

RESILIENCE RECHARGE

A PROGRAM FOR WORKPLACE WELL-BEING

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INTRODUCTION

The average person spends over 90,000 hours at work during their lifetime, making workplace well-being an important consideration. Despite this, work-related stress is a rising concern, with 77% of US workers reporting feeling stressed at work in the past month (American Psychological Association, 2024). Excessive, or chronic, stress can have a detrimental impact on job performance and can compromise mental and physical health.

Consequently, employee wellness has become a key focus for employers to mitigate burnout and enhance resilience, productivity, and overall well-being. Workplace resilience programs offer a promising solution by equipping team members with critical skills to manage stress, recover from challenges, and thrive during positive times. These programs not only foster stronger team relationships and a positive organizational culture, but also directly benefit team members by reducing stress, increasing work engagement, and improving well-being.

Mather Institute, in partnership with Northwestern University, designed the Resilience Recharge program—a brief, evidence-based program specifically adapted for a busy workplace.

Developed in collaboration with Judith Moskowitz, PhD, at Northwestern University and based on her widely used and validated

positive emotion regulation program (Moskowitz et al., 2024), our program aims to build team members' internal resources and foster stronger team connections. Delivered in just 5 to 10 minutes per week over four weeks (40 minutes total), it can be easily integrated into teams' existing meetings, ensuring accessibility and improving program adherence.

Resilience Recharge draws on principles from positive psychology programs, which improve well-being by strengthening positive skills and providing practical tools and strategies for use in everyday life. This approach also aligns with job demands–resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014), which suggests that expanding a team member's internal resources—such as social support, stress management skills, and resilience—enables them to effectively handle daily job demands that contribute to stress.

This Orange Paper offers information and tools you can use to implement Resilience Recharge with your team.

**77% OF US WORKERS
REPORTED FEELING
STRESSED AT WORK IN
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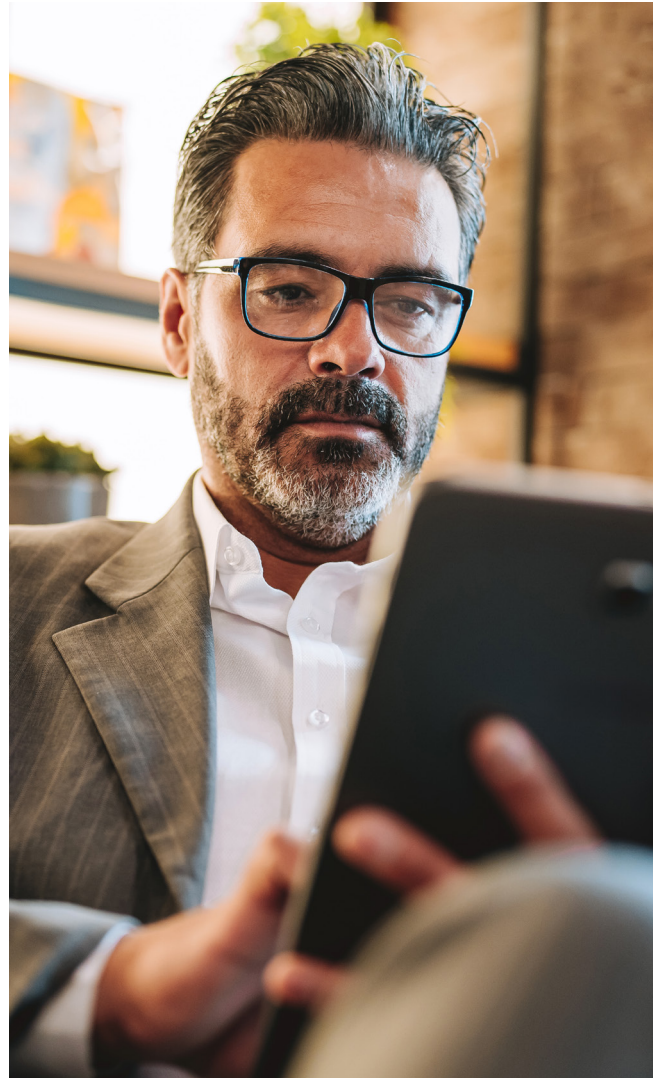
PART 1: HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE RESILIENCE RECHARGE PROGRAM WITH TEAM MEMBERS

This Orange Paper begins with a step-by-step description of the Resilience Recharge program and provides guidance on how to implement and replicate this program with your team.

