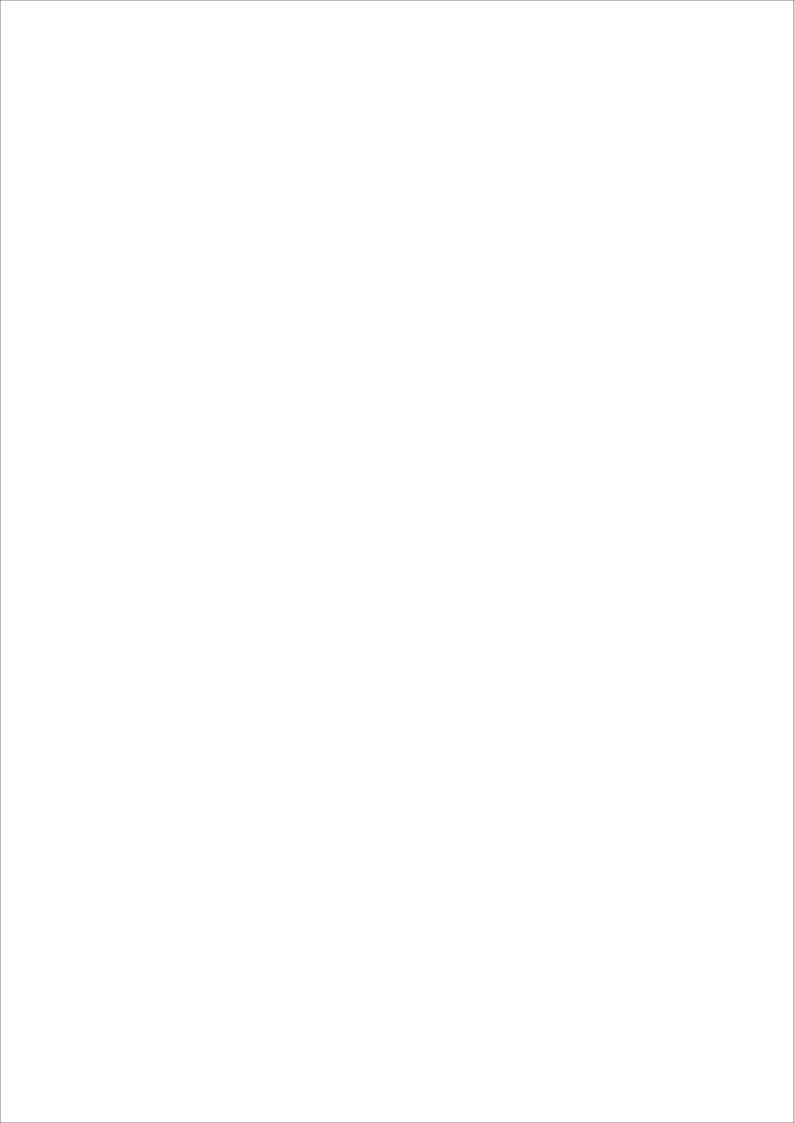


# Mental Health Self-care

A step-by-step training package for nurses







# Mental Health Self-care

A step-by-step training package for nurses



# Table of contents

ivicssaye	1
List of experts	vi
About this training package	1
Introduction	3
Part A: Facilitator Guide	
Managing emotions and stress	7
Self-care	18
Managing interpersonal relationships and seeking support	25
References	34
Part B: Trainee Manual	
Managing emotions and stress	43
Strategies to manage emotions	46
Managing stress	50
Self-care	53
Managing interpersonal relationships and seeking support	58
Conclusion	64
References	65

# मनसुख मांडविया MANSUKH MANDAVIYA



स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण व रसायन एवं उर्वरक मंत्री भारत सरकार

Minister for Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers Government of India



### MESSAGE

The COVID- 19 pandemic has posed a great threat to millions of people worldwide. As with most medical/ biological disasters, health professionals are the frontline workers who deliver essential Health care services and hence are the first point of contact. The pandemic has been a unique and unprecedented scenario for many healthcare workers. The associated stress and burnout can have a toll on healthcare personnel's mental health, and there exists an urgent need to provide support for the same.

Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare initiated action in response to this need and reached out to National Institute of Mental Health and Neurological Sciences (NIMHANS], Bengaluru and World Health Organization (WHO). A team was constituted consisting of experts from Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), WHO, NIMHANS, and other Centre of Excellence to develop a manual to strengthen and empower the psychiatric nursing professionals to use their expertise for the promotion of fellow nursing colleagues taking care of COVID- 19 patients.

The manual for "Mental Health Self-care for healthcare professionals: A step by step guide" a self-training manual, which has been prepared keeping in mind the nature of stress experienced by the nursing and other healthcare professionals, while performing their duties during COVID- 19 pandemic. The self-help manual will equip COVID- 19 warriors to effectively deal with their own stress.

I congratulate the team for their continued engagement in developing this manual. I am sure it will facilitate psychiatric nursing master trainers to address the stress of COVID- 19 warriors and help them to cope effectively, not only during the pandemic and managing day-to-day stressors at the workplace; but also empower them to effectively deal with any emergent situation in the heal their setting.

