

Clinician Wellness

Clinicians may face day-to-day stresses that include making life-altering decisions and encountering life and death situations. While it is true that many of the stressors providers face may relate to health care systems issues, anyone can benefit from learning strategies to deal with the responsibilities and demands of a regular work day. Individual strategies may enable providers to develop ways with which to deal with personal and work-related demands; this, in turn, may help providers avoid burnout and improve patient care. Listed below are some strategies that you, as a mentor, can suggest to your mentees to improve “resilience”.

- 1) **Take care of yourself.** It is your responsibility to do so. Patients will be more likely to listen to someone who is taking his/her own message to heart. Make sure to schedule self-care time into your day so that it does not get pushed off for more urgent items.

Suggestions for self-care:

- a. *Mindfulness and Meditation:* Mindfulness refers to the ability to become aware of the experience of the present moment without judgment. One can be trained to achieve mindfulness.
 - Mindfulness can help you:
 - Set your intention for the day.
 - Remind yourself why you went into medicine in the first place.
 - Focus on your purpose.
 - Relax, if only for a short time.
 - Consider sharing that purpose and enthusiasm with colleagues and staff as a way of motivating others to remember why they joined the profession.
 - Mobile apps/websites
 - Headspace.com
 - Calm.com
 - Mindfulness.com
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/well/how-to-meditate>
 - b. *Exercise*
 - c. *Proper sleep*
 - d. *Optimal nutrition*
- } improves cognitive performance
- e. *Walk or talk with coworkers* during the lunch hour or other break time, even if it means you may be later leaving work. You may increase productivity and satisfaction by “recharging” during this time.
 - f. *Count your blessings daily* (Krall E, below) *and practice gratitude*
 - [The Gratitude Diaries](#), Janice Kaplan
 - [The How of Happiness](#), Sonja Lyubomirsky
 - [“Gratitude as a Psychotherapeutic Intervention”](#): <http://ei.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/jclp22020.pdf>
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 - g. *Consider self-care a “professional core competency”* (Bohman B, below) *and not an option*

- 2) **Identify a mentor or advisor.** It is best to learn as much as possible about the functioning of your organization from someone experienced and positive. In this way, you can learn whether your perceptions about the workplace are accurate or not while receiving support.
- 3) **Be knowledgeable about available mental health services.** Do not be afraid to utilize these resources if needed.
- 4) **Make friends with peers within your own group and also in the medical community.** Schedule regular social activities with these friends to avail yourself of their advice and support. If one can persuade his/her department to fund regular dinners or lunches, even better. It is a small investment and pays large rewards in keeping providers committed and happy. Even just being present at department meetings will help build collegiality.
- 5) **Collegiality with staff members is of critical importance to the work day.** Respect and friendliness within the team promotes a greater willingness to work together efficiently for the benefit of the patients, who then belong to all the team members. Value input from staff about ways to improve patient care and find ways to empower staff to make changes that are within the power of the team.
- 6) **Work-life balance**
 - a. Try to train yourself to manage your workflow so that you can spend time at home with friends and family, especially aiming to spend dinner with your partner/children.
 - b. Realize that although patients often have multiple issues and need someone to listen to them, unreasonable demands on your time do not have to be encouraged or tolerated. You cannot please everyone all the time. Be willing to have less than perfect patient satisfaction.
 - c. Consider that spending less time at work and making less salary may be more beneficial than spending more time at work and making more money. Aim for less consumption if necessary.
- 7) **Try to be as flexible as possible in approaching changes within your system,** such as a new team, a change in workflow, or a new EMR. It is very true that attitude alone can determine how much you enjoy work. Within reason, flexibility and acceptance of change will help you and others remain optimistic.
- 8) **Accept coaching** if it means that you can learn to become more satisfied and efficient.
- 9) **Create a personal mission statement**
 - a. [The Five-Step Plan for Creating Personal Mission Statements:](https://www.livecareer.com/career/advice/jobs/creating-personal-mission-statements)
<https://www.livecareer.com/career/advice/jobs/creating-personal-mission-statements>
- 10) **Remember that we are lifelong learners.** Some providers re-energize themselves by carving out another interest within their role, such as research or management. Consider learning a

new language that you can use in the patient care setting or take a class that gives you a new skill outside work, like rose pruning or writing short stories. It really is possible!

References

Bohman B, Dyrbye L., Sinsky C, Linzer M, Olson K, Babbott S, Murphy M, deVries P, Hamidi M, Trockel M. *Physician Well-Being: The Reciprocity of Practice Efficiency, Culture of Wellness, and Personal Resilience.* NEJM Catalyst. 2017 August 7.

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