



ADDRESSING COMPASSION FATIGUE, SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS

PALLIATIVE CARE & HOSPICE SOCIAL WORKERS



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GOALS

Identify practical means of supporting patients while maintaining good coping and self care during the COVID-19 pandemic

OVER EXPOSURE TO TRAUMATIC STRESS



Overwhelming number of patients
...continuous threat of death
...simultaneous lifesaving efforts
...over long periods of time

Unique Traits of Palliative Care and Hospice Workers	
Highly self reliant/lots of grit	Desire to care for others
Give vs receive/ need support	“Work till it hurts”
“Weak” if display emotional distress	Skip breaks/meals
Staffing patterns require coverage	Sacrifice self care for the care of others

Stigma surrounds behavioral health concerns.

EXTRAORDINARY RISK FACTORS

Professional:

- ✓ Exposure to death and the associated trauma
- ✓ Lack of confidence/specific training

Personal:

- ✓ History of trauma
- ✓ Isolated/ without good social support
- ✓ Lack of good coping skills; use of negative coping

Physical:

- ✓ High fat / salt diet
- ✓ Race/genetics
- ✓ Single professional caregivers

THE PROFESSIONAL & INTERPERSONAL EFFECTS OF STRESS

Professional

- ✓ Loss of productivity
- ✓ Exhaustion
- ✓ Poor communication
- ✓ Impatience/ increased conflicts among staff
- ✓ Inability to stop working
- ✓ Increased obsession with helping
- ✓ Decreased confidence/ second guessing

- ✓ Detachment/numbing

Interpersonal

- ✓ Isolation/withdrawal
- ✓ Loneliness
- ✓ Mistrust
- ✓ Anger often directed at loved ones
- ✓ Decreased interest in intimacy/sex
- ✓ Negative impact on parenting

THE UNIQUE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC ENVIRONMENT

Professional

- ✓ Lack of Preparedness
- ✓ Lack of PPE
- ✓ Lack of Organizational Support

Interpersonal

- ✓ Guilt
- ✓ Moral Injury

Community

- ✓ Threat of Illness/Death
- ✓ Exposure to High Death Rates
- ✓ Loss of Sense of Safety
- ✓ Loss of Sense of Community and Connectedness
- ✓ Loss of Routines

COMMON EFFECTS EXPERIENCED BY BEHAVIORAL AND HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- Self medicating
- Overeating/drinking
- Extramarital affairs
- Suicidal gestures



THE GOOD (PROTECTIVE) NEWS: WORK SATISFACTION

- ✓ Compassion Satisfaction / Traumatic Growth / Making Meaning
- ✓ Stress management
- ✓ Self confidence/competence
- ✓ Spiritual connection
- ✓ Respect for human openness and resilience



WHAT IS SELF CARE?

The ability to maintain physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual health in times of stress

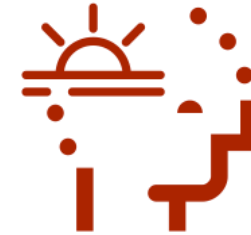


Sometimes
hiding
from the
world
is good
self-care.

cherylrichardson.com

THE CORE FOUR

- ✓ Regulated Sleep
- ✓ Physical Movement
- ✓ Active Mental Relaxation
- ✓ Social Support and Close Relationships



SKILLS: BUILDING RESILIENCE

Attitude

Self-
Awareness

Internal
Control

Optimism

Social Support

Humor

Exercise

Spirituality

Perseverance/
Patience

SKILLS: PROFESSIONAL/PEER SUPPORT

- ✓ Provide emotional/practical help
- ✓ Speak as equals, reciprocity
- ✓ Maintain contact after each shift or difficult patient encounters
- ✓ Strategize, share concerns
- ✓ Practice self care – Mini Modules
- ✓ Practice within scope of abilities
- ✓ STAY CONNECTED
- ✓ Work within the rules
- ✓ Seek support
- ✓ Identify your distress symptoms
- ✓ Practice controlled empathy
- ✓ Set helpful boundaries



EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING

- Professional skills development
- Sense of confidence and competence



COGNITIVE STRENGTHENING PROGRAM

- Cognitive restructuring / reframing
- Attention diversion
- Mindfulness training
- Adaptive engaging
- Adaptive affective expression



Stop



Look



Reframe

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING EXERCISE

THOUGHT STOPPING EXERCISE

- When you are having upsetting thoughts, imagine the STOP sign below and say to yourself “**STOP.**”
- Remind yourself to “**THINK**” and then suggest to yourself to “**BREATHE.**”
- Then practice your BREATHING EXERCISE. **REMEMBER: STOP, THINK and BREATHE**

THOUGHT INSERTION EXERCISE

- When you are having upsetting thoughts practice **THOUGHT STOPPING:**
Imagine the stop sign and say to yourself, “**STOP.**”
- Then think about what you want to replace the upsetting thought with.
- Create a **NEW THOUGHT / MESSAGE** you will tell yourself that is helpful to remain stable (e.g. I am safe; My family is O.K.).
- Then **INSERT** the new thought that you have developed, reminding yourself that you can become calm by practicing this exercise whenever you are upset or stressed.
- Additionally, you can then imagine a **PLEASANT IMAGE** or remember engaging in a **PLEASANT ACTIVITY.**



STOP THINK BREATHE

ATTENTION DIVERSION

- Purposeful emotion regulation
- Decreases intense feelings
- Temporary
(Narrative, Music, Joy)



ABOUT MINDFULNESS

- Cognitive strengthener
- Any level is positive
- Focus on present moment
- Acknowledge things as they are



Mindfulness Exercise

- Sit in quiet place
- Feet on ground
- Hands on lap
- Close your eyes
- Focus on breathing
- Thoughts come and go
- Inhale positivity
- Exhale stress

ADAPTIVE ENGAGING

- With others who understand and accept you
- In helpful activities
 - Increase coping skills
 - Build resilience
- Maintain integrity, dignity, and civility
- Avoid toxicity
- Avoid negative coping behaviors



ADAPTIVE AFFECTIVE EXPRESSION

- ✓ Identify distressing emotions
- ✓ Express emotions in healthy way
- ✓ Identify your prodromal activities
- ✓ Identify and plan for triggers



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH RESOURCE EXAMPLES

- ***Disaster Behavioral Health Self Care for Healthcare Workers Modules***
- Mental/Behavioral Health (non-responders)
- Opioids: Frequently Asked Questions
- The Exchange Issue 4: DBH and Resilience
- Tips for Retaining and Caring for Staff after a Disaster

<https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/dbh-resources>

- SAMHSA Disaster Technical Assistance Center (SAMHSA DTAC): www.samhsa.gov/dtac
- National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: www.ptsd.va.gov





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