

## *Balance & Renewal – Tool C*

### **My Defensive Routines Exercise**

If you are like most people you have developed ways to cope with everyday pressures. Most of us have tendencies that drive how we deal with stress and resist anxiety. These tendencies are called defensive routines, which we adopt to help us feel more in control. If you tend to *internalize your feelings and problems*, you will often rely even more on yourself than usual and fail to get any outside perspectives. If you tend to *externalize your feelings and problems*, you may over-rely on others, get distracted easily, or place blame for the problems outside yourself. If you tend to *approach* problems, you will rush to solve or respond; if you tend to *avoid* problems you may wait too long to deal with things or even ignore issues. This exercise will help you identify your defensive patterns and gain insights into how you typically respond to stressful situations.

#### **Step 1: What do you tend to do when under pressure?**

Check all that apply

##### **Approach and Internalize**

- I get to work earlier and stay at work later
- I continue to add new projects or take on more roles despite a realistic shortage of time
- I constantly remind myself of my own or others' high standards for me
- I expect everyone to perform at my high standards
- I can never say "no"

##### **Avoid and Internalize**

- I move further inside: my office, my projects, my thoughts and concerns
- I become detached from relationships with colleagues, friends and family
- I communicate less than usual and only about what I feel is essential
- Only my mission and goals seem important
- I don't need input from others
- I feel that other people just get in the way

##### **Approach and Externalize**

- I am the only one who knows the answer
- If anyone disagrees with me I will disregard them or make them sorry for disagreeing
- My closest friends and advisers always agree with me
- I never waiver on decisions

##### **Avoid and Externalize**

- I focus on negative aspects of situations
- I wear anger and disappointment as a badge of honor
- I criticize or become cynical with those who want things to change or have hope
- I blame my mood/circumstances on the situation or someone else
- I enjoy being with like-minded people and talking about what we think is wrong

**Step 2: Circle the five check marks that indicate your primary ways of dealing with life and work when you are stressed.** These are defensive routines – they help you defend yourself from your stressors and may inhibit change. The next step will help you unravel the impact of these habits.

***Step 3: List your top five defensive routines in the left column and complete each row to the right.***

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My Defensive Routines	Approach/Avoid Internalize/Externalize	How this affects me: mind, body, emotion, spirit	How this affects my team, close colleagues, family