Self Care Principles for Health Care Providers

Managing one's personal and professional life during a pandemic of the proportion that is evolving on the planet is and will be a challenge for all healthcare providers.

The suffering of others in times like these are close to home no matter where the hurt and harm is worst. The extreme suffering and losses in the country and throughout the world are oppressive emotionally and our individual knowledge that we ourselves could become potential victims of the Covid 19 virus raise existential fears in us all.

Taking care of ourselves and our families and friends, while also continuing to serve our community will continue to require individual and group effort in applying self-care principles and practices. The guidance and resources noted below offer strategies that should be understood and practiced.

- Accept that as healthcare providers we are at risk to experience increased anxiety, depression, irritability and poor sleep.[1]
- Maintaining conscious awareness of our responses and reactions can help us chose to cope better and to seek support and assistance when needed.
- While we need to be informed, seeking out scientific and medical informational resources, in lieu of ritualistic tuning into the repetitive media coverage of the pandemic, is advisable in appropriate dosing.
- Tuning out the pandemic and spending time in otherwise enjoyable and diverting activities is an important means of self-care--- yes, stay engaged with the pandemic, but take breaks with activities you enjoy and that give your brain and soul time to chill and de-stress. Find beauty and give it its due.
- Keep your physical distance from others, but kindle your emotional closeness by being engaged with those you love and care for.
- Stay physically active; eat normally and maintain healthy sleep patterns.

- Monitor your use of alcohol and avoid dependency on other drugs including OTC and prescription drugs. Seek help if you are getting into a danger zone.
- Do what you can to help, but don't do what you can't handle. Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed, getting support from personal and from formal channels early, rather than tough it out to your detriment.   Recognize if you are burning out and make a change to recharge and preserve yourself. If you can, set up buddy-systems with a co-worker, a friend and with your family members.
- Set up regular times to check-in with these folks--- listen to each other and share your concerns and support each other empathically.
- Feel free to talk about your background, interests, hobbies, and family and it is also ok to share your worries and fears with those who you know and trust.
- Identify each other's strengths and vulnerabilities. Care for yourself and for them.
- Keep an eye on each other and share your concerns if you see signs of distress in others.
- Offer to help with basic needs such as sharing supplies and transportation.
- Communicate with your organization's leadership about your and your colleagues' basic needs – help you colleagues feel safe to speak up in constructive ways to problem solve. Find solutions when you can.
- Stay connected and/or get reconnected with family, friends and supports to avoid isolation and loneliness--- it is a digital world, use it to get support and be supportive of others.

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