

Compassion Stress Management:

Self-Care for Professionals

Instructed by:
Charles R. Figley, PhD
and
Kathleen Regan Figley, MS, DMin
Figley Consulting
Tallahassee, Florida

Certification and Accreditation:

Green Cross Academy of Traumatology (<https://greencross.org/>) is the certifying body and
Center for Trauma and Resiliency Studies (<https://divinemeracy.edu/academics/ctrs/>)
is the accredited site under which Figley Consulting offers this course.



For permission to reprint, contact

Figley Consulting at
Beach Academy LLC
P O Box 6 ~ Panacea FL 32346
Email: BeachAcademyLLC@gmail.com
Phone: 850-294-6583

© Figley & Figley (2024)

Table of Contents

I	Introduction	1
	Goal	1
	Objectives	1
	Standards of Self –Care	2
II	What is Compassion Fatigue?	6
	Figure 1 Model of Compassion Stress and Fatigue	6
III	Making Meaning through Self-Assessment	7
	Figure 2: Psychosocial/Spiritual Integration Model	7
IV	Building Resilience Through a Comprehensive Self-Care Plan	11
	Score Pattern Analysis	11
	Self-Care Goal Worksheet	14

Appendices

1. Definitions
2. Self-Assessments
3. Quick Checklists
4. Further reading

About your instructors

Together, Charles and Kathleen Figley have made significant contributions to the fields of trauma and stress management through their various roles as educators, researchers, and practitioners. Their joint efforts have enriched the academic community as well as the practical application of trauma recovery methods globally.

Charles R. Figley, Ph.D. occupies the Kurzweg Chair at Tulane University since 2008. He works on several research and publishing initiatives and serves as mentor to Ph.D. students in the School of Social Work and the Tulane Medical School's Aging Studies Program. Professor Figley and his wife, Kathy, have collaborated on a number of projects over the years, including the Green Cross projects where they led a number of initiatives in the wake of catastrophes both domestic and international.

Dr. Figley is an elected fellow of five of the leading national professional associations and received many other honors in recognition for his scholarship and innovations. He is, for example, the recipient of numerous lectureships and other honors throughout the world including Northern Ireland, South Africa, England, Australia, Canada, and universities through the United States. He was awarded a senior Fulbright Research Fellowship to conduct research in Kuwait in 2004.

In 2004, Dr. Figley was named lifetime Alumni Fellow by the Pennsylvania State University, the highest honor awarded to its graduates. Most recently, Figley was honored by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York with an honorary degree in June 2014 in "recognition of his career-long achievements in social justice for the traumatized."

Dr. Kathleen (Kathy) Regan Figley has worked in the areas of human services and trauma/stress management since 1983. As a field practitioner and instructor, she specializes in compassion stress management and crisis intervention.

Dr. Figley has served as a subject matter expert, course developer, and instructor for courses offered to the general public, university students, clinicians, clergy, first responders, emergency managers, and the military (U.S. Army and U.S. Navy). Through Tulane's School of Social Work, Dr. Figley developed and delivered "Making Meaning of Trauma: An Integration of Psychosocial and Spiritual Approaches".

Dr. Figley has been affiliated with Green Cross Academy of Traumatology since 1997, and in 1999 earned their highest level of certification: Master Traumatologist. Dr. Figley's vita is available upon request.

The Figley family includes two married daughters, four very active grandchildren, one playful kitten and an equally playful dog.

Part I. Introduction

Course Goal

To provide each participant with the knowledge and skills necessary to reduce the secondary impact of working with traumatized colleagues and the consequences of that work.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this four hour training, participants will be able to

1. Articulate the developmental history of compassion fatigue including countertransference, stress, burnout, vicarious traumatization, and secondary traumatic stress;
2. Differentiate between compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious traumatization;
3. Articulate the unique array of symptoms indigenous to compassion fatigue;
4. Assess and identify symptoms of compassion fatigue in self and others;
5. Recognize compassion fatigue triggers and early warning signs;
6. Articulate current theoretical models for the etiology and transmission of compassion fatigue;
7. Articulate and teach others the potential effects of traumatic stress upon systems (marriage, family, workplace, etc.);
8. Identify and utilize resources and plans for resiliency and prevention for self and ability to facilitate this plan with others;
9. Create and maintain a self-care plan for self and others and familiar with the Academy of Traumatology's Standards of Self-care for Traumatologists;
10. Facilitate a self-care plan for self and others;
11. Provide psycho-education on the causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment of compassion fatigue; and
12. Abide by the Academy of Traumatology Standards of Traumatology Practice.

