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President's Message

Just six months ago, at the conclusion of our fabulous American Society for Pain Management Nursing® National Conference in Portland, I focused on how “the times they are a changing.” Little did any of us know how prophetic that theme was for what would come in 2020. At the National Conference in Portland, the changes being addressed were pain management, opioids, and our organization. Now, the daily news briefs about the opioid misuse/abuse crisis have been replaced with minute-by-minute news updates on the corona virus 19 (COVID-19) pandemic. It is amazing since almost no one knew it existed six months ago. It is ironic that this pandemic is challenging nurses, other clinicians, epidemiologists, and hospital systems during this *Year of the Nurse* which was designated to honor the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale [World Health Organization (WHO), 2020]. Not only is Nightingale considered the founder of modern nursing but she led efforts that championed environmental wellness, infection control, and reform in hospitals (Ferder, 2002; Loveday, 2020). Nightingale’s philosophy addressed and supported not only the importance of patients caring for themselves but also the importance of nurses practicing self-care (King & gates, 2007). An important challenge during this *Year of the Nurse* when nurses are being called upon to be health care leaders and infection control models is to actively care for themselves.

Nursing self-care has been defined as “the ability of the individual nurse to choose actions and activities, based upon knowledge, inspiration, personal power and standards, that will promote and improve the health of the individual nurse” (Bonczek, Quinlan-Colwell, Tran, & Wines, 2016, p. 271). Four important components of this definition are choice, knowledge, the uniqueness of each nurse, and the self-activities they choose. Self-care activities are best considered from a holistic perspective, including physical, psychosocial, and spiritual dimensions (see Self Care Model). Similar to working with patients, when thinking about self-care, nurses are encouraged to assess their own self-care needs (what causes you stress, fatigue, frustration, sadness, anger?). Next, identify what interventions will best satisfy those needs (what gives you pleasure, satisfaction, rest, comfort, relaxation?). Then develop a plan to implement and sustain the interventions on a daily basis. How each person chooses to care for self is unique and most likely will change at different times. During one period self-care may mean time alone in silence, while at another time it may mean being with others singing and dancing.

Self Care Model



Our bodies are physically challenged by stress from work, outside change, media news, and various other factors. Self-care assessment depends upon listening to our bodies and what they need. Many nurses have long ignored the signals from their bodies of thirst, hunger, and elimination. Self-care assessment requires listening to the

signals. Although it is easy to talk about being well-nourished and well-hydrated, it is not always easy to do. It may sound corny, but setting alarms for hourly hydration may be helpful. Drinking some water after cleansing hands following each patient encounter may work well for others. Minimizing comfort food eating is harder during stressful times, but most comfort foods are minimally nutritious. Although three meals a day are best, let us all challenge ourselves and our peers to eat at least one meal per day to support our immune systems. Assessing color of the food is an easy way to consider how supportive a meal is of the immune system. Generally, the more colorful it is, the more nutritious and supportive of immune function it is. The colors include those of vegetables, fruits, and protein, rather than colorful candies or icings. Another important aspect of caring for our bodies is to ensure adequate restorative sleep. That is enhanced with good sleep hygiene including a relaxation period of time prior to going to bed. Many find reading, music, meditation, or relaxation recordings helpful. Exercise is imperative for physical well-being. Unfortunately, during this pandemic, fitness centers with usual exercise activities are limited in most areas. As an alternative, there are many apps such as yoga, exercise, dance, and tai chi available on electronic devices. This may be an opportunity to try a new physical activity. Climbing stairs is not only a good exercise but it also generally allows for more social distancing than using elevators does.

While we always need to be cognizant of infection prevention, this is a high priority now. Interspersing the use of hand sanitizer with hand washing with warm water and soap for 20 or even 30 seconds is not only hygienic but it is relaxing. Maybe mentally sing a favorite song or visualize a favorite place while you enjoy the warm water. Finishing with application of a favorite hand lotion extends the relaxation and helps to prevent skin dryness with cracking thus providing more protection. During the last few weeks, I have frequently heard the voices of the nuns who taught me and of my mother telling me “keep your hands away from your face.” It is not so easy. A few things that may help are to explore new hairstyles that keep hair from falling into your face with the need to move it away; prevent skin dryness leading to itching by using moisturizer on face, lip balm on lips, and eye drops as appropriate; and use antihistamines or allergy medications to minimize contact with your nose. Recently, I find myself folding my hands together to avoid the tendency to touch things around me. Minimizing wearing jewelry to a watch or fit bit and plain band ring that can be easily sanitized is a good practice. Bracelets, necklaces, scarves, and neckties can easily become contaminated. Help reduce contact with contaminants by keeping a plastic bag with disinfecting wipes rather than hand sanitizing wipes to cleanse doorknobs, computer screens, keyboards, steering wheels, self-serve check out screens, etc. Using a wipe to open doors and on hand and stair railings is a good idea as well. Cell phones and employee badges are common sources of viruses and bacteria so cleaning them frequently is important. Developing a habit of keeping a personal pen handy and using it for any signing enables you to avoid sharing pens that have been touched by others who may have touched their faces.