PART 2: LEARN ABOUT THE RESILIENCE RECHARGE PILOT STUDY

The second part of this Orange Paper describes a pilot study of the Resilience Recharge program, which aimed to improve team members' well-being. Researchers from Mather Institute and Northwestern conducted an evaluation of the program, and they have shared their key findings and recommendations here.

If you are looking to create your own Resilience Recharge program, a guide for facilitators and participant handouts are included in the Appendix and are available for you to use license-free.



PART 1—HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE RESILIENCE RECHARGE PROGRAM

The goal of Resilience Recharge is to increase team members' overall resilience, which can help to reduce stress and make difficult tasks more manageable and enjoyable. The program focuses on building four key skills: gratitude, noticing and savoring positive events, identifying personal strengths, and performing acts of kindness.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: The Resilience Recharge program consists of four brief sessions (5 to 10 minutes each). Each session covers a different skill related to resilience. The sessions can be integrated into existing team meetings and completed collaboratively as a group. In each session, participants learn about a specific skill (e.g., gratitude), engage in an activity that combines self-reflection with group sharing, and receive practical tips for continuing to practice the skill throughout the week.

FACILITATOR: We recommend selecting a facilitator in advance, chosen from one of the members of the team. This role can be fulfilled by the team leader or a volunteer from the team who expresses interest in guiding the sessions. A facilitator guide with session information and tips for facilitating can be found in the Appendix.

GENERAL FORMAT OF EACH SESSION:

Each session follows a similar structure:

- Brief introduction
- Overview of skill (pause for questions)
- Activity Part 1 – Individual Reflection (1–2 minutes)
- Activity Part 2 – Group sharing (~3 minutes in groups of 2 or 3)
- Takeaways



OVERVIEW OF SESSIONS

An overview of the content covered in each session is provided below.

SESSION 1: GRATITUDE

The first session is designed to help participants recognize and appreciate positive aspects of their work, introducing the concept of gratitude as a way to acknowledge and appreciate the good in one's life, extending beyond just professional settings. It begins with an overview of gratitude and its relationship to resilience, highlighting how gratitude fosters more positive emotions and optimism, which in turn can increase resilience.

Examples of gratitude in the workplace, such as having a supportive team or a positive work environment, are provided. Participants identify two or three things they are thankful for at their job, then share in a small group. The session concludes by encouraging ongoing gratitude practices, such as maintaining a daily gratitude journal, sending appreciation notes to colleagues, nominating peers for recognition, and expressing gratitude in one's personal life.

SESSION 2: NOTICING AND SAVORING POSITIVE EVENTS

This session focuses on the concepts of noticing and savoring positive experiences. Recognizing when positive things happen can provide respite during stressful events and foster positive emotions that make us more resilient. The session provides practical tips for savoring events both during and after they occur, such as slowing down to engage all senses and reflecting on the experience through journaling or sharing with others. Next, participants identify and rate activities that bring them joy, fostering an awareness of personal sources of happiness. In small groups, participants share their most enjoyable activities and discuss strategies to deepen their appreciation and enjoyment of these experiences in everyday life. Lastly, they are provided with additional suggestions to cultivate and amplify positive events as they occur.

SESSION 3: PERSONAL STRENGTHS

This session focuses on helping participants recognize and leverage their personal strengths in the workplace. It introduces personal strengths as unique qualities that can improve work performance and promote resilience. Specifically, recognizing and using one's strengths can buffer against stress and build confidence, which contributes to resilience. During the session, participants identify three to five personal strengths from a provided list, with the option to add their own if it wasn't listed. They then reflect on a specific instance at work in which they utilized one of these strengths to complete a task or overcome a challenge. After individual reflection, participants form small groups to share their identified strength and how they apply it at work, to encourage recognition and appreciation of the diversity of strengths within the group.

SESSION 4: ACTS OF KINDNESS

This session focuses on the positive effects of kindness on both the giver and the recipient, highlighting benefits to mental and physical health, mood, and resilience. When people lend a helping hand to others, it can remind them that they don't need to face challenges alone. Thus, acts of kindness can build supportive networks that buffer against stress and promote resilience. During the session, participants reflect individually on personal experiences of giving and receiving acts of kindness, considering their emotions and others' reactions. In small groups, they share these experiences. The session concludes by encouraging participants to share something they appreciate about a colleague and to plan specific kind acts for the upcoming week.



