



# MENTAL HEALTH PLAN

## ENHANCED TRANSCRIPT

---



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



# Welcome to the Workshop

Hi there and welcome. I'm Shulamit Ber Levtov, the entrepreneurs' therapist. You can call me Shula for short, and my pronouns are she/her.

I support women business owners in caring for their mental and emotional well-being in an era of relentless stressors that can make you feel like you want to lose your crap on the daily. This is what helps you set the foundation for sustainable success in business and to show up fully as the CEO self that you want to be.

This is the workshop called “Keeping Your CEO Self in The Driver's Seat”, caring for your mental and emotional well-being as a business owner.

## Overview

Here's what you can expect in this workshop today.

**Housekeeping and Introduction:** First of all, we will take care of a little housekeeping. I will offer a land acknowledgment, and introduce you to the building blocks of the Mental Health Plan and the thinking behind them.

**Identifying Your Plan:** Then you'll identify the elements of your plan, and you'll put it together and learn how to use it.

**Housekeeping and Workshop Materials:** In terms of housekeeping, you can stop the recording anytime.

You also might want to have something handy to record what comes up for you in the workshop - pen and paper.

It's also helpful to have the worksheet handout that comes with the package to refer to as you do your work throughout the workshop.

There will be times in the workshop when I refer to pages in the worksheet package and it would be helpful to have those handy.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



# Land Acknowledgment and Actions for Reconciliation

This land acknowledgment is part of my response to the calls to action from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And I invite you to attend to this land acknowledgment and take this land acknowledgment as your call to action for reconciliation.

I'm an uninvited guest on unceded land that has been stewarded and inhabited for 10,000 years and is still inhabited today by the Algonquin Anishnaabe Nation. This land supports my mental health. It's really such a support for me to be able to go out my door and walk on the land here. And I'm so grateful for the ancestors who stewarded it and cared for it and to those who continue to do so today.

## Actions for Reconciliation:

- 1) One action that you can take today is to go to [whose.land](#) you can see in the upper right-hand corner of the slide there or to the [native-land.ca](#), which is on the next slide.
- 2) You can find out whose land you're on, and then share that information with others and talk about these things.
- 3) Another action you can take today, if it's within your means, is to make reparations. Here are two possibilities. One is pay your rent <https://payyourrent.ca/> and the other is the Indian Residential School Survivor Society <https://www.irsss.ca/>.

NOTE: the clickable links throughout will provide you more information on the topics I can mention only briefly because of time limits.

## How I became the entrepreneurs' therapist

When we go to school or get trained in our profession, we graduate as good technicians. We are good---sometimes very good---at what we do. We are masters of our art, but we know very little, if anything, about business. Most professional training programs don't include business training.

When I went back to school to get my Masters degree, I was doing it rather late in life. My goal was to complete it before I turned 50 and start a private practice. I succeeded. But coming out of school, I knew



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



two things about entrepreneurship. Many small businesses don't make it through their first year, and by the second year, 50% have failed.<sup>1</sup> Also, out of all occupations, mental health professionals score lowest on measures of financial health.<sup>2</sup> This didn't bode well for my future.

Entering this career formally late in life, and having encountered significant financial setbacks in my life as the result of two failed marriages, I had no savings. Having entered the workforce as an adult in the early 80s, at a time when the gig economy was well underway, I had only had contract work, and thus had no pension. Finally, as an older woman entering a new career, I wasn't confident that my employment prospects would be all that good.

I had to have a business that was successful, sustainable, and would allow me to work more or less until the day I died.

So right out of school, I hopped into business training and networking with other business owners.

It turned out that I was the only therapist hanging out in the entrepreneurial spaces where I was. That put me in a privileged position. Business owners, who wouldn't necessarily have confided in other people in networking situations, would whisper in my ear, or drop a hint here and there, about the mental and emotional toll of running a business.

Like the other entrepreneurs I met, I was running a business too. At first a solo practice, then a multidisciplinary holistic stress and trauma clinic. I experienced what an emotional rollercoaster it is to be running a business. I lived first-hand how demanding it is to run a business.

Flash forward to August 2020, and I was drowning. Not literally, but in a sea of stress that felt just as suffocating, and believe it or not, it wasn't related to COVID. That was just the last in a long line of extreme stressors. My group therapy practice looked great. We were doing well financially, engaged in community, running lots of free mental health-related workshops. But behind the scenes? Total agony for me.

I was juggling three jobs in one: therapist, CEO, and chief marketing officer, among many other things, as is the situation for many small business owners. We have to do 99% of the heavy lifting in the business. My

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.entrepreneur.com/starting-a-business/the-true-failure-rate-of-small-businesses>

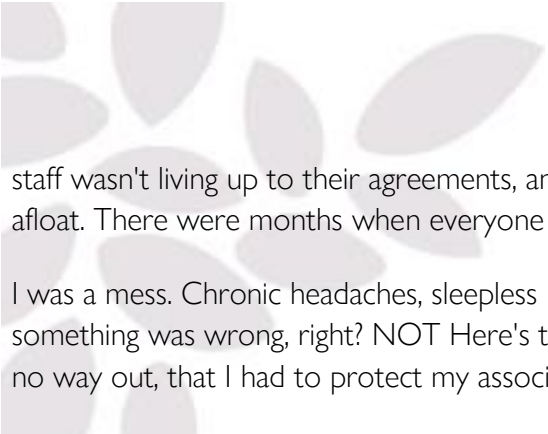
<sup>2</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282241294\\_The\\_Financial\\_Health\\_of\\_Mental\\_Health\\_Professionals](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282241294_The_Financial_Health_of_Mental_Health_Professionals) Britt-Lutter, Sonya & Klontz, Bradley & Tibbetts, Racquel & Leitz, Linda. (2015). The Financial Health of Mental Health Professionals. Journal of Financial Therapy. 6. 10.4148/1944-9771.1076.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



staff wasn't living up to their agreements, and I was working myself to the bone just to keep everything afloat. There were months when everyone else got paid but me.

I was a mess. Chronic headaches, sleepless nights, constant anxiety... anyone would have known something was wrong, right? NOT Here's the kicker: I thought I had to keep going. I believed there was no way out, that I had to protect my associates and the business at all costs. (Hello hustle culture...)

Then came the moment that changed everything. I lost it. I mean really lost it. I publicly called out a team member for dropping the ball, breaking every rule of good leadership. I behaved in a way that caused harm not only to the team but to the individual human person I had called out. My beloved expressed a tiny complaint and I yelled at him, "How dare you do this to me?" This was not me. I was officially off the deep end, not myself at all.

That's when my own therapist stepped in. He held up a mirror to my stress-induced inner turmoil that was separating me from my best and true self and said, "You can't go on like this." You know what? He was right.

He said he thought I needed to take a stress leave. I said, "Welll I actually was thinking about taking a week..." but before I could finish my sentence, he was shaking his head. I sat back to consider what he had said. As I thought about taking a week... two weeks... a month of leave, it became clear to me that I had to leave the business.

It was a tough pill to swallow. Exiting a business prematurely, or not in the way that you want to, is a blow. It felt like admitting defeat. I worried about letting down the community, hurting my associates financially, being seen as a failure. But sometimes, the bravest thing you can do is walk away.

So I did it. I exited the business, took that much-needed stress leave, and went back to work as a solo practitioner.

As I reflected on niching and marketing my solo practice, I thought about my own experience running a business. I remembered all the brave founders who had told me about their mental health struggles, and I began to wonder. Then I looked at the academic and professional research, and it turned out entrepreneurial mental health challenges are a thing! They're real, not just anecdotal or coincidental.

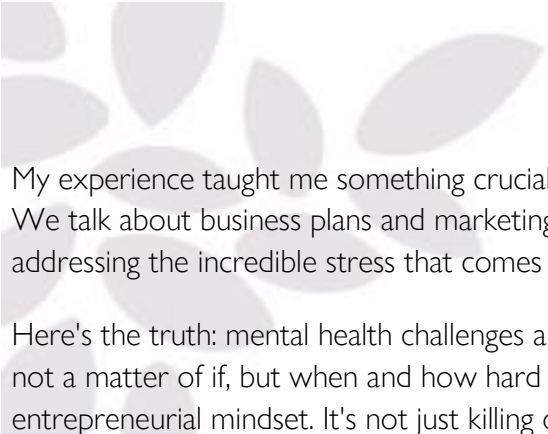
In this process, I realized that there were no therapists who understand entrepreneurship. But the need was clear, and that's how the Entrepreneurs' Therapist brand, and the work I do now as a therapist for women business owners, came into being.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



My experience taught me something crucial: entrepreneurship and mental health are deeply intertwined. We talk about business plans and marketing strategies, but where's the mental health plan? Why aren't we addressing the incredible stress that comes with running a business?

Here's the truth: mental health challenges aren't a sign of weakness in entrepreneurs. They're a given. It's not a matter of if, but when and how hard they'll hit. We need to change the harmful "hustle at all costs" entrepreneurial mindset. It's not just killing our spirits; it's killing our businesses too.

