De-stressing Through Reflection

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We may not all be law students, but everyone can relate to that end-of-your-rope feeling, especially this busy time of year. And stroking a soft animal seems like the kind of stress-relief anyone can love.
Definitions

• Stress:
  specific relationship between a person and environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his wellbeing

• Burnout:
  psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity
Physician Burnout – Is there really a problem?

• Affects estimated 30-40% of all US physicians and over 40% of nurses

• Up to 80% of all diseases and illness are related to stress

• Physicians with burnout are:
  • More likely to report making recent medical errors
  • Less empathetic
  • Less motivated and committed to their work
  • Less satisfied with their career and life
  • More likely to be female
  • Patient impact – diminished patient satisfaction and reduced patient compliance with treatment plans

Dyrbye LN and Shanafelt TD, JAMA 2011;305:2009-10
Innstrand ST et al, Int Arch Occup Environ Health 2011;84:813-24
Factors Associated with Burnout

- Individual Attitudes
  - Perceive personal needs as inconsequential
  - Embrace culture engendering self-sacrifice and highly self-critical attitudes
  - Prioritize professional accomplishment over familial, social, spiritual, mental and financial needs

Irving JA et al., Compl Ther Clin Practice 2009;15:61-66
Balch CM et al., Ann Surg 2011;254:558-568
Other Contributors to Burnout

- Work-related stress
  - Excessive workloads
  - Imbalance between personal and professional lives
  - Decreasing work control, autonomy, and meaning
  - Diminishing financial rewards
  - Academic vs. private practice setting
  - Specific medical specialty (ob/gyn, surgery)

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Balch CM et al., Ann Surg 2011;254:558-568
Dyrbye LN and Shanafelt TD, JAMA 2011;305:2009-10
How can we go from here to there?

http://www.choosehypnosis.com

http://www.war-stress-relief.com
Option 1

Stress Reduction Kit

Bang Head Here

Directions:
1. Place kit on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.

http://www.squidoo.com/desktop-stress-relief
Option 2

Stress Management for Dummies

Your stress-free guide to stress relief

Packed with stress-busting advice and exercises

A Reference for the Rest of Us!

Allen Elkin, Ph.D.
Founder, Stress Management and Counseling Center, New York City

forward by Paul J. Rosch, M.D., F.A.C.P.
President, The American Institute of Stress

http://img2.imagesbn.com
De-Stressing and Health Care Reform

• Should faculty emotional well-being be part of health care reform and hospital initiatives?

  – YES, since goal is to optimize patient safety and provide highest quality care
    • Create culture that values work-life balance
    • Address frustrations regarding administrative support, scheduling, and reimbursement
    • Embrace discussions centered on personal distress
    • ? Establish a mentoring program
Proactive Employer Response

- Create supportive work environment to enhance overall satisfaction
  - Redistribute staffing in specialties to meet patient demand
  - Create optimal workload to maximize quality of care, ensure patient safety, and minimize burnout
  - Consider greater reliance on physician extenders
  - Fight for fair reimbursement of services and tort reform

Dyrbye LN and Shanafelt TD, JAMA 2011;305:2009-10
Proactive Employee Response

• Physician personal well-being
  • Self-care program to acknowledge own situation and personal needs
    • Embrace reflective techniques to maintain balance by regularly re-setting priorities
  • Choose a career and environment that fits your personality and priorities
    • 2008 American College of Surgery
      • Private practice at greater risk for burnout as compared to academic
      • Trauma surgery had high rates of burnout whereas pediatric surgery had low rates

Dyrbye LN and Shanafelt TD, JAMA 2011;305:2009-10
Balch CM et al., Ann Surg 2011;254:558-568
Definition: intentionally paying attention to present-moment experience (physical sensations, perceptions, affective states, thoughts and imagery) in a non-judgmental way, thereby cultivating a stable and non-reactive awareness.
Mindfulness Practice

• Rooted in Buddhism

• Ability to remain aware of your moment-to-moment experience both internal and external without blaming or judging yourself

• Often performed in conjunction with another activity, such as exercise, meditation, or walking
MBSR Programs

- Participation in a mindfulness-based stress reduction program linked to:
  - Increased self-awareness
  - Increased spirituality
  - Reduced medical symptoms and psychological distress
  - Greater work satisfaction
  - Improved patient interactions

- Pathphysiology: Less preoccupation with daily worries permits deeper sense of spiritual well-being and cultivation of inner peace, even when presented entirely in a secular context

Carmody J et al., J Psychosomatic Research 2008;64:393-403
Forms of Mindfulness

- Meditation
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Hypnosis
- Massage
- Exercise
- Walking
- Pet relaxation therapy
- Music
Meditation

- Derived from Latin *meditatio*, meaning “to think, contemplate, devise, ponder”
- Defined as a relaxed state of being or a “conscious mental process in which a person learns to focus his attention and suspend the stream of thoughts that normally occupy the mind”
- Provides the individual with a greater sense of control and hence, less stress
Benefits of Meditation

