

Harbor
Light
Hospice



TAKE CARE OF YOU

Practicing Self-Care in the Workplace

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PROLOGUE



Perhaps one of the most overlooked aspects of hospice work, or any people-helping work for that matter, is the aspect of self-care. People who spend their lives pouring into others need to see themselves as rivers, not reservoirs. Simply stated, “We cannot give away what we don’t have.”

Rivers are life-giving and they self-perpetuate. Reservoirs become stagnant and die. What we do as hospice workers remains an undaunting challenge, one that we take seriously, and one that requires perpetual and effective self-care. We who walk into tomorrow need to be rested and energized to meet the demands of caregiving. The various disciplines need to function at optimal capacity, thus ensuring that our patients experience the very best transition possible.

WELCOME TO HARBOR LIGHT HOSPICE

On behalf of our leadership team, we welcome you to our growing family of hospice professionals, who wish to come alongside you and help make your career the best one possible. Our desire is that you discover a long-term and rewarding work environment. We strive to perpetuate what Dr. Cicely Saunders developed in 1967, along with other pioneers in the hospice field.

Hospice disciplines -- RN's, LPN's, Nurse Practitioners, Aides, Social Workers, Chaplains and Volunteers work hard to insure total end of life care. At Harbor Light we are reminded that hospice work is not what we have to do; it's what we GET to do! Precious lives deserve our very best care.

However, we also understand that we cannot give away what we ourselves don't have. In order to be effective and to experience long-term sustainability, we want our team members to be the best they can be! This comes through practicing good self-care.

Because turnover in hospice work is high, we recognize the need for all disciplines to make sure they stay emotionally, mentally and physically healthy. We want you to enjoy what you do! While we understand that our life's work will "have its moments," we equally recognize that a plan must be set in motion for each employee to remain healthy. We MUST maintain an excellent work ethic, but at the same time make sure that we are enjoying the process in a healthy, life-fulfilling manner.

To that end, Harbor Light Hospice offers generous Personal Time Off (PTO), extensive post-hire training, meaningful and informative staff meetings (that also promote relationship building), Interdisciplinary Group meetings (IDG), and Stand-Up times, where patient information is discussed, and team members interact.

You also need to utilize the loving concern of your other team members. None of us are islands. We work best together and need the camaraderie that builds only when team members look out for each other! Never be hesitant to talk to your Patient Care Manager (PCM). He or she will stop what they're doing to be a listening ear.

Our goal is to help you prevent burnout. The demands and pressures that come with people-helping jobs can at times feel overwhelming. That's why we emphasize good self-care. This comes by having a safe place to vent, by remaining honest and open about your feelings and by not letting your emotions pile up. If discussed in a timely and proper manner, most issues can be resolved; and fallout can be avoided.

Harbor Light prides itself in offering excellent patient care, but first we want you as a valued team member to stay healthy and vibrant. We want you to face each new workday with a solid expectation of both giving out and receiving any necessary personal care. This manual covers several areas as they pertain to effective self-care. Always remember, we are here for one another. No one needs to ever feel isolated or insignificant. Harbor Light Hospice wants you to enjoy a healthy, long tenure, so "Take Care of YOU!"

NO DRY WELL

Wells never dry up overnight. It's a process caused by drought or when they become plugged with debris. In ancient times, wells were the very life source of any community. Wells, in essence, were a symbol of a healthy community. Good running wells guaranteed the welfare of individuals as well.

Genesis 26:18 tells us that "Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham." The Philistines, Israel's arch enemy at the time, had stopped them up after Abraham died. The Philistines filled the wells to pollute, clog and render them useless. By shutting off the water supply, the Philistines made it impossible for Abraham's descendants to perpetuate.

Let's bring this truth home. Wells continue to symbolize our ability to thrive. When our personal "well" becomes clogged -- our ability to move forward in a healthy fashion - our staying power becomes more and more limited. If left unchecked, our personal wells can pollute our future and cause our perspective to become polluted with debris that causes us to move on in search of another well.

That's why we need to be like Isaac and constantly "dig out our well." Metaphorically, the well in those times represented all the social resources in the community that were necessary to endure and thrive. If the well fell into disrepair, if the life-giving water was polluted in quantity, then the entire community suffered. The well remained a symbol of a healthy community. It was a place of self-care, where individuals could stay replenished. Don't let your well run dry!

Every day we as hospice workers experience a myriad of feelings, thoughts and encounters with our patients and caregivers, family members, POA's, etc. that sometimes leave us feeling empty and drained of energy. Couple that with situations at home, ie.

family matters, financial concerns, aging parents, daycare issues, other relationship struggles and a host of never-ending daily responsibilities, etc. and tensions mount.

If we ignore the call to take care of ourselves, we may face insurmountable problems. Feeling drained of energy, even sickness, and negative emotions can, if prolonged, spiral into deeper issues. I love what Audre Lorde, a well-known African-American poet and essayist said, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgent. Caring for myself is an act of survival.

Here’s the bottom line: Before we can effectively care for others, we have to take care of ourselves. Again, we cannot give away what we ourselves don’t possess!

None of us knows what each new day will bring, so keeping an on-going self-directed checklist is a good idea. Anytime we feel overwhelmed, unwell or frustrated, we need to STOP! Stop and focus on the “little things” that make us feel better. It doesn’t have to be anything extreme or that requires money. Many times, it’s life’s small pleasures that bring big results.

What do you like to do? Any hobbies? What relaxes you? When you decide, then run there quickly. When life threatens to weigh you down, find a healthy diversion. The possibilities are numerous:

1. Eat healthy, delicious food.
2. Take a walk and practice “minding your mind.”
3. Spend time with positive people who want nothing from you, who bring out the best in you, and who you enjoy being with. Remember, misery breeds company, so stay on the alert!
4. Relax with a warm cup of tea, coffee, or a glass of wine.
5. Journal or draw.
6. Listen to your favorite music.

7. Take a break when you need one.
8. Use aromatherapy (Essential oils)
9. Get a massage.
10. Read a good “just for fun” book.
11. Deep clean your house/room/yard
12. Play with your pet.
13. Pray/meditate
14. Visit a friend.
15. Find a hobby

Self-care means asking for help when you need it. Be honest. There is absolutely no shame in admitting that you need help. We all do from time to time. Just find the time, and do it!

It could possibly save your job, your marriage, your sanity. Yes, it’s important to show compassion for others, but how often do we treat ourselves with that same level of kindness? One of the best things we can do for our mind is to take a break and remember that we are worth caring for.

Even our Savior took time to “get away from it all.” People were His greatest asset and His greatest joy, but also His greatest challenge. He often broke away from the crowds in order to re-group. The Lord needed time to pray and contemplate, so we who may be tempted to embrace a “savior complex” need to do the same. We have limitations! “And He said to them (His disciples), ‘Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while’” (Mark6:31).

Repeatedly putting the needs of others before our own can create stress and even resentment that prevents us from being the “best us.” This is not self-centeredness; it is survival! Our patients, their families, and our fellow team members deserve a “healthy us.” Our goal is to provide maximum and efficient care.

Amanda Kohr, Senior Editor at Wanderlust, writes, “Research has illustrated that adding self-care into one’s daily routine reduces stress, decreases the chance of mental and physical ailments, increases productivity and inspires feelings of happiness. By giving ourselves a daily dose of compassion, we’re able to approach our work and relationships with a clear, happy mind, thus allowing the cycle of positivity to continue.”

She then offers 10 simple ways to practice self-care. Some of them are repeats from above:

1. Eat healthy and mindfully.
2. Keep track of your accomplishments.
3. Express gratitude.
4. Gift your inner child (re-create memories from your childhood)
5. Create a cozy space.
6. Read a book.
7. Move (exercise)
8. Unplug (you know, technology!)
9. Create something.
10. Build a self-care kit.

Remember, don’t let your well run dry!

FOCUS ON THE “WHY’S”

At times life has a way of taking us to the limit of our abilities, energies and emotional love tank. During these times we may easily contemplate “throwing in the towel.” We are tempted to give up. And at the time, it might seem like the only choice left. Employee turnover in hospice circles and all people-caring jobs remains alarmingly high.

