

Pandemic Effects on Healthcare Professionals: You're not alone

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Disclosures

I have no disclosures

Disclosures

Focusing on
individual
interventions

Objectives

- Reflect on the experience of healthcare workers during COVID-19 pandemic
- Differentiate DSM-V trauma disorder and chronic stress
- Discuss interventions to manage stress

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“anyone else with COVID fatigue? I am not typically an anxious person, but I have been on edge and uneasy. It’s like knowing there is going to be this EPIC mass shooting and you’re on shift. And then you wake up from the nightmare and it’s F@\$%ing Groundhog’s day and you do it AGAIN x WEEKS. BUT you don’t know when it’s going to start exactly or end.”

“Anyone else discouraged? I’m usually the hopeless optimist...But I’m discouraged by people going about life like usual...Or pushing for normalcy despite our alarming numbers...Even some physicians and healthcare workers...And the vaccine rollout hasn’t reach as many as we had hoped. Really concerned about what lies ahead.”

”

“I am finding myself walking a tight rope these days: how do I set an example without appearing judgmental? How do I take care of myself and my family without being hypocritical? How do I stay sane without making fun of the unfortunate and vulnerable?

I know I am doing the right thing by not making travel or party plans for this holiday season. I am trying to teach my kids not to be jealous of their friends who are travelling for the holidays, but I myself feel envious of those who are. I don't want to think that those who choose to travel or gather are oblivious and uncaring. I am trying to keep faith in humanity....”



- “Running a code with everyone wearing respirators makes it so hard to hear and everyone is kinda yelling bc you can’t understand what the f@\$% people are saying. Tough. We’ve lost 10 people this week. I ordered body bags by the case today.”

Types of stress responses

POSITIVE



A normal and essential part of healthy development

EXAMPLES

*getting a vaccine,
first day of school*

TOLERABLE



Response to a more severe stressor, limited in duration

EXAMPLES

*loss of a loved one,
a broken bone*

TOXIC



Experiencing strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity

EXAMPLES

*physical or emotional abuse,
exposure to violence*

Understanding Stress/Trauma Reactions

- Criterion A Trauma = Exposure or witness to actual or threatened death, serious injury or violence
 - Necessary for diagnosis of Acute Stress Disorder or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Chronic Stress = Non-life threatening event or circumstances
 - Physiological, sympathetic nervous system activation is normal/healthy response
 - Chronic elevation of system can be problematic

DSM- 5 Symptoms of Acute Stress/Traumatic Reactions

- Persistent Anxiety or fear-based symptoms
 - Sleep difficulties, irritability, excessive worry, rumination, physical symptoms (GI distress, muscle tension, headaches, hypertension)
- Avoidant or Anhedonic (lack of pleasure) and dysphoric (depressed mood) symptoms
- Hyper-arousal or Externalizing symptoms
- Dissociative symptoms
 - Depersonalization: Feeling detached from, as if outside observer, one's mental processes or body (e.g., feeling as if in a dream)
 - Derealization: Recurrent experiences of unreality of surroundings

Primary considerations for management



Managing Impact of Chronic Stress

Sympathetic nervous system is normal, natural, healthy- But not forever



Avoiding responses that leads to negative anxiety cycle

Being mindful of coping behavior
De-pathologize your emotions,
Relax and let yourself be nervous



Goal is to increase the likelihood that event will be processed successfully

Adequate adaptation of cognitive and emotional process.

2 levels of intervention

#1 Prevention

- Focuses on healthy routines and practices to manage stress levels

#2 Management/ Recovery

- Increased structure, support and intentionality



"THE STRESS ITSELF WILL KILL YOU FASTER THAN THE STRESSOR WILL—UNLESS YOU DO SOMETHING TO COMPLETE THE
STRESS RESPONSE CYCLE.

WHILE YOU'RE MANAGING THE DAY'S STRESSORS, YOUR BODY IS MANAGING THE DAY'S STRESS. IT'S ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO YOUR WELL-BEING THAT YOU GIVE YOUR BODY THE RESOURCES IT NEEDS TO COMPLETE THE STRESS RESPONSE CYCLES THAT HAVE BEEN ACTIVATED."

