Overcoming Depression and Anxiety for Those in Helping Professions

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Learning Objectives

1. Describe factors that contribute to overall health and wellbeing of the healthcare workforce.

2. Understand strategies for self-care, including to help improve mood and anxiety.

3. Recognize ways to help support other healthcare workers through altruism.

Thank you!

Healthcare Worker Resilience During the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Integrative Review[1]

- Building **resilience** in nurses and other healthcare workers can serve as a protective factor against negative outcomes related to the job, including burnout, anxiety and depression, and can improve patient outcomes

- Inverse relationship between **resilience** and burnout

- Primary interventions: focus on building **resilience** through coping and communication skills

- Secondary interventions: evaluating levels of burnout and providing support for those who are at risk for or experiencing burnout

- Tertiary interventions: target those who have surpassed their resilience threshold and need support and healing in order to safely return to work

Lessons Learned from 2003 SARS-CoV-1 Epidemic[2]

- Significant emotional distress was present in 18–57% of healthcare workers
- 1/4 of doctors found to have psychiatric symptoms
    - ~20% had Impact of Events Scale scores of ≥ 30
- Healthcare workers were psychologically affected regardless of specific exposure to infected patients or high-risk work areas
- Factors identified as causal in emotional distress included:
    - Concern for family
    - Fear of contagion
    - Job stress
    - Interpersonal isolation
    - Stigma
    - Wearing of personal protection equipment and infection control procedures

Systematic review and meta-analysis
Mental Health Problems Among Healthcare Workers[3]

- A total of 38 studies were identified that reported the mental health problems of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic

- Distribution of healthcare workers
    - 27.9% doctors
    - 43.7% nurses
    - 7.0% allied health workers

- Pooled prevalence
    - PTSD 49% (95% CI: 22–75%)
    - Anxiety 40% (95% CI: 29–52%)
    - Depression 37% (95% CI: 29–45%)
    - Distress 37% (95% CI: 25–50%)

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Table 1 Summary of interventions and strategies for mitigating risk of psychological distress, reducing burnout and building resilience amongst healthcare workers.

Intervention and strategies	Accessibility		
	Self	Self (with organisation infrastructure)	Organisation or group
Self-care			
Exercise	✔		
Sleep hygiene	✔	✔	
Social support	✔		✔
Meaningful work			
Small group discussions			✔
Reflective counselling	✔		✔
Emotional health			
Mindfulness practice	✔	✔	✔
Stress management program			✔
Organisational justice			✔
Effective leadership			✔
Competency Training			✔
Computer based resilience training		✔	
Education sessions (resilience focused)			✔
Anticipate, plan and deter responder risk and resilience model		✔	
Psychological first aid			✔
Staff feedback sessions			✔
Psychosocial pandemic committee			✔
Battle buddies		✔	

Heath C, Sommerfield A, von Ungern-Sternberg BS. Resilience strategies to manage psychological distress among healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic: a narrative review. Anaesthesia. 2020 Oct;75(10):1364-1371.

Factors that Contribute to Resilience

- Hope
- Sense of purpose/meaning
- Love and belonging
- Humor/laughter
- Gratitude
- Asking for help
- Helping Others
- Being realistic on what you can and cannot control
- Diet, exercise, and sleep
- Therapy and Medication Management

Hope

Sense of purpose/meaning

Love and belonging

Humor/laughter

Gratitude

Asking for help

Helping Others

Being realistic on what you can and cannot control

Diet, exercise, and sleep

Therapy and Medication Management

Doing What Matters
in Times of Stress:
An Illustrated Guide

GROUNDING   UNHOOKING
ACTING ON YOUR VALUES   MAKING ROOM
ENGAGING   BEING KIND

World Health Organization

The next step in grounding is to REFOCUS on the world around you. Notice where you are. What are five things you can see?

What are three things you can

Breathe the air. What can you smell?

Notice where you are and what you are doing.

Touch your knees, or the surface beneath you, or any object you can reach. Notice what it feels like under your fingers.