TIPS FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

- 1 We recommend implementing the program in person, although it can be conducted virtually for remote teams. We suggest sharing the session handout with participants at the start of the session and using breakout groups to facilitate discussion.
- 2 The program can be completed with many different team sizes. Smaller teams may not need to break into small groups to share.
- 3 Consider conducting the program with teams that already meet weekly so that the sessions occur regularly and maintain momentum without long breaks interrupting the program.
- 4 At the end of each session, ask team members to share how they plan to practice throughout the week to encourage repetition and habit-building. Because the sessions are brief, the skills should be practiced frequently throughout the week to maximize the benefits of the program.

PART 2

PILOT STUDY: EVALUATING THE RESILIENCE RECHARGE PROGRAM

Mather Institute and Northwestern University conducted an evaluation to assess the impact of Resilience Recharge on several aspects of well-being, such as resilience, job stress, overall life stress, and life satisfaction.

Specifically, the evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

- How does the program affect team member resilience, stress, and job satisfaction?
- Are workplace micro-trainings in this format a feasible and effective mode of delivery?



HOW THE EVALUATION WAS CONDUCTED

PARTICIPANTS

The Resilience Recharge program was pilot tested with 20 teams within a multisite senior living organization. On average, there were 10 people on each team. Approximately 200 team members received the program. Overall, 71 participants completed the optional surveys. A total of 55 team members completed both the pre-program and post-program survey and attended at least one session. An additional 16 team members completed only the post-program survey and attended at least one session.

Nearly 82% of participants were female, and 69% had a bachelor’s degree or higher. In terms of race/ethnicity, 59% were White, 20% were Hispanic or Latino, 10% were Black, and 8% were Asian or Asian American.

Table 1. Participant characteristics (N = 55)

CATEGORY	PERCENT (%)	CATEGORY	PERCENT (%)
Age		Race/Ethnicity (Select all that apply)	
18–24	7%	American Indian/Alaska Native	0%
25–34	28%	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	4%
35–44	22%	Asian/Asian American	10%
45–54	20%	Black/African American	12%
55–64	19%	White	69%
65+	4%	Hispanic/Latino	23%
Gender		Highest level of education	
Female	66%	High school diploma or GED	30%
Male	33%	Bachelor’s degree	40%
Gender identity not listed	0%	Master’s/MBA	21%
		JD/MD/PhD or other doctorate	8%

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number, and thus total percentages may not always add up to 100%.

SURVEYS

Both the pre- and post-surveys included questions about resilience, job stress, job satisfaction, work engagement, job-related autonomy, job-related achievement, job-related affiliation, work-related positive emotion, overall stress, positive affect, and life satisfaction. The pre-survey also collected demographic information, while the post-survey measured program satisfaction, level of participation, perceived impact, and feedback. Facilitators also completed short surveys after each session to provide their feedback.

KEY FINDINGS

PROGRAM ENGAGEMENT

Overall, the program was well attended, with nearly 80% of participants attending three or more sessions (averaging 3.25 out of 4 sessions). It is likely that the program’s integration into existing meetings and brief duration contributed to the high attendance rate. Most session facilitators reported that each session lasted 5 to 10 minutes and rated the quality of the sessions an average of 4.66 out of 5 (on a scale from 1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent).

PROGRAM SATISFACTION

Overall, most participants indicated that they were satisfied with the Resilience Recharge program (94% were “somewhat” to “extremely” satisfied) and likely to recommend it to a colleague or team member (91%) (Figures 1–2).

Figure 1. How satisfied were you with the program?



69% EXTREMELY/VERY
26% SOMEWHAT
6% SLIGHTLY/NOT AT ALL

Figure 2. How likely are you to recommend the program to a colleague or team member?



74% EXTREMELY/VERY
17% SOMEWHAT
9% SLIGHTLY/NOT AT ALL

Participants also reported that the content was relevant (94%) and useful (91%) and that they are likely to use these skills in the future (93%) (Figures 3–5). Participants also provided feedback on which components of the program they found most valuable. When asked to rate the skills covered in the program, 42% of participants reported gratitude as the most useful skill while personal strengths was selected the least often (11%) (See Figure 6).

Figure 3. How relevant was the content?

