Wellness & Workforce Summit
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Culture Under Pressure: Leading ECCs Through Change

Dr. Andre Jones

Assistant Executive Director
HMC Ambulance Service, the State of Qatar

I Have No Potential
Conflicts Of Interest
To Report

"People don't resist change; they resist being changed."

Peter Senge

What to Expect from This Session

Understanding Pressure & Purpose

- Psychological, organizational, and physical pressures in the ECC environment
- The impact of purpose and shared mission in high-stress workplaces

Leadership & Culture: The Roadmap to Thriving

- How leadership style influences workplace culture
- Key lessons in resilience, adaptability, and leadership development

Practical Strategies for Dispatcher Wellness

- Addressing burnout and mental fatigue
- Recognition and engagement for long-term retention

Final Reflection & Call to Action

- The role of leaders in shaping a thriving workplace
- How each individual can find their own purpose and resilience in the field
- Understand how psychological safety can drive cultural resilience

Understanding Pressure & Purpose

Pressures of Dapatch Work
Pressures of
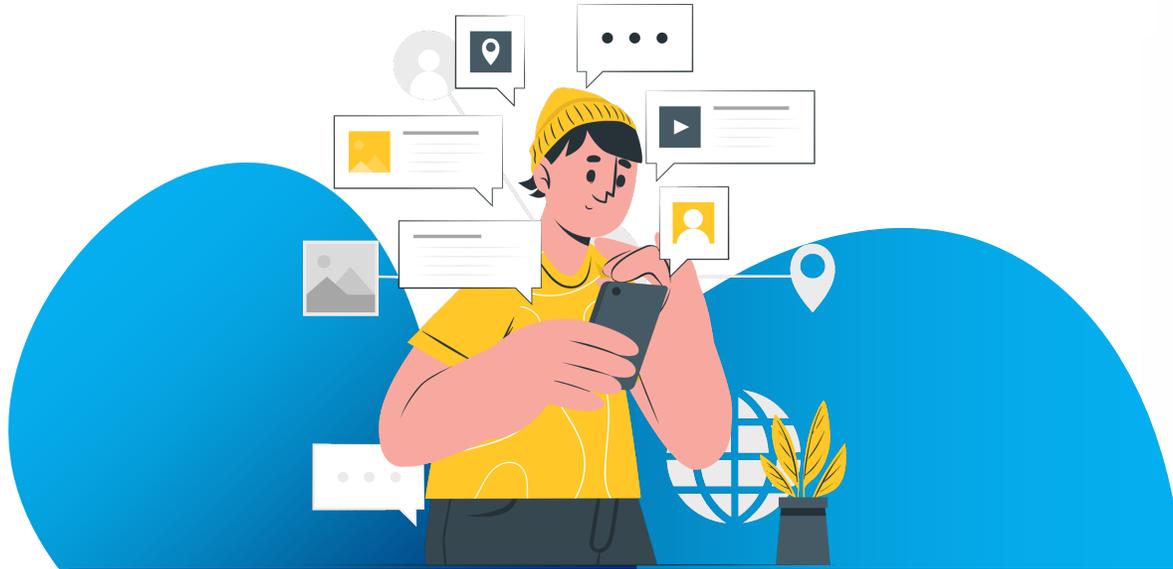# Dispatch Work

Psychological Pressures

Organizational Pressures

Emotional Fatigue & Burnout—The Hidden Crisis

Unresolved trauma erodes trust, impacts morale, and accelerates turnover.

Why This Matters

The Police Executive Research Forum (2017) asserts that

9-1-1 is the most significant social contract between local governments and its citizens in the history of the United States. Countless lives have been saved, criminal offenders apprehended, crimes solved, and crimes prevented because of the availability and reliability of 9-1-1 (p. 16).

With **high turnover rates**, understaffed 9-1-1 centers mean people cannot effectively access police, fire, or emergency medical service assistance when they need it.

They are leaving for (generally) correctable reasons!