We are professionals, who bring our individual skills to the table. We worked hard to earn the necessary degrees and training to effectively serve others. We as people-helpers start our journey with the best of intentions and a desire to excel. We bring a good working knowledge of the “what’s” regarding our specific discipline. We hope our expertise makes a difference in the lives we touch.

What we do as hospice workers is challenging work. We often confront situations that take us to the limit emotionally, mentally and even spiritually. Sometimes we feel inadequate and uncertain, but because we love people, we push through the difficult times. My daily prayer is this: “God, give me wisdom beyond my training, my skills and my inability at times to cope.”

The people-serving industry is full of rewarding moments that make us glad we pursued our individual discipline. Then comes those times when:

1. Patients yell at us.
2. Patients throw us out of the room.
3. Patients and families become demanding and unreasonable.
4. Patients misunderstand what we say and misrepresent our actions.
5. Job demands far surpass our eight-hour shift.
6. Co-workers become difficult to work alongside.

Sometimes disease progressions make our favorite patients (don't tell anyone!) become our worst nightmares. Episodic situations cause our patients to change on a dime. Smiles and hugs are replaced with cursing and hurtful comments. We never know, do we?

Or, what about those times when the census spikes dramatically, making us feel overwhelmed and overworked? We all have the same eight-hour shift to get the work done, but sometimes we run out of "day" before we run out of duties. During these times, we continue to do what's right in spite of what may be convenient. Disease trajectories always circumvent the clock and compassion says, "Do what you have to do to get the job done."

Our patients are more than mere numbers on a census, they are precious people facing their mortality. During these times, we do what's right, not what's necessarily easy.

Or, what about co-workers who refuse at times to be team players? They live unto themselves, refusing to see the bigger picture. We all have come alongside such individuals. All of us are made better by co-workers who carry their weight with integrity and self-initiative.

But let me ask you, "What makes you get up in the morning?"

"What energizes you?"

"What makes your life fulfilling and rewarding?"

Let's face it. When we meet new people, what's one of the first things they ask? "What do YOU do?" Am I right?

Hopefully, all of us find fulfillment in what we do. It's what sets us apart. It's what defines us. What we do is an expression of "who we are." But as sure as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, there will be days that what we do is not good enough to keep our feet planted on solid ground. We all experience those hair-pulling, emotionally charged, pissed-off moments that make us wonder why we stay at it. Those moments that threaten our sanity. Those moments and situations that tax us mentally and emotionally. Those times when the grass looks greener on the other side of the professional landscape. Those moments when frankly, we want to walk away.

BUT STOP!

When those times come, and they will, we have to re-group. The "what's" of our discipline, of necessity, have to shift quickly to the "why's." Asking ourselves, "Why do I do what I do?" Otherwise, the "what's" become tedious and energy draining. Our work can easily lose its wonder and purpose. Job requirements and high-level mandates can become nerve-wrenching and take us to the jumping off place. Patients, their families and even co-workers at times push us to the brink!

That's when we have to put on the brakes and ask, "Why am I doing what I do?" Let me remind you:

1. People are dying and need your love and compassion.
2. People are scared and perhaps striking out, giving you the opportunity to bring peace and comfort.
3. That could be YOUR mom or dad lying there. Aren't you glad you can be there for them?

4. No one should have to face end of life issues alone.
5. Your presence will assure that someone dies pain-free and in peace.
6. Families need the love and support you bring -- a hug, handshake, reassuring words.
7. The expertise you bring -- specific to your discipline -- makes all the difference to the “one” as he or she transitions.

For the most part, what we do as hospice workers is done in obscurity. We do our finest work, usually one-on-one. Lives are changed, helped and personal significance is emphasized when we behind closed doors reach into earthly lives that are coming to an end. Our work with an “audience of one” exalts the true meaning of life.

May I share a personal story? After leading churches for 35 years, I left the pastoral ministry for the hospice chaplaincy. I went from crowds to the one. At first the change was refreshing, but then I began to feel insignificant in the overall scheme of people-helping. I had moved from preaching to larger crowds to touching only one person at a time. Patients, who due to their inability to speak or respond in any manner, were the most challenging. I remember asking myself, “Is my presence here making a difference?”

In short, I felt that my life had been shelved and cheated of greater glory. I played into the “numbers game.” Until one day when a dying patient held my hand and said, “Roger, you’ll never know what having you here means to me. I’m at peace.” Then moments later she died.

Through tears I asked the Lord to forgive me. Hospice care is just that -- caring for one person at a time. While our culture extols crowds, we must always remember that crowds are made up of individual lives who matter greatly in the scheme of life and eternity. It’s Jesus feeding the multitudes or delivering the Sermon on the Mount versus His private, life-changing conversations with Nicodemus and the unnamed woman at the well.

Do you remember the story of the girl who walked along the beach where thousands of starfish had been washed up? One at a time she threw them back into the sea. A curious, critical onlooker said, “Why are you doing that? It just doesn’t matter.” She held up a starfish and said, “It matters to this one!”

Our patients matter. Their loved ones, personal caregivers, and friends will cry when their time is over. Individuals facing their mortality will hopefully transition pain free and in peace. And soft hands, warm hearts will guide them on their journey. Hospice workers truly do their finest work in obscurity.

So, when the “what’s” of your discipline try to capture you and hold you captive in their daily grind, stop and remind yourself about the “why’s” and keep moving forward with joy and a sense of satisfaction, knowing that your work changed the world one patient at a time.

GOOD TIME MANAGEMENT

What does good time management have to do with self-care? Plenty!

When we lack effective time management skills, we easily become stressed out and even overwhelmed. All of us have the same 8 hours (unless we're on call!) to accomplish our tasks. And at times hospice work can be "feast or famine," depending on the census. Effective time management assures our ability to stay in the game.

The psalmist wrote, "Teach us to use wisely all the time we have" (90:12 -- Contemporary English Version). Because we have to visit our patients in a timely manner, we must manage our schedule to remain in compliance with Medicare and/or company regulations. Individual disciplines learn about expected norms during their post-hire training time.

In order to complete our necessary workload each day, we need to implement a realistic plan, making sure we include emergency time, time for interruptions, and then pace ourselves. At times we feel like firemen on their way to a burning building, but thankfully these times are manageable when we learn to schedule our days in a realistic fashion.

Harbor Light Hospice recommends that we plan our weeks in advance. This includes new admissions, routine visits, recerts, PRN visits, IDG meetings, care plan meetings with our patients and their Primary Caregivers and facilities, "Meet and Greets," and of course, continual care or transitional visits (SIA's). It goes without saying that emergency situations, SIA's or unexpected deaths come unplanned. However, weekly and/or daily calendar planning needs to allow "breathing space" in our scheduling. Medicare time requirements generously allow us the ability to move previously scheduled visits to another day, as long as we remain in the necessary time constraints. Pre-planning is the key!

Hospice workers need not place unrealistic expectations upon their time or physical limitations. If pre-planned visits get interrupted or if time simply does not allow

scheduled visits or meetings, then courtesy calls are always appropriate. Sometimes we become our worst enemy! If visits need to be made within a given time period, feel free to call on your team members to assist. We are only as strong as the team surrounding us! Contact your Patient Care Manager (PCM) to help you.

As stated, good time management is essential to having productive days and to relieving unnecessary stress. Unmotivated, lethargic people need not apply! The hospice challenge requires self-motivated, integral individuals, who understand the necessity of wise time management. But having said this, all workers need to pace themselves as they move through their day. Remember, anxiety flourishes in the minds of those who struggle to “live in the moment.”

Yes, you may need to get on the road. Yes, you may have three more patients to see in a given time frame. Yes, you may feel the push toward an expected end. However, tensions build when we minimize our present opportunity, while thinking about what’s next. Enjoy the moment! Make your schedule your friend, not your foe. Let it serve as a guide, not a ball and chain around your unmet expectations. Again, learn to pace yourself!

All of us face obstacles along the way. Highway detours, stalled trains or long trains, road construction, icy or snow-covered roads, high winds, torrential rains, etc. hinder us from arriving at our next scheduled appointment when we expected. Relax! Wise, realistic daily planning allows for these inevitable interruptions.