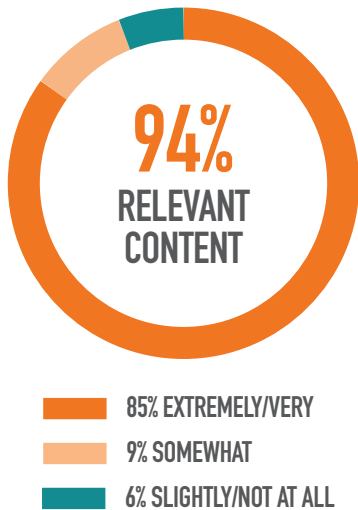


Figure 4. How useful did you find the skills covered in the program?



Figure 5. How likely are you to use the skills and techniques learned in the program in the future?

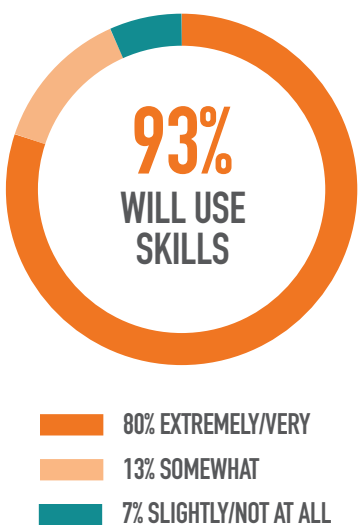
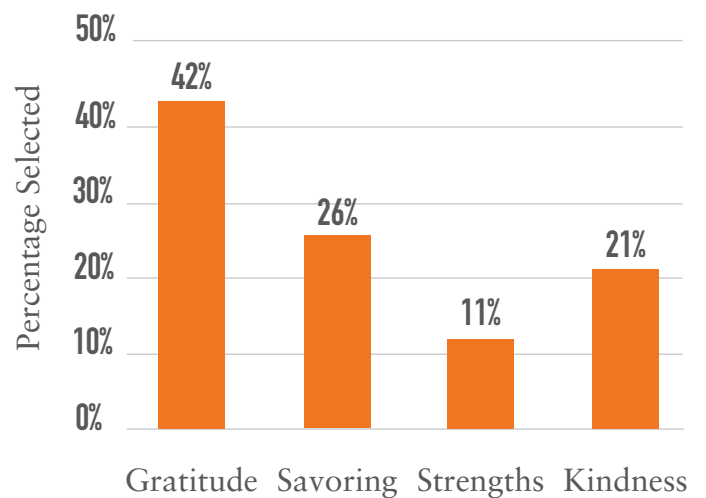


Figure 6. Participant ratings of the most useful program skill



PROGRAM OUTCOMES

We compared pre- and post-survey responses to determine improvements in team member well-being.

STRESS

There was a small but statistically significant decrease in both job-related stress (Figure 7) and life stress (Figure 8) from before to after the program. This suggests that the program's benefits may extend beyond the workplace into participants' broader lives. It's possible that some participants incorporated the resilience skills they learned into their home lives (e.g., reflecting on how grateful they are), in addition to the workplace.

Figure 7. Job stress

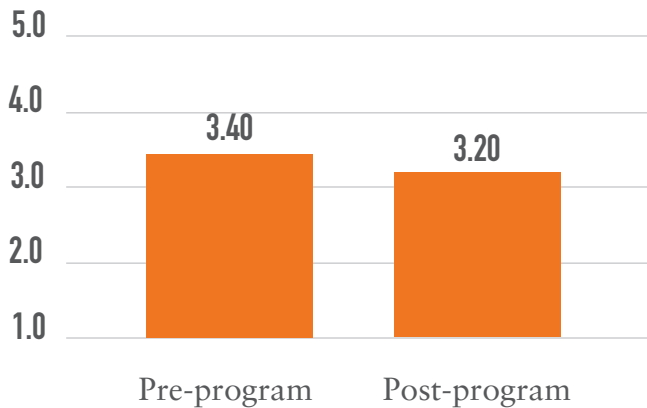
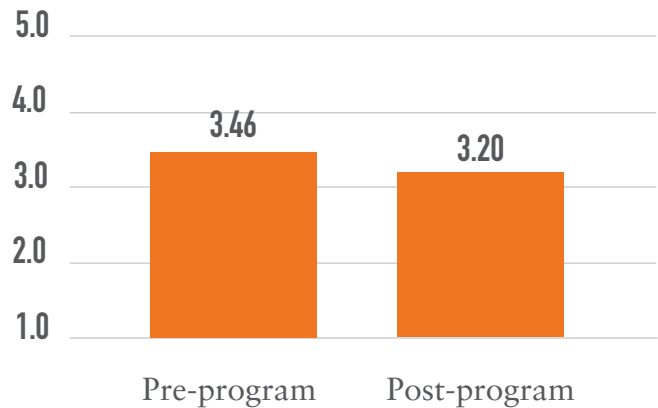