Challenges
in the ECC

High-Stress Environment + Emotional Toll +

Erratic Work Hours + Isolation

However, purpose provides a sense of meaning and direction, which can help dispatchers cope with stress. It allows them to see the bigger picture and understand the importance of their role in helping save lives.
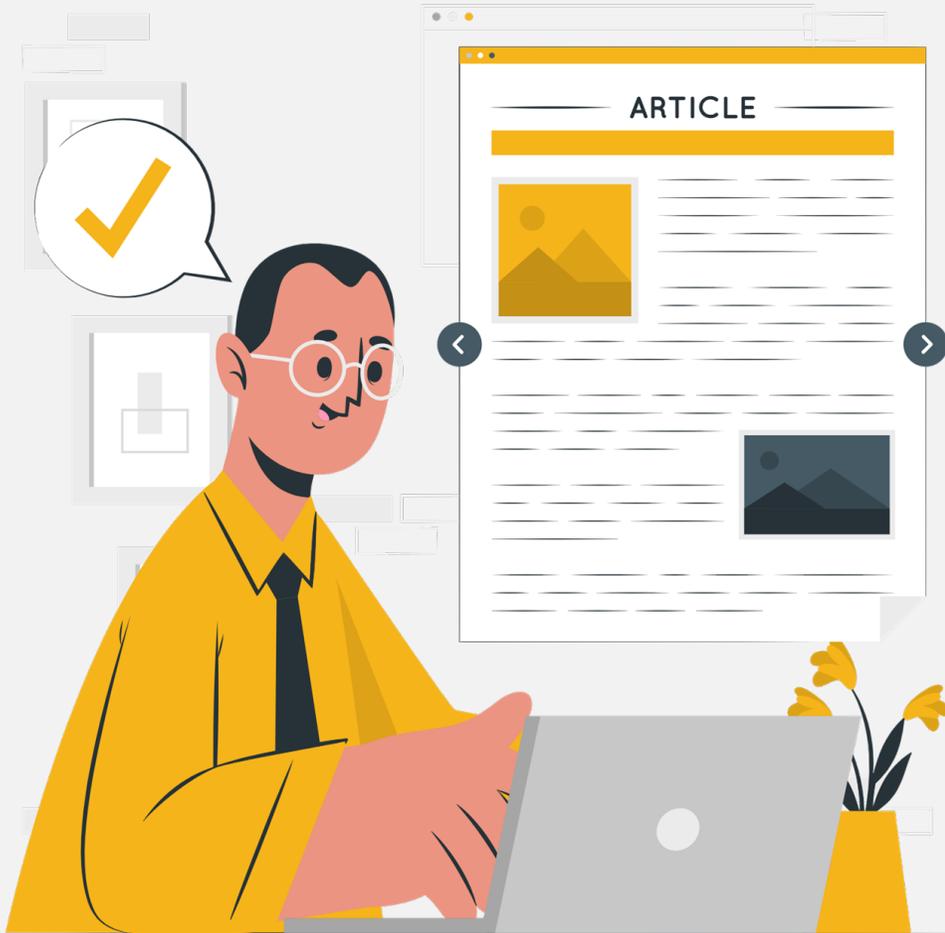
Positive Culture

In 9-1-1 emergency dispatch, fostering a positive culture is crucial for enhancing employee well-being, engagement, and performance. It connects employees with the organization's mission, fueling their dedication to delivering top-notch emergency services.

How can purpose boost teamwork and resilience, benefiting employee well-being and effectiveness?

Importance of a Positive Culture

Research by Imperative and LinkedIn shows that 73% of employees who report a sense of purpose at work are engaged, compared to only 23% of those who don't.

A positive culture is crucial in an ECC as it fosters a sense of meaning, mission, and passion among employees, resulting in improved performance, teamwork, and overall effectiveness in saving lives and serving the community.

The Significance of Purpose

Purpose in the workplace refers to a profound sense of meaning, a reason for being, and a connection to a larger mission or cause. It's not just about the tasks we perform, but why we do them and how they contribute to a greater good.

PURPOSE is more than a buzzword; it's a powerful force that can transform organizations. It's about values, ethics, and a shared commitment to a mission that transcends daily challenges.

Aligning Purpose

You must start with…

YOU!

o Why are you here?

o Do I get to shape what "here" looks like?

o How can I help?

Self

Team

Culture

Organization

What do These Tools Have in Common?

