

Guidelines to Support You in Times of Crisis



We care about your wellbeing. We are all navigating difficult times and dealing with uncertainty and challenges, like working from home and fear of illness, that we've never experienced before. We are in this together and we are here to assist you. This guide has been compiled to support you with Key Steps that you can take to take care of your wellbeing under these unusual circumstances and beyond.

Is it normal to feel tired, depleted and unsettled?

Yes! If you are feeling depleted and/or unsettled, you are not alone and what you are experiencing is very normal. When first faced with a crisis, your body rallies to help you fight or flee the 'enemy.' This rallying involves the production of cortisol and adrenaline, which are great in the short-run because it gives you a surge of energy and the resources to deal with the high-stress period. In the long-run, this stress response is not good for you because high-cortisol takes its toll on the body, mind and spirit. Over the course of many weeks and months, we can experience compromised immunity, insomnia, heightened anxiety, irritability and even depression. The good news is that there are Key Steps that you can take to deal with crisis fatigue.

What is wellbeing?

When we talk about wellbeing, we are referring to you **being well in all aspects of your life**. You are not a one dimensional being. You are multifaceted, so physical wellbeing is not enough. Wellbeing includes five pillars or key areas of life: **Physical, Mental, Emotional, Social and Spiritual**. Each aspect is intrinsically connected to the others. Use the table below to understand and assess each aspect of your wellbeing. When you score: 0 is the lowest score and 10 indicates that you are totally happy and well in this aspect of your life. This assessment will give you an indication of the area(s) that need the most attention so you can take Key Steps to achieve ultimate wellbeing.

The five key aspects of wellbeing	Your score (out of 10)
Physical: Your physical wellbeing is about having a healthy, balanced and optimally functioning body. It is much more than the absence of physical illness. It refers to your energy levels, endurance and ability to eat, sleep, perform at your best and be resilient in the face of stress.	
Mental: High mental wellbeing protects you from stress and fosters resilience by enabling you to make healthy choices, recognise your value, worth and potential. It refers to your ability to think clearly, manage your thoughts, maintain healthy boundaries, communicate well and be in the moment.	
Emotional: Your emotional wellbeing contributes to healthy self-esteem, self-worth and emotional intelligence. It is the ability to acknowledge, accept and express your emotional needs and feelings when required. It includes empathy, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation and social skills. Emotional and mental health are extremely interconnected and often coincide.	
Social: Your social wellbeing is about social connection, inclusion and a sense of belonging. Your friends, family, community, culture, religion, the groups you belong to and your place of education or work all contribute to social wellbeing. Increasing your social wellbeing can be very supportive in enhancing your mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing.	
Spiritual: Your spiritual wellbeing is the ability to experience gratitude, meaning and purpose in life through a connection to oneself or a power greater than oneself. It is known to be one of the most powerful sources of strength, inspiration and motivation and can lower anxiety, stress and depression. It is extremely personal and means different things to different people.	
Your total wellbeing score (out of 50)	

How can you increase your overall wellbeing?

As you reflect on your scores in each aspect of your life, it is important to listen to your inner voice. Deep down, you likely already know the aspect(s) that need your attention most. Here are some practical **Key Steps** below; this list is not exhaustive but intended to get you started and to spark your own ideas. Make sure you transfer the Key Steps that you are committed to taking onto your action plan on page 4:

Physical wellbeing

1. **Sleep:** Get at least seven hours sleep per night. Avoid technology one hour before bed as the blue light from the screen suppresses melatonin (the hormone that regulates our sleep wake cycle). Preferably go to bed at the same time every night as research is suggesting that it can make you not only healthier but happier and smarter too.
2. **Eat well:** Consume high-quality proteins, carbohydrates, heart-healthy fats, vegetables, vitamins and minerals while minimising processed foods, saturated fats and alcohol. Drink enough water (about 6 to 8 glasses a day) as even mild dehydration can have negative effects on your mood and concentration. Eat regularly and don't skip meals (unless you are experienced at intermittent fasting) as your energy levels (and mood) can suffer as a result.
3. **Exercise:** Sitting has been labelled the new smoking so we need to move! Regular exercise is one of the best things you can do for your health. It has many mental and emotional benefits and reduces your risk for many chronic diseases. Doing 20 minutes of moderate activity per day is enough. This could be going for a short walk twice a day or getting up from your desk every hour (set an alarm if need be) to do some squats, jumping jacks or jogging on the spot. It'll only take three minutes and, by the end of the day, you'll reach your goal of 20 minutes.

