

# Stronger Together

A guide to  
Mental Health




## *Preface*

What creates a strong corporate culture and a profitable business? The answer is: The people. If the people in the company are feeling good, the result will be good as well.

This handbook from the Union for University Graduates at Scania is an important part of this. We know that mental health problems is a growing problem in society. We spend a large part of our days at work. Working conditions, working environment and how we treat each other in everyday life make a difference!

Scania has a strong corporate culture that is unique. This means, among other things, that we help, see and support each other. We must safeguard and strengthen this. Here we all have a responsibility, regardless of position or where in the organization we are.

Let us help improve our mental health and well-being.  
Because together we are strong.



**Christian Levin**  
President and CEO



**Helle Bay**  
Executive Vice President  
People & Culture



# **Stronger Together**

## **- a guide to Mental Health**

Hi!

Have you ever been exhausted? Felt bad mentally? Or do you have someone close to you who is feeling drained? Maybe you are a relative or a colleague of someone you are worried about? Or a manager with personnel responsibilities and want to know how you can detect early signals of mental health problems? Maybe you're just curious about this subject? If so, this is a booklet for you.

The causes of mental illness are many and the increase we have seen in recent years is due to several factors. It can be changes in society, in working life, in health care and in our expectations.

With the guide Stronger together, we want to increase the knowledge and the awareness of the subject and open up for discussion. Because we know that it is by talking about how we feel that we can help each other feeling better. Therefore, we have gathered facts about mental health problems, self-esteem, stress, recovery and energy. And also posted some tips and exercises in the various areas.

Use the book as inspiration, discussion material, eye opener, a tool. How you want!

We need to take care of ourselves. We need each other

**Take care of yourself - you are important!**

Union for University Graduates at Scania  
(Akademikerföreningen på Scania)



**Lisa Lorentzon**

Chairperson

Akademikerföreningen



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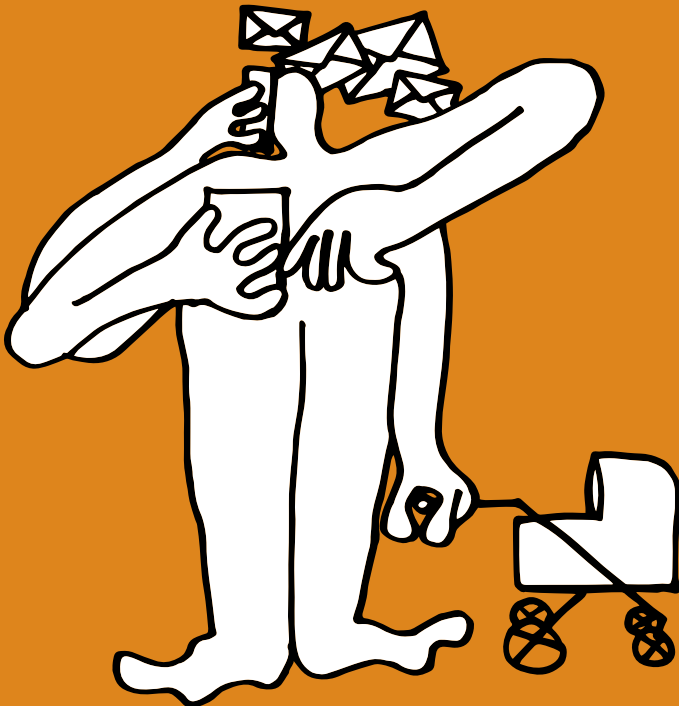
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# The Modern life

*“Our brain has to deal daily with a world for which it is not adapted. No wonder it can sometimes be overwhelming”*



# How are we affected?

Evolution takes time. Our brains have not developed much since our ancestors lived on the savannah as hunters and gatherers. Emotions and mental conditions are basically the same now as then. However, the environment we live in today is very different from the one people lived in several thousand years ago. During the last 150 years, societal development has also escalated. What about the brain? Has it been able to catch up? No, not according to modern research.

Our brain has to deal daily with a world for which it is not adapted. No wonder it can sometimes be overwhelming, that we feel stressed and bad. The new normal means more sedentary, multi-tasking, many hours in front of a screen and constant socialization with people we have not met before. Online meetings are also more cognitively demanding, and at a distance we tend to work more and often fail to take the breaks we need.

If we compare our time with the world that humans had to relate to before, it becomes a little easier to understand how our brains can react and that we may need to be a little kinder to ourselves.

## Before...

...people lived in groups of 50 to 150 people. Today, most people live in cities with significantly more inhabitants.

...a human saw a couple of hundred, maximum a few thousand, individuals in a lifetime. Nowadays this is what most modern people can encounter in a few days.

...the one who did not move and made sure to find something eatable risked to starve to death. Today we do not have to take many steps to get food – you can even order the food straight to your door.

...it was life-threatening to end up outside the group. Being excluded or being alone still creates enormous stress for humans. In Sweden 2019,

there were 1.9 million single households. It is mainly younger and older people who live alone, and it is also in these groups where the experience of loneliness is most widespread. (scb.se)

...stress helped humans to survive in a dangerous world among wild animals. Today, most of us do not have to worry about life-threatening situations, yet it is the same system in our brains that is activated when we become stressed by psychosocial reasons (finances, relationships, jobs, etc.). Maybe not as intense as when threatened by a predator, but today stress often lasts low-intensity for long periods of time. Increased doses of stress hormones over a long period of time can lead to the brain no longer working properly.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to redesign your brain to be more adapted to the present, but on the other hand it is possible to "reprogram" it with the help of the right tools. We can't get rid of anxious thoughts completely (and we probably do not want to either), but on the other hand we can learn to tame and relate to them so that these thoughts do not limit our lives or lead to mental health problems.

If you want to learn more about this and have not had time to read Anders Hansen's books, than it is highly recommended! The first is called "Hjärnstark", the second "Skärnhjärnan" and the third "Depphjärnan".

# Stress

*“Children should be picked up, the car be inspected, deadlines at work... well, sometimes it never seems to end”*





# A stressful everyday life...?

You're not alone. Children should be picked up, the car be inspected, deadlines at work... well, sometimes it never seems to end. While some seem to get a boost out of having a lot to do, others are completely exhausted - the answer to that riddle is probably what we call positive vs negative stress.

**Positive stress** is just as it sounds - positive! We become more alert and sharp and it can be experienced almost as an injection of joy. We might put a little extra effort to catch up with that deadline. Or manage to get a good logistics solution for driving your daughter to the football training just in time and then pick up grandma at the train station - all this while the potatoes are boiling. Voila! Here you stress for a short period, but once at home you get to recover during a good dinner with grandma

**The negative stress**, on the other hand, is not something we feel good about and it can occur for a number of different reasons. You may experience high demands from your surroundings without sufficient support, or have an ongoing conflict at the workplace that creates an inner stress. Or you have a lot to do (can also be fun things!) without getting enough recovery. So "negative stress" does not automatically mean that it is a boring commitment but can basically be a lack of recovery, so here it is important to pay attention.

If the condition of negative stress is allowed to last for too long, there is a risk of triggering so-called **fatigue syndrome** (also called fatigue depression). You can read more about this in the chapter "Mental health problems".

