Supporting NHS Workforce Resilience

'The real truth about effective mental health strategies in healthcare professionals today: a conversation'.

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Dr Nicola Eccles

Head of Mental Health and Wellbeing

Aspire Strategies

Nicola has worked as an academic specialising in health behaviour and public health at Universities in the North of England for many years. She has also designed, implemented and evaluated health interventions with schools, hospitals and councils across the UK to understand what works, for whom and when in relation to making sustained and effective changes to mental and physical health. More recently Nicola has been involved in the design and creation of digital health applications dedicated to improving psychological and physical wellbeing. With a specialism in behaviour change tools, Nicola brings this expertise to the design and delivery of Aspire software solutions.

Today:

- **The critical issue - how we can build organisational and individual skills to manage mental health in the long term?**
- **The lack of 'fit' and ineffectiveness in so many organisational mental health strategies**
- **Two fundamental changemakers and how to apply them:**

- lifelong approach to skills and learning

- realistic analysis of personal resources

Where are we now? The permacrisis

The world we live in is not very ‘liveable’

- E.g. right now:
- Post pandemic
- Economy
- Ukraine
- Social media
- Marginalisation

Therapy cannot solve societal and hierarchical problems and economic problems

175% increase in demand for mental health support

Mind suggests the ‘second pandemic’ is the mental health crisis

https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/major-reports/soc202021_01d_mh-care-demand

Perceptions of mental health support by NHS staff

2021 NHS Staff Survey found a 40% increase in those who felt unwell due to work stress from 2019 (up to 44%)

40% felt mental health concerns would not be addressed

Increase in provision of mental health support for HCW but how is this received?

Workload so high that no time or energy to participate in offerings

'Toxic stoicism'

The need for flexible access to support (e.g night workers)

Clarkson et al (2023) You get looked at like you're failing': A reflexive thematic analysis of experiences of mental health and wellbeing support for NHS staff. Journal of Health Psychology

Resilience: Research?

- 1 in every 5 medical staff is affected by burnout
- Resilience is a central element of wellbeing for healthcare staff
- Research shows health care costs, quality of care and the resilience of medical staff are all linked
- Healthcare staff look for a sense of community…little time for learning about struggles of others
- Most feel the need for wellbeing support but find it difficult to give themselves permission to engage in or with it
- We talk about ‘resilience’ and it’s relationship with burnout. But how do we develop it?

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Neuroplasticity is the way the brain can create new neural pathways and basically ‘rewire’ itself.

Our habits and past experiences can be rewritten….which means we **can** ‘become’ resilient

Resilience skills development:

Communication and speaking up…showing vulnerability… is one of the most important steps to build resilience (despite it feeling like the opposite!)

As difficult as it is to experience stress pain and anxiety…repressing those feelings and not communicating them will exacerbate the problem

Resilience skills development:

“Breaking Down ‘Easy’”:

1. Think of a task that comes easily to you but others might find difficult to perform. Write down a task you performed recently.

2. What goes into making this task possible? Below the task, list factors, subtasks, and personal traits required to complete this task.

3. Translate these traits and characteristics into strengths

Resilience skills development:

What are the ways in which you have reliably dealt with stressors in the past or would like to try to in the future.

Space Where do you go?

Reflection How do you think and process best?

