Emotional Well-being and Staff Resilience: Navigating the Covid-19 Pandemic

Sarah Sjöström, MSN, RN, ACNP-BC
Associate Chief Nursing Officer
Hebrew Rehabilitation Center
The Case for Supporting Our Teams

Why should healthcare organizations invest energy in employee well-being and resilience?

**Patient/Resident Impact:**
Poor employee performance leading to practice errors, poor care delivery

**Employee Impact:**
Fatigue, burnout, chronic stress, PTSD

**Organizational Impact:**
Low staff retention, high turnover; poor patient/resident outcomes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Stressors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Safety/Insecurity</td>
<td>PPE Shortages, Fear of Disease Transmission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Control/Unpredictable Events</td>
<td>Continued Disease spread despite safety measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty/Change</td>
<td>Changes to Policies and Procedures, Need to make changes with little information (closing of units, moving seniors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of Life/Loved Ones</td>
<td>Loss of seniors with whom special bonds were formed, Personal Losses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Emotional Support</td>
<td>Quarantine/Social Distancing/Healthcare workers separated from family, Public Scrutiny of healthcare facilities, Stigmatization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral/Inner Conflict</td>
<td>Restricting patient/resident visitation, Inadequate access to life-saving treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overwork/Exhaustion/Lack of Self-Care</td>
<td>Protracted Use of PPE, Healthcare workers “service before self” mentality</td>
</tr>
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</table>
“The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it, is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.”

- Rachel Naomi Remen -
### The Stress Continuum Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>READY (Green)</th>
<th>REACTING (Yellow)</th>
<th>INJURED (Orange)</th>
<th>ILL (Red)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEFINITION</strong></td>
<td>Mild and transient distress or impairment</td>
<td>More severe and persistent distress or impairment</td>
<td>Clinical mental disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Optimal functioning</td>
<td>◇ Always goes away</td>
<td>◇ Leaves a scar</td>
<td>Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Adaptive growth</td>
<td>◇ Low risk</td>
<td>◇ Higher risk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Wellness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEATURES</strong></td>
<td>Feeling irritable, anxious or down</td>
<td>Loss of control</td>
<td>Symptoms persist and worsen over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ At one’s best</td>
<td>◇ Loss of motivation</td>
<td>Panic, rage or depression</td>
<td>Severe distress or social or occupational impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Well-trained and prepared</td>
<td>◇ Loss of focus</td>
<td>No longer feeling like normal self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ In control</td>
<td>◇ Difficulty sleeping</td>
<td>Excessive guilt, shame or blame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Physically, mentally and spiritually fit</td>
<td>◇ Muscle tension or other physical changes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Mission-focused</td>
<td>◇ Not having fun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Motivated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Calm and steady</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Having fun</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>◇ Behaving ethically</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAUSES</strong></td>
<td>Any stressor</td>
<td>Life threat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>PTSD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moral injury</td>
<td>Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wear and tear</td>
<td>Anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Substance abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emotional Fluctuations in Times of Mass Disaster

The Convergence of 3 Frameworks for Supporting Emotional Well-being and Resilience

- Foresight
- Coping
- Recovery

Addressing Sources of Anxiety in Healthcare Workers During the Covid-19 Pandemic (2020)
- Hear me
- Protect me
- Prepare me
- Support me
- Care for me

5 Essential Elements of Mass Trauma Intervention (2007)
- Safety
- Self/collective Efficacy
- Calm
- Connectedness
- Hope
Levels of Organizational Structure

- Organization
- Individual
- Team
Recognizing and Responding to Front Line Concerns

Feedback Channels

Speak Up

Active Listening
Team Problem Solving

Lack of Control
Insecurity
Uncertainty
Lack of Support

Hear me
Care for me
Foresight
Safety
Collective Efficacy
Making Space for Self-Care and Emotional Support

- Lack of Control
- Insecurity
- Uncertainty
- Lack of Support

- Model self-care
- Access to food/lodging
- Access to calm/rest spaces
- Access to support resources

- Assess team members
- Acknowledge losses
- Normalize reactions

- Team up
- Take Breaks
- See something, say something

- Hear me
- Care for me
- Foresight
- Coping
- Recovery
- Safety
- Collective Efficacy
### Interventions Across Organizational Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Senior Leaders/Organization</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| • Plan for how to access reliable sources of information  
  • Suggest limiting intake of media/news  
  • Allow individuals ways to communicate safety or workflow concerns  
  • Identify points of control for individuals over process and practice  
  • Form “battle buddy” relationships  
  • Individual check-ins for employees  
  • Assist individuals with managing time/schedules/workloads  
  • Encourage stockpiling of compassion for self and others  
  • Encourage breaks, sleep, eating well and hydration  
  • Allow employees to express their individual needs/coping strategies are unique to the individual  
  • Encourage staff to assist to identify colleagues that may need extra support | • Identify centralized location/process for information and policy updates  
  • Managers of teams must be present and practice active listening  
  • Problem solve work flow issues as a team  
  • Include team members in decision making  
  • Managers eliminating fear of consequences for staff needing to make hard decisions  
  • Take time to recognize the losses the team has experienced  
  • Normalize the challenging emotions  
  • Managers should actively assess team members for signs of individuals who need support  
  • Mock drills/simulations/practicing roles  
  • Debrief after challenging cases  
  • Team building initiatives to encourage trust amongst colleagues  
  • Create a space for sharing positive messages such as a whiteboard or post it board | • Providing all necessary PPE or communicating transparently about challenges and potential solutions  
  • Develop mechanisms for frontline teams to communicate safety concerns  
  • Respond to concerns (feedback loops/close the loop) with information training or policy adjustments  
  • Provide clear, transparent and frequent communication  
  • Provide Covid-19 testing to staff if able  
  • Senior Leaders must be present on the front lines, particularly in affected areas  
  • Acknowledge the losses and challenges  
  • Model self-care  
  • Provide access to food and lodging as needed if able  
  • Ensure staff access to resources for emotional/physical support (listed resources and/or on-site resources)  
  • Create calm/rest spaces in the facility  
  • Send Thank You Cards/Staff Acknowledgements  
  • Share stories of recovery/success  
  • Create a vision of hope  
  • Keep a future focus |
References


