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MEET

Shane Hughes

Shane is a Lead Hand from Massiv Die-Form in Ontario, Canada. In this edition, Shane shares how the support of his family and therapist helped him persevere through his darkest moments.

Growing up, Shane feared appearing weak and learned to hide his emotions. He spent years on and off anxiety medication due to panic attacks that started in 2016. Shane tried his best to manage, but stressful events kept piling up. He faced family health scares, loss of a grandparent, new work responsibilities, and guilt over not being able to give his daughter a sibling. By March 2022, Shane barely slept and experienced daily panic attacks.

After another night of spiraling anxiety, Shane was struck with overwhelming chest tightness and went to the hospital. "I didn't know panic attacks could feel like that," he explained. Shane went back on anxiety medication and took a medical leave from work.

Shane tested positive for COVID-19 after leaving the hospital and quarantined at home. Isolated in his basement, Shane battled thoughts of suicide. His wife and daughter were the lifeline that kept him going. "They were the reason I fought through those late nights," he told us. His wife encouraged him to seek help. Once recovered from COVID-19, Shane connected with a therapist over the phone using Magna's Employee and Family Assistance Program. He then searched for a local therapist and began sessions in-person.

"I hit rock bottom and did not want to know if there was anything lower," he reasoned.

Sessions were difficult at first, but slowly Shane and his therapist built a trusting relationship where he opened up. Over time, he learned to recognize unhelpful patterns he had and found coping strategies that worked for him.

After 6 months, Shane gradually returned to work. He contemplated whether to share why he took time off. Despite fear of judgement, Shane considered how telling his story might help others going through similar challenges and decided to be honest.

He explained, "there should not be any stigma around men asking and getting help for mental health issues."

Shane is grateful that therapy has helped him feel more present and reduce his overthinking. With renewed confidence, he has built new friendships, started hobbies, and strengthened his relationships. For anyone experiencing mental health struggles, Shane encourages you to not be afraid to seek help. His guiding rule is that if you can only take one step forward, take that step. You are not alone.

RESILIENCE: Overcoming Life's Challenges

Life throws lots of curveballs, and resilience is your trusty sidekick. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from tough times. Like training a muscle, you need practice and patience to build resilience.

When faced with a challenge, you can build resilience with these steps:

- 1 Reflect on success: Write down how you overcame past obstacles.
- 2 Break it down: Make a list breaking down big challenges into smaller, actionable steps.
- 3 Celebrate the wins: Reward yourself for each milestone achieved.
- 4 Be flexible: Stay open to trying new ways to deal with challenges.



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The MECHANICS of the STRESS ENGINE



We all inevitably encounter stress on the highway of life. When it comes to stress, your body works similarly to a car! Let's take a look under the hood to discover how stress works and why you should care about managing your stress.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FEEL STRESSED?

Your sympathetic nervous system and parasympathetic nervous system work together to control your stress. The sympathetic nervous system works like the gas pedal of a car – it gives the body a burst of energy! When you sense danger, it helps your body prepare to act by triggering the “fight or flight” response. The parasympathetic nervous system works like the brake pedal and slows the body down. It controls the “rest and digest” response, which takes over to help the body recover when you feel safe.

When the “fight or flight” response is activated, your sympathetic nervous system signals the release of hormones into the body. These hormones cause your heart rate to increase, blood pressure to rise, and breathing to quicken. The abundance of oxygen you inhale reaches your brain and sharpens your senses. Blood rushes to your muscles to boost your speed and strength. You might need energy to fend off a threat, so your body releases stored energy from your muscles and liver. Once the threat has passed, the “rest and digest” system kicks back in to restore energy through tasks like digesting food.

WHAT CAUSES STRESS?

The cause of stress is different for each person and almost anything can be a stressor. If you perceive something as a danger to your safety or well-being, then it can cause stress. What triggers one person to react might seem like nothing to someone else. Reactivity of the nervous system varies from person-to-person, which means stress may occur more often in people with higher sensitivity.

IS STRESS BAD?

Believe it or not, some stress is actually helpful! Just like your car needs to be driven to keep it in good shape, you need some stress to function at your best. Good stress, such as starting a new job, working out, or trying to master a new skill, can provide you with the flood of energy and motivation you need to succeed.

WHAT IF YOUR STRESS IS CONSTANT?

While some stressors resolve quickly, others can be complicated and long-term like relationship strain, financial difficulties, or health concerns.

In a car, if you push on the gas pedal too hard or for too long, you risk overheating the engine or running out of fuel. Similarly, if you are constantly stressed, you probably feel the exhaustion from always being on high alert.

