What it means to Bear Down

Life & Work Connections
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We recently received honest but difficult news about the University’s financial situation. You may be filled with a range of emotions: anger, confusion, gratitude, disappointment, relief. These emotions are normal and OK. You are not alone in your feelings.

We are now called to come together and discover a new path forward. For this journey, we will need to Bear Down – but maybe not in the way that many might think.

A car cannot get far on an empty tank of gasoline. The road before us is a long one, filled with challenges. It is essential we keep our tanks full so we can sustain our relationships, lead our communities, and carry out the University of Arizona mission [1].

What does Bear Down mean right now? It does not mean sacrificing at all costs to make everything run as it has in the past. Our rallying cry calls us to have the determination and discipline to care for ourselves, so we are ready for the new challenges we will face each day.

What does that look like in action?

- A colleague invites a stressed friend to a virtual coffee break.
- An organizer starts a meeting with a few collaborative deep breaths.
- An employee recognizes their anger and takes a walk instead of hitting send on a sarcastic email.
- A parent talks to their manager about a flexible schedule so they can better integrate home schooling with fulfilling their work duties.
- A manager asks, “Given our resources, how do we do the work differently?”
- A dean shows vulnerability, because this situation is difficult for them, too.
- A senior leader says no to an early morning meeting, so they can say yes to a jog.

Taking the time to chat, exercise, practice mindfulness or simply enjoy a meal without a stack of work next to your plate can feel selfish in a time like this. But it may be exactly what we need. We cannot run on fumes. We cannot move forward on an empty tank.

How, and how often, we refill our tanks is unique to each of us. It could be a daily walk by the wash, a weekly Zoom happy hour with your friends, an out-of-the-blue dance break with your kids, or just taking a moment to really, truly enjoy that cup of coffee. Mental health is essential to our overall wellness. I hope we can all give ourselves permission to prioritize it.

Josephine Corder is the director of Life & Work Connections [2]. She has an MBA from the Eller College of Management and more than 10 years of experience in project implementation and program management. Join her Friday, May 8, for “Taking Care of Yourself and Others? Building Wellness and Resiliency [3],” a Zoom webinar for all University staff.
How do you Bear Down? How are you refilling your tank? Let Corder know at lifework@arizona.edu [4]. To stay up to date with opportunities to improve your well-being, subscribe to the Life & Work Connections email list [5].

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Links
[1] https://www.arizona.edu/purpose-values
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