

COVID-19 Wellness Resources

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From Your Mental Health Team

Empathy and Boundaries

- Empathy is the ability to recognize and relate to the feelings of another person. When someone responds to us with empathy we feel understood and heard.
- It is different from sympathy, which is expressing sadness or pity for someone else's misfortune. Expressing genuine sympathy for someone's loss is appropriate. However, in some situations sympathy can seem condescending.
- Brené Brown is a social worker and research professor who studies courage, vulnerability, shame, and empathy. She has written several books including *The Gifts of Imperfection*, and gave a very popular TedTalk on *The Power of Vulnerability*. In the video below she talks about the difference between empathy and sympathy:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>
- Empathy empowers us to “meet people where they are at,” and treat them with dignity and respect.
- To practice empathy requires having healthy boundaries. We can show we care, without assuming responsibility to “carry” the other person's difficulties and distress.
- This is done by listening supportively without comparing their circumstances to our own, minimizing their feelings, giving unsolicited advice (“I think you should...”), or attempting to rescue them from difficulties beyond our role and control.
- Identifying too intensely with someone else's situation and wanting to control things for them can be a response based on our own emotional needs and conflicts, and wanting to relieve our own distress. It is important to recognize when this is happening and remind ourselves that we are in a supportive role.
- This helps us to respond ethically (maintain fair and safe professional relationships) and prevent compassion fatigue (gradual lessening of empathy). We can show we understand someone else's experience without taking it on as our own.
- Brené Brown talks about empathy as a skill set for compassion, that includes being able to set effective boundaries:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5U3VcgUzqil>
- Good boundaries help make empathy sustainable, equipping us to stay emotionally healthy as we provide compassionate care for others.



Boosting Courage

Sometimes our self-confidence falters. We might doubt our ability to handle a difficult situation. We might feel scared and unprepared. Franklin D. Roosevelt, president of the United States during The Great Depression and World War II, said “courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear.” For healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is considerable fear about how the virus will impact us professionally and personally. There is also an intensified focus on the care we provide, and how we can best adapt to meet the needs of our community. We are facing unprecedented challenges and an increased pace of change as this situation evolves.

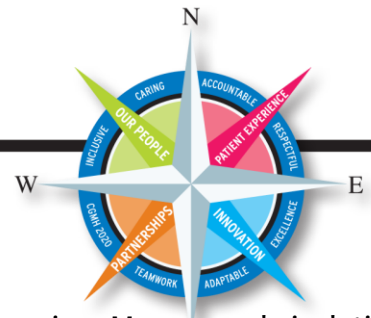
What are some things I can do when feeling vulnerable or overwhelmed? What can I control?

- **Seek connection with others.** Try to make the most of your time with loved ones at home, and find ways to stay in touch with other family and friends. Our social supports can cheer us on and motivate us to keep going. Conversations about topics other than work and the pandemic can help to balance the barrage of related information we are receiving, and keep us grounded about the importance of everyday things in life.
- **Support from coworkers is important.** Who can better understand the challenges you are facing in your job, things that you can't always discuss with people outside of work? If you are struggling with something, consider who you can approach for an empathetic response and help problem-solving. Also look for ways you can be supportive of others on your team, as helping someone else can build our confidence as well. Our Peer Support Team is also available.
- **Reflecting on what drew you to work in a healthcare setting can boost courage.** Having a calling to provide care, and contribute to the functioning of a hospital, is often something we assess to be more important than fear. What are the things you find most meaningful about your job? How does it feel to know you make a difference in the lives of people who rely on CGMH for care?
- **Faith** can boost courage and be a source of strength. If spirituality is important in your life, consider how you can reach out to your faith community now when in need of reassurance and support. Are there things you can practice daily, such as prayer and readings, to bolster and guide you?
- **Personal mementos** or “lucky” items can sometimes be carried with us as a tangible reminder to take courage. For example, a piece of jewellery, funny socks, a photo of a loved one.
- **Music** can also help us to face adversity and take heart. Many of us have a favourite tune, songs associated with special times in our lives, or that remind of people we care about. Anthems and hymns are used to unite us. The videos of people in Italy and other locations around the world singing from balconies to raise each other's spirits while quarantined at home due to coronavirus are a powerful example of how music can boost morale.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1prweT95Moo&feature=youtu.be>

or BTO,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJprEyXMrIk>



having a song you can play in your thoughts or share with others is another tool for coping. Many people isolating at home have made and circulated playlists online. One song that is popular and comforting now is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8NIhjpVF5U>

It's harder to feel afraid when this is your internal soundtrack, and what a great tune to share with any children in your life.

These emotional pick-me-ups can help clear our thoughts and steady us to keep going. Strategies for boosting courage are an important part of any self-care "toolkit." They help us to tolerate distress and adapt to stressful circumstances, in order to better get through this day, and the next, in our ongoing efforts to provide compassionate, innovative and collaborative care.





Responding to Patients who are Anxious

Why might patients and/or visitors be anxious?

- The pandemic is causing increased stress and anxiety for many people.
- They might be concerned about separation from family and friends, changes to routines, finances, uncertainty about the future, and fear that they or their loved ones will get the virus.
- Coming into the hospital alone could be very frightening for some. It might be an unfamiliar environment. Having only one designated visitor for compassionate reasons and/or none adds to a sense of isolation and vulnerability.
- Anxiety can manifest in defensive behaviors such as anger, sarcasm, withdrawal and being dismissive.

We can help reduce patient anxiety by:

- Introducing ourselves and our role, and explaining what we are about to do and why
- Asking patients how they are feeling and responding with empathy
- Asking about their work, children and other aspects of their lives, to show interest in them as a person
- Being calm and reassuring
- Responding to questions, even those we can't answer fully, in a polite and caring way
 - Give brief factual answers
 - If we do not know an answer, we can offer to check for them
- Offering what we can to improve their comfort (e.g. a blanket, a drink of water)
- Long wait times can increase anxiety - to manage patient expectations:
 - avoid specifying times but assure them their concerns will be addressed “as soon as possible”
 - thank them for their patience
- Guiding patients through a few quick strategies for reliving anxiety can also help.
 - If they are able to do *diaphragmatic breathing*, encourage them to breathe in slowly through the nose and out through the mouth, taking longer to exhale than inhale. The belly should move out and in with each breath, rather than the chest up and down.
 - *Progressive relaxation* involves tightening then relaxing muscle groups in the body, moving upward from toes to head.
 - They can also try *visualization*, picturing oneself in a place that is safe and peaceful, and trying to imagine that environment using the five senses (e.g. if on a beach, hearing the sound of the waves).
- Be aware of our own stress management. We are better able to have a calming influence on patients when we have practiced strategies for regulating our own anxiety. Even just pausing to take a deep breath before speaking can help us to feel and appear more composed.

