



Health Workforce Initiative

Hi-Touch Healthcare: The Critical Six Soft Skills

Grab-N-Go Independent Training Module:

Stress Management and Self-Care

HEALTH WORKFORCE INITIATIVE STATEWIDE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CALIFORNIA
COMMUNITY COLLEGES CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



Stress Management and Self-Care

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Stress Management and Self-Care

Background Information

Working in healthcare can be stressful. Providing competent, compassionate care to patients is what brings people to the health care field. However, this type of care is increasingly compromised as the costs of healthcare skyrocket and businesses try to do more with fewer resources. Many caregivers are exhausted as they try to maintain the balance of necessary empathy and compassion without being overwhelmed by human suffering.ⁱ Stress can be experienced for a multitude of reasons: responsibility for the health and well-being of patients, increasing workload, death and injury, insufficient rewards and support, and the feeling of intimidation by peers, supervisors, patients and even patient's families.ⁱⁱ

Stress manifests itself in various ways.ⁱⁱⁱ Health care workers may experience headaches, agitation, fatigue, insomnia, a feeling of being overwhelmed, and an inability to relax. This can lead to burnout, which is problematic for healthcare professionals. Burnout is characterized as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and negative assessment of one's competence and achievement. Burnout can also manifest itself in new employees due to the reality of large workloads and lack of clarity about their role within the organization. It is imperative that employers incorporate stress management and self-care to help their employees remain healthy and engaged.^{iv}



Workplace Violence (WV) is another occupational hazard for all health care workers.^v Power structures in the healthcare industry can lead to workplace aggression, leaving nurses and administration staff feeling vulnerable. Aggression includes bullying and other violence-related behaviors (assault, battery, emotional abuse and sexual harassment). This aggression could be experienced internally from peers or externally from patients, visitors, and their families.^{vi} Patients and their visitors constitute almost all of the acts of physical violence towards health care workers. Nonphysical violence usually stems from peers and supervisors. Although most of workplace violence is against nurses and physicians, all staff that work in jobs associated with psychiatric care, first aid, and emergency services are placed at greater risk of aggression.^{vii}

Providing stress management for employees is paramount for healthcare entities. Early intervention and education to stop workplace bullying as well as treatment for employees undergoing psychological distress must be provided. Health care employees “need training courses devised to increase awareness of the problem and teach coping skills, such as conflict resolution and effective communication strategies, identification of violence-prone subjects, intentional handling of violent events, and self-protection strategies.”^{viii}

This module is designed to help employees recognize their level of stress and anxiety and to provide simple tools and strategies that can be implemented in a multitude of settings.



Training



Goal: This training provides participants an understanding of how stress in the healthcare setting affects employees and offers ways of dealing with that stress.

WIIFM: What's in it for me? Stress in the workplace is an everyday occurrence in today's modern healthcare environment. Strengthening the understanding of how stress affects individuals and ways of dealing with that stress will enhance the employees work environment and help to improve the level of satisfaction at work.



Materials Provided:

1. Stress Management and Self-Care PowerPoint
2. Activity # 1 – Life Stress
3. “Stress” worksheet
4. “Life Stress Score” results sheet
5. Activity # 2 – Pair/Share
6. Activity # 3 – Compassion Fatigue Self -Test



Directions for the Trainer: Activity preparation information is included in this document and/or within the PowerPoint presentation notes. Each PowerPoint slide, as appropriate, includes detailed explanations and instructions for the trainer. As with all Grab-N-Go Modules, you can use it all for a more detailed training, *or simply use one or two of the many activities—a la carte style!*



ACTIVITY #1

Life Stress



Goal: This activity provides an opportunity for participants to discover various stressors they may currently have in life that may impact their ability to function at an optimal level at work.



