

**EVIDENCE-BASED STRATEGIES TO
LESSEN MORAL DISTRESS IN
NURSING: ISSUES & CHALLENGES**

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PURPOSE

- The purpose of this presentation is to:
 - ◆ Provide an overview of evidence-based findings of the impact and outcomes of moral distress in nursing
 - ◆ Define the concepts of *moral courage* and *moral distress* and how these concepts impact patient quality and safety as well as nurse vacancy rates, lost time from work, and in nurses permanently leaving the profession
 - ◆ Examine and share specific evidence-based literature examining critical concepts when nurses have unresolved guilt from lack of *moral courage* leading to *moral residue*

OBJECTIVES

- At the end of this presentation the participant will be able to:
 1. Examine the concepts of “*Moral Courage*” and “*Moral Residue*”
 2. Examine *evidence-based findings when nurses have guilt from lack of moral courage leading to moral residue*
 3. Describe implications for nurse educators and nurse leaders regarding *evidence-based strategies to deal with moral distress*
 4. Examine strategies to assist with *moral courage to avoid moral distress in healthcare environments*
 5. Examine linkages between moral distress and patient quality and safety

MORAL COURAGE

- Moral Courage is a virtue
- A virtue is a desirable quality we expect to find in a person of merit
- Virtue theory focuses on the character of the person rather than the person's decision-making process
- Virtue theory holds that a person of “good moral fiber” makes the right decision regardless of the process

EDUCATION IS KEY IN SHAPING INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER

- Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle argued that education is key in shaping an individual's character
- Martin Luther King exemplified “moral courage” because he had both moral and physical courage
- Aristotle believed that virtuous individuals are desirous of doing good and they struggle to make moral decisions
- Courage is one of the four cardinal virtues:
 - ◆ Courage
 - ◆ Temperance
 - ◆ Justice
 - ◆ Wisdom

CHARACTERISTICS OF VIRTUOUS PERSONS

- Do not require motivation or “will power” to do good or to do what is “right”
- An internal struggle bolstered by “will power” enables a virtuous individual to “do what is right”
- German Philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1788) sees the choice of virtuous action as a result of moral reasoning
- Kant’s focus is on *duty or obligation* vs. *virtue which focuses on character*

MORAL DISTRESS

- When one knows the right thing to do but cannot do it because of organizational constraints
- Questioning the “rightfulness or wrongness” of decisions, treatments, or procedures while feeling powerless to change situations we perceive to be morally wrong

MORAL DISTRESS

- Term was coined in 1984 by Andrew Jameton
- Describes the situation when no one knows the “right thing to do” but institutional constraints make the course of action nearly impossible
- The American Association of Critical Care Nurses defines moral distress as “What occurs when you act in a manner contrary to your personal and professional values, which undermines your integrity and authenticity”

MORAL RESIDUE

- When moral distress is not dealt with
- The impact is cumulative over time

STEPS TO DETERMINE RISK

- You take a risk because you believe that what you gain is better than what you have
- You are willing to put yourself on the line in some way because your values indicate the outcome will be better

SIMILARITIES OF ALL RISKS

(TREASURE, 2003)

- Involve choices
- Requires an investment (Time, Money, Energy)
- All risk taking cannot be successful with a good outcome
- Requires the person to put self on the line in some way
- Is accompanied by feelings of “stretching oneself”
- Carries important emotional rewards
- Incites feelings of excitement often in the form of fear

COGNITIVE REFRAMING

- Consists of strategies to assist in cognitive reorganization
- This often means confronting individuals with information different from or at odds with their expressed views , attitudes, or self images
- This provokes cognitive dissonance
- Thoughts are distorted

EXAMPLE OF COGNITIVE DISTORTION

- Stressor
- Distorted thought
- Realistic thought

SELF-SOOTHING

- Focus is to comfort self emotionally in the face of stressful encounters by doing things that are pleasant
- These techniques calm and relax mind and body
- Find the courage to embrace ourselves in the moment as we are no matter how we feel about ourselves

IMPORTANCE OF SELF-SOOTHING

- It provides peace of mind and also helps us develop satisfying relationships
- Unless we have this peace of mind we may deal with feelings that arise in relationships out of blame or anger when things do not go our way
- We tend to judge or attack others to protect ourselves
- Will have fear of abandonment, shame of being insulted, fear of being wrong

