

National Emergency Nurses Association



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| NENA-National Position Statement | Self-care of the ED Nurse |
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Issue:

Emergency department (ED) nurses are at risk for burnout due to recurrent high stress situations. The daily responsibilities of the ED nurse may include crisis management, observing and managing tremendous human suffering, pain management, and violent or hostile patients or family members. While trying to prioritize care they often miss opportunities for self-care, including taking mental and physical breaks (Salvarani, et al., 2019; Valdez, 2019). Research studies show the value for organizations and individuals to be educated about self-care. Being aware of one's own reaction pattern can be vital learning of effective coping techniques (Crane et al., 2016). A study conducted by Davidson et al. (2018) showed an increased rate of suicide amongst nurses was attributed to stress and lack of autonomy. Melnyk et al. (2018) found that more than half of 1700 nurses studied, reported substandard mental or physical health which correlated with increased errors in the workplace. Dorociak et al. (2017) describes self-care as any activity that we do deliberately to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Self-care is key to improved mood, reduced anxiety, greater job satisfaction and increased productivity in the workplace. It is also key to a good relationship with oneself and others. By having those positive strong relations it will help build foundations for nurses as a collective team.

NENA-National Position:

It is the position of the National Emergency Nurses Association that ED nurses employ strategies to prevent potential burn out including mindfulness and emotional regulation with effective coping mechanisms. NENA-AB feels that all employees be provided education on the importance of self-care. It is also our position that the employer should encourage self-care strategies for the employee and opportunity for support through counselling services.

Rationale:

The Oxford dictionary (2021) defines self-care as the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, during periods of stress. By virtue of the work environment for ED nurses, 25-30% of nurses meet the criteria for burnout (Valdez, 2019). Burnout in nursing has three dimensions which include depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and feeling less accomplished. Emotional exhaustion is based on lack of reserve due to being physically and emotionally drained. Depersonalization is related to negative attitudes, cynicism and judgment of patients and coworkers shown by making biased and/or negative statements and being insensitive about patient presentations. These characteristics are seen in nurses who are experiencing burnout and compassion fatigue (Valdez, 2019; Blomberg et al., 2016 and Gomez et al., 2017). According to the American Psychological Association (2015) self-care can be described as a conscious act one takes to promote one's own physical, emotional, and mental health. Examples of this include getting enough sleep every night or sitting or walking outside for a few minutes for some fresh air. It may include meditation or yoga or

regular therapy sessions. Self-care has been also been defined as, "a multidimensional, multifaceted process of purposeful engagement in strategies that promote healthy functioning and enhance well-being." Dorociak et al., (2017). One needs to assess which areas of their life that need attention and self-care; reassess often; as this is vital for building resilience toward stressors in life. Taking these steps to care for your mind equips nurses to be the best they can be, by building resiliency amongst teams which promotes a safe environment for all.

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