What about charting? You know as well as I that both Corporate and Medicare require complete and accurate charting by all hospice workers. We are a team who must give an account! Both in my experience and interaction with other team members, charting brings its own set of challenges when it comes to good time management. I find it best to make charting a part of each visit. Naturally, individuals have to complete this all-important aspect of hospice responsibility according to what works best for them. Nurses

remain my constant heroes, as I understand their additional charting expectations. I personally never preempt a nurse's visit because I know they have expectations and time restraints that override mine. This, I like to refer to as, "teamwork." When we respect and honor the time for other disciplines, our load becomes lighter and everyone involved seems to benefit. This dynamic may sound strange, but it works!

No one navigates emergencies and interruptions with ease. These unplanned times, if allowed, can tax our already full schedules. But remember, these times come and go -- feast or famine -- and you have team members who stand ready to come alongside you when the load becomes too heavy to bear.

Good time management is not optional; it's essential if we are to end each day or each month with the satisfaction of a job well done. Each new day is a gift, not to be squandered or wasted, but to pour into the lives of those who are coming to the end of their time. Keep in mind that Harbor Light owns us between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. This understanding keeps all of us time conscious but not time driven. There's a difference. One spells enjoyment, the other creates unnecessary anxiety.

AVOID BURNOUT

We live and work in a fast-paced world that can exact a negative toll on us -- physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. To be sure, prolonged stress can produce burnout. Life happens, and situations develop outside of our control more often than not. Like a cat stalking a mouse, burnout suddenly overtakes us and wreaks havoc. Many promising careers have been sabotaged due to burnout that was not recognized in its beginning stages. None of us wants to become the victim of something that could have been avoided.

I appreciate the fine work that the England-based Calmer Community has done to help individuals in the people-helping business either to avoid burnout or to walk them through identifiable times of stress that if not countered, could potentially lead to career interference or termination. Calmer Community is an award-winning training organization which empowers entrepreneurs, freelancers and business teams to nurture good mental health and wellbeing. Please visit <https://www.thisiscalmer.com/about> for more information. Their research on burnout is life-altering!

But first, what is burnout?

Burnout is the loss of meaning in one's work, coupled with mental, emotional, or physical exhaustion as the result of long-term, unresolved stress. Burnout can affect anyone, however, there is a growing number of entrepreneurs, business owners, and freelancers who are reporting symptoms of burnout. Research now indicates that burnout symptoms are as high as 60-percent in the United Kingdom.

General symptoms of burnout include:

1. Demotivation and detachment from your work
2. Depleted energy levels
3. Detachment in personal relationships
4. Lower productivity
5. Lower resistance to illnesses
6. Pessimistic outlook on work or life in general
7. Physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion
8. Time away from work

Calmer research recognizes 5 stages of burnout. Burnout can affect anyone, at any time in their lives. However, burnout is most common in people between the ages of 25 and 44. Their guide is inspired by Winona State University, found online (<https://www.winona.edu/stress/bntstages.htm>'s burnout study, as well as their own psychological research.

As with any illness, symptoms of burnout change from person to person, however, these five stages are commonly observed:

Honeymoon Stage

When we undertake a new task, we often start by experiencing high job satisfaction, energy and creativity. This is especially true of a new job role, or the beginnings of a business venture. In this first phase of burnout, you may begin to experience predicted stresses of the job, so it's important to start implementing positive coping strategies, such as taking practical steps in your job, or prioritizing your mental health through one of Calmer's programs (<https://thisiscalmer.com/entrepreneurs>). The theory is that if we create good coping strategies at this stage, we can continue in the honeymoon phase indefinitely.

Common symptoms include:

1. Commitment to the job at hand
2. Compulsion to prove oneself
3. Free-flowing creativity
4. High productivity levels
5. Job satisfaction
6. Readily accepting responsibility
7. Sustained energy levels
8. Unbridled optimism

The Onset of Stress

The second stage of burnout begins with an awareness of some days being more difficult than others. You may find your optimism waning, as well as notice common stress symptoms affecting you physically, mentally or emotionally.

Common symptoms include:

1. Anxiety
2. Avoidance of decision making
3. Change in appetite or diet
4. Fatigue
5. Forgetfulness
6. General neglect of personal needs
7. Grinding your teeth at night
8. Headaches
9. Heart palpitations
10. High blood pressure

11. Inability to focus
12. Irritability
13. Job dissatisfaction
14. Lack of sleep or reduced sleep quality
15. Lack of social interaction
16. Lower productivity
17. Unusual heart rhythms

Chronic Stress

The third stage of burnout is chronic stress. This is a marked change in your stress levels, going from motivation, to experiencing stress on an incredibly frequent basis. You may also experience more intense symptoms than those of Stage 2.

Common symptoms include:

1. Anger or aggressive behavior
2. Apathy
3. Chronic exhaustion
4. Cynical attitude
5. Decreased sexual desire
6. Denial of problems at home or at work
7. Feeling threatened or panicked
8. Feeling pressured or out of control
9. Increased alcohol/drug consumption
10. Increased caffeine consumption
11. Lack of hobbies
12. Missed work deadlines and/or targets
13. Persistent tiredness in the mornings

14. Physical illness
15. Procrastination at work and at home
16. Repeated lateness for work
17. Resentfulness
18. Social withdrawal from friends and/or family
19. Uptake of escapist activities

Burnout

Entering Stage 4 of burnout is where symptoms become critical. When burnout is talked about more generally, this is the stage that is often referred to. Continuing as normal is often not possible, and it's key that you seek intervention. Calmer makes available (<https://thisiscalmer.com/our-partners>) for more serious clinical issues.

Common symptoms include:

1. Behavioral changes
2. Chronic headaches
3. Chronic stomach or bowel problems
4. Complete neglect of personal needs
5. An increase in escapist activities
6. Desire to “drop out” of society
7. Desire to move away from work or friends/family
8. Development of an escapist mentality
9. Feeling empty inside
10. Obsession over problems at work or in life
11. Physical symptoms intensify and/or increase
12. Self-doubt
13. Social isolation

Habitual Burnout

The final stage of burnout is habitual burnout. This means that the symptoms of burnout are so embedded in our life that you are likely to experience a significant physical or emotional problem, as opposed to occasionally experiencing stress or burnout.

Common symptoms include:

1. Burnout syndrome
2. Chronic mental fatigue
3. Chronic physical fatigue
4. Chronic sadness
5. Depression

Your friends at Harbor Light are committed to helping you stay healthy -- physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I love it when during the few times I've had to call off due to sickness, Cleveland's Personal Care Manager (PCM), Kathi Michaels, texts me back: "Take Care of YOU!" Hence, the name of this manual!

So, how do we prevent burnout from affecting us? While burnout can cause issues at work, at home, and in life, it is always possible to take action and move back toward Stage 1. Calmer suggests that even if you're not experiencing stress or burnout now, the wisest course of action is to proactively take up self-care and build your mental resilience.

Following is a generalized Burnout Self-Test. This tool is designed to help you check yourself for burnout. It helps you look at the way you feel about your job and your

experience at work, so that you can get a feel for whether you are at risk of burnout. Additional tests must be purchased from this website: www.mindtools.com.

Remember, burnout occurs when passionate, committed people become deeply disillusioned with a job or career from which they have previously derived much of their identity and meaning. It comes as the things that inspire passion and enthusiasm are stripped away, and tedious or unpleasant things crowd in.

Understand something. When it comes to stress and the potential to experience burnout, everyone is different or unique. None of us respond the same, in certain environments, or when given responsibilities or workloads. However, it is safe to say that prolonged stress is unhealthy and might possibly lead to one of three classifications of burnout. So, for purposes of this discussion, we move from a more detailed view of burnout to three generalizations that provide subtle warnings:

1. **Frenetic Burnout:** When the amount of expended energy becomes negatively disproportionate to the effort invested. Burnout occurs when a person works at an intensity to the point of burnout.
2. **Underchallenged Burnout:** Occurs when a person feels trapped in a monotonous and unstimulating work environment, performing a role which does not provide job satisfaction.
3. **Worn-out Burnout:** Occurs when people give up after experiencing a period in which their work environment is consistently a source of intense stress or which yields negative rewards.