**If you feel that your work situation** is a reason for negative stress, it is important to be open with this to someone close to you. It can be a colleague, a friend or your manager. Many people who feel bad or are stressed may feel ashamed of this and therefore choose not to tell anyone. But by keeping it to yourself, there is a great risk that the body will eventually give up completely, which can lead to a long period of illness in the end. If you do not want to talk to a colleague or manager, it is possible to turn to a safety officer, to us elected representatives in the Union for University Graduates (AF) or to Scania Occupational Safety and Health. The earlier you are open about your mood, the easier it is for people around you to help and support you.

There are many different reasons why we experience negative stress and things that one person can be stressed by, makes another feel no stress at all. For some, stress can be based on the fact that there is a lot to do - while others experience stress when they feel that they are not getting anything done. Other stress factors can be too monotone work, too much responsibility, a conflict with a colleague or feeling alone with the work tasks. Therefore, there are guidelines to ensure that the work is conducted in a sustainable and healthy manner, and checklists to identify risks in the event of change.

Being a minority in a group can also be very energy consuming, which can lead to great negative stress. Therefore, it is very important that we work actively with issues concerning diversity and inclusion also from a stress perspective.

By gaining insight into how stress can be triggered differently for different people, doesn't only provide a better understanding of oneself and your stress triggers. It can also give an understanding that your colleagues may experience stress in completely different ways. Therefore, try to be aware and sensitive to what your colleagues find stressful.

More *information* on where to turn for support can be found in the chapter "Help & Support".

# To be a good colleague on remote

By working proactively and creating a safe and good work climate, we have a lot to gain when it comes to reducing negative stress. And the good thing is that we (as fellow human beings and colleagues) have a very great power in helping to build such a work climate. Here are some tips that can be good to consider as a colleague, especially when working a lot on remote:

## Encourage & Pay attention to each other

It is easy to forget to give your colleagues positive feedback when you only see each other in digital meetings. Try to remember that! You can encourage your colleagues either verbally via the screen or in email.

## Daily check-ins

Many people feel alone when working from home. To feel a belonging in the work group is important also when working remotely. A daily check-in and/or digital coffee breaks, preferably with the camera on, can make that happen.

## Offer your help

Try to pay attention to your colleagues and their needs. Do you have the time and knowledge - offer the same help as you would have done at the office. Maybe someone also has technical challenges as a result of working remotely.

## Encourage breaks and healthy working hours

Research shows that many people work harder when they do it from home. The working day starts earlier and the lunch break becomes shorter. Encourage your colleagues to take a walk at lunch time and try to be a role-model. Start in normal working hours and work no later than you usually do at the office.

*“I used more  
of my energy  
than I gained,  
and I hadn’t  
really under-  
stood the need  
for recovery.”*

Beatrice Svedberg



Three questions to

# Beatrice Svedberg

(Future Competence Strategist, YRR)

Hi Bea!

**How nice of you to share your experiences of fatigue – would you like to tell us what happened in your case?**

Sure - if I can help someone, I'm just happy!

It probably started long before I understood it myself. I had pushed myself very hard for 4-5 years, both at work but also at home with a child who didn't feel so good and my mother who suffered from a stroke. So I probably did not really have time to reflect on how I felt and I didn't understand the need for recovery. But then when, everything started to calm down, I just crashed. Maybe it was when my body had time to relax it became clear to me that I had emptied my entire energy account, because it went downhill very quickly.

**If you try to think back - can you remember if you noticed any signs before you crashed?**

Yes, in retrospect, there were very clear signs that I then did not think were stress related. For example, I have always been a person who likes to have many ongoing projects, but all of a sudden I had a hard time completing what I had started. And I did not feel as structured as I was used to, so I got a troublesome feeling of inadequacy. It felt a bit like I was cheating the employer because I got paid, but felt that I did not deliver. So my self-esteem dropped.

In addition to this, I often became very angry and tired at home, with very little patience. When I came home from work I mostly wanted to be alone and my husband probably thought I was very boring during this period. Physically, I was often sick - the colds were never ending. I think it was my body's way of making me stop because then I had to lie down and rest. I also became very sensitive to sound and had loss of memory.

At the same time, I had such a strong desire not to feel weak. As soon as I recovered from a

cold, I went exercising, but then I caught a cold again. And so it went on. I even asked my doctor if I could take away my tonsils, because I thought my sore throat prevented me from training for a race I had signed up for. Then I know she suggested yoga, but I thought it sounded so heavenly boring and quirky. I wanted to exercise! But shortly after that I got a lot of strange diseases and ailments in a short time and when my hand started to all of a sudden I was scared for the first time. As if I understood that maybe it was not just "bad luck" that I was sick so often, but that it could actually have something to do with my lifestyle.

### **How did your return look like then? And what have you learned?**

It's hard to say exactly what the turnaround was, I think it's the total sum of everything. On the one hand, I was on sick leave, which I think was an important part of my recovery, but at the same time it created a lot of anxiety and a bad conscience in me. I probably did not think I deserved to be on sick leave. The journey after that was probably the most important part - I went to a rehabilitation program via **PBM** here I got many important

tools and learned to start talking more openly about my situation. I also came in contact with others who were in the same situation and sharing the experiences with similar people gave a lot - not the least acceptance of my own mind which helped to reduce my sense of failure. Without this, I probably would not have dared to participate in the podcast that I run today with two friends (*Ut ur väggen - och vidare i livet*) which not only gives support to others, but also gives me strength and development.

If I would choose three things that I have learned, it is to be able to say no, to be able to distinguish between things that are my responsibility and the responsibility of others and that it is okay that not everyone is like me. The most important thing is that I am good just the way I am.



# Being able to say “no”

For many, "no" can be one of the most difficult words to say. Which in turn can lead to a large commitment at work and / or at home. Therefore, we have collected some suggestions on how a "no" can be communicated.

- **"I'm in the middle of other projects at the moment, so it does not fit so well".** (No more explanation is needed and it shows that you have another important job to do)
- **"I dislike sharing my attention between several tasks, so I prefer to focus on the ones I have first and foremost"** (You show responsibility)
- **"I'm sure you will be able to do that excellently yourself!"** (Perhaps slightly insecure colleagues need this encouragement to dare to tackle the job on their own)
- **"I need more time with the family this period, so I can't take on more than I have right now"** (Very few would think that this priority is anything but right...)
- **"I have a lot right now myself, but I know someone else who could help out"** (You offer another solution that is probably better, because this person seems to have more time for the task than you do)
- **"Could I give you an answer tomorrow instead?"** (Ibland (Sometimes it can be good to get some time to think. Then it is also possible to come up with a good wording to say “no”)

These tips are taken from the book "Stå på dig, annars gör någon annan det" (by Stefan Ekberg). Recommended to read the whole book!





*“As a colleague,  
I am more  
sensitive now-  
adays. I now  
have the ability  
to clearly see  
signs in my  
colleagues, that  
I did not notice  
before”*

Tony Karlsson





Three questions to

# Tony Karlsson

(Development Engineer, NETT)

Hi Tony!

**We understand that your 16 years at Scania have been both good and bad – would you like to tell us about your experiences?**

Yes, I started as a designer and then switched to working in acoustics, which I enjoyed at first. But then there were a lot of reorganizations and all of a sudden there was more to do. The work was incredibly stressful for about three years.

I remember that during this period I had great difficulty sleeping and I was always speeded. During weekends and holidays, my biggest priority was to try to relax and sleep - which also meant that I stopped doing activities that I used to enjoy in my spare time. It simply became a vicious circle where anxiety and worry took up most of my life.

