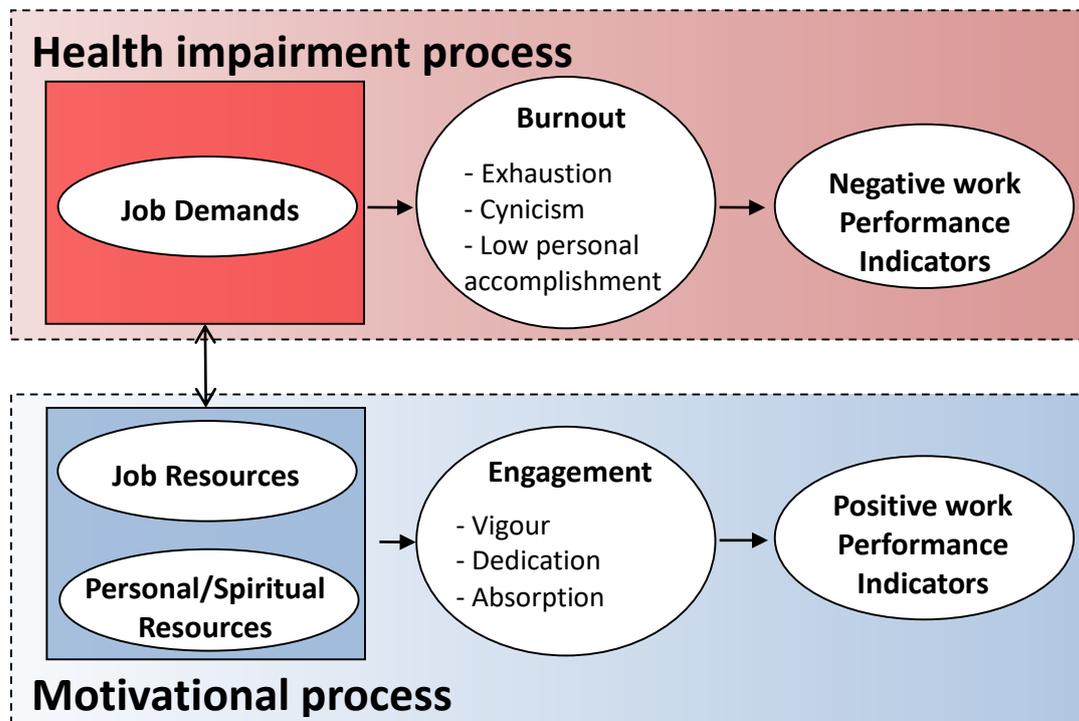# Foundations of Well-Being in Ministry:
Understanding the dual processes

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Introduction:

This session will explore how ministry-work characteristics, personal factors, and specific dimensions of one's spiritual lives (attachment to God, the way one engages their religion to cope with stress, and a sense of "calling") contribute to overall well-being in ministry.

The Job Demands-Resources (JDR) Model

Health impairment process

| Job Demands | **Burnout**
 - Exhaustion
 - Cynicism
 - Low personal accomplishment | **Negative work Performance Indicators** |

| Job Resources
 Personal/Spiritual Resources | **Engagement**
 - Vigour
 - Dedication
 - Absorption | **Positive work Performance Indicators** |

Motivational process

Burnout: is a psychological syndrome in response to chronic stressors related to the occupation. The three key dimensions of this response are an overwhelming **emotional exhaustion**, feelings of **cynicism and detachment** from the job (or clients), and a sense of **ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment**.

Work Engagement: is a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment in employees that is characterised by **vigour**, **dedication**, and **absorption**. *Consider Romans 12:11*

Job Demands are any aspects of the job (tasks to do, relationship dynamics, even physical environments) that require energy and effort to meet. Although job demands are not necessarily negative, they do cost us energy that, if not replaced because there are too many or we have them too long, can deplete energy resources leading to burnout. Burnout in turn inevitably results in negative personal and work outcomes such as anxiety, depression, lower personal initiative, reduced work quality and quantity, and greater absenteeism and intentions to leave.

Challenge Demands: those that have potentially beneficial outcomes if met or one believes can be overcome.

Hindrance Demands: those that impede or hinder the actually accomplishment of core tasks.

