Don’t Get Cooked by the Pressure of Healthcare
Presented by Debra Kahnen, BSN, RN, CMSRN and Bethlyn Gerard, NCQA, PCMH-CCE, HTCP, CPA, LMT
During the 2016 Annual Convention

Summary: A recent survey of healthcare workers reported that 69% felt stressed and 17% felt highly stressed. Nurses take care of everyone else FIRST – so much so that few even register their bodies feedback signals because the pace of the profession has required them to pain block. Have you ever gone an entire shift without a break to eat or go to the restroom? The stress inherent in healthcare not only adversely affects the nurse’s health, it also puts the patients at risk. Under stress the cortex or intelligent brain is literally high-jacked by the Amygdala (fight or flight center) and nurses become task oriented and lose access to high level critical thinking. This high-jack of the brain increases the risk for missing important clinical clues and potentially making errors. The high stress environment of health care can also cause breakdowns in communication, increase lateral violence, and adversely affect a healthy practice environment. One solution is to teach health care providers how to do just in time stress management to balance their autonomic nervous system and use mindfulness to increase their resilience.

Nursing Implications:
• Those trained to notice and neutralize stress in the moment, increased their ability to effectively navigate stressful environments. Utilizing this 3N process (Notice, Neutralize and Navigate), teams reported perceived improvement in team work and a healthier work environment.
• A group of health workers, trained in the 3N process, demonstrated increased resilience when given extra responsibilities.
• Building a culture that encourages self-care and supports the nurses and other healthcare workers in “taking 5” to balance the autonomic nervous system when they get stressed, could potentially improve and sustain improvements in quality, safety, and patient satisfaction.

Key Takeaways:
• The amygdala hijack interferes with your ability to think. You can literally breathe your way through it. Slow deep abdominal breathing, practiced in the stressful moment, can help balance the autonomic nervous system promoting access to critical thinking skills and situational awareness. Practicing the technique of even breathing – making the length of your in breath match the length of your out breath can also promote a sense of calm in the midst of stress.
• Mindful meditation has been shown to increase resilience - the ability to bounce back quickly from stressful events. In addition, it can reduce the psychological stress response, improve IQ and cognitive function, decrease pain, and improve immune function.

• You Tube channel, Staying Mindful Under Stress, was created for participants to practice the stress neutralizing and resilience building techniques. It can be found at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUrJv4vG01DVEBKU_M1WxPA

**Link:** [http://www.prolibraries.com/amsn/?select=session&sessionID=1260](http://www.prolibraries.com/amsn/?select=session&sessionID=1260)

**References:**


[View](#) complete menu of REAL Briefs™