



# Carrying the Weight Workbook

2025



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## Introduction

This workbook has been developed to support prosecutors, judicial officers and the police as part of NICRO's general crime and violence prevention work.

People in the criminal justice and first-responder sector in South Africa (and globally) are under immense psychological pressure, often facing cynicism, distrust, or outright hostility from the public, yet your contribution is critical.

This workbook may be used by anyone for any non-commercial purpose.

## PURPOSE OF THE WORKBOOK

Every day, you face situations that most people never encounter. You listen to painful stories, see the effects of crime and violence, and make decisions that can change lives. Whether you are a police officer, prosecutor, magistrate, or first responder, your work carries great responsibility. It is demanding, often stressful, and not always recognised by the public.

This workbook has been developed for you. It is a practical tool to help you understand and manage the effects of stress and trauma that come with your work. It also serves as a reminder of how important your role is in our communities.

Working on the front line of the justice and response system is not only physically demanding, but also emotionally and mentally draining.

Exposure to other people's suffering, violence, and trauma can take a toll on you over time. This is called **vicarious trauma**. It does not mean you are weak. It means you are human.

Too often, those who carry this heavy responsibility are criticised when things go wrong, yet rarely thanked when things go right.

This workbook acknowledges that reality. It provides strategies to protect your own wellbeing, while also affirming the enormous value of what you do.

## HOW THIS FITS WITH OTHER NICRO WORKBOOKS

NICRO offers other workbooks that deal with important life skills. These can be downloaded from the NICRO website

(<https://www.nicro.org.za/index.php/en/community-development-resources#workbooks>)

- Anger Management Workbook
- Co-Parenting Workbook
- Developing Resilience Workbook
- Emotional Intelligence Workbook
- Financial Literacy Workbook
- Healthy Attachments Workbook
- Healthy Boundaries Reader
- Managing Difficult People Guide
- Mental Wellbeing Workbook

- Peer Pressure Workbooks for Teens
- Positive Masculinities Workbook
- Positive Parenting Workbook
- Post Partum Anxiety Workbook
- Stress Management Workbook
- Substance Abuse Workbook
- Toxic Relationships Reader
- Tracing the Pattern Workbook

## HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This workbook has two main purposes:

1. **Education** – It will give you clear, practical information about stress, trauma, and resilience.
2. **Practical Tools** – It includes worksheets and exercises you can use in your daily life to strengthen your ability to cope and recover.

You can work through it from start to finish, or you can turn directly to sections that feel most relevant to you. The worksheets are designed to be simple, practical, and realistic.

## A MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION FROM NICRO

Before we go further, it is important to say this clearly: **what you do matters**. Without you, communities would not feel safe, justice would not move forward, and countless people would not receive the protection they need.

Your work is often invisible, but its impact is lasting. This workbook is not only about protecting your wellbeing. It is also about recognising your value and saying **thank you**.

## Understanding Vicarious Trauma

### WHAT IS VICARIOUS TRAUMA?

- Vicarious trauma happens when you are repeatedly exposed to other people's pain, fear, or suffering.
- You may not have experienced the event yourself, but listening to testimony, reading case files, or witnessing the aftermath of crime and violence can affect you deeply.
- Over time, this can change how you feel, think, and interact with others.
- It is important to understand that vicarious trauma is not a sign of weakness.
- It is a natural human response to carrying the emotional weight of others.
- Recognising it early is the first step in managing it effectively.

### HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

- **Prosecutors and magistrates** hear disturbing details in testimony and evidence.
- **Police officers** face crime scenes, victims in crisis, and community hostility.
- **First responders** witness injuries, deaths, and trauma in unpredictable situations.

In each case, your brain and body absorb the stress, even if you tell yourself to stay professional.

Over time, this stored stress can build up.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Everyone responds differently, but common signs include:

#### Emotional signs

- Feeling numb, detached, or hopeless
- Becoming irritable or angry more quickly
- Losing empathy or patience

#### Physical signs

- Trouble sleeping
- Headaches, fatigue, or unexplained aches
- Increased use of alcohol, smoking, or medication

#### Work-related signs

- Avoiding certain types of cases or tasks
- Feeling cynical about the system
- Struggling to concentrate or make decisions

## WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Unchecked vicarious trauma can lead to burnout, depression, or withdrawal from work.
- It can also affect your relationships outside of work, leading to isolation or conflict.
- By understanding the signs and risks, you can act early to protect yourself.
- Just as you would never ignore warning lights on a vehicle, you should not ignore the warning signs in your own mind and body.

## WORKSHEET: MY EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Think about how stress and trauma show up in your life. Tick the ones that apply to you and add your own if necessary.

**When I am affected by stress or trauma, I notice:**

- ☐ I struggle to sleep
- ☐ I snap at people more easily
- ☐ I feel tired all the time
- ☐ I lose interest in things I normally enjoy
- ☐ I drink, smoke, or eat more than usual
- ☐ I avoid certain tasks or people at work
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

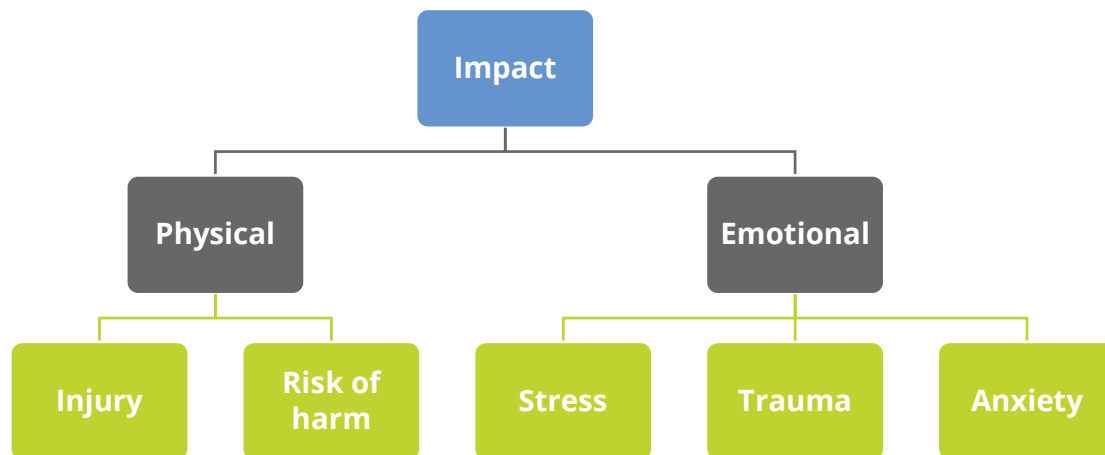
*Tip: If you see these signs building up, it is time to use your coping strategies or seek support.*

## REFLECTION PROMPT

**What do I usually notice first when I am under too much stress?**

(Write a few sentences here.)

## The Human Cost of the Work



### CARRYING THE BURDEN

- Your work exposes you to difficult realities most people never have to face.
- You see the pain of victims, the damage caused by crime, and the frustration of communities who feel let down by the system.
- You may face hostility in courtrooms, on the streets, or even from the very people you are trying to protect.
- This exposure comes at a cost.
- The burden you carry is not only physical but emotional.
- You may find yourself bringing work home in your mind even when you try not to.
- You may struggle with doubt, asking yourself whether what you do really makes a difference.

### THE RISK OF LOSING PURPOSE

Constant criticism, heavy caseloads, and slow systems can chip away at your sense of purpose.

You may find yourself feeling:

- Nothing changes, no matter how hard I try.
- I am just another part of a broken system.
- People only see what we do wrong, never what we do right.

These thoughts are understandable. They are also signs of the emotional toll this work takes.

### REFRAMING THE ROLE

It is easy to forget how critical your role is. Without you:

- Crimes would go unchallenged.
- Victims would stand alone.



- Communities would lose hope in justice.

Your efforts, even when they feel invisible, hold the line between chaos and order, despair and hope.

The truth is that you often make more difference than you realise.

## **REFLECTION EXERCISE: WHY I CHOSE THIS WORK**

Take a few minutes to reconnect with the reason you chose this profession. Write your answer below.

