

# Staying Strong

**Strengthening resilience and wellbeing**





For many people, Covid-19 was the onset of what psychologists call an ‘emotional tsunami’. The pandemic impacted virtually every aspect of our lives. Lockdowns, social distancing, and remote work caused us to feel isolated and anxious, not knowing what the future would hold. We lost people we loved in our families and circle of friends, as well as people we worked with. We learned to live with loss and grief.

The riots and the floods in KZN struck in the middle of the pandemic. The feelings of helplessness and hopelessness mounted as the ‘tsunami’ increased in strength and impact.

Increasing prices, financial insecurity and job losses add to the stress many people are currently experiencing. Loadshedding is another factor that is impacting wellbeing negatively. Our daily routines are disrupted, making it difficult to plan activities or stick to a schedule. Uncertainty around when the power will go out and for how long causes frustration, the lack of power can cause safety risk for many, and others may be struggling with sleep disturbances when power outages occur at night.

No wonder that many people are increasingly feeling empty, depleted and depressed.

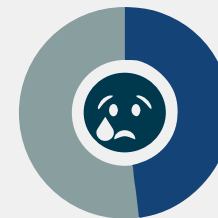
The latest research on the mental and emotional wellbeing of adults worldwide puts numbers to the scale of this ‘emotional tsunami’.

## Latest research on the wellbeing of adults worldwide



Up to **45%** of adults feel adverse effects on mental health

World Economic Forum



**48%** of employees report that they are burned out at work

Microsoft



Up to **70%** of adults view this period as the most stressful of their careers

Gallup



**25%** of young adults recently considered taking their own lives

Centres of Disease Control

Employee Wellbeing and Employee Engagement, motivation and productivity are like two trees intertwined. When the one is knocked, the other also suffers. It is therefore no wonder that boosting wellbeing and resilience have risen to the top of the agenda of organisations worldwide.



“It is not the mountain that we conquer,  
but ourselves.”

Edmund Hillary

**In response to our clients increasingly expressing concern about the impact of the pandemic and other stressors on employee wellbeing, Free To Grow developed Staying Strong early in 2020. The objective was to support organisations in creating a caring culture that would let employees experience that the organisation values the health and wellbeing of its people.**

Statistics worldwide show that only around 5-7% of employees access a formal Employee Assistance Program (EAP). The rest are usually left to struggle along on their own.

Staying Strong shifts the focus from 'therapy for a few' to 'building the skills to maintain mental health for many'. The programme and toolkit make the theory and practice of wellbeing concrete in a way that is relevant to people's lives and that they find practical and 'doable'.

The different versions of the programme and toolkit and the diversity in our team enable us to reach all levels in the organisation with a common message of hope and resilience.

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## Different versions for different target groups

- The programme is available in three versions: for shopfloor/entry level workers, knowledge workers, and Managers. The latter incorporates a section on caring for your team's wellbeing.
- The toolkit is available in two versions: for shopfloor/entry level workers and knowledge workers.

## Flexible implementation options



### 1. Immersive face-to-face facilitated workshops

One full day or two half-days offering employees the opportunity to do a deep dive into the various topics and experience the full benefit from face-to-face engagement



### 2. Virtually facilitated sessions for remote teams

Short interactive sessions providing remote team members with a valuable opportunity to connect and engage meaningfully. 2 x 4-hour sessions



### 3. Train the Trainer

We can equip your facilitators with the skills and tools to present the programme in-house (face-to-face or virtually)



### 4. A hybrid approach

Choose any combination of options 1, 2 and 3 that meets your needs or combine the presentation of the Staying Strong programme with using the Leader-led DIY toolkit (see pages 6-7) to reach different audiences in your organisation



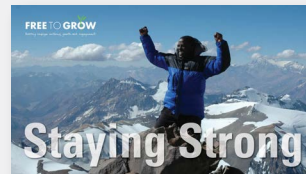
## A new version of Staying Strong: A tool in the change management journey

- Use this programme to get buy-in for the change that is happening in your organisation and create emotional and strategic alignment while ensuring that people are supported through the muddling phase of the journey
- Contact us to explore the option to have internal Change Champions equipped to provide follow up support

