

Self-care Strategies to Deal with Moral Distress & Compassion Fatigue

Helping Nurses During the
Coronavirus Crisis

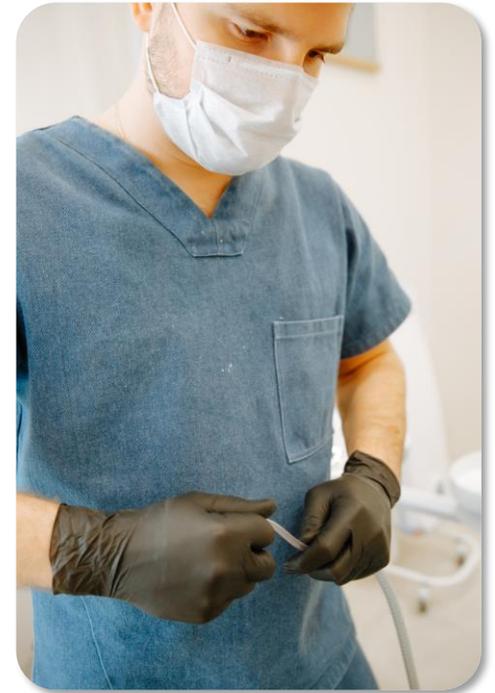


ELNEC Efforts to Address Nurses' Needs During the Coronavirus Crisis

- COVID-19 is challenging the healthcare system and the workforce in unprecedented ways.
- Nurses must come together to support each other and our colleagues with the moral distress and compassion fatigue that is already causing increased stress.
- This “new” ELNEC module is based on the ELNEC modules on Loss, Grief and Bereavement that address the importance of self-care, especially in the midst of cumulative loss and death.
- Slides have been added that are specific to the stressors associated with the Coronavirus crisis.

Hazards in the “Helping Professions”

- Intense emotional energy is spent in palliative care due to patient care situations
 - End of life
 - Physical suffering
 - Emotional distress
 - Psychological pain
 - Moral distress
- During the Coronavirus pandemic, this is compounded by lack of PPE- putting oneself and one’s family at risk; problems with equity among treatment options (limited ventilators); and interacting with families that are unable to be with their loved ones at EOL.



Kravits, 2019

Are these Hazards Causing Compassion Fatigue or Burnout Symptoms, or Both?

- Compassion Fatigue
 - Physical, emotional, spiritual fatigue, resulting from chronic and continuous self-sacrifice and/or prolonged exposure to difficult situations
 - Inability to love, nurture, care for, or empathize with another's suffering
- Burnout
 - Physical and psychological, with a decrease in loss of motivation. Triggered by:
 - More workplace demands
 - Lack of resources
 - Interpersonal stressors
 - Organizational policies that can lead to diminished caring, cynicism, and ineffectiveness

Kravits, 2019

Is this Pandemic Contributing to Moral Distress?

- Moral distress is suffered by healthcare workers who are having to act in a way that is in opposition to our own values and beliefs. This can be from:
 - Unrelieved pain or suffering
 - Inefficiency of healthcare system
 - Inability to allow patient's loved ones to come into the hospital to visit
 - Having to witness patients who are suffering and dying alone
 - Having to provide care with limited access to necessary equipment



Nurses Are Leaders During A Crisis

- Historically flexible and creative during crises
- The most trusted healthcare professionals
- Strong advocates for patients, families, and communities
- Expert, compassionate clinicians focused on holistic care of patients and families
- The ones who are at the bedside 24/7



But We Cannot Lead if We Don't Practice Self-Care, Especially During the Pandemic

- We must:
 - Develop self-awareness in the midst of this crisis: be proactive in caring for ourselves.
 - Take a moment for self-reflection at the end of each day- did you really take care of yourself?
 - Strengthen our sense of self-efficacy- believe in yourself. You are doing a great job during the most challenging circumstances anyone has ever seen before!
 - Practice body monitoring- pay attention to your body's messages- STOP and re-hydrate, eat some healthy calories and protein, take a break, rest!
 - Wellness plan- establish a plan that is feasible in this hectic time when juggling a heavy workload, along with additional family care needs (children being home-schooled, fixing 3 meals a day, difficulties in obtaining groceries, etc).

Cultivate Moral Resilience

- Moral resilience is the ability to be “buoyant in adverse circumstances”.
- Nurses know how to do this!
- Look for meaning in despair. Recall and focus on at least one bright moment during the day that made you grateful (i.e. a colleague supported you in a difficult decision; a family member expressed gratitude that you helped him have a facetime chat with his loved one; the local community stood outside the hospital cheering for all the healthcare workers).



ELNEC Critical Care Curriculum; Rushton, 2016

Knowledge is Power

- Keep up with the evidence-based facts. There are so many myths circulating, so know the facts:
 - Coronavirus.gov- latest updates & FAQs
 - USA.gov- provides data on federal government responses
 - CDC.gov/coronavirus- public health and safety information
 - ANA- <https://nursingworld.org/coronavirus>
 - AACN- <https://www.aacnnursing.org>
- Educate yourself to provide primary palliative care
 - ELNEC is online and can give you the knowledge you need to provide pain and symptom management, care during final hours, address grief, loss and bereavement support, and give you “the words” you need to communicate during serious illness and this crisis: <https://www.relias.com/product/elneec-training>

What Can I Do if I am Struggling?

Lead the Way!

