BACKGROUND
Since the onset of the pandemic, we have seen people in pain, disillusioned, afraid, believing in isolation and most of all, hungry for the things that used to satisfy and uplift their spirit: physical contact, community gatherings, spiritual, work and interpersonal relationships. The pandemic’s rapid onset and prolonged nature has led to increased compassion fatigue and emotional exhaustion.

Research has shown that healthcare staff are at risk of developing psychological distress and mental health symptoms. According to an international study by the World Health Organization (WHO), 40% of healthcare workers have reported mental health and psychological problems during the pandemic. These problems include symptoms of anxiety, depression, and burnout.

OBJECTIVES
To: offer a meaningful and uplifting break as well as to provide staff with a quiet and safe space to decompress from their busy, busy days. Since the onset of the pandemic, hospital leaders have recognized that a limited view of employees’ psychological safety solely in terms of job security, without due consideration of the broader context of the pandemic, could have the effect of severely restricting organizational resources, and adversely impacting patient safety and staff retention during and beyond the pandemic.

PLANNING AND RESEARCH METHODS
Mayo Clinic has taken a proactive, comprehensive, human-centered approach to supporting the mental health of frontline staff. There is evidence that taking breaks during the workday is necessary to refuel energy and enhance well-being, but the quality and type of break impacts its being.

The internal survey results validated the need to implement strategies which could provide staff a meaningful, uplifting break from their day. Both Tea for the Soul and Support Our Staff (SOS) spaces were initiated to offer space and resources for respite within the workplace. The increase awareness of opportunities available to support their well-being, and offer an experience to decrease stress in the workplace.

SOS Survey: Impacted unit-based initiative that provided a quiet space for staff to rest, relax, refresh, and reflect; designed to enable staff to take short, but meaningful breaks.

SOS Space: A temporary-based initiative that provided a quiet space for staff to rest, relax, refresh, and reflect; designed to enable staff to take short, but meaningful breaks.

SOS Kits: To assess individual stress levels in response to the interventions, and perceived organizational support.

To discuss the initiatives, the SOS team invited all units to indicate interest in participating in a virtual session, and 13,007 employees expressed interest.

RESULTS
Impact was measured by a brief survey from October to December 2021 to assess individual stress levels in response to the interventions, and perceived organizational support.

The SOS Space: 362 completed surveys from 9 units indicated a decrease of 2.63 points on a sliding scale from 0 (no stress) to 10 (extremely stressed).

The Tea for the Soul: 1,550 employees. Of the 362 completed surveys, 83.2% reported having much more or slightly more stress during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic, and 60.8% reported having much worse or slightly worse well-being.

DISCUSSION
Supporting the mental health and well-being of frontline healthcare workers requires a comprehensive approach. At Mayo Clinic, this includes robust well-being programs and mental health services designed to support employees in accordance with the principles of evidence-based virtual offerings which add convenience. The efforts described here demonstrate the positive impact of creating a supportive, and welcoming environment for staff in the workplace. This included tools and resources via the SOS kits, as well as the unique skill of chapters in the momentary support through Tea for the Soul. The results demonstrate the efforts not only reduce stress, but also elevate perceived organizational support at a time when staff were faced with a myriad of challenges.

CONCLUSIONS
Overall, these interventions demonstrated that offering a space and opportunity to recharge, connect, and take time in the workplace for a break positively improves stress levels and perceived organizational support.

Future plans include expansion to other care settings. These interventions are two components of a more comprehensive organizational response to support healthcare workers.

REFERENCES