Eight common job demands of Australian clergy and other religious workers:

- *Demands of high expectations*
- *Role ambiguity*
- *The variety of tasks and skill-set required*
- *Workload, work type, and time demands*

- Interpersonal conflict and values mismatches
- Isolation
- Financial stress
- Changes in society

Step 1: Identify the job demands and their "type"

What are some of the **job demands** you consider significant in your role?

Which job demands would you consider challenges?

Which job demands would you consider hindrances?

Rate the "weight" of each demand between 1-10.

> *Note:*
>
> *Keep in mind that every person has unique needs and stress thresholds. Something that causes extreme stress for one person might just be an inconvenience – or even a positive challenge – for someone else.*
>
> *This is why it's important to talk to each person in a team context individually. Find out which stressors are causing each person the most trouble and why.*

Step 2: Problem focused coping

Looking at the above list, what could be done to…

1. Focus your time on "your" right job demands (i.e., challenge job demands);
2. Manage your job demands by taking appropriate recovery to avoid chronic energy depletion; and
3. Identify some resources that could help you cope with and address weighty demands.

**Job Resources** are those aspects related to the job that:

    (a) Help a person achieve work tasks;

    (b) Reduce job demands and their associated costs; and

    (c) Stimulate personal growth and development.

Personal Resources are individual characteristics that are linked personal resilience and an ability to be able to "make things happen" around them. Such things as high levels of team- and self-efficacy, an active coping style, optimism, extraversion, emotional stability, conscientiousness, etc.

Spiritual Resources are a subset of personal resources that consist of spiritual beliefs and practices related to an interaction with God that are linked to resiliency and the ability to impact one's environment. For example:

- Secure attachment to God
- Collaborative religious coping style
- A sense of 'call' to the work.

Together, job and personal resources increase motivation and help people to meet their goals at work. In turn, people may become more committed and enthused about their job, because they derive increased fulfilment from the accomplishment of cherished tasks. This engaged state then flows on to positive work outcomes such as organisational commitment, increased initiative, creativity, increased job and life satisfaction, etc.
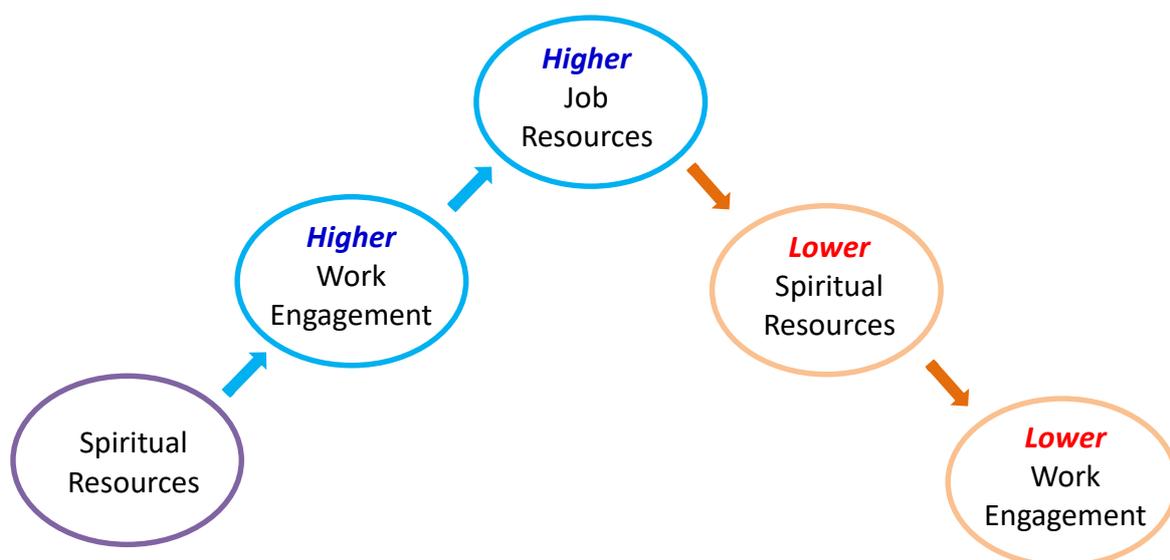
Note: Beware of making *work engagement* and/or your ministry the goal over all else. **One's spiritual life is the key driver of engagement in ministry over time**, but if the work (even ministry) becomes the central focus, it is only a matter of time before work engagement decreases among Christian workers.