Standards of Self-Care¹

I. Purpose of the Guidelines

As with the standards of practice in any field, the practitioner is required to abide by standards of self-care. These Guidelines are utilized by all members of the Green Cross. The purpose of the Guidelines is twofold: First, do no harm to yourself in the line of duty when helping/treating others. Second, attend to your physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs as a way of ensuring high quality services to those who look to you for support as a human being.

Do no self-harm

II. Ethical Principles of Self-care in Practice: These principles declare that it is unethical not to attend to your self-care as a practitioner because sufficient self-care prevents harming those we serve.

1. Respect for the dignity and worth of self: A violation lowers your integrity and trust.
2. Responsibility of self-care: Ultimately it is your responsibility to take care of yourself and no situation or person can justify neglecting it.
3. Self-care and duty to perform: There must be a recognition that the duty to perform as a helper cannot be fulfilled if there is not, at the same time, a duty to self-care.

It is unethical to neglect self-care

III. Standards of Humane Practice of Self-care

1. Universal right to wellness: Every helper, regardless of her or his role or employer, has a right to wellness associated with self-care.
2. Physical rest and nourishment: Every helper deserves restful sleep and physical separation from work that sustains them in their work role.
3. Emotional Rest and nourishment: Every helper deserves emotional and spiritual renewal both in and outside the work context.
4. Sustenance Modulation: Every helper must utilize self-restraint with regard to what and how much they consume (e.g., food, drink, drugs, stimulation) since it can compromise their competence as a helper.

Take care of self

¹ Green Cross Academy of Traumatology (<https://greencross.org/>)

IV. Standards for Expecting Appreciation and Compensation

1. Seek, find, and remember appreciation from supervisors and clients: These and other activities increase worker satisfactions that sustain them emotionally and spiritually in their helping.
2. Make it known that you wish to be recognized for your service: Recognition also increases worker satisfactions that sustain them.
3. Select one or more advocates: They are colleagues who know you as a person and as a helper and are committed to monitoring your efforts at self-care.

Appreciation ~ Social Support

V. Standards for Establishing and Maintaining Wellness

Section A. Commitment to self-care

1. Make a formal, tangible commitment: Written, public, specific, and measurable promise of self-care.
2. Set deadlines and goals: the self-care plan should set deadlines and goals connected to specific activities of self-care.
3. Generate strategies that work and follow them: Such a plan must be attainable and followed with great commitment and monitored by advocates of your self-care.

Section B: Strategies for letting go of work

1. Make a formal, tangible commitment: Written, public, specific, and measurable promise of letting go of work in off hours and embracing rejuvenation activities that are fun, stimulating, inspiring, and generate joy of life.
2. Set deadlines and goals: The letting go of work plan should set deadlines and goals connected to specific activities of self-care.
3. Generate strategies that work and follow them: Such a plan must be attainable and followed with great commitment and monitored by advocates of your self-care.

Section C. Strategies for gaining a sense of self-care achievement

1. Strategies for acquiring adequate rest and relaxation: The strategies are tailored to your own interest and abilities which result in rest and relaxation most of the time.
2. Strategies for practicing effective daily stress reductions method(s): The strategies are tailored to your own interest and abilities in effectively managing your stress during working hours and off-hours with the recognition that they will probably be different strategies.

Commit to Self-Care

VI. Inventory of Self-care Practice - Personal

Section A: Physical

1. Body work: Effectively monitoring all parts of your body for tension and utilizing techniques that reduce or eliminate such tensions.
2. Effective sleep induction and maintenance: An array of healthy methods that induce sleep and a return to sleep under a wide variety of circumstances including stimulation of noise, smells, and light.
3. Effective methods for assuring proper nutrition: Effectively monitoring all food and drink intake and lack of intake with the awareness of their implications for health and functioning.