Materials Needed (quantities vary by group size)

- ☐ PowerPoint slide # 10
- ☐ One “Stress” worksheet for each participant
- ☐ One “Life Stress Score” results sheet for each participant
- ☐ Pen or pencil for each participant
- ☐ Calculators for participant use (Optional)



Procedures:

1. Hand out a pen/pencil and one copy of the “Stress” worksheet to each participant.
2. Instruct participants to read the directions on the top of the worksheet and complete it to the best of their ability. Allow 15 minutes to complete the worksheet.
3. When everyone has completed the worksheet, bring the group back together and explain that the scale shows the kind of life pressure that you are facing at this time in your life. Depending on your coping skills, this scale can predict the likelihood that you will fall victim to a stress-related illness. The illness could be mild -- frequent tension headaches, acid indigestion, and loss of sleep to very serious illness such as ulcers, cancer, and migraine headaches.
4. Pass out the “Life Stress Score” results sheet to each participant.
5. Have the participants compare their score with the key on the results sheet.
6. Were there things that surprised you about the list? Did you realize you had that many stressors in the last 24 months?
7. Ask them “So... what is your level of stress currently?”



Life Stress Worksheet



Instructions:

1. In the past **12 to 24 months**, which of the following major life events have taken place in your life?
2. Mark down the points for each event that you have experienced this year.
3. When you're done looking at the whole list, add up the points for each event and total your score at the bottom.

- _____ Death of spouse (**100 points**)
- _____ Divorce (**73 points**)
- _____ Marital separation or from relationship partner (**65 points**)
- _____ Jail term (**63 points**)
- _____ Death of close family member (**63 points**)
- _____ Personal injury or illness (**53 points**)
- _____ Marriage (**50 points**)
- _____ Fired from work (**47 points**)
- _____ Marital reconciliation (**45 points**)
- _____ Retirement (**45 points**)
- _____ Change in family member's health (**44 points**)
- _____ Pregnancy (**40 points**)
- _____ Sex difficulties (**39 points**)
- _____ Addition to family (**39 points**)
- _____ Business readjustment (**39 points**)
- _____ Change in financial status (**38 points**)
- _____ Death of close friend (**37 points**)
- _____ Change to a different line of work (**36 points**)
- _____ Change in number of marital arguments (**35 points**)
- _____ Mortgage or loan over \$30,000 (**31 points**)
- _____ Foreclosure of mortgage or loan (**30 points**)
- _____ Change in work responsibilities (**29 points**)
- _____ Trouble with in-laws (**29 points**)
- _____ Outstanding personal achievement (**28 points**)
- _____ Spouse begins or stops work (**26 points**)
- _____ Starting or finishing school (**26 points**)
- _____ Change in living conditions (**25 points**)



Life Stress Worksheet

- _____ Revision of personal habits (**24 points**)
- _____ Trouble with boss (**23 points**)
- _____ Change in work hours or conditions (**20 points**)
- _____ Change in residence (**20 points**)
- _____ Change in schools (**20 points**)
- _____ Change in recreational habits (**19 points**)
- _____ Change in church activities (**19 points**)
- _____ Change in social activities (**18 points**)
- _____ Mortgage or loan under \$20,000 (**17 points**)
- _____ Change in sleeping habits (**16 points**)
- _____ Change in number of family gatherings (**15 points**)
- _____ Change in eating habits (**15 points**)
- _____ Vacation (**13 points**)
- _____ Christmas season (**12 points**)
- _____ Minor violations of the law (**11 points**)

_____ **Your Total Score**



Life Stress Score Result Sheet

Total Score of:

0-149: Low susceptibility to stress-related illness

150-299: Medium susceptibility to stress-related illness

300 and over: High susceptibility to stress-related illness

Permission to reprint the Life Stress Test received from:

Dr. Tim Lowenstein

P.O. Box 127

Port Angeles, WA 98362

www.stressmarket.com



ACTIVITY #2

Pair/Share



Goal: This activity provides an opportunity for participants to share with each other ways that they deal with stress in their personal life and in their life at home.



Materials Needed

- ☐ PowerPoint slide # 11



Procedures:

1. Have participants think about a recent time when they were stressed—a situation at work **and** a situation. How did you manage your reaction and feelings to these situations? What strategies worked?
2. Pair: Have participants pair up.
3. Have them turn to their partner and take turns finishing the following sentence: “One of the best things I can do for myself when I am feeling stressed at work/home is _____.”
4. Share: have pairs share their responses with the large group, either having one partner report about the other or having one spokesperson report for the pair.
5. Discussion points:
 - a. Which ideas about coping with stress did you find new and/or helpful?
 - b. Which ideas were potentially harmful or destructive ways of dealing with stress (alcohol, drugs, etc...)? How do we know when these strategies are helpful and when these strategies become problems in themselves?
 - c. Which ideas will you try in the future?