YOU

Transformation efforts don't fail because of the strategy or technology – they fail because of culture (90% - McKinsey, Gartner, MIT Sloan)

Culture & Change:
The Roadmap to Thriving

"Mod Squad"

- Culture Impact (OCAI): Hierarchical – Order-driven, structured, rule-based

- Pressures: Psychological – Fighting personal battles as a young dispatcher while dealing with inadequate leadership

- Leadership Style (MLQ): Transactional – Focused on control, consistency, and meeting expectations

- Impact on Performance: Focused more on technical excellence than emotional intelligence and team cohesion

General Jones

- Culture Impact (OCAI): Market – Performance-focused, competitive, results-driven

- Pressures: Social – New dispatch center with a tense dynamic between communications staff and field operations

- Leadership Style (MLQ): Directive – Authority-driven, enforcing policies, high expectations

- Impact on Performance: Created efficiency but fueled hostility instead of fostering collaboration

Huge Internal Shift

- Culture Impact (OCAI): Clan/Collaborative – Relationship-based, engagement-focused

- Pressures: Physical – Room temperature, long hours at the console, broken chairs, and even working shifts due to staffing shortages and contract/acquisition

- Leadership Style (MLQ): Transformational (emerging) – Influencing change, strategic leadership

- Impact on Performance: Gained awareness of how working conditions directly affect dispatcher well-being and efficiency

PT-1 AMBULANCE | COVALENT HEALTH | PRN AMBULANCE

The Turning Point

- Culture Impact (OCAI): Adhocracy – Innovation-driven, adaptable, proactive

- Pressures: Organizational – Driving transformation while implementing Balanced Scorecard to improve effectiveness with new CAD and ensure business sustainability

- Leadership Style (MLQ): Fully Transformational – Coaching, mentoring, influencing beyond operations

- Impact on Performance: Learned how strategic leadership can determine the survival of an organization

Scaling Awareness

- Culture Impact (OCAI): **Balancing Clan** (people-first) with Hierarchy (structured processes) in a multicultural environment

- **Pressures: Social & Organizational** – Managing a frontline **workforce of 1,761 staff from 25 countries** while maintaining alignment with a mission to deliver the safest, most effective, and compassionate care under structured policy and SOPs

- Leadership Style (MLQ): **Transformational & Servant Leadership** – Focusing on mentorship, collaboration, and empowerment

- Impact on Performance: **Strengthened mentorship and collaboration** as key leadership principles

Practical Application & Reflection

and the Influence of Fostering a Positive Culture

Recognition and Rewards

Recognition reinforces the importance of purpose-driven work. Establish recognition programs that acknowledge employees who exemplify the organization's mission and values.

Recognition and rewards play a crucial role in promoting a purpose-driven culture by acknowledging and incentivizing employees who align with the organization's mission and values, creating a sense of belonging, motivation, and pride.

Wellness and Support Programs

If leaders don't promote well-being, organizations will never be as strong or productive as they could be.

Develop wellness programs that support employees' mental and emotional well-being, which can enhance their sense of purpose.

Offer mental health resources, such as counseling or stress management workshops as well as establish peer support programs, to help dispatchers cope with the emotional toll of their work.
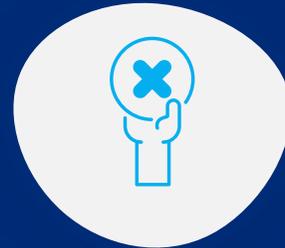
80 / 20 Rule

Never give 100% of yourself to something. Save some of you for YOU.

Align behavior with personal values to drive work-life integration

... if you cooking 80% of the meals and having a few meals by yourself.
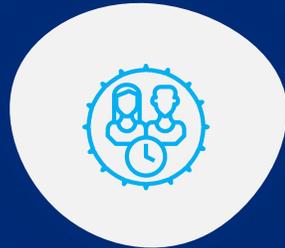
... spending 80% of your week with the family and having a day/time to yourself