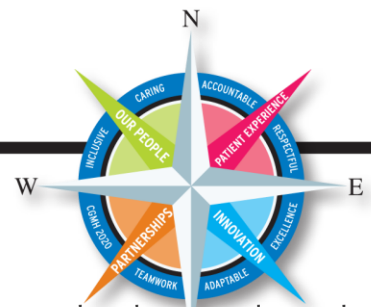
For more information, see:

How to help reduce your patients' anxiety – nurse.com (article)

<https://www.nurse.com/blog/2016/11/11/how-nurses-can-help-reduce-their-patients-anxiety/>

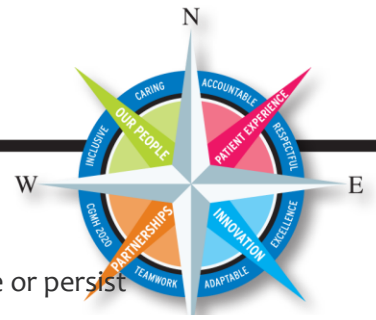
7 Ways to Provide Excellent Patient Care to an Anxious Patient – TravelNursing.org (article)

<https://www.travelnursing.org/7-ways-to-provide-exceptional-patient-care/>



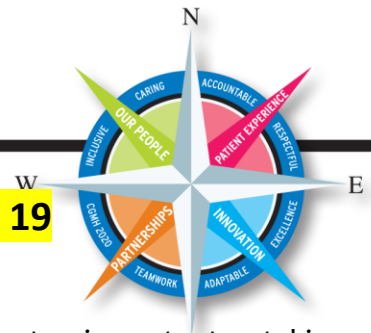
Vicarious Trauma

- Witnessing trauma (death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence) at work can take an emotional toll. Healthcare providers are at increased risk because their jobs routinely involve providing care for people who are vulnerable. They see or hear about traumatic events experienced by others. Over time this exposure can have a negative impact.
- Factors influencing work-related Vicarious Trauma include:
 - The nature of the work (repeated direct and indirect exposure to crisis situations), your working conditions, training related to coping with exposure to trauma, and what supports are available to you in the workplace.
 - You can be at more risk for developing vicarious trauma if there are significant stressors and losses in your personal life (e.g. domestic violence, providing care for a loved one at home).
 - Compassion fatigue (reduced empathy) and burnout (feeling exhausted due to chronic work-related stress) can increase vulnerability to vicarious trauma
 - Those in helping professions can feel isolated as family and friends might not want to hear about the stressful situations they encounter at work, and do to confidentiality/ privacy considerations some things cannot be discussed outside of work.
- Symptoms of vicarious trauma can include intrusive thoughts and imagery about those events, avoidance of things related to the events, feeling discouraged about the world, anxiety (e.g. tension, restlessness, racing thoughts, feelings of dread, elevated heart rate, difficulty sleeping), and changes to mood (sadness, fatigue, irritability, hopelessness, withdrawal from family and friends, changes to appetite, loss of interest in activities), similar to what people suffering from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) experience.
- If it persists vicarious trauma can cause difficulties functioning at work and home, and evolve into mental and physical health issues, relationship problems, increased absenteeism and attrition (helpers leaving the field).
- Some ways to prevent and respond to vicarious trauma include:
 - Debrief with colleagues or a supervisor on a regular basis and after incidents at work
 - Routinely and proactively practice good self-care:
 - Set realistic goals, expectations and boundaries for yourself
 - Have some quiet time — being in nature, writing in a journal, meditating
 - Recognize and appreciate the hard work you do
 - Get enough rest
 - Exercise often — even short walks are very helpful for coping with stress
 - Eat healthy and drink lots of water
 - Develop appropriate outlets for difficult emotions – talk with someone you trust, journal, exercise to relieve frustration
 - Check how you are coping — ask others for their opinion on how they see you coping. This may help provide some insight. (i.e.family member, friend)



- Get more support if you find symptoms of vicarious trauma increase or persist

If you think someone you know might be suffering from vicarious traumatization, you can share the above recommendations with them. Be kind and supportive. Sometimes people struggle in silence because they are embarrassed about having these difficulties. They might blame themselves for not being able to cope and “get over it.” People used to helping others can be uncomfortable needing and accepting help for themselves.



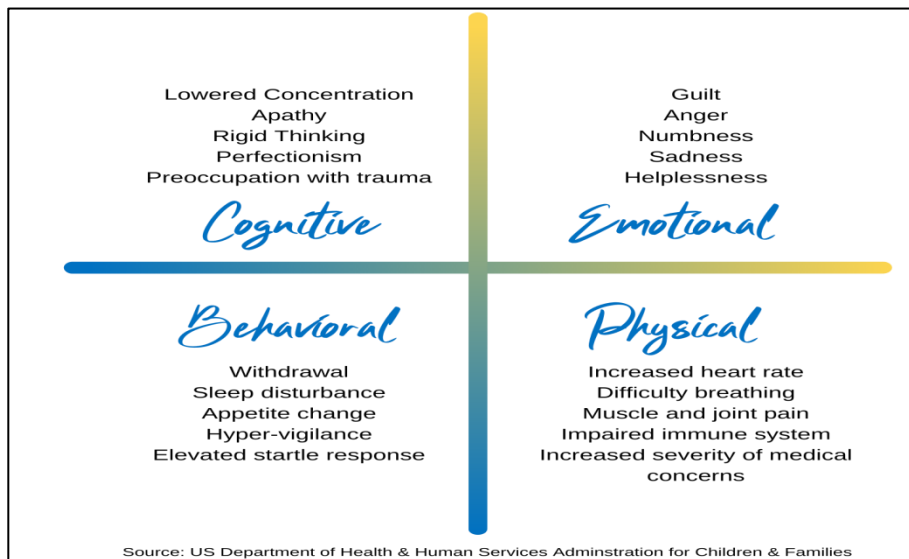
Managing Stress & Self-Care during COVID- 19

You are indispensable

Self-care is more crucial than ever. Take steps to manage our stress and anxiety is just as important as taking care of your physical health. Whole health begins with Mental Health.

Acknowledge and Understand your Reactions

- Appreciate that you will have reactions to stressors encountered, lack of rest, erratic eating schedules, information overload, increased work and responsibilities at work and home and limited resources.
- Exercise self-compassion. Almost everyone is impacted by an emergency will experience psychological distress. These reactions are by no means an indication of weakness.
- Everyone is susceptible to secondary traumatic stress.



Be Aware and Monitor Your Wellbeing

- Check in with yourself and monitor for symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Contact your provider if symptoms impact your ability to provide care to your patients or family as you would have before the pandemic.
- If overwhelmed by sadness, depression, anxiety or hopelessness reach out for assistance by contacting peer support, the mental health crisis line at 1-888-893-8333 or go to your nearest emergency department.

Nervous System to Combat Stress Activate Your Parasympathetic

- Practice breath awareness
- Eat regularly scheduled meals and avoid foods that increase inflammation in the body. Foods that may help fight inflammation may include fatty fish, broccoli, avocados, tomatoes, peppers, mushrooms, berries, grapes, green tea and dark chocolate.
- Maintain a daily routine to prepare for bed and promote quality sleep.

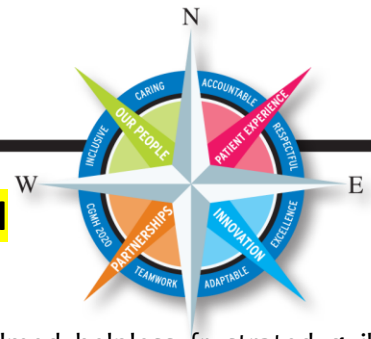


- Utilize mind-body practice like yoga, meditation and relaxation techniques.
- Maintain social connections through channels available to you.

Take Time for Your Mental Health

- Take a break from media coverage around COVID-19.
- Set aside time for you and your family to recover.
- Make time for self-care such as talking with a friend, reading a book, journaling or meditating.

<https://www.apna.org/m/pages.cfm?pageID=6685>



Managing Stress and Self Care in General

- It's completely normal to be experiencing a wide range of emotions.
- Name your emotions. (i.e. Anxious, stressed, worried, fearful, low, lonely, overwhelmed, helpless, frustrated, guilty, angry)
- **Autostress** can occur when our body's stress response goes for a long time and can occur after the high levels of stress have resolved. (i.e. Chest tightness and feeling you can't breathe, muscle tension, aches and pains, headaches, difficulty sleeping, restlessness and inability to relax, heart palpitations and digestive issues)
- Anxiety is described as having both mental and physical symptoms
- **Physical Symptoms** – Autostress
- **Mental symptoms** – Anxiety
- Anxiety is described as unhelpful thinking patterns the mind fixates on threat, uncertainty and negativity.
- Anxiety can occur on it's own, a response to stress, or can trigger stress.
- It can intensify and lead to panic attacks.
- You cannot control anxiety from occurring - it's an automatic survival mechanism.
- What matters most is how we respond to anxiety, learn to recognize and reduce anxiety.