- Ordinarily we would utilize your employee health counselors for personal support but they may not be easily accessible during this crisis; seek out a nurse colleague to debrief difficult situations with.
- Raise ethical issues that are taking a toll on you and your colleagues with your supervisor. You may not have access to an ethics committee member during this crisis, but you **MUST** be heard!
- Encourage discussions around staffing fairness to limit the workload stress; compassionately ensure your colleagues who are at greatest risk for contracting the virus have limited contact with patients sick with the virus, if possible.

What Can I Do if I am Struggling?

Lead the Way! (cont)

- Find ways to celebrate success and joy. Even in the midst of this pandemic there are always joy to be found! Do you have a bulletin board where everyone can see thank you messages to each other or spiritual words of support?
- Access resources for tools and strategies to help if you are experiencing incivility, bullying, or workplace violence that may rise in the midst of the pandemic stressors. See Resource section.

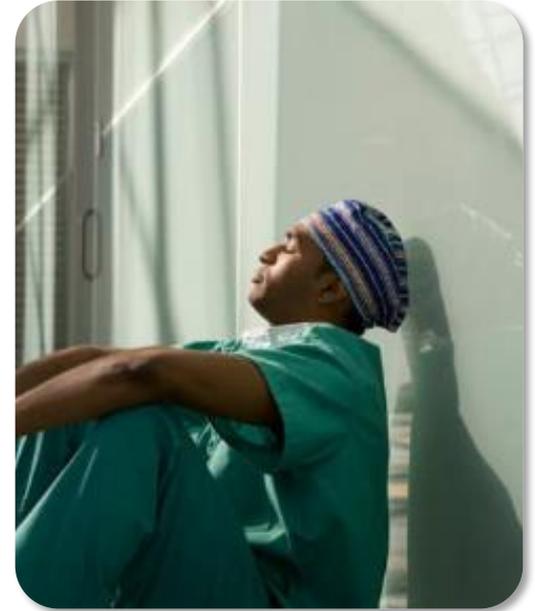


Other Strategies To Address Compassion Fatigue/Burnout/ Moral Distress

- Consider appointing a wellness champion on your unit, in your clinic, or on your team; Can one person take the lead in reminding others to take care of themselves?
- Take a moment at the start of each day to gather (6 feet apart) with a prayer, special reflection, or word of the day that can bring everyone together in spirit or emotionally, even though we have to stay physically apart.
- Nutritious food is always helpful. Remember, eating is a social expression of caring in our culture. Consider single package items that everyone can enjoy.

Protecting Yourself Through This Crisis

- Maintain positive, pro-active self-care
 - Balanced, healthy nutrition
 - Realistic exercise plan
 - Quality sleep
 - Engage in activities that give you meaning
- Pay attention to your body's signals and respond to needs
- Create positive emotions
 - At the end of the day, write down 3 things that went well during the day.
 - At the start of the day, recite an affirmation (an intention "I" statement using action-oriented verbs), i.e. "I will provide compassionate care today to those who are dying."
 - Find and express gratitude!



Stay Safe and Healthy

- Mental health is as important as physical health

- Being “cooped up” can be difficult



- In this time of “social distancing”

- Utilize technology to stay connected to family and friends
- Reach out to elders or others in need in your neighborhood
- Consider meeting with a group of friends on “Zoom” or other facetime avenues for a book club or knitting group
- Substitute videos online in lieu of gym time
- Access church services or prayer groups online
- Take advantage of a short walk outdoors and soak up the beginning of spring

We Need You!

- **Remember: It is not selfish to practice self-care especially during this crisis!**
- Keep in mind what we tell family caregivers: “If you don’t take good care of yourself, you cannot take care of your loved ones.”
- You will burn out and not be able to respond to the needs of your patients, families, colleagues and your community if you don’t find a few sacred minutes each day to do something for yourself.



**Thank You For ALL You are Doing for Your
Patients, Families, and Communities!**



Stay Safe, Healthy, and Find Meaning in These Challenging Times



References

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- Rushton, C. H. (2016). Moral resilience: A capacity for navigating moral distress in critical care. *AACN Advanced Critical Care*, 27(1), 111-119. doi:10.4037/aacnacc2016275.

Resources

- Strategies for Eliminating Nurse-to-Nurse Bullying
<https://www.amsn.org/sites/default/files/documents/practice-resources/healthy-practice-environment/Strategies-for-Eliminating-MSM-Mar13-1.pdf>
- Wellbeing ([ANA, 2020](#))
 - American Psychiatric Nurses Association [Managing Stress & Self Care during COVID-19: Information for Nurses](#)
 - [Six Tips for Nurses Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) A blog by Dr. Bernadette Melnyk and ANA's Healthy Nurse, Healthy Nation™
 - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC) [Resources to Protect Mental Health and Coping with the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
 - [Coronavirus and Mental Health: Taking Care of Ourselves during Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#) A blog from the American Psychiatric Association, includes printable hand out
 - Uniformed Services University's Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress' [Sustaining the Well-being of Healthcare Personnel during Coronavirus and Other Infectious Diseases](#)
 - American Holistic Nurses Association's [Holistic Stress Management website](#)
 - National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) [Navigating a Mental Health Crisis](#)
 - NAMI's [Navigating a Mental Health Crisis Infographic](#)
 - US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Center for PTSD's [Managing Healthcare Workers' Stress Associated with the COVID-19 Virus Outbreak](#)
 - SAMHSA [Suicide Prevention Resource Center website](#)