



Professional self-care in the aftermath of disaster



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Importance of professional self-care



- It is distressing to be with children who are in distress
- It's critical healthcare providers find ways to have their own personal needs met and appreciate and address impact of supporting children who are grieving or traumatized
- Create a culture where:
 - it is ok to be upset
 - members normalize asking for help and model willingness to accept assistance

Compassion fatigue



- Exposure to trauma and suffering of patients can lead to compassion fatigue
 - Empathy: understanding and taking perspective of patient
 - Compassion: requires empathy but includes wanting to help and/or desiring to relieve suffering – “to bear or suffer together”
- Warnings about compassion fatigue imply that compassion is necessarily tiring
- Compassionate approaches can be gratifying and buffer against physician stress



Supporting those most in need can be gratifying

- Realistic objectives of purpose of interactions
- Healthcare providers have skills and resources to provide meaningful assistance
- Healthcare providers are aware of and have sufficient support to deal with personal impact of work
- Especially difficult in austere environment and when you have other challenges

Common emotional reactions to crisis



- Ambivalence or conflicting emotions
- Anxiety
- Confusion
- Shame, lowered self-esteem
- Anger or irritability
- Distrust or suspiciousness

Other common reactions



- Physical
 - Behavioral
 - Cognitive
 - Interpersonal
 - Spiritual
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- Reactions are often misinterpreted → blaming, withdrawal and anger

Support for Staff



- Organizational support
 - Additional support staff
 - Modify workload, expectations, schedule
 - Supportive supervision
 - Professional Development
 - Employee Assistance Program
- Family and peer support
- Religion and spirituality

Domains for professional self-care

(adapted from US DOE Compassion Fatigue)



- Physical
- Intellectual – cultivate creative abilities; respectful humor
- Occupational
- Environmental
- Emotional
- Social
- Spiritual

Challenges to self-care



- Making time when there is so much to do and everyone needs your help
- Feeling shame or guilt for attending to your own needs
- Assuming others are having less trouble adjusting
- Lack of modeling of professional self-care