E-Learning Module L:

Occupational Wellness

This Module requires the learner to have read Chapter 11 of the Fundamentals Program Guide and the other required readings associated with the topic.

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Please reference as follows:

GETTING STARTED

This e-Learning Module has been designed to consolidate key concepts from the required readings and provide an opportunity to begin applying these concepts through self-directed reflection and scenario-based work, in preparation for the case-based discussions, in-person, with other learners.
GETTING STARTED

In this module you will review the content highlights associated with Chapter 11 of your Program Guide.

It would be best if you have read Chapter 11 in advance and have the Program Guide, as well as the Domains of Issues Laminate with you as you complete this module.

You will be prompted to write down your thoughts or ideas during this module. You can do so in the ‘notes’ section at the end of Chapter 11 in your Program Guide. These notes are just for you; you are not required to share them.

Consider bringing forward any questions from the e-Learning Modules to your next Peer-to-Peer Exchange or your next Case-Based Learning Session.
TOPICS COVERED

✓ Understanding the Fundamentals
✓ Occupational Stressors
✓ Responses to Occupational Stressors
✓ Stress and Distress
✓ Workplace Syndromes Related to Distress
✓ Hardiness
✓ Developing Resiliency
Those who work in hospice palliative care are frequently exposed to distressing emotional situations and profound suffering. There are times we are brought to our knees; we have suffered and our own souls have been wounded. The challenge for us as care providers is to find a way to be emotionally involved and empathetic in our work and allow our helping motivations, deep commitments and idealism without burning out!

We each have a responsibility to manage the stress associated with our role as care providers in hospice palliative care.
UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDAMENTALS

The Program Guide cites some reasons that attract people to hospice palliative care.

- Reflect on your motivation for choosing to work and/or volunteer in this field? Are they similar to some of the stated reasons listed in Chapter 11 of your Program Guide?
OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS

There are internal and external sources of stress in this work.

Internal stresses may include:

▪ Trying to find a balance between home and work life; sense of duty and commitment to both
▪ Self expectations; a desire to meet all the diverse needs of those in our care
▪ Dealing with continuous loss; forming new relationships that will soon end in death
External stresses may include:

- Lack of training or support to deal with frequent deaths and the associated grief
- Conflict in the workplace, e.g. lack of respect for team members and their roles
- Incongruity of values and beliefs within the team
- Clash between the care that is actually being provided and one’s vision of good hospice palliative care
- Aging workforce and aging of the population (increasing number of people with life-limiting illness and high expectations related to care)
How health care providers respond to the stressors related to their work is diverse. The factors that will enhance a positive response to stressors include:

- The level of training in dealing with dying, death and loss
- Organizational support and commitment, e.g. time allotted for case based discussions, open to new learning or ideas
- Team support, e.g. respect for each other’s strengths and skills
- Processes in place for conflict management
- Life experiences, e.g. living with or caring for a family member or personal friend with life-limiting illness that resulted in development of effective coping strategies
- Personality traits, e.g. sense of humour, flexibility, etc.
STRESS AND DISTRESS

Stress is a very natural and important part of life. Stress helps keep us alert, motivates us to face challenges, and drives us to solve problems. These low levels of stress are manageable and can be thought of as necessary and normal stimulation. When we experience too much stress for too long, this becomes ‘distress’.

During times of distress, usual coping mechanisms are no longer effective in relieving the effects of stress thereby leaving the body, mind and spirit vulnerable to harm.
WORKPLACE SYNDROMES RELATED TO DISTRESS

In Chapter 11 of the Program Guide there are several stress related syndromes.

Compare the differences between Compassion Fatigue and Burnout:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compassion Fatigue</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No energy</td>
<td>Unable to care; feelings of exhaustion, dissatisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing left to give</td>
<td>Lack of purpose and meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling empty</td>
<td>Loss of idealism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too many questions and not enough answers</td>
<td>Physical symptoms such as nausea and vomiting, heart palpitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue to care</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
HARDINESS

The development of “hardiness” will enhance your ability to manage job stress and maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The following are some of the characteristics of hardiness:

- **Commitment**: having a strong interest and involvement not only in work but also family, hobbies, projects
- **Challenge**: accepting change as an opportunity for new experiences and personal growth rather than as a threat to satisfying work and life
- **Control**: a sense of being in charge of what happens in your work life and your personal life
HARDINESS

- Consider the aspects of hardiness. What can you do to develop hardiness in order to manage the stressors in your personal and work life?
DEVELOPING RESILIENCY

Developing resiliency helps to prevent or at least minimize the impact of distress.

Resiliency comes from within, but is also integrated externally with personal relationships. Look to the strategies outlined in the Developing Resiliency section of Chapter 11 in your Program Guide.

☐ Write down four strategies that will become or are already part of your plan to develop resiliency.
BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Providing hospice palliative care does not come without cost. Experiencing the fear, pain and suffering of others has an impact on the health care provider.

It’s important to care for yourself so that you can care for others.
BRINGING IT TOGETHER

As a reminder, think about the instructions given to you when flying on an airplane; in the event of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop from the ceiling, and you are to put your own mask on first before helping those around you.

In caring for yourself, you will renew your energy, build hardiness, and experience the sense of satisfaction, dedication, and personal growth felt by so many who work in the field of Hospice Palliative Care.
WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

This concludes the e-Learning Modules for the Fundamentals program. You will have an opportunity to apply what you have learned at the final Case-Based Learning Session.

Should you be part of the Fundamentals Enhanced program, you can continue with e-Learning Modules M and N.

To prepare for Modules M and N, read the associated Program Guide chapters in advance and bring the Program Guide and Domains of Issues Laminate with you.
This e-Learning resource is the property of:

The Palliative Pain & Symptom Management Consultation Program - Southwestern Ontario
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