Section B: Psychological

1. Effective behaviors and practices to sustain balance between work and play
2. Effective relaxation time and methods
3. Frequent contact with nature or other calming stimuli
4. Effective methods of creative expression
5. Effective skills for ongoing self-care
 - a. Assertiveness
 - b. Stress reduction
 - c. Interpersonal communication
 - d. Cognitive restructuring
 - e. Time management
6. Effective skill and competence in meditation or spiritual practice that is calming
7. Effective methods of self-assessment and self-awareness

Section C: Social/interpersonal

1. Social supports: At least five people, including at least two at work who will be highly supportive when called upon
2. Getting help: Knowing when and how to secure help – both informal and professional – and the help will be delivered quickly and effectively
3. Social activism: Being involved in addressing or preventing social injustice that results in a better world and a sense of satisfaction for trying to make it so

Conduct Self-Assessment: Personal and Professional Life

VII. Inventory of Self-care Practice – Professional

1. Balance between work and home: Devoting sufficient time and attention to both without compromising either
2. Boundaries/limit setting: Making a commitment and sticking to regarding
 - a. Time boundaries/overworking
 - b. Therapeutic/professional boundaries
 - c. Personal boundaries

- d. Dealing with multiple roles (both social and professional)
- e. Realism in differentiating between things one can change and accepting the others
- 3. Getting support/help at Work through
 - a. Peer support
 - b. Supervision/consultation/therapy
 - c. Role models/mentors
- 4. Generating Work Satisfaction: By noticing and remembering the joys and achievements of the work.

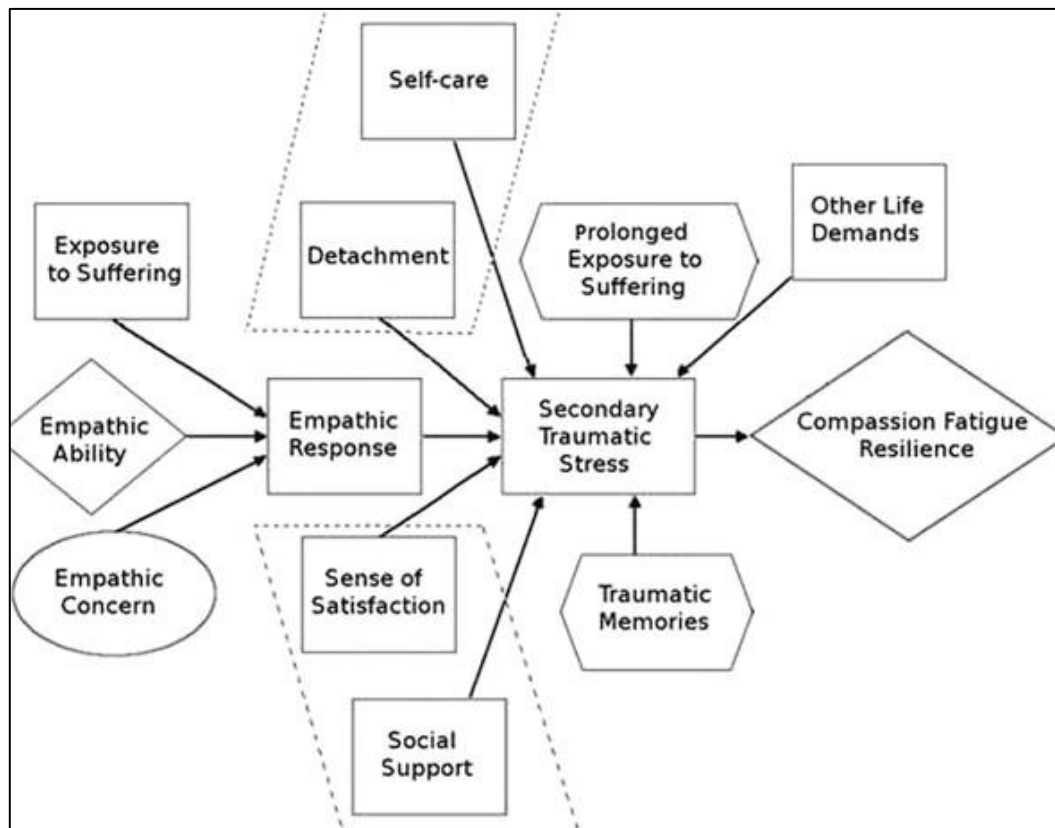
Take Action! Implement a Self-Care Plan

VIII. Prevention Plan Development

- 1. Review current self-care and prevention functioning
- 2. Select one goal from each category
- 3. Analyze the resources for and resistances to achieving goal
- 4. Discuss goal and implementation plan with support person
- 5. Activate plan
- 6. Evaluate plan weekly, monthly, yearly with support person
- 7. Notice and appreciate the changes

Part II. What is Self Care for Professionals?

