Planting the Seeds of Caring: System Level Approaches to Foster Resilience & Incorporate Self-Care into Routine Interdisciplinary Team Meetings

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Introduction

Palliative care clinicians engage in difficult work often involving physical, emotional and spiritual suffering, death and dying and conflict. Additionally, with the recognition of the benefits of palliative care and increased demand for services coupled with workforce limitations, palliative care clinicians are subject to additional workplace stress increasing the risk of burnout. The key characteristics of burnout have been observed in palliative care clinicians in other countries and 61% of surveyed palliative care clinicians in the United States demonstrated high Emotional Exhaustion or Depersonalization. Personal and team self-care techniques and system level approaches have been described to decrease burnout and foster resiliency in palliative care teams. We will describe our self-care practices for palliative care teams and incorporate into routine interdisciplinary meeting elements of team structure, function and practice which promote resilience.

Definitions

• BURNOUT: A form of mental distress manifested in individuals who experience decreased work performance resulting from negative attitudes and behaviors. Key dimensions include emotional exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and depersonalization, a sense of inefficacy and lack of personal accomplishment.

• RESILIENCE: The capacity of a dynamic, malleable system to self-regulate challenges to its stability, vibrancy or development, and the ability to “bounce back” following adversity.

• SELF-CARE: A spectrum of knowledge, skills and attitudes including self-reflection and self-awareness, identification and prevention of burnout, appropriate professional boundaries, and grief and bereavement.

• MINDFULNESS: A kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is.

• MINDFULNESS-BASED STRESS REDUCTION: An 8 week program developed by Kabat-Zinn to teach mindfulness techniques.

The Virtues Project®

The Virtues Project is an educational and research initiative that uses an evidence-based approach to build resilience. The Virtues Project is an 8 week card deck that contains 10 virtues with quotes, practices and affirmations from diverse wisdom sources and sacred traditions. The Virtues Project® is the intellectual property of Paloma Research, Inc.

Table 1. Sample The Virtues Project® Reflection Card Virtues with Definitions

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Virtue</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>The willingness to take full responsibility for our choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Treats every person with dignity and courtesy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detachment</td>
<td>The ability to honor oneself and others through our words and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Living with a sense of respect for what we know is right. Living up to the virtues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating Every Person with Dignity and Courtesy</td>
<td>A kind of non-elaborative, non-judgmental, present-centered awareness in which each thought, feeling, or sensation that arises in the attentional field is acknowledged and accepted as it is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>The willingness to take full responsibility for our choices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect for What We Know Is Right</td>
<td>Treating every person with dignity and courtesy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Living with a sense of respect for what we know is right. Living up to the virtues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caregiving</td>
<td>The attitude of honoring oneself and others through our words and actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisdom</td>
<td>Having a discerning mind, based on experience and mindfulness. Making wise decisions based on our deepest intuition.</td>
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References