**What first motivated me to serve in this role?**

Now reflect: **Does that reason still matter to me today?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not sure

## **A REMINDER OF WORTH**

- Even in moments when you feel invisible, criticised, or worn down, remember this: you are part of something larger than yourself.
- You are not only enforcing rules or procedures.
- You are standing as a shield between people and harm.
- That role comes at a cost, but it is also a calling.
- Recognising the human cost is not about weakness.
- It is about honesty.
- It is also the first step in finding ways to carry the weight without breaking under it.

## **REFLECTION PROMPT**

**What is one case, one action, or one moment where I know I made a difference?**

(Write about it here. Big or small, it matters.)

## Managing Stress and Trauma

### SUPPORTING MATERIALS

You can download the following workbooks from NICRO's website for a deeper dive into this topic:

- Anger Management Workbook
- Developing Resilience Workbook
- Emotional Intelligence Workbook
- Mental Wellbeing Workbook
- Stress Management Workbook
- Substance Abuse Workbook

### BURNOUT

#### WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term stress. It does not happen overnight.

It builds slowly, often over months or years of constant pressure, high caseloads, exposure to trauma, and little recovery time.

Burnout is more than just being tired.

Rest alone does not fix it.

It is when stress has drained your energy, motivation, and sense of purpose.

#### WHAT DOES BURNOUT LOOK LIKE?

Common signs include:

##### Emotional signs

- Feeling hopeless, helpless, or trapped
- Growing cynicism or negativity about your work
- Loss of motivation or pride in your role

##### Physical signs

- Constant fatigue, even after rest
- Headaches, stomach problems, or frequent illness
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns

##### Work-related signs

- Reduced concentration or frequent mistakes
- Avoiding certain cases or tasks
- Feeling detached from victims, clients, or colleagues
- Thinking, *"What's the point?"*

## EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Burnout rarely appears suddenly.

Watch for these early indicators:

- You dread going to work more days than not.
- Small tasks feel overwhelming.
- You stop enjoying things you once liked outside of work.
- You notice yourself becoming more irritable or withdrawn.
- Your body feels tense, heavy, or constantly tired.

Catching these signs early is critical.

Left unchecked, burnout can lead to depression, health problems, or leaving the profession altogether.

## EFFECTIVE RESPONSES TO BURNOUT

### 1. Acknowledge it

The first step is recognising that burnout is real. Denial keeps you stuck.

### 2. Take short, intentional breaks

Even small resets matter: step away from your desk, take a walk, breathe deeply.

### 3. Rebalance your workload where possible

Speak to supervisors about high caseloads or particularly heavy cases. Sometimes redistribution is possible.

### 4. Strengthen boundaries

Do not take work home whenever you can avoid it. Set a “switch-off” time at the end of each shift.

### 5. Reconnect with meaning

Remind yourself why you started this work. Focus on the moments where you made a difference.

### 6. Seek support

Professional counselling, peer support, or talking with trusted colleagues can help process the weight before it becomes unmanageable.

### 7. Rebuild energy

Prioritise sleep, movement, and nutrition. Without energy, resilience is impossible.

## REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

A magistrate in Gauteng began feeling constantly tired and detached in court. He noticed he was snapping at staff and struggling to focus on evidence. At first, he thought he just needed a weekend off, but the fatigue continued.

Eventually, he admitted to himself that he was burning out. He spoke to a senior colleague, who encouraged him to take leave and connect with counselling support.

After several weeks of rest and reflection, he returned to work with better routines in place. What changed everything was acknowledging burnout early rather than ignoring it.

## WORKSHEET: MY BURNOUT ACTION PLAN

**My early warning signs are:**

**What I will do if I notice these signs:**

- Immediate action (in the moment): \_\_\_\_\_
- Medium-term action (weekly routine): \_\_\_\_\_
- Long-term action (seeking support, rebalancing workload): \_\_\_\_

## REFLECTION PROMPT

**What is one small step I can take this week to protect myself from burnout?**

## SUBSTANCE USE

### WHY PEOPLE TURN TO SUBSTANCES

For many first-line responders, prosecutors, police, and magistrates, work brings high stress and repeated exposure to trauma. Some people use alcohol or drugs to try to:

- Numb painful emotions.
- Relax after a difficult shift or trial.
- Sleep when their mind is racing.
- Feel “normal” after dealing with intense cases.

While it may feel like substances bring short-term relief, over time they can worsen stress, reduce resilience, and increase the risk of burnout, depression, and poor decision-making.

### WHAT COUNTS AS RISKY USE?

Not every drink after work is harmful. But certain patterns increase risk:

- **Frequency:** Drinking or using drugs most days of the week.
- **Quantity:** Using more than intended, or needing more to feel the same effect (tolerance).
- **Purpose:** Using mainly to escape, numb, or “forget” rather than social enjoyment.
- **Impact on life:** Substance use affecting sleep, mood, work performance, or relationships.
- **Loss of control:** Struggling to cut down, or feeling guilty about how much you use.

### WARNING SIGNS OF RISKY USE

Ask yourself:

- Do I drink or use more when I am stressed or upset?
- Have colleagues, friends, or family expressed concern about my drinking or drug use?
- Do I hide or downplay how much I use?
- Do I need substances to fall asleep, relax, or face work?
- Have I made mistakes at work or in court because I was hungover or not fully clear-headed?

If you answer “yes” to several of these, it may be a sign that your use has shifted from coping into risk.

### WHY THIS MATTERS FOR YOUR ROLE

Substance misuse is particularly dangerous in high-responsibility professions like policing, prosecution, and magistracy because:

- Even small impairments can affect judgement, fairness, and safety.
- Mistakes have real consequences for victims, accused persons, and justice outcomes.
- Colleagues and the public rely on your reliability and integrity.

Protecting your wellbeing also protects the integrity of your role.

## ASSESSING SUBSTANCE USE

The below tool is extracted from the World Health Organization's The Alcohol, Smoking And Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST).

- Answer each question honestly.
- Each answer earns a specific score.
- Write your score in the yellow column.
- At the end of this test, you will add together all the scores per substance to get a final score.
- This final score tells you if your substance use is low, moderate or high risk.

| In the <i>past three months</i> , how often have you used the substances you mentioned (first drug, second drug, etc)? | SCORING OPTIONS |               |         |        |                       | YOUR SCORE |
|--|-----------------|---------------|---------|--------|-----------------------|------------|
|  | Never           | Once or twice | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily |            |
| <b>A.</b> Tobacco products (cigarettes, chewing tobacco, cigars, etc.)   | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>B.</b> Alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits, etc.)  | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>C.</b> Cannabis (marijuana, pot, grass, hash, etc.)   | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>D.</b> Cocaine (coke, crack, etc.)  | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>E.</b> Amphetamine-type stimulants (speed, meth, ecstasy, etc.)   | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>F.</b> Inhalants (nitrous, glue, petrol, paint thinner, etc.)   | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>G.</b> Sedatives or sleeping pills (diazepam, alprazolam, flunitrazepam, midazolam, etc.)                           | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>H.</b> Hallucinogens (LSD, acid, mushrooms, trips, ketamine, etc.)  | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>I.</b> Opioids (heroin, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, codeine, etc.)  | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |
| <b>J.</b> Other – specify: ____  | 0               | 2             | 3       | 4      | 6                     |            |

| During the <i>past three months</i> , how often have you had a strong desire or urge to use (first drug, second drug, etc)? | SCORING OPTIONS |               |         |        |                       | YOUR SCORE |
|---|-----------------|---------------|---------|--------|-----------------------|------------|
|   | Never           | Once or twice | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or almost daily |            |
| <b>A.</b> Tobacco products (cigarettes, chewing tobacco, cigars, etc.)  | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>B.</b> Alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits, etc.)   | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>C.</b> Cannabis (marijuana, pot, grass, hash, etc.)  | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>D.</b> Cocaine (coke, crack, etc.)   | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>E.</b> Amphetamine-type stimulants (speed, meth, ecstasy, etc.)  | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>F.</b> Inhalants (nitrous, glue, petrol, paint thinner, etc.)  | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>G.</b> Sedatives or sleeping pills (diazepam, alprazolam, flunitrazepam, midazolam, etc.)                                | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>H.</b> Hallucinogens (LSD, acid, mushrooms, trips, ketamine, etc.)   | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>I.</b> Opioids (heroin, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, codeine, etc.)   | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |
| <b>J.</b> Other – specify: ____   | 0               | 3             | 4       | 5      | 6                     |            |

