Taking Care of Yourself

Problem

Nursing is a great and rewarding career full of euphoric moments and tragedies. However, caring for a large number of patients, their families, visitors, co-workers, and medical staff can leave a nurse physically and emotionally exhausted. Therefore, it is important for a nurse to take care of herself first in order to be able to provide quality care to her patients.

Consequence

An emotionally and physically drained nurse is headed directly for depression, burnout and poor patient care.

Solution

Here are some considerations related to taking care of yourself.

- Closed eyes and ten controlled, deep and measured breaths are all you need to change that physiologic feeling of panic.

- Oxygen to your brain will provide you the clarity you need to go forward with purposeful actions and intentions.

- Try the following relaxation technique:
  - Find a quiet space – an equipment room or bathroom – where you can close your eyes and practice deep breathing.
  - Close your eyes and relax your shoulders downward.
  - Relax you facial muscles.
  - Inhale through your nose as deeply as you can, extending your abdomen outward.
  - Hold that breath for a moment and then, slowly exhale completely through pursed lips while counting slowly and rhythmically, relaxing your shoulders even more deeply as your breath is expelled.
  - Your body will begin to release its tension and your internal pace will become slow.
Repeat; as you continue your concentration will be diverted from the usual buzz of activity in your mind.

Open your eyes slowly when you are done with all ten breaths.

- This type of moment is yours to take; no one will give it to you – no one can.
- You must learn to recognize the need, find the place, make the time, and give yourself permission to relax.
- Make time to take care of yourself.
- Ensure adequate nutrition to keep your health, resistance and energy up.
- Exercise to stay healthy and relieve the stress related to your work.
- Get a life outside your job, not just a room to eat, sleep, change clothes, and go back to work.
- Have friends on the job and outside the workplace.
- Create a life that allows you to receive and give emotionally outside the workplace.
- Taking care of yourself is not selfish; if you don’t take care of yourself, how can you properly take care of all those patients counting on you?

References

*Avoiding Common Nursing Errors*, Lisa Marcucci, MD, Editor, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2010