So now, I'm on a mission to prevent what happened to me from happening to any other founder. In my work, as the Entrepreneurs' Therapist and a fractional Chief Mental Health Officer for founders, I help business owners navigate the wild emotional rollercoaster of entrepreneurship, and advocate for change at the ecosystem level by consulting and teaching in entrepreneurship programs and speaking at conferences about the integration of care for founder mental health into business plans and processes.

**Privilege and Experience:** My pronouns are she/her, and I experience intersections of systems of oppression, including those around age, disability, body size, sexuality, and racialization. I'm also aware that although I'm a member of a racialized group but because I pass for white, I have a great deal of access to White privilege. I also experience cisgender, heterosexual privilege, although I identify as bisexual. Those things play a role in how I see and think about things.<sup>3</sup>

## Mental Health Risks are Inherent in Entrepreneurship

Let's reflect on the working conditions that we face when running a business.

**Sleep deprivation:** You can't sleep because your mind is racing, or because you're stressed or anxious. You're deprived of sleep, because you're working late into the night, or you're up early. You're up early because you can't sleep or you get up early on purpose to start the work day early.

**Food deprivation:** We find ourselves putting off meals. Making just one more phone call, writing one more email and suddenly it's 4 pm and you haven't had breakfast or lunch. Maybe you've got back-to-back zoom meetings. You show up to the meeting and you haven't eaten; you say, "Excuse me. I just need to

---

<sup>3</sup> If you're unfamiliar with the idea of privilege, you can check this out to learn more

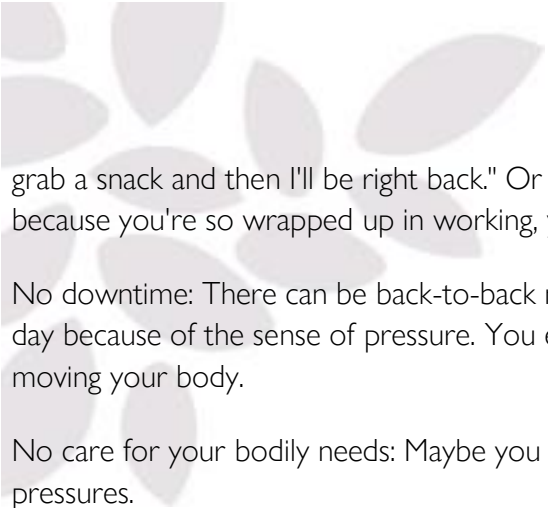
<https://opentextbc.ca/symaccandrep/wp-content/uploads/sites/342/2021/02/Worksheet-Power-and-Privilege-Activity.docx>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



grab a snack and then I'll be right back." Or you gobble down your meal in front of the computer. Or, because you're so wrapped up in working, you don't eat until late into the evening.

No downtime: There can be back-to-back meetings with no breaks. Or working with your head down all day because of the sense of pressure. You end up stuck in front of your computer all day, so you're not moving your body.

No care for your bodily needs: Maybe you don't take bathroom breaks because of time and productivity pressures.

Restricted physical activity: your body barely moves because you don't get up to eat or go to the bathroom and you sit cramped at the computer all day.

No leisure time: You're too pooped from working and peopling all day that you have nothing left for other activities, not even for family time.

Isolation: the only socialization you do is business networking, and that doesn't really count as human connection because you have to "be on" all the time. Just like with other leisure activities, you're too emotionally, physically and cognitively depleted to be able to have connecting conversations with other people.

Beyond the 9-to-5, there's now the so-called "5-to-9." We might find that we're not only working like this during business hours as well as early mornings and evenings, but with the hustle and productivity culture now there's a "5-to-9" that precedes the nine to five. The "five to nine" refers to a self-care or wellness routine: you go for your run, do your yoga, journaling and meditation then drink your smoothie before you start work. It's seen as something you do in order to be productive. It's all in the service of working ridiculously hard during your work day (or work day-and-night). So you have the nine to five—which might actually be nine to midnight—plus the five to nine.

It might not like be like this every day. But these working conditions are a common occurrence in the life of a self-employed person.

This is often glorified. This is the life of the entrepreneur. This is hustle culture. This is what we have to do to grow our businesses and succeed.

Or so we're told. So "they" say.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



I invite you to take these conditions out of the entrepreneurial context:

- sleep deprivation
- hunger
- enclosure in a windowless room for hours on end
- restricted from human or other social contact
- prohibited from meeting your bodily needs
- restricted physical activity.

What does that bring to mind? What other kind of environment does it make you think of?

In my workshops and presentations, when I run the audience through this scenario and ask this question, people respond that it sounds like jail, prison or torture.

I'm *not* saying at all that we entrepreneurs of privilege have the same experience as jail or torture. Not at all.

What I *am* saying is these are the kinds of tactics used by police and military all over the world to break people down. So when you start to think about it this way, is it any surprise that, if these are our working conditions, we break down?

When we break down, there is nothing wrong with us. This is what happens when we experience these kinds of conditions.

We tend to think about breaking down as bad. And certainly, it's unpleasant and not something that we would want to experience. And it's also a signal to look under the hood to check with what's going on, to pay attention.

It's important to note that when you break down, *there's nothing wrong with you*, not only because of your working conditions, but also because mental health and entrepreneurship are inherently linked.

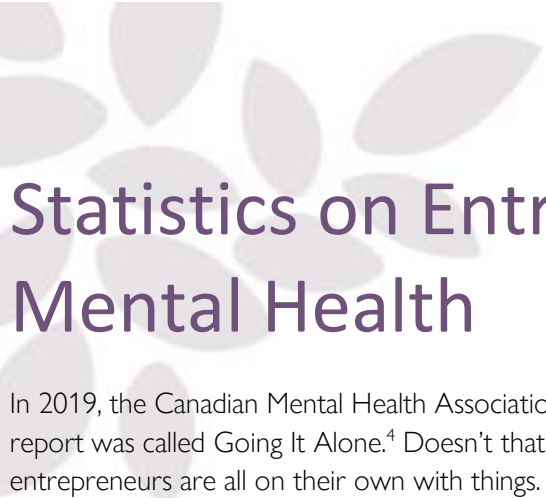
We *expect* mental and emotional challenges to be inherent in entrepreneurship. Our personal experience tells us this, like we've just discussed around our working conditions, but also the academic and professional literature tells us the same thing.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



# Statistics on Entrepreneurship and Mental Health

In 2019, the Canadian Mental Health Association surveyed 476 entrepreneurs, about their mental health. Their report was called Going It Alone.<sup>4</sup> Doesn't that title capture the entrepreneurial experience? For the most part, entrepreneurs are all on their own with things.

The big takeaway from this report is that mental health is a missing priority in Canada's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

They recommend that mental health support and education be integrated into business programs and training nationally.

Here are some of the statistics around entrepreneurship and mental health.<sup>5</sup>

Entrepreneurs have a higher prevalence of mental health challenges in the general population. For example, in the US, 49% of the entrepreneurs surveyed reported having a mental health condition.

in Atlantic Canada, a survey was conducted and 68.5% of entrepreneurs who responded to the survey reported some form of mental health condition.

A national Canadian study was conducted by another organization, and they found that 46% of Canadian entrepreneurs felt that mental health issues interfered with their ability to work.

**Prevalence of Depression and Stress:** 66% of Canadian entrepreneurs report feeling depressed at least once a week. And in the US entrepreneurs who were studied in a survey, they reported depression and anxiety are the top two of the top three mental health conditions that they experience. Entrepreneurs are more susceptible to stress and more likely to experience poor work-life balance and burnout.

This may sound like a whole lot of bad news.

But the reason I'm telling you this is so that you can know that *you are not the only one*.

You are not the exception.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://cmha.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GoingItAlone-CMHA-BDCReport-FINAL-EN.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.shula.ca/mental-health-entrepreneurship/>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



All the evidence points to the fact that entrepreneurship and mental health challenges are inherently and intimately connected.

# Mental Health Planning as an Integral Part of Business Planning

If it isn't clear already, here's why we need a mental health plan.

The essence of resilience — both personal resilience and business resilience — is being resourced and prepared.<sup>6</sup>

Resilience is not an inherent capacity; it's not something you're born with.

Resilience is a skill; it's actually a set of skills that can be developed.

Resilience doesn't happen by magic. It's not just something you're born with.

The essence of resilience is being resourced and prepared; it's putting plans in place and putting support in place.

Plans are how we recognize and mitigate risk, and risk, including risks to our mental health, is inherent in entrepreneurship, as we've seen.

As business owners, we have business plans — either in our heads, on paper somewhere, or in a digital file somewhere.

These plans include financial plans, marketing plans, cash flow forecasts, all the things.

If mental health challenges are inherent in entrepreneurship, doesn't it make sense then that if plans are how we identify and mitigate risk, we should also have a mental health plan for the founder as an inherent part of our business plan?

Obviously, we are our business's greatest and most valuable asset.

