

Staying Strong

Strengthening resilience and wellbeing



In these challenging times, people are weathering an extraordinary storm of economic hardship and infrastructure breakdowns. Rising costs, financial uncertainty, and job losses are intensifying the stress many are already feeling. The disruption of essential services like water and electricity only adds to the burden, leaving many struggling to find solutions. As if that weren't enough, employees are often asked to do more with less—facing job cuts, tighter budgets, and heavier workloads. This relentless pressure is wearing people down, leading to burnout and exhaustion.

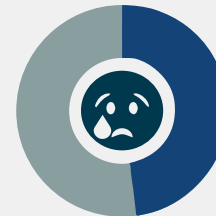
The cumulative effect of these stressors is profound, with more and more employees feeling drained, anxious, and overwhelmed. The constant battle to keep up, coupled with the ongoing service disruptions and overwhelming workloads, is chipping away at their resilience and diminishing their hope for the future.

This emotional strain doesn't just affect individual wellbeing—it has a significant impact on job performance and engagement. Recent research on the mental and emotional wellbeing of adults around the world reveals the scale of this 'emotional tsunami' and the steep decline in emotional health.



Up to **45%** of adults feel adverse effects on mental health

World Economic Forum



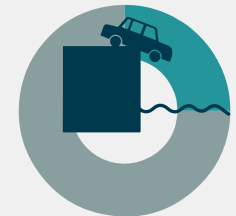
48% of employees report that they are burned out at work

Microsoft



Up to **70%** of adults view this period as the most stressful of their careers

Gallup



25% of young adults recently considered taking their own lives

Centres of Disease Control

Nurture wellbeing. Drive engagement. Inspire growth.

“It is not the mountain that we conquer,
but ourselves.”

Edmund Hillary

The objective of Staying Strong is to support organisations in creating a caring culture that lets employees experience that the organisation values the health and wellbeing of its people.

Statistics worldwide show that only around 5-7% of employees access a formal Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The rest are usually left to struggle along on their own.

Staying Strong shifts the focus from ‘therapy for a few’ to ‘building the skills to maintain mental health for many’. The programme and toolkit make the theory and practice of wellbeing concrete in a way that is relevant to people’s lives and that they find practical and ‘doable’.

The different versions of the programme and toolkit and the diversity in our team enable us to reach all levels in the organisation with a common message of hope and resilience.

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Different versions for different target groups

- The programme is available in three versions: for shopfloor/entry level workers, knowledge workers, and Managers. The latter incorporates a section on caring for your team's wellbeing.
- The toolkit is available in two versions: for shopfloor/entry level workers and knowledge workers.

Flexible implementation options



1. Immersive face-to-face facilitated workshops

One full day or two half-days offering employees the opportunity to do a deep dive into the various topics and experience the full benefit from face-to-face engagement



2. Virtually facilitated sessions for remote teams

Short interactive sessions providing remote team members with a valuable opportunity to connect and engage meaningfully. 2 x 4-hour sessions



3. Train the Trainer

We can equip your facilitators with the skills and tools to present the programme in-house (face-to-face or virtually)



4. A hybrid approach

Choose any combination of options 1, 2 and 3 that meets your needs or combine the presentation of the Staying Strong programme with using the Leader-led DIY toolkit (see pages 6-7) to reach different audiences in your organisation



A new version of Staying Strong: A tool in the change management journey

- Use this programme to get buy-in for the change that is happening in your organisation and create emotional and strategic alignment while ensuring that people are supported through the muddling phase of the journey
- Contact us to explore the option to have internal Change Champions equipped to provide follow up support

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1

Welcome and context

- 1.1 Life as a journey – the highlights, the easy stretches and the uphill battles that can tire and deplete us
- 1.2 The need to break through instead of break down so we can summit our ‘mountains’

2

Becoming aware of the impact

- 2.1 Taking a closer look at how stress and the current environment impacts us, our lives and our organisation
- 2.2 Using **BRAVE** as a diagnostic: testing the impact on my **B**ody, **R**elationships, **A**ttitude, **V**alue add at Work and **E**nergy

3

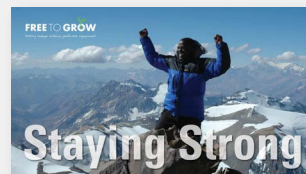
What can we draw on and top-up so that we do not run on empty

