



HOSPITALIST WELL-BEING ADVOCATES TOOLKIT

A practical guide to making real change, by hospitalists, for hospitalists.

Curiosity. Empathy. Courage.

These attributes define Hospitalist Well-being Advocates.

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SOCIETY OF HOSPITAL MEDICINE'S WELL-BEING TASK FORCE

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Introduction

Across the nation, hospitalists are integral leaders in the care of hospitalized patients and have been indispensable to meeting the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath. The new stressors from COVID-19 and other dynamics in the healthcare system add to the existing structural [Drivers of Burnout](#) in Hospital Medicine previously identified by the SHM Practice Management Committee. These forces have created a much more challenging environment for hospitalists and the hospital medicine workforce, leading to burnout, fatigue, and, for some, a decision to leave the profession altogether.

The Society of Hospital Medicine affirms that individual hospitalists have the power to influence teams and organizations to support and promote well-being, regardless of their formal role. Any hospitalist can be a Hospitalist Well-being Advocate, and this toolkit is designed to be inclusive and accessible to all. Experience level or whether you are in a position of leadership **does not matter**. We need all hands on deck to make a meaningful difference in a colleague's life.

A **Hospitalist Well-being Advocate** is ANY hospitalist who is **curious** to understand the essence of building a pro-wellness organization, **empathetic** towards others, and **courageous** to take initiative and inspire change.

This toolkit is a practical guide where you select into one of three 'personas' based on your position or role. The three 'personas' are:

- [The Hospitalist](#): "I care, but I do not have a formal leadership role."
- [The Hospitalist Leader](#): "I want to use my position of leadership to make a difference."
- [The Well-being Leader](#): "I am a well-being expert and I need more than just the basics."

Suggestions on How to Use the Toolkit:

1. Start with an individual check-in on your own well-being and resilience, using the R.I.S.E. mnemonic.
2. Identify which advocate persona best applies to you and your role.
3. Review the suggested activities and consider which ones you could adopt and implement in your group or institution.
4. Start small—even just one change can have a ripple effect.
5. Revisit the recommendations, share with colleagues, and build on each success.

The goal of this document is to equip hospitalists with tools and recommendations they can use to advance well-being at their institution. Each persona features a list of action items real hospitalists have used in their groups. This is not a scientific study and is not meant to be an exhaustive list. It is a practical guide and starting point to make change, assembled by hospitalists, for hospitalists.

Before you begin, know your capacity, set personal boundaries, and stick to them. We first want to provide some practical tips to help you prioritize your own well-being that were adapted from Dr. Swati Mehta.

R.I.S.E. for Self-Care

By Swati Mehta, MD, FACP, CPXP, SFHM

As a hospitalist, I saw my team members struggle and I wanted to help. While we cannot change the system alone, there is much we can do to lift ourselves and rise from burnout, like the phoenix does from ashes.

It is imperative that we introspect, take stock of our own battery, and charge it to serve our peers in improving their wellness. As a member of SHM's Well-being Task Force, I am excited to share the R.I.S.E. checklist as an important preface to our Hospitalist Well-being Advocates Toolkit.

Before advancing to the personas, take a few minutes to review this checklist and gauge where you are in your own well-being journey. We encourage you to share this checklist with your peers and work through it together with a trusted colleague. We are healers, and this toolkit will help us fulfill our purpose.

R.I.S.E. for Self-Care



Recharge	Introspect	Seek help	Express yourself
<p>"What gives me joy outside of work?"</p> <p>Reenergize mind, body, and spirit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time in nature • Eat healthy, fresh foods • Sleep 7-8 hours each night • Journal • Read • Exercise regularly • Listen to music/learn to play an instrument • Take a sabbatical <p>Carve out time for calm. Before and after your clinical shift:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Step outside 2. Close your eyes and take 5 deep breaths 3. Focus on the smell of the air, the sun on your face, and aim to be present 	<p>"What can I/we do to improve the situation?"</p> <p>Personal introspection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask: "Why did I go into medicine?" • Ask: "What is one thing I can change to make my workplace better for my team?" • Seek out a mentor <p>Collective introspection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure team engagement via regular check-ins/surveys • Conduct quarterly small group sessions: "What should we do to improve our culture?" • Schedule team building activities outside work • Debrief with team after a poor patient outcome • Participate in yearly retreats to reset and align priorities with hospital administration 	<p>"What resources do I need to improve the situation?"</p> <p>Pay careful attention to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Your health/wellbeing. Consider the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health specialist • Primary care for preventive health • Buddy system/peer support group • Employee assistance programs 2. Workplace environment. Advocate for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible work schedule/shift timing • Outsourcing documentation (scribes/virtual scribes) and billing • Staffing for census surges • Virtual care (telehealth) • Child care for work meetings • Responsive IT department • Input in hospital projects impacting your team 	<p>"Who can I thank? What am I grateful for?"</p> <p>Express empathy: An authentic human connection with patients is critical for our wellness.</p> <p>Express gratitude: Giving thanks creates a positive ripple effect. Remember to thank your partner, kids, parents, team members, and colleagues for every small gesture of kindness.</p>