Having a mental health plan in place is the way to protect that asset, because, as I said, the essence of resilience is being prepared.

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.shula.ca/resilience-mindset-toxic-positivity/>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



But also, when we include our mental health in our business planning as integral to the success of our businesses, we are changing the way we relate to ourselves. And that changes our businesses and the world.

## KPIs: What are Mental Health Lag and Lead Indicators?

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are quantifiable metrics used to assess how effectively an organization is achieving key business objectives. They include both lag and lead indicators.

In this workshop you will learn about the two categories of lead indicators for your mental and emotional wellbeing: the 7 Ffactors, which are external conditions over which you have little to no control, and the 3 Principles, which are the things over which you have control. You will also learn how to identify your lag indicators, the symptoms that you are doing poorly and the signs that you are doing well.

Here's a type of scenario from which these terms arose.

Imagine the old school sales dude in the 1950s suit with a skinny tie and the fedora. And he goes to work in a room full of other sales dudes at tables with phones, making calls and checking things off a list. And he sits down on his desk; his list and his phone are there. He knows that he has to work through this list of 100 calls before he can make one sale. Making 50 calls is his lead indicator. It's the action in which he has to engage. And the one sale is his lag indicator. It's the outcome.

Let's talk about how this applies to you.

### Lead indicators

Lead indicators look forward; they are measurable actions and what leads to outcomes. In your mental and emotional well-being, lead indicators include your 3 Principles that you apply for self and communal care. It also involves the conditions you experience—the 7 Factors, what's happening in your life and in the world.

The 7 factors are out of your control. The 3 Principles (self and communal care) are things that are usually in your control, positive things that build you up, the things you know will set you up for success. That's the stereotypical "shoulds" around self-care. These are things that are on your list that you do on a regular basis to make sure that you feel well. (In this category are also things you know will have negative consequences, but you do anyway).

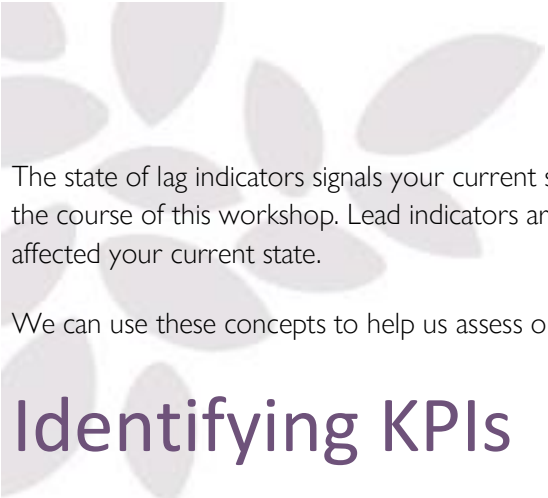
### Lag indicators



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



The state of lag indicators signals your current state. These are unique to every person. You will identify yours in the course of this workshop. Lead indicators are the tactics, strategies and behaviours that will affect or have affected your current state.

We can use these concepts to help us assess our mental and emotional well-being and make a plan for them.

## Identifying KPIs

(Refer to Lag Indicators 4, page 7 in the worksheets)

In my work, I've identified 7 Factors<sup>7</sup> of risk to entrepreneur mental health that show up most frequently in the work that I do with clients.

These 7 Factors are one element of the lead indicators in a mental health plan. You'll learn how they fit into your plan later.

### Factor 1: Isolation and Lack of Support Networks

**Loneliness and Health:** Isolation is the first topic that comes up with entrepreneurs with whom I speak, and with whom I have worked. Its isolation itself is one of the social determinants of health.<sup>8</sup> And you may recall that the US Surgeon General recently stated that loneliness poses health risks that are equivalent to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.<sup>9</sup> Isolation is also a major risk factor for suicide.<sup>10</sup>

As business owners, our isolation starts with our work. Entrepreneurs are isolated, simply because there are fewer business owners around. Also, the uniqueness of our experience as business owners sets us apart from other folks who don't own businesses.

Furthermore, the more intersections we experience, the less likely it is, for example, that we will find someone who's an entrepreneur and also has a disability and also is racialized, and also is in a different size body. The more intersections we experience, the less likely it will be to find peers.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.shula.ca/entrepreneur-mental-health-7-challenges/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.goinvo.com/vision/determinants-of-health/?utm\\_source=pocket\\_mylist](https://www.goinvo.com/vision/determinants-of-health/?utm_source=pocket_mylist)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/loneliness-poses-health-risks-as-deadly-as-smoking-u-s-surgeon-general-says>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9641655/>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



It's also lonely at the top stuff comes up for leaders about the people that they lead, the clients, the employees, the contractors, etc.<sup>11</sup> We do a lot of emotional labor, to manage our natural reactions with interactions with folks, and to the work that we do.

Unfortunately, there are very few places where we are supported in processing our responses to things, and where it's safe to be transparent about what's going on with us in response to the stresses we experience in our business.

**Limited Socializing Opportunities:** Sometimes we're just too busy (or too pooped) to socialize beyond networking situations. But in those instances, we have to be always on because we're concerned about impression management. If we appear to be vulnerable, folks might doubt us and our capacity to do business, or doubt our business and then not become customers or clients. It's hard to trust that disclosing your vulnerability isn't going to have a negative impact. In addition, it's hard to find the right place where you can really let your hair down with people who get what it's like to be an entrepreneur.

## Factor 2: The Hustle, Oppression and Self-Worth

**Stress from Systems of Oppression:** The second factor is something I refer to as “the hustle”.<sup>12</sup> But really it refers to systems of oppression. Much of the stress that we experience as women business owners comes from systems of oppression that exert invisible, but deeply felt and harmful pressures on us.

**Impact of Intersectionality:** It is the case, as I mentioned before, the more intersections that occur and you experience in your body, the more the systems of oppression are going to exert harm and pressure upon you. We mindlessly will absorb so-called truths from these systems, without even really realizing where they came from.

The dominant systems and points of view can affect our mindset and the way we think about things like what it means to be successful. For example, unless we don't start to examine what success really means to us, and how we want to accomplish that success, we might find ourselves behaving in certain ways and engaging in certain behaviors that cause us harm.

**Institutional Barriers:** Institutional expressions of these oppressive systems put barriers in our way. And one really big example for women entrepreneurs and others, like Indigenous entrepreneurs and disabled entrepreneurs, it's difficult to find institutional funding, because they are perceived as less competent than others.

**The Impact of Capitalism and White Supremacy:** At the root of it, living under capitalism is traumatizing.<sup>13</sup> White supremacy is the root of capitalism<sup>14</sup>, and all other systems of oppression are connected to it. The constant

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2213058615300097>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.shula.ca/hustle-culture-is-toxic/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/capitalism-exploits-the-body-s-response-to-traumatic-stress>

<sup>14</sup> [https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4339&context=honors\\_theses](https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4339&context=honors_theses)



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



onslaught of so-called microaggressions<sup>15</sup> elicit a stress response in our mind and body and that wears us down, especially when we're running a business. We have a sense that our survival depends on the success of our business.

**Toxic Productivity and Harm:** What may be more visible than these so-called invisible systems of oppression, and how they are at work in the world around us, is the hustle culture of toxic productivity. And the extractive focus on production at all and every cost. Again, this is something that we absorb, often unquestioningly, because we're concerned about the success of our business and about earning money and about making it.

**The Toll of the Hustle:** We work hard, we might even have learned how to work smart. But nevertheless, it all comes down to us. There are times when we work more than eight hours a day and metaphorically more than seven days a week. There are times we push ourselves to work more than is good for us, or our businesses—even when we don't have to; we can get caught in what I call the hustle trance.

**The Consequences of Hustling:** We experience a great deal of stress and pressure to get clients and make money. We may be in a position where this pressure is real. Or we may be in a position where we're still engaging in this pressured kind of behavior, even though it's less relevant now because our business is older or mature.

When you're self-employed, the pressure to succeed can feel like life and death and that impacts on the body resulting in the fight response, which is really the hustle. Being in the hustle, being in a fight response without any time to come back into the rest and digest/restore phase that the nervous system needs so much, we end up risking harm—mental, emotional and physical harm. This is why the hustle is one of the risks to mental health for entrepreneurs.

### Factor 3: VUCA and Daily Struggles

**Navigating the Complexity:** VUCA is another risk: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. This acronym, that originated from leadership theories coined in 1987, refers to the conditions experienced by leaders—people in leadership positions—and if you're running a business, you're no less a leader.