Mental wellbeing

1. **Focus on what you can control:** Weed the garden of your mind and remove thoughts about things that are beyond your control. If you regularly focus on other people's behaviour or issues in the macro-environment, you'll get stuck in a problem mindset and risk heightening your anxiety. When you focus on your own behaviour, planning for the week ahead and taking steps in your control, you switch to a solution mindset that reduces anxiety and empowers you.
2. **Cut off or limit negative influences:** Watching the news, taking in too much social media or letting your mind stagnate can negatively impact your mental wellbeing. Harsh friends or family have the same effect. Take action to curb negative influences. Feed your mind well: start an online course, challenge yourself, read wisdom literature or spend time with constructive people. This will positively impact your mental and emotional wellbeing.
3. **Reframe destructive thoughts:** When you catch yourself thinking things that don't serve you, like "I am so tired of being stuck at home," reframe it to, "I'm so blessed to have a warm home to lockdown in when many are homeless and unemployed. It's hard but it will pass." If you are struggling to catch your negative thoughts, it is very helpful to keep a journal and write down what you are thinking.

Emotional wellbeing

1. **Practise mindfulness:** Mental and emotional wellbeing are tightly connected. We often don't know what we're thinking or feeling because we operate on autopilot. Take charge of your mind and emotions; become aware of how you feel throughout the day. You'll detect negative emotions early and be able to take Key Steps to manage them.
2. **Label and accept your feelings:** By identifying and labelling your feelings, you shift into a better mental state that helps you to process your feelings. It's very important to accept your feelings and not make them bad or wrong. Your emotions are like warning lights in a car. You would never ignore or judge them, would you? Self-awareness is the gateway to self-management. When we ignore and repress our feelings, they become stuck and can be destructive to our physical, mental and social wellbeing too. Tune in, listen and identify the messages they're sending.
3. **Laugh your heart out:** Laughter is the best medicine. That is why they have a dedicated 'laughter session' in yoga studios. You don't even have to mean it. Neuroscience reveals that the simple act of spreading your cheeks and even pretending to laugh sends a signal to your body that you are happy. And when you are happy, your brain releases feel good hormones like dopamine and serotonin. In fact, many studies now show that laughter alone can treat all kinds of physical ailments and increase longevity.

Be at your BEST

- B** = Boundaries
Breathing (4:7:8)
- E** = Exercise regularly
Eat well + drink water
- S** = Sleep 7 hours per day
Schedule + support
- T** = Time management
Thinking: take charge!

Social wellbeing

1. **Connect:** Positive social connection is known to add years to our life. Physical distancing makes this harder but not impossible. Reach out to check on a colleague, phone a friend, create an online social gathering to share a meal or participate in a social club to engage with like-minded people.
2. **Offer help:** Positive acts of kindness increase our feelings of wellbeing so you help yourself in the process of helping others. There are so many people in need. You could offer to get groceries for the elderly in your community, send food parcels to those who are destitute or support a colleague who has a heavy workload. The possibilities are endless. Make a difference today!
3. **Get support:** It's okay to not be okay. There are likely many people in your social network who can support you. Ask for help and do not try to be superhuman. Remember that when others help you, it makes them feel good too. Get professional support where needed, whether it be childcare or psychological help. Smart people get help and do not limp along. Vulnerability is a strength.

Happiness and wellbeing are best regarded as skills.

-- Richard Davidson --

The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater is our own sense of wellbeing.

