



Safeguarding Mental Well-Being in Pediatric Healthcare

Why are you attending this training?

1

You do vitally
important work

2

Your work can
come with
mental health
risks

3

You have the
ability to limit risks
and support your
wellness

What we'll cover

**Mental health
considerations**

**Signs of
concern**

**Self-coping
tools to
protect your
mental health**
(Prevention and
Intervention)

**Resources to
support your
wellness**

Q&A

Mental Health Considerations

Struggling is common

Approximately 1 in 5 people will have
a behavioral health problem each year

World Health Organization

Trauma-exposed teams face unique struggles

What we know about jobs involving trauma exposure:

- Greater risk of anxiety among nurses who work with trauma victims
(Kerasiotis & Motta, 2004)
- Higher rates of acute stress disorder, depression, and mental health help-seeking for among trauma-exposed disaster workers
(Fullerton, Ursano, & Wang, 2004)
- Greater risk of anxiety, depression, PTSD symptoms and alcohol consumption among journalists with high exposure to graphic user-generated content
(Feinstein, Owen, & Blair, 2002; Feinstein, Audet, & Waknine, 2014)

Vicarious Trauma (VT)

A psychological response to **cumulative exposure** to traumatic material, in which a person's beliefs about one's self, others, and the world are altered to reflect increased sense of vulnerability.

What makes VT distinct from other conditions?

- Burnout is job-specific and marked by:
 - Physical and/or mental exhaustion
 - Cynicism and job detachment
 - Feeling ineffective or lacking accomplishment
- Vicarious trauma effects are:
 - Global, not job-specific
 - More persistent
- Related concept:
 - Compassion Fatigue
 - Burnout + Secondary Traumatic Stress



What puts someone at higher risk of VT?

- Less work experience
- Prolonged, excessive work volume
- Personal trauma history
- Perceived inability to effectively cope
- Coping via emotional avoidance
- Negative beliefs about the trauma exposure and its effects
- Poor work/life boundaries

What protects people from VT effects?

- Education about VT
- Mindful awareness
- Strong social support
- Practice of healthy self-care
- Psychotherapy
- **Finding meaning or purpose in the work**



Signs of concern

What are the signs of trauma effects?

Cognitive

- Increased pessimism, cynicism
- Hopeless or helpless thoughts
- Suspicion of others
- Difficulty concentrating
- Problems retaining and recalling information

Change in Beliefs:

- "Am I capable of something like this?"
- "My loved ones could be in danger."
- "The world is a hostile place."
- "Other people can't ever be really known or trusted."
- "I can't ever let my guard down."

What are the signs of trauma effects?

Emotional

- Changes in mood (sharp or sustained)
- Apathy
- Anxiety
- Hypervigilance or “on guard”
- Emotional numbness
- Greater sense of vulnerability

Physiological

- Sleep disturbance
- Muscle tension
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal issues
- Sexual dysfunction

What are the signs of trauma effects?

Professional Behavior

- Loss of motivation
- Overidentification with work
- Avoidance of work (e.g. procrastination, tardiness, absenteeism)

Personal Behavior

- Withdrawal from valued activities
- Withdrawal from relationships
- Diminished intimacy
- Self neglect (e.g. hygiene)

Self-coping tools to protect your mental health

Prevention

Structure your day – within reason

- Daily routines and scheduled activities offer numerous benefits:
 - Predictability and normalcy
 - Accountability
 - Enhanced mood and motivation
- Self-care activities should be featured in each day's schedule
 - Start and end your day with a mindful moment
 - Some self-care is better than none
- Leave space for free time



Take stock of your self-care

Assess how are you doing at the basics:

**Setting
boundaries**

(It's OK to say no,
when you can!)

**Taking
breaks**

Exercise

**Hobbies/
interests**

Nutrition

Sleep

Socializing

Self-care includes pleasant activities

Pleasant activities can:

- Clear your mind
- Turn down the volume on upsetting emotions
- Remind you of life's joys

Examples of pleasant activities:

- Your favorite music, TV, or movies
- Spending time in nature
- Cooking your favorite meal
- Taking a warm bath

Whatever
activity you
choose, aim
to be fully
in the
moment

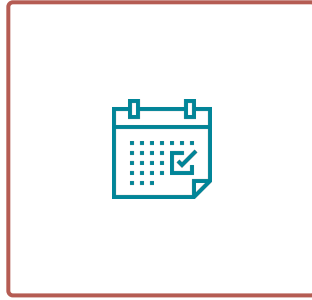
Make self-care a priority

Take 3 steps to improve your wellness:



1.

Identify small, feasible actions to improve your self-care problem areas



2.

Schedule and protect time for those actions.



3.

Share your plan with an “accountability buddy”

Check your thinking

- Our beliefs can undermine how we take care of ourselves
 - "Time for wellness means less productivity."
 - "Self-care is self-indulgence."
 - "Job exhaustion is inevitable (or outside of my control)."
- Slow down and ask yourself:
 - "How accurate is this thought?"
 - "What's the impact of this thought?"
 - "What's a more helpful, empowering thought?"

**Remember
that your
thoughts are
not facts**

Check your thinking

“Job exhaustion is inevitable (or outside my control).”

vs.

“There are challenges at work I can't fully control, but I can still prioritize my wellness and self-care.”

The difference?
Evidence, balance, utility.

Broaden your perspective

Don't lose sight of the big picture.

- What's the high level value of your work?
- Who benefits from what you do?
- What aspects of this job give you a sense of meaning?
- What aspects of this job are you grateful for?

Research shows that increased sense of job meaning and purpose is associated with greater job *and* overall life satisfaction.

Less media exposure can be self-care

Take stock of news and social media consumption in your free time

- Track the frequency and duration of your news and social media engagement
- Note how you feel before and after engaging

Next, ask yourself:

- "Does this help me take more productive action?"
- "Does this give me a healthier perspective on the issue?"
- "Does this improve my mood?"

**If the
answer is
"no,"
consider
a break.**

Intervention

Meet difficult emotions with mindful acceptance

“What we
resist, will
persist”

Denial and suppression of unwanted thoughts and emotions can cause added distress.

Instead, practice acceptance through mindful awareness.

The goal isn't to get rid of, or change, how we are feeling.

The goal is to be curious, nonjudgmental and open toward our experience.



I'm noticing **tension** in my shoulders.

My face is feeling **flushed**.

My mind is telling me **I'm failing**.

I feel **overwhelmed**.

Offer yourself compassion

Self
compassion ≠
self-pity or
self-indulgence

Provide
statements of
comfort to
ourselves

Engage in
activities that
show kindness
to ourselves
and others

When in doubt,
think about the
most compassionate
person you know:

- Gestures
- Activities
- Statements

Calming your body

Distressing emotions and thoughts activate our sympathetic nervous system (*Fight-flight-freeze response*)

Tap into your body's calming response:

- 4-7-8 deep breathing
Inhale (4 sec), Hold (7 sec), Exhale (8 sec)
- Mindfulness meditation
For 10 mins, quietly notice what's happening within you without judgment



**Seeking professional support
is also a sign of resilience.**

When support makes sense

If you're finding it hard to function well at home, at work, or in your relationships, consider connecting with professional support.

- Changes in mood or behavior
- Changes in thinking (e.g. concentration, recall)
- Changes in behaviors impacting your health
- Thoughts about self-harm or harming others, as well as feelings of helplessness or hopelessness