| During the <i>past three months</i> , how often has your use of (first drug, second drug, etc) led to health, social, legal or financial problems? | SCORING OPTIONS |               |         |        |                       | YOUR SCORE |
|--|-----------------|---------------|---------|--------|-----------------------|------------|
|  | Never           | Once or Twice | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or Almost Daily |            |
| <b>A.</b> Tobacco products (cigarettes, chewing tobacco, cigars, etc.)   | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>B.</b> Alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits, etc.)  | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>C.</b> Cannabis (marijuana, pot, grass, hash, etc.)   | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>D.</b> Cocaine (coke, crack, etc.)  | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>E.</b> Amphetamine-type stimulants (speed, meth, ecstasy, etc.)   | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>F.</b> Inhalants (nitrous, glue, petrol, paint thinner, etc.)   | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>G.</b> Sedatives or sleeping pills (diazepam, alprazolam, flunitrazepam, midazolam, etc.)   | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>H.</b> Hallucinogens (LSD, acid, mushrooms, trips, ketamine, etc.)  | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>I.</b> Opioids (heroin, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, codeine, etc.)  | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |
| <b>J.</b> Other – specify: ____  | 0               | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |

| During the <i>past three months</i> , how often have you failed to do what was normally expected of you because of your use of (first drug, second drug, etc)? | SCORING OPTIONS           |               |         |        |                       | YOUR SCORE |
|--|---------------------------|---------------|---------|--------|-----------------------|------------|
|  | Never                     | Once or Twice | Monthly | Weekly | Daily or Almost Daily |            |
| A. Tobacco products  | NO SCORE FOR THIS SECTION |               |         |        |                       | NA         |
| B. Alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits, etc.)   | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| C. Cannabis (marijuana, pot, grass, hash, etc.)  | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| D. Cocaine (coke, crack, etc.)   | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| E. Amphetamine-type stimulants (speed, meth, ecstasy, etc.)  | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| F. Inhalants (nitrous, glue, petrol, paint thinner, etc.)  | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| G. Sedatives or sleeping pills (diazepam, alprazolam, flunitrazepam, midazolam, etc.)  | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| H. Hallucinogens (LSD, acid, mushrooms, trips, ketamine, etc.)   | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| I. Opioids (heroin, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, codeine, etc.)   | 0                         | 5             | 6       | 7      | 8                     |            |
| J. Other – specify: _____  | 0                         | 4             | 5       | 6      | 7                     |            |

| Has a friend or relative or anyone else <i>ever</i> expressed concern about your use of (first drug, second drug, etc)? | SCORING OPTIONS |                           |                                   | YOUR SCORE |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
|   | No, never       | Yes, in the past 3 months | Yes, but not in the past 3 months |            |
| A. Tobacco products (cigarettes, chewing tobacco, cigars, etc.)   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| B. Alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits, etc.)  | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| C. Cannabis (marijuana, pot, grass, hash, etc.)   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| D. Cocaine (coke, crack, etc.)  | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| E. Amphetamine-type stimulants (speed, meth, ecstasy, etc.)   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| F. Inhalants (nitrous, glue, petrol, paint thinner, etc.)   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| G. Sedatives or sleeping pills (diazepam, alprazolam, flunitrazepam, midazolam, etc.)                                   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| H. Hallucinogens (LSD, acid, mushrooms, trips, ketamine, etc.)  | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| I. Opioids (heroin, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, codeine, etc.)  | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| J. Other – specify: _____   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |

| Have you <i>ever</i> tried to cut down on using (first drug, second drug, etc) but failed? | SCORING OPTIONS |                           |                                   | YOUR SCORE |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
|  | No, never       | Yes, in the past 3 months | Yes, but not in the past 3 months |            |
| A. Tobacco products (cigarettes, chewing tobacco, cigars, etc.)                            | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| B. Alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, spirits, etc.)   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| C. Cannabis (marijuana, pot, grass, hash, etc.)  | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| D. Cocaine (coke, crack, etc.)   | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| E. Amphetamine-type stimulants (speed, meth, ecstasy, etc.)                                | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| F. Inhalants (nitrous, glue, petrol, paint thinner, etc.)                                  | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| G. Sedatives or sleeping pills (diazepam, alprazolam, flunitrazepam, midazolam, etc.)      | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| H. Hallucinogens (LSD, acid, mushrooms, trips, ketamine, etc.)                             | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |



| Have you <i>ever</i> tried to cut down on using (first drug, second drug, etc) but failed? | SCORING OPTIONS |                           |                                   | YOUR SCORE |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|
|  | No, never       | Yes, in the past 3 months | Yes, but not in the past 3 months |            |
| I. Opioids (heroin, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, codeine, etc.)                     | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |
| J. Other – specify: _____  | 0               | 6                         | 3                                 |            |

## CALCULATE YOUR SCORE

For each substance, add your scores from the previous sections together to arrive at a total score for each substance. IE: Add all the tobacco scores together to get a total. Do the same for each substance. Enter that total score next to each substance in the table below.

| ASSIST SCORE                   | ENTER YOUR SCORE | RISK LEVEL                   |                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                |                  | If your score is between.... | Your risk level is.... |
| A. Tobacco products            |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| B. Alcoholic beverages         |                  | 0 – 10                       | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 11 – 26                      | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| C. Cannabis                    |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| D. Cocaine                     |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| E. Amphetamine-type stimulants |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| F. Inhalants                   |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| G. Sedatives or sleeping pills |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| H. Hallucinogens               |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| I. Opioids                     |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |
| J. Other – specify: _          |                  | 0 – 3                        | Lower                  |
|                                |                  | 4 – 26                       | Moderate               |
|                                |                  | 27+                          | High                   |

## WHAT DO YOUR SCORES MEAN?

**Lower:** You are at lower risk of health and other problems from your current pattern of use.

**Moderate:** You are at moderate risk of health and other problems from your current pattern of substance use.

**High:** You are at high risk of experiencing severe problems (health, social, financial, legal, relationship) as a result of your current pattern of use and are likely to be dependent.

## EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO RESPOND

### 1. Safer Choices:

- Limit alcohol intake (e.g., set a 2-drink maximum, not more than twice per week).
- Avoid using alcohol or drugs as your main way of coping with stress.
- Track your use with an app or diary to stay aware of patterns.

### 2. Healthier Alternatives:

- Physical activity: exercise is proven to lower stress hormones.
- Grounding and relaxation techniques (deep breathing, mindfulness, prayer, or meditation).
- Talking through stress with a trusted colleague, friend, or counsellor.
- Engaging in hobbies that give joy and balance.

### 3. Seeking Support:

- Speak with a trusted peer, chaplain, or Employee Assistance Programme.
- Reach out to a doctor, counsellor, or support group if cutting down is difficult.
- Remember: asking for help is a sign of professionalism, not weakness.

## Quick Reflection Exercise

### My current pattern:

- On a stressful week I usually: \_\_\_\_\_
- One risk sign I recognise in myself: \_\_\_\_\_
- One healthier coping strategy I am willing to try: \_\_\_\_\_

## **KEY REMINDER**

Substances may temporarily numb stress, but they do not resolve it.

Over time, they add more problems than they solve.

Resilience comes from healthy coping, not escape.

## UNDERSTANDING COMMON MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS IN FRONTLINE JUSTICE WORK

### ANXIETY DISORDERS

#### What it is

Anxiety is more than normal worry. It is persistent, overwhelming fear or unease that interferes with daily functioning. For prosecutors, police officers, magistrates and other justice officials, constant exposure to violence, trauma and high stakes decision-making creates ongoing hyper-alertness.