Nothing wrong with Doing you.
Casual / Unhappiness Leave
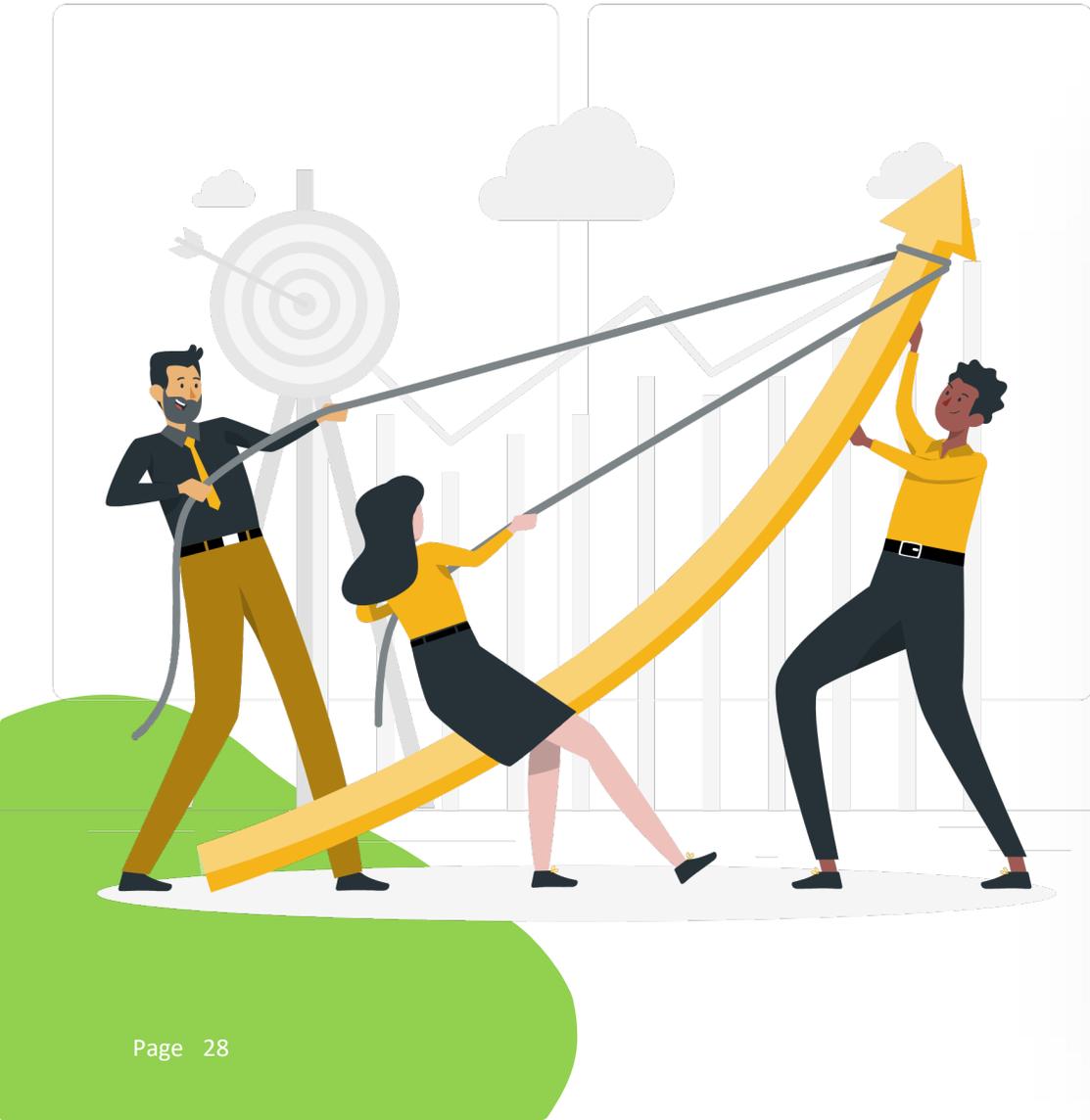
Leadership Involvement

Leaders play a pivotal role in setting the tone for the organization. They serve as role models, demonstrating how to embody the organization's mission and values.

Burnout doesn't happen because of workload. It happens because of poor leadership.

Leaders should consistently communicate and exemplify the organization's mission and values in their actions and decisions. Their words and deeds should align with the purpose.