Figure 1. Model of compassion stress and fatigue (Figley & Figley, 2017)



Innate Factors: Empathic Ability, Empathic Concern

Risk Factors

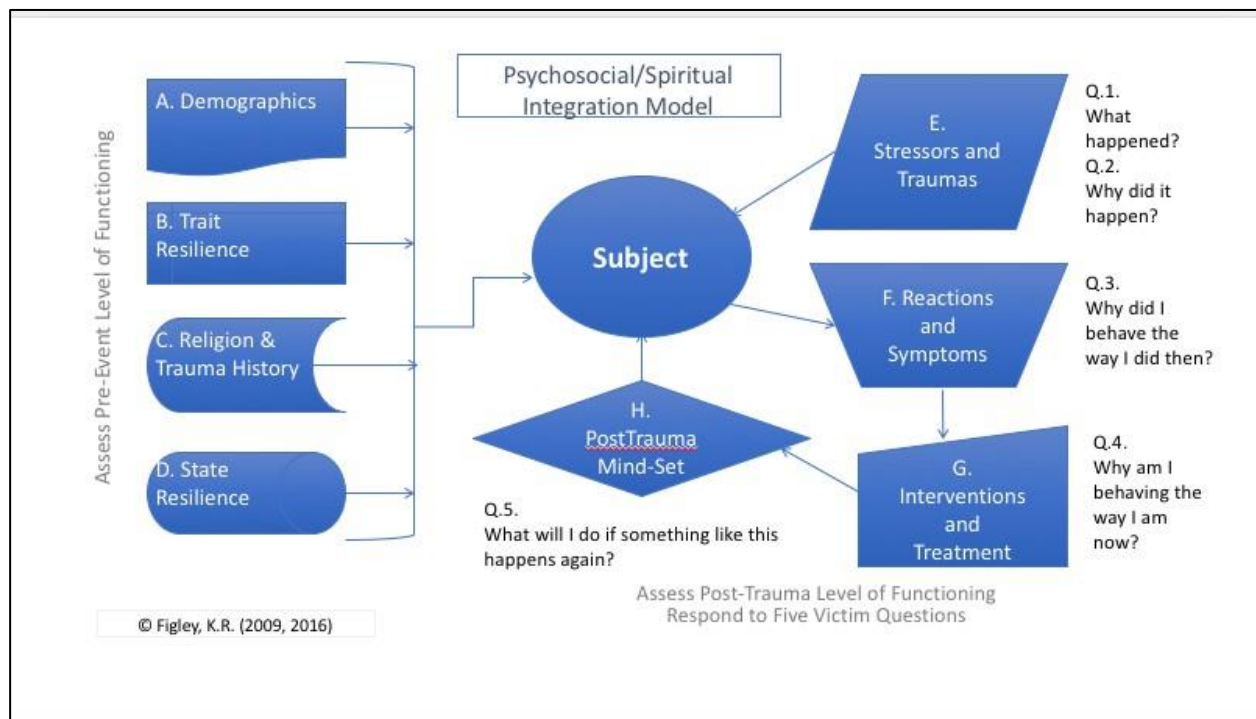
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Prolonged Exposure To Suffering
- Traumatic Memories
- Other Life Demands

Protective Factors

- Self Care
- Detachment
- Sense of Satisfaction
- Social Support

Part III. Building Resilience through Self-Assessment

Figure 2. Psychosocial/Spiritual Integration Model (Figley, K.R. 2009, 2016)



Assess Pre-Event Level of Functioning (A-D)

- A. Demographics
 - Name
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Marital Status
 - Income
 - Education/Occupation
- B. Trait Resilience
 - Ego Resiliency (ER-89)
 - Self-Compassion
 - Spiritual Intelligence
- C. Spiritual and Trauma History
 - Spiritual Timeline
 - Trauma Timeline
 - Posttraumatic Growth Inventory
- D. State Resilience
 - Social Readjustment Rating Scale
 - How Vulnerable Are You to Stress?