In the end, just the thought of going to work made me feel sick. Then I finally got in touch with a very good doctor at the occupational health care who could help

me feel better. On the one hand, I was on sick leave for about a year and during this time I received, among other things, "exercise on prescription", but also a CBT treatment. I had never heard of CBT before, but it was very rewarding for me and I got many useful tools. I also got in touch with others who went through a similar situation.

**What a good thing that you got the right help from the occupational health care. How has all this shaped you as a person?**

As a colleague, I am very sensitive nowadays. I now have the ability to clearly see signs in my colleagues, which I didn't notice before. So what I usually do is to ask them about how they feel. And also point out if I think that someone has worked a little too much or if I hear that someone insinuates that they are sleeping badly.

People don't always acknowledge that they are actually feeling bad or stressed, but I think it can be a wake-up call that can be a start of

an important reflection process.

Today I feel good and see the joy in things that I didn't have the opportunity or energy for when I was feeling bad. I have also learned how to lower my own pressure of performance and I am much better at not overworking but clearly state when it starts to get too much. I get a lot of support and good help from my current managers who are very good at setting boundaries when we as employees are getting too much to do.

**How great of you to pay attention and also act when you see signs in your colleagues.**

**Do you have more good tips of what we as colleagues can do if we suspect that someone is feeling bad?**

The most important thing is to dare to ask how your colleague is doing, I would say. And to remind that there is very good help to get if you are feeling stressed or bad. It is also important to dare to open up to your manager about how you feel, otherwise it is difficult for the manager to be able to support and help. Of course, not all managers have the ability to support in the right way, but then you have at least given him or her the right

prerequisites.

Another tip is the possibility of PEP\* at Scania, which can be a good way of trying another working area. Personally, I have now been on a new job for almost two years after my six months of PEP, which also helped me to recover.

A positive thing about Scania is that it is relatively easy to change direction within the company. Thanks to PEP you don't even have to change position if you think it is a too big step. Through PEP, you can try until you find a working area and a working group that you enjoy, and then apply for a position if you want to.

\* PEP (Personnel Enhancement Program)  
- Through PEP, you can be given the opportunity to gain experience by working in a new work environment. The program usually lasts for 3-6 months. You retain your terms of employment and when the program is completed, you have the right to return to your old job. (See more info on Reflex / My employment).

# Self-test

## - signs of stress

As we learned from both Beatrice and Tony's experiences, the body can show clear signals of too much stress without you even understanding or noticing them. Therefore, feel free to take a moment for this self-test, to feel if your body is trying to tell you something.

- Do you experience sleep problems?
- Do you have recurrent headaches?
- Do you experience memory and concentration problems?
- Do you avoid social contact, which you have not done before?
- Do you feel more emotional (eg. easy to tears or irritation)?
- Do you have a nagging feeling of anxiety or nervousness?
- Do you experience lack of energy?
- Do you often catch a cold or get sick?
- Do you feel a pressure over your chest?
- Do you have intestinal or stomach problem?
- Do you feel dizzy every now and then?

If you tick one or more of these boxes, it may be a sign for a lot of stress.

In the chapter Recovery & Energy you can get information and tips about recovery, and in the chapter Help & Support you can read more about where you can find help.

# Recovery & Energy

*“Recovery is one of the most important antidotes to stress. What you need depends on what you recover from, and who you are as a person”*



# What gives & takes energy?

Recovery is one of the most important antidotes to stress. We need to charge the batteries every day. It is not just about sleep or passive rest, but also about active recovery and breaks during the work day. This can happen in different ways for different persons.

What you need depends on both what you recover from and who you are as a person. It can be anything from micro-breaks such as a deep breath, stretching or listening to music to exercise. Or maybe at this very moment you need to put down this handbook, close your eyes and just be in the moment? Try to listen to what your body needs right now.

## Reflection - what is recovery for me?

- **When I have worked concentrated for a long time ...**
- **When I have interacted intensely with other people...**
- **When I have been stationary for a long time in front of the computer...**

## Refill with energy based on your needs

“Take a power-walk in the forest”

“Take a break to water the flowers”

“Listen to my favorite music”



Take a test via [www.livsstilsanalys.se](http://www.livsstilsanalys.se)

# Do you get the recovery you need?

## What do you need more or less of?

Test how much recovery you need to add to your life. Put a cross in one of the scales for each statement that is true.

The left scale symbolize your life right now, and the right stand for your recovery.



## My life right now

- I am stressed in my everyday life
- I have experienced major life changes in the last six months (eg death, divorce, serious illness)
- Worry about children, partners, close friends
- Worry about my finances
- I am available for work outside my regular working hours
- Have difficulty sleeping
- Experiencing that work takes time at the expense of family & friends
- I feel that my responsibilities, mandate and powers are unclear at work
- I am rarely completely satisfied with what I achieve
- Experience too high workload both at work & in your free time
- Prioritize others over myself
- Experience that leadership is unclear at work
- Make high demands on myself
- Have a hard time getting started and doing things I need to do
- Rarely get physical contact
- Feeling lonely and / or that others don't understand me

## My recovery right now

- I get enough time for recovery
- Exercise at least three times per week
- Move regularly in everyday life, e.g. ride a bike or take one daily walk
- Take regular breaks
- Trying to learn new things in everyday life
- Eat well and keep a varied diet
- Often receive positive feedback
- Able to come to a halt and feel satisfied about everything I can manage
- Listen casually to other people until they have finished talking without interrupting
- Have control over the tasks I am expected to perform at work
- Can avoid negative emotions by keeping a distance from unwelcome thoughts
- Meditate for more than 10 minutes a day
- Allocate time in my calendar to be with myself only
- Sleep 6 ½ to 7 hours per night
- Can say no to work to spend time with my partner or family
- Can close a project even if I know I could have done more



**Result** - If the contents of your left scale with requirements are larger than your right scale with recovery, you will probably need to top up with energy!

*“Despite many years in various managerial positions, where several discussions were about preventing stress and mental health problems among employees, I had a hard time seeing the signals in myself.”*

Magnus Pelz





Three questions to

# Magnus Pelz

(Head of Powertrain Research, Technology & Concept Developm. , NP)

Hi Magnus!

**For those of us who don't know you - who are you?**

Short about me - I live in Tullinge together with my wife (who also works at Scania) and our two sons, 18 and 21 years old, who both study at KTH.

Career-wise, I have spent almost my professional life at Scania and am now in my 27th year at the company. I have hold many different exciting positions, mainly in engine development at R&D.

I have also worked in Purchasing, as head of the Project Office and for three years as head of the Cummins / Scania XPI Project Office in the USA. Then I was back in various managerial roles within engine development.

I had a short break from managerial roles for a couple of years and had other very exciting tasks in powertrain development.

Today, I am the head of NP which is responsible for research and pre-development of the powertrain.

**How exciting! But as we understand, it has not always been all roses - you were hit by a fatigue depression a few years ago. Would you like to tell us about it?**

Exactly, it came a bit out of nowhere (that was my experience then). It was ironic, because just a few weeks earlier I had expressed a good flow both at work and at home. Everything in life felt good and all my commitments went well.

But all of a sudden, I felt sick and out of energy, so I contacted a doctor who could see that I had shingles. In retrospect, I understand that too much stress can trigger this, so it is something you should be vigilant about.

It was at the check-up that I understood the seriousness of how I felt - or rather that my doctor understood the seriousness and kept me in the hospital and then sick-listed me for fatigue depression.