Why They **Stay**

What is the most practical strategy for cultivating a positive culture in this high-pressure field?
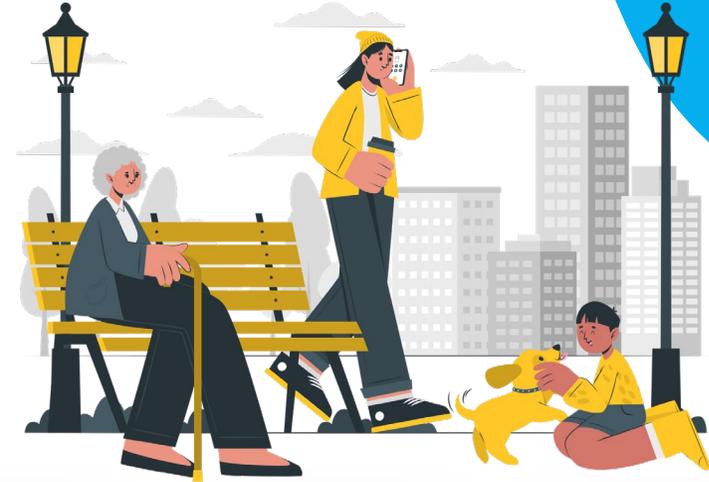
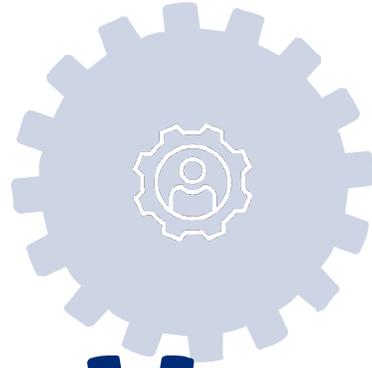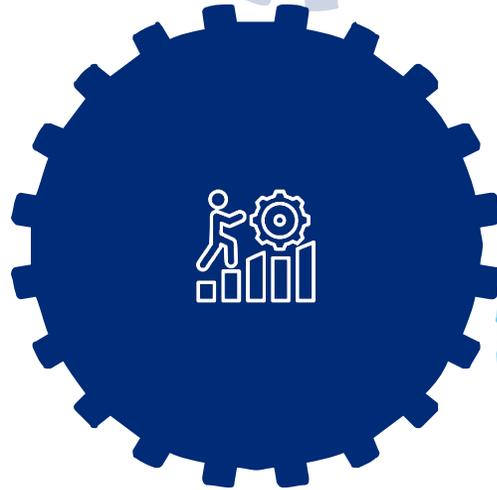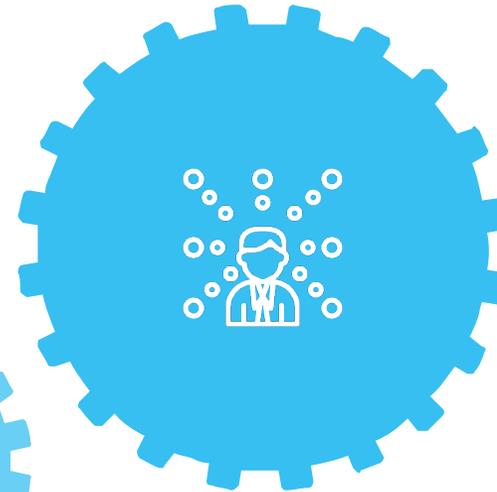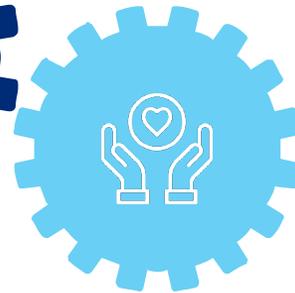| S	H	O	W	U	P
Sincere & Empathetic	Honest & Humble	Optimistic	Well Informed & Willing	Upbeat & Positive	Procedurally Compliant

Social Skills

**Self-
Regulation**

Self- Awareness

Empathy

The Role of
Emotional Intelligence

Understanding Emotions
Emotional intelligence involves recognizing, understanding. and managing one's own emotions and those of others. It's a vital skill in fostering a purpose-driven culture.

Empathy and Compassion
Emotional intelligence is closely linked to empathy and compassion, enabling individuals to connect with the emotions and needs of others.

Emotional Connection
A purpose-driven culture encourages emotional connections, as employees understand the significance of their work in helping others.

Conflict Resolution
Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in conflict resolution. A purpose-driven culture fosters better communication and the ability to navigate conflicts constructively.

Leadership Effectiveness
Leaders with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to inspire purpose, create a positive work environment, and align employees with the organization's mission.

Stress Management
Emotional intelligence helps employees manage stress and emotional challenges more effectively, contributing to resilience in high-pressure settings like the ECC.

Improving
Emotional Intelligence

In the context of a positive culture and its impact
on workplace civility

01

Self-Awareness

Encourage self-reflection to develop an understanding of
one's own emotions, triggers, and reactions. This self-
awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence.

02

Empathy

Foster empathy by promoting active listening and
encouraging employees to consider others' perspectives. This
helps build stronger connections within workplace.