Assess Post-Trauma Level of Functioning (E-H)

- E. Stressors and Traumas
 - Human caused vs. natural
- F. Reactions and Symptoms
 - Caregiver Reactions
 - ProQOL
 - Secondary Traumatic Stress
- G. Interventions and Treatment
 - Healthy Coping Strategies
 - Strategies for Inducing Relaxation Response
 - Compassion Stress Management Techniques
 - Professional Care
- H. Post Trauma Mindset
 - Posttraumatic Growth Inventory
- Q. 1-5. Healing Theory

Strategies for Inducing Relaxation Response: Examples of Stress Reactions and Effective Reduction Strategies.²

Stress Reaction	Strategies for Inducing Relaxation Response			
	Breath Work	Meditation	Progressive Relaxation	Visualization/ Guided Imagery
Anxiety	X	X	X	X
Chronic pain	X	X	X	X
Depression	X	X	X	
Fatigue	X		X	
Headaches / Migraine Headaches	X	X	X	X
High Blood Pressure	X	X	X	
Insomnia	X		X	
Irritability	X	X	X	X
Muscle Tension	X		X	X

² Figley, K.R. (2012). Counterbalancing Stress. In CR Figley (Ed.) Encyclopedia of Trauma. Sage Publications.

Compassion Stress Management Techniques

Technique	Currently Use	Option for Self-Care Plan
When Working with Clients		
Breath-Work		
Self-talk		
Movement		
Between Sessions/After Work		
Breathing Meditation		
Prayer and Meditation		
Visualization (e.g., safe place)		
Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) or Thought Field Therapy (TFT)		
Journaling		
Art Therapy		
Music Therapy		
Poetry Therapy		
All hobbies and absorbing activities		
Music and Other Creative Therapies		
Dance and Other Kinesthetic Treatments		

Table created by C.R. Figley

Professional Care: Compassion Fatigue Desensitization

Desensitization is required if compassion stress continues or gets worse. Below is a table of methods by degree of exposure and client control.

		Exposure		
		High	Partial	None
Client Control	High	Client-Guided Exposure Therapy Acupuncture-Induced Relaxation Override	Energy Psychology Therapies Systematic Desensitization Family Therapies	Psychodynamic Therapies Client-Centered Creative Therapies
	Partial	Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies	Neurolinguistic Programming Visual Kinesthetic Dissociation Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Hypnotherapies	Controlled Creative Therapies
	Little-None	Exposure/Flooding Therapies		Psycho-pharmacology In-Patient Treatments

Table created by C.R. Figley

Part IV: Building Resilience Through a Comprehensive Self-Care Plan

Score Pattern Analysis: Life Stress, Resilience, and Coping ©

Instructions

The Score Pattern Worksheet is color coded.

MAINTAIN --- GREEN COLUMN: If scores fall mostly in the **green** column, you likely manage stressors well. High levels of life stress may be offset by healthy coping, high resilience, strong personal self---care practices, and overall satisfaction with one's life.

GROW --- RED COLUMN: If scores fall mostly in the **red** column, stressors may be taking their toll. High levels of stress which are not offset by resilience and coping indicate potential risk for health problems and negative impact on professional functioning. Under these circumstances, it is **critical** that you increase coping strategies and/or seek help from a professional to offset the negative impact.

EXPLORE --- NEUTRAL COLUMN: If scores fall in the middle category (e.g., **neutral**), you may be a bit more challenged in determining the score pattern. Adjust your score pattern analysis by looking at the rating to which your score is closest. For the purposes of self---care planning, use the adjusted score pattern.

Based on your analysis of the score pattern, which relaxation, self---soothing and/or compassion stress management strategy(ies) do you need? Are your goals maintenance, growth, or both?

Remember to use the SMART formula when creating self---care goals:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Realistic
Time---Based

Example – Poor SMART goal: I will exercise regularly

Example – good SMART goal: I build my physical strength by working out at the gym with my accountability buddy for 30 minutes 3x/week for 30 days, starting Monday.