#### What it looks like

- Restlessness, feeling “on edge”
- Racing thoughts, inability to switch off after work
- Muscle tension, headaches, gastrointestinal problems
- Difficulty concentrating in court or investigations
- Sleep disturbance (trouble falling or staying asleep)
- Irritability and snapping at colleagues or family

#### Early warning signs

- Dread before every shift or court day
- Over-checking work files or evidence repeatedly
- Avoiding situations that trigger anxiety (e.g., trauma cases)
- Using caffeine, energy drinks or alcohol excessively to cope

#### Effective responses

- Grounding and breathing exercises before or after difficult hearings or cases
- Setting clear routines for rest and sleep
- Physical activity to release stress
- Talking with a trusted colleague, supervisor or counsellor
- If anxiety is constant or escalating, seeking professional mental health support

### DEPRESSION

#### What it is

Depression is not just sadness. It is a prolonged state of low mood, hopelessness and loss of motivation that impairs work and personal life. Justice workers often face it after years of exposure to human suffering, repeated loss, and public criticism.

#### What it looks like

- Persistent low mood, emptiness, or tearfulness
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities
- Withdrawal from colleagues and family
- Fatigue, lack of energy, slowed thinking
- Trouble concentrating, making decisions, or preparing cases

- Thoughts of worthlessness, guilt, or “what is the point”

### **Early warning signs**

- Increasing difficulty getting out of bed to attend work
- Neglecting case preparation or paperwork deadlines
- Feeling numb rather than emotionally engaged with work
- Recurrent minor illnesses or unexplained aches and pains

### **Effective responses**

- Maintaining daily structure and regular meals, even when motivation is low
- Breaking large tasks into small, achievable steps
- Reaching out for supervision or peer debriefing instead of isolating
- Counselling, peer support groups or Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)
- If symptoms persist beyond 2 weeks, professional evaluation and possible treatment

## **POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)**

### **What it is**

PTSD develops after direct or indirect exposure to traumatic events. For police, prosecutors and magistrates, repeated contact with violent crime scenes, disturbing testimony or images can create lasting trauma responses, even if not directly victimised.

### **What it looks like**

- Intrusive memories, flashbacks or nightmares about cases
- Avoidance of reminders of the trauma (e.g., crime scene photos, witness statements)
- Hyper-arousal: being easily startled, constantly on guard
- Emotional numbing, detachment from loved ones
- Difficulty concentrating in hearings or investigations

### **Early warning signs**

- Trouble sleeping after specific disturbing cases
- Avoidance of tasks linked to traumatic evidence
- Heightened irritability or anger with colleagues or suspects
- Sudden emotional reactions (crying, panic, rage) when triggered

### **Effective responses**

- Grounding exercises during or after exposure to traumatic material
- Building safe decompression routines after work (e.g., leaving work files at office, engaging in calming activities)
- Seeking peer or supervisor support when certain cases feel overwhelming
- Trauma-focused therapy (such as CBT or EMDR) when symptoms persist

## COMPLEX PTSD (C-PTSD)

### What it is

Complex PTSD develops after repeated or prolonged trauma over time, often without sufficient recovery periods. For justice professionals, this can result from continuous exposure to distressing cases, lack of organisational support, and ongoing criticism from the public.

### What it looks like

- All the symptoms of PTSD
  - Plus: chronic feelings of worthlessness, guilt or shame
  - Persistent difficulties in relationships (with colleagues, family, friends)
  - Emotional dysregulation: sudden outbursts, numbness, or despair
  - Difficulty trusting others, including supervisors or institutions

### Early warning signs

- Feeling permanently “stuck” in survival mode
- Losing sense of meaning or purpose in the justice role
- Growing distrust of colleagues, the system, or community
- Cycles of emotional highs and crashes linked to work stress

### Effective responses

- Recognising that long-term exposure to trauma requires long-term support
- Prioritising regular mental health check-ins, not only crisis interventions
- Building strong peer networks to reduce isolation
- Therapy approaches focusing on self-identity, trust and rebuilding safe connections
- Advocating within the workplace for healthier case rotation and support structures

## WHY MANAGEMENT MATTERS

- You cannot stop stress from being part of your work, but you can control how you respond to it.
- Ignoring stress does not make it go away; it usually makes it worse.
- Managing stress and trauma effectively allows you to:
  - Protect your health and wellbeing.
  - Remain focused and professional in your duties.
  - Continue to serve others without burning out.

## IMMEDIATE TOOLS (FOR THE MOMENT OF STRESS)

These are strategies you can use in the middle of a difficult day, when you need to calm your mind and body quickly:

- **Grounding:** Name five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. This brings your mind back to the present. You can also take a moment to reflect on what the ground feels like beneath your feet and then when you are focused on that tell yourself something that you know off by heart- a childhood rhyme, a recipe, your morning routine, a piece of legislature- doesn't matter what you choose. The familiarity of that will ease your nervous system.
- **Controlled breathing:** Inhale through your nose for four counts, hold for four counts, exhale slowly through your mouth for six counts. Repeat three times.
- **Short reset breaks:** Step outside for fresh air, stretch your body, or take a brief walk if possible.

## MEDIUM-TERM TOOLS (BUILDING DAILY RESILIENCE)

These are habits that help you recover and stay strong:

- **Sleep:** Aim for regular rest. Poor sleep is one of the fastest paths to burnout.
- **Movement:** Exercise does not have to mean the gym. Walking, stretching, or any regular activity helps your body process stress.
- **Nutrition:** Skipping meals or relying on fast food increases fatigue. Regular, balanced eating fuels resilience.
- **Connection:** Spend time with people who make you feel supported, whether family, friends, colleagues, or faith communities.

## LONG-TERM TOOLS (SUSTAINING YOURSELF)

These strategies keep you strong over months and years:

- **Supervision and counselling:** Talking through difficult cases with professionals or trusted mentors helps process trauma.

- **Peer support:** Sharing experiences with colleagues reduces isolation.
- **Personal boundaries:** Learn to say enough for today. Leave work at work where possible.
- **Purpose and meaning:** Remind yourself regularly of why your work matters.

## WORKSHEET: AM I AT RISK OF STRESS, ANXIETY, OR BURNOUT?

Read each statement carefully. Tick ✓ the ones that apply to you in the past **two weeks**.

### Emotional and Mental Signs

- ☐ I feel tense, restless, or “on edge” most of the time.
- ☐ I struggle to concentrate or my mind feels “foggy.”
- ☐ I often feel hopeless, helpless, or that nothing will improve.
- ☐ I have become more negative or cynical about my work.
- ☐ I feel emotionally drained before the workday even begins.

### Physical Signs

- ☐ I often feel tired, even after sleeping.
- ☐ I get frequent headaches, stomach problems, or body aches.
- ☐ My sleep has changed (trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or oversleeping).
- ☐ My appetite has changed (eating much more or much less than usual).
- ☐ I notice my heart racing or shallow breathing when stressed.

### Work and Behavioural Signs

- ☐ I dread going to work more days than not.
- ☐ I avoid certain tasks, cases, or people because they feel overwhelming.
- ☐ I have become more irritable or withdrawn with colleagues or family.
- ☐ I make more mistakes at work or struggle to finish tasks on time.
- ☐ I feel detached or numb when dealing with victims, clients, or cases.

### Scoring Guide

- **0–5 ticks:** Normal stress levels. Keep using healthy coping strategies.
- **6–10 ticks:** Warning zone. Your stress or anxiety is becoming noticeable. Pay attention and take preventive action.
- **11 or more ticks:** High risk of burnout or significant stress. You should take steps immediately to reduce stress and strongly consider reaching out for support.