If your stress goes unmanaged, your sympathetic nervous system stays activated for long periods. This impacts your whole body. Unmanaged stress can raise blood pressure, which leads to blood vessel damage and increased heart disease risk. Consistent stress also physically changes your brain, making you more likely to experience mental health issues like depression. Since the stress response needs fuel, it directs energy away from the systems that support digestion, reproduction, and immunity, which could cause damage to these systems over time.

Your body needs time to recover from stress. It is essential that you put as much work into managing your stress as you put into caring for other health issues. Working toward a calm and steady mind is a vital part of maintaining a healthy body.

If you are looking to better manage your stress, continue reading this edition to learn about effective strategies and tools.

DID YOU know?

The Subtle Art of Saying No

“You cannot pour from an empty cup.”

This saying touches on the danger of overcommitting oneself. It means we must take care of ourselves before we can help others most effectively! Learning to say no can help. When we decline requests that do not match our priorities, we reserve our mental and physical energy for what matters most.

Saying no is not easy, so where can you start?

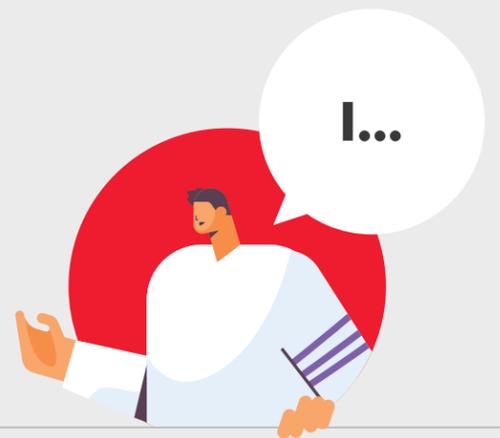
BE CLEAR

Vague responses can cause confusion long-term.



USE “I” STATEMENTS

Lead conversations from your perspective to avoid sounding defensive.



WAIT TO ANSWER

Say you need to check your schedule. Allow your nerves to settle before answering.



Short on Time?

QUICK STRATEGIES FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

From project deadlines to family obligations, it might feel like there is never enough time to catch your breath. The stress management techniques below can be done anywhere, anytime, and in under 10 minutes. With these techniques in your toolbelt, there is no need to put off stress relief for later.

1 HUMMING

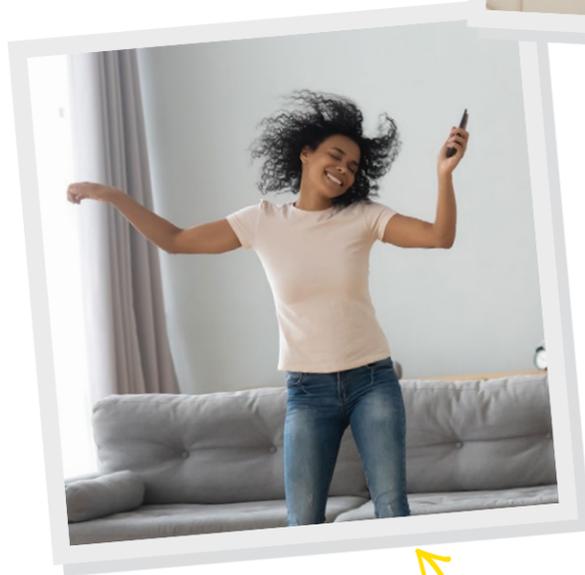
Did you know that your vagus nerve, the main part of your parasympathetic system, is activated by humming? If you are feeling stressed, try humming while you work, cook dinner, or drive home to calm your body.



2 GROUNDING

Anxiety happens when you worry about the future, but your spiraling thoughts cause your body to feel threatened now. Grounding exercises help you stay rooted in the present moment where there is typically less of an immediate threat.

One option to ground yourself is to focus on your breath using box breathing. Breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 4, breathe out for 4, hold for 4, and repeat for a few minutes. Alternatively, shift focus to where you are right now by trying the 5-4-3-2-1 technique: Notice five things that you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.



3 "SHAKE" IT OFF

It is common to shake your hand in pain after jamming a finger. That is because shaking is a quick way to calm down your nervous system. Next time your nerves get to you, try shaking your right hand, then your left, then add in your legs. Hopefully, you can release some of that tension.

4 SPEND TIME IN NATURE

For many of us, most waking hours are spent indoors. Research tells us that spending time outside can help reduce stress and improve attention. When you get a moment to recharge today, try spending it outdoors!