Adapted from R.I.S.E. created by Swati Mehta, MD, FACP, SFHM, CPXP and member of SHM's Well-being Taskforce



The Three Personas

**A practical guide to making real change,
by hospitalists, for hospitalists.**

Curiosity. Empathy. Courage.

These attributes define Hospitalist Well-being Advocates.



Persona 1 - The Hospitalist

I care, but I do not have a formal leadership role.

The What

Practice self-care and invite others to join

The How

- Write down one thing you are grateful for each night before bed. Share this with a colleague or friend the next day.
- Set aside time each shift for a break. Encourage others to do the same.
- As appropriate, join a one-on-one call or virtual meeting (in which you are not an active participant) outside on your phone while taking a walk instead of sitting inside. Encourage others to do the same.
- Reach out to your peers and identify a colleague to take to lunch or grab coffee. Block off this time on your calendar.
- Adopt an open mindset about self-care; share with others what has been helpful for you.
- Find an outlet to release stress. Exercise. Invite colleagues who also need to unwind.

Help build a supportive and inclusive community

- Check in with a colleague during the day and see how they are doing.
 - Use [SHM's Check-in Guide](#) to prompt honest sharing.
- If someone shares honestly and vulnerably, validate their feelings and response. Follow up when they answer.



Persona 1 - The Hospitalist

I care, but I do not have a formal leadership role.

The What

Help build a supportive and inclusive community
cont.

Appreciate others

Know your resources

The How

- Take time to share your own wellness journey with a teammate and give space for them to do the same. Here are guiding questions that prompt open-ended responses:
 - What is the best part of your day?
 - What gives you joy?
 - What is one pebble in your shoe?
- Know how you appear and present to others. If necessary, seek out professional development skills to increase your own personal sensitivity, inclusivity, and communication.
- Add your preferred pronouns to your email signature and virtual meeting title.
- Create space for you and your colleagues to connect over shared extracurricular interests outside of work. Set up an informal team of people who do things together (e.g., photography, wine, video games, etc.) and assign one person to coordinate activities for a set period and then switch.

- Send a genuine 'thank you' or 'thinking of you' text message to encourage someone on your team.
- Get in the habit of taking time to verbally thank a colleague who has helped you.
- Tell a teammate how much you enjoy working with them or being friends with them. Acknowledge the positive qualities you have seen in them both inside and outside of work.

- Be knowledgeable or up to date about current policies around mental health treatment and disclosures.
 - Ask your medical staff leadership to see the questions pertaining to mental health treatment on your local credentialing and state licensure forms.
- Be aware of local support resources such as employee assistance and peer support programs.
- Save/memorize the following hotlines in your contacts for emergencies right now:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Dial 988)
 - Crisis Text Line (Text HOME to 741741)



Persona 1 - The Hospitalist

I care, but I do not have a formal leadership role.

The What

Give honest feedback

Share ideas with leadership

The How

- Be the voice you want to hear and the change you want to see. Ask questions to ensure the hospitalist experience is considered in structural and operational decisions. Some helpful questions are:
 - Can you explain the 'why' behind this project or change in operations?
 - How do changes benefit the individual employees and not just the bottom line of the organization?
 - This is not going well. What is Plan B and how can we work together to make this happen?
- Actively participate in opportunities to engage with leadership. Show up and provide honest feedback about how their actions and decisions directly impact you and your colleagues' well-being.

- Find like-minded individuals and work together to determine the well-being needs of your team. Take stock of your group's current resources and whether they are sufficient.
 - Use SHM's [Seven Drivers of Burnout](#) to understand and assess factors of burnout potentially at play within your group.
- Determine how to best communicate any resource gaps with leadership.
 - Look up an "impact-feasibility matrix" and use it to narrow down key topics and move ideas to action.
 - Prioritize one or two ideas rather than overwhelming decision makers with numerous options.
 - Come with a potential solution (not just the problem) as a first step to help start the conversation.



