

Appraisal Matters

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Annual Conference

This Appraisal Matters Newsletter will cover discussion from the Annual Conference and from the October Support Group. It was lovely to see so many of you at both occasions and we look forward to seeing you in other events across the year.

This is a save the date notice already for next year's Annual Conference on the **17th to 18th September**. We hope to see more of you there, at the dinner on the 17th and/or as a day delegate.

Hard to reach appraisees ...

Sometimes it is hard to pin doctors down to set an appraisal date when they are apprehensive about their first appraisal. (Although appraisees who are difficult to pin down aren't always having their first appraisal.)

Difficulties in setting up the appraisal were recognised in Sarah Marwick's research in 2015-16 to be a very strong indicator for stress in personal or professional life or both.

We advocate strongly that the right response is to offer support and to ask explicitly in the appraisal why it has been so difficult in a non-judgemental way.

...and if you need some help

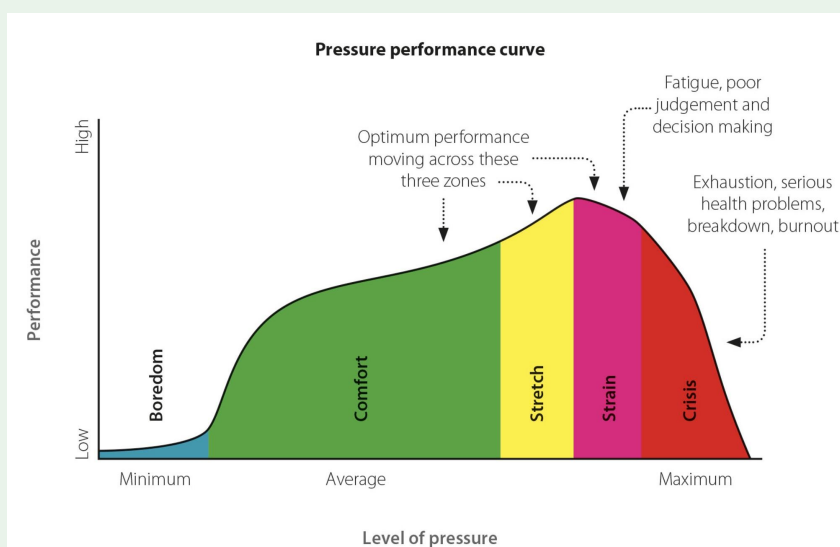
Getting the administrative team involved can help. Try three times (e.g. two emails and a phone call) and then let the team know that there are problems. It could be as simple as out-of-date contact details.

Similarly if you have engaged with the appraisee but their emails have dropped off, don't waste your time! After three attempts please hand it back to us and we can reach out to them. If this continues we can get in touch with their RO to chase as well.

The 'How are you?' rating scale in appraisal

The 'How are you?' scale in Appraisal 2020 and 2022 comes from the idea of a net promoter score, originally used by Disney and other large corporations. Anything 8/10 or below means a level of dissatisfaction that needs exploring. In Disney/business terms, the respondent would not come back or recommend the experience to family and friends. It is not meant as a proxy measure for wellbeing.

However, early findings suggest that many doctors still rate themselves at an 8/10 even when they are close to the edge of burnout. We know that high flyers (like doctors) can continue to work at high levels of performance through stretch and well into the strain zone, before they hit the tipping point of the pressure performance curve. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, they can fall over the cliff edge into fatigue/panic attacks and burnout. In extreme cases this can also lead to suicide.



Appraisers need to explore the free text comments, as it is possible for a doctor to rate 'how are you?' at 8/10 but make only negative comments about their health and wellbeing. Watch out for those doctors and ask about their support structures.

At the conference and in the support group we discussed the 'How are you?' scores validity, and whether there is an anxiety about saying the truth in an appraisal compared with writing things down beforehand, or vice versa. There is certainly a testing out of 'you as the appraiser' in the rapport formation stage. As the score is a snapshot in the moment and will change from day to day and moment to moment, what is important is not the score but what questions you can ask as a result. It is often worth asking for an updated score at the time of the appraisal as this also helps put the pre-appraisal score in context. For example, a doctor may score 4/10 before they go on holiday but 9/10 when they come back.

Coaching by Numbers – the theory behind 'How are you?'

For every 'How are you?' score above zero, you can ask: 'What makes it 'n' rather than 'n-1'?' e.g. what makes you rate it as 6 rather than 5?

This engages positive psychology and gets the doctor thinking about what is good rather than what is not in their current situation.

Then you can ask: 'What would it take to get you from 'n' to 'n+1'?' e.g. from 6 to 7? or 'What is the smallest change you could make that would get you to 'n+1'?' e.g. to 7?

This introduces ideas of small incremental changes which makes the idea of making a change more manageable for the doctor.

Even with a score of 10, you can ask similar questions e.g. What made you choose a 10 rather than a 9? What will it take to make sure you maintain this at a 10?