ACTIVITY #3

Compassion Fatigue Self-Test



Goal: This activity provides an opportunity for participants to explore their own compassion fatigue.



Materials Needed

- ☐ PowerPoint slide # 20
- ☐ One “Compassion Fatigue Self-Test” for each participant.
- ☐ Pen/pencil for each participant.



Procedures:

1. Pass out a “Compassion Fatigue Self-Test” and a pen/pencil to each participant.
2. Have them read the instructions on the self-test. Questions?
3. Give participants 5-7 minutes to complete the self-test.
4. Reflect: When everyone has completed the self-test, invite discussion about the following points:
 - a. Do you think you have compassion fatigue? Why or why not?
 - b. If so, can you think of some ways to prevent this from happening? If not, what current habits do you think help prevent this sort of fatigue?
 - c. Can you think of ways to deal with it once you realize you are experiencing it?



Compassion Fatigue

Self-Test: An Assessment



Instructions:

1. Answer the questions below to the best of your knowledge. There is no right or wrong answer. Answer according to your first instinct.
2. Assign one of these numbers to each one of the questions below:
Responses: 1 = Very True 2 = Somewhat True 3 = Rarely True

You will find summation directions at the end of the test.

1. ____ When people get upset, I try to smooth things out.
2. ____ I am able to listen to other's problems without trying to "fix" them and/or take away their pain.
3. ____ My self-worth is determined by how others perceive me.
4. ____ When I am exposed to conflict, I feel it is my fault.
5. ____ I feel guilty when others are disappointed by my actions.
6. ____ When I make a mistake, I tend to be extremely critical of myself. I have difficulty forgiving myself.
7. ____ I usually know how I want other people to treat me.
8. ____ I tell people how I prefer to be treated.
9. ____ My achievements define my self-worth.
10. ____ I feel anxious in most situations involving confrontation.
11. ____ In relationships, it is easier for me to "give" than to "receive".
12. ____ I can be so focused on someone I am helping that I lose sight of my own perceptions, interests, and desires.
13. ____ It is hard for me to express sadness.
14. ____ To make mistakes means that I am weak.
15. ____ It is best to not "rock the boat" or "make waves."
16. ____ It is important to put people at ease.
17. ____ It is best not to need others.
18. ____ If I cannot solve a problem, I feel like a failure.
19. ____ I often feel "used up" at the end of the day.
20. ____ I take work home frequently.
21. ____ I can ask for help but only if the situation is serious.
22. ____ I am willing to sacrifice my needs in order to please others.
23. ____ When faced with uncertainty, I feel that things will get totally out of control.



Compassion Fatigue

Self-Test: An Assessment

24. ____ I am uncomfortable when others do not see me as being strong and self-sufficient.
25. ____ In intimate relationships, I am drawn to people who are needy or need me.
26. ____ I have difficulty expressing my differing opinion in the face of an opposing viewpoint.
27. ____ When I say "no," I feel guilty.
28. ____ When others distance from me, I feel anxious.
29. ____ When listening to someone's problems, I am more aware of their feelings than I am of my own feelings.
30. ____ I find it difficult to stand up for myself and express my feelings when someone treats me in an insensitive manner.
31. ____ I feel anxious when I am not busy.
32. ____ I believe that expressing resentments is wrong.
33. ____ I am more comfortable giving than receiving.
34. ____ I become anxious when I think I've disappointed someone.
35. ____ Work dominates much of my life.
36. ____ I seem to be working harder and accomplishing less.
37. ____ I feel most worthwhile and alive in crisis situations.
38. ____ I have difficulty saying "no" and setting limits.
39. ____ My interests and values reflect what others expect of me rather than my own interests and values.
40. ____ People rely on me for support.

It is important for you to periodically review your self-care, along with your needs and action plans to meet those needs. If you find that you responded with a 1 (Very True) to more than 15 of these items, it's definitely time to take a close and careful look at self-care issues.

*Copyright 1996: Dennis Portnoy, from OVEREXTENDED AND UNDERNOURISHED: A SELFCARE GUIDE FOR PEOPLE IN HELPING ROLES.
For more information, go to www.myselfcare.org.*



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