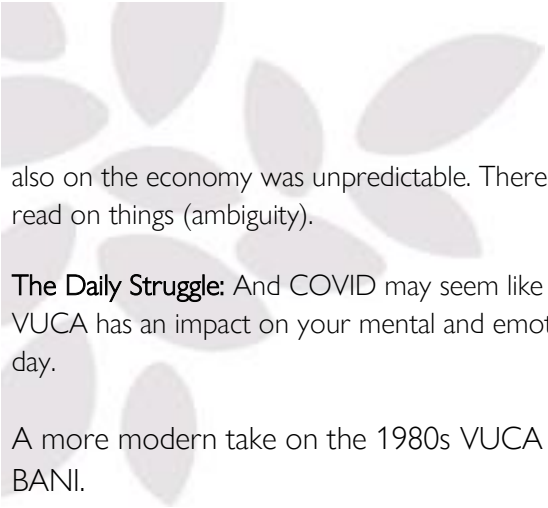
Along with these challenges, we have decision making/problem solving, always facing new and ever-changing conditions and wearing all the hats, like being CEO or bookkeeper or PR person, we're marketers, we're doing customer service, all this takes its toll resulting in cognitive fatigue, and depletion of emotional and physical resources.

**Daily Encounters with VUCA:** The most recent example that everyone knows, demonstrates what VUCA is in very large terms: the onset of the COVID pandemic, where conditions were really volatile. It was very sudden; the data and directives were constantly changing the path of COVID (uncertainty), and its impact on the level of health but

---

<sup>15</sup> <https://hbr.org/2022/03/we-need-to-retire-the-term-microaggression>





also on the economy was unpredictable. There were so many forces at play (complexity), and it was hard to get a read on things (ambiguity).

**The Daily Struggle:** And COVID may seem like an exception, but when I lay it out this way, you can clearly see how VUCA has an impact on your mental and emotional well-being. We women entrepreneurs face VUCA every single day.

A more modern take on the 1980s VUCA concept that address the current breaking down of systems is BANI.

Jamais Cascio developed the BANI concept, when he and other futurists found that they couldn't as reliably make reasonable judgments about what was to come in the weeks and months ahead.

"The world has rocketed past merely being "uncertain" or "volatile." At this point, VUCA no longer captures disruptions to the norm, it *is* the norm. To borrow a concept from chemistry, there has been a *phase change* in the nature of our social (and political, and cultural, and technological) reality — we're no longer happily bubbling along, the boiling has begun. BANI makes the statement that what we're seeing isn't a temporary aberration, it's a new phase." Jamais Cascio

*Brittle:* Brittle chaos is sudden, surprising, and hard to ignore. Brittleness is illusory strength.

*Anxious* (or Anxiety-creating): Anxious chaos is confusing, deceptive, and emotionally painful. In an Anxious world, every choice appears to be potentially disastrous.

*Nonlinear:* Nonlinear chaos is disproportionate, surprising, and counter-intuitive. In a Nonlinear world, cause and effect are seemingly disconnected or disproportionate.

*Incomprehensible:* Incomprehensible chaos is ridiculous, senseless, even unthinkable. We try to find answers but the answers don't make sense.<sup>16</sup>

#### Factor 4: Barriers to Professional Support in Entrepreneurship

**Entrepreneurial Poverty:** As entrepreneurs, we experience barriers to professional support. Of course, what first comes to mind is that professional support means therapy. And you know, entrepreneurial poverty is a thing; we are not all Jeff Bezos or Galen Weston. We don't always have the cash at hand that we would like to be able to do things in our business. Certainly, after-tax cash can be scarce. For me, there have been months when my business

---

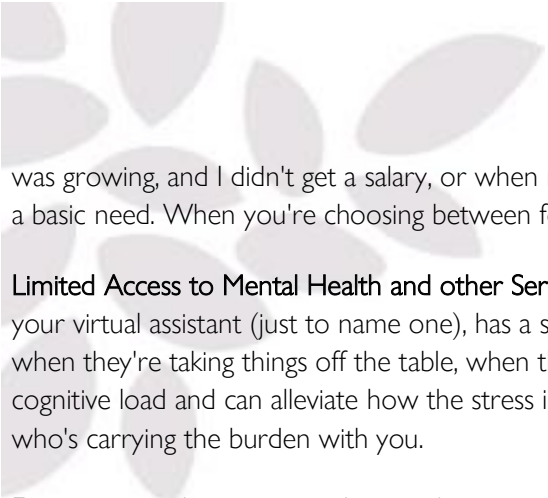
<sup>16</sup> <https://medium.com/@cascio/facing-the-age-of-chaos-b00687b1f51d>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



was growing, and I didn't get a salary, or when my salary was not a full salary. But therapy? We don't look at that as a basic need. When you're choosing between food, rent and therapy, obviously, food and rent come first.

**Limited Access to Mental Health and other Services:** Having the support of other folks in your business, such as your virtual assistant (just to name one), has a significant impact on your mental and emotional well-being. Because when they're taking things off the table, when they're carrying some of the weight for you, that alleviates the cognitive load and can alleviate how the stress is impacting your body. You're not alone; there's somebody there who's carrying the burden with you.

Entrepreneurial poverty is a thing; cash poverty is a thing. That makes access to support difficult, whether it's mental health support or other support.

**Stigma and Disclosure Challenges:** There is very high demand for mental health professionals, and there's a lack of practitioners. There are even fewer who understand the intersection of entrepreneurship and mental health.

Stigma is also a barrier. In 2022, The Hustle reported that 84% of business owners surveyed say stigma exists around mental health challenges within the business community.<sup>17</sup> You're not going to disclose your struggles if you're concerned about what people are going to think about you. Having to keep your struggles to yourself is a stressor in and of itself. It kind of piles on the distress; you're already in distress, but you can't disclose that to anyone. It's a double whammy.

There's a common belief that if we break down or need support, something's wrong with us. You can see how all these things come together to create barriers to professional support and how these barriers can impact our mental and emotional well-being.

## Factor 5: The Link Between Self-Worth and Business Success

Tying your self-worth to success is a common human foible. It's natural, or habitual I should say, that we connect our sense of self-worth with the role we play in life. When the role shifts or we lose it, we don't know who we are anymore. We haven't got any way to tell ourselves stories about ourselves that help us feel good about our success and ourselves.

This is even more the case with entrepreneurs, especially values-driven entrepreneurs, because we identify so closely with our businesses and the impact that our businesses are going to have on the world. When our businesses aren't succeeding, our vision is put in question, and then we end up telling ourselves all kinds of bad things about ourselves. Like, why did I do this? What did you think you were doing? This harm is going to continue in the world, and I'm powerless to stop it.

---

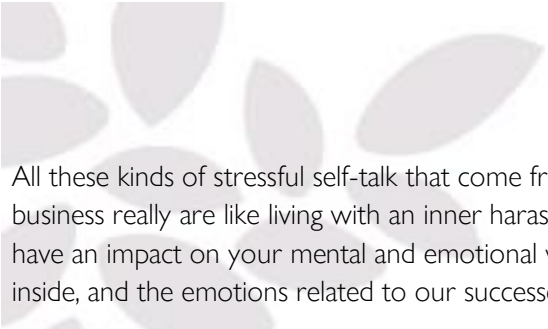
<sup>17</sup> <https://blog.hubspot.com/the-hustle/recover-from-burnout>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



All these kinds of stressful self-talk that come from connecting your sense of worth with the performance of your business really are like living with an inner harasser, an inner bully. Just like an outer harasser or an outer bully can have an impact on your mental and emotional well-being, the same applies to the way we talk to ourselves on the inside, and the emotions related to our successes and failures toss us around.<sup>18</sup>

### Factor 6: Predisposition

Entrepreneurs—many entrepreneurs—have a predisposition to mental health challenges. As I mentioned before, research conducted in the US and Canada has documented the mental health challenges experienced by entrepreneurs.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, some of us come to entrepreneurship from full-time employment, and owning and running a business was seen as a way to improve our mental health. We were in toxic workplaces or systems of oppression that were having a significant impact on our well-being. Alternatively, we create businesses to accommodate our mental health needs because traditional nine-to-five work doesn't. Additionally, as I said, entrepreneurs are more likely to come from a pool of people in the general population who are predisposed to mental health challenges.

In his research, Michael A. Freeman, who's a psychiatrist and a psychologist in the US, found that people who are on the energetic, motivated, and creative side are both more likely to be entrepreneurial and more likely to have strong emotional states. These states may include depression, despair, hopelessness, loss of motivation, and even suicidal thinking.<sup>20</sup> So, the state of our mental health as human beings is impacted by our business, but it's also influenced by what mental health status we are bringing to the table.

### Factor 7: The “Invisible” Factor

We bring our whole selves to our businesses, including our mental and emotional self. That's a factor outside our business that comes in to mix with the other factors inside our business. These factors amplify one another, as do all the other six factors.

This is what I call the “invisible 7<sup>th</sup> factor,” because the fact that all these aspects amplify one another is often lost on us.

We might think, “What's the matter with me? I can handle anything. I've been rolling with the punches for years. Why am I losing my cool now when all that happened is my software crashed or my VA quit?”