—

EMILY AND AMELIA NAGOSKI

AUTHORS, *BURNOUT: THE SECRET TO UNLOCKING THE STRESS CYCLE*

Physical Activity



Breathing

Positive Social
Interaction



A big ol' cry

7 Ways to FINISH YOUR STRESS CYCLE

From Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking Your Stress Cycle
By Emily & Amelia Nagoski



Laughter

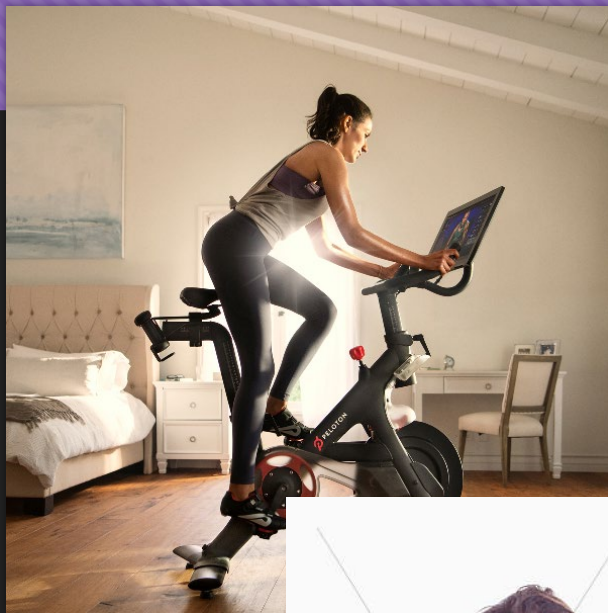


Affection

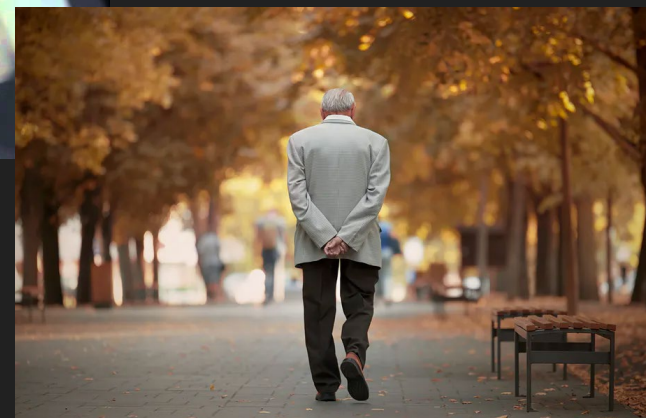


Creative Expression

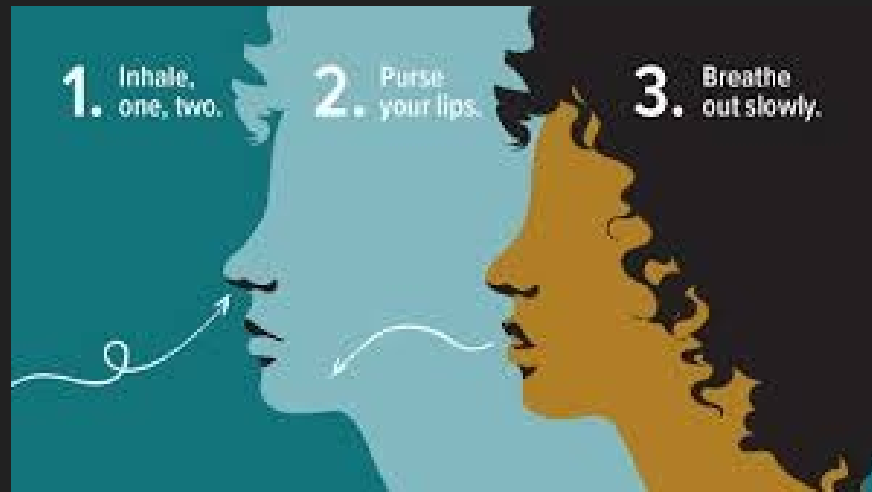
Physical Activity



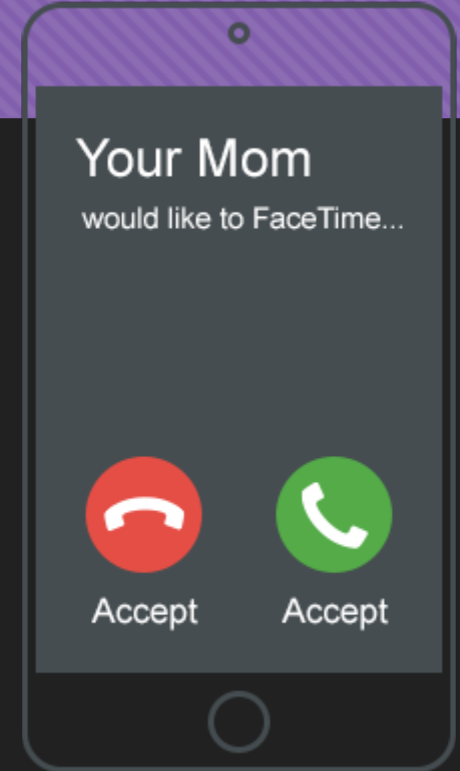
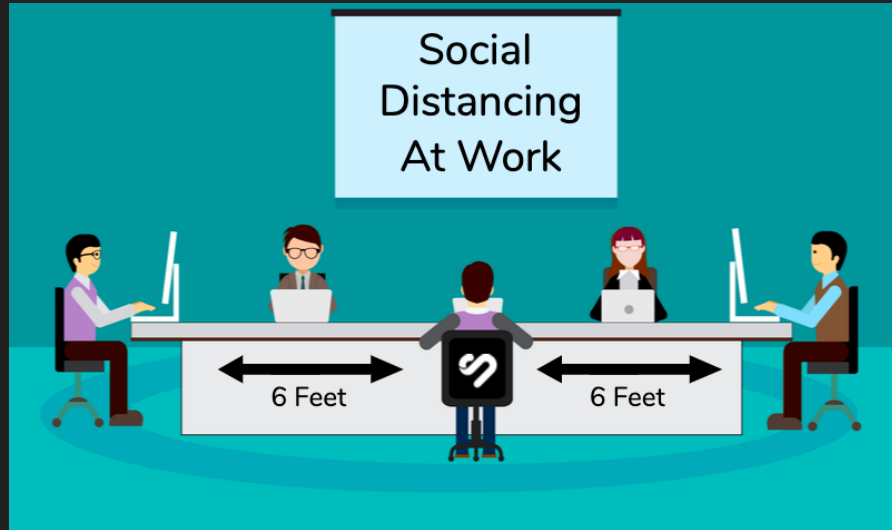
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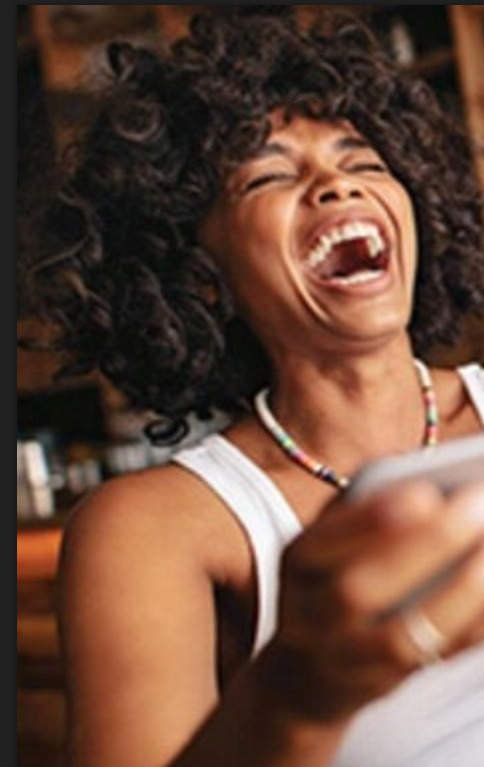
Breathing



Positive Social Interaction



Laughter



Creative Expression



Affection



Crying



COVID-19 Specific Guidance

Connect and share

Connect and share with supportive others

- Any connection is protective!
- Consider social distancing vs. social disconnection

Schedule

Schedule relaxation/grounding opportunities

- Balancing chronic arousal of sympathetic system

Focus

Focus on what you can control; take action when and where you able

- Consume information only as needed, from reputable sources
- Follow guidelines to minimize risk and then relax
- Identify activities that bring purpose/meaning/value

Today was different

COVID-19 Specific Guidance

Routines

Maintain healthy routines; now more than ever:

- Set regular sleep schedule
- Shower, get dressed, eat regular/healthy meals
- Exercise changes brain function and has anxiolytic effects!