IMPORTANCE OF SELF –SOOTHING AND REFRAMING STRATEGIES TO MANAGE DANGER

- Without using self-soothing behaviors we may attack or withdraw

RELEVANCE OF SELF-SOOTHING AND COGNITIVE REFRAMING

- Self-soothing and cognitive reframing are the key skills in managing fear
- Without these skills our perceptions, thinking, and decision-making are distorted and erroneous
- Self-soothing and cognitive reframing are skills to help us contain our emotions and avoid over reacting to situations
- Nurses are in complex, dynamic health care settings and it is essential they accurately perceive situations
- Nurses must learn these necessary strategies and skills to show moral courage

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR MORAL RESIDUE

- When you venture into the unknown, you learn to face a challenge that may demand strength, courage, and faith in yourself or another
- Tolerating risks and necessary skills if you are to break your silence and refuse to tolerate disrespect to patients, families, colleagues and yourself
- Breaking rules that jeopardize patient safety

FOUR PRIMARY SOURCES OF FEAR MUST BE OVERCOME

- Nurses must master sources of fear if they are to regain their voice and dialogue with other healthcare professionals and executives/nurse managers to eliminate barriers to quality care and a quality work environment

WHY IS MORAL COURAGE SO IMPORTANT?

- Moral courage requires that you understand your professional obligation to trigger the motivation that encourages the nurse to take necessary risks

HOW TO MANAGE DISRUPTIVE SYSTEMS

- Disruption occurs when nurses perceive or feel they are “morally constrained”
- Health care systems constrain nurses from doing what they believe is morally right but they are unable to carry out that action
- Constraints may be due to situational misperception or fear (hierarchical decision making or lack of resources)
- Constraints may be internal or external to the individual

HOW TO MANAGE DISRUPTIVE PEOPLE/CO-WORKERS

- “There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about” (Margaret Wheatley, 2002)

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO MANAGE & DEAL WITH MORAL DISTRESS

- Poor/substandard healthcare cultures lead to challenging health care environments and that harms patients and health care providers

HOW TO BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM TO AVOID MORAL DISTRESS & MORAL RESIDUE

- American Nurse's Association Code of Ethics
- Despite changes over time in the Code's expression, interpretation, and application, the central ethical values, duties, and commitments of nursing focus on the duty of the nurse to the profession and to the patients for whom they care

LEADERSHIP & EDUCATION TO CREATE A MORAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT

- The first generally accepted code of ethics for nursing in the United States was the Nightingale Pledge crafted after the Hippocratic Oath

IMPACTFULNESS OF MORAL COURAGE FOR NURSES

Morality is a Code of Conduct for nurses

Morality is a guide to behavior that all rational persons would put forward for governing moral behavior

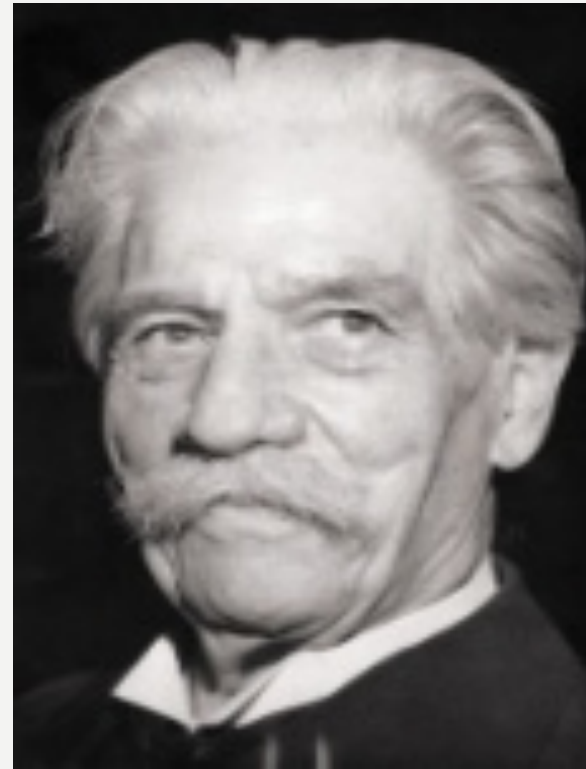
Scientific and technological advancements create more questions often of a moral nature impacting nursing care particularly patient advocacy

EXAMPLES OF 2 PERSONS WITH MORAL COURAGE

- People with moral courage to live by and fight for their values

ROLE MODELS

- In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.



ROLE MODELS



“How very little
can be done
under the spirit of
fear”

(Clara Barton)