---

<sup>18</sup> Self-compassion is a powerful tool for unlinking self-worth and success. Here are two resources:  
[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/try\\_selfcompassion](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/try_selfcompassion) and <http://www.selfcompassion.org/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/innovations/wp/2015/04/29/crazy-good-how-mental-illnesses-help-entrepreneurs-thrive/>

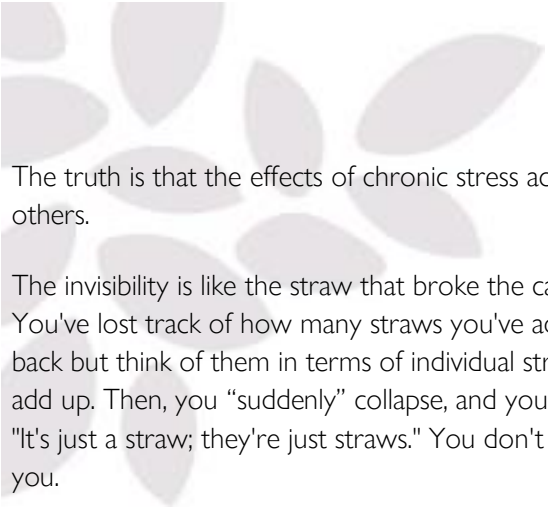
<sup>20</sup> [https://www.michaelafreemanmd.com/Research\\_files/Are%20Entrepreneurs%20Touched%20with%20Fire%20\(pre-pub%20n\)%204-17-15.pdf](https://www.michaelafreemanmd.com/Research_files/Are%20Entrepreneurs%20Touched%20with%20Fire%20(pre-pub%20n)%204-17-15.pdf)



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



The truth is that the effects of chronic stress accumulate, and each new stressor exacerbates the impact of all the others.

The invisibility is like the straw that broke the camel's back. You look at a straw, and it doesn't seem like a big deal. You've lost track of how many straws you've added to your load. So, when you have three tons of straws on your back but think of them in terms of individual straws, you might toss one more without realizing how all the straws add up. Then, you “suddenly” collapse, and you wonder what's happening. It's because you're thinking to yourself, "It's just a straw; they're just straws." You don't consider them as a whole, and how the collective impact lands on you.

This is why it's important to keep in mind this invisible seventh factor—that all these factors come together and amplify one another.

You might be saying, "Come on, these things aren't unique to business owners." And this is true; these experiences are human in nature.

But it's important to recognize that while non-entrepreneurs experience these things, we experience them in a unique way. We face them with an intensity and frequency that folks who don't own businesses don't have to go through.

These are our working conditions and the challenges we face every day.

## ACTIVITY

I'm inviting you to take a pause now.

This a lot of information, so it might feel overwhelming.

What you might like to do right now is pause the recording and take a break here. You might like to stretch and get a drink, go to the bathroom, have a snack — whatever feels right.

You might be having reactions to this information. It might be bringing stuff up for you — thoughts, feelings, memories, reactions.

So after you take a break, take some time to journal or make notes on the seven factors and what comes up for you.

If you recognize any of these 7 Factors from your own life and the ways in which they've come up for you as you've been going through your business to date, I invite you to consider taking notes or journaling.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



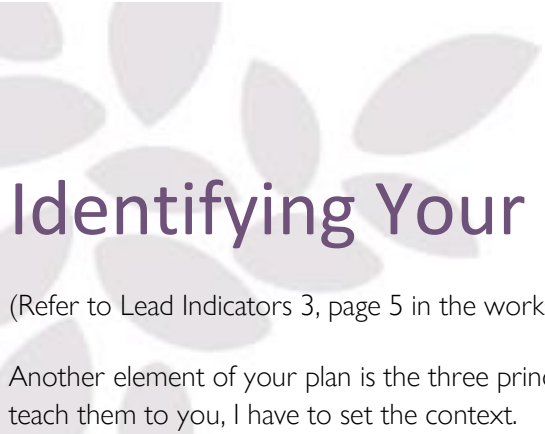
I'll be right here when you come back.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

[shula.ca](https://shula.ca) | [shulamit@shula.ca](mailto:shulamit@shula.ca) | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



# Identifying Your Lead Indicators

(Refer to Lead Indicators 3, page 5 in the worksheets)

Another element of your plan is the three principles of stress resilience, which are the lead indicators,. But before I teach them to you, I have to set the context.

## Understanding the CEO Self and its Functions

Your CEO self is the part of the brain that supports creative problem-solving, taking in and synthesizing new information, making decisions with that new information, focus, collaboration — all the kinds of things that you need as a CEO, as the person who's running your business, to conduct business, to be the person at the helm. But when you flip your lid, your CEO self goes offline.

I invite you to consider the brain in the palm of your hand<sup>21</sup> as a metaphor for how you experience stress and emotions. I say metaphor because the triune brain theory has been debunked. For a good lay explanation of how the brain works, please read Lisa Feldman Barrett, 7 ½ Lessons about the Brain.<sup>22</sup>

You can think of the back of your forearm as the spinal column. This is the back of your brain, what used to be called the lizard brain. Then we have the midbrain, which we could call the mammalian brain. It houses the amygdala and the hippocampus, responsible for emotions and memories.

Then we have the prefrontal cortex, which I call the CEO self. This part supports creative problem-solving, taking in and synthesizing new information, decision-making, focus, concentration, creativity, collaboration — all skills we need as founders and CEOs.

The problem is, or the challenge is, that when the amygdala becomes hot, when the emotions are high, then the CEO self — the prefrontal cortex — feels like it goes offline. In Lisa Feldman Barrett's terms, the brain directs energy away from the executive or so-called higher functions and toward survival.

I call this experience flipping your lid. The survival response takes over, and cortical function is inhibited. Your CEO self and its functions are unavailable to you.

When your CEO-self is offline, metaphorically speaking, not communicating with the rest of you, then all you have to go with are the survival responses.

---

<sup>21</sup> <https://drdansiegel.com/hand-model-of-the-brain/>

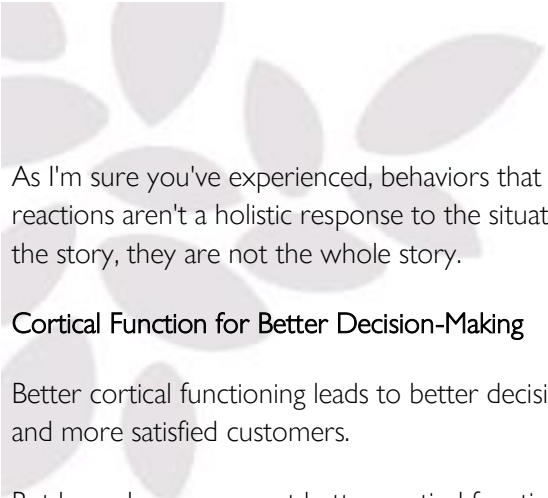
<sup>22</sup> <https://lisafeldmanbarrett.com/books/seven-and-a-half-lessons-about-the-brain/>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



As I'm sure you've experienced, behaviors that arise solely out of survival responses, emotions and habitual reactions aren't a holistic response to the situation and don't serve us well. Although they're an important part of the story, they are not the whole story.

### Cortical Function for Better Decision-Making

Better cortical functioning leads to better decision-making, greater insight, more ease, a more profitable business, and more satisfied customers.

But how do you support better cortical function when emotions are high?

Talking to yourself has a limited effect when it comes to regulating emotions.

When activated, the brain is a lot like a scared cat or dog, or like a pre-verbal child.

For example, when you've been upset, has anybody ever told you to stop being upset? Or when you're angry, somebody says, "Well, don't be angry," or when you're worried, somebody says, "Oh, don't worry," does that actually help? Does that actually make you feel any better? For me, it makes me feel worse!

### Experience and Regulation

Your organism needs *experiences*, not language, to be able to get the message.

When you engage in experiences, your "inner bunny" can calm down and the CEO self can get back into the driver's seat.

We need to provide the inner bunny with experiences that show it the bear is gone and it's okay.

That's where the three principles of stress resilience come in. These are the second element of your plan: Soothe, Discharge, and Nourish are the three principles.<sup>23</sup>

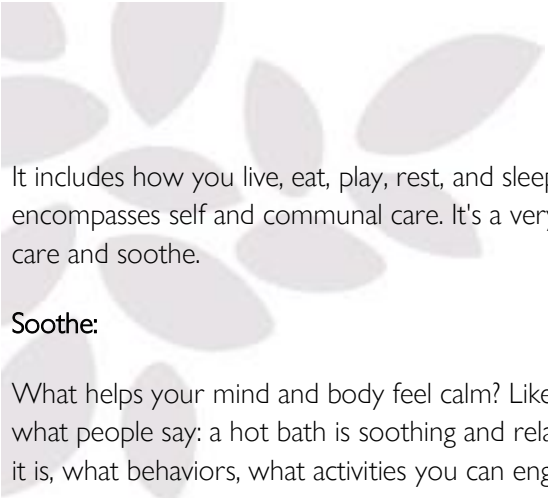
## Soothe, Discharge, and Nourish

The concepts associated with the three principles of stress resilience involve a far more comprehensive approach to self-care than just spa dates or vacations.