- Ownership:** focusing on and actioning what we can control instead of worrying
- Resilience:** keeping on hanging on – how applying the 3 P’s can help
- Optimism:** shifting our focus to the positives in our lives – making gratitude a way of life on an individual and organisational level
- Support:** knowing when to ask for help, being clear on the kind of help needed and knowing how to ask for the kind of help needed and from whom

4

Putting together a plan that will increase our resilience

- 4.1 Understanding the impact of lifestyle on our ability to handle what life throws at us
- 4.2 Using the **STRONG** framework (**S**leep well, **T**rain well, **R**elax well, **O**rganise well, **N**ourish well, and **G**ive well) to create a plan to sustain ourselves through challenges



LINK: Experience our visual communication style in this extract of our Interactive Staying Strong workbook for knowledge workers

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The objective

To equip leaders with the tools to demonstrate their care and support for their people through 15 short, meaningful team conversations, building resilience and wellbeing in bite-size chunks over time



The content

1. **Becoming AWARE of the need** (4 sessions)

Life as a journey – understanding how tough times impact various aspects of my life. Using the **BRAVE** test to see how well I am coping.

2. **Tuning in my ATTITUDE** (6 sessions)

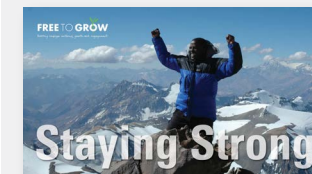
Hanging on to hope and choosing to focus on what is good and what I can control: Ownership, Resilience and Optimism: **OROS**

3. **Getting and giving SUPPORT** (2 sessions)

Accepting that I am not alone. Knowing when and how to reach out for support. The value of being an ear and a shoulder for others.

4. **'Stress proofing' my LIFESTYLE** (3 sessions)

Understanding how my lifestyle impacts my ability to stay strong. Making the changes I need to Train well, Relax well and Nourish well.



LINK: Extracts from 2 of the videos in the Staying Strong toolkit for shopfloor/entry level workers

The 3 tools in the toolkit



15 Videos
(5-7 mins each)

- Each video contains a short, powerful message, presented by a skilled and inspirational FTG facilitator
- Image rich presentation makes messages easy to understand and remember
- Available in English, Afrikaans, Portuguese, Setswana and Swahili



A Leader's Guide

- A step-by-step, easy to follow guide for leaders to have a focused and meaningful conversation on the theme of each video
- Optional: Help 2 Learn, a 4-hour mini-workshop for leaders on basic facilitation skills and how to use the toolkit effectively



Personal workbook

- Contains a visual summary of the key video takeaways of each session to review and share, as well as practical exercises to encourage application
- Different versions for shopfloor and knowledge workers

6. The benefits of using the Staying Strong Toolkit



1. Cost and time efficient

- Presented in-house by leaders of teams instead of HR or external facilitators
- Requires minimum employee time away from work
- Can be integrated into existing team meetings



2. Enhances and sustains learning

- Extensive use of different forms of imagery, making learning 'land' and 'stick'
- Learning happens in bite-size chunks of 10 – 30 mins per week over 15 weeks
- Staggered learning creates multiple opportunities for application between sessions



3. Strengthens wellbeing

- 15 wellbeing touchpoints ensure wellbeing remains in the spotlight, becoming part of the 'rhythm' of the organisation
- Creates a more open climate, opening the door to follow-up conversations & support
- Strengthens the connection between team members, growing the peer support network



4. Develops leaders

- Makes leaders accountable for the wellbeing of their people
- Develops skills to facilitate meaningful team conversations (far beyond the toolkit ones)
- Provides tools that ensure impact, growing confidence and sense of contribution



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7. Client feedback on the Staying Strong programme



"Staying Strong is a truly transformational programme. The positive impact it made within Argility two years ago for our managers, has definitely contributed to an elevated level of wellness and resilience within our teams."

Tanya Long

Chief Operating Officer



"I am blown away by the impact. We expected a positive outcome, but there were so many unintended positive consequences that we can only say: The impact extended far beyond what we could ever imagine."