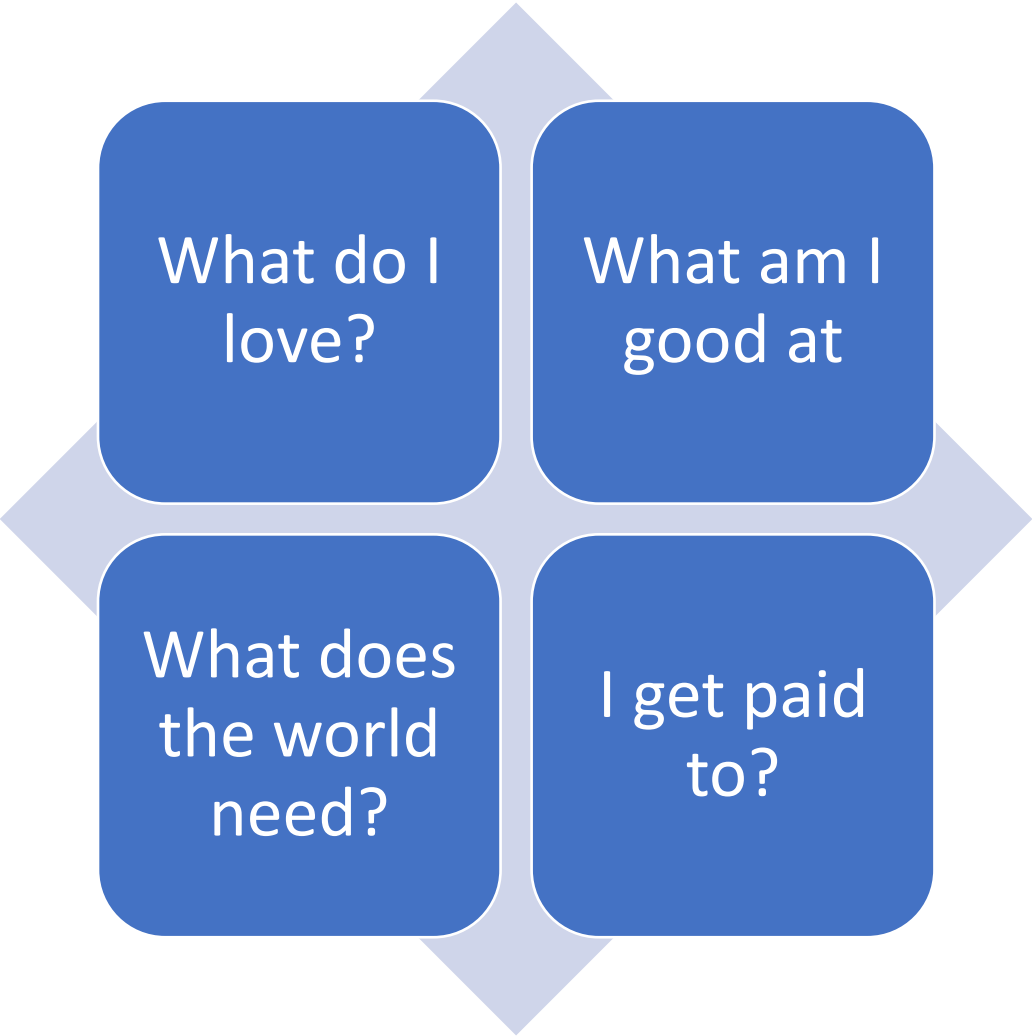
Self-Expression How do you create? What do you create?

Connection Who are the people you can rely on?

Resilience begins with self awareness

You have to pay attention to yourself….

Self reflection is the most worthwhile investment you can make


What do I love?
What am I good at
What does the world need?
I get paid to?

What do I love & what am I good at? = **passion**

What I get paid to and what I am good at = **profession**

What does the world need and what do I love? = **mission**

What I get paid to and what does the world need? = **vocation**

Resilience skills development:

Relationships are important. We build resilience through people.

Relationships can make you feel competent and confident and loved.

The networks you have at work or with family and loved ones is critical to developing resilience.

Resilience is not just an inside job!

The lack of ‘fit’ with ‘stress management’ techniques……

No application of knowledge from ….

Personal Resource Allocation model (PRA) ***Grawitch and Barber 2010***

Conservation of Resources Model (CRO) ***Hobfoll 1988***

Most workplace stress solutions….

Present a reductionist approach. Focus on work/life balance

Consider workplace ‘benefits’ as the answer

Ignore the critical and central issue of ….personal resources

A healthy work culture...

Emerges when the belief is NOT that people don’t want to go to work

Allows people to consider how, when and where to allocate their personal resources

Enables a critical step in empowering individuals to deal with stress and build resilience

- The PRA as a framework for a conversation
- An **integrative** approach to work life rather than a reductionist approach
- Work cannot keep ‘giving’ more
- Individuals cannot keep ‘giving’ more

Re write the narrative

Work-life enrichment

How does the PRA work in a real world setting?