Persona 2 – The Hospitalist Leader

I want to use my position of leadership to make a difference.

The What

Model self-care

The How

- Do not send emails outside of work hours and/or add a disclaimer to your signature line.
 - For example: "If you receive an email from me outside of your normal work hours, please know that I respect your time away and do not expect you to respond. Enjoy your time away from work!"
- Take vacation, share about it, and encourage your staff to take vacation too.
- If appropriate, join a one-on-one call or virtual meeting (in which you are not an active participant) outside on your phone while taking a walk instead of sitting inside. Encourage others to do the same.
- Limit after-hours meetings.
- Share something about your self-care in your out-of-office message.
 - For example: "I'm out of the office celebrating my daughter's 13th birthday on June 16, 2022. Please reach out after that date if I have not responded to you."
- Consider ways to give people the flexibility to take care of their well-being.
 - Allow people to work from home if not doing clinical work.
 - Have Zoom options for after-hour meetings.



Persona 2 - The Hospitalist Leader

I want to use my position of leadership to make a difference.

The What

Model inclusive leadership and equity

Normalize being human

The How

- Invest in your own learning on how to be an inclusive leader. Consider embedding annual leadership education/conferences in your hospitalist leader contract agreement.
- Be humble and willing to learn. Welcome feedback and listen reflectively, not defensively. Consider 360 evaluations and coaching to develop your own skills and those of other leaders in your group.
- Add your preferred pronouns to your email signature and virtual meeting title.
- Support diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in processes such as meeting facilitation, formation of committees, hiring processes, salary equity, and leadership role selection. Ask for feedback from the group on how they perceive these to be working.
- Include questions on a group survey to determine how DEI-related topics influence burnout on your team.
 - As appropriate, include demographic questions on the survey.
 - Example feedback prompt: *"I am empowered to bring my full authentic self to work."*
- Work with DEI leaders to address structural causes of inequity and share resources and lessons.
- Ensure your group is aware of patient-to-healthcare team member bias policies and ways to report microaggressions against healthcare workers.
- Consider your own development and group development on issues such as allyship, sponsorship, and other DEI topics.

- As comfortable, share your own stressors and what has helped you.
- Be intentional to share positive things as well (e.g., family, friends, life outside of work).
- Encourage others to share their stories if they feel comfortable doing so (e.g., sharing during meetings, one to one, or via stories/articles, etc.).
- Spend the first five minutes of each meeting with an activity such as sharing highs, lows, and bright spots (who and/or what has helped) over the past week/month.



Persona 2 – The Hospitalist Leader

I want to use my position of leadership to make a difference.

The What

Amplify recognition

Identify and share wellness resources with your team

Communicate clearly, frequently, and transparently

The How

- Celebrate what the group has accomplished—awards, achievements, etc.
- Open every staff meeting with a shout-out and recognition, including peer shout-outs.
- Thank team members verbally one on one or during meetings.
- Send thank you notes (electronic or handwritten).
- Create a mechanism for positive feedback from patients.
- Recognize innovation and change that benefits the group/organization.
- Nominate a nurse/physician pair award to build team bonding.
- Consider ways for physician hospitalists to interact with nurse leadership more formally on the hospital wards (e.g., Inpatient Council, physician/nurse leader dyad partnerships).

- Familiarize yourself with organizational and community wellness resources (e.g., peer support programs, employee assistance programs, coaching programs, etc.).
- Ensure your team has awareness and easy access to those resources (e.g., reminders at team meetings, website links, signs in discrete locations, etc.).
- Save/memorize the following hotlines in your contacts for emergencies right now:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Dial 988)
 - Crisis Text Line (Text HOME to 741741)

- If there are changes coming, be explicit and transparent to avoid rumors and drops in group morale.
- Get input from the team, when possible, about potential changes.
- Have a method where people can submit ideas and a mechanism to respond so that ideas do not just disappear. This demonstrates engagement and follow through.



Persona 2 – The Hospitalist Leader

I want to use my position of leadership to make a difference.