(Mansukh Mandaviya)



डॉ. भारती प्रविण पवार Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar





# स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण राज्य मंत्री भारत सरकार

MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



# Message

"Health" is not simply the absence of disease. It encompasses elements of physical, mental and social well-being. Healthy population is an asset to the nation. Maintaining the health of the nation has been the utmost priority during the COVID 19 pandemic.

The nurses and other frontline workers have been at the foreground of the response. Thus, the need to support this cadre is stronger than ever. With this notion, the manual for "Mental Health Self-care for healthcare professionals: A step by step training package" is being launched. This training package will facilitate uniform training of master trainers across all levels.

I congratulate Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for their efforts. I also laud teams of National Institute of Mental Health and Neurological Studies (NIMHANS), Bangalore and World Health Organization (WHO), India for their support, and experts who contributed towards development of this document.

I am confident that the efforts will see efficacious results as master trainers are empowered to address the stress of COVID-19 through this manual. I wish luck and success to all stakeholders going forward.

I would like to recite the holy chant "लोका: समस्ता: सुखिनो भवन्तु" (Let the entire world be happy).

(Dr. Bharati Pravin Pawar)

"दो गज की दूरी, मास्क है जरूरी"

Office: 250, 'A' Wing, Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi-110011, Tel.: 011-23061016, 23061551, Telefax: 011-23062828 E-mail: mos-mohfw@gov.in



राजेश भूषण, आईएएस सचिव RAJESH BHUSHAN, IAS SECRETARY



भारत सरकार स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण विभाग स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय Government of India Department of Health and Family Welfare Ministry of Health and Family Welfare



Message

All countries have witnessed unprecedented challenges during COVID-19. Many health related vulnerabilities came to the forefront during this period. Mental health has been one such element. Physical, mental, and social well-being is what makes a healthy individual and the country's response to COVID-19 has to take all of these elements into account.

It is in this context that the "Facilitator Manual for Mental Health Self-care for healthcare professionals: A step by step training package" has been developed. Nurses and healthcare workers have been at the forefront of responding to this pandemic, and all efforts must be made to support and promote their psychosocial well-being. This training package will facilitate uniform training of Master Trainers across all levels. Those trained will be able to assist in alleviating stress experienced by the nursing professionals and other healthcare providers, while performing their duties.

I laud the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for undertaking efforts for development of this crucial document. I also thank the experts who contributed in development of this document for their support; and I appreciate the efforts of National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences, Bengaluru and WHO, India.

I am confident that this document will set the stage for optimal focus on psychosocial well-being of the healthcare and frontline workers.

(Rajesh Bhushan)

Room No. 156, A-Wing, Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi-110 011 Tele,: (O) 011-23061863, 23063221, Fax: 011-23061252, E-mail: secyhfw@nic.in



प्रो.(डॉ.) सुनील कुमार

PROF. (Dr.) SUNIL KUMAR MBBS & MS (AIIMS)

स्वास्थ्य सेवा महानिदेशक DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH SERVICES



भारत सरकार स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय स्वास्थ्य सेवा महानिदेशालय Government of India Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Directorate General of Health Services



#### MESSAGE

The COVID – 19 Pandemic which commenced in late 2019 has wreaked havoc globally. The COVID warriors i.e. health professionals selfless service has saved millions of lives worldwide. COVID warriors especially nurses have meticulously executed quality and highest standard of nursing care. Nurses' commitment and dedication for serving mankind is laudable. They bring hope, solace and comfort to suffering people.

I appreciate the team which was constituted consisting of experts from MoHFW, WHO, NIMHANS, and other centers of excellence for their efforts. This strive has led to the successful development of the manual which allow health workers to strengthen their own psychosocial well-being and empower them to respond to their patients' and colleagues' psychosocial needs.

I congratulate the faculty of Department of Nursing and Clinical Psychology at NIMHANS who have been able to successfully develop a cadre of 200 master trainers; who have further trained another 2000 nurses and are expected to further train more nurses from their states/UT.

This manual will facilitate uniform training of master trainers across all levels. It is much needed in this current scenario to empower and strengthen the psychiatric nursing professionals to take care of their fellow colleagues' mental health, who, are involved in care of the COVID-19 patients. I wish all success for the entire team.

(Sunil Kumar)



### Dr. Rathi Balachandran

Assistant Director General Tel 011-23061033 Fax 011-23062310 E-mail rathi bala@govin



भारत सरकार स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय निर्माण भवन, नई दिल्ली - 110011 Government of India Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi - 110011



#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The development of the "Training package for Mental Health Self-Care for Health Care Professionals: Step by Step Guide" was an outcome of dedicated and committed efforts of Mental Health Care experts. I acknowledge their valuable contributions while developing this manual. The training package will help the Mental Health Nursing experts to orient Health care professional on how to take care of their mental health during COVID-19 pandemic.

I am extremely thankful to Dr. Alok Mathur, Additional DDG, Directorate General Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, GOI who has extended guidance throughout the course of development of this training package.