What to look out for:

Threat Scanning – when your mind searches the environment for what you fear is often associated with your mind assigning meaning to harmless events. (Obsessively checking the news for coronavirus updates, frequently checking your body for coronavirus symptoms)

Catastrophizing – Mind jumps to the worst case scenario

Hypothetical Worry – The “What if's” that are typically about things you don't have control over.

Emotional Reasoning – When your mind tells you that your emotions reflect reality which are often unreliable.

Fortune Telling – When your mind interprets predictions as facts.

“Resilience is to know what is in your control and concentrate on that.”

“Let go of what is **not** in your control.”

Self – Compassion “If your compassion does not include yourself, then it is incomplete.”

Notice how you talk to or treat yourself. Develop compassionate phrases for example “I am doing the best that I can”. “Let me try to be as compassionate and understanding as I would be to someone else.”

Protecting ourselves from self-compassion is often yet another way we try to buffer ourselves from pain, the fear of vulnerability and suffering. Find something to fill you up, self-care above and beyond maintenance, not an indulgence but a necessity and fill up. Mental health becomes as important as washing your hands. Reach out to supports. Utilize Apps such as “Calm” to enhance sleep, Aura health.io, Headspace.com. Not to mention “Mindful walks” each day.

Self-Kindness, common humanity and mindfulness. Be warm and understanding toward yourself.



Enhancing Resilience “To know what is in your control and concentrate on that.”

Sharing latest details with family and friends is common but it keeps us thinking about it, which will influence our sense of threat or risk. Don’t initiate the conversation and change the subject if it does come up. You can ask your family or friends to not discuss the coronavirus updates with you.

“Let Go of what is not in your control”

Exploring Strengths “You possess many strengths in your professional life.”

Review past or present work, education or other professional endeavors. List your strengths that help you in your profession.

Describe how a specific time your strengths were able to help you in your profession.

Identify two new ways you could use your strengths in your professional life.

Whole Health begins with Mental Health

Important Reminders

- Take time for yourself (Carve out the time)
 - Cultivate your inner advocate
 - Take good care of yourself
 - Respect yourself
 - Treat yourself
 - Soothe yourself
- Help is available if symptoms you are experiencing impact your ability to provide care to your patients and your family in the same way you did before the pandemic, reach out for support.

Further Resources on this Topic:

Coffee with Claire, Conversations on COVID-19 with CAN’s President

www.psychpoint.com

www.thewellnesssociety.org

www.apna.org

www.anxietycanada.com

Mental Health First Aid COVID-19 Self-Care & Resilience Guide, Mental Health Commission of Canada

The Working Mind COVID-19 Self-Care & Resilience Guide, Mental Health Commission of Canada

APPS:

Calm

Aurahealth.io

Headspace.com



Pause to Breathe

When we are busy and facing uncertainty it can feel like we barely have time to catch our breath. Our focus might be on just getting through the day. One of the most effective things we can do during such times is to take a few minutes to pause and breathe. Breathing slowly and deliberately from the diaphragm helps settle our nervous system.

How to do it:

1. Take a slow breath in through the nose, breathing into your lower belly (for about 4 seconds)
2. Hold your breath for 1 or 2 seconds
3. Exhale slowly through the mouth (for about 4 seconds)
4. Wait a few seconds before taking another breath

About 6-8 breathing cycles per minute is often helpful to decrease anxiety, but find your own comfortable breathing rhythm (© Anxiety Canada)

You can discretely try this breathing in most places (e.g. while waiting in line). If you take a few deep breaths before doing a difficult task, it can help you to feel more calm and confident (e.g. public speaking).

If you practice this type of deep breathing routinely it will be even easier to do when your stress is heightened. A few minutes of deep breathing in the morning can help you to face the day with an increased sense of calm, and at night it can help you to relax and improve sleep.

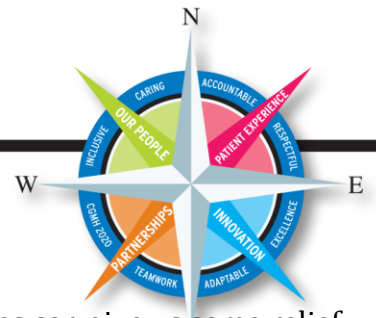
While practicing your breathing, try noticing if you are storing tension in places such as your neck and shoulders and if so give those areas a gentle stretch.

Using our five senses to bring us back to the present when we are distracted by worry is also a quick, effective strategy for managing stress.

You can do this by noticing:

- 5 things I can see right now
- 4 things I can hear right now
- 3 things I can touch right now
- 2 things I can smell or taste
- Take 1 deep breath

If you are in an environment that doesn't allow for all of these steps (e.g. smell/taste), just do the others. Sensory exercises like this one help us to be mindful of our environment and what we are doing in the moment.



When we are very busy and breaks are hard to come by, simple relaxation strategies can give us some relief. Heightened stress over time takes a toll on our mental and physical health, so easing it even in small increments can improve how we feel and perform.

Please click on the links below if you would like more information on breathing and grounding strategies.

Calm Breathing – Anxiety Canada (tip sheet)

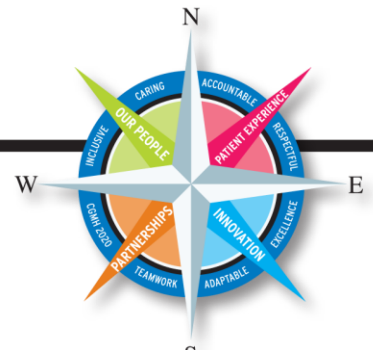
<https://anxietycanada.com/sites/default/files/CalmBreathing.pdf>

Take a breath: How the simple act of meditative breathing helps us cope – CNN (article)

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/27/health/how-to-do-breathing-meditation-coronavirus-wellness/index.html>



Distress Tolerance
Skill - Right Now (5 se



Grief & Loss Related to Coronavirus

- Our jobs, roles and expectations influence how we see ourselves, and when we experience losses in these areas, there is a grieving process. It is normal to experience denial, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, withdraw from family and friends, feel angry, depressed, fatigue or lack of energy, loneliness and feel a sense of desperation.

Communication is imperative, particularly during times of Grief/Loss and here are some effective tips:

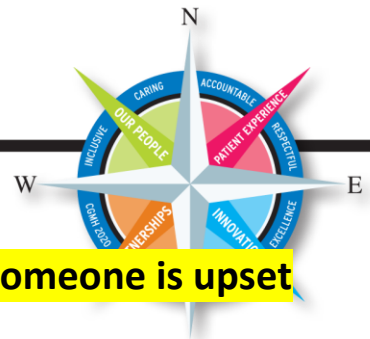
- *Open up to family and friends, lean on the people who care about you.
- *Listen to your family member's concerns, and remember they are worried about you.
- * Make the best choices, under the circumstances for your family.
- * Check in with friends, &/or coworkers who may be experiencing similar life events.

It is easy to self-criticize or blame yourself when experiencing a loss. Aim to avoid putting yourself down, and challenge every negative thought that goes through your mind. Write down evidence to the contrary to the negative thought(s). For example, **Negative Thought:** "If only I was better at work, I would still have my job." vs **Fact:** "The state of emergency has created many layoffs across sectors. Once the economy is opened back up I know my boss will want me back to work and I will be ready."

What can I do to manage the grief and loss?