If you suspect, at any level, that you might be experiencing burnout, please contact your Patient Care Manager (PCM) and sit down for a private, confidential discussion. To Harbor Light Hospice, you are much more than an employee; you are a valued member of the team. Your personal welfare is our utmost concern.

Burnout Self-Test

Instructions: For each question, place the corresponding number in the column that most applies.

Questions	Not At All (1)	Rarely (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Very Often (5)
I feel run down and drained of physical or emotional energy.					
I have negative thoughts about my job.					
I am harder and less sympathetic with people than perhaps they deserve.					
I am easily irritated by small problems, or by my co-workers.					
I feel that I have no one to talk to.					
I feel that I am achieving less than I should.					
I feel under an unpleasant level of pressure to succeed.					
I feel that I am not getting what I want out of my job.					
I feel that organizational politics or bureaucracy frustrate my ability to do a good job.					
I feel that there is more work to do than I practically have the ability to do.					
I feel that I do not have time to do many of the things that are important to doing a good quality job.					
I find that I do not have time to plan as much as I want to.					
TOTAL					

Score interpretations (No matter your score, pay attention to areas you ranked a 5)

15-18: No sign of burnout

19-32: Little sign of burnout

33-49: At risk of burnout

50-59: Severe risk of burnout

60-75 : Very severe risk of burnout

CULTIVATE A SENSE OF HUMOR

We all understand that hospice work should be taken seriously. We get that. Working with patients, their caregivers, their families, and even our team members constitutes a solemn industry. We are called to walk in and maintain proper protocol and dignity. Sensitivity to the matters at hand make us exceptional workers.

However, funny things do happen while we engage the dying. We all have our funny hospice stories. I submit three for your enjoyment:

1. Often, less severe Alzheimer patients ask me, "What happened to your hair?" My usual response is, "Your hair turned white, mine turned loose." One gentleman gave me a puzzled look and then said, "I have more hair on my a** than you do your head."
2. Or, what about the time I was singing Christmas carols to a lady who had not spoken in several weeks. I dutifully sat beside her bed, offering my favorite Yuletide selections when out of her silence came, "For the love of God, somebody make him stop!"
3. I visited a home patient, who had a reputation for being "difficult." During his Initial Spiritual Assessment, I of course asked him about his preferred faith tradition. He replied, "I'm an atheist." I responded back, "That's ok, I just want to be your friend." Again, he insisted, "Didn't you hear me? I'm an atheist." I then assured him that my purpose there was not to force religion upon him. For the third time, he loudly said, "I'm an atheist!" After a few uncomfortable moments of silence, he said, "I swear to God!" He later admitted that he was a "Warmed over Baptist."

Yes, funny things do happen in hospice work. You too have funny stories. The Scriptures remind us that "laughter is a good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). Laughter is therapeutic. We are told that laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cell and infection-fighting antibodies. Laughter further triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemical. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

Everyone needs to laugh. Our Harbor Light Executive Director, Amy Schwab, is “Exhibit A” when it comes to laughter and providing life-giving leadership! Laughing redirects our emotional pain and reminds us that life has its highs and lows and that occasional visits to the “mountain” balance our “valley” experiences, thus keeping us in a healthy check.

I appreciate when our chaplains are called upon to share “funnies” during morning Stand-Ups. Are their jokes sometimes corny? Do they at times smack of being ridiculous? Sure! But for a brief moment in time the day becomes suspended and we are carried into a much appreciated, light time of laughter, making us forget our upcoming day’s challenges. All of us snickered when Chaplain Jill Smith recently shared the following anonymous lyrics during a Cleveland Stand-Up. They are based off the hit song, “Fifty Ways to Lose Your Lover” from yesteryear, as they pertain to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic:

*“Don’t hop on the bus, Gus,
Stay away from the pack, Jack,
Sneeze into your sleeve, Steve,
And keep virus-free!*

*Stop touching your face, Grace,
Stay back to six feet, Pete,
Keep washing your hands, Stan,
And heed CDC.*

Don’t visit your Gran, Jan,

*Wipe down every toy, Roy,
Don't hoard all the food, dude,
Please buy sensibly.*

*Just use some Purell, Mel,
Keep wipes near at hand, man,
Don't listen to John, Don,
You don't need more TP!*

This isn't Spring Break, Jake,
Stay home if you're sick, Dick,
Just follow the rules, fools,
And stay virus free!"

Light moments offered during a very difficult time for all of us provided stress relief! Life becomes unbearable when our "laugh" is stolen. Allow the following quotes to remind you:

"A good laugh heals a lot of hurts." -- Madeleine L'Engle

"A smile is a curve that sets everything straight." – Phyllis Diller

"Always laugh when you can. It's cheap medicine." – Lord Byron

“A smile starts on the lips, a grin spreads to the eyes, a chuckle comes from the belly, but a good laugh bursts forth from the soul, overflows, and bubbles all around.” – Carolyn Birmingham

“If laughter cannot solve your problems, it will definitely DISSOLVE your problems so that you can think clearly what to do about them.” – Dr. Madan Kataria

“If you don’t learn to laugh at trouble, you won’t have anything to laugh at when you’re old.” – Edgar Watson Howe

“Laughter is God’s hand in a troubled world.” –Bettenell Hunticker

“To truly laugh, you must be able to take your pain and play with it.” – Charlie Chaplin

“When you laugh, you get a glimpse of God.” – Merrily Belgum

Good self-care mandates our on-going ability to laugh at ourselves when the occasion calls for it, and to laugh appropriately with others. Laughter always allows us to stay focused on the brighter side of life even when temporarily suspended by dark times.

ANGER MANAGEMENT

What does anger management have to do with self-care? Pro-longed, unresolved issues can lead to poor work performance, team conflict, unnecessary stress, and at worst, a career cut short. Good social skills are absolutely essential for those in people-helping professions. Harbor Light Hospice is no different.

Unfortunately, some bring their private, hard-pressing issues to work with them. Individuals who have not successfully learned to manage frustration or hurts from their past often recycle their emotional and mental pain when they assume new employment. All the professional training in the world remains ineffective when individuals negate good team building skills.

Solid professional training -- regardless of the discipline --coupled with poor people skills constitutes a disaster! I once knew a wonderful preacher who exhibited poor people skills. His unresolved anger disqualified him from effective ministry. Hospice workers too can have the necessary professional skills but severely lack the mandatory people skills to succeed. Good self-care requires that we continually keep our emotional and mental states in check.

We all have marveled at the sad reality that accompanies toxic personalities who refuse to practice normal standards of acceptable behavior. Some allow the residual emotional carry over from their past to pollute their present opportunities.

Sadly, employment can be cut short when individuals refuse instruction and redirection. Good self-care includes effective anger management.

How do you deal with anger? Try not to suppress it. Allow me to illustrate why. Picture a small trash container. Watch it slowly fill up. From time to time, it gets pressed down, but no one takes the initiative to empty its contents. Over time additional trash is added, until finally the container overflows and creates a mess. It simply cannot hold any more debris.

That's exactly what happens when we refuse to deal with anger. We press it down, sometimes for years, when finally, our lives become messy and solutions become difficult, if not impossible. Tempers allowed to rage out of control usually culminate in failed relationships and lost opportunities.

Neither time nor training allow me to wax eloquent on anger management, but one thing I do know is that suppressed anger often leads to depression. Do you struggle with depression at some level? You might seek partial help by asking yourself, "What anger issues, if any, have I allowed to fester in my life?"

Because there is no perfect work environment, we are called upon to wisely manage our emotions and specifically our anger. People and situations can get on our nerves -- by permission. We are called to manage our emotions, making sure they serve us with distinction, not master us with embarrassment. We need to think twice before we speak once. The math could save us from building walls instead of bridges with those around us.

Counting to ten during volatile emotional times is a poor substitute for good self-control. When situations and people make you angry, the best thing to do is get away, debrief, and re-group. Let off your steam in a constructive, healthy way. Don't allow a momentary lapse in judgment to sabotage your effectiveness and chances for a successful career.