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.shula.ca/three-principles-of-stress-relief/>





It includes how you live, eat, play, rest, and sleep. It also includes how you're connected to others in the world. This encompasses self and communal care. It's a very broad way of thinking about stress relief, stress resilience, and self-care and soothe.

### **Soothe:**

What helps your mind and body feel calm? Like melted butter, what might help you just have that feeling? It's often-what people say: a hot bath is soothing and relaxing, but not if you don't like hot baths, right? You have to find what it is, what behaviors, what activities you can engage in that help you feel this way.

### **Discharge:**

Discharge has to do with moving your body and your emotions.

By movement, I don't mean exercise, unless exercise is a super fun thing for you. I really mean just moving your body in ways that feel good. It can be as simple as putting headphones in and listening to a song and having a little cheer dance. Or it can be running up and down the stairs, or it can be engaging in sports or working out—whatever it is that's fun for you, a fun way to move your body.

Discharging your emotions also is whatever works for you. Obviously, as a therapist, and you know popular culture, the first thing that comes to mind is getting a therapist to talk to somebody. But talking isn't always what can be supportive.

You need to find ways for your emotions to come out. It might be venting to a friend; it might be making notes; it might be yelling—whatever works for you to let your emotions out.

I have a friend who likes to watch sad movies when she needs to have a good cry because it's too overwhelming to cry about what she's upset about. But she knows that tears need to come out, so she'll watch a sad movie and allow the tears come out.

### **The Significance of Physical and Emotional Movement**

It's important to move both your body and your emotions. Moving the body, in particular, is really important because, to come back to the idea of the bunny: what happens when a threat is perceived by the nervous system? Mobilization messages are sent to the body to either fight or run.

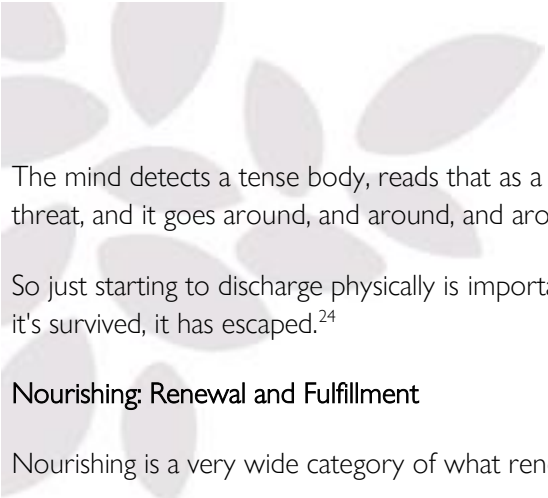
But we're not bunnies. There aren't any bears we can't fight, and we certainly can't run away from them. It's phone calls, emails, all that kind of thing. And so, we need to discharge what's built up in the body because, otherwise, it will set up a feedback loop.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levto, MA, RSW, CFSW



The mind detects a tense body, reads that as a threat, sends more mobilization messages, which then registers as a threat, and it goes around, and around, and around.

So just starting to discharge physically is important for stress resilience because it helps the whole body know that it's survived, it has escaped.<sup>24</sup>

### **Nourishing: Renewal and Fulfillment**

Nourishing is a very wide category of what renews your spirit and fills your soul.

It can be spending time in nature, spending time with friends, worship, service, singing, reading, inspirational literature—whatever it is that connects you with a sense of things greater than you, like finding meaning or purpose, for example.

It could be just reading inspirational literature that motivates you and moves you; it could be connecting with friends and family, or it could be engagement in religious practices or religious communities.

It's a very wide category and depends entirely on what speaks to you. What helps you feel nourished and gives you the juice to keep going?

### **Overlapping Strategies: Discharge, Soothe, and Nourish**

You might find also that there's some overlap between what soothes and what discharges: soothing and discharging behaviors overlap with nourishing because, for example, creative expression can be nourishing, but also discharging; the same as sports—you can be in the zone and really feel charged up from it, be connected with other folks. It's a discharge activity and also a nourishing activity. It's important to keep these things in mind. You're going to have an opportunity to explore what these mean to you next.

## **Rest: Embracing the Concept**

Now that you've taken a look at the three principles and the seven factors as they apply to you, I invite you to consider this idea: that rest is a form of resistance because it disrupts and pushes back against the toxic hustle of capitalism and white supremacy that robs us of our capacity to be the founders and CEOs we want to be, and robs us of our humanity.

---

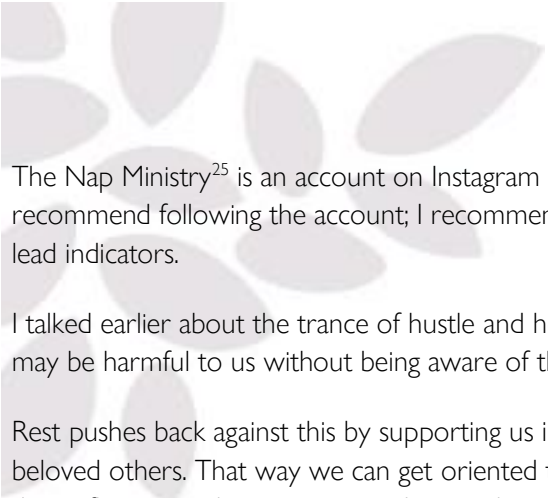
<sup>24</sup> Read more about completing the stress cycle in this excellent book, *Burnout*, by Emily and Amelia Nagoski: <https://www.burnoutbook.net/>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levto, MA, RSW, CFSW



The Nap Ministry<sup>25</sup> is an account on Instagram run by Tricia Hersey<sup>26</sup>, who wrote the book *Rest Is Resistance*.<sup>27</sup> I recommend following the account; I recommend reading the book. And I invite you to consider rest as one of your lead indicators.

I talked earlier about the trance of hustle and how we can inadvertently absorb certain ideas and behaviors that may be harmful to us without being aware of them.

Rest pushes back against this by supporting us in taking time out to connect with ourselves, our values, and our beloved others. That way we can get oriented to what really matters to us and make choices about our actions that reflect our values, not some ideas we have inadvertently and unquestioningly absorbed.

These kinds of check-ins and, in particular, rest, taking a time out, is a significant factor that can support your mental and emotional well-being. That's why I'm inviting you to consider it as one of your lead indicators.

## ACTIVITY

I'm inviting you to take a pause now.

What you might like to do right now is pause the recording and take a break here. You might like to stretch and get a drink, go to the bathroom, have a snack — whatever feels right.

You might be having reactions to this information. It might be bringing stuff up for you — thoughts, feelings, memories, reactions.

So after you take a break, take some time to journal or make notes on the three principles and what comes up for you.

I'll be right here when you come back.

## Putting it all together, step by step

Start with the worksheets on pages three to five in the workbook to start compiling the data you need for your plan, looking at each of the three principles of stress resilience.

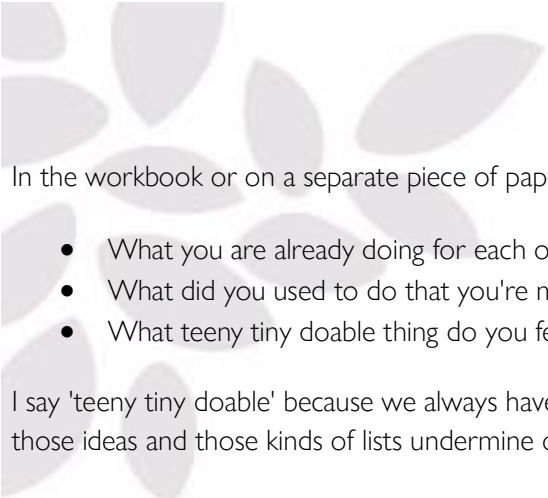
---

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.instagram.com/thenapministry/?hl=en>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.triciahersey.com>

<sup>27</sup> <https://thenapministry.com>





In the workbook or on a separate piece of paper, answer the following for each of the three principles

- What you are already doing for each of them?
- What did you used to do that you're missing doing?
- What teeny tiny doable thing do you feel like adding in?

I say 'teeny tiny doable' because we always have this idea that we should be doing this, that and the other thing. But those ideas and those kinds of lists undermine our mental health because they stress us out.

I'm inviting you to just put a teeny tiny doable thing on your list so that you can actually do it and feel good about doing it.

Be sure to include communal care on this list—things you do to care for others and things you do, things that others do, that you allow them to do to care for you. This also includes activism to address the systems of oppression that are affecting your mental health and the mental health of other folks.

It's an important part of mental and emotional well-being to be able to identify that, yes, some of this is out of my control, but there are some things that I can do, and doing things about what you can change.

Engaging in activism, whatever kind of activism fits for you, is an important part of your stress resilience and an important activity in which to engage for your mental and emotional well-being.

## ACTIVITY

Pause the recording here and use the worksheets on pages three to five so that you can brainstorm identifying ways to soothe, discharge, and nourish yourself. I'll be back when you start the recording up.

Complete the worksheets in the order below. The first three are specific to each of the three principles. The 4<sup>th</sup> is a general brainstorming to prompt more ideas.

