NAVIGATE Nursing

Where Every Nurse is a Leader

MINIMIZE WORK DAY STRESS

Is your work day becoming more stressful? Work stress affects nurses emotionally and physically (Christo and Pienaar, 2006; Cohen & Single, 2001) and also influences quality of care and patient outcomes. Below are a few strategies you can include in your daily routine to minimize workday stress.

Shift Work & Extended Hours

Shift rotations, extended hours, and the resulting fatigue pose serious threats to both patient and employee safety. Currently no mandatory limitations on shift rotation or hours of work per day or week are in place for nurses.

Stress Relief Activity

- Introduce the idea of standardizing shift rotations and hours worked at your next staff meeting.
- Review and analyze your unit staffing schedule for the past three months to determine if work schedules include more than 12 hours per day or 60 hours per week.
- Review the signs of sleep deprivation and fatigue which include difficulty with concentration and memory, tiredness, irritability, blurred vision, reduced vigilance, apathy, impaired communication.
- Review patient care quality indicators and error rate reports and correlate them to your analysis of the work schedule.

FACT:

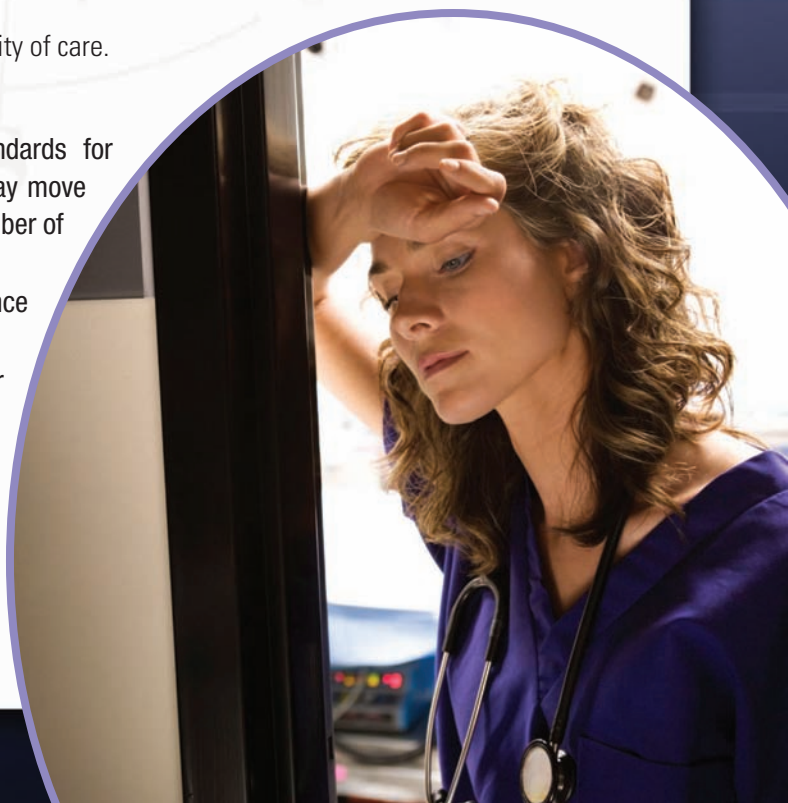
Although today's work demands in healthcare settings are very different than they were even a year ago, you hold the key to "de-stressing" your workday.

Increased Workload

The literature validates that work overload can impact quality of care.

Stress Relief Activity

- Participate in discussions to establish unit standards for workload assignments and identify outliers that may move you beyond these standards such as excessive number of admissions or discharges.
- Develop a process for accessing additional assistance in "excessive" work situations.
- Discuss strategies for improving team work on your unit and develop checklists and establish routines.
- Hold debriefings in your staff meetings to discuss issues such as patient assignments, workloads, job strain, etc.



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Co-Workers

Conflicts with co-workers can be a stressor for nurses. Bullying and lateral violence frequently occurs among colleagues.

Stress Relief Activity

- Improve your awareness of overt and covert acts of verbal or nonverbal aggression which may include undermining, sabotage, and scapegoating, backstabbing, and withholding information.
- Learn how to reduce lateral violence and bullying in your facility.
- Choose to constructively engage conflict rather than submitting to avoidance behaviors.
- Recommend your unit adopt a zero tolerance policy regarding lateral violence and bullying.

References

Christo, B. and Pienaar, J. (2006). South Africa correctional official occupational stress: The role of psychological strengths. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 34(1), 73-84.

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Adapted from Sherrod, D., Chilsholm, A., Jones, L., & Peets, R. (2010). De-Stress Rather than Distress in T oday's Workplace. *NURSES FIRST*, 3(1), 6-10.

March 2010