These techniques can help guide you out of a heightened emotional state where it is hard to make rational decisions. Even a small improvement in your stress can help you think more clearly. With practice, you can get better at accessing your calm mind quickly.

To address long-term stress or bigger life problems, these tips are a start, but do not be afraid to seek support. Whether this involves talking to a friend, joining a support group, or seeking professional help, reaching out is often a vital ingredient to managing stress. Read this edition's Mental Health Corner to learn more about therapy.

MENTAL HEALTH CORNER

Therapy: Exercise for the Mind

Your mental well-being impacts how you manage stress, relate to people, and make decisions. Just like you take care of your body by exercising, you can maintain and improve your mental well-being with therapy.

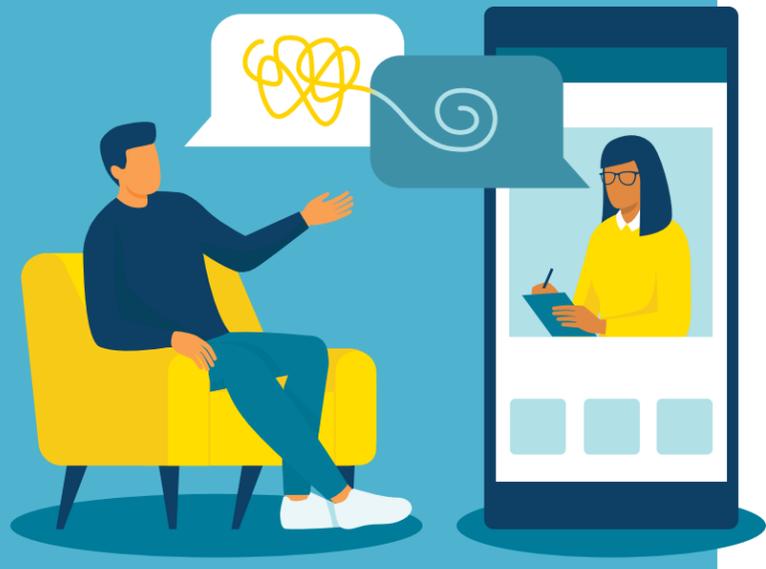
A personal trainer teaches you skills to improve your fitness, and a mental health therapist equips you with tools to cope with stressors and tackle challenges with confidence. Anyone can use therapy to build resilience and mental strength.

You may have worried that seeking therapy is a sign of weakness. While some may hold the outdated belief that you should be able to

“snap out of it” when you are struggling, more people are seeing the value of mental health support. Despite what lingering stigmas may have you believe, going to therapy is actually a strength and a sign of resourcefulness.

As a Magna employee, your family household has access to the Employee and Family Assistance Program (information on page 4). This program gives you access to free, confidential support from a counsellor at any time! You can also talk to your doctor to assess your needs and discuss other therapy options.

Remember, mental health is health, and you have the power to care for it.



To sip or to stress: Unravelling myths about alcohol and relaxation

Employee and Family Assistance Program

Delivered by Workplace Options. Services are confidential.

global.helpwhereyouare.com

Company Code:
Magna

Visit the website to book an appointment or online message.



Magna Direct Dial Line – Canada/US:
1-984-810-5304

Magna Toll Free Line – Canada/US:
1-833-354-2425

WhatsApp:
1-984-920-6875

?

Does this sound like you?

You had a long day. To wind down, you pour a glass of wine, crack a beer, or enjoy a stiff martini. You feel like the only thing that will help you relax is a good drink.

While having the occasional drink does not significantly harm well-being, did you know that relying on alcohol to destress actually has the opposite effect? Here's how:

Good sleep is crucial for managing stress by helping your body to recover from the day. Unfortunately, alcohol hurts sleep quality. Even moderate amounts disrupt your ability to enter deep sleep, leaving you more likely to wake up feeling stressed. While alcohol might seem to dull emotions, it primarily numbs inhibitions and reduces the body's release of feel-good hormones. Consequently, regular alcohol consumption can intensify negative feelings over time.

To protect your mental health, here are some ways to be mindful of your drinking habits:

1

Pay attention to how often you reach for a drink due to stress.