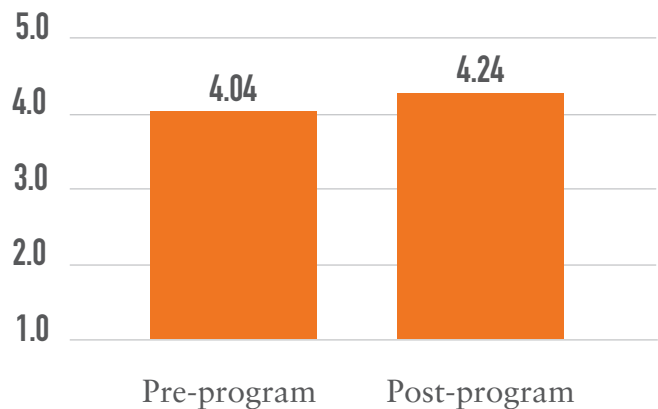
Figure 8. Life stress



LIFE SATISFACTION

There was a small increase in life satisfaction from before to after the program (see Figure 9). Several of the resilience skills focus on identifying and appreciating good things in one's life, such as sources of happiness and acts of kindness. It can be easy to overlook these positive moments when there are challenges at work that need to be addressed. This finding suggests that the program was effective at increasing participants' awareness of or attention to more positive experiences.

Figure 9. Life satisfaction



Several other measured constructs, like resilience, self-efficacy, work engagement, affiliation, work-related positive emotions, and overall positive affect, saw slight improvements but did not reach statistical significance (See Table 2). It is possible that with a larger sample size to increase statistical power, these effects would be statistically significant.

Table 2. Pre- and post-survey average scores for all measures

MEASURE (SCALE RANGE)	AVERAGE SCORE PRE-SURVEY	AVERAGE SCORE POST-SURVEY	DIRECTION OF CHANGE
Job Stress (1–5)	3.40	3.20	▼
Life Stress (1–5)	3.46	3.20	▼
Job Satisfaction (1–5)	5.95	5.91	—
Resilience (1–5)	3.81	3.92	—
Self-Efficacy (1–5)	4.20	4.30	—
Work Engagement (1–7)	5.57	5.68	—
Positive Emotion at Work (1–7)	5.73	5.81	—
Life Satisfaction (1–5)	4.04	4.24	▲
Positive Affect (1–5)	4.02	4.10	—
Job-Related Achievement (1–5)	4.67	4.51	—
Job-Related Affiliation (1–5)	4.20	4.25	—
Job-Related Autonomy (1–5)	4.94	4.95	—

Note: This table shows the average scores for each measure both before and after the program. Direction of change is reported for all statistically significant findings ($p < 0.05$, one-tailed t-test). These changes were all improvements from baseline.

TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our pilot evaluation of the Resilience Recharge program found that participants experienced less stress both at work and in their personal lives after the program, suggesting the program's benefits extend beyond just the workplace. As participants gained tools to manage stress and build positive emotions, they also reported greater life satisfaction. The program also showed potential for increasing resilience, self-efficacy, work engagement, and positive emotions, though more research in larger samples is needed to confirm this. These findings underscore how investing in workplace well-being can enhance quality of life more broadly.

Our second research question addressed the feasibility and efficacy of the micro-training format. Resilience Recharge demonstrated good attendance across all sessions, with study participants rating good-to-high satisfaction and enjoyment of the sessions. The session on gratitude was especially well received by participants. Some participants expressed a desire for longer sessions; however, it is likely that the sessions were easily implemented and well-attended specifically because they were shorter in length. While each session could be completed in 5 minutes, we suggest taking 10 minutes, if possible, to thoroughly cover all material and maximize participant engagement.

A limitation of our study is that it relies on team members opting to participate in our surveys, and those who did not choose to participate in the study may have experienced lower satisfaction and/or fewer well-being benefits. Moreover, for many of the teams, leaders volunteered their teams for the program, demonstrating their eagerness and willingness to incorporate resilience training into their meetings. Results could vary for teams whose leaders are less enthusiastic about the training.