The What

Establish metrics to monitor well-being

Define well-being goals/objectives for your team

Advocate for system-level change

The How

- Understand what your organization currently measures (e.g., employee engagement, burnout, turnover). Is this data available for your team? Could it be?
- If there is no data—especially at the specialty/group level—consider surveying your team to establish a baseline and to track improvement over time.
 - Utilize the [National Academy of Medicine's Valid and Reliable Survey Instruments to Measure Burnout, Well-Being, and Other Work-Related Dimensions](#) to source appropriate well-being surveys for your group.
- Organize periodic listening sessions to obtain more details around key issues and opportunities for improvement.
- Allow for anonymous comments and idea sharing.
- Make sure to measure what is going well and what to do more of, not just negatives/burnout.

- Prioritize problem areas by feasibility and impact (e.g., use a PICK chart).
- Create group action plans for well-being (using survey/listening session data if available).
- Consider using project management and tracking tools to document and follow up on action plans and show your team progress or why something is not moving forward.

- Emphasize the return on investment for reducing friction or challenges in the system with leadership colleagues (e.g., better patient care, lower staff turnover, etc.) when advocating for additional well-being resources.
- Find ways to reduce or otherwise ease hospitalist administrative burden such as by hiring or repurposing support staff.
- Create a backup structure to allow for sick days so that people feel they can take off when they are sick.
- Implement a backup system to help manage high-patient census days.



Persona 2 - The Hospitalist Leader

I want to use my position of leadership to make a difference.

The What

Advocate for system-level change
cont.

Engage your team
in well-being efforts

Invest in your team
on an individual level

The How

- When structuring a new service, build in a more humanistic approach with reasonable work hours and shorter blocks.
- [Get rid of stupid stuff.](#)

- Start a well-being committee for your group.
- Develop a new formal or informal well-being leadership role for a member of your team (e.g., well-being director, well-being champion).
- Connect the committee and/or leader with organizational well-being leaders. Create additional buy-in from senior leaders.
- Connect other leaders with resources. For example: [Stanford Medicine's Chief Wellness Officer \(CWO\) Course | WellMD & WellPhD | Stanford Medicine](#)
- Look for opportunities for hospitalists to participate in organization-wide well-being initiatives (e.g., Schwartz Rounds, Hospital-wide Well-being Committees).

- Prioritize regular one-on-one check-ins with every direct report and follow up on their feedback from prior meetings.
- Focus on what is going well and brings people joy.
- Consider performing *stay interviews* (talking to people about why they stay in the group), in addition to exit interviews, to understand what individuals need to develop and thrive.
- During exit interviews, learn from those who are leaving the group and use helpful information for improvement.
- Foster connections between individuals to strengthen the team (e.g., pair shares in meetings or small group problem-solving work groups that create and deepen team connections).
- Find ways to ally, sponsor, mentor, and promote individuals in your organization.



Persona 3 - The Well-being Leader

I am a well-being expert and I need more than just the basics.

The What

Model self-care

The How

- Do not send emails outside of work hours and/or add a disclaimer to your signature line.
 - For example: *"If you receive an email from me outside of your normal work hours, please know that I respect your time away and do not expect you to respond. Enjoy your time away from work!"*
- Take vacation and share about it.
- As appropriate, join a one-on-one call or virtual meeting (in which you are not an active participant) outside on your phone while taking a walk instead of sitting inside. Encourage others to do the same.
- Limit after-hours meetings.
- Share something about your self-care in your out-of-office message.
 - For example: *"I'm out of the office celebrating my daughter's 13th birthday on June 16, 2022. Please reach out after that date if I have not responded to you."*



Persona 3 - The Well-being Leader

I am a well-being expert and I need more than just the basics.

The What

Normalize being human

Amplify Recognition

Promote well-being norms

The How

- As comfortable, share your own stressors and what has helped you.
- Encourage others to share their stories if they feel comfortable doing so (e.g., sharing during meetings, one to one, or via stories/articles, etc.).
- Spend the first five minutes of each meeting with an activity such as sharing highs, lows, and bright spots (who and/or what has helped) over the past week/month.

- Do not forget the basics!
 - Thank team members verbally one on one or during meetings.
 - Send thank you notes (electronic or handwritten).
 - Tell others that one thing you are working on in your role is finding ways to show gratitude more often and recognizing all the good work our colleagues do.
- Consider asking your faculty if they feel like they are valued or recognized. Act on the feedback to ensure your team feels the systems in place are adequate and visible.
- Design or refine recognition systems to make it easier for hospitalists to recognize one another, especially those outside of your role.
- Coach other leaders on the importance of recognizing team members and encourage them to make it a leadership practice and not a yearly formality.
- When recognizing someone, make sure to include or notify that person's immediate supervisor.