I had all of the obvious symptoms

of a burnout, but I hadn't realized that before. So despite many years in various managerial positions, where several discussions were about preventing stress and mental health problems among employees, I had a hard time seeing the signs in myself.

During my recovery period (which lasted for about three years), where I was periodically on part-time sick leave, I felt almost like a prisoner from Azkaban (for those of you who have read Harry Potter - you know how the souls are sucked out of the body).

My biggest focus initially was mainly to get well. Jobs and career was not even to think about at that stage. Gradually, as I began to feel better, I realized that in order to feel good as a whole, I needed a stimulating job - but with the right conditions. One of these conditions was that it was not appropriate for me to work as a manager during my habituation period of 25%. So I asked to change jobs, which I got a lot of support for.

Another important thing was my managers' actions when it came to helping me setting boundaries and balance my work. This prevented it from becoming too much

for me. Without their support, it would have been much harder for me to come back.

Here we must not forget our own important role, that is to partly accept the situation but also be determined to change it. Occupational health care and good managers can't help you if you are neither open up about your situation nor want to change it.

**What a journey you have made, how nice of you to share it. What would you like to say to people in the same situation?**

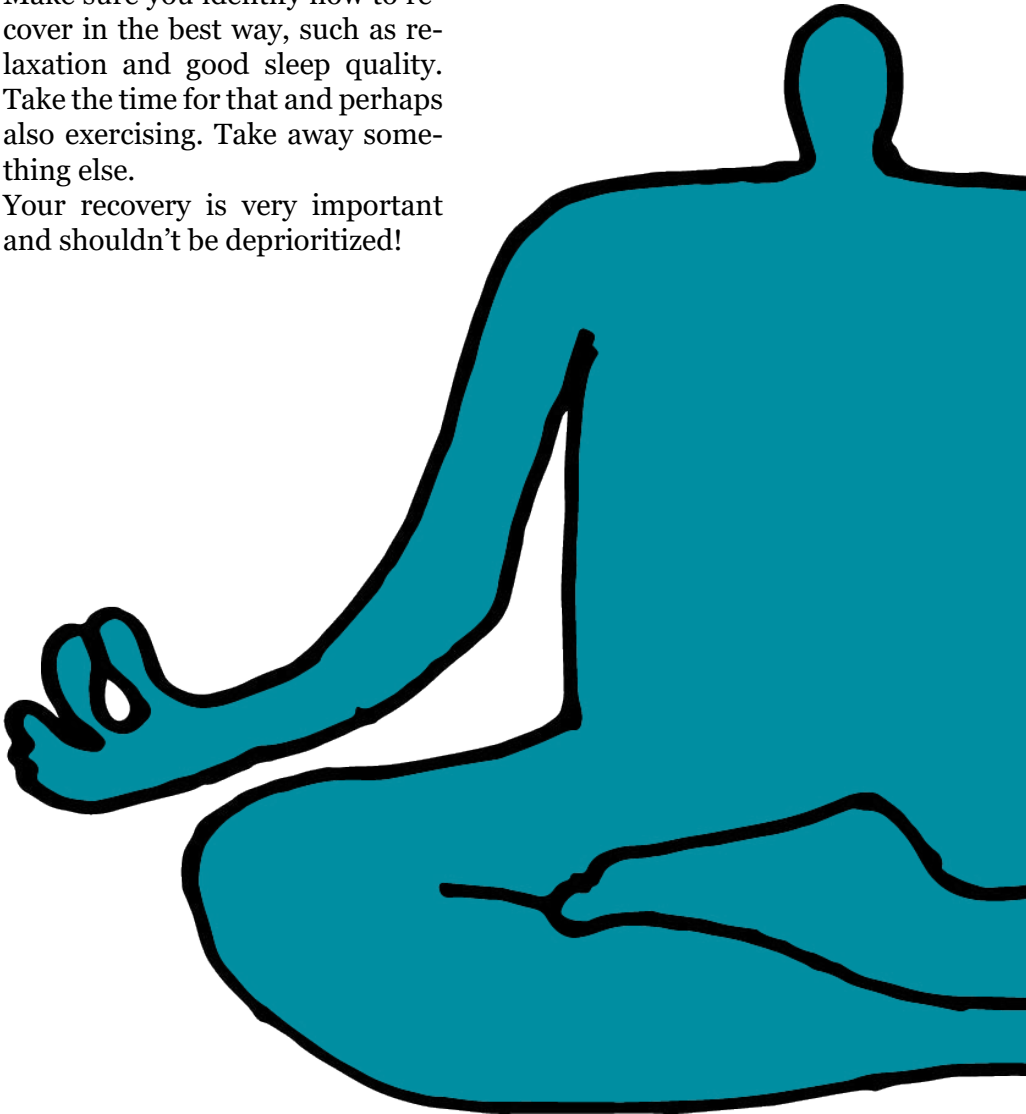
If you feel stressed, anxious or depressed – don't hold back, but talk about it. Tell your manager so that you can get support. As a manager it can be difficult to notice that employees are feeling bad.

Another important thing is to review what recovery you get. I think that is very important and I have made big changes myself. Today I would not be able to manage my everyday life without my three training sessions per week, my afternoon breaks for meditation or my new routines to completely disconnect from work in the evenings and spare time.

With the right recovery, you can do a lot, but if you lack recovery, there is a risk to crash sooner or later.

Make sure you identify how to recover in the best way, such as relaxation and good sleep quality. Take the time for that and perhaps also exercising. Take away something else.

Your recovery is very important and shouldn't be deprioritized!



# Micro-recovery helps us cope with everyday stress

- *This is how you do it:*

**Do the opposite** - to what made you stressed and tired to get energy and recover. **If you are:**

- **Mentally tired** after a long time of concentrated work - let the brain rest! After repetitive tasks - Do something that challenges and stimulates the brain!
- **Emotionally tired** after contact with different people all day - Take some time for yourself! After individual work - Make sure to bring in chats and human contact!
- **Physically tired** after being stationary in front of the computer – Adjust your working position, make pause movements and move your body!

**Do often** Don't wait with recovery until the holidays, evening or weekend, but do it continuously.

**Change environment** e.g. by going for a walk in nature.

**Exercise and explore** Have recovery as a daily item on your agenda. Explore what suits you and evaluate.

**Plan for variation** during your workday. For example, by switching between mentally demanding tasks and more routine ones, changing tempo, varying meetings with writing jobs or changing work environment during the day.

**Reflect** Give yourself time for reflection. A good tip is to sum up the working day before you go home. Clean the computer and by that mark the end of the day if you work from home. Then it will be easier to feel that you are free.

# Tips on short exercises

## Quick relaxation: 30 seconds

An exercise in interrupting and lowering the tension. You can use it often, both during the working day and in your free time. Do as follows: 1. Take a slightly deeper breath 2. Hold your breath for a short while. Feel the tension in your body 3. Release the air slowly and be present in the exhalation 4. At the same time as you exhale; relax your forehead, shoulders and stomach 5. Land with your focus in the present, where you are standing or sitting.



## Short meditation: 1-5 minutes

Sit down, breathe and start focusing on one single thing. It could be your breathing, an object or maybe a word. Stay focused without worrying about anything else. At some point, you will lose focus on the matter. The important thing is not how long you meditate, but that you try to be completely in the present. Look at this meditation as a circle. Do as follows: 1. Focus 2. Release focus 3. Hover in the void 4. Observe and accept the thoughts that reappear 5. Focus again 6. Repeat



### **Make yourself grounded with a swing:** 2-3 minutes

An effective way to become calm, focused and get rid of difficult thoughts is to "ground" yourself. Move the center of gravity back and forth so that you swing from one foot to the other. Close your eyes if you can. As you rock back and forth, notice your toes, your pad, heel, the sides of your feet, the top of your feet, your calves, shins, and finally your thighs. The brain's attention is thus controlled away from negative and stressed thoughts, and space is freed up to find a more constructive approach.