Tool 1: GROUNDING

- NOTICING your thoughts and feelings.
- SLOWING DOWN and CONNECTING with your body.
- REFOCUSING and ENGAGING with the world around you.
- What can you see, hear, touch, taste and smell? Pay attention with curiosity to what is in front of you. Notice where you are, who is with you and what you are doing.

Tool 2: UNHOOKING

UNHOOK YOURSELF with these three steps:

1. NOTICE that a difficult thought or feeling has hooked you.

2. Then silently NAME the difficult thought or feeling.

3. REFOCUS on what you are doing. Pay full attention to whoever is with you and whatever you are doing.

When something is on a hook, it cannot get away. The hook traps it.

In the same way, we can get hooked by our difficult thoughts and feelings.

THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Tool 3: ACTING ON YOUR VALUES

- Choose the values that are most important to you

- Then pick one small way that you can act according to these values in the next week. What will you do? What will you say? Even tiny actions matter.

- Three approaches to any difficult situation:
  - Leave
  - Change what can be changed, accept the pain that cannot be changed, and live by your values
  - Give up and move away from your values
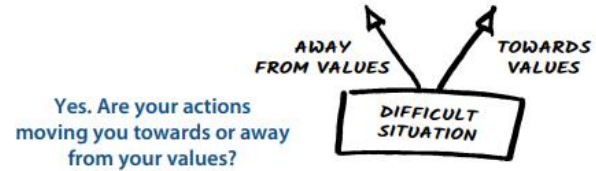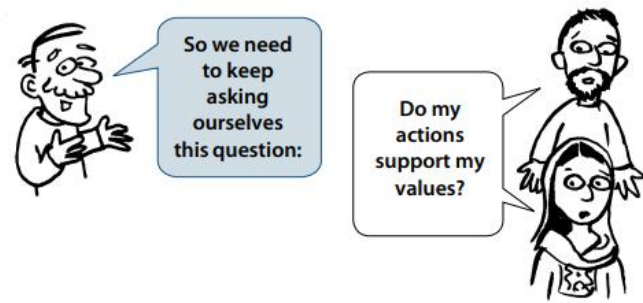
To help you clarify your values, here is a list. These are not the "right" values or the "best" ones – they are simply some common ones.

To be kind	To be brave
To be caring	To be persistent
To be generous	To be forgiving
To be supportive	To be grateful
To be helpful	
	To be loyal
To be patient	To be respectable/honourable
To be responsible	To be respectful
To be protective	To be trustworthy
To be disciplined	To be fair/just
To be hardworking	To be…
To be committed	To be…

Tool 4: BEING KIND

- BE KIND. Notice pain in yourself and others and respond with kindness.

- Unhook from unkind thoughts by NOTICING and NAMING them. Then, try speaking to yourself kindly.

- If you are kind to yourself, you will have more energy to help others and more motivation to be kind to others, so everyone benefits.

When you see someone in pain, suffering and struggling, what are small acts of kindness that you could do?

Every small, kind action makes a difference.

And we should be kind to ourselves, too.

So unhook from thoughts like...

I do not deserve kindness.

My needs do not matter.

Tool 5: MAKING ROOM

- Trying to push away difficult thoughts and feelings often does not work very well.
- NOTICE the difficult thought or feeling with curiosity. Focus your attention on it. Imagine the painful feeling as an object, and notice its size, shape, color and temperature.
- NAME the difficult thought or feeling.
- Allow the painful feeling or thought to come and go like the weather

…and imagine it as words and pictures on the pages of a book.

…and imagine it gently resting it on your lap…

… and ENGAGE with the world around you.

You can also imagine tucking the book under your arm, and taking it with you.

So the thought is still with you, but you can ENGAGE with the world around you.

Leadership

References

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5. Santarone K, McKenney M, Elkbuli A. Preserving mental health and resilience in frontline healthcare workers during COVID-19. Am J Emerg Med. 2020 Jul;38(7):1530-1531.