The pandemic situation and associated stressors certainly are presenting psychological challenges personally and while interacting with others with whom we live, work, or in other ways relate. We know that the results can range from frustration or irritability to anxiety, anger, depression, and domestic violence. For one family being sheltered in place may be mildly irritating but for another it may be a time of extreme stress and violence. Awareness of signs of domestic violence can facilitate advocating for the victims. For many stress-related issues an underlying factor is a perceived lack of control. Trying to alleviate the stress/anxiety related with that is most likely why the grocery store shelves are bare. Although the average person may feel very little control over life at this time, they can exert control through buying water, pasta, rice, toilet tissue, etc. It is important to also understand that we can exert control and choice over hand washing, touching our faces, donning/doffing appropriately, social distancing, and setting boundaries around our time, space, and commitments. We have control over how we use our energy and our choices. Minimizing contact with negative people can help us to remain positive. As nurses, we are “doers” and “givers” so we generally feel good when we are helping. Random acts of kindness not only can make someone else smile but can also help us feel more positive. It feels good to see the somewhat surprised smile on the face of an environmental service worker when they are randomly told “thank you for all you are doing.” As we work as nurses, we continually support others, and we need to take pride in doing so. What may be considered “silly things” may help as well. For me, decorating my porch with bunnies and egg lights with more bunnies on the lawn and eggs hanging from two trees makes me happy whenever I watch people smile as they walk past. Since personal interaction needs to be limited, sending traditional cards or electronic cards can help stay in touch with others. Rather than silently thinking it, this may be a good time to verbalize or text a positive thought about someone, something they are wearing, or something they did.

For those working remotely at home, there can be challenges as well. It is important to continue a daily routine as much as possible by keeping the same hours and activities. Boundaries are important. It can be challenging for family members to understand someone is physically at home but not accessible. Identifying a room or space that is designated for work and even outlining it with a colorful tape or ribbon may be helpful. Taking breaks from sitting or investing in a standing desk will help to avoid tension and fatigued muscles. Those working remotely may experience a sense of feeling guilty for not “being in the trenches.” Remember that those who are working remotely are contributing by maintaining social distancing, minimizing viral transmission, and preserving the now precious personal protective equipment for those who vitally need it.

As we use our knowledge, expertise, and innovation to address the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to carve out time and energy to ensure we are caring for ourselves. See Table 1 for a Menu of 30-Second Self-care Treats you can give to yourselves. The ASPMN® leadership and Board of Directors members strongly support self-care and strongly encourage you to practice it.

In this E-news is a selection of excellent *Healthcare Provider Self-care Tips* contributed by ASPMN® Board of Directors member, Kimberly Wittmayer, MS, APN, PCNS-BC, AP-PMN. I encourage you to review them and select at least one to pursue. During the coming weeks and months, you will see more information about self-care, including a message from the ASPMN® Chapter Resource and Membership Committee. We appreciate, respect, and value each of you. We encourage all of you to share your self-care practices on the list serve and through E-news. As we are increasingly surrounded with the blossoms and colors of spring, please take a few minutes several times every day to enjoy them as you keep yourselves healthy and safe.

Table 1 Menu of 30 Second Treats

When we feel “stressed” it often is the result of trying to manage a series of things.

Similarly, we can manage stress with a series of little activities throughout the day. Many take **30 seconds or less** to do. These include:

Rubbing hand lotion on your hands and wrists for 30 to 45 seconds

Sing a tune.

Walking outside, checking the weather and walk back inside.

Close your eyes for 30 seconds and picture being in your favorite place.

Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth for 30 seconds.

Pet your pet!

Walk to see the birds for 30 seconds.

Stretch to touch as close to your toes as possible 20 times.

Silently say a prayer or two.

Close your eyes for 30 seconds & say “thank you” for what you have today; Or to think of all the people you love;. Or all those who love you.

Wash the back of your neck with cool water.

Laugh out loud!

Close your eyes and think of where you were this day last year or five years ago today; Or remember your last vacation.

Pull some weeds.

Enjoy letting a piece of chocolate totally melt in your mouth (**no** chewing).

Square Breathe.

Walk up and down two or more flights of stairs.

Read a cartoon or funny story.

Share the funny story with a colleague.

Clean _____!

Walk around the _____.

Perform a Random Act of Kindness.

Compliment someone.

Tell someone you appreciate them.

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