

THE TOTAL NURSE

Resources

The Program in Narrative Medicine

<http://www.narrativemedicine.org/index.html>

A program offered through College of Physicians Surgeons, Columbia University that uses writing/narrative to help process the emotions and impact of working in health care.



Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project

<http://www.compassionfatigue.org/index.html>

The Compassion Fatigue Awareness Project is an online source for information, training materials, workbooks, and texts for health care caregivers, as well as other types of caregivers.

healthjourneys

<http://www.healthjourneys.com/index.asp>

healthjourneys offers a selection of books, CDs, and other materials that teach guided imagery and other relaxation techniques to manage the effects of stressful situations.

HelpGuide.org

<http://www.helpguide.org>

This Web site offers ad-free information and resources for dealing with life's challenges. Categories of topics include mental and emotional health, family and relationships, healthy living, and caregiving.

What do you do for you?

AS AN ONCOLOGY NURSE, a good deal of your day is spent focused on the quality of life for your patients. You treat their disease, manage their symptoms, minimize their pain, and educate them and their families on the many aspects of living with a cancer diagnosis. At the end of the day, how do you leave your job behind and go back to being a spouse, a parent, a sibling, and a friend? What do you do to improve the quality of your life?



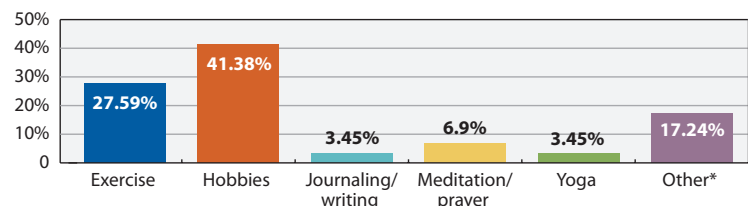
To help you answer these questions, *Oncology Nurse Advisor* created "The Total Nurse: Caring for Self While Caring for Others," a new section on our Web site. This section aims to provide information and resources to help you, the oncology nurse, cope with stress on the job and enhance life off the job.

The editors of *ONA* are working with Kerstin McSteen, BSN, MSN, ACHPN, CNS-BC, an oncology nurse with Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and a member of the *Oncology Nurse Advisor* Editorial Board, to find tools that will help you determine your stress level, locate resources to reduce it, and introduce you to new ways of enriching your life. But we want your input.

The next time you visit www.OncologyNurseAdvisor.com, go to The Total Nurse and take a moment to complete the survey telling us what you want to find in this section. Look around and feel free to write to editor.ona@haymarketmedia.com and let us know what you think should be included in this section. We look forward to working with you, our readers, to build this into a unique resource for nurses. ■

The ONA Poll

WE ASKED: Which self-care/renewal activity do you practice? Here are your responses.



*Activities identified in the Other category included jog, participate in a service organization, read, varied combination of the choices, and maintain a whole-heartedness attitude.

Transitioning from work to home

THE ABILITY to transition is not generally viewed as a form of self-care, but the process of leaving our professional world and re-entering our personal world deserves attention.

Leaving what we have been immersed in for the last 8+ hours can often be very difficult, and when working in the field of oncology, these experiences more often than not include witnessing sad situations and the suffering of patients and their families. It can leave one feeling disoriented and out-of-sorts, and it takes a toll not only on the nurse, but also on those who the nurse goes home to. The poem, “Talking to the Family,” by John Stone, MD, exemplifies the stark and harsh difference between what we see and do in our jobs and what we do at home.

So how can one ease the transition from work to home?

Engineer a transition period Most of us follow a ritual before we go to work: morning coffee, walk the dog, drop the kids off at school, read the newspaper. Constructing a ritual for the end of the day that disconnects us from work is just as important. Whether you walk, bike, bus, train, or drive home from work, use that time to do something that clearly shifts you to a different place and mindset. Avoid perseverating on the hard parts of the day.

One nurse shared her ritual for finishing up work in a busy oncology clinic: “I consciously take off my lab coat as a reminder that I am switching gears. I listen to a favorite CD on the drive home and sing out loud, and when I pull in to the driveway, I reapply my lipstick. It all helps me walk in the door refreshed and able to be present to my kids and my partner.”

Another nurse talked about what she does on her bus ride home: “I close my eyes for a few minutes and visualize a mini-vacuum cleaner on the top of my head that is sucking up all the negative energy that has accumulated from my day. That might sound silly, but I notice a difference in how I hang on to thoughts if I don’t do it.”

Set limits We carry very high expectations of what can be accomplished in 24 hours and easily fall into a habit of trying to accomplish “one more thing” at work, turning an 8-hour day into a 9- or 10-hour day. Besides breeding resentment, this cuts into our personal time. Having reasonable expectations at work can help one to transition back to home. Once at home, setting a few limits on what you can do is important. Balancing the “must dos” (laundry, dishes, car upkeep) with the “want to dos” (read a book, go to a concert) may require negotiation with oneself and with family, so that the less enjoyable activities still get done, but are distributed fairly.

Make a plan for after work Knowing what to expect when you do get home can help with the transitioning process. At the beginning of the week, look at the calendar and make a schedule for yourself and everyone in your household to avoid the stress of last-minute craziness. If a particular day promises to be tight, plan accordingly. ■



Stress Management from MindTools

http://www.mindtools.com/pages/main/newMN_TCS.htm

Web site offers self-help tools in a variety of categories, including performance stress, relaxation and sleep, self-confidence and self-esteem, anger management, and various types of coping strategies. A burnout self-test is also available.

Interpersonal Communication And Relationship Enhancement: I*CARE

<http://www.mdanderson.org/education-and-research/resources-for-professionals/professional-educational-resources/i-care/index.html>

Recognizing that improved communication skills can prevent practitioner burnout, M. D. Anderson Cancer Center offers online resources to assist health care practitioners in sharpening the skills necessary to manage challenging patient and family encounters.

Let’s hear from you!

The editors of ONA want

The Total Nurse: Caring for Self While Caring for Others

to include the resources nurses want and need for self-care.

Please complete **The Total Nurse: Self-Care Survey**

and tell us what you want to find on the pages of this section.



Go to www.OncologyNurseAdvisor.com/selfcare and click on the logo (above) to take the Self-Care Survey.