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- 1 Welcome and context**
  - 1.1 Life as a journey – the highlights, the easy stretches and the uphill battles that can tire and deplete us
  - 1.2 The need to break through instead of break down so we can summit our ‘mountains’
- 2 Becoming aware of the impact**
  - 2.1 Taking a closer look at how stress and the current environment impacts us, our lives and our organisation
  - 2.2 Using **BRAVE** as a diagnostic: testing the impact on my **B**ody, **R**elationships, **A**ttitude, **V**alue add at Work and **E**nergy
- 3 What can we draw on and top-up so that we do not run on empty**
  - Ownership:** focusing on and actioning what we can control instead of worrying
  - Resilience:** keeping on hanging on – how applying the 3 P’s can help
  - Optimism:** shifting our focus to the positives in our lives – making gratitude a way of life on an individual and organisational level
  - Support:** knowing when to ask for help, being clear on the kind of help needed and knowing how to ask for the kind of help needed and from whom
- 4 Putting together a plan that will increase our resilience**
  - 4.1 Understanding the impact of lifestyle on our ability to handle what life throws at us
  - 4.2 Using the **STRONG** framework (**S**leep well, **T**rain well, **R**elax well, **O**rganise well, **N**ourish well, and **G**ive well) to create a plan to sustain ourselves through challenges



**LINK:** Experience our visual communication style in this extract of our Interactive Staying Strong workbook for knowledge workers

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## The objective

To equip leaders with the tools to demonstrate their care and support for their people through 15 short, meaningful team conversations, building resilience and wellbeing in bite-size chunks over time



## The content

### 1. **Becoming AWARE of the need** (4 sessions)

Life as a journey – understanding how tough times impact various aspects of my life. Using the **BRAVE** test to see how well I am coping.

### 2. **Tuning in my ATTITUDE** (6 sessions)

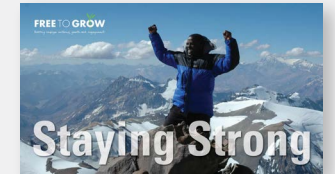
Hanging on to hope and choosing to focus on what is good and what I can control: Ownership, Resilience and Optimism: **OROS**

### 3. **Getting and giving SUPPORT** (2 sessions)

Accepting that I am not alone. Knowing when and how to reach out for support. The value of being an ear and a shoulder for others.

### 4. **'Stress proofing' my LIFESTYLE** (3 sessions)

Understanding how my lifestyle impacts my ability to stay strong. Making the changes I need to Train well, Relax well and Nourish well.



**LINK: Extracts from 2 of the videos in the Staying Strong toolkit for shopfloor/entry level workers**

## The 3 tools in the toolkit



**15 Videos**  
(5-7 mins each)

- Each video contains a short, powerful message, presented by a skilled, inspirational FTG facilitator
- Image rich presentation makes messages easy to understand and remember
- Available in English, Afrikaans, Portuguese, Setswana and Swahili



**A Leader's Guide**

- A step-by-step, easy to follow guide for leaders to have a focused and meaningful conversation on the theme of each video
- Optional: Help 2 Learn, a 4-hour mini-workshop for leaders on basic facilitation skills and how to use the toolkit effectively



**Personal workbook**

- A visual summary of the key video takeaways of each session to review and share
- Practical exercises to encourage application



# 6. The benefits of using the Staying Strong DIY Toolkit



## 1. Cost and time efficient

- Presented in-house by leaders of teams instead of HR or external facilitators
- Requires minimum employee time away from work
- Can be integrated into existing team meetings



## 2. Enhances and sustains learning

- Extensive use of different forms of imagery, making learning 'land' and 'stick'
- Learning happens in bite-size chunks of 10 – 30 mins per week over 15 weeks
- Staggered learning creates multiple opportunities for application between sessions



## 3. Strengthens wellbeing

- 15 wellbeing touchpoints ensure wellbeing remains in the spotlight, becoming part of the 'rhythm' of the organisation
- Creates a more open climate, opening the door to follow-up conversations & support
- Strengthens the connection between team members, growing the peer support network



## 4. Develops leaders

- Makes leaders accountable for the wellbeing of their people
- Develops skills to facilitate meaningful team conversations (far beyond the toolkit ones)
- Provides tools that ensure impact, growing confidence and sense of contribution



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# 7. Client feedback on the Staying Strong programme



"Staying Strong is a truly transformational programme. The positive impact it made within Argility two years ago for our people, has definitely contributed to an elevated level of wellness and resilience within our teams."