- ***Connect with Others**, stay connected with your usual support systems; friends, family, spiritual leaders or social groups. (During Covid time, you may wish to use Digital Platforms to remain connected)
- ***Allow yourself to feel a range of emotions.** It's OK to be sad and feel a sense of loss, but also allow yourself to experience joy and happiness. As you celebrate special times, you might find yourself both laughing and crying
- ***Rhythmic exercise.** Move both your arms and legs such as dancing, is a hugely effective way to lift your mood, increase energy, sharpen focus and relax both mind and body.
- ***Be kind** to yourself.
- ***Develop a regular routine.** Maintain a timeframe that includes eating, sleeping and activity each day.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/overcoming-destructive-anger/202004/anger-loss-and-grief-in-the-age-pandemic>



Difficult Conversations: Strategies for responding when someone is upset

Many things can contribute to difficult conversations. This is very true in healthcare settings. When patients are in pain and distress, when their loved ones are worried or frustrated, when we are busy and tired, when a co-worker is having a bad day, and/or when there are challenges in the environment such as being short staffed or having difficulty with equipment, emotions can get heightened. Sometimes we are exposed to aggressive behaviour from others. At other times we might find our own anxiety and frustration building.

Good communication can help prevent and de-escalate situations where there is the potential for aggression. Using the EAR acronym to remember steps for effective communication - empathy, assertiveness and respect - can guide us in how to respond when someone is upset.

Secrets of Effective Communication (EAR)

E = Empathy

- Find some truth in what the other person is saying
- Try to imagine their perspective/experience
- Paraphrase the other person's words (to show you are listening and to give them opportunity to clarify if needed)
- Acknowledge how the other person is probably feeling, based on what they said
- Inquire gently about what they are thinking and feeling

A = Assertiveness

- Express your own ideas and feelings in a direct, tactful manner using **I statements**, such as "I feel upset" rather than "you are upsetting me."

R = Respect

- Convey an attitude of respect even if you feel frustrated or angry. Find something genuinely positive to say. Being patient and civil can have a calming influence on the other person.

There are nonverbal cues that can let us know when someone is agitated:

- * A raised voice
- * Clenched hands
- * Crossed arms
- * Pacing

HOW TO RESPOND:

Responding with empathy is often the best strategy to defuse a difficult situation. This requires staying in control of your own emotions and body language when someone is behaving aggressively.



Being confrontational with someone who is distressed tends to escalate things and communication breaks down.

If you can engage the person in conversation and model calm behaviour, they are more likely to be cooperative.

People who are agitated require more time to think. When the emotional centre of the brain is very active our capacity for logic and language is less.

Giving them some space and time to calm down is important.

Speaking in a clear, concise manner will help them better understand and respond to you.

Appropriate open body language such as making intermittent eye contact, nodding to show you are listening, and keeping your arms relaxed at your sides while standing some distance away and slightly off to the side (the supportive stance from non-violent crisis intervention) is important – it conveys attention and respect for the person, while also allowing you both some personal space.

Explain your actions and behaviours in advance, so the person knows what to expect and will not be startled into reacting defensively.

Take reasonable precautions for your own safety. If you assess that there is significant risk of violence, then follow CGMH and departmental protocols to protect yourself, your colleagues, patients and others in the vicinity.

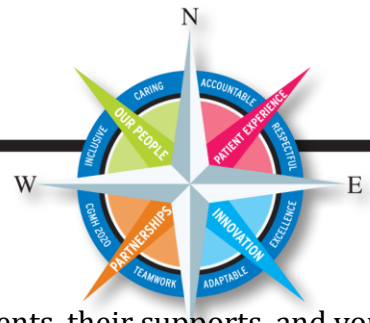
Signs that there is increased risk can include:

- * Disorientation or impulsive behaviour due to a medical condition or intoxication
- * Not respecting personal space
- * Making threats
- * History of physical aggression.

CODE OF CONDUCT, WORKPLACE HARASSMENT & VIOLENCE PREVENTION POLICY & PROCEDURE

<http://thepulse.collingwood.cgmh.on.ca/apps/files5019/COMPLETE%20WITH%20APPENDIX%20Code%20of%20Conduct,%20Workplace%20Harassment%20and%20Violence%20Prevention%20Policy%20November%202018.pdf>

It is okay to assertively set limits and boundaries. Doing so in a direct, tactful way, with a brief explanation for why certain behaviour is inappropriate and what is acceptable instead, can lead to positive change. Sometimes people are unaware of how their behaviour is disruptive to others and need guidance. For those who are aware, this direction provides accountability. Aim for a win-win outcome, engaging the person in finding a solution to the problem rather than arguing.



These strategies can help you to respond during challenging interactions with patients, their supports, and your colleagues. Focusing on finding a solution to a difficult situation, rather than labelling the person as difficult, can help us manage our own emotions (not take the behaviour personally) and respond in a professional manner.

For more information please click on the links below:

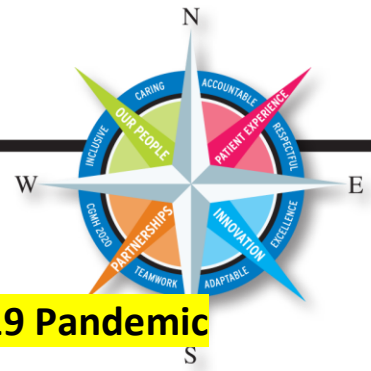
De-Escalation Tips in Light of Coronavirus Anxiety – Crisis Prevention Institute (tip sheet)
https://www.crisisprevention.com/CPI/media/Media/download/PDF_De-escalation-Tips-Coronavirus.PDF?code=EBIT01DTCA&src=Resources&med=Website

Difficult Interactions – onthewards.org (article)
<https://onthewards.org/difficult-interactions/>

Difficult and Challenging Conversations – nursingtimes.net (article)
<https://www.nursingtimes.net/clinical-archive/assessment-skills/communication-skills-6-difficult-and-challenging-conversations-20-04-2018/>



Five Secrets of
Effective Communicat



Talking to and Supporting Teens during the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the pandemic continues, we continue to face an ever changing reality. We do our best to adapt, to cope. Some moments are better than others, for sure. There are moments where we muddle along, others where we simply survive. We have become experts in social distancing and infection control. This is unique, “we are all in this together”, yet isolated at the same time. It is like we are in different boats struggling to navigate the same storm. The teenage life has been absolutely turned upside down. Opportunities to develop relationships, social skills and identity, critical at this age, have all but vanished. Then there are the losses. Extracurricular activities suddenly cancelled, with no idea if and when they will continue. Add to this all the uncertainty. Consider the twelfth grader for a moment. What will prom and graduation look like? What about college or university? We haven’t even mentioned adjusting to online learning, luckily teens are tech savvy.

For teens whose parents are working, new roles of “teacher” or “caregiver” are common. For teens whose parents are not working, there may be a whole set of worries related to both theirs and their families financial future. Some teens continue to work in roles deemed essential and they may be the only members of their household working outside the home. It is no wonder that this is an especially difficult time for teens. What exactly should we be saying and how can we best support them?

Talking to Teens

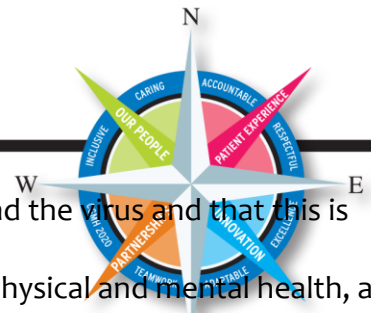
Stay informed. Teens may want to discuss more complex topics related to the pandemic and you may have to do a bit of your own learning. You may also want to consider the timing of conversations. When is your teen likely to be most receptive and alert? Checking in with ourselves is also key. If we are feeling anxious or irritable, this is not the best time to have a conversation. Do your best to model patience and calmness.