2

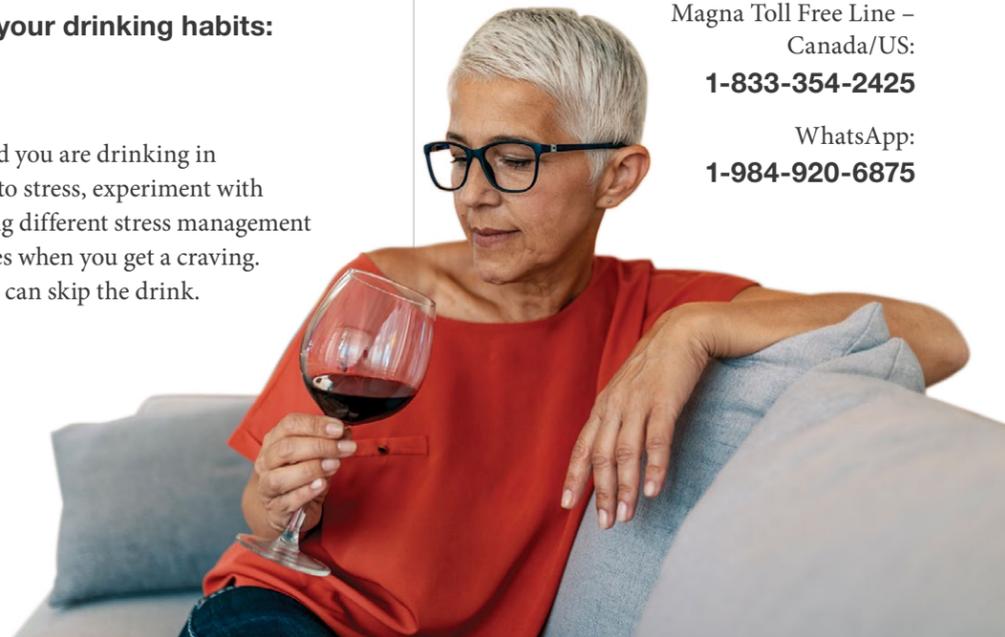
People often underestimate how much they drink. Measure your drinks to know how much alcohol you are having rather than "eyeballing" it, and compare your drink's volume to standard drink sizes.

3

If you find you are drinking in response to stress, experiment with first trying different stress management techniques when you get a craving. See if you can skip the drink.

If you struggle to cut back

Alcohol use disorders can range from mild to severe. Signs include, but are not limited to, being unable to limit the amount of alcohol you drink, making unsuccessful attempts to drink less often, and continuing to drink even though it is negatively impacting relationships or work. If you or a loved one is experiencing any of these signs, please reach out for support through Magna's Employee and Family Assistance Program or local resources.



Slow Cooker BURRITO BOWLS

SERVES 6 **PREP TIME** 15 min.

COOK TIME 4-6 hours (varies by cook temperature)

With minimal preparation, slow cooker recipes are great for busy, stressful days. Chop up ingredients, toss them into a slow cooker, and let them cook while you go about your day. Use the long cooking times and hands-off prep to tackle other tasks or just relax while your meal simmers to perfection!

Flexible Tip: Use this recipe as a base, then change up ingredients to suit your preferences! For example, swap out the beans for another protein source, use the vegetables you have in your fridge instead of buying fresh, or toss in spices already in your cupboard.

INGREDIENTS

2	boneless skinless chicken breasts	1 can (19 oz)	black beans, drained and rinsed
1½ cups	canned, no salt added, diced tomatoes	1 cup	uncooked brown rice
1¼ cups	low sodium chicken broth	1 cup	frozen corn
2 tsp	chili powder		
1 tsp	ground cumin		
1 tsp	garlic powder		

Adapted from Canada's Food Guide

Optional toppings:
Unsweetened Greek yogurt, low sodium salsa, diced avocado

INSTRUCTIONS

- Lightly coat the inside of your large slow cooker with olive oil.
- In the slow cooker, combine the whole chicken breasts, diced tomatoes (with liquid), chicken broth, chili powder, cumin, and garlic powder. Make sure the broth covers both chicken breasts, adding more chicken broth or water if needed. Cover and cook for 3-4 hours on the low setting.
- Uncover and stir in the beans, uncooked brown rice, and frozen corn. Cover and cook for another 2-3 hours on the low setting.
- In the last hour of cooking, check the brown rice occasionally, stirring once or twice to make sure it cooks evenly. If the mixture seems dry, add in more chicken broth or water. Cooking is done when the brown rice is tender.
- Once cooked, remove chicken breasts and place in a large bowl or cutting board. Use two forks to shred the chicken into bite-sized pieces. Transfer the chicken back into the slow cooker and mix to combine.
- Serve in bowls alongside optional toppings of your choice!

NUTRITIONAL FACTS

Serving size:
1½ cups

343 calories
25 g protein
3.8 g fat
0.8 g saturated fat
53 g carbohydrates
11 g fibre
2.5 g sugars
252 mg sodium

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