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
Stigma surrounds behavioral health concerns.

Unique Traits of Palliative Care and Hospice Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trait</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highly self reliant/lots of grit</td>
<td>Desire to care for others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give vs receive/ need support</td>
<td>“Work till it hurts”</td>
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<td>“Weak” if display emotional distress</td>
<td>Skip breaks/meals</td>
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<td>Staffing patterns require coverage</td>
<td>Sacrifice self care for the care of others</td>
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Overwhelming number of patients
...continuous threat of death
...simultaneous lifesaving efforts
...over long periods of time
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.
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
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](https://asprtracie.hhs.gov/dbh-resources)

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