## Analyzing the Impact of Seven Factors

Now, let's shift our focus to the seven factors and their relevance to your mental health plan and overall emotional well-being.

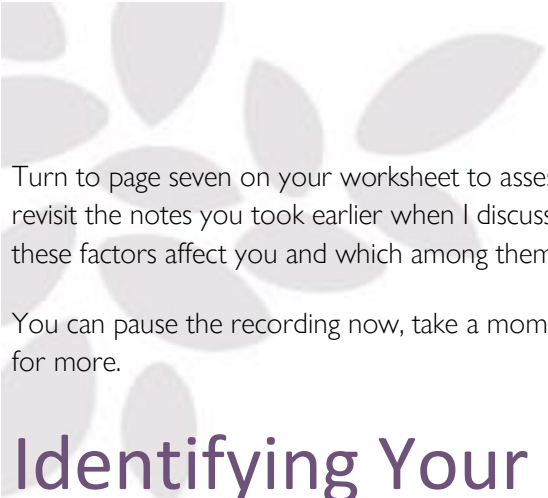
These seven factors are often situational—events that usually fall beyond your realm of control.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



Turn to page seven on your worksheet to assess how these factors apply to your life. It might be beneficial to revisit the notes you took earlier when I discussed the seven factors. Utilize this information to determine how these factors affect you and which among them hold greater importance to you.

You can pause the recording now, take a moment to examine page seven on the worksheet, and then come back for more.

## Identifying Your Lag Indicators

Lag indicators measure what has happened after you implement or experience the lead indicators. They are the outcomes. They include your stress symptoms. They include your personal wellness indicators. They include indicators of performance in business and indicators of performance in your personal life.

In other words, they tell you:

- Am I showing up the way I want to?
- Is my business going the way I want it to?
- Is it showing the results that I want?

Stress symptoms are how your body feels, the kinds of things that effect your body and executive functioning; how it's impacted by stress.

Personal wellness indicators are signs that tell you when you're doing well.

As we've discussed, when you find yourself breaking down in truth, there's really nothing wrong with you.

Breaking down can be a good thing because it's a signal to look under the hood. It's data. It's a lag indicator. It's important to know what's happening.

## ACTIVITY

Use the worksheets on pages one and two to brainstorm about your lag indicators and make notes about them, so that you can become familiar with the signs that tell you you're doing well, as well as the signs that tell you that you're heading down a path where your mental and emotional well-being might be taking a hit.

Pause the recording here and use worksheet--pages one and two. I'll be here when you come back



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



# Using Your Mental Health Plan: A Strategic Approach

It's important when you want to use any tool to understand its purpose.

Your mental health plan is *not* to prevent you from having a hard time. It identifies strategies you can use to care for yourself in an ongoing way.

Caring for yourself in a systematic and ongoing way can mitigate the impact when you're having a hard time. It's a myth to think that we can avoid what it means to be human, which is to experience hard times and difficult emotions.

The reason we care for ourselves is not to make the difficulties go away, but to give ourselves care when we're having a hard time. It's a way of being kind to ourselves, so that we can soothe the amygdala and bring our CEO selves back online, so that we can show up the way we want to in life and in business.

## Parallels with Athlete Preparation

You can compare yourself to a marathon runner or another high-performing athlete. It can look like the *individual* wins the race, on an individual basis, by individual will and power alone, because you only see the actual race.

In fact, behind the scenes and before the race, athletes have a whole team working to support them: a chiropractor, massage therapist, doctor, nutritionist, coach, sports psychologist, etc.

For the mental health plan, part of our work is building a team not only of practitioners, but also of strategies and tactics that support our mental and emotional well-being.

That's what your plan is for: to help you be resilient. In other words, to put in place the skills and the supports that you need to care for yourself when the crap hits the fan.

## Implementing with Accountability and Support

As far as implementation is concerned, the biggest challenge, as it is with all long-term projects, all plans that you make, is implementation support and accountability.

It doesn't really matter if you do the formal plan (as I'm going to discuss in a moment). What really matters is doing the thing. It's implementation, and how better to implement than to have support and accountability?



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levto, MA, RSW, CFSW



## Simple Format

The simplest application of your mental health plan is to include your mental and emotional well-being in discussions with your supportive others. You can add a check-in on your lead and lag indicators into your meetings with your coach or your mastermind group, for example, or your biz bestie. And that can help you stay accountable.

Another way to be accountable is, of course, to work with me. You can go to <https://www.shula.ca/book-a-free-chat/> to book a free call to discuss what kind of support I offer and how that might fit what you need.

If you're curious about how I work to support folks in implementing the mental health plan, you can take a look at <https://www.shula.ca/implementation-support-for-your-mental-health-plan/>

## Three Ways to Use Your Mental Health Plan

Let's talk about using your mental health plan. There are three ways to use it. The simplest, as I said, is just to make mental health a topic of every business planning or checking conversation that you're having with supportive others.

## Enhanced Format

To add to these discussions, you can follow this check-in outline, this enhanced format.

You can look at:

1. What's working? (because you're familiar now with your lag and lead indicators) You can look at what's working with your lead indicators.
2. What isn't working?
3. What are you learning from that information? (the information about what isn't working)
4. What are you going to change in light of what you've learned above?

You can just talk about these questions when you are having conversations with supportive other folks.

The answer to question four becomes part of your lead indicators for the next period. It's what you assess. You look at: did it work or didn't it work? If so, what did I learn from that? And what am I going to do differently?

It's a very simple but enhanced way, once you know what your lag and lead indicators are, that you can incorporate an on-the-fly review when you're talking to other folks.

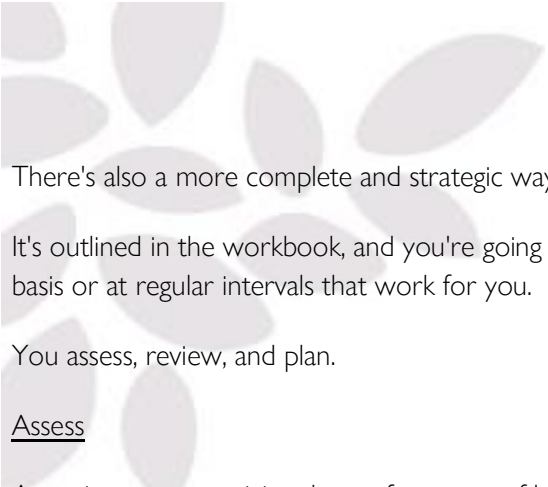
## Strategic Format for Ongoing Well-being



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



There's also a more complete and strategic way to use your mental health plan.

It's outlined in the workbook, and you're going to have an opportunity to work through this shortly on a weekly basis or at regular intervals that work for you.

You assess, review, and plan.

### Assess

Assessing means noticing the performance of lag indicators in relation to the lead indicators. What's going on around you? Which of the seven factors were at play this week? Did you or didn't you implement your three principles of stress resilience? And how are you feeling? How's your mood? How's your CEO self doing? How are your symptoms? Take stock of all these things to see where you are now and why.

### Review

Then you review what worked and what didn't work. Some of the things that we encounter are out of our control, but they still have an impact. And they can have an impact, either negative or positive. That's what you're looking at here.

### Plan

After that, you make a plan. Can I change anything, or will I change anything as a function of what I've learned above? Make a plan for what you're going to do based on the information from the assessment and the review.

## **Adapting for Continued Relevance**

As part of your regular strategic planning, it's important to take a bigger look, a much higher view of your lag and lead indicators and possibly revise them based on your current situation and external circumstances.

For example, when COVID hit, I had to take a look at how that was affecting me and what I needed. I found that some of the things I did for self-care weren't helping anymore, and I needed to come up with new ones. Some of the ones I used to engage in just weren't simply available, and I needed to find different ways to care for myself.

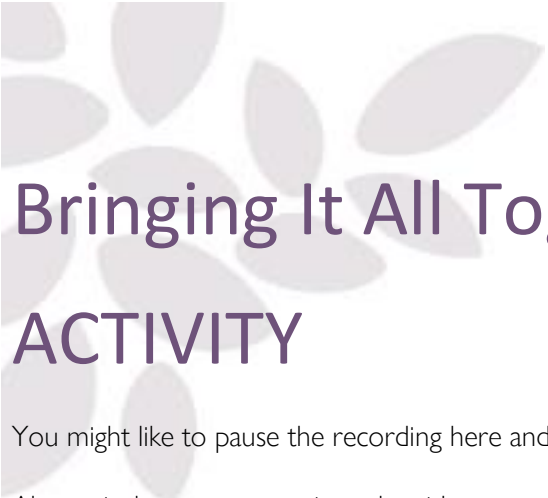
A strategic review every six months or every year is important, just to make sure that the data is still accurate, and what you're doing is still relevant and helpful.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



# Bringing It All Together

## ACTIVITY

You might like to pause the recording here and do the work in the worksheets on pages nine and onward.

Alternatively, you can continue the video to see a version of my plan in action, then complete your plan and conduct your first review when the recording has finished.