As with younger children, a great place to start is to ask teens what they already know and whether they have any questions. This way, we meet them where they are, avoiding lectures and helping to correct misinformation and rumors. Be honest if you don’t have answers, this may be a great time to find out together. Also, try to be hopeful. There are many positive news stories of people doing wonderful things for others and working together to “flatten the curve”. If we are feeling anxious or fearful, limiting negative media can be helpful.

Ask teens how they are feeling and validate those feelings. Frustration, disappointment and worry are likely. Continue to check in with them to see how they are managing. Try to avoid judgements and ensure reassuring statements like; “Sounds like you are worried, it is normal to be worried during times like these.” This statement is more helpful than, “You shouldn’t feel worried; everything is going to be ok.” Even though there are probably good intentions behind the second statement, it invalidates their feelings, sending the message that there is something wrong with how they feel (there isn’t) and in reality, is inaccurate as we simply don’t know what the outcome will be. Sharing our own feelings or a story of when we felt worried as a teen can be reassuring and normalizing. Be careful not to process your own emotions with them as they are not equipped for this. Process your emotions with another adult instead. Conversations and questions are likely to be ongoing, by creating a “safe space” for your teen to engage, they are more likely to return.

Supporting Teens

Consider stages of development. The teenage brain is a developing brain and areas responsible for decision making and problem solving are not fully developed. As such, impulsivity and feelings of invincibility can occur, leading to social distancing defiance. Their awareness that they may be less at risk than other populations does



not help either. The key here is education that even asymptomatic people can spread the virus and that this is about “flattening the curve” and protecting the vulnerable people around them.

Healthy behavior. We know that proper nutrition, sleep and exercise can improve physical and mental health, as can mindfulness. Consistency with routine, for example, learning schedules and sleep schedules, are also important. Knowing what to expect can ease our worries. You may want to develop a schedule with your teen (they are more likely to follow it) including rewards for their efforts as well as reasonable down time. Realistic expectations of their performance can help both them and us.

Monitor screen time and content. Completing assignments, connecting with friends and being creative are all productive, great uses of technology. Watching videos or playing video games all day, not so much. We can help them replace media sources containing rumours, misinformation, negative or discriminatory content. We can also teach and model the difference between staying informed and media overuse, which can cause anxiety.

Instill hope by reminding them of their strengths, ability to cope and moments when they demonstrated resiliency. Help them shift focus on what they can control rather than what is out of reach. We don’t know what the outcome will be, but there are many things we can do now to manage as best as we can. Maybe there are things that can be done to help the community at large and make a difference?

Seek help. Situations such as these can both create as well as worsen pre-existing mental health concerns. If this is the case, there are many online and professional local resources to connect your teen with. For example, ComPsych GuidanceResources located on The Pulse provides support and resources while 211ontario.ca can connect teens with local support services. Kids Help Phone is another great resource that allows for a TEXTING option <https://kidshelpphone.ca/text/>.

There is no question that this is a very difficult time for us all. Teens have some unique challenges, for sure, but they also have some amazing strengths and can be quite resilient. They have access to many resources to help them get through this, including us. Teens will get through this, just as we all will.

Sincerely,

Your Mental Health Team

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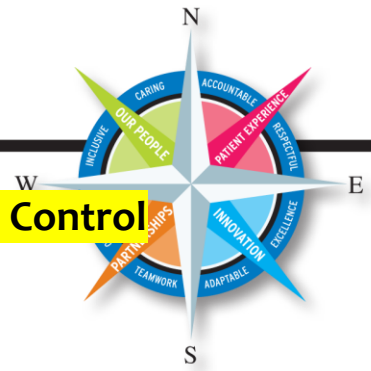
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Adaptive Coping: Balancing the Things You Can Control

and the Things You Can't

One of the main challenges in times of crisis is mentally grappling with things you cannot control. For COVID-19, this often includes global pandemic numbers, government-level responses, and other people's actions. While these things impact us on an individual level, we have limited ability to impact them in return.

Unfortunately, we often spend so much time worrying about these problems that we neglect doing the things we actually do have influence over. For instance, we may be so busy watching the news we skip our planned physical exercise. Differentiating between the things we control and things we don't can allow us to focus our energies where it matters most. It can also help us with accepting the things beyond our scope of influence. That isn't to say the things we don't control are not important. But recognizing that we have no control over them can make it easier to live with.



Try the following exercise:

Step 1: Draw a large circle on a page

Step 2: Inside the circle, write down all the things you control or can do to improve your situation. Outside of the circle, write down all the things you have no influence over.

Step 3: Examine your circle and take a moment to reflect. Where has your mental and physical energy been going recently? Is there anything you control that you've been neglecting? Is there anything you can let go of?

Sincerely,

Your Mental Health Team



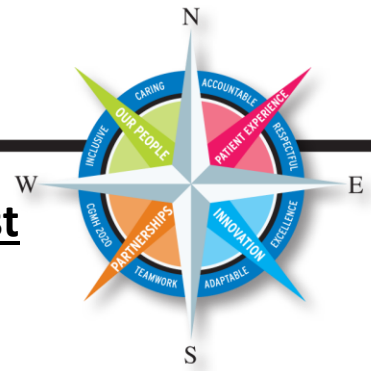
Transitioning Between Work and Home

Having a solid plan for transitioning between work and home can allow you to maximize your time at both. It can also help protect us against burnout, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma by improving our ability to rest and rejuvenate. Here are some tips for transitioning from home to work and back again:

- Have a set routine. Having a routine allows your body and brain to learn to expect what comes next. This can include things like having a specific playlist you listen to on the way to work, or specific activities you engage in as soon as you come home.
- Make the most of your commute. Take a moment to reflect upon your previous activity and practice gratitude regarding something that happened. Plan your intentions for what comes next.
- When in doubt, sweat it out. Exercise after work can help burn off pent up stress and allow you to return home with a clear head and settled heart.
- Practice boundaries. Have a clear distinction between work and home. For example, try not to check your work email from home.
- Use Containment Visualizations:
 - When transitioning between work and home, take a moment to visualize a container that is the right size and shape to hold any “unfinished business” you wish to save for later. Ideas include a safe, a file cabinet, or an envelope.
 - Reflect on what it is you wish to leave behind. Imagine you are putting all of these thoughts into the container, ready for you to pick up at another time. When you are ready, close the container. You may have to do this several times before you feel ready to move on.
 - Move forward with your day, knowing that all of these thoughts are stored for safe keeping and are not something you need to worry about now.
 - Use a real container if this helps. For example, write out a list of “work thoughts” at the end of the day. Put this list in an envelope in your locker, so you can leave them behind when you go home.
 - Similarly, you can also “brush yourself off” with your hands, imagining you are also brushing off the thoughts and feelings from the day. This also works with washing your thoughts off in the shower.

Sincerely,

Your Mental Health Team



Recommended External Resource List

Brain Breaks: Breathing Exercises for Kids

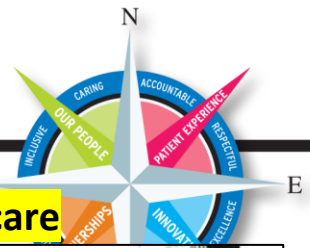
<https://childhood101.com/fun-breathing-exercises-for-kids/>

Coronavirus Anxiety Workbook

<https://thewellnesssociety.org/free-coronavirus-anxiety-workbook/>

Deep Breathing- Strategies for Children

<https://copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids>



Distress Tolerance Skills – Do One Thing and SELF care

DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILL

DO ONE THING – 20 MINUTES

From 'Distract' skill, we have developed a range of techniques that you can now use to take your mind away from the distress you feel. We know that none of us make good decisions when we are in a highly emotional state. Emotions can run high when we are excited as well as when we are angry or depressed: "I was so angry I couldn't think straight, I just saw red" "I was so excited I just did it without thinking! What a mess I have made of it!" are sayings we have all used! The trouble with acting at these times is the often devastating consequence of those impulsive actions e.g. self harm, binge eating, verbal and physical violence. This keeps the vicious cycle going. Distraction can serve to give you a much needed break from depressed or impulsive thought patterns.



