becomes.

Additional Resources

SafeCare BC

- Mental health resources specifically for care workers
- Workplace health and safety resources
- Training opportunities
- Educational materials

When You Need More Support

If you're experiencing persistent burnout, anxiety, depression, or other mental health concerns, please reach out:

- Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Your healthcare provider
- Crisis lines in your area

You deserve support. It's okay to ask for help.

Final Reminders

- ✓ **Self-care isn't selfish**—it's how you sustain the care you give
- ✓ **You can't pour from an empty cup**—but you CAN choose to refill it throughout your day
- ✓ **Small actions compound**—one breath, one sip of water, one moment of pause adds up
- ✓ **You're not alone**—every care worker struggles with this. It's the system, not you.
- ✓ **You deserve care too**—you matter, not just for what you do, but for who you are

Stay Connected

Thriving Workplaces

Email: team@thrivingworkplaces.ca

Web: www.thrivingworkplaces.ca

SafeCare BC

Web: safecarebc.ca

Contact via: safecarebc.ca/about-us/contact

Thank you for the work you do. Your wellbeing matters.

Notes & Reflections

Use this space to jot down insights, ideas, or reminders from today's session:

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

Quick Reference Card

(Cut this out and keep it in your pocket or badge holder)

FRONTLINE RESET QUICK GUIDE

ENERGY LOW?

→ Quick Restorers:

- 3 deep breaths
- Drink water
- 2-min break
- Step outside

STRESS HIGH?

→ Reset System:

1. NOTICE your signal
2. INTERRUPT (calming breath or 5-4-3-2-1 grounding)
3. CHOOSE your next move

Self-care isn't selfish. It's how you sustain the care you give.