03

Respectful Interactions

Improving emotional intelligence leads to more respectful
and considerate interactions among employees. They learn to
communicate with empathy and tact.

04

Positive Work Environment

When emotional intelligence is a focus, the workplace
becomes a more positive and inclusive environment where all
employees feel valued and heard.

05

Collaboration and Teamwork

Enhanced emotional intelligence fosters better teamwork and
collaboration. Employees work cohesively toward a shared
purpose.

06

Emotional Intelligence Workshops

Offer and training sessions on emotional intelligence,
focusiwoonrkshopsng self- awareness, empathy, self-
regulation, and social skills.

Resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back and thrive in the face of adversity. Resilience is not the absence of challenges or adversity. It is not about avoiding difficult situations, but rather, resilience is the ability to navigate and overcome challenges, learn from setbacks, and adapt positively in the face of adversity.

When you know why you do what you do, it provides a driving force to overcome challenges.

Anchors in the **Storm**

The reality is this: resilience isn't about ignoring the storm. It's about having something strong to hold onto when it hits. Your anchor might be different than mine; family, faith, fitness, or a professional purpose. But without one, we risk drifting into exhaustion, disengagement, or burnout.
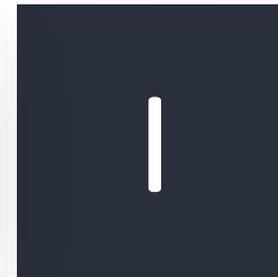
T	H	R	I	V	E
Trust in yourself and your team	Health & well-being as priorities	Resilience in the face of challenges	Intentional leadership that fosters growth	Vision for the future and the impact you want to make	Empowerment to take control of your purpose and role

Psychological Safety

Silence does not mean alignment

When staff are afraid to speak up, your culture is not just struggling, it's broken.

When staff hesitate to voice concerns, make challenging decisions, or share ideas, it's not a reflection of their confidence; it's a reflection of the environment in which they work.

If you want a resilient, high-performing organization, start by creating a space where people can speak the truth without fear of consequences.

How Can I Help?

Implement leadership-driven culture change to improve retention.

Contribute to the conversation about culture.

Model the desired culture in your own behavior and actions.

Recognize & mitigate stressors that impact dispatcher wellness.

Prevent Resignation

Psychological safety is the foundation of innovation, accountability, and trust.

911LEADOR
Leadership Effectiveness
Assessment for Dispatch
Organizational Resilience

EMPOWER

Emotional Mental Physical
Observation and Wellness
Evaluation of Risk

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EMPOWER

Emotional Mental Physical Observation and Wellness Evaluation of Risk

This certifies that

Andre Jones

has successfully completed the EMPOWER Wellness Assessment

● **Wellness Status: AMBER**

Assessment Date
November 26, 2025

Valid Until
May 26, 2026

✓ Electronically Verified

Certificate ID
6926e480bc30eb9f910b6921

Wellness Hub
Support, education, and tools for your journey

EMPOWER: Emotional Mental Physical Observation and Wellness Evaluation of Risk

📞 **Crisis Support**

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
24/7 free and confidential support for people in distress. Call or text 988.
[Call 988]

Crisis Text Line
Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.
[Text HOME]

💼 **Professional Support**

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
Confidential counseling and support services provided by your...
[Connect]

Safe Call Now
24/7 crisis line for first responders. 1-206-459-3020
[Connect]

[♡ Request EMPOWER'ment Session]

⚡ Microbreaks

💼 AI Coach

📖 My Reports

Wellness Library

[Browse Library] [Saved Resources (0)]

🔍 Search resources...   [All Categories ▾] [All Types ▾]

sleep
Video · 15 min
Decompression Protocol for Shift Workers
A guided sequence to help you wind down after a stressful shift.
Dr. Sarah Mitchell   View ↗

resilience
Article · 5 min
Building Shields: Understanding Vicarious Trauma
Understanding the signs of vicarious trauma and how to build emotional buffers.
Fortify Strategies   View ↗

stress management
Audio · 3 min
3-Minute SOS Breathing
Audio guide for box breathing during high-stress calls.
NENA Wellness   View ↗

Continuing Professional
Leadership Development

...is the answer

Questions?

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APCO International Summit Series

The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture

Edgar H. Schein

And in 9-1-1, that culture becomes the shelter our people stand in when the pressure is highest.