-- Dalai Lama --

Spiritual wellbeing

1. **Practise gratitude:** We have so much to be thankful for. You might want to keep a journal and write down three new things each day. You could also do this verbally; maybe reflect on what you are grateful for while exercising or before going to bed. Children enjoy being part of this. You could also start each workday by sending an email to thank, acknowledge or appreciate someone in your network and, in so doing, spread ripples of positivity. The same applies to your social network.
2. **Fill your cup:** Do things that really fulfil you. It could be as simple as having a hot bubble bath, reading a good book, painting or saying a prayer. It could be a little more involved and require that you connect to your deep inner purpose and take steps to fulfil it. This is referred to as finding your 'ikigai' and is a concept well worth pursuing.
3. **Breathe:** When you are feeling emotionally triggered and want to manage your feelings so you can respond well, breathing properly makes all the difference. In under two minutes, it regulates your blood pressure and reduces cortisol (the stress hormone). Try it now. Take a deep breath in through your nose (for the count of four), hold it for the count of seven and release it through your mouth (for the count of eight). Repeat three to five times and you'll feel significantly better and more grounded. Close your eyes if you can. Doing this many times each day will increase your connection with yourself and enhance your spiritual wellbeing.

How can you win while working from home?

1. **Practise self-care:** Follow this guide and take Key Steps that allow you to be your best and achieve wellbeing in all facets of your life. This is not selfish but rather very smart. Remember, you cannot pour from an empty cup.
2. **Ask for what you need:** If you are struggling with connectivity or you're missing your second monitor, consult with your manager. It might be possible to have some of your needs met when they compromise your productivity.
3. **Create a dedicated workspace:** When working and living in one space, work can spill over and feel all consuming. If possible, work in one (or more) dedicated spaces to make it easier to maintain boundaries and focus. If you don't have a separate room where you can close the door to minimise distractions, you could use earphones.
4. **Follow a routine:** Get up at the same time, dress for work, keep to your meal schedule, work in your dedicated space and 'leave work' at the end of your workday (as much as possible). This will help you to create a sense of normality and prevent overwork and burnout. It can also help you to feel and be more in control during a time when so much is out of our control. Routines create a sense of comfort and stability.
5. **Plan, prioritise and stick to your schedule:** Instead of a vague plan, create a realistic daily schedule and put it in writing (digitally or with pen and paper). Place it where you can see it. Compile a detailed to-do list that's broken down into categories based on importance. Use a time-tracking app like RescueTime, to let you see whether you're sticking to your schedule. It'll also help you figure out what times of day you are most productive versus when your energy and focus dips. This can help you to reserve your most productive hours for your most important tasks.
6. **Communicate clearly and regularly:** In an age of technology, working remotely does not have to mean working in isolation. Staying in contact is important for your benefit and others. Keep each other updated and figure out how to accommodate each other's schedules, especially if you are home schooling while working. Communicate with your family (or support system at home too) so you can work around one another's schedules as best as possible.

7. **Avoid online fatigue:** As much as you need to keep regular contact with colleagues, don't have too many meetings. Perhaps an email update, an instant message or a WhatsApp can suffice. For many reasons, online meetings can be more tiring than face-to-face, so don't rely on meetings alone to maintain connection.
8. **Allow for breaks:** Taking breaks is important to keep you productive as it can prevent brain fog, backaches, headaches and muscle strain. Schedule breaks evenly throughout the day to 'sharpen your saw' and ensure you are at your best when working. Use some breaks to get **fresh air** because working from home, and limiting contact with others, can lead to lots of time indoors. This increases our chance of boredom and fatigue.
9. **If you have children, prepare for and minimise disruptions:** It's difficult enough to get work done if you have children at home, but even harder with younger children like babies and toddlers. Still, it's not impossible if you plan ahead and have some flexibility. These tips are working for parents who are currently mastering this challenge:
 - 9.1. **Explain the situation.** Talk to your children about coronavirus, especially older ones who can better understand the impact it'll have on your day-to-day life. Help them understand that you are working from home and not on an extended holiday.
 - 9.2. **Get help, if you can:** It might not be easy with the physical distancing guidelines, but if you have someone that can help (e.g. a family member that can stay isolated with you), you'll be able to get more work done. If you co-parent, take turns between watching the children and working. When you're working, aim to be in a separate room so your children learn that this is where mommy or daddy is off limits.
 - 9.3. **Mix up your hours.** If your job allows for it, try to work when your baby or toddler is asleep, like early morning, nap times and at night. It's not ideal, but it's a temporary solution and you'll be more productive if you have quiet time to yourself. Just make sure that you are getting enough rest and remember that this too will eventually pass.
 - 9.4. **Try new activities.** Fun toys and games that children haven't played with before will keep them entertained longer. Time-consuming projects, like crafts, stickers, puzzles and Legos, will buy you some time.
10. **Think like an entrepreneur:** As the pandemic affects the global economy it is on each of us to look at how we add value to our organisation, our teams, our suppliers and communities. Think, what can you do to define the problems and seek out solutions to help your organisation remain successful and competitive? It is on all of us to go over and above, to rally together and to make sure we don't just survive but can thrive and 'be the difference that makes the *difference*.'