### **What's that sound?** 2-3 minutes

Listen to your surroundings, for example when you are out walking, is another tip for a short recovery. Different types of vehicle noise, voices talking, elements making noises, birds chirping, wind whistling. Just focus on hearing them and give your overactive brain a much needed break.



### **Get away from hard thoughts by focus:** 1 minute

Place your focus on something outside of yourself by silently naming three objects you see in the room. Describe their color, shape and texture silently to yourself. In this way you get away from your stressful thoughts.



## **Say HALT:** 30 seconds

HALT is an abbreviation for Hungry, Angry, Sad (Ledsen in Swedish), Tired. Think about whether your negative thoughts (such as losing faith in your own ability or getting increased heart rate because someone is behaving like an idiot) have been influenced or triggered by any of these factors.



## **Oxygenate the body:** 2 x 5 seconds

When your energy is running low, it may be because you do not have enough oxygen in your blood and body. Make the body automatically fill its lungs with as much air as possible by focusing on the exhalation instead of the inhalation. Start by actively squeezing the air out of your lungs, the more you can squeeze out the better. Then you relax, and then the air will rush into your lungs, without you having to do anything. Repeat once more.



## **Jump, jump:** 3 minutes

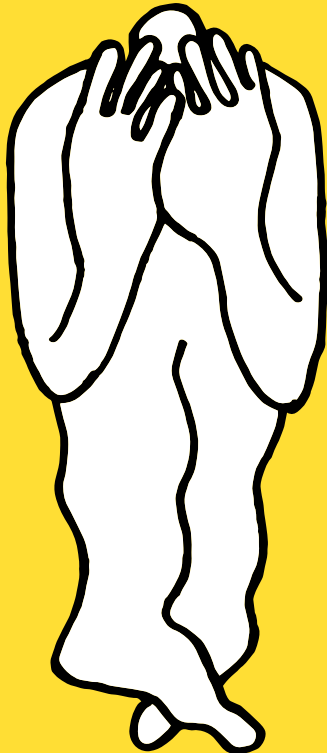
Repeating short but very intense workouts for three minutes can give very good results for the muscles and heart. Get up and run (stay on the same spot), make deep frog jumps and add some burpees. Repeat for three minutes.



The exercises come from the book "Reload - Så blir du återhämtningssmart" (by Henrik Fexeus & Catharina Enblad). Recommended to read the book!

# Mental health problems

*"Every fourth Swede sometime suffers from depression so severe that it requires treatment"*





# What's the difference?

**Anxiety:** You can certainly relate to the feeling of having "a lump in the stomach"? For example during a presentation or similar. This is not strange - many of us do! However, you shouldn't have to have that feeling for long periods or that it is so strong that it limits you. Anxiety can also cause palpitation (heart rushing), sweating, or dizziness for no immediate reason. If these feelings become very strong and sudden, it can be an anxiety attack. These attacks are not dangerous, but can be experienced as unpleasant and some describe it as a "feeling that you are going to die". If you get hit, take deep, slow breaths and it will eventually pass.

**Depression:** We are all feeling low and sad at times - which is just natural! No one is on top all the time. But on the other hand, you shouldn't have to feel indifference or depressed for a long time about things that you usually find fun (according to Vårdguiden more than two weeks). This may be a sign of depression.

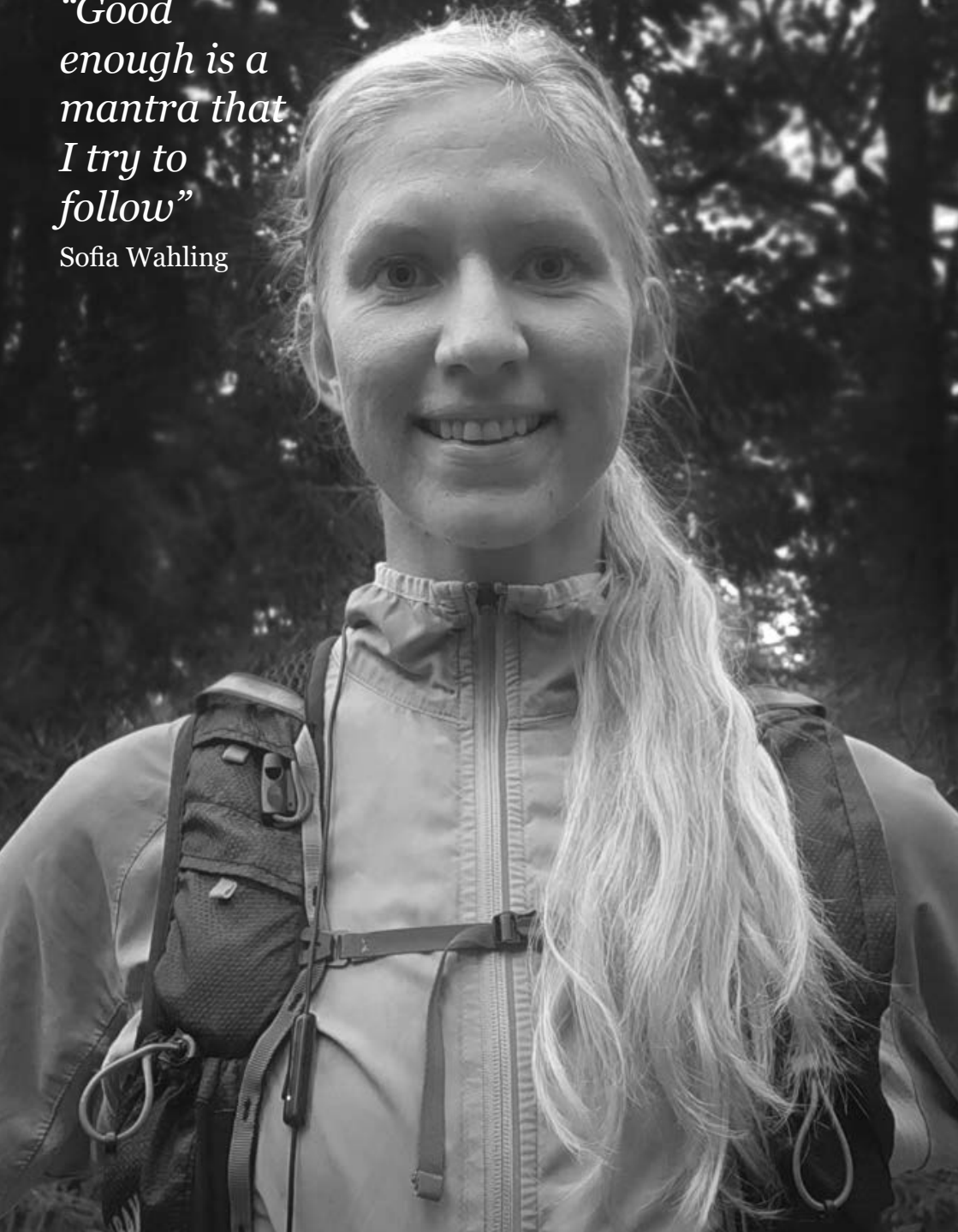
## **Fatigue Syndrome / Fatigue Depression / burnout:**

There are many names for this phenomena but today fatigue syndrome is used most often, but in the past it has also been called burnout or fatigue depression. But it refers to the same diagnosis that is a result of long-term (negative) stress. The body usually signals this through, for example, fatigue, stomach problems, difficulty orienting, dizziness, palpitations, difficulty sleeping, etc. Memory and the ability to concentrate can also be strongly affected, which can also be confirmed on a brain scan. Some may even become depressed, but not all will. To be diagnosed with fatigue syndrome, you must have experienced severe stress for about six months and had symptoms for at least two weeks.