Around ***demands***…

Demands are not always negative….they are just things that compete for personal resources. From a resource availability perspective…it is irrelevant whether a demand is a ‘have to or a ‘want to’

Around ***work/life balance***…

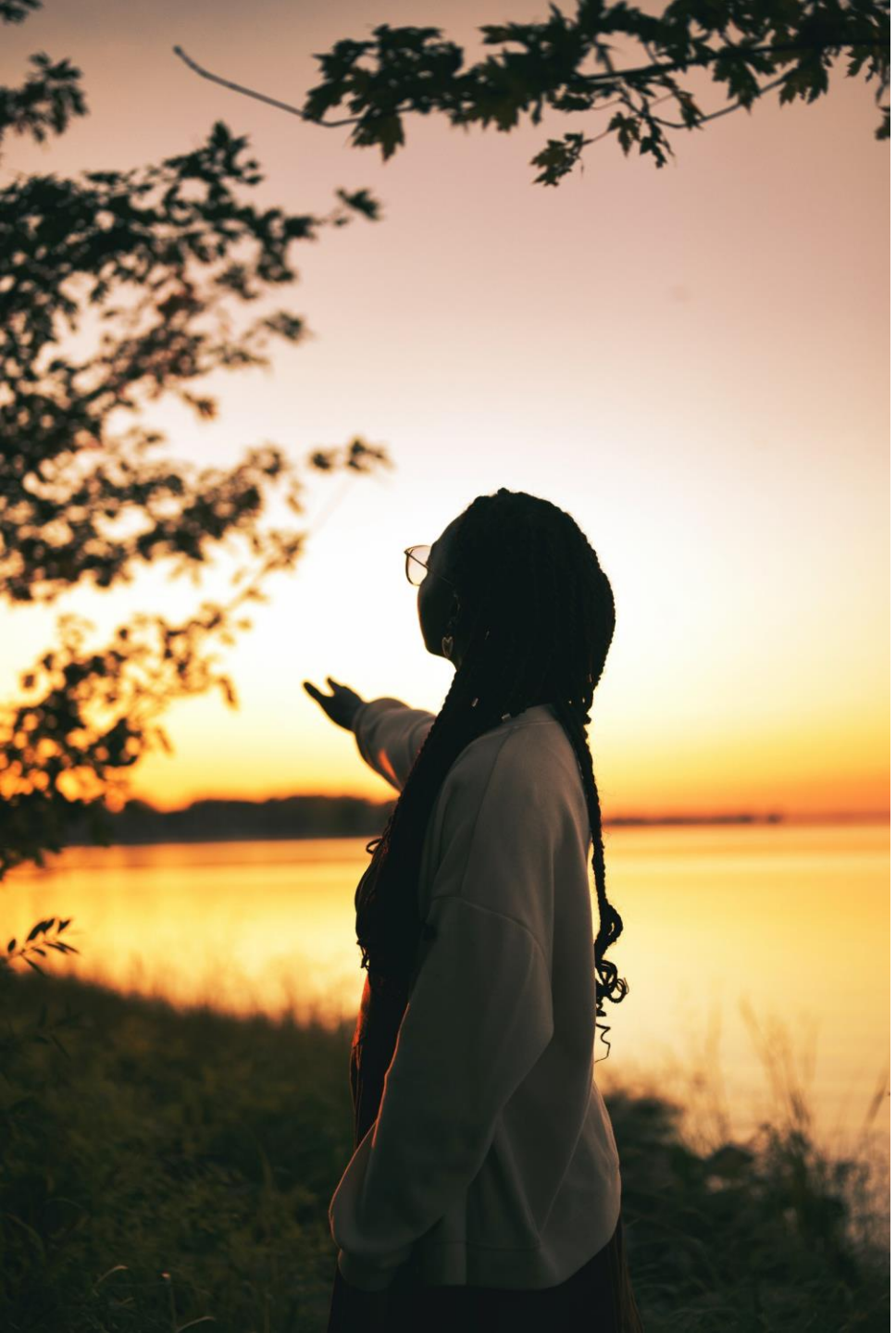
The ‘traditional’ model creates a belief that ’work’ is a negative demand on time and home/family is a positive …but in reality both can be positive and negative at different points in time

The synergistic phenomenon

‘facilitation’

Experiences in one domain (space) can produce energy that we use in another domains….