DO ONE THING

So, the next time you feel intense emotion, rather than acting on it, DO ONE THING from your list, or use something from the SOOTHE BAG and do it for 20 MINUTES.

- Concentrate totally on whatever distraction technique you have chosen to do. It is helpful to pick activities that burn off some of the adrenaline associated with high emotion so don't just vacuum! Vacuum enthusiastically, hard and thoroughly! **Do it for 20 minutes.**
- If your mind wanders or you feel the emotion kicking in again, do not succumb to it!
- **Keep going for 20 minutes.**
- After 20 minutes, assess how you are feeling – if you still feel emotional
- Repeat the same activity for another **20 minutes.**
- After 20 minutes, assess how you are feeling – if you still feel emotional
- Repeat the same activity for another **20 minutes.**
- And keep going until you are able to think clearly enough to make a wise decision.
- Just to be sure – **DO ONE MORE THING FOR 20 MINUTES** once more.

'DO ONE THING - 20 MINUTES' skill helps us manage the impulsive actions that result from distressing emotion.

EMOTION REGULATION SKILL

SELF CARE

We may not have caused our problems but we do have a responsibility to change things for the better. Looking after ourselves with the intention of improving or restoring our physical or mental health, treating or preventing disease is our own responsibility and no one else can do it for us. Self care is about taking charge of our own health decisions and doing the best we can to get and stay physically and mentally fit. Self care is sleeping and exercising to maintain physical fitness and good mental health. It is also eating well, practicing good personal hygiene and avoiding health hazards such as smoking, drinking and taking drugs. Self care is also taking care of minor physical problems and long term conditions. It's a bit like having a vaccination to protect us against particular diseases. We can build up our immunity and natural resources to enable us to deal with distress.



The acronym "**SELF care**" can remind us what we can do regularly in order to keep ourselves healthy and stable. If we take care of ourselves, we can protect ourselves against vulnerability. This means we are more likely to be able to cope with the mental pain that is so often associated with emotionally distressing situations.

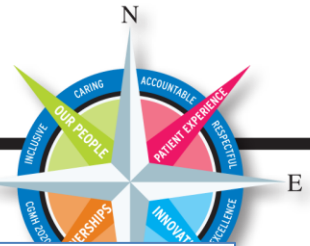
SLEEP

EATING & EXERCISE

LOOK AT – alcohol, drugs, smoking, treating illness

FIND something every day that gives you a sense of achievement, ability and enjoyment

<p>Be kind to yourself Be kind to yourself & treat any physical illness. Encourage rather than criticise yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.</p>	<p>Exercise regularly Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health, and gives us more energy. Get outside, preferably in a green space or near water. Find an activity you enjoy doing, and just do it.</p>
<p>Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill Increase your confidence and interest, meet others, or prepare for finding work.</p>	<p>Eat healthily Eat regularly, eat breakfast, eat healthily, eat fruit and vegetables, drink water.</p>
<p>Help others Get involved with a community project, charity work, or simply help out someone you know. As well as benefiting others, you will be doing something worthwhile which will help you feel better about yourself.</p>	<p>Relax Make time for yourself. Allow yourself to chill out and relax. Find your own way of relaxing, different things work for different people.</p>
<p>Have some fun and/or be creative Having fun or being creative helps us feel better and increases our confidence. Enjoy yourself!</p>	<p>Balance sleep Get into a healthy sleep routine – including going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.</p>
<p>Connect with others Stay in touch with family and friends - make regular and frequent contact with them.</p>	<p>Beware drink and drugs Avoid using alcohol (or non-prescribed drugs) to help you cope – it will only add to your problems.</p>



Distress Tolerance Skill – Right Now (5 Senses)

DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILL

RIGHT NOW

When we realise we cannot change a situation but feel overwhelmed by upsetting thoughts and very uncomfortable feelings, we can use our five senses to do something **RIGHT NOW** that will help improve this moment.

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5	things I can see right now, or imagine I can see right now
4	things I can hear right now, or imagine I can hear right now
3	things I can touch right now, or imagine I can touch right now
2	things I can smell or taste right now, or imagine I can taste right now
1	deep slow breath <i>Then, simply focus on your breathing. In this moment. Here and now.</i>

Things I can see

Look around you and notice 5 things you can see, right now. Wherever you are, and notice what you can see. Notice colours, shapes, light and shadow, movement, near and far, dimensions, textures. Notice 5 things!

Things I can hear

Notice 4 things you can hear right now. You might notice the sounds around you, near and far, loud and soft, sounds from within your own body, those in the room, those outside the room.

Things I can touch

Notice 3 things you can touch, right now. Reach out and touch things around you. What are they? What do they feel like? Maybe you can massage your hand or stroke a pet.

Create your own 'ice pack' (see below) and place it on your forehead, or buy in a supply of 'cool strips' from the chemist.

Things I can smell or taste

What 2 things can you smell or taste around you, right now. Notice the smells or tastes in this place, where you are, right now; books, furniture, your wrist, your clothes, whatever is nearby.

Take one deep slow breath

Then simply bring your attention to your breathing, perhaps counting your breaths, or just noticing those sensations of breathing.

AND/OR

Make your own ice pack or use a cooling forehead gel patch. Place it on your forehead and sit breathing quietly until you feel physical and mental benefits.



Five Secrets of Effective Communication

Five Secrets of Effective Communication (EAR: ?)*

E = Empathy

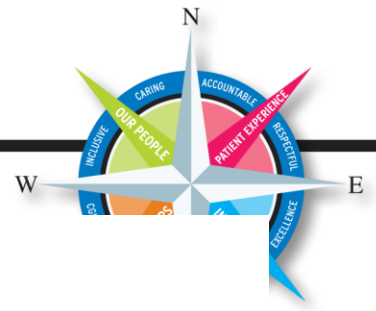
0. **The Disarming Technique (DT).** Find some truth in what the other person is saying, even if it seems totally unreasonable or unfair.
0. **Empathy.** Put yourself in the other person's shoes and try to see the world through his or her eyes.
 - **Thought Empathy (TE).** Paraphrase the other person's words.
 - **Feeling Empathy (FE).** Acknowledge how the other person is probably feeling, based on what she or he said.
0. **Inquiry (IN).** Ask gentle, probing questions to learn more about what the other person is thinking and feeling.

A = Assertiveness

0. **"I Feel" Statements (IF).** Express your own ideas and feelings in a direct, tactful manner. Use "I feel" statements, such as "I feel upset," rather than "you" statements, such as "You're wrong!" or "You're making me furious!"

R = Respect

0. **Stroking (ST).** Convey an attitude of respect, even if you feel frustrated or angry with the other person. Find something genuinely positive to say to the other person, even in the heat of battle.








Grounding Techniques

Grounding Techniques

After a trauma, it's normal to experience flashbacks, anxiety, and other uncomfortable symptoms. **Grounding techniques** help control these symptoms by turning attention away from thoughts, memories, or worries, and refocusing on the present moment.

5-4-3-2-1 Technique

Using the 5-4-3-2-1 technique, you will purposefully take in the details of your surroundings using each of your senses. Strive to notice small details that your mind would usually tune out, such as distant sounds, or the texture of an ordinary object.