Fatigue syndrome [www.1177.se](http://www.1177.se)

*“Good  
enough is a  
mantra that  
I try to  
follow”*

Sofia Wahling



Three questions to

# Sofia Wahling

(Method Engineer, YSNA)

Hi Sofia!

**Your journey towards fatigue depression was fraught with anxiety and low self-esteem. Do you want to tell us about your experience?**

Yes, that's right, and it became clear to me at my first job after graduating. I did not think I knew anything when I enter the labor market, but still I managed to get (as I felt then) my dream job. Even though I was super happy, it also started a very big inner pressure. How could I meet the expectations?! I know nothing!

After two weeks I had the first anxiety attack of my life and after that I had anxiety pretty much all the time. I remember how I could sit on the commuter train to work with a big lump in my stomach. And then the working day had not even begun. But I did not really understand why. I felt that the company was happy with me, but I still walked around with a constant fear of "doing wrong" or "not being good enough". But despite

the gnawing anxiety, I struggled, I simply kept the anxiety inside and pretended it wasn't there. I think I reduced the unpleasant feeling by telling myself that "it's probably how it feels when you work and are an adult, it's simply not that fun".

But after 1.5 years in working life, the anxiety took over completely and I didn't want to get out of bed. I probably just wanted to disappear, with my head under the sleeping blanket.

**How sad to hear about your experience. What did your way back look like?**

I told my manager how I felt and went through a CBT treatment at work, but it only increase the anxiety, unfortunately. My problems lay deeper. I felt a lot of shame rather than stress and felt insecure in everything.

Luckily, I had a nice colleague who I trusted who said "It shouldn't be like this. You don't have to feel this way". This, together with my

mother and sister who followed me to the doctor, became my turning point. I received professional help, antidepressant medication, therapy and sick leave.

At first I just felt completely drained - how could I now get back to a normal life again? I felt I would never be able to go back to work again. And even less find my way elsewhere - who wants to hire a useless wreck? Do I have to move to a desert island and fish for the rest of my life?

But gradually I began to recover and thus be able to think a little more rationally about the future and work again. Then I realized that I wanted to change the workplace. It became important for me to apply for a job where I could feel safe, with clear processes and expectations and where I was not expected to work overtime.

I asked my friends and noticed that those who seemed to enjoy their work and had a good balance between work and leisure, all worked at Scania. Previously, I had not been interested in Scania because I thought it sounded boring and stiff, but now I had other priorities with my well-being in focus, so I applied. And got the job!

**How good and strong of you to get back! Would you like to tell us what you have learned and how you feel today?**

I have learnt a lot! First and foremost, how important it is to dare to talk openly about your mood and try to really understand why you feel the way you do. Getting to know yourself.

Then to have a safe workplace with an understanding manager, clear tasks and expectations and colleagues that make you feel safe.

During my recovery, I have worked a lot with myself, partly with the help of therapy, but I have also taken courses and read books about personal development and mental health problems. This has strengthened my self-esteem.

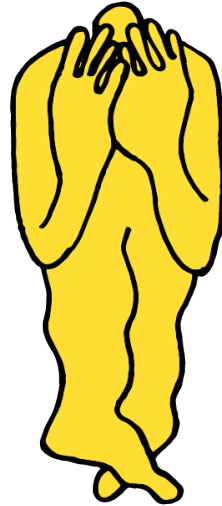
Today I feel good enough. To be strong and feel good, I have also learned to set clearer boundaries and understand my needs better. And I have slowed down.

I also try to be inspired by people who have a healthy work style and don't work too hard.

Good enough is a mantra that I try to follow.

All this together have contributed to my well-being. Today I feel harmonious and satisfied with my life - both at work but also privately. I have no supervision in terms of career, but the most important thing for me is to feel that I am happy and satisfied with what I do - so the career must conform to that, rather than the other way around.

*Sofia runs the Instagram account: Hejdå\_Psykisk\_Ohälsa*



## Did you know...

- **Every fourth Swede** drabbas någon gång av en depression så allvarlig att den kräver behandling.
- Depression **is a very common disease** that can be characterized by blues, anxiety, difficulty sleeping and changes in appetite.
- **Around half** of those who experience depression for the first time is at risk of becoming ill again. It is therefore important to be aware of new symptoms even after the end of treatment.
- **Depression can be treated** with medications and different types of therapies.

[www.hjarnfonden.se](http://www.hjarnfonden.se)

# Nine myths about fatigue syndrome

- 1. "It only affects sensitive people"**  
No, anyone can be affected. They are often ambitious and talented people with great drive.
- 2. "Brain changes are permanent"**  
Njae, det behöver inte vara så eftersom stresssystemet kan läka med rätt behandling. Men hjärnan behöver få vara i fred och vila.
- 3. "The one once afflicted will never be completely well again"** Jodå, det går att bli frisk, men livet kommer kanske inte kunna se likadant ut som innan. Och för att inte återinsjukna behövs rätt stöttning från arbetsplats och vården – men även en vilja och beslutsamhet hos sig själv att tillfriskna.
- 4. "Depression is the same as fatigue syndrome"**  
No, depression and fatigue syndrome are two different diagnoses but with similar symptoms. Since different treatments are required for these, it is important that a doctor helps out to get the correct diagnosis.
- 5. "Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is the best treatment"** Well, not necessarily. For specific fatigue syndrome, the most important thing may be to let the brain rest, but for depression, CBT can be a good treatment method. This is up to the doctor to decide.
- 6. "Antidepressant drugs act as a treatment"**  
Yes and no. In the case of fatigue syndrome, other things happen in the body and mind than in a depression and then it is not certain that antidepressant medication is the right treatment. But it can be helpful. A doctor needs to decide this.

## 7. "Relaxation works as a treatment"

Relaxation is very important in the event of exhaustion, but only relaxation methods do not actually heal the brain. Performing heart rate-boosting activities (moderately) is also important. You can get help from a doctor regarding this.

## 8. "Stress is dangerous and leads to fatigue"

Yes and no. Stress itself is not dangerous but rather an important survival mechanism. However, sufficient and right type of recovery is required, otherwise it can lead to stress-related ill health.

## 9. "You will be back at work quickly if you rest properly"

Yes and no. It depends on how far the exhaustion is. If it has been going on for a long time, it can take a long time (several years) for the brain to heal. But if it is at an early stage, it heals much faster. Therefore, it is extremely important to take early signals seriously.



# Self-esteem

Many people who develop depression or anxiety have a low self-esteem. This was also the case for Sofia, which we read about in the interview. For her, an important key in her recovery was to come to the insight that she had a low self-esteem, and then start to strengthen it.

## **If you have a strong self-esteem, you may feel like this:**

- I am good as I am - with my strengths & weaknesses!
- I deserve love and respect - just like everyone else!
- I can set healthy boundaries for other people so that they do not exploit or harm me.
- I know my needs and take them seriously.