I am also thankful to the faculty and staff of NIMHANS. Dr. Satish Chandra Girimaji, Former Dean and Director, Prof. Dr. B.S. Shankaranarayana Rao, Registrar, Dr. Seema Mehrotra, Professor and Head of the Department of Clinical Psychology, for their tremendous and unconditional support at every phase. Further, I also extend my gratitude to Dr. Pratima Murthy, Director, NIMHANS.

My sincere appreciation to Dr. Sailakshmi, Head of Nursing Department, Ms. Maya Sahu, Psychiatric Nursing Consultant and Coordinator, Dr. R. Sumathi, Nursing Tutor, Mrs. Krutideepa Mohanty, PhD Scholar, Mrs. Supriya S, ICMR-JRF and Mr. Nagaraju R from the Nursing office, NIMHANS for their expert contributions.

I also extend my gratitude to WHO India officials - Dr Fikru Tullu (Team Lead - NCD), Dr Pushpa Chaudhary Deo ( Team Lead -Health through Life course), Dr. Atreyi Ganguli, National Professional Officer (Mental Health and Substance Abuse), for supporting this venture through their technical expertise. I would also like to thank Ms. Pragati Sharma (National Consultant- Midwifery) and Ms. Nandika Chaubey (Consultant- psychosocial support) from WHO-India, for their valuable contribution. Further, my heartfelt appreciation and thanks to Dr. K. Reddemma, President, Indian Society of Psychiatric Nurses for her support in this endeavor.

I am also indebted to all the experts who participated in the expert discourse on 3rd November, 2020. This manual is an outcome of their expertise.

I also share my gratitude to the constant encouragement and guidance rended by Senior officials of Government of India, especially Prof. (Dr.) Sunil Kumar, DGHS, Dr. Nipun Vinayak Joint Secretary Nursing, Dr. Sudhir Gupta, DDG, Dr. Tanu Jain Addl. DDG. Dr. Rinku Sharma ADG, Mr. Anil Gupta, Deputy Secretary. I also express my thanks to team from Mental Health Division and Nursing Division for the support rendered throughout the project.

I would also like to thank our office staff who has whole-heartedly supported us during the program, without whom this endeavor could not have been realized.

(Dr. Rathi Balachandran)

# **List of experts**

## Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

- Dr Alok Mathur, Additional DDG, Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India
- Dr Rathi Balachandran, Assistant Director General (Nursing), MoHFW, Govt. of India

## National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), Bengaluru

- Dr Sailaxmi Gandhi, Professor & Head, Department of Nursing, NIMHANS
- Dr Paulomi M Sudhir, Professor, Dept. of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS
- Dr Manjula M, Professor, Dept. of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS
- Dr Ravikant Pinjarkar, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS

## **COVID-19 Warriors (Nursing)**

- Dr Anandha Jyothi, Nursing superintendent (Retd.), Victoria Hospital, Bengaluru
- Professor Ponnamma K M, Principal, Govt. College of Nursing, Kozhikode, Kerala
- Dr Rita Lakhani, Principal, D Y Patil University School of Nursing, Navi Mumbai
- Mr Rathish Nair, Principal in charge and Chief Nursing Officer, AllMS Patna
- Mr Ajo Jose, Nursing Officer, Dr RML Hospital, New Delhi
- Mr Joseph Jennings M. M, Nursing Officer, Govt. Medical College Hospital, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala
- Ms Maibam Ranita Devi, Community Health Officer, Health and Wellness Centre, Awang Wabagai Manipur
- Mr Shoukkath Ali V, Nursing officer, JPN Apex Trauma Centre, AllMS, New Delhi

#### WHO-India

- Dr Atreyi Ganguli, National Professional Officer (Mental Health and Substance Use), WHO-India
- Ms Pragati Sharma, National Consultant Midwifery, WHO-India.
- Ms Nandika Chaubey, Consultant Psychosocial Support, WHO-India

### **Indian Society of Psychiatric Nurses (ISPN)**

• **Dr K. Reddemma**, President, Indian Society of Psychiatric Nurses, Nodal officer, PhD Consortium, Former Dean and Senior Professor of Nursing, NIMHANS

# List of authors & principal investigators

- Dr Sailaxmi Gandhi, Professor & Head, Department of Nursing, NIMHANS
- Dr Paulomi M Sudhir, Professor, Dept. of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS
- Dr Manjula M, Professor, Dept. of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS
- Dr Ravikant Pinjarkar, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS
- Ms Maya Sahu, Psychiatric Nursing Consultant and Coordinator, Department of Nursing, NIMHANS



# About this training package

The Training Package titled "Mental Health Self-care- A training package for Mental Health Self-care- A step-by-step training package for nurses" is an outcome of intense collaboration of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India (Nursing Division and Mental Health Division) and Directorate General of Health Services, NIMHANS (Department of Nursing, and Department of Clinical Psychology) and the World Health Organization (WHO-India). This was developed as part of the Training of Trainers (TOT) Program on 'Promotion of Mental Health of Healthcare Providers'. The overall objective of this training package (facilitator guide and trainee manual) is to empower the nurses and other healthcare workers in India to promote their own mental health, and also that of their families, fellow healthcare providers as well as the patients and their families during disasters or stress in the workplace, irrespective of the setting.