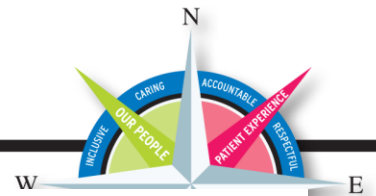
-  **What are 5 things you can see?** Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface, or an object you never noticed.
-  **What are 4 things you can feel?** Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin, or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture, and other physical qualities.
-  **What are 3 things you can hear?** Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic, or trees blowing in the wind.
-  **What are 2 things you can smell?** Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has a scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.
-  **What is 1 thing you can taste?** Carry gum, candy, or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors.

Categories

Choose at least three of the categories below and name as many items as you can in each one. Spend a few minutes on each category to come up with as many items as possible.

Movies	Countries	Books	Cereals
Sports Teams	Colors	Cars	Fruits & Vegetables
Animals	Cities	TV Shows	Famous People

For a variation on this activity, try naming items in a category alphabetically. For example, for the fruits & vegetables category, say "apple, banana, carrot," and so on.



Grounding Techniques

Body Awareness

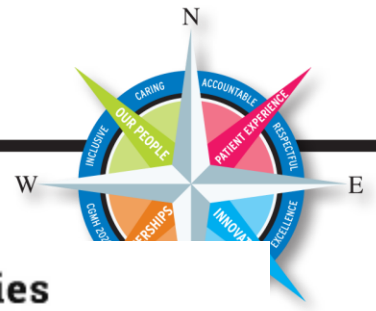
The body awareness technique will bring you into the here-and-now by directing your focus to sensations in the body. Pay special attention to the physical sensations created by each step.

1. Take 5 long, deep breaths through your nose, and exhale through puckered lips.
2. Place both feet flat on the floor. Wiggle your toes. Curl and uncurl your toes several times. Spend a moment noticing the sensations in your feet.
3. Stomp your feet on the ground several times. Pay attention to the sensations in your feet and legs as you make contact with the ground.
4. Clench your hands into fists, then release the tension. Repeat this 10 times.
5. Press your palms together. Press them harder and hold this pose for 15 seconds. Pay attention to the feeling of tension in your hands and arms.
6. Rub your palms together briskly. Notice and sound and the feeling of warmth.
7. Reach your hands over your head like you're trying to reach the sky. Stretch like this for 5 seconds. Bring your arms down and let them relax at your sides.
8. Take 5 more deep breaths and notice the feeling of calm in your body.

Mental Exercises

Use mental exercises to take your mind off uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. They are discreet and easy to use at nearly any time or place. Experiment to see which work best for you.

- Name all the objects you see.
- Describe the steps in performing an activity you know how to do well. For example, how to shoot a basketball, prepare your favorite meal, or tie a knot.
- Count backwards from 100 by 7.
- Pick up an object and describe it in detail. Describe its color, texture, size, weight, scent, and any other qualities you notice.
- Spell your full name, and the names of three other people, backwards.
- Name all your family members, their ages, and one of their favorite activities.
- Read something backwards, letter-by-letter. Practice for at least a few minutes.
- Think of an object and "draw" it in your mind, or in the air with your finger. Try drawing your home, a vehicle, or an animal.



Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are actions we take—consciously or unconsciously—to deal with stress, problems, or uncomfortable emotions. Unhealthy coping strategies tend to feel good in the moment, but have long-term negative consequences. Healthy coping strategies may not provide instant gratification, but they lead to long-lasting positive outcomes.

Examples of <u>unhealthy</u> coping strategies:	Examples of <u>healthy</u> coping strategies:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drug or alcohol use • Overeating • Procrastination • Sleeping too much or too little • Social withdrawal • Self-harm • Aggression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise • Talking about your problem • Healthy eating • Seeking professional help • Relaxation techniques (e.g. deep breathing) • Using social support • Problem-solving techniques

Example Scenarios

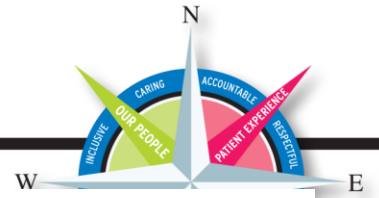
Noelle has a research paper due in one of her classes. Because the paper will require so much work, Noelle feels anxious every time she thinks about it. When Noelle distracts herself with other activities, she feels better. Noelle uses the coping strategy of procrastination to avoid her feelings of anxiety. This helps her feel better now, but will cause problems in the long run.

Juan feels jealous whenever his wife spends time with her friends. To control the situation, Juan uses insults to put down his wife's friends, and he demands that his wife stay home. When Juan's wife caves to his demands, he feels a sense of relief. Juan uses the coping strategy of aggression to avoid the discomfort of jealousy.

Rebecca is angry about being passed over for a promotion at work. Rather than discussing the situation with her boss and trying to improve her work performance, she holds onto her anger. Rebecca has learned to manage her anger by drinking alcohol. Drinking numbs Rebecca's anger temporarily, but the problems at work remain unresolved.

Scenario Discussion Questions

- What consequences might result from this individual's unhealthy coping strategy?
- What healthy coping strategies could be helpful for the individual?
- What barriers might be preventing the individual from using healthy coping strategies?

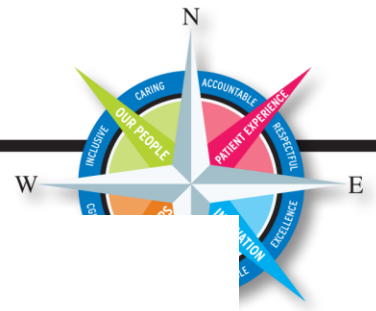


Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies

Describe a problem you are currently dealing with:

My unhealthy coping strategies:	Consequences of unhealthy coping strategies:
1	
2	

Healthy coping strategies I use, or could use:	Expected outcomes of healthy coping strategies:	Barriers to using healthy coping strategies:
1		
2		
3		



Strengths Exploration

Strengths Exploration

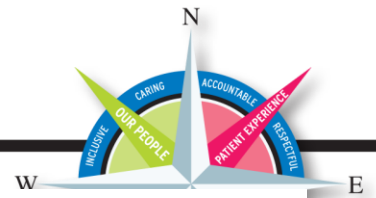
Those who know their strengths and use them frequently tend to have more success in several areas. They feel happier, have better self-esteem, and are more likely to accomplish their goals.

To use your strengths effectively, it's important to have a clear idea of what they are, and how they can be used. Some of your greatest strengths might be easy to recognize, while others go unnoticed because they feel ordinary to you (even if they aren't).

In this worksheet you will identify your strengths and ways in which you are already using them. Additionally, you will explore new ways to use your strengths to your advantage.

Circle your strengths from the choices below, or add your own at the bottom.

Wisdom	Artistic Ability	Curiosity	Leadership
Empathy	Honesty	Open Mindedness	Persistence
Enthusiasm	Kindness	Love	Social Awareness
Fairness	Bravery	Cooperation	Forgiveness
Modesty	Common Sense	Self-Control	Patience
Gratitude	Love of Learning	Humor	Spirituality
Ambition	Creativity	Confidence	Intelligence
Athleticism	Discipline	Assertiveness	Logic
Optimism	Independence	Flexibility	Adventurousness



Strengths Exploration



Relationships

romantic relationships, friendships, and family

List the strengths you possess that help you in your relationships.

Describe a *specific* time your strengths were able to help you in a relationship.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths in relationships.

1

2



Strengths Exploration



Profession

past or present work, school, or other professional endeavors

List the strengths you possess that help you in your profession.

Describe a *specific* time your strengths were able to help in your profession.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths in your professional life.

1

2



Strengths Exploration



Personal Fulfillment

hobbies, interests, and pleasurable activities

List the strengths you possess that help you achieve personal fulfillment.