Step 3: Identify, cultivate, and draw upon the resources most relevant for your current ministry work context

What are some of the job resources you have experienced as motivation in past ministry or work roles?

What are some of the **personal resources/practices** you have found to have helped developed engagement previously?

Has your **spiritual life** provided resources for you in generating motivation or managing the demands in your ministry? If so, what aspects of your faith and spiritual practices have been particularly "resourceful" for you?

Demands and Resources Interact

We need to manage and have the right *kind* of demands, as well as having sufficient (plenty!) of job and spiritual resources. Indeed for those in ministry particularly, **focusing on improving job and personal resources (or making the most of what is there) does more good than simply reducing job demands**.

Resources		Demands	
		Low	High
High		Average motivation but plateau in role with potential boredom.	Highly motivating and stimulating, but need to detach from work to recover energy.
Low		Under-stimulated in role with definite boredom – becomes "just a job" at best.	Burnout in role.

Three essentials for promoting well-being in ministry:

1. Identify and focus on the right job demands (i.e., challenge job demands);
2. Manage job demands by taking appropriate recovery to avoid chronic energy depletion; and
3. Constantly replenish the resources to meet those right demands – particularly spiritual resources.

Resource building is essential – not simply reduction of demands!

Conclusion: Tips for Battling Burnout and Enhancing Engagement

Changing the Individual

- Change work expectations from abstract, overly high ideals to more concrete, short to medium term goals. Detailed and holistic job descriptions or a personal position focus with yearly or 6 monthly measurable goals greatly aid this.

- In addition to *daily detachment*, take regular and effective breaks that allow you to emotionally re-charge following peak periods of work. Get to know the rhythms of your working day, week, and indeed year, so that you can seek to find sustainable rhythm of acute workload being balanced with "Sabbath" periods.

- Take good care of yourself. People who are strong in both physical health and psychological well-being are in a better position to handle sources of stress and to be of maximum help to others. Five essential things to attend to is an adequate diet, exercise, relaxation time, average of 8 hours sleep, and watching carefully your thinking habits.

- Establish some aspects of home life that are a haven of rest from work – that is, separated from work demands and can include relationships and activities that are positive and rewarding in themselves.

- Another aspect of self-care is to know your strengths, weaknesses, and what you are passionate about in life and work. If people can make a realistic appraisal of their abilities, limits, desires and 'callings', they can recognise the times when they should say "no," take a break, or get help from others.

- Consider how you involve your faith in your work stress (self-directed, deferral, collaborative). What is your overall tendency? Do you recognise one practice in some situations, but other circumstances are triggers for another? What does (or could) it mean in practice to collaborate with God in your daily situations?

- Central to the above two points is your experience of God. Does either of the two dimensions of anxiety about abandonment or avoidance of intimacy resonate with you? Where would you position yourself on the table below?

		Model of Self: Anxiety about Abandonment	
		+	**-**
Model of Other: Avoidance of Intimacy	**+**	**Secure** (Positive Other and Positive Self)	**Preoccupied** (Positive Other and Negative Self)
	-	**Dismissive** (Negative Other and Positive Self)	**Fearful** (Negative Other and Negative Self)

- How can you continue to grow in paying attention to God's personal communication to you, respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with God, and to live out the consequences of that relationship? Supervision? Engaging a spiritual director? Spiritual disciplines? Personal retreats/conferences etc.

Changing the Organisation

It is essential to focus on the job environment as well as the person in it to battle burnout and promote engagement. Managerial or organisational interventions are usually necessary to change the mix of job demands and job resources, but are insufficient unless individuals take up the resources and opportunities provided. Get to know what extra resources are out there to help you grow and develop provided by your ministry team or organisation. Identify resources that would aid your ministry, and put together a proposal for consideration by leadership.

My Summary Applications

My Work Environment

My key Job Demands are:

My key job resources are:

Insights to aid in managing demands and accessing available resources:

Behaviour changes I can enact to manage stress related to the above job demands, and draw on the job resources available:

My Personal Resources

	Simple plan to enact	To whom I will be accountable
Key personal resources I can develop are:		
Key spiritual resources to develop are:		