This training package was developed in multiple phases. Phase 1 was a situation analysis where an online Google survey was conducted to explore the nature of stressors experienced by the nursing professionals taking care of COVID positive patients in India. The data of 757 completed forms were analyzed and based on that, the draft manual was developed. The draft was shared with nursing experts who later participated in an online expert's discourse, which was the Phase 2 of the TOT on 3rd November, conducted from the President's chamber, NIMHANS. Nursing experts representing the stakeholders for whom this TOT is being developed comprised of selected COVID–19 warriors i.e. Nursing Superintendents and Nursing Officers representing the north, south, east and west zones of India participated in the program online. An intense and highly interactive brainstorming session generated new suggestions which helped to modify and finalize the TOT program as well as this manual. Plagiarism check with Turnitin software was within acceptable range (11%).

The master trainers who participated in the Pilot TOT of Phase 3 also gave feedback about the ease of understanding, practical applicability and utility before finalization. Phase 3, i.e. a TOT program was organized by the Department of Nursing from 3rd December, 2020 onwards for three consecutive days every week until the 1st week of February, 2021. The participants were from various states of India with various nursing qualifications ranging from GNM to PhD in nursing with psychiatric nursing specialty.

A total of 463 nurses have participated in the ten TOT programs. Of these, 200 have qualified as master trainers and have in turn trained another 2000 nurses and are expected to further train more nurses from their state/UT. With this, a cascading effect would be created wherein a large number of nurses who have experienced varying levels of stress during the COVID-19 pandemic would learn stress management and thereby enhance their mental health. Based on the feedback from the participants, all the strategies taught during the TOT could help nurses cope with stress in the workplace as a routine in any health care setting.

This training package is a practical, easy to follow manual that has a combination of ice breakers, group activities, demonstrations, case vignettes and links to videos which will guide the existing pool of master trainers. It will also be useful for psychiatric nurses to further train non-specialized nurses, healthcare personnel, patients and family members in mental health promotion. It can be used for training purposes through on-site training sessions, virtual sessions, or a combination of the two.

# Dr. Sailaxmi Gandhi,

Principal Investigator, Professor & Head, Department of Nursing, NIMHANS (INI), Bengaluru 29



# Introduction

World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as: "... a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." WHO has also proposed that mental health is: "... a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

As integral as mental health is to overall well-being, COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on it. Multiple studies have shown that COVID-19 outbreak led to high anxiety, depression and stress levels within the population. Healthcare professionals are particularly affected, as their work demanded long hours of duties, thus causing fatigue and disturbing their work-life balance.

Nurses have been playing a significant role in providing healthcare services. Acknowledging their contributions, the World Health Assembly had designated 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. Nurses and midwives have been playing a great role during the COVID-19 pandemic as well. Hence, to ensure that quality care is delivered to patients, it is critical to protect and support the mental well-being of the nurses. This calls for strengthening the capacities of the nurses, to be able to address the psychosocial need for themselves as well as the people they serve.

In 2018, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India (GoI), in collaboration with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru and WHO India, created a pool of Master Trainers, under the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP). The capacities of these master trainers can be strengthened to take forward capacity building activities for psychiatric nurses, at the sub-national level, as COVID-19 response. Further, this pool could be expanded by training a larger cohort.

The focus is on developing a pool of master trainers from the psychiatric nursing specialty with representatives from every state and UT in the country. These master trainers would undergo the online Training of Trainers (TOT) organized at NIMHANS and following this would each train other nurses in their respective state/UT to address stress management, resilience building and adaptive coping of nursing professionals working in COVID-19 designated hospitals in the country. Nurses with psychiatric nursing specialty would be strengthened and empowered to use their expertise for the promotion of mental health of fellow nursing colleagues taking care of COVID-19 patients.

The TOT program on 'Promotion of Mental Health of Healthcare Providers during the COVID-19 Pandemic' was organized by Department of Nursing, NIMHANS in collaboration with Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, WHO–India and MoHFW. The program involved online training using didactics, videos, case scenarios, role plays, demonstrations and return demonstrations in a group of minimum of 30 participants for three consecutive sessions of two hours duration each.

This book is dedicated to all the COVID-19 warriors- the nurses and the frontline workers who are taking care of persons with COVID-19.

# Part A: Facilitator Guide

**Facilitator:** A facilitator is someone responsible for creating a positive atmosphere for learning clearly communicating the concepts so that they are understood by the participants.

**Participant:** Someone attending a workshop session.

# Top tips for facilitators

- Be neutral and positive throughout the sessions, allow participants to speak and share stories, work in groups etc.
- Involve participants regularly by giving them information to stimulate their thinking.
- Gently guide participants through the sessions as there is a lot of stigma and misinformation around mental health and distress.