### My Personal Reflection

**The three signs that concern me most are:**



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**One step I can take this week to reduce stress is:**

This worksheet is designed to raise awareness, not to diagnose. If you tick many signs and feel overwhelmed, it is important to **speak to a trusted colleague, manager, or mental health professional.**

## WORKSHEET: MY STRESS TOOLKIT

Write down strategies you can use in your own life. Divide them into three levels:

**Immediate tools (when I feel overwhelmed):**

**Medium-term tools (daily habits that keep me steady):**

**Long-term tools (ways I protect myself over time)**

## SELF-CARE ROUTINE CHECKLIST

Use this checklist to create a self-care routine that promotes your well-being and allows you to prioritize self-care in your daily life. Customize it to fit your preferences and needs.

| Physical Self Care  |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| Get sufficient sleep (7-9 hours) every night  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engage in regular exercise or physical activity   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Eat a balanced and nutritious diet  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Stay hydrated by drinking enough water throughout the day   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Practice good personal hygiene habits   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Take breaks and stretch regularly, especially if you have a sedentary lifestyle                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Schedule regular health check-ups and appointments  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Emotional and Mental Self Care  |                          |
| Engage in activities that bring you joy and relaxation (e.g., hobbies, reading, listening to music)   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Practice mindfulness or meditation to calm your mind and reduce stress                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Express your emotions through journaling or talking with a trusted friend or therapist                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Set healthy boundaries in your relationships and prioritize your emotional wellbeing                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engage in positive self-talk and practice self-compassion   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Limit exposure to negative news or triggers that impact your mental wellbeing                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engage in activities that stimulate your creativity and imagination                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Self Care  |                          |
| Nurture relationships with friends, family, and loved ones  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Plan and engage in social activities that bring you joy and connection                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Seek support and reach out to others when you need it   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Practice active listening and meaningful communication with others                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Surround yourself with positive and supportive people   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engage in acts of kindness and contribute to your community   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spiritual Self Care   |                          |
| Engage in activities that align with your values and beliefs  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Spend time in nature and appreciate its beauty  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Practice meditation, prayer, or reflection to connect with your inner self                            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Seek inspiration from books, podcasts, or spiritual teachings   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engage in activities that promote gratitude and a sense of purpose                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Explore your spirituality and engage in rituals or practices that bring you peace                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pampering and Relaxation  |                          |
| Take warm baths or showers with soothing products   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Indulge in a spa day or pamper yourself with selfcare treatments                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Set aside time for relaxation activities such as reading, taking walks, or listening to calming music | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Treat yourself to a massage or other therapeutic bodywork   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engage in hobbies or activities that help you unwind and recharge                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Create a cozy and inviting space at home where you can relax  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## CHECKLIST: ASSESSING HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY HABITS

For each habit listed below, mark whether it is a healthy or unhealthy habit for you personally. Be honest with yourself and consider the impact of each habit on your overall well-being.

| Physical Health:  | I Do This                | I Don't Do This          |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Regular exercise  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sufficient sleep (7-9 hours per night)  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Balanced and nutritious diet  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Drinking enough water   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avoiding excessive alcohol consumption  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avoiding smoking or tobacco use   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Regular medical checkups  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mental and Emotional Health:  | I Do This                | I Don't Do This          |
| Engaging in stress reducing activities (e.g., mindfulness, meditation, hobbies) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Seeking support from friends, family, or professionals when needed              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Setting and prioritizing realistic goals  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Maintaining a positive mindset  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Practicing selfcare and self-compassion   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Managing time effectively   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Practicing relaxation techniques  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Social Health:  | I Do This                | I Don't Do This          |
| Maintaining supportive and positive relationships                               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Engaging in social activities and connecting with others                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Communicating effectively and assertively                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Respecting personal boundaries and the boundaries of others                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Balancing time spent alone and time spent with others                           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Participating in community or volunteer activities                              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Productivity and Time Management:   | I Do This                | I Don't Do This          |
| Prioritizing tasks and setting clear goals                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avoiding procrastination  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Managing and minimizing distractions  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Setting healthy work-life boundaries  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Taking breaks and practicing selfcare during work/study sessions                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Seeking help or delegating tasks when necessary                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Screen Time and Digital Habits:   | I Do This                | I Don't Do This          |
| Limiting excessive screen time  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Practicing healthy online boundaries  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avoiding excessive social media usage or comparing oneself to others            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Balancing screen time with offline activities and face-to-face interactions     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

|  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Using technology for productive purposes and personal growth                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Personal Hygiene:</b>   | <b>I Do This</b>         | <b>I Don't Do This</b>   |
| Maintaining regular personal hygiene practices (e.g., showering, brushing teeth) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Washing hands regularly  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Taking care of hair, nails, and skin   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wearing clean and appropriate clothing   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Financial Habits:</b>   | <b>I Do This</b>         | <b>I Don't Do This</b>   |
| Budgeting and managing finances effectively                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Saving money regularly   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Avoiding excessive and impulsive spending  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Paying bills on time   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Planning and setting financial goals   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- After assessing each habit, reflect on your checklist and identify areas where you can improve your habits for better overall health and well-being.
- Use this self-assessment as a starting point to make positive changes in your lifestyle and create healthy habits that support your well-being.

## SELF-CARE CHECKLIST TEMPLATE

| PHYSICAL  |  | M                        | T                        | W                        | T                        | F                        | S                        | S                        |
|-----------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MENTAL    |  | M                        | T                        | W                        | T                        | F                        | S                        | S                        |
| 1         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| EMOTIONAL |  | M                        | T                        | W                        | T                        | F                        | S                        | S                        |
| 1         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| SPIRITUAL |  | M                        | T                        | W                        | T                        | F                        | S                        | S                        |
| 1         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4         |  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## REFLECTION PROMPT

**What is one new strategy I will try this week to manage my stress more effectively?**

## Building Resilience

### SUPPORTING MATERIALS

You can download the following workbooks from NICRO's website for a deeper dive into this topic:

- Anger Management Workbook
- Developing Resilience Workbook
- Emotional Intelligence Workbook
- Mental Wellbeing Workbook
- Stress Management Workbook
- Substance Abuse Workbook

### WHAT RESILIENCE MEANS

Resilience is not about being tough all the time.

It is about the ability to recover when life knocks you down. In your line of work, resilience means:

- Finding ways to keep going after difficult cases.
- Staying connected to your sense of purpose.
- Not letting cynicism or hopelessness take over.

Resilience is built, not born.

Small daily practices add up to long-term strength.

Resilience is not about ignoring pain or pretending to be unaffected. It is about acknowledging the weight you carry while still finding ways to stand tall.

### FOUNDATIONS OF RESILIENCE

#### Mindset and Meaning

- Remind yourself that your work has value even when results are slow or unseen.
- Not every case will have a happy ending, but every step you take towards justice matters.

#### Social Support

- Isolation feeds stress. Support from colleagues, family, or faith communities creates balance.
- Sharing your struggles does not make you weak. It makes you human.

#### Perspective-Taking

- When a case fails or criticism comes, remind yourself: This is not all on me.



- Systems are imperfect.
- Doing your best in your role is enough.

### **Celebrating Small Wins**

- A conviction secured, a victim feeling heard, a moment of compassion shown — these are victories worth recognising.

## **RESILIENCE IN PRACTICE**

- Start and end the day with a grounding routine (stretch, prayer, quiet moment, journal).
- Keep a record of positive feedback, thank-you notes, or cases where you felt proud. Look back when motivation feels low.
- Balance serious work with hobbies, laughter, or time in nature. Joy is a form of resilience.

## **WORKSHEET: WEEKLY RESILIENCE TRACKER**

At the end of each week, take a few minutes to fill this in:

**This week drained me because:**

**This week lifted me because:**

**One thing I can do differently next week to protect my resilience is:**

## **REFLECTION PROMPT**

**When was the last time I felt proud of my work? What made that moment meaningful for me?**

## Practical Scenarios

### A Police Constable in Khayelitsha

During a week of violent protests, a young constable worked long shifts on the front line. Each day he faced shouting, insults, and sometimes stones thrown at him. He admitted that he started to feel hated by the very community he was sworn to protect.

Instead of withdrawing, he asked an older colleague how to cope.

The advice was simple: *Do not measure your worth by the loudest voices. Remember the grandmother who calls us when she is afraid. She trusts us.*

The constable now reminds himself of this whenever he feels overwhelmed.

### A Prosecutor in Durban

A prosecutor worked on a difficult case of child abuse. The evidence was disturbing, and the defence was aggressive.

After a draining day in court, she considered asking to be moved off the case. But she remembered a thank-you card from a victim in a previous case, where her persistence had helped secure justice.

She kept that card in her desk. Looking at it gave her the strength to continue. The case was eventually successful.

For her, resilience came from remembering past impact.

### A Paramedic in Soweto

After responding to a fatal accident involving children, a paramedic found himself replaying the images at night. He noticed he was becoming distant from his own family.

Instead of hiding it, he spoke to a peer support counsellor. The counsellor helped him process the event and reminded him to balance his exposure to trauma with positive activities. He began running with a neighbour three times a week.

Over time, the nightmares reduced. For him, resilience meant reaching out and building new routines.