## **If you have a weak self-esteem, you may feel like this:**

- I'm afraid of what others think of me or of failing.
- I often compare myself with others and think I am worse than them.
- I feel that I am not good enough just as I am and I often think negative thoughts about myself.
- I need a lot of confirmation from others and can be very sensitive to criticism.
- I do not know my needs and I have a hard time setting reasonable boundaries that I feel good about.



# Strengthen your self-esteem

If you feel that your self-esteem is not as strong as you would like it to be, here is some help on the way.

## **Take care of yourself & your body**

Try to eat healthy, move & sleep properly.

## **Try to understand yourself**

By becoming aware of your thoughts and values, it becomes easier to understand why you think and feel the way you do.

## **Be kind to yourself**

What would you have said and done if a close friend was in your situation? Feel free to write it down and say it to yourself when you are judging yourself.

## **Practice setting boundaries**

Expressing one's opinion strengthens self-esteem. Practice speaking up if someone is doing something you think is not okay. And practice saying no to things you do not want.

## **Be inspired by others who make you feel good**

Read books, follow social media accounts and listen to podcasts that make you grow and feel good. Unfollow accounts that give the opposite effect.

## **Practice not being perfect and lower your demands**

Practice making everyday things a little less perfect - you will notice that nothing catastrophic will happen.

## **"You become like the ones you hang out with"**

Do you socialize with people who make you feel safe and who themselves have a strong self-esteem? What does your social life look like? Would it be better to spend more or less time with some?

## **Try to deal with certain thoughts with distraction**

All the thoughts you have are not always true and you do not have to believe everything you think. Cognitive Defusion can give you some help with this. (More information on this can be found below).

# Cognitive Defusion

Cognitive Defusion is a tool that can help you distance yourself from negative thoughts about yourself. In this way, you can take control of your self-esteem and strengthen it. Here are some exercises you can do.

### **1. Observe without valuing**

Try to observe your negative thoughts without valuing them. Example: "Right now I got the idea that I am not good enough as I am"... or "I note that I am criticizing myself right now".



## 2. **Difficult teenage parents**

Treat your thoughts like annoying parents who just nag and nag and that you just ignore listening to.

## 3. **"Who benefits from that?"**

When you get a negative thought, you can ask yourself, "Who benefits from me believing this thought to be true?" If it does not help you then why should you believe it...?

## 4. **Disturbing passengers**

Treat scary feelings as if they were disturbing passengers on a bus where you are the driver. See what happens if you just keep driving without listening to what they say or (if you feel really annoyed) ask them to get off at the next stop.

## 5. **T-shirt print**

Imagine wearing a t-shirt with a print on your chest with your condescending thoughts about yourself. Wear it as if it were any shirt and do exactly what you want to do regardless of the print.

## 6. **The cell phone from hell**

Imagine that your negative thoughts are a cell phone that can't be turned off. It can simply lie buzzing in the bag while you continue doing your things...

More about techniques for cognitive defusion:  
[www.myralf.se](http://www.myralf.se)

# Self-test

## - Do I suffer from depression?

How often have you been bothered by this **in the last two weeks?**

*(Never / several days / half of the days / almost every day)*

1. Just little interest or less joy in doing things?
2. Feeling low, depressed or feeling that the future is hopeless?
3. Problems falling asleep, waking up too early or sleeping more than usual?
4. Feeling tired or lacking in energy?
5. Have had a poor appetite or ate more than usual?
6. Poor self-esteem or feeling that you have failed or let down people close to you?
7. Difficulty concentrating - when, for example, watching TV or reading a book?
8. That you moved or talked more slowly than usual? Or the opposite - that you felt more restless?
9. Thoughts that it would be better if you were dead, or thoughts of injuring yourself in any way?
10. How often has your mood affected you negatively in your work, at home or in contact with other people?

If you have answered “half of the days” or “almost every day” on several options, you may suffer from depression and should then seek help - it is possible to get well and regain the spark of life again!

You can either turn to the occupational health care or your health center. See more info about this in the chapter Help & Support.

# Suicide

## - If the biggest tragedy becomes a fact

If you or someone close to you has suicidal thoughts, it is very important not to keep this to yourself - seek help, there is good support.

Suicide is more common than many of us might think. And just like depression and exhaustion, it can affect basically anyone. **Annually, approximately 1,500 lives are terminated** in Sweden as a result of suicide. It means **one life every six hours** and thus four people per day. Annually. To be able to grasp these terrible figures a little better, about 200 people die in traffic per year in Sweden.

The suicides not only affect the individual but also leave behind many grieving and despairing relatives. It is estimated that there are approximately ten people around each suicide who are grieving and who in turn may themselves be at risk of suicide.

Unfortunately, we are not spared suicide at Scania either. It happens that employees or a close relative of an employee take their own life. We therefore want to give some guidance in what help there is to get if you yourself have these kind of thoughts, but also how we as employees can support each other.

[www.suicidezero.se](http://www.suicidezero.se)



# What you can do...

## **... if you feel bad or have suicidal thoughts**

First of all, you should know that you are far from alone with these thoughts.

You don't have to keep these thoughts to yourself, try to open up to someone. It could be to someone close to you or to any of the volunteers who is a phone call away. They are just waiting to talk to you and give support. Many of these volunteers have had similar thoughts as you themselves and know very well what you are going through.

In the chapter Help & Support under the heading Organisations & Initiatives, we have listed some help organizations where you can turn.

## **... if you suspect that someone close to you is feeling bad**

Take your concerns seriously and try to express this to the person. Avoid saying how the person is feeling, but give your picture of the situation. Then the person gets a chance to answer your concerns in their own words.

Be prepared to listen to the answer without interrupting. Try not to give advice or suggestions that the person has not asked for. But what you can do is to ask for permission, for example; "Can I tell you how I see what you are saying?" or "Is it okay if I make a suggestion?". In this way, you leave the door ajar so that the person can open up at own pace. If the person says that he or she does not want to talk about it right now, then be clear that you are still here if the person wants to talk later.

If you suspect that the person is planning to commit suicide, try to lead the conversation on concrete questions about this; ask if he or she has considered ways to injure themselves or if the person has ever tried to injure themselves. Some people think that it is negative to ask direct questions about suicidal thoughts, but it is rather the opposite.

So while it may be difficult to ask these questions, it can be vital for that person. If the person should answer “yes” to the question of whether he or she plans to commit suicide, do not leave the person alone, but help the person to seek emergency care or call 112.





*” The sooner  
you get  
in touch  
with us,  
the better!”*

Ellen Salén  
Wettergren





Three questions to

## Ellen Salén Wettergren

(Rehabilitation specialist at Scania's Occupational Health Care)

Hi Ellen!

**You have had many conversations with employees who contact the Occupational Health Service because they are unwell and need support. Please tell us about how it works.**

Sure! The most common way to contact us is via the Occupational Health Care Call Center (tel. 553 700 16). Here, nurses answer calls every day between 8.00-9.00. They ask a number of questions about the reason why you feel bad, such as workload, conflicts, bullying or not sleeping at night.

The nurse helps to determine whether the illness is mainly caused by work or more connected to private life. If it is mainly linked to private life (for example divorce), they refer to Scania Personnel Support / Falck Healthcare (tel. 0200-216300).