# **Ground rules for participants:**

Group will be informed about the ground rules, to be followed throughout the sessions:

- 1. It is advisable not to disclose any personal matter in the group. However, what is said in this group should stay in the group and confidentiality must be maintained.
- 2. Be respectful and non-judgmental to others.
- 3. 'Re-name' your device with your name before joining the session.
- 4. Stay seated and alert.
- 5. Keep your videos on and maintain professional etiquette.
- 6. Keep a notepad and pen handy.
- 7. Mute yourself and unmute only when you are speaking.
- 8. In order to contribute to the sessions, please press 'raise hand' button, and time will be allocated to share views. Kindly do not interrupt the speaker in between the session or another person expressing a point, wait for your turn.
- 9. If you need any personal help, you can contact the facilitator after the session. If needed, you will be offered professional help.
- 10. Please keep your mobile phones in flight mode to avoid disturbances.



# Managing emotions and stress



# **Duration of the session:**

Two hours



#### Aim:

To help participants learn skills in managing difficult emotions and stress



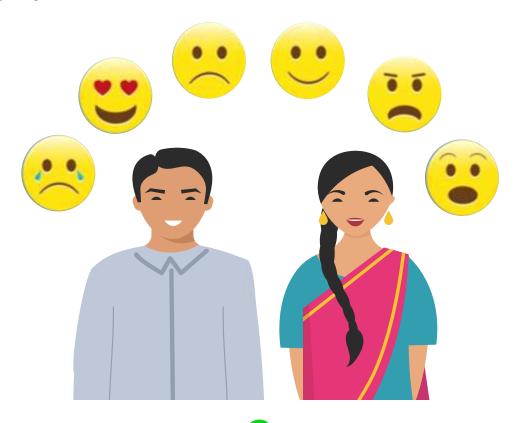
# **Learning outcomes:**

Participants will be able to-

- Understand emotions as well as distress and train other nurses to deal with those emotions effectively
- · Understand the need for accepting difficult situations
- · Practice relaxation skills

# 1.1 Introduction

Begin the session by welcoming the group and briefing them about what would be covered in the session and the main objectives. Start the session with a round of introductions and setting the ground rules.



The session focuses on strengthening and empowering you to use your expertise for the promotion of mental health of fellow nursing colleagues, taking care of patients with COVID – 19. The skills acquired in this program may be applied in other stressful situations. Names used throughout the sessions, in case vignettes, illustrations and videos are pseudonyms.

# Ice breaker activity:



**Description:** Divide the members into three equal groups and assign them to three breakout rooms. Ask the participants to think of incidents when they felt happy/ afraid/ angry in workplace (one emotion to one group). Allow them 5 minutes for discussion and then request them to make their presentation before the larger group- their situations, emotions and strategies, they use to manage these emotions.



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by discussion



Materials: Pen, paper



**Procedure:** The participants discuss among themselves, brainstorm and note down the answers preferably on a PowerPoint (PPT) slide. Once the time is over, the three group leaders are asked to share individual group thoughts before the larger group.



**Debriefing:** The facilitators further suggest some more strategies. The activity allows the participants to interact, gives them the sense of being involved and helps the facilitator to build the ground for the discussion of the next topic.

# 1.2 Managing emotions



**Description:** Ask the participants to focus on their own emotions. What exactly they are feeling now: happy/excited/nervous. Introduce the topic of managing emotions



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by video demonstrations



Materials: Case vignettes, pen, paper



**Procedure:** The case vignette is presented to the participants. Participants note down their responses separately and raise their hand when they are ready. A few participants are selected to share their thoughts before the larger group.



# Case vignette



Dr. Manasi, a 32-year-old resident doctor working in a COVID ward is taking care of patient Mr. Sekhar who is 41 years old, obese and has history of COPD. The patient was stable when she took charge for the day, but he suddenly developed breathing difficulties and collapsed. He was put on ventilator as his GCS score was 3. Dr. Manasi was in her PPE and could neither go to the washroom nor eat anything for more

than 8 hours. She was feeling extremely suffocated inside and was getting angry. While handing over, she shouted at the staff and went to change. As she stepped out to go home, she met patient's young wife with a baby in her arms sadly sitting in the waiting area. She felt sad for her and went home. When she entered her home, she found her 3-year-old baby asleep in her room and parents were waiting for her to have dinner together. Her mother is a retired nursing superintendent. Dr. Manasi requested them to have food and take the child to sleep with them. When she sat down for dinner, she could not eat properly as she was feeling bad for not being available for her child and family. She was also afraid of infecting them despite taking precautions.

- Can you identify the difficult emotions she is experiencing and the situations in which she experiences these emotions?
- What strategies would you suggest to help her in managing these emotions?

Identify the situations that cause emotional distress: Patient's condition deteriorating, long duty hours, staying with family while on COVID duty, not being able to be there for child.

Pick out various emotions she is experiencing sadness, anger, and fear of infecting family members.

## Strategies to manage:

- She can be made aware that she is experiencing these emotions and identify these.
- Encourage her to understand that she is reacting to her colleagues and family based on her emotions and also that her appraisal of the situations and difficulty in accepting them are resulting in these difficult emotions.
- She can accept that few things are beyond her control and move on.
- Sometimes not reacting to these emotions but being aware, accepting that this is a difficult time for all, may help.