MAINTAIN HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Proper life boundaries are definitely necessary for good self-care. Often, we see “No Trespassing” signs on abandoned buildings. We see the same signs posted on fence posts out in the country. To trespass is to cross over into unsafe areas. Good self-care requires that we heed these warnings.

Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend wrote a best-seller in 1992, simply entitled, *Boundaries*. Their book is built on a simple principle: Maintaining clear boundaries is essential to a healthy, balanced lifestyle.

The authors define “boundaries” as personal property lines that mark those things for which we are responsible. In other words, boundaries define who we are and who we are not. Boundaries impact all areas of our lives:

Physical Boundaries help us determine who may touch us and under what circumstances.

Mental Boundaries give us the freedom to have our own thoughts and opinions.

Emotional Boundaries help us deal with our own emotions and disengage from the harmful, manipulative emotions of others.

Spiritual Boundaries are determined by the faith tradition we choose to embrace and the teachings of that particular denomination, church, or spiritual resourcing entity.

Boundaries, when rightly understood, are not restrictive, they are life-giving. We all need to live and function within healthy boundaries that both protect us and others, and keep us happy. Your answers to the following questions may determine how you view boundaries and what changes you may need to make in the event you presently live outside of healthy norms:

1. Can I set limits and still be a loving person?
2. What are legitimate boundaries?
3. What if someone is upset or hurt by my boundaries?
4. How do I answer someone who wants my time, love or energy?
5. Aren't boundaries selfish?
6. Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider setting boundaries?

The treatment of boundaries could fill volumes. Ask Drs. Cloud and Townsend! However, for our purposes regarding self-care, we will discuss boundaries as they pertain to good employment experiences. What are some of the boundary issues that hospice workers may confront?

Patience

Always practice patience with your patients! Not everyone is easy to deal with. Thankfully, most of our patients are at least kind and somewhat loving and most are willing to cooperate with whatever your discipline involves. However, we all deal with less than desirable individuals who make our work challenging. At times we perhaps deal with anger, open hostility and unrepeatable comments. We've all been asked to leave. And we all have been treated harshly and unreasonably. During these times, proper boundaries are extremely important.

- The late Kenny Rogers said it best, "Know when to hold and when to fold." Plan a wise exit strategy!
- Do not take unkind treatment personally. You could be dealing with a disease trajectory, or let's face it, you might even be dealing with God-awful, hateful people, who were born that way and suffered a relapse! Thank God, most of our patients

are kind, decent people. During these times, be sure to set boundaries that protect both you and the patient.

Emotions

We may be trained, skilled professionals, but we're still human beings. We come equipped with emotions that sometimes get the best of us. During the course of our days, we experience a myriad of emotions that can push healthy limits. None of us are exempt from the emotions that come with patient care and particularly those who are actively dying. Let's admit it, we become emotionally attached to our patients -- especially those who were easy to love and with whom we could comfortably relate.

During these times, proper boundaries are essential. We cannot allow our emotions to override good patient care and professional wisdom. A delicate balance exists between loving our patients and caring for them. It has been said by many, "The moment I quit caring about people is the moment I quit!" And this is true!

However, when our emotions run amuck and we find ourselves unable to cope, it's time to reassess proper boundaries. We cannot allow our work to hurt us, but neither can we become granite-faced in the midst of difficult patient care. Yes, let your emotions define you. Let them find expression. But make sure your emotions don't ride piggy-back on the emotional tone at work in the room. We are pacesetters. Our patients and their families depend and lean on the inner support we bring to each heart-wrenching occasion.

"People don't care about how much we know, until they know how much we care?" A cliché? Perhaps. But so true. Healthy emotional boundaries on the part of hospice team members assures a healthy outcome to transitional care. Who are we kidding? Love comes in many sizes, colors, languages, cultural norms, shapes and scenarios and we who

help set the atmosphere can use our emotions to bring comfort and strength to dying patients and their families.

Toxic People

All of us meet toxic people. By definition, a toxic person is one who when you encounter or hang out with them, make you feel exhausted, emotionally drained, and negative. Dr. Nancy Irwin describes a toxic person as anyone who is abusive, unsupportive, or unhealthy emotionally, someone who basically brings you down more than up. At the risk of sounding harsh or uncaring, please understand that because toxic people refuse to submit to healthy self-care boundaries, we must then establish necessary boundaries for them. This is true of patients, caregivers, their families and our co-workers.

Author Roanna Day draws from RedditUsers.com, and offers seven signs that point toward personal toxicity. We might do well to recognize these signs and respond accordingly.

1. You're left feeling emotionally exhausted after an encounter with them
2. They try to intimidate you to get their way
3. They try to control you by guilt-tripping
4. They are easily jealous
5. They give backhanded compliments
6. They constantly see themselves as the victim
7. They overshare

Most of these signs are self-explanatory, but let's talk specifically about number 7. We all encounter folks who love to talk, and love to self-disclose. After only a few moments we leave knowing almost everything about them including their shoe size! These individuals perhaps suffer from attention deficit. Wisdom says, "Beware!" A boundary issue is at stake.

Working with people brings a unique set of challenges. Learning to place proper boundaries on conversations and people in general, maintains a healthy balance when dealing with the varied and unique people issues we encounter.

Self-Disclosure

We all meet people who lack in social grace and who live outside the conventional walls of proper etiquette. One aspect of self-care is found in the way we interact with others, making sure that what we reveal about ourselves remains appropriate. Always remember, we are there for our patients, not vice versa. Private issues need not be discussed with our patients or their families. Courteous conversation is one thing, but a complete personal disclosure should be avoided. From time to time, those we serve attempt to cross inappropriate boundaries. Questions about private matters should be overlooked and the conversation redirected. In my experience, politics, religion, sexual discussions, and financial matters are topics that should remain in the “Not Open for Discussion” category. Hospice workers do well to keep the air light and the conversation moving forward in a discreet manner. These are what we call, “healthy boundaries.”

Touchy-Feely

We live in a culture that promotes tactile expressions. We shake hands, high-five, pat people on the back, hold hands, hug, kiss, wink and offer other expressions of affection. When in the midst of a pandemic, elbow taps and fist bumps are deemed necessary! And each expression stands alone, depending on how and to whom we touch. In other words, married men probably would do well not to rub another woman’s back. Just saying! As you know, several of these tactile expressions are reserved for more intimate relationships.

Good boundaries determine when and how we respond to individuals in the “touchy-feely” department. Professionals always adhere to wholesome boundaries and proper etiquette when dealing with people. Mutual respect is always the key, so touch with discretion!

SELF-CARE THROUGH LOYALTY

How does loyalty tie in with self-care? I still get tickled when I hear team members use the phrase, “C.Y.A.” You know, “Cover You’re a**” We also make sure we “cover all our bases,” dot all our “I’s” and cross our “T’s.” Did you enjoy this cliché festival? These clichés remind us to excel in our given discipline. And they preclude the notion that we not only strive toward personal excellence, but we also look out for the interests of others. We are loyal to one another! Countless times I’ve had team members say to me, “You may not want to do that.” They saved my bacon!

Part of an excellent spirit is being loyal to and with those whom we work alongside. Self-care demands that we “treat others as we wish to be treated.” Loyalty is a wonderful virtue in any life and any profession. As hospice professionals, we rub elbows with our co-workers on a regular basis. And as fellow humans we share in each other’s joys and difficult moments. All of us experience bad days from time to time and none of us is exempt from the fickleness of emotions run amuck. In short, we all do and say things about others we shouldn’t. Right?

It’s a wonderful thing to run into co-workers, look them in the eye and bring greetings. And what a terrible thing it is to meet a co-worker, with no eye contact given, knowing they were recently the subject of a derogatory conversation held elsewhere. One of the joys of loyalty is knowing that upon encountering another party that all is well. And to be sure, disloyalty is a harsh taskmaster.

