

Stressed Out? How Nurses Can Regain Some Calm

60 Views



Featured Author:

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Todd Wheeler is the founder and president of Concierge Colorado and Hospital Concierge of America. For over 20 years he has been a successful entrepreneur in many sectors of the service industry. In the 1990's he operated an international management consulting firm specializing in organizational development and growth for mid-size and large organizations. Clients included: Arthur Anderson, Gambro International, Rocky Mountain Bank Note and Grupo Misa (Mexico City). In a former life, Mr. Wheeler was the Chair of the MIT Enterprise Forum in Colorado.

At the present time Hospital Concierge of America and Concierge Colorado provides concierge consulting services and concierge programs to hospitals as retention and recruitment tools. These concierge programs have been noted by both hospital administration and staff as "indispensable", "extremely professional", "world-class" and "life savers". Feedback proves that many nurses site these programs as the reason they work at this hospital. Mr. Wheeler believes that all concierges are not created equal, and strives every day to create and deliver elegant results to people problems. For several years, Concierge Colorado has been exceeding the expectations of over 10,000 individuals and has completed over 35,000 requests for hospital staff, with a 99% same day completion score.

After developing and utilizing web based concierge management technology to run the concierge business for the last 6 years, Concierge Colorado is now offering consulting services, training and the most powerful Customer Relationship Management tools for hospital concierge and small businesses.

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Stressed Out? How Nurses Can Regain Some Calm

Todd Wheeler July 02, 2008

One third of Americans are stressed out. They live with extreme stress as a part of their daily lives, and according to a study conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA), New York, nearly half of all Americans believe their stress has increased during the past five years.

As a nurse, you certainly feel the pinch—and probably deal with quite a bit of stress day in and day out. Indeed, with the ongoing nursing shortage, you are likely to be overworked and stretched to the limit. In addition, your job presents inherent hazards and challenges; it is physically challenging, emotionally challenging and intellectually challenging. You routinely deal with your own pains, as your body hurts from lifting and maneuvering equipment and patients who are often twice your size. You have to keep up on the latest drugs and dosages, in addition to the latest medical methodologies, and, perhaps the hardest of all, your heart aches from bearing witness to the grief of many families.

To top it off, life goes on outside of the hospital or clinic. Like many others, you juggle work and home responsibilities and often find the 24-hour day woefully short. You work an 8-hour day at home with kids, family, household responsibilities and THEN you come in for your 12-hour shift! So you find yourself commiserating with the one-third of employed adults who have difficulty managing work and family responsibilities and with the 35 percent who suffer because their jobs interfere with their family or personal time.

Don't Deny It

Although stress has become a common ailment in our go-go culture, you can no longer simply ignore it. Consider the following – stress is often linked to health problems such as hypertension, anxiety, depression, insomnia and obesity. In addition, stress contributes to poor relationships, broken families and severed friendships.

“Stress in America continues to escalate and is affecting every aspect of peoples’ lives—from work to personal relationships to sleep patterns and eating habits, as well as their health,” says psychologist Russ Newman, PhD, APA executive director for professional practice. “We know that stress is a fact of life and some stress can have a positive impact, however, the high stress

levels that many Americans report experiencing can have long-term health consequences, ranging from fatigue to obesity and heart disease.”

And, finally, stress can lead to decreased productivity and even job loss, according to the APA. More specifically, studies have illustrated a link between employee stress and decreased quality of care delivered by health care providers. As a matter of fact, according to a report published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, the frequency of medication errors declined by 50% after employee stress prevention activities were implemented in a 700-bed hospital. In a second study, there was a 70% reduction in malpractice claims in 22 hospitals that implemented stress prevention activities.¹

Coping with stress

Because stress wreaks so much havoc, you simply can no longer ignore its presence. As a nurse, you need to learn how to handle stress more effectively—and should consider adopting the following strategies:

Acknowledge the pain. Instead of constantly telling yourself that you can handle whatever life throws at you, recognize your limitations. Simply put, raise the white flag and look for some help.

Manage your most precious resource—time. One way to manage your time is to set priorities. Write a to-do list and schedule time to work on top priorities first. This will help you get the most important tasks accomplished, while controlling the stress you feel about them. It is also helpful to delegate or hire someone to complete some of these tasks. A landscaper to cut your lawn or a concierge service to take care of your miscellaneous errands could be well worth the price in terms of time saved—and stress averted.

Work out. Numerous studies show that exercise can reduce stress. Exercise counteracts stress, helping to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease and other ailments. At the same time, exercise reduces stress by turning your attention away from pressing concerns.

Talk it out. Discussing your difficulties can help to reduce stress. Find and develop a support group—and you can often reduce your stress simply by venting.

Maintain a healthy diet. Stress often prompts people to reach for the chips and candy. However, several studies suggest that a healthy diet—not the junk food—can actually help to reduce stress.

Relax. Adopt some simple stress relief techniques such as muscle relaxation, visualization and controlled breathing exercises. Simply participating in these activities for a few minutes often can help to reduce stress levels—and help you get back on track.

In addition to adopting these stress reduction strategies, it’s also a good idea to work with your employer to reduce stress in the workplace. Encourage your employer to do the following and your job could become a lot less stressful:

- Ensure that the workload is in line with workers' capabilities and resources
- Design jobs to provide meaning, stimulation, and opportunities for workers to use their skills
- Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs
- Clearly define workers' roles and responsibilities
- Establish work schedules that are compatible with demands outside the job
- Provide opportunities for exercise by creating a walking club or sponsoring or subsidizing a workout center or health club memberships
- Provide concierge services that can help employees take care of errands—from housekeepers to handymen, pet sitters to pre-made meals, grocery shopping and even car care—these reduce stress and can give you your life back!

References

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