Sibongile Antoni

At the time, Head of HR: Learning & Development



WOOLWORTHS



WILDERNESS



"I found this programme incredibly insightful and valuable for my leadership team in the UK. The practical approach to highlighting the need and benefits of employee wellbeing from an organisational and people perspective was particularly enlightening; one could feel the shift in the room as the workshop unfolded. I was thrilled at how employee wellbeing was positioned; each leader walked away with a newfound understanding and a desire to drive this focus in their teams."

Andrew McDonald

At the time, Wilderness Group HR Manager



"This is by far the best programme I have experienced in my 20+ years at Wilderness. I gained a lot on a personal level and it meant much to our team as well. It brought us closer together."

Alex Chaplin

At the time, Chief Operating Officer, Wilderness Botswana



"Staying Strong is not just a learning programme, but an intervention that ignites purpose and passion and provides tools for people to reconnect with themselves, while finding better alignment with the organisation. It was a truly transformational encounter which had a profound impact on the lives of our bargaining unit teams."

Ruby Motloheloa

At the time, Head of HR, Southern Africa, Distell



"Staying Strong fully met our needs and exceeded our expectations. It spoke to the hearts of our bargaining unit employees. The content was relevant to their reality that they find themselves in. It was not theoretical but practical. The facilitators connected with our people by speaking in their language and interacted with them in a way that showed them they are cared for and respected."

Reggie Geyer

Head of HR Supply Chain, Distell

8. Client feedback on the Staying Strong Toolkit



Aldrin Links

Director: Human Resources

"Staying strong is well-packaged, practical and relevant and brings across the message really well. It is also highly interactive and creates a much valued opportunity for our people to connect. We are excited by the overwhelmingly positive response so far."



Annelie Govender

HR Director

"We have worked with Free To Grow for over six years and have first-hand experience of the impact of their solutions. When they came up with the innovative STAYING STRONG TOOLKIT to help leaders support their teams, we immediately signed up, starting with the Vector Finance team. The toolkit is easy to use, does not require much preparation time from managers, and has a huge impact on the individual wellbeing of team members as well as the feeling of connection in the team. Definitely a worthwhile investment."



Tshidi Ntsima

Training Manager, Wilderness Botswana Training Manager, Wilderness Botswana

"Staying Strong is awesome."

The toolkit is a wonderful tool, easy to follow for anyone. It makes these wellbeing conversations come so natural, anyone can feel like a therapist!"



Malebo Mpepele

Group Training & Development Manager

"The Staying Strong toolkit made a huge contribution to staff morale and relationships. It gave our leaders the tools to look after and care for our people during the pandemic."

It equipped them to have conversations with their people, which made employees feel valued, seen and heard. It worked brilliantly and our leaders and our teams loved it."



LINK: More on the impact at Peermont



Japie Greyling

Hospital General Manager at Mediclinic Newcastle

2021: "We see daily benefits of this wonderful programme. People are getting stronger in mind, body and soul. As a whole, there is a different vibe in the hospital. People are more optimistic and resilient. This has been the best 15 week workout we have ever been on."

2022: "It has been more than a year since Mediclinic Newcastle launched Staying Strong developed by Free To Grow. What amazes me is that staff can still recall the simple yet powerful principles that helped all of us to STAY STRONG."

2023: "We can still feel the impact of Staying Strong."



LINK: More on the impact at Mediclinic Newcastle

9. Programme for Managers: Nurture your team's wellbeing



This short, hands-on programme provides managers with the awareness, knowledge and skills to support their team's wellbeing in a way that matters.

Duration: 4 hours

Delivery: Face to face or virtual

Programme content:

- 1** The reality of the current levels of employee wellbeing globally and the impact on employee motivation and performance
- 2** The continuum of mental health and the signs and symptoms of each of the five stages - how to spot when an employee is 'slipping'
- 3** The most common stressors in the workplace-how to prevent or address them
- 4** How to encourage open conversations about mental health, including practical tools to open team meetings in a way that will make team members feel seen and heard
- 5** How to have a one-on-one wellbeing conversation with an individual team member showing signs of mental or emotional distress
- 6** How to support team members with a mental health crisis and when to refer them to professional help

“Managers impact employees' wellbeing more than therapists and as much as a spouse or partner.”

Gallup state of the workplace report 2023

10. Why partner with us?

FREE TO GROW

31 YEARS 36 COUNTRIES 1 532 ORGANISATIONS

Our differentiators



LINK: Download our FTG Profile

Free To Grow is a BBBEE Level 2 contributor

Some of our clients