- Limit scheduled meetings to 25 or 50 minutes.
- Make sharing your video on Zoom optional.
- Encourage walking/stretching during meetings that are for listening only.
- Design systems that make it easier for hospitalists to recognize their peers and team members (i.e., nurse, social worker, etc.) in a meaningful way. Below are some key principles and helpful tips:



Persona 3 - The Well-being Leader

I am a well-being expert and I need more than just the basics.

The What

Promote well-being norms
cont.

Design system resilience

Know your resources

Develop a strategic plan

Establish metrics to
monitor well-being

The How

- Remove barriers such as requiring a log-in process.
- Include the person's supervisor.
- Consider using this effective recognition formula: Name the person, thank them for a specific act, and briefly outline how that act created a positive impact.

- Collaborate with healthcare system leadership to ensure adequate staffing and budgeting.
- Build redundancy in the system to cover when team members need to take personal time, PTO, family leave, or manage a medical emergency.
- Anticipate and plan for unforeseen circumstances and make these contingencies known to your team.

- Inquire about and secure funding for staff to attend leadership courses, conferences, and workshops.
- Determine the feasibility of hiring a leadership coach.
- Save/memorize the following hotlines in your contacts for emergencies right now:
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (Dial 988)
 - Crisis Text Line (Text HOME to 741741)

- Reach out to and develop relationships with leaders in similar roles at other organizations for examples, ideas, and collaborative opportunities.
- Ask leaders in your own organization what templates or resources are available for assistance with strategic planning.
- If you don't have an administrative dyad partner, consider exploring dyad models at other organizations and adapting something similar.

- Understand what your organization currently measures (e.g., employee engagement, turnover/retention). Could it apply? How often is it measured?



Persona 3 - The Well-being Leader

I am a well-being expert and I need more than just the basics.

The What

Establish metrics to monitor well-being
cont.

The How

- If turnover data is available, what is tracked? Are there opportunities to improve the process to gain valuable information about why people are leaving? (E.g., exit interviews, stay interviews.)
- If there is no data—especially at the specialty/group level—consider surveying your team to establish a baseline and to track improvement over time.
 - Utilize the [National Academy of Medicine's Valid and Reliable Survey Instruments to Measure Burnout, Well-Being, and Other Work-Related Dimensions](#) to source appropriate well-being surveys for your group.
- Consider these key principles as they relate to surveying physicians
 - Keep it short.
 - Ask about items that are actionable.
 - Test your survey with physicians and ask for feedback.
 - Ensure physicians know results are anonymous.
 - Be prepared to share results transparently (include key stakeholders).
 - Be prepared to provide action items.
 - Standardize measurement across the organization.
 - Advocate for including a well-being metric on organizational dashboards (it is important to assume accountability).

Integrate DEI

- Add your preferred pronouns to your email signature and virtual meeting title.
- Include questions on your survey to determine how DEI-related topics influence burnout on your team.
- Work with DEI leaders to address structural causes of inequity.
- Collaborate with local/external DEI experts to draft a bias policy that protects your team from racism and discrimination in the workplace.



Persona 3 - The Well-being Leader

I am a well-being expert and I need more than just the basics.

The What

Develop your leadership skills in the well-being space

Engage your team in well-being efforts

The How

- Seek out formal and informal networking opportunities:
 - Join an interest group, such as those that exist at [SHM](#).
 - Become involved with the Collaborative for Healing and Renewal in Medicine (CHARM) network.
 - Attend national meetings.
 - Seek out like-minded leaders.
 - Ask your mentors/other leaders to introduce you to other leaders in the field.
- Seek out formal leadership development courses specific to well-being. For example, the [Chief Wellness Officer \(CWO\) Course | WellMD & WellPhD | Stanford Medicine](#).
- Commit to a monthly review of the literature relating to the leading of well-being efforts.

- Start a well-being committee for your group.
- Develop a new or additional formal or informal well-being leadership role for a member of your team (e.g., well-being director, well-being champion).
- Connect the committee and/or leader with other organizational well-being leaders.
- Connect the committee and/or leader with resources such as SHM's [Seven Drivers of Burnout](#), the Hospitalist Well-being Advocates Toolkit, R.I.S.E., etc.
- Look for opportunities for hospitalists to participate in organization-wide well-being initiatives such as considering becoming a [Schwartz Rounds](#) site.



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