Your Key Steps Action Plan

There are no silver bullets or magic pills to achieve wellbeing while dealing with the crises we are facing on so many levels. But together we can – and do – make a difference. It is up to you. Put your wellbeing first so that you can, in turn, be the BEST you for others at work and at home. Choose to take Key Steps to really 'be the difference that makes the *difference*.'

What Key Steps will you take? List them below and commit to making them happen...

About Dr Sharon King Gabrielides

Sharon is the founder and CEO of Key Steps Corporate Training. She is a **dynamic facilitator, speaker and executive coach** with over 20 years' experience in leadership and organisational development and transformation. She prides herself on working with individuals and organisations to help them solve their problems, increase emotional intelligence and bring about sustainable change.

She is a registered Education, Training and Development Practitioner (ETDP), credentialed Master Coach (CMP), holds an Honours degree in Psychology and practices as an NLP master practitioner. Sharon is also one of only three women in South Africa to hold the title of Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) – it's the Oscar of the speaking industry. Sharon is also a **qualified Modern Classroom Certified Trainer (MCCT™) and accredited Global Virtual Speaker.**

Sharon's **PhD** thesis contributed a framework for holistic and sustainable leadership development that has been published by Rutgers University in the USA. She is faculty of numerous business schools and highly sought-after by leading corporates because she works hand-in-hand with them to create sustainable results and long-term success. In 2020, Sharon was inducted into the **Educators Hall of Fame**, which is a lifetime achievement award, recognising her excellence and contribution to the field. Most important to Sharon is that she has become known for her practical approach, useful tools and genuinely caring manner that allows people to take Key Steps to really 'be the difference that makes the **difference.**'



Why Key Steps?

We are a niche training and coaching consultancy that pride ourselves on offering flexible face-to-face and virtual solutions that really get results. We are BEE Level 2, Services and MICT SETA Accredited (#2257) and have 20 years' experience making a **difference.** We are unique in our ability to strategically analyse your specific and diverse needs and create "Key Steps" to meet your objectives, offering optimal return on your investment (ROI). Recent research shows that our development programmes are **28% more effective than our competitors.**

Our programmes are rooted in many cognitive behavioural methodologies, scientific practices and structured theories and frameworks. These include Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), coaching, dialogue education principles and various psychological and philosophical principles. We blend current research, modern training techniques, tools, stories, theories, case studies, practical exercises (including much peer interaction and team building) to create an experience that inspires individuals and teams to **take their learning out of the classroom and make it count!**

Our founder and CEO, **Dr Sharon King Gabrielides**, is faculty at internationally acclaimed business schools, where she develops and facilitates modules of their leadership development programmes. We also work with leading corporates, including, including ABB, Absa, ACSA, Adcock, Aon Group, Atlas Copco, Auditor General SA, AVI, AVIZ Laboratories, Barloworld, BASF, Bateman, Bayer, BCG, Bidvest, BMG, BMW, Bombela, Bühler, Bytes, CAMAF, Caterpillar, Citibank, Clover, Colgate, Daimler, Dimension Data, EY, Epiroc, Eskom, First Rand, Flight Centre, FNB, Fraser Alexander, Hogan Lovells, Hollard, Hytech, IBM, Imperial, Investec, Kaefer, Kraft Foods, Kronos, Mc Cain, Mercedes-Benz, Merchants, Mondelez, Mondi, M-Sure, National Brands, Nedbank, NEF, Nestlé, Openserve, Premier Foods, Primedia, REEF Insurance, Rand-Air, Refinitiv, RMB, SAICA, Sandvik, Servest, Sibanye-Stillwater, Siemens, SKF, Standard Bank, Stanlib, Sun International, Telkom, Tenova, Thomson Reuters, UCS, UTi and VW.

