



Well@Work Podcast Season 4 Episode 6

Pause, Reset, Nourish

Welcome to the Well@Work Podcast from the University of KY Center on Trauma and Children. This podcast is made possible by a grant from SAMHSA to the Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, and the UK Center on Trauma and Children. On this episode, Dr. Ginny Sprang discusses the Pause, Reset, and Nourish framework for self-regulation.

Hello, I'm Dr. Ginny Sprang, and I'm here to tell you about one of my favorite ways to calm down: Pause, Reset, and Nourish. All of us face a variety of stressors on a daily basis that are coming at us from multiple directions. Most people have probably read at least one magazine article with suggestions about methods to manage stress, from yoga to kickboxing to journaling and meditation. These and other self-care strategies can certainly be effective. However, for most of us, taking an hour out of our busy schedule might seem impossible. That's why the PRN framework is a helpful strategy because it only takes a few minutes to go through three simple steps: Pause, Reset, and Nourish. Like medications you take PRN, or as needed, you only repeat this as frequently as you like throughout the day. Employing these resilience-building practices helps reset and rebalance our nervous system, allowing us to move through the day better equipped to navigate whatever challenge may come up.

Think about this example: Sarah is a child welfare worker who has a full caseload of children and families. Her days involve back-to-back direct client encounters with little time for breaks. In between direct client encounters, she has to return phone calls, write letters for court, and complete her case notes. This is where the PRN framework could be helpful.

The first tool of the PRN framework is Pause. Take a moment to check in with how your body feels. Start by taking slow, deep breaths from your diaphragm, then repeat this breathing technique three times. As you become more aware of how you're feeling, you might notice you're holding stress or tension in certain parts of your body, or you become aware of repeating thoughts or intense emotions.

Once you've gained awareness of your internal experience, the next step is to Reset. This entails actively doing something that will help you feel steadier, calmer, and more confident. Use the awareness you gain from the Pause step to guide your choice about how to reset. If your mind feels too full, you could reset by having a quiet moment. This could include the breathing technique you used earlier, practicing mindfulness, taking a short walk outside, or looking at a picture that makes you feel happy or smile. If negative emotions are overwhelming you, focus on a memory of a positive moment, share some gratitude with others, watch a short funny video, or talk to a friend or loved one. You can reset self-critical thoughts by interrupting them with self-compassion. It can be helpful to talk to yourself as if you were a caring, supportive friend, saying something like, "It's okay, you're going to be



okay," or "You're doing the best you can," or "You're strong, you can definitely do this."

The final step is Nourish. Focus on something that helps you remember your own strength and resilience or reminds you to take care of yourself. Take a hot bath, go for a walk or run, have coffee at the park with a friend. Try to think about something that's been rewarding or meaningful to you. This can be related to your family, your job, or anything you value. For a different approach, you could try engaging in moments of lightheartedness or playfulness with others. This could include a family activity, laughing with a coworker, or simply doing something nice for another person.

As you Pause, Reset, and Nourish, remember to be kind to yourself. Adapt the approach to your unique situation, your values, and your needs. The most important thing is to intentionally create space to use these PRN strategies frequently enough to make a habit of them. You want to slow down and listen to your body, reset your nervous system from stress to safety or from crisis to confidence, and nourish yourself with some self-compassion. Remember, care for yourself and you will be better able to care for others, and of course, to stay well at work.