After the first contact, me or some of my colleagues call you up within a week or so to talk in more detail. Then we book an introductory

conversation, where we scratch the surface a little more. We then talk about the work situation and try to define the current problems. (It could be that you sleep poorly or put keys in the refrigerator.) The call is confidential, and you don't need to talk to your manager about it. But to take the next step, we always recommend that you talk to your manager (or manager's manager or HR), if you have not already done that.

Then I take the case to a team consisting of an ergonomist, company doctor, psychologist and rehabilitation specialist. The team discusses how they can support in the best way.

When this initial process is complete, and the team has a good idea of the problem situation and which support is appropriate, more concrete support activities tailored to you are started. This usually happens after about 2-3 weeks

The most common support is that you get an appointment to a

psychologist for individual support conversations and assessment to be part of a group with others in the same situation. There are several groups that start regularly, such as Fatigue Syndrome and ACT \* groups. There are also Anxiety and Depression groups. Then you are usually also called to a doctor's appointment for assessment and diagnosis, to initiate the right treatment, possible medication and sick leave.

## **Can you describe what the situation usually looks like for those who contact the occupational health care and what support is offered?**

Most often the reason is overload of work, and this applies to both men and women. For the most part, it is the employee who makes the first contact with us, and he or she has usually already talked to the manager.

It is often a matter of sleeping poorly, having difficulty prioritizing tasks, being involved in too many different projects that make it unclear what to invest in or prioritize. There are often dependencies between the projects you participate in, and it is unclear what should be prioritized. It is common it has been going on for six months.

The employee has often deprioritized what they think is fun and important (such as family and friends). In addition, these people usually work on breaks in an attempt to catch up more and stop the process.

It is also common for sleep to be negatively affected, and with cognitive problems such as not feeling that anything is fun, losing motivation and being unfair to oneself and not thinking that one is good enough.

## **Is there anything else that you, with your experience, think is important and want to highlight?**

The sooner you get in touch with us, the better! It is easier to fix the problems if it has not been too long.

It is important to increase the knowledge and understanding of the risk you take, if you do not relieve and remove tasks in time, among the employees who feel bad.

And finally, it is important that managers and colleagues are sensitive to each other.

\*ACT -a form of therapy for the prevention of stress and mental health problems.

# Find support

## **AF - Union for University Graduates at Scania (Akademikerföreningen)**

You can always ask us elected representatives in the Union for University for advice and support in work-related issues. We can help with tips and advice on how to act, and also be involved in support in various conversations concerning your work environment or rehabilitation. It usually gets better the earlier in the process that AF is involved.

[brevlada.af@scania.com](mailto:brevlada.af@scania.com)

Phone: 08-553 826 15

[www.saco.se/scania](http://www.saco.se/scania)

## **Occupational health care**

Contact occupational health care by phone:

- Södertälje: 08-553 700 16
- Luleå: 0920-76449
- Oskarshamn: 0491-765 400

What Occupational health care can offer can be found at [Reflex](#).

## **Scania staff support**

This is a service where you can dial in and get professional help with questions about social problems, relationships, finances and legal help. It doesn't have to be work-related issues but can also be related to private life. You get three free calls and you can call without the approval of your manager or HR. You always receive personal service and your case is treated completely anonymously and confidentially in relation to both the employer and society in general. You can find this via Benify (use "personalstöd" as a keyword).

Phone: 0200-21 63 00

## **The Psychiatric Emergency Department - St Görans' Hospital**

If you or a close relative needs help for acute and serious psychiatric conditions, you can go here. NOTE! For life-threatening conditions - call 112! A doctor will assess the condition of the care seeker and then decide whether the person should be admitted to a psychiatric ward or referred to another care center or alternatively be referred to a health center or psychiatric clinic.

- Adress: Vårdvägen 5, S:t Görans sjukhusområde  
(Ring the doorbell when visiting 20.45 – 08.00)
- Phone: 08-123 492 00

## **1177 ("Vårdguiden")**

On their website there is very good information about health and diseases and where you can find care. You can also call telephone number 1177 for medical advice 24/7. [Here](#) you can find a collection of information about where you can get help.

## **Health care Center (Vårdcentralen)**

Here you can make an appointment to get help with things that are not urgent or life-threatening. Some centers also offers video conferencing or chat. At [1177.se](http://1177.se) these centers are listed for Stockholm area.

# Organisations & Initiatives

## **Hjärnfonden**

Hjärnfonden is involved in driving Swedish brain research forward, engaging in the victims' diagnoses and spreads knowledge about the brain.

[www.hjarnfonden.se](http://www.hjarnfonden.se)

## **Mind** – *For mental health*

Through interpersonal conversations, knowledge spreading and lobbying, Mind wants to reduce the stigma and shame surrounding mental health problems and increase the conditions for mental well-being for all people.

[www.mind.se](http://www.mind.se)

## **Aldrig ensam**

This is a non-profit organization that was started by Charlie Eriksson in 2013 to contribute to a more open dialogue about mental health problems. There is good information and support to get.

[www.aldrigensam.com](http://www.aldrigensam.com)

## **Suicide Zero** – *For a society without suicide*

A non-profit organization that since 2013 has been working to radically reduce suicides in Sweden. There is a lot of information and facts about suicide, but also good help and support.

[www.suicidezero.se](http://www.suicidezero.se)

## **SPES** - *National federation for SuicidPrevention & Survivors' Support*

For you who lost a loved one to suicide. Support is offered from survivor to survivor through telephone hotlines, conversation meetings and social media.

[www.spes.se](http://www.spes.se)

# Other

## Insurances

It is a good idea to keep track of your insurances if you end up on a longer sick leave.

### **How do insurance and benefits work?**

When you work at Scania, which has a collective agreement, you have insurance that gives you extra money. In addition to sickness benefit from the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, you receive sick pay and ITP sickness pension thanks to the collective agreement. After one year of sick leave, other rules come into force. Read more on [Avtalat](#) and [Collectum](#).

### **In need of private health insurance?**

You can also choose to take out private health insurance. You will receive support on how to think about health insurance, and help with seeing if you need to supplement your health insurance coverage at Avtal [Rådgivningstjänst](#).

### **Supplement your health insurance coverage?**

If you come to the conclusion that you want to supplement your health insurance protection, you can, for example, do so via Scania's group insurance. Enter into Benify and search for "Pension och Försäkring". Your central union (Sveriges Ingenjörer, Akavia and others) also offers supplementary health insurance.

## Organizational and social work environment

1. Scania's Guideline for Organizational and Social Work Environment (SAH-11-01)
2. Guideline for Risk management (SAH-06-20)
3. Method for identifying risks of change (SAH-BC-06-22)

# Stronger Together

**You are a member of the Union for University Graduates aren't you?** If not - join us so that we can continue to pursue important issues together. As a member, you can also contact us for advice and support in your personal situation.

Together we have a responsibility to be there for each other. Dare to ask, dare to tell! It is not easy, but it is necessary.

We hope that you who have read this booklet have gained increased knowledge, inspiration and courage to make a change. We also hope that it can contribute to awareness, openness and discussion about mental health problems in the workplace.

**Feel free to share it!**



**Join AF!**  
[www.saco.se/scania](http://www.saco.se/scania)



# Stronger Together

A guide to  
Mental Health

[www.saco.se/scania](http://www.saco.se/scania)

[brevlada.af@scania.com](mailto:brevlada.af@scania.com)

08-553 826 15

LinkedIn: Akademikerföreningen at Scania



**Akademikerföreningen på Scania**  
sedan 1956