Appraisal Resources

Seeing doctors who put themselves last makes us reflect on ourselves. Where do we put maintaining our health and wellbeing in our list of priorities? Reminding appraisees that self care isn't selfish, indeed it's a professional responsibility (in *Good Medical Practice*), can help them to reframe their priorities and not always put themselves last. It can do the same for us!

Below are a few resources and ideas that we came up with at the Annual Conference

Regular Exercise	Being in Nature
<u>Running</u> Gym <u>Cycling</u> Yoga Dancing Time and space to exercise in away you enjoy	Sea swimming <u>Coastal rowing</u> <u>Gardening</u> / growing things <u>Going for a walk</u> Stop to watch/ see/ smell/ touch nature <u>Adore your outdoors – forest bathing</u>
Friends and Family	Mindfulness
Spending time with family and friends. Seeing my grandchildren Cooking Social activities Time talking to friends and colleagues Stroking the cat/ dog Talking to a friend <u>Volunteering</u>	Meditation Reading Jigsaws Getting good sleep Sitting in the hot tub A spa day Going on retreat Being self-full, making space for yourself so that you're in a positive state
Be Creative	Good Food
Listening to music <u>Singing</u> <u>Singing for health network</u> Playing piano/guitar Colouring or art <u>Zentangle</u>	<u>The chocolate meditation</u> Treat yourself – go out to dinner Gin Cups of tea Prepping lunch or breakfast for the next day so that future me has an easy day <u>Eating mindfully</u>
Daily Habits	Plan Breaks
Planning and prioritising Don't eat lunch at the desk Ticking things off a to-do list! <u>Gratitude List, Worry List, Done List</u> <u>Practice gratitude journaling</u> Getting away from the phone and being inaccessible to others 45 minute slots for work	Time away from my desk during the day Plan breaks while working to do something physical or creative Day off a week / regular holidays <u>Digital Detox</u> / <u>Digital Detox on Holiday</u> Putting non work activities in the diary as non-negotiable Lots of time to do very little

Apps and Resources

[The Shine App](#)

[Headspace](#)

[LMC support booklet](#)

[RCGP nature immersion course](#)

[First 5s groups](#)

Listening to my morning wake up on Alexa, my morning routine plays a daily podcast called Everyday Positivity by Kate Cocker

[Wessex Appraisal Resource Page](#)

[Wessex Appraisal Support for you Page](#)

Asking to have a fourth appraisal with the same Appraiser:

The experience of doing fourth appraisals with the same person in Covid was perceived as comforting and a good idea by doctors who had one. Research shows that being empowered to ask for a fourth appraisal (especially at times of transition or just before retirement) is highly valued. It increases doctor's sense of satisfaction and ownership of their appraisals.

Any request for a fourth appraisal has to come direct from the appraisee to the administrative team, as the appraiser could be perceived as having a conflict of interest. We will check that you are happy to be reallocated to the same doctor and, as always, you have the right to veto anyone who wants a fourth appraisal with you if you would prefer they moved on to someone else.

Doctors who admit in the WLB questionnaire that they are drinking above the recommended limits.

This is always worth exploring - the amounts may or may not amount to hazardous drinking - and the appropriate support will depend on the context. Remember that it takes courage to be honest and therefore it is a conscious choice and should be taken as a 'cry for help' from someone who has some insight and could be worrying about what they are doing.

Short term increases in alcohol use were common in Covid when people did not have to drive, but most doctors rapidly rebalanced because they reached a point of discomfort with their alcohol intake. Be curious and non-judgemental, listen carefully to what the doctor tells you and support them if they need to seek help from PHP or elsewhere.



Appraisal Date Reminders

We have had a few people let us know that they have not received confirmation of appraisal dates or still get a series of appraisal date reminders even after letting us know. One of the causes of this is that if you respond to the automated FourteenFish emails we unfortunately do not receive notification. Please instead get in touch with Emma at emma.pierce@wessexappraisal.org or Tom at thomas.pierce@wessexappraisal.org.

Wessex is growing! Meet the team ...



Emma
HR

Harry
Marketing

Susi
CEO

Tom
Accounts

Kat
Training

Introducing the Wessex Team

Wessex has been growing in the background and a few new faces will be popping up: Kat has joined us the Training Programmes director and will be running the New Appraiser Training and Appraiser Skills Assessments, as well as bespoke training programmes..

Harry will be our marketing go-to and in charge of producing newsletters and keeping the Wessex website and social media up to date.

Welcome back as well to Emma, who will be back at the other end of your emails.

Feel free to contact anyone individually (emails are below) or email info@wessexappraisal.org and it will be picked up and sent on to the right person.

The next Appraisal Support Group Meeting will be held online [here](#) on Tuesday 8th November.

Thank you for helping us continue to make appraisals matter,

🍀 Wessex Appraisal Service Ltd Team 🍀

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