

Five Easy Ways for Nurses to Manage Stress

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As a nurse, stress is a guaranteed part of the job. Because of this, it is important to identify its origins and learn how to handle it. Here are five easy ways for nurses to manage stress from Snelling Medical Staffing:

Deep breathing works wonders

Simple deep-breathing exercises are proven to reduce stress and stabilize your mood. In fact, deep breathing is a “super stress buster.” It evokes the relaxation response. This is a state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional response to stress. Deep breathing releases endorphins that decrease heart rate, lower blood pressure and reduce muscle tension. And the best part? It can be practiced anywhere.

Find a calming activity

Keeping a journal is an excellent way to release tension. Pen and notebook, online, or digital voice recorder; the important thing is to organize your thoughts, assign meaning to those thoughts, understand the context, and come to terms with your feelings.

Some nurses find doodling (think adult coloring books), counting backward, stretching, and positive affirmations also work as a great release from anxiety and frustrations.

Understand your feelings

There is strength in knowledge. Learn to read your own body’s warning signals and learn what your biggest “stress” triggers are. Once you know what causes anxiety, you can work to alleviate those triggers as much as possible from your daily routine.

If you can take a moment and recognize what is happening, it is much easier to step back and breathe deep or squeeze a stress ball or take a break or count backward... whatever calming activity works for you.

Find a peaceful place to take a break

Taking breaks is essential when stressed out. If you feel like you cannot take much more, don’t try to push through. Take a break. Regular breaks should be done in a quiet, peaceful area.

Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between rest breaks and fewer errors. No one is a superhero – take ten minutes and allow yourself a chance to recharge.

Join a support group

Peer support groups can be very effective at reducing stress. Just knowing that others are going through the very same issues and having the same feelings can be very calming, and even liberating. An onsite staff support group can offer nurses the help they need in reducing stress. If there are no onsite opportunities available, going online can be a great alternative. For example, Facebook hosts many work-related peer support groups for nurses.

Reducing stress is paramount in preventing burnout and compassion fatigue. Find a calming activity, seek out others to lean on, and take some deep breaths. Take a break and take care of yourself first.