# Facilitator's notes:



- She can be encouraged to be mindful of the emotions she is experiencing and her own judgments of herself "I must help everyone", "I am a burden to my parents, putting pressure on them", "I am not a good mother, I am not able to give time to my daughter."
- Mindfulness and self-compassion may help-sitting for meditation and understanding the context and her limitations, e.g. she has done her best and she can't do more than that.
- She may use "Switch on & off" technique (when leaving home and leaving the workplace) i.e., remaining in an objective mode, keeping a distanced approach, to help in stepping back which may result in less intense emotions.
- Activity on accepting the situations (video demonstration followed by discussion).

# Points to remember

Emotions often arise from our interpretation of events/situations. When we view them as threatening, burdensome or catastrophic, it is difficult to manage but when we see them as neutral and think that it will pass, we can cope with it.



- Positive emotions: Love, appreciation, happiness, hope, enthusiasm, joy etc.
- **Negative emotions:** Fear, anger, shame, frustration, regret, sadness etc.
- Both positive and negative emotions are required for adaptive functioning in moderate amounts.

Positive emotions help us open up new possibilities whereas negative emotions warn us of threats or challenges that we may need to deal with. Thus, both emotions are important, it is equally important to learn how to regulate our emotions effectively, especially when these emotions cause distress, interfere in meeting goals, or performance.

# Need to regulate emotions

- When they interfere in achieving your goals.
- Not appropriate to the situation.
- Excessive in comparison to what is expected.
- Creates distress and negative mood e.g. anxiety interfering in performance, sensitivity to criticism, rejection, feeling sad often etc.
- Both under expression and over expression are problematic.

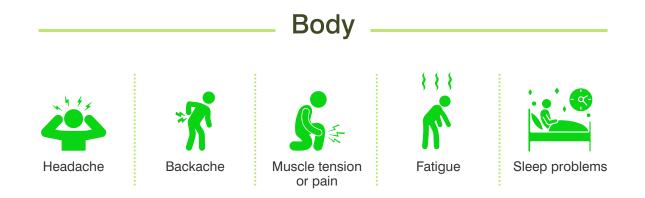
# **Emotion regulation**

Builds empathy in us that enables us to build healthy relationships with others and with ourselves and function better.

# Poor emotion regulation

Negative emotions can impact on the body, mind and behaviors.

Some of these are:



# Mind



Anxiety



motivation or focus



Irritability or anger



Sadness or depression

# Behaviour



Over-eating or under-eating



Anger outbursts



Drug or alcohol misuse



withdrawal

# Strategies to manage emotions:

# If you are sad:



- Try to increase your activity levels as much as you can.
- Minimize newsfeeds: Avoid following news on COVID-19 excessively. Try to reduce how much you read, watch or listen to news that makes you feel anxious or sad. Seek the latest information at specific designated times of the day, once or twice a day if needed.
- Don't watch TV/news related to COVID 19 an hour before going to bed.
- Listen to some success stories.

# If you are afraid of infecting family members:

- Recognize your emotion and rate it on a scale of 1-10.
- Follow COVID-19 protocol.
- Maintain safety measures at home.
- Maintain distance from older persons with co-morbidity.
- Ensure that your family eats nutritious food and engages in exercise/walking/physical activity. If they are co-morbid, ensure that they adhere to medications/treatment regime.
- Talk (avoid pandemic related talk) to friends/parents.
- Listen/access authentic websites such as WHO or MoHFW and state government health portals.

- Rational thinking: Engaging in rational self-talk may be helpful in reducing worries/fear of infecting others in the family, such as – "I am taking all necessary precautions to prevent infection to others", "My family is safe and protected, some degree of risk will always be there despite taking all the precautions. Worrying about it may not help reduce that risk, on the contrary, if I continue to worry it can negatively affect my mental health".
- **Practice relaxation techniques:** Deep breathing lowers stress in the body and thus helps calm down or relax the body as well as mind.

# If you are angry



# Immediate measures:

- **Self-awareness:** Awareness about one's frustration or anger is the first step towards managing anger. The next step would be to try and accept these emotions as a reaction to the circumstances and telling oneself that "it's Ok to feel frustrated or angry as long as it doesn't affect my work or interaction with others". The third step is learning to stay with the anger without reacting to it. It also includes being mindful about not allowing the emotions to affect your work and communication with others.
- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm. Anger is accompanied by physiological and biological changes, such as increased heart rate, blood pressure, and levels of the hormones epinephrine and nor-epinephrine. Deep breathing increases the supply of oxygen to brain and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a state of calmness. Breathing techniques help you feel connected to your body—it brings your

awareness away from the worries in your head and quiets your mind and thus reduces your anxiety.

- Count slowly to ten.
- Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as 'relax', 'take it easy'.
- Take a short break if possible.

Gently avoid the situation, person with whom you are angry. Do not respond or take action based on the emotion. Revisit the situation when you are calmer.



# Long term measures:

 Understand your anger and the source or triggers (your thoughts also can be triggers) for it.

- Is there any other /alternative way you can view this situation?
- What would be the effect of taking a different perspective?
- Remember if you have tried all of the above to manage your negative emotions and you still have not felt better, then do seek help from a professional.