### A Magistrate in Limpopo

This magistrate dealt with constant delays, under-resourced courts, and public frustration. He often felt like he was failing people. But he decided to keep a small notebook where he wrote down moments that gave him hope: a victim thanking him for listening, a community member shaking his hand, a young offender showing genuine change.

On bad days, he read through the notebook. It reminded him that while he could not fix the whole system, he could still make a difference case by case.

## REFLECTION PROMPT

Which of these examples feels closest to my own experience?

What does resilience look like in my daily work?

## Seeking Help Without Stigma

### THE MYTH OF SILENCE

In justice and first-responder work, there is a common belief: *If I admit I am struggling, people will think I cannot cope.*

This is a dangerous myth.

The truth is the opposite: seeking help is a sign of professionalism.

It means you are protecting your ability to keep doing the work well.

Silence does not equal strength.

Silence often means carrying a weight that will eventually crush you.

### WHY SEEKING HELP MATTERS

- Stress and trauma left unmanaged will spill over into your personal and professional life.
- Getting help early can prevent serious mental health problems.
- Talking about your struggles normalises it for others too, creating healthier workplaces.

### WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

- Seeking professional help from a therapist, counsellor, psychiatrist, or other mental health professional can provide you with the support, guidance, and treatment you need to address your mental health concerns and improve your overall well-being.
- Remember that reaching out for help is a sign of strength, and there are resources and support available to assist you on your journey to mental wellness.

- If you are experiencing challenges with your mental wellbeing, it is important to seek professional help when you have any of the following:
  - A. **PERSISTENT SYMPTOMS:** If you are experiencing persistent symptoms such as prolonged sadness, anxiety, mood swings, or difficulty coping with daily life.
  - B. **IMPACT ON FUNCTIONING:** If your mental health symptoms significantly impact your ability to function at work, school, or in your personal relationships.
  - C. **RISK OF HARM:** If you have thoughts of self-harm or suicide, or if you are engaging in risky behaviours that jeopardize your safety or well-being.
  - D. **DIFFICULTY COPING:** If you are having difficulty coping with stress, managing emotions, or finding effective ways to address your mental health concerns.
  - E. **INTERFERENCE WITH DAILY LIFE:** If your mental health symptoms interfere with your ability to perform daily tasks, engage in enjoyable activities, or maintain a healthy lifestyle.
  - F. **RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS:** If your mental health symptoms are causing strain on your relationships with family, friends, or coworkers.
  - G. **PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS:** If you are experiencing physical symptoms such as fatigue, changes in appetite or sleep patterns, headaches, or digestive problems that may be related to your mental health.
  - H. **PAST TRAUMA:** If you have a history of trauma or abuse and are experiencing symptoms such as flashbacks, nightmares, or hypervigilance.
  - I. **SUBSTANCE USE:** If you are using alcohol, drugs, or other substances to cope with your mental health symptoms.
  - J. **LACK OF IMPROVEMENT:** If you have tried self-help strategies or lifestyle changes but have not seen improvement in your mental health symptoms.

## TYPES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND TREATMENTS

- There are various types of mental health professionals who provide different types of treatments and support for mental health conditions.
- The choice of mental health professional and treatment approach depends on individual needs, preferences, and the nature of the mental health condition.
- Seeking help from a qualified professional is an important step toward improving mental health and well-being, and there are many resources and treatment options available to support individuals on their journey to recovery.
- Here are some common types of mental health professionals and treatments they may offer:

### 1. PSYCHIATRIST:

- a. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who specialize in diagnosing and treating mental health disorders.
- b. They can prescribe medication, provide psychotherapy, and offer other forms of treatment such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) or transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS).

## **2. PSYCHOLOGIST:**

- a. Psychologists have postgraduate degrees in psychology and are trained in assessing, diagnosing, and treating mental health disorders.
- b. They provide psychotherapy, conduct psychological assessments, and may specialize in specific areas such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), or family therapy.

## **3. CLINICAL SOCIAL WORKER:**

- a. Clinical social workers have master's degrees in social work (MSW) and are licensed to provide therapy and counselling services.
- b. They help individuals and families navigate social and emotional challenges, provide support, and connect clients with resources and community services.

## **4. COUNSELLOR OR THERAPIST:**

- a. Counsellors or therapists may have master's degrees in counselling, psychology, or related fields and are trained to provide mental health counselling and therapy.
- b. They offer individual, couples, or group therapy sessions to address a wide range of mental health concerns.

## **5. PSYCHIATRIC NURSE PRACTITIONER:**

- a. Psychiatric nurse practitioners (PMHNPs) are registered nurses with advanced training in psychiatric care.
- b. They can assess, diagnose, and treat mental health disorders, prescribe medication, and provide therapy and counselling services.

## **6. MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST (MFT):**

- a. Marriage and family therapists specialize in working with couples and families to address relationship issues, communication problems, and family dynamics.
- b. They provide therapy and counselling services to improve interpersonal relationships and resolve conflicts.

## **7. PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST:**

- a. Peer support specialists are individuals with lived experience of mental health challenges who provide support, encouragement, and guidance to others facing similar struggles.
- b. They offer peer support services, share their personal experiences, and help clients navigate the mental health system.

# **TYPES OF TREATMENTS**

1. **MEDICATION MANAGEMENT:** Psychiatrists and psychiatric nurse practitioners may prescribe medications to manage symptoms of mental health disorders, such as antidepressants, antianxiety medications, mood stabilizers, or antipsychotic medications.
2. **PSYCHOTHERAPY:** Various forms of psychotherapy, including cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT), and psychodynamic therapy, are used to help individuals understand their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, develop coping skills, and make positive changes in their lives.

3. **ALTERNATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES:** Some individuals may benefit from alternative or complementary therapies such as mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR), yoga, acupuncture, art therapy, or music therapy, which can promote relaxation, reduce stress, and enhance well-being.
4. **HOSPITALIZATION AND INTENSIVE TREATMENT PROGRAMS:** In severe cases where individuals are at risk of harm to themselves or others, hospitalization, or participation in intensive treatment programs such as partial hospitalization programs (PHPs) or intensive outpatient programs (IOPs) may be necessary to stabilize symptoms and provide intensive therapeutic support.

## USING MEDICATION TO MANAGE MENTAL WELLBEING

Using medication to manage mental wellbeing is a common and effective treatment approach for many individuals with mental health conditions.

It is important to work closely with a healthcare provider to find the right medication and dosage, to monitor for effectiveness and side effects, and to make informed decisions about treatment options.

With proper care and support, medication can play a vital role in helping individuals achieve and maintain mental wellness.

Here is an overview of how medication can be used to support mental wellbeing:

### PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS:

- Psychiatric medications are prescribed to help alleviate symptoms of mental health disorders and improve overall mental wellbeing.
- These medications work by affecting neurotransmitters in the brain, which play a role in mood, emotions, and behaviour.

### TYPES OF MEDICATIONS:

1. **ANTIDEPRESSANTS:** Used to treat depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mood disorders.
2. **ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS:** Help reduce symptoms of anxiety and panic disorders by calming the central nervous system.
3. **Mood Stabilizers:** Used to manage mood swings and stabilize mood in conditions such as bipolar disorder.
4. **ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS:** Prescribed to treat psychotic symptoms such as hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thinking in conditions like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.
5. **STIMULANTS:** Used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) by increasing focus and attention.

### EFFECTIVENESS

- Medication can be highly effective in reducing symptoms and improving quality of life for many individuals with mental health conditions.
- It is important to work closely with a healthcare provider to find the right medication and dosage that works best for everyone, as responses to medication can vary.

### COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENT

- Medication is often used in combination with other treatment approaches, such as therapy, lifestyle changes, and self-care practices, to achieve optimal results.
- Therapy can help individuals learn coping skills, address underlying issues, and make positive changes in their lives, complementing the effects of medication.

### SAFETY AND MONITORING

- It is essential to take psychiatric medications as prescribed and to follow up with a healthcare provider regularly to monitor their effectiveness and any potential side effects.

- Some medications may require periodic blood tests or other monitoring to ensure safety and effectiveness.

#### **SIDE EFFECTS**

- Like any medication, psychiatric medications can have side effects, which vary depending on the type of medication and individual factors.
- Common side effects may include drowsiness, dizziness, weight changes, gastrointestinal issues, and sexual dysfunction.
- It is important to discuss potential side effects with a healthcare provider and to report any concerns promptly.