Our experiences at ‘home’ can positively influence work and vice versa



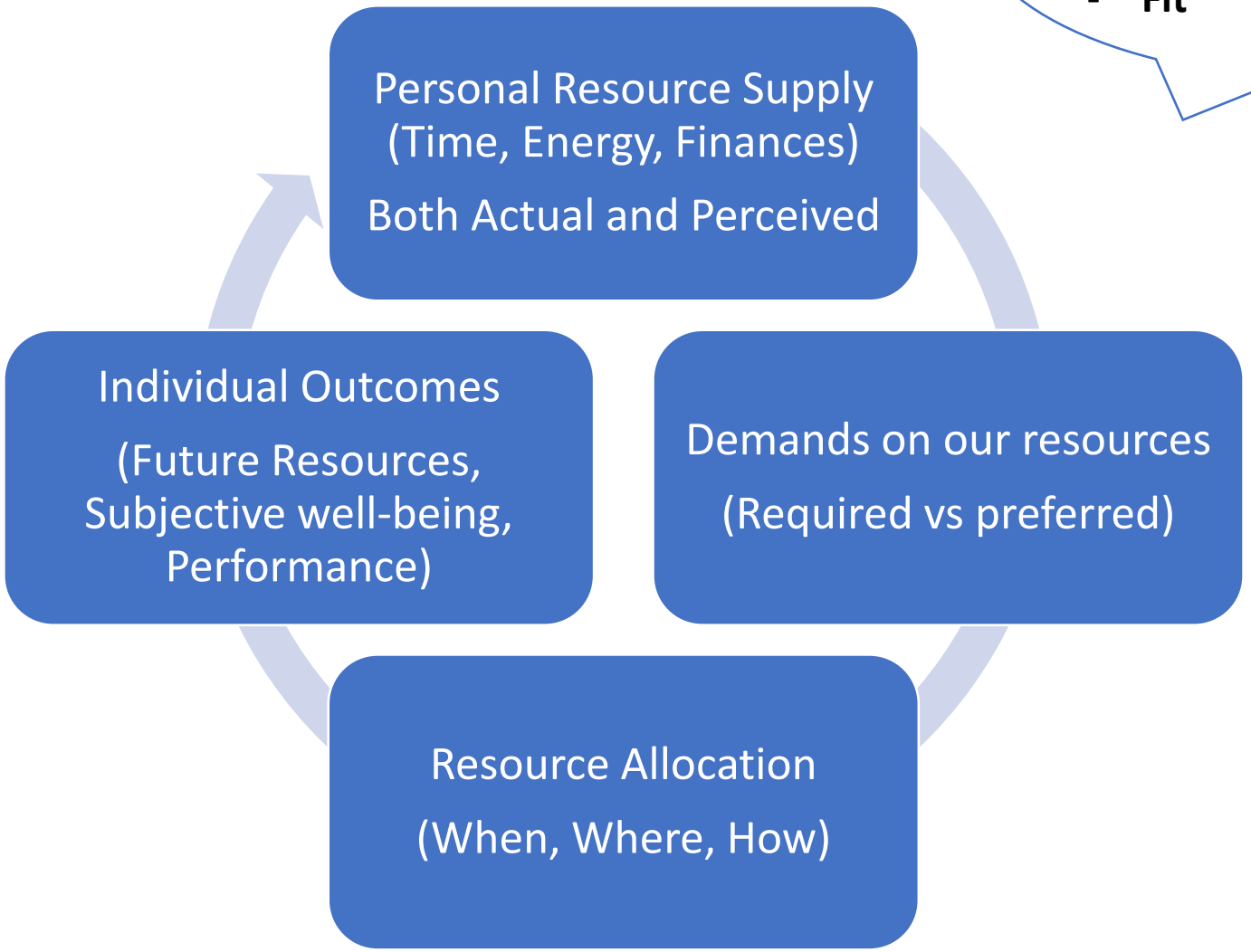
"When people effectively respond to their life demands, they tend to produce a greater quality of results, which is the hallmark of effective self-regulation"

The Personal Resource Allocation Framework

(Grawitch, Barber and Justice 2010)

Influencing Factors

- **Individual differences**
- **External resources**
- **Fit**



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Aspire

Info@aspirestrategies.co.uk

@aspireinstaa

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@aspiresoftltd

Contact:

Dr Nicola Eccles

nicola.eccles@aspirestrategies.co.uk