You and I carry influence. Influence used righteously builds. The other destroys. Influence is defined as “our ability to sway others, positively or negatively.” We have the power to build others up or tear them down. An individual who falls out with someone, can use his/her negative influence to turn the affections of still others. That’s the power of influence! Our co-workers deserve our healthy, life-giving influence. Unkind words, accusations, or derogatory remarks make good soap opera fodder, but can ruin the solidarity of good teamwork.

It makes me feel good when I run into a fellow hospice team member and know in my heart that any words spoken about them to others have been unto edification. It's just easier to love folks than secretly despise them. Hate is hard work! It also carries the burden of guilt. I love it when team members gather around the table during meetings, look each other in the eyes and honestly and respectfully dialogue. Hospice work is difficult on a good day, without any of us having to bear the burden of disloyalty toward our leaders or co-workers. Agreed?

Do we need a listening ear from time to time? Do we ever need to vent? Of course! But wisdom says, "Use wisdom!" When you vent, do it constructively, in private and without malice. Years ago, a pastor cautioned me, "And for the love of God, make sure that who you vent to is trustworthy and loves you as much as you do!"

The fact is, we can disagree without becoming disagreeable. Those outside our circles do not need to hear our disgruntled comments. Professionalism demands that we act accordingly, never using outside venues to implode upon others. Almost every day of my work life, I see these words posted, usually in elevators: "Please refrain from publicly discussing patient medical issues." This breach of trust constitutes a HIPAA violation (*Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act*). And when we speak derogatorily about those on our team in public venues, we breach trust as well.

Has someone made you mad? Is there someone on the team you simply cannot tolerate? Then find a trusted friend, go to a private place, close the door, vent and move on! The offering of mutual loyalty reveals our true character and reminds us that disloyalty hurts everyone. Remember, you don't have to have supper with people you may not like, but remaining loyal helps keep the whole team in a place of health. Yes, self-care includes being loyal! Saying nothing when you want to implode on or about someone is the safest way!

Research shows that loyalty in relationships, i.e., marriage, family, co-workers, etc. is tied to a greater sense of life satisfaction, happiness and a host of practical benefits such as

things shared in common. Conventional wisdom relentlessly reminds us that the key to success in any workplace is loyalty. As a matter of fact, it is so vital that an entire industry exists that produces loyalty marketing -- books, Webinars, and consulting firms that offer help.

Someone aptly said, "You find out who your true friends are after you leave the room!" Like you, I may not like everyone I meet, but loyalty proves to our co-workers that we are dependable and more concerned about company performance and reputation than we are about making an impression on weak minds who feed on drama.

Following are 9 personality traits that can predict if someone will be loyal over the long haul:

1. They have a positive outlook on life
2. They have a desire to commit to the overall welfare of others.
3. They aren't afraid of routine.
4. They embrace uncertainty.
5. They are empathetic toward others.
6. They have a strong sense of self-worth.
7. They're able to recover quickly from disappointments.
8. They're reliable.
9. They're good communicators.

Now it's time for a self-care test: Take a few moments to think about each preceding trait. Are you a loyal person, or are you susceptible to maligning others for less than good reasons? Be determined to remain truthful as you consider each attribute.

EAT HEALTHY

Hospice workers daily pound the pavement. We drive a lot! Our travels take us to private homes, nursing facilities, assisted living facilities, hospitals, and all over creation. We spend a lot of time in our mobile office. And most of us have one-half hour to locate, order and eat our lunches. Many times, we rely on fast food. It's there, it's easy and it's quick! And relatively inexpensive when we order the "specials."

Recently, I took it upon myself after personally experiencing a substantial weight gain to research the calories I was consuming during my almost daily drive-thru excursions. Without naming any particular chain, let me reveal my findings:

A sandwich, medium fries and soft drink ranged anywhere from 1,078 to 1,192 calories. Throw in a pie or cookie and add another 139 to 240 calories. The noon meal in total can average between 1,217 to 1,422 calories! IMPORTANT NOTE: This does not include breakfast or dinner contributions.

Dieticians tell us the average man needs approximately 2,500 calories a day to maintain his weight, and 2,000 if he wants to lose weight. The average woman needs 2,000 calories per day to maintain; and 1,500 to lose weight. Actually, these calorie amounts are higher than what doctors say. Their suggestions range from 1,800 to 2,000 for men; and 1,500 to 1,800 for women.

So, without casting aspersions on individual fast food restaurants, let me suggest that regular trips to any restaurant over the long haul not only increases the potential for weight gain, but also minimize our availability for healthy food intake. Foods that produce energy are preferred over those that make us lethargic and gain weight.

Let me recommend the following foods that are known to boost energy and maintain a good mood:

- Green tea
- Red bell peppers
- Walnuts
- Kefir (probiotic yogurt)
- Okra
- Flaxseed
- Cereal (whole grain)
- Edamame (soybean products)
- Bananas
- Dark chocolate (antioxidant)
- Almond butter
- Almonds
- Avocados
- Salmon
- Cottage cheese
- Roasted chickpeas
- Spinach
- Sweet potato fries
- Raspberries
- Pistachios
- Oatmeal (Vitamin B)
- Coffee (1-2 cups per day)
- Asparagus
- Red wine
- Salsa
- Figs
- Eggs (Vitamin B-12)
- Watermelon
- Oranges (electrolytes)
- Pulses (legume seeds)

A further suggestion: You may want to pack your lunch before you go to bed. Early morning alarms, or last-minute alarms, may not allow you time to pack a healthy lunch.

GET ADEQUATE SLEEP

Someone said, “You can buy sleep, but you cannot buy rest.” So true. Pharmacy shelves are lined with sleep aides -- Vicks ZzzQuil, Simply Sleep, Nytol, Sominex, Melatonin, and many more. However, I challenge you to look for and find “Rest” on those same shelves. Rest, of course, follows good sleep, but remember too that rest is a state of mind, a product of the soul at ease. Putting physiological issues aside, have you ever awakened not feeling rested? We all have at one time or another.

Part of self-care is experiencing consistently good sleep. Let’s face it, we can’t do optimal work unless we feel rested. Take a look around you throughout your day and notice the many “yawn-ers.” You’ll be surprised! According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM), approximately 1 in 3 American adults are not getting enough sleep. To be healthy, we need to sleep one-third of our life away! That means 8 hours per day.

While sleep requirements vary slightly from person to person, most healthy adults need between 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night to function at their best. Please continue reading after you finish laughing! Children and teens need even more. And despite the notion that our sleep needs decrease with age, most older people still need at least 7 hours of sleep.

It is probably safe to say that many in the people-helping business often do not get enough sleep. Admit it! As part of your future self-care regiment, why not make it a goal to regularly get your needed amount of sleep? Here’s what happens if you don’t get enough Zzzzzzz:

- You get sick.
- Your heart suffers
- Your cancer risk increases

- You can't think
- You forget stuff
- Your libido diminishes
- You gain weight
- Your risk of diabetes increases
- You become accident prone
- Your skin suffers

Most of us have watched our fellow team members nod off during IDG or while watching in-service videos. Have you ever watched a patient sleep, wishing that was you? Come on, be honest! But don't tell anyone! We may blame our sleepiness on the warm room, but most likely one of three late night TV hosts kept us up too long! Adequate sleep is essential to maintaining good self-care. And if you're not feeling rested in the morning, find out why. As you know, time drags when our bodies cry out for rest. We need all the energy we can get to perform maximum patient care.

LEARN TO RELAX

We are people who care. We care about our patients and their families, our facilities, our co-workers, Harbor Light Hospice, our Patient Care Manager's (PCM's), our...you name it. We are in the people-caring business. But if we're not careful, we can care too much in the wrong way, unlike Scarlett in the infamous movie, "Gone with the Wind."

Her closing line is dedicated to all who approach life haphazardly: "After all, tomorrow is another day. Tara! I'll go home, and I'll think about some way to get him (Rhett) back. After all, tomorrow is another day!" Scarlett's concern was heart-stopping, wasn't it? It went as far as her personal convenience! Would that Scarlett had a more concerted love for Rhett. Her compassion and zeal for her marriage stopped short of her misdirected self-love.

Conversely, we in the people-helping business can allow our shortcomings to affect our ability to relax and enjoy the job. In truth, some, not all of us, tend to be too hard on ourselves and miss out on the joys of what we accomplish. Still, there are others who, like Scarlett, need to mend their haphazard attitudes!