#### **RISK-BENEFIT ANALYSIS**

- When considering medication for mental wellbeing, it is essential to weigh the potential benefits against the risks and to make an informed decision based on individual needs and preferences.
- In some cases, the benefits of medication may outweigh the risks, especially when symptoms are severe and significantly impact daily functioning.

#### **CONCLUSION**

- Medication can be a valuable tool in managing mental wellbeing, particularly when used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes therapy, lifestyle changes, and self-care practices.

## **REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES**

### **A Prosecutor in Cape Town**

After months of handling sexual offence cases, a prosecutor noticed she was becoming withdrawn and numb. At first, she told herself to push through. But when she forgot a simple detail in court, she realised she needed help.

She contacted her employee wellness programme and saw a counsellor. After a few sessions, she felt lighter and more focused.

She later told a colleague: *It did not make me weaker. It kept me in the fight.*

### **A Police Sergeant in Mpumalanga**

A sergeant who had served for over 20 years began drinking more after a traumatic shooting. His wife asked him to speak to someone, but he resisted.

One day, a younger officer quietly told him he was struggling too and had gone to see a counsellor. Hearing this from a junior broke the silence. The sergeant went for support and slowly reduced his drinking.

For him, the turning point was realising that seeking help was not a loss of respect.

### **A Paramedic in Durban**

A paramedic used to believe that showing emotion was unprofessional. After breaking down at work one day, she was embarrassed.



Instead of punishment, her supervisor suggested she join a peer support group. In that space, she realised many others had similar experiences.

She learned to speak openly without shame. She now tells new recruits: *Crying once does not make you weak. Bottling it up forever will.*

## **WORKSHEET: MY SUPPORT NETWORK**

Write down the people or services you could reach out to when you are struggling.

**Professional support I can access:**

**Trusted colleagues I can talk to:**

**Family or friends who support me:**

**Community or faith resources:**

Keep this list somewhere private but easy to find. In moments of crisis, it helps to have the names ready instead of trying to think while overwhelmed.

## **REFLECTION PROMPT**

**If I noticed a colleague struggling, how would I encourage them to seek help without shame?**

## Affirmation Section

### THE OFTEN-UNSEEN VALUE OF YOUR WORK

- Much of your effort happens quietly.
- Cases move slowly, communities do not always see the behind-the-scenes battles, and mistakes are often highlighted more than successes.
- Yet your work is the backbone of justice and safety.
- Without you, laws are only words on paper. You give those words life.
- You stand in courtrooms, at crime scenes, and in emergency situations.
- You face the anger, the pain, and the danger so that others can have a chance at safety and dignity.

### REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES OF IMPACT

#### A Magistrate in the Eastern Cape

A young offender appeared before a magistrate for the third time. Instead of treating him as just another case, the magistrate took time to explain the consequences of continued crime, while also encouraging him to join a local mentorship programme.

Two years later, that offender came back to court — not as an accused, but to thank the magistrate. He was now working as a mechanic. The magistrate's small act of humanity helped change a life.

#### A Police Officer in KwaZulu-Natal

During a domestic violence call, an officer was shouted at by both parties. Despite the hostility, she stayed calm and ensured the children were safe. Later, the mother quietly told her: *If you had not come, I do not know what would have happened.*

That officer's professionalism in the heat of the moment prevented further harm.

#### A Prosecutor in Johannesburg

After a long and draining trial, a victim of assault approached the prosecutor outside the courtroom and simply said: *Thank you for believing me.* For the prosecutor, that one sentence outweighed months of criticism, long hours, and personal stress.

#### A Paramedic in Limpopo

At the scene of a serious accident, a paramedic knew one patient could not be saved. Instead of focusing only on the medical procedures, he sat next to the patient, held their hand, and told them they were not alone. The family later said those last moments gave them comfort.

## AFFIRMATIONS FROM NICRO STAFF

To our stakeholders in the Criminal Justice field

Your roles as the guardians of Justice, upholding of victims right and maintenance of public safety are without a doubt crucial to ensuring order in our country. Your job is often a thankless one in a challenging field. We appreciate and support the pivotal role that you play in ensuring a safe, orderly and law-abiding country.

With much appreciation and gratitude

**Sonia Solomon**

Area Manager

As NICRO, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation for your outstanding efforts of working with us, referring cases to us, your invaluable support means a lot to us as NICRO Bloemfontein, your dedication has made a significant difference, and we are grateful.

Thank you for your contributions, which have positively impacted our success as a team. It is a great pleasure to work with someone as committed and talented as you. Your hard work and dedication do not go unnoticed, and we are grateful for your service.

We are looking forward to your continuous support.

Kind regards

**Matshego Williams and team**

I want to sincerely express my gratitude for your exceptional partnership and support in the services we offered as Nicro. Thank you for always being available for communication and your patience in getting feedback from us, I real appreciate it.

Your support has been a huge help during our time working together.

Kind regards

**Lorna Khungeka**

Social Auxiliary worker

I would like to take a moment to express my sincere thanks for the time and effort you dedicate to our organization, it is really appreciated because our services are continuing because of you. Your professionalism and fairness are appreciated and the way you are treating us in your court as your staff members.

Please continue doing the good work it means a lot to us. Please continue with this great effort, as your dedication is truly impressive and makes a significant difference to our organization.

Kind regards,

**Nomfundo Mantanga**

Social Auxiliary worker

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Thank you so much for the contribution you bring to NICRO. Your outstanding contribution to helping us achieve our mission and vision is deeply appreciated. Your outstanding work that you provide on a daily basis does not go unrecognized.

Kind Regards,

**Brittany Jardien**

Social Worker

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I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the South African Police Service, the Prosecutors, and the Magistrates for the excellent work you continue to do in upholding justice and protecting our communities.

Your dedication, professionalism, and courage in ensuring that justice is served do not go unnoticed. The SAPS, through its tireless investigations and protection of citizens; the Prosecutors, through their commitment to presenting the truth with integrity; and the Magistrates, through their impartiality and wisdom in judgment—all play a vital role in strengthening the rule of law in our country.

It is because of your collective efforts that our communities feel safer, and that justice is carried out in a fair and transparent manner. Your sacrifices, long hours, and unwavering commitment to duty are highly commendable.

On behalf of myself and the community, I thank each of you sincerely. May you continue to carry out your duties with strength, courage, and fairness.

With deep appreciation

**Nondumiso Mbeka**

Social Worker

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I would like to sincerely express my gratitude to the prosecutors and the South African Police Service (SAPS) for the outstanding work you have done in carrying out your duties with dedication, professionalism, and integrity.

Your commitment to justice and the safety of our communities does not go unnoticed. The way you handled this matter reflects the highest standard of service and has brought confidence to me and many others who depend on your tireless efforts.

The sacrifices you make, often at great personal risk, and the persistence you show in ensuring that justice is served, deserve to be acknowledged and deeply appreciated. Your work has not only strengthened trust in our justice system but also restored a sense of safety and hope.

On behalf of myself and my family/community, I would like to thank you most sincerely for your continued dedication. Please extend this gratitude to every member of your team who played a role in making a difference.

May you remain strong and steadfast in your service to the nation.

**Lusanda Sigiya**

Social Worker

Dear Prosecutors, Judicial Officers, and Members of the South African Police Service,

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation for the vital roles each of you plays in the criminal justice system. As a social worker working closely with offenders, I have come to value the importance of a multidisciplinary approach in promoting accountability, rehabilitation, and ultimately, reintegration into society.

To the **Prosecutors**, thank you for your professionalism and your commitment to fair and balanced prosecution. Your work ensures that justice is pursued while still allowing space for the consideration of rehabilitative options, especially for individuals who show potential for positive change.

To the **Judicial Officers**, your ability to administer justice with fairness and integrity, while also recognizing the importance of restorative justice and rehabilitation, makes a significant impact. Your openness to sentencing alternatives and diversion programmes gives many offenders a second chance to rebuild their lives and become constructive members of society.