• Reduces stress by:
  – 1) reducing somatic-arousal (physiologic) diminishing individual’s response to environmental stressors; and
  – 2) altering individual’s cognitive appraisal of and perceived self-efficacy with regard to stressors

• Study of 178 full-time employees
  • Mental silence meditation (thought reduction) vs. relaxation meditation vs. control
  • Both mental silence and relaxation showed significant stress reduction and diminished depressive feelings

Manocha R et al, Evi Comple Altern Med 2001;1-8
Forms of Meditation

• **Mindfulness**
  - Focus on chosen object of awareness (i.e. breathing) thereby increasing awareness of the present moment

• **Mantra**
  - Repeat a calming thought, word or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts

• **Transcendental**
  - Form of mantra meditation (a word, sound or phrase that is thought but not spoken that permits the individual to narrow his level of conscious awareness)

• **Guided or visualization**
  - Form mental images of places that you find relaxing using as many senses as possible

Carmody J et al., J Psychosomatic Research 2008;64:393-403
Other Forms: Prayer and Spirituality

- Prayer most commonly practiced by reading or speaking passages
- Spirituality ≠ religion
  - Defined as belief in a higher power that works in the universe, a sense of interconnectedness with all living things, or an awareness of the purpose and meaning of life
  - Quality that goes beyond religious affiliation that strives for inspiration, reverence, awe, and meaning and purpose
- Combination of prayer, meditation, journaling, life review, and reading of spiritual texts
- Monthly spirituality/reflection groups
  - Confidential private method to share and reflect on medical errors, anger and challenging ethical situations
  - Helps find meaning in work

Stetz C, Health Progress May-June 2006
Pattison M, Health Progress May-June 2006
Kreitzer MJ et al., J Holist Nurs 2009;27:7-16
Other Forms: Tai chi

- Self-paced, non-competitive series of slow, flowing body movements
- Movements emphasize concentration, relaxation, and the conscious circulation of vital energy throughout the body
- Primarily practiced as a way of calming the mind, conditioning the body, and reducing stress
- Focus on breathing and keeping attention in the present moment

Images from: methodsofhealing.com
Other Forms: Yoga

- Mind-body intervention that arose in India 4000 years ago
  - Combines physical postures, controlled breathing, and meditation
  - Meta-analysis of healthy adults showed yoga effective in reducing stress
    - Better sense of well-being
    - Feeling of relaxation
    - Improved concentration
    - Increased attentiveness
    - Lowered irritability
    - Optimistic outlook on life

Other Reflective Techniques

- Hypnosis and tactile massage
- Counseling
- Peer Mentoring
- Reflective Narratives
Hypnosis and Tactile Massage

• Shown to:
  – alleviate psychological stress in nurses with increased tolerance of challenging patients and/or physician colleagues
  – increase feeling of well-being and enhance ability to deal with daily stress
  – More energy so can pursue more active social life outside of work

Airosa F et al, BMC Compl Altern Med 2011;11:83-
Does Counseling Work?

- Norwegian study of 227 physicians (88 men, 97 women) enrolled in single day individual or week long small group counseling program
  - Designed to help participant reconsider personal and professional priorities
  - Levels of emotional exhaustion, mental distress and job stress were significantly lower at one year

Isaksson KE et al, BMJ 2008;337:1-8
Peer Mentoring

• Conflicting data on nursing students whether peer mentoring relieves stress
  – One study (n=17) showed no statistical difference in perceived stress with those who had mentors vs. those who did not
  – Two other studies showed reduced overall stress in students with a mentor

Likely dependent on type of mentor-mentee relationship and adequate training of mentor in stress reduction techniques

Li HC et al., Intl Nursing Review 2010;58:203-210
Reflective Narratives

- Six 1-hour writing workshops as part of ob/gyn residency
  - Hypothesis: creating and sharing stories help to 1) enhance patient-doctor relationship, 2) understand personal reactions to medical encounters; and 3) identify and connect with values and what is meaningful in the work
  - 18/20 ob/gyn residents participated in workshops focused on life balance, fatigue/frustration, managing expectations, emotional reactions, fear of causing harm, and team relationships
    - Trend of less burnout and more empathy in participants vs. non-participants

Winkel AF et al., JGME 2010;Dec:610-615
Conclusions

• Reflection = happier, more satisfied physician and patient!
  – Figure out your values
  – Figure out your priorities
  – Determine optimal personal work-life balance

  – BE PROACTIVE so as to avoid burnout which can damage your personal life and professional career
  – Cultivate self-awareness, connection with colleagues, adequate support systems, and meaning in work
Ten Simple Steps to Find Balance and Reduce Stress in Your Life

- Find a mentor
- Define what you mean by success
- Determine your priorities
- Reflect regularly
- Set realistic goals for both career and home
- Add “NO” to your vocabulary
- Stay organized and delegate when possible
- Carve out flexibility in your days
- Manage your time effectively
- Take care of yourself and your spouse
Thank You for Your Attention!