It is particularly encouraging that these benefits emerged from such a brief intervention (just 5 to 10 minutes weekly). This efficiency suggests that even minimal, targeted resilience training can yield meaningful improvements, making such programs highly practical for time-constrained workplace environments. Although not tested in the pilot study, we would expect the impact of the Resilience Recharge program to be stronger if practiced over a longer period of time. Overall, Resilience Recharge offers an enjoyable and time-efficient way to improve team members' well-being.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TIMING MATTERS

While the program can be implemented any time, consider launching it when teams have slightly more capacity—perhaps during a less hectic period or when there’s a natural gap in other initiatives. Starting during a busy period may limit team members’ abilities to engage fully. However, once the skills are learned, they can be reinforced and brought back during stressful times when they are needed most.

PERSONALIZE TO YOUR TEAM

While the content is universally applicable, incorporate examples specific to your team and work environment whenever possible to make the content even more relatable. For instance, incorporate information about local recognition programs in the gratitude section and training/development opportunities in the personal strengths section.

REGULAR REFRESHERS

This four-week program sets a strong foundation but needs continued reinforcement to maintain benefits. We recommend monthly or quarterly refresher sessions—even just five minutes to revisit one of the skills. Rotate through the four activities (i.e., gratitude, savoring, strengths, kindness). Because they are interactive, they can be repeated many times without feeling redundant. Small groups could be formed with different sets of people to learn more about team members. This keeps momentum going and allows new team members to participate.



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APPENDIX A—FACILITATOR GUIDELINES

This appendix provides guidance on facilitating the Resilience Recharge program. You are welcome to modify the structure to fit the needs of your team. Handouts can be customized to include resources available at your organization.

STRUCTURE OF SESSIONS

Sessions should last approximately 5 to 10 minutes, and the sessions are intended to be held weekly. Each session has the following structure:

- Brief introduction
- Overview of skill (pause for questions)
- Activity Part 1 – Individual reflection (1–2 minutes)
- Activity Part 2 – Group sharing (~3 minutes in groups of 2 or 3)
- Takeaways

The session handout has suggestions for continued practice. This does not need to be read aloud. If time allows, you could ask the group which continued practice activity they are interested in trying to encourage repetition and habit-building throughout the week. Adjust these instructions to fit the needs of your group.

MATERIALS

- Week 1 (Gratitude) – handouts, journal/notebook (optional)
- Week 2 (Noticing and Savoring) – handouts, chocolate with savoring instructions (optional)
- Week 3 (Personal Strengths) – handouts, resilience sticker (optional)
- Week 4 (Acts of Kindness) – handouts, compliment cards (optional)

Note: The instructions include suggestions for an optional memento for each session. The mementos are intended to encourage continued practice. This program can be administered without them.

TALKING POINTS FOR INTRODUCING RESILIENCE RECHARGE

- We're excited to introduce the Resilience Recharge program. It was developed by Mather Institute in collaboration with Northwestern University.
- The purpose of the program is to increase overall resilience, which may help you reduce stress and make difficult tasks more manageable and enjoyable. While some of these skills may already be familiar to you, others might be new.

-
- The program consists of four brief sessions. At each session, you will get a handout containing session information and practical tips related to the day's topic. Additionally, you'll receive a small memento as a token of appreciation and a reminder to apply what you've learned.
 - Each session will last 5 to 10 minutes, making them short yet impactful. For those interested in doing more, there is a list of additional resources and tips to continue practicing these skills beyond our sessions. During each session, we'll learn about the skill of the day and how to apply it and then do a brief activity to put it into practice. If there is time left, we'll share or discuss as a group.
 - These skills will develop the more you practice them at work and at home. Consistent practice is key.
 - I am looking forward to completing this program together as a team. Thank you for your participation and commitment to personal growth and resilience!

OPTIONAL MEMENTOS

Week 1: Gratitude

- Journal and pen

Week 2: Noticing/Savoring Positive Events

- Chocolate bar and instructions (optional activity to do after the weekly session)

Week 3: Personal Strengths

- Resilience sticker

Week 4: Acts of Kindness

- Compliment cards

APPENDIX B—SESSION HANDOUTS

Staffed by a multidisciplinary team of researchers, Mather Institute is an award-winning resource for research and information about wellness, aging, trends in senior living, and successful industry innovations. The Institute conducts cutting-edge research, often in collaboration with leading universities, with the goal of informing, innovating, and inspiring. Mather Institute is part of Mather, an 80+-year-old not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating Ways to Age Well.SM

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