What do YOU do to relax? Self-care requires that we not take our work home with us. Sometimes that's easier said than done. Right? We who love what we do find it difficult at times to de-brief. But, to remain healthy and balanced we need to understand the necessity of separating our professional life from our personal life.

In this section, we're going to emphasize the following points, borrowed from "7 Signs You're Too Hard on Yourself," by Dr. Alice Boyes.

Don't take yourself too seriously.

When we beat ourselves up over mistakes that carry minimal consequences, we need to give ourselves a threshold for mistakes, or to cut ourselves some slack. Petty mistakes come with getting up in the morning. In the Bible, Daniel 6:3 says, "Then this Daniel became distinguished above the other high officials, because an excellent spirit was in him." For certain, all of us want to develop Daniel's spirit of excellence, but none of us is perfect; and when we make honest, simple mistakes, we need to let ourselves off the hook. This is not a ploy to overlook faults, but rather to keep our humanity in check.

Patient Care Manager, Pat Cline, personifies this truth. He is dearly loved and known for his wisdom and gentle way of correcting wayward decisions, while at the same time instilling within individuals the desire to do better. He possesses the ability to allow employees to self-talk their way to better decisions, while he wisely guides them.

Don't take yourself too seriously. We all know and love creative people, ones who love to excel, and people who take what they do seriously. We commend them. We honor them. And perhaps in the secret places of our heart, we look for ways to duplicate their performances. All self-respecting people want to do their best. In short, they want to succeed at what they do. This is most commendable. However, the flipside of that coin is important, as well. We need to quit taking ourselves too seriously and enjoy our frail humanity when it manifests!

Don't keep criticizing yourself after having corrected a mistake.

One day I called a team member the wrong name. It seemed to unnerve her. Upon realizing my mistake, I immediately set out to apologize. I'm sometimes bad with names. Then, on and off all day I kept telling myself how rude and disrespectful it is to get someone's name wrong. While this may be true, I did what I could to rectify the situation, so my self-criticism probably should have stopped there. Enough already! Relax!

Pay close attention to when you continuously bump health and fitness-related self-care for lesser important things.

Perhaps you keep a daily “To-Do” list. Are you married to it, or do you allow yourself room to complete more important items when they present themselves? Once you complete X, Y and Z, do you consider your own needs? Do you say, “I’ll put off going to the chiropractor for other higher stake areas of life? Again, “take care of YOU!”

When someone treats you poorly, do you automatically take the blame?

When something goes wrong interpersonally, do you always see it as your fault? If a teammate doesn’t follow through, was it your fault for not reminding them? It’s one thing to “have someone’s back.” It’s an entirely different thing to accept responsibility for work undone.

If someone does not communicate clearly with you, it must be because you’re unapproachable, or you don’t make it easy enough for them to communicate. Naturally, there’s a right way and a wrong way to confront these times, but your self-care requires proper responses.

Do you always go the extra mile?

This is certainly admirable; however, you may deplete yourself. We sometimes get so busy being perfect in relatively unimportant areas that we leave important things unattended.

Do you feel like a failure even though you mostly have “things pulled together?”

Often, people who are self-critical look at their life and see only the areas in which they are not perfect. They overlook all the good things they’ve accomplished. Take measures now to reduce your self-criticism. History records only one perfect man, and we didn’t get the job!

Do you see other people's dumb mistakes as understandable, but not your own?

The other day I placed my coffee cup upside -down on the Keurig and then took a shower. Afterwards, I cleaned up spilled coffee all over my kitchen floor. I almost said, "What an idiot!" Instead, I decided to laugh at myself. The next time you do something dumb, loosen the noose around your neck and laugh out loud!

Go easy on yourself. Quit expecting --demanding -- perfection. Yes, strive toward excellence, but give yourself a break when you meet with personal shortcomings. This will allow you to make better decisions and waste less time and emotional energy, which in turn will make you more productive.

MIND YOUR MIND

Have you ever been around negative people? You know, people like “David and Debbie Downer!” Their glass remains half-empty. They live to whine. Nothing’s ever good enough. And they spend their time looking for the worst in others. They are the ultimate critics, who when others see them coming on the sidewalk, quickly cross the street! And of course, “birds of a feather flock together!” Their best friends are “Negative Nellie” and “Gloomy Gus.” For certain, we all know people like that!

Norman Vincent Peale was an American minister and author known for his work in popularizing the concept of positive thinking, especially through his best-selling book, *The Power of Positive Thinking*. His life’s work was based on the premise: “Change your thoughts and you change your world.” He is hailed as the “father of positive thinking” who through his writing and speaking shared his famous formulas of faith and optimism.

Many today still accept as truth Dr. Peale’s simple and effective philosophies about positive living. Neither time nor space allows us to dissect Dr. Peale’s premises; however, we all agree that negative people make life more difficult to navigate. In hospice work, we need people around us that adhere to the “glass half-full” outlook during end of life care. Good self-care mandates that we live on the brighter side of life, for God knows, we see and hear enough of the other.

It goes without saying that our actions follow where our mind goes. “Walk over there.” “Pick up that book.” “Plug in the cell phone.” Pretty simple, huh? Our mind-brain mechanism is a wonderful tool that when faced with difficult, heart-rending tasks, allows us to keep a positive perspective. As you know, perspective is defined “as the way we look at things, our approach to life.” And generally speaking, outlook really does determine outcome! We are given the choice to view situations as negative or positive. It seems to me that good self-care necessitates a good, positive outlook on life in general.

Several years ago, Chuck Swindoll, popular radio minister said,

“Sow a thought and you reap an action;
Sow an act and you reap a habit;
Sow a habit and you reap a character;
Sow a character and you reap a destiny.”

The progression from our thoughts to our destiny is sobering, isn't it?

I love the many positive nurses we have at Harbor Light. I've seen them work under terrible pressure at patient's bedsides or with heart-broken families; and I've watched as positive attitudes persistently calm the storms of grief and uncertainty. Wholesome attitudes keep the environment in check and family members are stabilized during the worst moments of their lives. I'm not talking about laughter; I'm referring to positivity that lightens dark moments.

As previously stated in the section, “Cultivate a Sense of Humor,” hospice work is serious business. The dying process necessitates that we take our work seriously and operate in dignity. However, there's a big difference between “serious” and “negative.” I believe that positivity in the workplace is one factor that takes the terminally ill to their successful conclusion. No one likes to be around negative influences in a job that's already emotionally taxing.

Let me explain.

Our friends at the Mayo Clinic tell us that positivity reduces stress by eliminating negative self-talk. Studies reveal that negative in-put/out-put make life more difficult during already difficult times.

Positive thinking doesn't imply that you keep your head in the sand and ignore life's less pleasant situations. It means that you approach unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. Positive thinking often begins with self-talk.

Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your mind. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some are born out of logic and reason; other self-talk arises from misconceptions that you create because of a lack of information or even wrong information. You nurses know what I'm talking about! How many times have you had to re-educate caregivers and other family members because of faulty information? I've watched as environments filled with negative predispositions turned into celebratory hugs and laughter-through tears!

If the thoughts that run through your mind are mostly negative, your outlook on life is more likely pessimistic. If they're mostly positive, you're likely an optimist -- someone who practices positive thinking. Hospice workers, of all people, need to be some of the most positive people on the planet. Why? Among other valid reasons, positivity enables better coping skills during hardships and moments of stress. Perhaps you've heard it said, "that it takes more muscles to frown (negativity) than it does to smile (positivity)." Why spend your life over-working?

Untold volumes have been written about the power of the mind, and the choices we make to live either negative or positive existences during our time on earth. What happens "to us" is many times the product of what first happens "in us." Determine as part of your on-going self-care, to live in a positive vein that keeps you healthy and others around you happy! In other words, mind your mind!