We look forward to the possibility of working with you. Please **contact us** to discuss how we can tailor unique solutions to really meet your needs and provide optimal results. You can also connect with us on social media where Sharon regularly shares practical tools and guidelines. And keep reading to hear what our clients say about working with us...

Let's connect:



You are – by far – one of the best speakers and facilitators I have ever worked with.

-- VP, ABSA

Sharon, it is great having you on board with Henley – we value your wonderful inputs. You are such a professional – talented, interesting and well received by all. Thanks for that which you bring to our success.

-- Linda Buckley,
Exec Education Director,
Henley Business School

What Our Clients Say

Sharon, I cannot thank you enough for the value you brought to our leaders. You had record attendance with 388 leaders participating in your virtual session. Our feedback from them has been exceptional, 99% said they took away practical, implementable solutions. Well done! As always you were an absolute professional – composed, prepared and engaging. Your credentials and content speak volumes. Your energy and commitment is palpable. It is such a pleasure working with you. -- **Adele Ungaretti, Head: Exec Development, Standard Bank**



Glad to have connected with you today. You are doing great work for us. In all my years, I have never seen leadership and EQ developed in this way. It really makes a difference. We will be rolling this out through the organisation next year. -- **Dawie Mostert, VP of Organizational Transformation, Sibanye-Stillwater**



You have a way of building a relationship with your audience that leaves us feeling as if we've known you forever. Your feedback to our leaders was straight forward but kind. Thank you for being a great partner to work with and for the continual value you add. -- **Linky Olivier, CEO, CAMAF**



Sharon's training has made a visible difference to my team's skills. I could see an immediate improvement, following her workshops. I have had similar positive feedback from my peers and have a high regard for her abilities and professionalism. Having seen her work prior to and during the COVID-19 lockdown, I know Sharon to be a resilient service provider, who finds innovative ways to address her clients' needs, despite the challenges at hand. -- **Pieter Roos, Portfolio Head – Technology and Change Assurance at Absa**



Sharon is the ultimate professional. She speaks with passion and her knowledge on leadership and emotional intelligence is invaluable. I thought I would be able to multitask during this session as I can with many others. Not with Sharon! I was engaged from beginning to end. I would recommend Sharon to any corporate looking to build their company culture as well as their leadership team. -- **Craig Turton, Vice President, Purple Group**



I am impressed. This workshop was well presented, masterfully facilitated and the content was interesting with great tools we can apply immediately to communicate with more impact. We will definitely work with Sharon again to engage and empower our people. -- **Michael Spence, Managing Partner, Partners in Performance**



Sharon is a brilliant presenter and coach. I really enjoyed this session – it is definitely in the Top 3 of all the sessions in the Business Leadership II Programme the bank is offering. Thanks for adding immense value and providing such practical tips, tools and case studies. -- **Deon Scheepers, Manager, First Rand**



Sharon, you are by far one of the best facilitators I have had the privilege of working with. You have a way of keeping the room engaged (virtually too), creating a safe space, yet moving the pace along to ensure the practical activities are done well. Your passion and wealth of knowledge below the waterline is so evident.



-- **Kirsten Mann, Account Manager, Connemara Consulting**

Working with you has changed my life. It has changed the way I lead, the way I manage and the way I live! I am able to get the best out of my team. You are such a blessing and inspiration Sharon. Thank you. I often find myself quoting you and looking back in my file for the Key Steps we took. -- **Orietta van Wyk, SAP Manager**



I was so sceptical about this training and thought it was going to be another one of those that, in the long run, doesn't achieve much. Well, what a pleasant surprise. We are seeing major shifts and results following your sessions. Thank you for the incredible insights you have shared and additional value you've brought to the business. It sets you apart. Thank you for proving me wrong. -- **Sheraz Patel, GM Dealer Sales, M-Sure**



Your attention to detail, passion, exceptional knowledge and genuine care for our business and people, long after the intervention, really set you apart. And you are great to work with. Thank you. -- **Sandy Martins, EY**