Describe a *specific* time your strengths were able to help you with personal fulfillment.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths for personal fulfillment.

1

2



Talking to Relatives and Loved Ones: Common Reactions to Grief and Loss

Talking to relatives and loved ones

The care of family members becomes ever more central to the holistic care of the dying person. Their prime need is to be reassured of the patient's comfort.

Provide regular opportunities for the family member to understand or be updated on the condition, treatment and or care given to the patient. Consider at what pace family members may like to know what changes to expect and how they will be managed. Make the family feel welcome at all times and consider what arrangements can be made to offer them space to rest and eat and drink close by. Some family members may wish to stay with the patient continuously or others may wish to be called back if death is close by. Some may wish to be involved in direct care giving. Provide advice and support as needed.

The benefit to families pre-bereavement of the nurse in helping both the dying person and those close to them understand the situation as it evolves and caring for them with intelligence, insight and understanding will contribute greatly to the experience of relatives and how they will grieve after death for the loss of their loved one. This is the legacy of nurses to those we care for.

The value of sensitive conversations and preparing people for what to expect as their loved one's condition deteriorates can never be underestimated. This is often highlighted as a missing element in conversations that take place at end of life. Timely conversations will support preparation for bereavement.

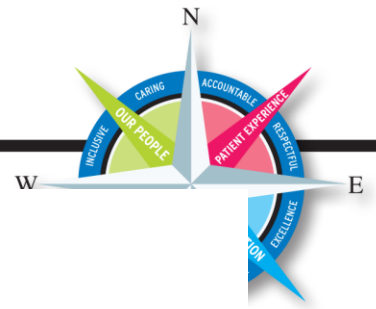
Difficult conversations

Probably one of the most dreaded questions by all levels of staff is "Am I dying?" Each situation has to be responded to depending upon the circumstances and the context in which it has been said. However the following suggestions are offered for your consideration as responses. "You must be feeling really bad to ask me that" "May I ask why you asked that question?" "Is that what you are thinking?" "May I ask what makes you think that?" These types of responses will allow the person the opportunity to explore the conversation further whilst providing you with some time to gather your own thoughts. It may also be helpful to ask what the doctor or any other healthcare professional has said prior to this question being asked of you. Whilst there is no right or wrong answer it is less than helpful to ignore this question or to be dismissive in any way, and if you feel you really cannot take this conversation any further, simply acknowledge this is difficult and seek help from a more senior member of staff.

The taboo of death

Some people consider it morbid to talk about death; it is such a taboo subject that it has only increased our fear of dying.

This taboo of talking about death is based around fear, and it's important that you develop the knowledge and skills to feel confident to care and talk with patients who are at the end of their life. You need to encourage all those close to the patient to discuss dying, including children in the conversation using language they understand.

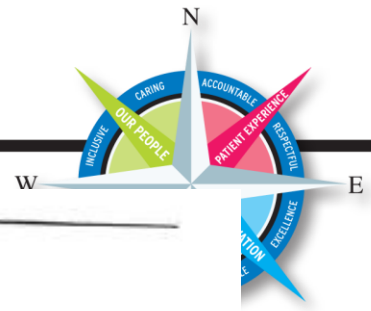


Apart from the obvious fact that none of us know what follows death, people fear dying in pain and distress. Unfortunately recent reports about poor care may only heighten this fear, possibly increasing the challenges in communication with families for staff.

Relatives often say, "Please don't let him/her suffer." Talking openly about death has the potential to make it easier to deal with. Recognising death and how it relates to you, can make it easier for you to relate to your patients

Everyone has their own journey to death, some may gradually fail and for others death comes suddenly. In some people, the body weakens whilst the mind stays alert, and others remain physically strong, yet their mind weakens.

However the nature of end of life care is the reality that at some point death will come to the person, and each loss is felt by those that are close to the one who has died, even those who have cared for them. Families often described the journey as a roller coaster, an unpredictable up and down journey that suddenly comes to an abrupt end



APPENDIX T: COMMON REACTIONS TO GRIEF AND LOSS

There is a multitude of different sources of grief and loss and not all involve death. Individuals experiencing grief from a loss may choose a variety of ways of expressing it. No two people will respond to the same loss in the same way. However, some frequent reactions include:

Changed behaviours:

- Seeking solitude, withdrawal
- Change in social activities
- Inappropriate behaviour (e.g., laughing)
- Absent mindedness
- Crying

Sleep and energy disturbances:

- Feeling fatigued, restless, lethargic
- Sleep difficulties

Other physical symptoms:

- Changed eating habits
- Gastro-intestinal complaints
- Decreased interest in pleasurable activities
- Decreased sex drive



A range of troubling emotions:



- Feelings of denial, disbelief, numbness, shock, panic, or sadness
- Feelings of isolation
- Mood fluctuations
- Anger, guilt, frustration, hostility, blaming

Cognitive difficulties such as forgetfulness, confusion or a lack of concentration

Spiritual emptiness and pessimism

Constant thought about the deceased or a feeling of their presence



Although these reactions can be overwhelming and distressing it is important to accept and not to avoid them. It is also useful to remember your reactions are common and natural and you are not alone.

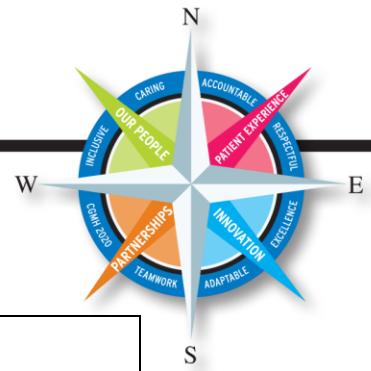


Worry Windshield: Resilience and Anxiety Management Activities for Kids

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Worry-Windshields-Anxiety-Management-Activities-using-CBT-2075234>

(Available for Free to Employees on The Pulse)





COPING WITH STRESS

Positive Stress

- Motivates
- Feels exciting
- Improves performance
- Is pleasant and beneficial
- Is vital for physical and mental fitness
- Focuses energies and sharpens the Mind

Negative Stress

- Doesn't fade, but builds
- Can lead to mental and physical problems, such as loss of concentration, irritability, depression, anxiety, headaches, tight muscles, fatigue
- Can be curbed with relaxation, positive "self-talk", and healthy boundaries and lifestyle

SEVERAL FACTORS THAT AFFECT STRESS LEVELS:

1. Individual perception of stressors. How we look at stressors determines their intensity, duration, and our responses.
2. Personal and family resources. Personal qualities like patience, perseverance, and optimism can affect the way one deals with stress.
3. Support network. Family, friends, counsellors and others can help you not only release stress but also cope with it well.

TEN SIMPLE COPING STRATEGIES:

1. Recognize and increase your awareness of your reactions to the stress.
2. Learn to deepen and slow down your breath, relax your body and your mind.
3. Practice 5 minutes every hour by simply deep breathing (breath in for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, and let go for 4 seconds).
4. Recognize your stressors and triggers.
5. Decide what you can and cannot control or change; accept what you cannot change, change what you can.
6. Practice mindfulness – keep your attention in the present moment, with full awareness and acceptance and without judgment.
7. Implement positive, rational self-talk.
8. Take time where you can reduce interruptions, reflect, stretch, and simply BE.
9. Talk with friends, family, counsellors/psychologists to help you let go of held-in thoughts and feelings, get perspective, and feel connected to others.
10. Food and sleep are essential for your survival. Don't let them slip out of your control. Don't skip meals nor sacrifice sleep.
11. Work related strategies:
 - Set realistic self-expectations. Know your strengths, limits, and boundaries
 - Examine job demands. Are they reasonable? Are they prioritised?
 - Clarify role and duties.
 - Schedule. Set goals, prioritise tasks, maintain a schedule, and take breaks!