Understanding Self-Care: A Primer for Healthcare Providers

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Objectives

- Understand the emotional components and behavioral patterns associated with burnout.

- Describe tools and strategies that can be effective in reducing burnout, and promoting emotional self-care in the work environment.

- Generating personal strategies and narratives to maintain resilience.
The Story of Tomás
Burnout

- Reported by 30% to 60% of physicians

- “(healthcare providers) ... are at particular risk for burnout as we are taught early on that exhaustion is perceived as a status symbol and to base our self-worth on being productive.” Henry Kuerer, MD, PhD, FACS

- Affects clinicians from all disciplines
Brownout, Burnout, and Vicarious Trauma

**Brownout**
- Enthusiasm replaced by frustration and disappointment
- Irritability and resentment
- Frequently on “autopilot”
- Decreased productivity
- Loss of confidence and passion

**Burnout**
- Emotional exhaustion
- Overidentification/overinvolvement with pts
- Depersonalization (treating pts as objects)
- Sleep problems
- Social withdrawal
- Addictive/emotional avoidance behaviors

**Vicarious Trauma**
- Hyperarousal: disturbed sleep, irritability or anger, hypervigilance, especially triggered by patient interactions.
- Avoidance: avoid thoughts, feelings, conversations assoc. w/ patients’ pain and suffering
- Re-experiencing: intrusive thoughts/dreams, distress in response to reminders of work with patients
What is Burnout

- Primary ineffective emotional strategies we use in stress inducing situations/patient encounters
  - Avoidance
  - Over-involvement
Emotion vs. Intellect

* The actual heart of our clinical work is ALWAYS interpersonal.

* Any interpersonal interaction, by its nature, is an emotionally salient interaction.

* "If you think you can do this work and not be affected by it emotionally... it would be like walking through water and not getting wet...."
Emotion vs. Intellect

* The nature of the intellectual-self

* The nature of the emotional-self
Emotional Energy

* To influence self-care in a positive way, we must influence emotional energy.
Emotional Energy

- Development of self-awareness skills.
  - Present focus is essential to distinguish self from other
  - “I feel the suffering, and I am not this person’s suffering”
  - Ability to track/read what’s going on in your own body
  - Ability to attend to own visceral/somatic experience.
Emotional Energy

* Restorative experiences
  * Often involve parts of the brain or body other than the one “over worked”
  * Restorative social experiences to re-connect with the wide nature of human experience.
Emotional Energy

- Self-care maintenance
  - Replacing “time” with “energy”.
  - “Cleansing” practices to promote renewal.
  - Use of personal narratives.
Some Resources for Healthcare Providers