# **Activity: Video demonstration on acceptance**

Running away from any problem only increases the distance from the solution. A better way to handle the problem is to solve it or accept it. Problem-solving is a skill and can be acquired. It is important to remember that having the right attitude to problems and their solutions is a key factor for reducing stress. However, always solving a problem may not be feasible. When it seems to be out of your control, not accepting difficult emotions can lead to more struggle and more distress, thus the vicious cycle goes on. In that case, acceptance is an important option.

What if you could accept and allow yourself to experience your emotions, thoughts, without labeling them as good or bad? Let's have an example:



**Methodology:** Video demonstrations



**Materials:** Video link (<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-L3tmfV3zc">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-L3tmfV3zc</a>)



**Procedure:** Show the video to the participants. Ask them to relate with Mrs Manasi as well as the participants' own situations.



**Debriefing:** Lead the discussion with the following probes:

- Is it possible to follow this in their daily practice?
- How they would like to apply it for themselves?

# Points to remember

Acceptance is an alternative to our instinctive response to avoid thinking about negative or potentially negative experiences. It is the active choice to allow unpleasant experiences to exist, without trying to deny or change them. We become conditioned to solving problems automatically, often without thinking (like an automatic pilot). When problem-solving is very rigid or inflexible, it generates stress. For example, using the same solutions to all problems, believing that one should not experience problems, there must be a perfect solution to problems or all problems must be solved completely. Rather some problems have no perfect or single/complete solutions. It is important to identify source of distress and look at the problems differently. One of the ways to reduce stress generated from problems is acceptance. It is an active process that leads to fewer struggles and thereby less distress.

**Changing negative thoughts:** Identify the negative thought and whether it is based on evidence or is it just a thought, what could be alternative ways of thinking about it? Have a balanced thought, reappraise and use positive statements.

**Positive self-talk:** A positive affirmation makes you feel good and reminds you that you can do it if you want to. You can talk to yourself positively, standing before the mirror or put sticky notes with positive affirmations on your worktable or computer. The more frequently you state these, the more you start believing in yourself!

# 1.3 Managing stress



**Description:** Introduce the topic of managing stress



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by demonstration.



Materials: Case vignettes, pen, paper



**Procedure:** The case vignette will be presented to the participants. Participants note down the answers on their own and



raise hand when they are ready. Few of them are asked to share their thoughts before the larger group.

# Case vignette



Mrs Krupa, a Nursing Officer with 7 years of experience in Critical Care Unit is working in a COVID ward. She was undergoing infertility treatment and has conceived four months ago. She has hypothyroidism and a complicated pregnancy, with history of miscarriage in the previous pregnancy. She has requested for leave but has not been sanctioned leave due to shortage of staff. Of late she gets irritated over trivial matters and has anger outbursts when

interacting with her junior staff. She finds it difficult to pay attention to her work. She stays with her husband who was in a private sector but has lost his job last month. Her parents are in her hometown and are not in a position to come and take care of her. Although her husband helps her in household chores, she is not able to finish her work at home and always is late for work.

- Identify the possible stressors Mrs. Krupa is experiencing.
- Identify the possible effects of stress on her physical and mental health.

**Stressors:** Complicated pregnancy, physical health issues, financial difficulty, parents being away, loss of job of husband and not getting leave.

# Strategies to manage:

- Sharing the responsibilities
- Making time for self: quality time, bonding with husband, thinking of pleasurable moments, planning for the baby's arrival

Facilitator's notes:

- Adequate eating and sleeping habits
- Time management at home
- Problem-solving
- Sharing your concerns with colleagues and seniors
- Activity on practicing relaxation techniques

**Activity:** Diaphragmatic/Abdominal breathing skills training and body scan

**Description:** Demonstration



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by demonstration.



**Materials:** Audio recording (included in pendrive)



**Procedure:** Before training in this skill, remember that if the person has respiratory or lungs related problems, then they need to consult a doctor before doing this exercise. Also, persons who experience significant pain or discomfort while doing this exercise need not continue it. Demonstrate and practice the following steps during the session and explain the need to practice it at least 3 times a day and whenever having troubling thoughts.

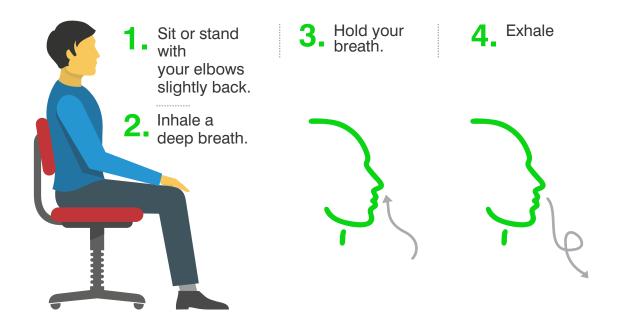
- Place one hand on your abdomen and the other on your chest. Let your shoulder and hands feel loose and relaxed. When you breathe in, allow the abdomen to rise. When you breathe out, allow the abdomen to flatten. The chest needs to have little or no movement during this process.
- Take a slow and gentle deep breath in through your nose to a count of 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 4 seconds. (Request the individual to hold their breath only for the amount of time that she or he feels comfortable).