Seek Help

Know when to seek/recommend additional support

- Symptoms of acute stress
- Worsening symptoms of depression/anxiety
- Safety concerns (suicidal ideation, abuse, neglect)

- Several Studies showing increased risk for healthcare providers
 - Increased risk of exposure, task/goal oriented, expectations to “have it together”
 - Both systemic and personal factors- you don’t “burnout” because you are deficient
- “Micro-Practices” can decrease risk of stress/burnout
 - 1-2 minute personal check-in/breathing exercise
 - “Three good things” exercise
 - Naming emotions
 - Homecoming routines for work-life balance

Additional Considerations for Healthcare Providers

Healthcare Worker Martyr Syndrome

Martyr:

a person who sacrifices something of great value and especially life itself for the sake of principle

Healthcare Worker Martyr Syndrome

Training

- You have to sacrifice from the beginning

Altruistic personalities

- Genuinely want to “help people”
- Don’t want to put out coworkers

Identity

- So much invested
- Anything less feels like betrayal

Healthcare Worker Martyr Syndrome

- You are a finite resource
- Your race is a marathon, not a sprint



Specific Considerations for children

Adults must care for themselves to be able to care for children!

Children express emotions differently (often behaviorally)

Routine provides security

Play is protective

Appropriate education and space for conversations

Thank you!

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