### **Analog Mental Health Review: A Practical Example**

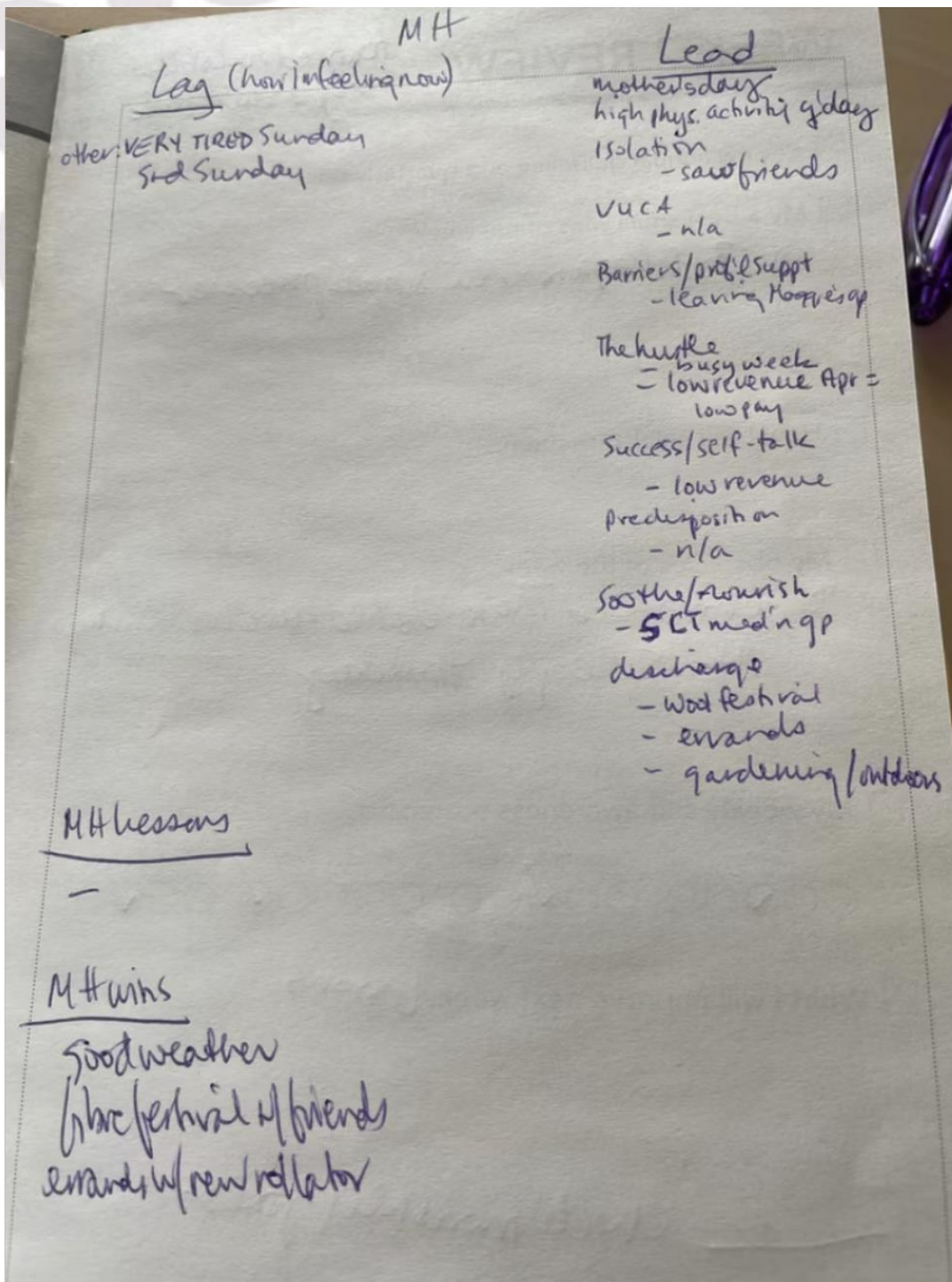
On the next page is an example of a very analog version of my mental health review:



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtov, MA, RSW, CFSW



## How I conducted my review

In this very analog review, I noted my lag indicators. I looked at how I'm doing and I looked at the seven factors and how they had an impact on me this week. And you can see my soothe, discharge and nourish at the bottom. The tactics I engaged in this past week, I looked at whether they worked and didn't work. I like to call them lessons and wins. That week, there was nothing that didn't really work, and my wins I noted here. I call them lessons wins because I like to celebrate.

You'll also notice that I didn't put my plan on this page. You can easily note down the two to-dos that you need to put on your calendar and in your project management software. You can note them here to remind you to put them there, but I usually like to put them in the calendar and in my project management software right away. I just prefer not to double up and enter them twice.

I assessed how I'm doing and the lag indicators. You can see on the picture of my analog version, I review and note what worked and what didn't. I looked at both my lag and lead indicators.

I planned for the support I'll need for the week based on my assessment and on the conditions that I know are coming up, like the things I have on my calendar for this week.

For example, if my assessment showed that I'm tired and needing sleep, I'll plan for better sleep hygiene this week. If my lead indicators for the coming week included a couple of really long days, I'm going to make sure I have fast and easy food available for those days. I also have rest time booked for the weekend coming up.

I have separate sheets on which I've listed my usual lag and lead indicators. I review and update those from time to time.

On a weekly basis, I conduct a review of my business goals and performance, and I make plans for the coming week. (Just a side note, I use the 12-week year as a structure to guide my business plan and planning.)<sup>28</sup>

Most of the heavy lifting in my mental health plan and business planning is done once a quarter. So, the weekly reviews only take a really short time. In a week when I don't have much time, I'll take half an hour, and when I have more time to reflect, I'll take an hour sometimes, and do a bit of journaling along with the rest of the weekly review.

However, the mental health review can just be five or 10 minutes incorporated into your regular weekly review of your business goals and performance.

---

<sup>28</sup> <https://12weekyear.com>



You can pause the recording here and do the worksheets and come back, or you can just let it play out to the end. This is the end of the formal portion of the workshop.

## There's Nothing Wrong with You

If nothing else, I hope that this workshop helped you integrate the idea that there's really nothing wrong with you.

Running a business is hard, and it makes sense that things are going to be challenging emotionally and mentally when you're trying to do hard things.

There's really nothing wrong with you. Mental and emotional challenges are an inherent part of entrepreneurship.

If you can take away nothing other than the realization that when you encounter difficulties, you can say to yourself, "Hey, there's really nothing wrong with me," I would be very happy.

I'm happy to connect with you. I love the social aspect of LinkedIn. If you want to come to the DMs and chat with me there, I'd be happy to hear from you. I really love to chat over how things are going. Here's my profile link:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/shulamitberlevtov/>

I'd love to hear about your experience working through this material. You're welcome to email me at [shulamit@shula.ca](mailto:shulamit@shula.ca).

If you want support for refining and implementing your mental health plan, [click here](#).

If you want to learn more about working with me on an ongoing basis so you can set the foundation for sustainable success in business and show up as the CEO you want to be (as well as the spouse, parent, family member or friend you want to be), **click here**.

I hope that you've learned something from this workshop.

I look forward to hearing from you.



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | [shulamit@shula.ca](mailto:shulamit@shula.ca) | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levto, MA, RSW, CFSW

## About the author: Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW



I'm The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™ and your Chief Mental Health Officer, the person you hire when you want steady, shame-free support that helps you stay whole as you navigate the real and really messy work of founding and growing a business.

A culture change catalyst who works at the intersection of mental health and entrepreneurship, I have 30+ years of entrepreneurial experience and 24+ years as a professional in the field of mental health and personal growth. Over the years, I've logged thousands of hours supporting hundreds of folks navigating the emotional ups and downs of demanding lives and of business ownership without losing themselves in the process.

I'm masters-level registered social worker, as well as an award-winning entrepreneur with certifications in entrepreneurship development, The Trauma of Money, Financial Social Work, Resilience Coaching and Nonviolent Communication, among many others. In my work, I bring together my lived experience (with mental illness and trauma as well as entrepreneurship) and my professional training, education and expertise in both mental health and entrepreneurship to create an approach that is both compassionate and practical.

My pronouns are she/her, and I experience intersecting of systems of oppression, including those around age, disability, body size, sexuality, and racialization. I'm also aware that, although I'm a member of a racialized group, I pass for W/white, so I have a great deal of access to White privilege. I also experience cisgender and heterosexual privilege, although I identify as bisexual. Those identities play a role in how I see and think about things and in how I am able to mobilize resources.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> If you're unfamiliar with the idea of privilege, you can check this out to learn more  
<https://opentextbc.ca/svmaccandrep/wp-content/uploads/sites/342/2021/02/Worksheet-Power-and-Privilege-Activity.docx>



The Entrepreneurs' Therapist™

shula.ca | shulamit@shula.ca | 613-868-9642

© 2025 Shulamit Ber Levtoy, MA, RSW, CFSW