BALANCED LIVING

What does it mean to live a balanced life? Perhaps all of us struggle to maintain healthy “checks and balances.” It’s easy to allow certain areas of life to get out of control, while simultaneously being “on top” in other areas! Have you ever noticed that when we excel in a given area, it doesn’t take long to realize that another area need attention? Balanced self-care remains an on-going challenge! Author-Pastor Chuck Swindoll wrote in his book, *Growing Stronger in the Seasons of Life*, “One of the hardest things about life is that it’s so daily!”

Life is like an over the road journey, and good self-care mandates that we “stay between the ditches!” Those who drive understand the many distractions and interruptions that potentially befall travelers. We have to remain alert to avoid accidents. So many things vie for our attention. Many, perhaps most, are legitimate, but they still have a way of unequally dividing, or stealing our time.

I can’t help but remember how the Gospel writer describes the boyhood of Jesus: “And He continued to increase (grow) in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). In other words, He grew academically, physically, spiritually and socially. I suggest He lived a balanced life! And likewise, all of us need to keep these four areas in check, don’t we?

1. We need to consistently study to glean the most up-to-date information specific to our discipline and stay up on the latest techniques and methods. Harbor Light continually makes available Continuing Educations Units ((CEU) or encourages employees to seek outside opportunities to better themselves.
2. Walk-A-Thons and Running Marathons are occasionally announced for whoever wishes to participate. And our Patient Care Managers (PCM’s) constantly encourage team members to “take care of themselves.”

3. Spiritual development of course, is emphasized at Harbor Light, and caring, trained chaplains stay committed to coming alongside the faith traditions of patients and team members to offer spiritual support.
4. Good social development is mandatory for those in the people-helping professions. Hospice work is no different. As stated elsewhere, highly qualified and trained professionals may at times disqualify themselves from effective work if they lack in the social graces. All of us have worked alongside team members who because of “broken areas” in their life, found it difficult to get along with their fellow employees, outside professionals or even their patients! This often leads to disastrous outcomes.

Following are areas of involvement that all of us need to daily monitor. Balance is the key, making sure we maintain healthy self-care:

Family life

Whether single, married, divorced, separated or whatever our individual status, the significant people in our lives await our safe return at day’s end. They are the most important people in our lives. They deserve a “whole” us, not a fragmented mess that cannot separate home from work. Do you leave your work at work?

Perhaps you struggle with professional separation versus familial life. Our families need our undivided attention. Self-care requires that we both physically and emotionally detach ourselves when we “hit the driveway.”

Keep Moving

What people say about exercise and endorphins is true. Staying active increases feelings of happiness and a strong sense of accomplishment. This doesn’t necessarily mean a

gym membership but finding the form of physical activity that works for you: dancing, hiking, walking, bike riding, yard work, or whatever.

Gift Your Inner Child

Someone suggested that a grown-up is simply “a child in an adult body.” Do you ever find yourself reflecting back on certain childhood memories? We all do! Especially those times when life was easy and unencumbered. When responsibilities were minimal. And before bills! We tend to suppress negative memories and highlight those times in our formative years that bring us pleasure.

What were some of your favorite things to do when you were small? Did you love sidewalk chalk, picking wildflowers, eating marshmallows or riding high on a tire swing? Did you climb trees or jump from the hayloft? What about “Hide and Seek?” Lie in the grass scouring the sky? Or, the myriad of other games that kept you entertained for hours at a time? Ever catch and collect lightning bugs with holes punched in the jar lid?

Stay balanced, kid at heart! Now and then, treat your inner child to a little present and allow the warm feelings to wash over you!

Unplug

Of course, social media has its benefits and who among us wants to go back to landlines and answering machines? Cell phones are an incredible perk in today’s world. But does it really make you feel better to expose yourself to everyone’s online version of themselves? Take time daily to break away from social media and quit comparing “your wretched life” to all the wonderful success stories you see! That “guy in the mirror” may have issues, but he/she is always a work in progress, just like everyone else!

Many long for a return to what they refer to as “simpler times.” However, modern technology is here to stay. Like everything else in our lives, balance is the key. We at Harbor Light carry I-Phones in order to effectively do our job. And then, most of us have personal cell phones for after-hour communications. Again, this is fine. Welcome to 2020! However, many tend to forget that life is best lived out “in the moment.” They forget that eye contact, personal touch, and one-on-one verbal exchange still override the availability of texting, Messenger, Facebook, Instagram or whatever. John, the youngest disciple of Jesus wrote, “...What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands...” (1 John 1:1). Hearing, seeing and touching still remain the most powerful, effective forms of human interaction/communication.

What’s the point? Don’t exchange the convenient (contemporary technology) for vital, life-giving human interaction, thus losing out on some of life’s most meaningful moments. Good self-care mandates that we enjoy the “personal touch.” When you get home tonight, if at all possible, place your cell phone on the counter -- put it on vibrate -- and give the ones you love your undivided attention. Enjoy a relaxed meal around the table, look one another in the eyes AND TALK! Most calls can wait!

Those you cherish will never feel they have to compete with “another call” or a Facebook post. This is self-care and “others care” at their best!

Monitor Stress/Anxiety Levels

Many of us spend our lives “all stressed up with no place to go!” A certain amount of stress is perhaps healthy, and a normal part of life. For example, you have probably felt anxiety before speaking to a group or during a job interview.

We also experience anxiety during early wake up calls, or attempting to get to work on time, or visiting patients in a timely manner, or dealing with difficult family members. The

list continues. However, many tend to live in a continual state of stress, which over time produces anxiety.

What does anxiety look like, and how does it impact our lives? Dr. Kristeen Chemey wrote about the effects of anxiety on the body. She says, “Everyone has anxiety from time to time, but chronic anxiety can interfere with quality of life. While perhaps most recognized for behavioral changes, anxiety can also bring serious consequences on physical health.”

Here’s how: Long-term anxiety causes our brain to release stress hormones on a regular basis. They increase the frequency of symptoms such as headaches, dizziness and depression. Some even experience weight gain, when anxiety drives them to eat ravenous amounts of food. If it gets too intense, the outcomes may be lightheadedness and nausea.

Dr. Chemey then addresses what happens when an excessive or persistent state of anxiety is allowed to continue. The following body systems can be affected: Central Nervous System, Cardiovascular, Excretory and Digestive, Immune and Respiratory.

In more extreme and prolonged situations, the following severe conditions may develop: Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Social Anxiety Disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Phobias and Panic Disorders. Obviously, this chaplain is unqualified to speak in a more detailed manner to these issues, only to say that a balanced, healthy lifestyle, which mandates good self-care is recommended for all who work in the people-helping professions.

In layman’s terms, we need to learn how to “chill out.” While this manual touches upon generalized ways to move toward better self-care, all of us need to search out ways to redirect our stress and anxiety levels. We are surrounded by professionals who truly care for us. I have many daily texts and/or emails to prove it! If they don’t have ready answers, they surely know where to redirect us. Harbor Light Hospice employees, we wake up

every day to the wonderful realization that we work alongside people who see us, not only as employees, but as individuals whose personal health matters. Harbor Light Hospice is a company that first and foremost promotes effective self-care.

EPILOGUE

Any treatment on the topic of self-care lacks thoroughness because effectively taking care of ourselves is a never-ending pursuit. It's like looking for a flea on an elephant!

Take Care of You was born in Pat Cline's (PCM) office in Youngstown, Ohio, in March 2020, when the realization again hit him that one of the primary missing ingredients in hospice circles is the lack of self-care on the part of palliative and hospice workers. "Employee turnover is too high," he said.

The topics included in this manual obviously just scratch the surface. And to be sure, other works that address the multi-faceted topics related to self-care abound. However, if we can get our employees -- our team -- to take this often-neglected area to heart, we will have accomplished our objective: A substantial drop in mental and emotional casualties.

Yes, we want to excel as a hospice company. We want our good reputation to be "noised abroad," but we understand the only way to achieve long-term sustainability is to make sure that those who work at Harbor Light love -- and continue to love -- the daily challenges involving patient care. Where potential burnout is jealously guarded!!

We are a blessed group of people who do more than a job; we have a high and holy opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those facing their mortality. And remember, "We don't have to work in hospice care, we get to!"

Thank you, Harbor Light, for making this possible! We dedicate this self-help manual to all who pursue this noble calling.

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