*Tanya Long*  
Chief Operating Officer, Argility



"Staying Strong is not just a learning programme, but an intervention that ignites purpose and passion and provides tools for people to reconnect with themselves, while finding better alignment with the organisation. It was a truly transformational encounter which had a profound impact on the lives of our bargaining unit teams."

*Ruby Motloheloa*  
Head of HR, Southern Africa



"Staying Strong has such a massive impact – it touches our staff more deeply than I could have hoped for. We can't wait to implement this on a large scale."

*Tracey Douglas*  
Deputy Director: Institute Management Support, WCGH



"Staying Strong fully met our needs and exceeded our expectations. It spoke to the hearts of our bargaining unit employees. The content was relevant to their reality that they find themselves in. It was not theoretical but practical. The facilitators connected with our people by speaking in their language and interacted with them in a way that showed them they are cared for and respected."

*Reggie Geyer*  
Head of HR Supply Chain, Distell



"Staying Strong has positively influenced employee morale and the feedback has been exceptional. Employees have commented on the meaningfulness and practicality of the content and will definitely be able to use the tools in their personal and professional lives."

*Milda Mussa*  
HRD Specialist, Mozal



**LINK: [More on the impact at Distell](#)**

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# 8. Client feedback on the Staying Strong Toolkit



“Staying strong is well-packaged, practical and relevant and brings across the message really well. It is also highly interactive and creates a much valued opportunity for our people to connect. We are excited by the overwhelmingly positive response so far.”

*Aldrin Links*

Director: Human Resources



“We have worked with Free To Grow for over six years and have first-hand experience of the impact of their solutions. When they came up with the innovative STAYING STRONG TOOLKIT to help leaders support their teams, we immediately signed up, starting with the Vector Finance team. The toolkit is easy to use, does not require much preparation time from managers, and has a huge impact on the individual wellbeing of team members as well as the feeling of connection in the team. Definitely a worthwhile investment.”

*Annelie Govender*

HR Director



“It went exceptionally well. Every session had a positive takeaway. What we learned was easy to apply. Almost everyone in my team experienced how our sessions provided them with a space to pause and reflect, see life and its challenges in a new way and receive practical tools to push through.

A bonus was that these sessions gave us the opportunity to talk freely. A big degree of trust has been built – we now feel far more connected and comfortable being open with each other. This has been a huge change for my team.”

*Lynrey Lindsey*

Credit Management Exec



“The Staying Strong toolkit made a huge contribution to staff morale and relationships. It gave our leaders the tools to look after and care for our people during the pandemic.

It equipped them to have conversations with their people, which made employees feel valued, seen and heard. It worked brilliantly and our leaders and our teams loved it.”

*Malebo Mpepele*

Group Training & Development Manager



**LINK: More on the impact at Peermont**



2021: “We see daily benefits of this wonderful programme. People are getting stronger in mind, body and soul. As a whole, there is a different vibe in the hospital. People are more optimistic and resilient. This has been the best 15 week workout we have ever been on.”

2022: “It has been more than a year since Mediclinic Newcastle launched Staying Strong developed by Free To Grow. What amazes me is that staff can still recall the simple yet powerful principles that helped all of us to STAY STRONG.”

*Japie Greyling*

Hospital General Manager at Mediclinic Newcastle



**LINK: More on the impact at Mediclinic Newcastle**

# 30 YEARS 36 COUNTRIES 1 508 ORGANISATIONS 150 316 PEOPLE

## Our differentiators

Co-created solutions, customised to fit your needs and context



[LINK: Download our FTG Profile](#)

Free To Grow is a BBBEE Level 2 contributor

## Some of our clients