To the **Members of SAPS**, thank you for your dedication to maintaining law and order and for your respectful and professional handling of offenders. Your role in the early stages of the justice process is crucial and often sets the tone for what follows. Your collaboration with social workers contributes to safer communities and better outcomes for those in conflict with the law.

Together, we share a common goal, to protect society, uphold justice, and create opportunities for change and transformation. Your continued support and cooperation are deeply appreciated and vital in helping offenders take responsibility, break the cycle of crime, and reintegrate into their communities with dignity.

Thank you for your dedication, partnership, and the work you do every day.

**Grace Mafethe**

Social Auxiliary Worker

I am writing to express my sincere appreciation for your hard work and dedication to the Criminal Justice System. Your contributions have been invaluable to the vision of NICRO, a world without crime and violence.

Specifically, I want to recognize the outstanding partnerships and working relationships we have with you. Your referrals, administrative support and overall support ensures that

we continue to provide quality services. Your contributions have not gone unnoticed, and I want to publicly acknowledge your efforts.

I encourage you to keep up the excellent work. Once again, thank you for all that you do. We appreciate your hard work and dedication.

Kind Regards,

**Mihlali Nyangintsimbi**

Supervisor

I just wanted to say thank you for the dedication, knowledge, compassion and partnerships you bring to every case we work together on. It's a honour to be apart of a team so committed and supportive to the law, community and safety of others.

I truly appreciate it all.

Thank you.

**Kaelin Mulock Houwer**

Counsellor

Thank you so much for your pivotal role in changing the lives we have the opportunity to be a part of because of you. The amount of times I have had clients say that they are "not saying I am happy or grateful for being arrested" but that they are grateful for the help they didn't even know they needed and this is because of you.

Our clients often express immense gratitude for the direction the prosecution chose to go. You will never truly know how much your choice has positively impacted their lives and the intergenerational impact of choosing that direction as the prosecution.

Therefore, we are so extremely grateful, both the clients and us, as it is also a privilege to be a witness and be involved in these life changing experiences that your decisions facilitated.

Kind Regards,

**Donne Williams**

Counsellor

I just wanted to take a moment to express my sincere appreciation for the work you do and the partnership we share.

As a social Auxiliary worker, I've had the privilege of seeing the impact of your dedication, professionalism, and compassion both in and out of the courtroom. Your commitment to justice, especially in cases involving vulnerable individuals and families, makes a real difference.

Thank you for always being willing to listen, collaborate, and advocate for outcomes that prioritize not just accountability, but also healing and long-term wellbeing. Working alongside you strengthens the support we can offer to those we serve.

I look forward to continuing this important work together.

With appreciation.

**Thandi Lobete**

Social Worker

This guide is a small token to say that we see you.

We know how tough you have to be to do this work — to carry the weight of justice while not letting it consume you. Yet we also know that being truly invested, as you are, means that sometimes a case will reach your heart and that is what makes your work so meaningful.

We see the sacrifices you make, waiting patiently for clients to complete their programmes, offering second chances to those who falter, and standing firm when the easy route would be to refer for one day interventions. Too often the justice system is accused of chasing statistics — but we know that is not true. We see it in you. You know each accused by name, and you take genuine joy in celebrating their progress and successes alongside us.

We also know this job can be thankless and relentless. And yet, day after day, you return with grace, never allowing fatigue or frustration to overshadow your pursuit of justice. That perseverance is noticed.

We see the late nights, the extra miles- not just for the clients but for us, and the patience you extend, even when the work is heavy. We are deeply thankful. Thankful to be working alongside you for a safer South Africa. Thankful that our clients matter as much to you as they do to us. Thankful that together, we are changing the course of lives.

May this guide offer support in the moments you need it most, and may it serve as a reminder that you are seen, valued, and appreciated.

With heartfelt gratitude,

**Magda Reynolds**

Counsellor & Business and Development Manager

Thank you so much for your outstanding commitment to our clients and to us in our goal to build a safer South Africa. Your support and dedication to helping the clients and then NICRO to facilitate and drive our vision is very much appreciated.

**Noli Sihlangula**

Social Auxiliary Worker

I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for the work you do. Thank you for trusting and supporting the NICRO process and the interventions. Your collaboration and understanding of the importance of holistic care make a significant difference in the lives of those we serve. I appreciate your partnership and looking forward to continuing our work together. Thank you once again.

**Olwethu Sithilanga**

Social Auxiliary Worker

Thank you so much for your hard work and dedication. Your efforts are truly appreciated. The pursuit of Justice is never easy and your commitment to upholding the law and protecting our communities does not go unnoticed.

You are carrying a heavy burden, but you carry it with so much passion and love. You often forgo time with family, work nights and must give up on weekends and face the intense pressure to do what is right – not what is easy.

You relive painful stories, work with victims during hectic, crazy times and still pursue Justice with Integrity. We recognize the long hours, the difficult decisions and the personal sacrifices that comes with the role. Your service is deeply valued and your impact reaches far beyond the courtroom.

We certainly count our blessings, but we should also make our blessings count.

**Nicro Team**

## WHY IT MATTERS

- These examples may sound small in the face of the challenges you face every day.
- But to the people affected, they were life-changing.
- Your work often makes the difference between despair and hope, fear and safety, silence and justice.
- Even when no one says it out loud: **you matter. Your efforts matter. Your sacrifices matter.**

## REFLECTION EXERCISE: MY DIFFERENCE

Think back over your career. Write down one case, one person, or one moment where you know you made a difference. Keep this note somewhere you can return to when you need a reminder of your value.

**The moment I know I made a difference was...**



## CLOSING WORDS OF APPRECIATION

You are often criticised, rarely thanked, and almost never given enough resources for the challenges you face. Yet you continue to serve. That deserves recognition.

This workbook cannot solve all the systemic problems around you, but it can remind you of this: **You are not invisible. You are essential.**

## REFLECTION PROMPT

**What words of appreciation do I wish someone would say to me? Can I begin by saying them to myself?**

## Conclusion and Commitment

### LOOKING BACK

- You have worked through information about stress, trauma, resilience, and the importance of seeking support.
- You have also reflected on the human cost of your work and the value of what you contribute every day.
- This workbook is not a cure for all the challenges you face.
- The systems you work in will remain demanding and often under-resourced.
- But what you can control is how you protect your own wellbeing and how you remind yourself of your worth.

### A FINAL REMINDER

- You cannot carry everything alone.
- Taking care of yourself is not selfish; it is responsible.
- Your role is vital to justice, safety, and dignity in South Africa.
- Even when your efforts are unseen or unthanked, they matter.

## YOUR PERSONAL WELLBEING PLEDGE

Read the statements below. Tick the ones that speak to you, and add your own.

- ☐ I commit to paying attention to my own warning signs of stress.
- ☐ I will use at least one practical tool each week to manage my stress.
- ☐ I will not be ashamed to seek help when I need it.
- ☐ I will remind myself of the importance of my work, even when others do not.
- ☐ I will look for moments of hope and resilience, no matter how small.
- ☐ My own addition: \_\_\_\_\_

## CLOSING WORDS

- Injustice, trauma, and suffering will never fully disappear.
- But people like you stand between chaos and order, despair and hope, silence and justice. That is no small responsibility.
- Take care of yourself, so that you can continue to take care of others.

**You matter.**

**Your wellbeing matters.**

**South Africa needs you strong.**

## FINAL REFLECTION PROMPT

What is one action I will take in the next week to strengthen my wellbeing?

## List of South African support resources

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <b>Adcock Ingram Depression &amp; Anxiety Helpline</b> | 0800 70 80 90  |
| <b>Akeso Psychiatric Response Unit 24 Hour</b>         | 0861 435 787   |
| <b>Cape Mental Health Society</b>                      | (021) 447 9040 |
| <b>Cipla Mental Health Helpline</b>                    | 0800 456 789   |
| <b>Dr Reddy's Mental Health Helpline</b>               | 0800 21 22 23  |
| <b>Healthcare Workers Care Network Helpline</b>        | 0800 21 21 21  |
| <b>LifeLine</b>  | 0861 322 322   |
| <b>South Africa Suicide Crisis Helpline</b>            | 0800 12 13 14  |
| <b>South African Depression &amp; Anxiety Group</b>    | 011 234 4837   |
| <b>Suicide Crisis Helpline</b>                         | 0800 567 567   |

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