Score Pattern Analysis: Life Stress, Resilience and Coping©			
Instructions: After you calculate your score for each self-assessment, circle below the range into which your score falls.			
Trait Resilience			
Ego Resiliency Scale (ER--89)	High--Very High Resiliency Trait	Undetermined Trait	Low--Very Low Resiliency Trait
Self--Compassion			
Self--Kindness	High	Moderate	Low
Common Humanity	High	Moderate	Low
Mindfulness	High	Moderate	Low
Overall Mean	High	Moderate	Low (R)
Spiritual Intelligence ³			
Critical Existential Thinking (CET)	Satisfied with Score	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied with Score
Personal Meaning Production (PMP)	Satisfied with Score	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied with Score
Transcendental Awareness (TA)	Satisfied with Score	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied with Score
Conscious State Expansion (CSE)	Satisfied with Score	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied with Score

Trauma History			
Posttraumatic Growth Inventory	Growth	Some Growth	Little/No Growth

State Resilience – Personal			
Social Readjustment Rating Scale	<37% chance	51% chance	79% chance
How vulnerable are you to stress?	Excellent resistance	Some Vulnerability	Serious Vulnerability

Continued next page

³ The score categories listed here are for the purpose of self-assessment. These score categories are not part of the Spiritual Intelligence Scale. Whether or not you are satisfied with your score is your subjective decision.

State Resilience – Professional			
Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL)			
Compassion Satisfaction	High	Moderate	Low
Burnout	Low	Moderate	High
Compassion Fatigue	Low	Moderate	High

Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale			
Intrusion	None --- Mild	Moderate	High---Severe
Avoidance	None --- Mild	Moderate	High---Severe
Arousal	None --- Mild	Moderate	High---Severe

Look at the ProQOL score pattern to determine into which category below your profile fits.

Low Burnout Low Compassion Fatigue High Satisfaction	Enjoy Your Job! Everything is working well. There's a good fit with population served, work environment, and capacity to manage the emotional toll of the work.
Low Burnout High Compassion Fatigue High Satisfaction	Stay and Manage the Emotional Toll of the Work. The work environment and population served are working well, but there's an emotional toll resulting from clients' traumatic material.
Low Burnout Low Compassion Fatigue Low Satisfaction	Change Population Served The work environment is satisfactory and there is no emotional toll; there is no joy in working with the population being served.
High Burnout Low Compassion Fatigue High Satisfaction	Change Jobs The work environment most likely is toxic. If at all possible, seek employment elsewhere. If options are not available, consider ways in which toxicity can be neutralized via changes in own behavior.
High Burnout High Compassion Fatigue Low Satisfaction	Change Careers Nothing is working well. The work environment is toxic, there's an emotional toll resulting from client's traumatic material, and there is an absence of joy in serving the client population. If you cannot change careers at this time, consult a professional to increase effective symptom management and support during adaptation phase.

Continued next page

Self-Care Goal Worksheet

1. Analyze the data and compare that with self---perceptions, and the perceptions of family, friends and colleagues.
2. Based on your Score Pattern Analysis, identify three (3) SMART goals which will maintain or increase your resilience to stressors. Goals may be Maintenance (continue doing what works) and/or growth (add that which will increase resilience).
3. Identify two (2) accountability buddies with whom you will meet to monitor your goals, and set a time/place to meet. One buddy should be identified from your professional environment and the second should be identified from your personal life.

S---M---A---R---T

Specific – Measurable – Attainable – Realistic – Time---Based

SMART Goals	Maintenance	Growth
1.		
2.		
3.		

Are there obstacles or resistances to achieving your goals?

() Yes

() No

If yes, what are they? List here and share with your accountability buddy.

What strategies might you use to overcome the obstacles/resistances?
your accountability buddy.

List here and share with

Identify Buddies	Meeting Date/Time
Personal:	
Professional:	

Refer back to Standards of Self---Care, Section VIII. Prevention Plan Development. When you work your plan over time, you will find that those goals become realities because you are focused on the areas that will make you happier, healthier, and more efficient in your work, and you have the right support to get there.

This page intentionally left blank for Notes & Calculations