- Then slowly and gently exhale through your mouth for 8 seconds. Let your upper body relax down as you exhale.
- Repeat the cycle at least 5 times.

Incorporate the following as required into this exercise:

- While inhaling: Take in what you want. Thinking of a word like 'peace' or visualizing a scene that helps you relax.
- While exhaling: Release what you don't want. So you can think of words like stress or anger

**Debriefing:**You can do it at any place, any time; at your desk, on your bed, while sitting, etc. Make it a practice or habit to do it 4-5 times daily. Remember, practice is very important in strengthening any skill.



# Homework: Being mindful in everyday activities

Most of us perform our day-to-day activities mechanically, we do not enjoy things. This is like being in automatic pilot mode - neither enjoying nor being aware of the things. On the contrary, being mindful is being aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. You can practice this when you perform your household activities or your daily routine. For example, just observe the various experiences when you are having coffee/tea- the warmth, the taste and sensations in the body, etc. similarly when you have your bath or your meal. Choose one activity in a day that you can do mindfully.

This helps you to shift your awareness from an *auto pilot* mode to a more being mode.

Similarly, when you are at work, you can practice this exercise too!

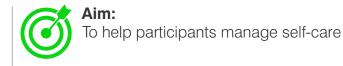


# Self-care



# **Duration of the session:**

Two hours





# **Learning outcomes:**

Participants will be able to-

- Understand the importance of physical health and work-life balance
- Handle self-criticality
- Learn how to build resilience



**Description:** Ask the participants to think - what are the problems that trouble them and they are unable to manage.



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by demonstrations.



Materials: Case vignettes, pen, paper



**Procedure:** The case vignette will be presented to the participants. Participants note down the answers on their own and raise hand when they are ready. Few of them are asked to share their thoughts before the larger group.



# Case vignette



Mrs Sajiya, 27 years old Nursing Officer with three years of experience in female medical ward is working in a COVID unit of district hospital. She is on antihypertensive drugs since last two years. She is recently married, staying with her in-laws and has to take care of the family. She does not get any help from her husband in the household activities. Her father-in-law is diabetic and mother-in law is hypertensive and has arthritis. At the end of her duty in the hospital,

when she returns home, she feels dehydrated and too tired to perform the household chores. She feels frustrated and exhausted due to the work pressure. She is not able to sleep properly, cries sometimes and gets scolded by her seniors for making simple mistakes at the workplace. She always criticizes herself, remains preoccupied with these thoughts and cannot concentrate on her work and often tells herself, I can do nothing right!

- Identify the issues Mrs Sajiya is undergoing.
- What would be the strategies to help her?

**Issues:** Work life imbalance, physical health problems and self-criticality

Strategies to manage: Activity on

- Building resilience
- Handling self-criticality
- Pursuing hobbies

Facilitator's notes:



Yoga and other lifestyle practices (**Short video:** http://mentalhealtheducationnimhans.org/2767-2/covid-19-informative-videos/

#### Elaborated video:

http://mentalhealtheducationnimhans.org/2767-2/covid-19-informative-videos/)

# 2.1 Building resilience

Resilience is not the absence of distress or difficulty. Resilience is the ability to adapt and grow following adversity. The following are essential:

- Adaptability and agility in the face of adversity (difficulties)
- Flexibility in coping with newer demands and challenges
- Not all are equally resilient- resilience can be developed-as a skill



# People who are resilient have:

- Social support and close relationships with family and friends.
- The ability to manage strong feelings and impulses (emotion regulation skills).
- Good problem-solving skills.
- The courage to ask for help and seek resources (help-seeking).
- Healthy ways to cope with stress (stress coping skills).
- The capacity to help others and find positive meaning in life.
- A view of themselves as a resilient person (self-efficacy & positive self-evaluation).

# Ways to enhance resilience:

- Increasing our flexibility in responding- not being rigid in our way of responding to situations and events.
- Strengthening and building our support networks.
- Having greater emotional awareness and managing our emotions in a balanced way- so that we are able cope better with challenges.
- Developing skills necessary to deal with challenges (preparedness in handling).
- Using humor and seeing things in alternative perspectives.

#### **Activity:**

**Description:** Ask the participants to make two groups. Allot each group one activity.

Group 1: Gratitude activity

Group 2: Three good things activity

#### **Group 1: Gratitude activity**



**Methodology:** Group activity



Materials: Pen, paper



**Procedure:** Every day for the next week, write down three things each day that you are grateful for.



**Debriefing:** The practice of gratitude is one of the most time-tested and proven methods for enhancing resilience.

Why is gratitude important in building resilience?

What happens when it is low/not present?



Watch the video clip

(Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Zl9puhwiyw)



#### Group 2: Three good things activity



Methodology: Group activity



Materials: Pen, paper



**Procedure:** Consider ending your day by reflecting on and writing down three good things that happened today.



**Debriefing:** Be focused on reflecting on the experiences, noting how you felt, and what was the best thing about the experience.

Importance of self-reflection-building resilience and strength

#### Points to remember

#### 1. Maintain work-life balance

- Follow routines with regular work, hobbies, rest, exercise
- Taking breaks/relaxation time
- Spending quality time with family, friends and pets. If not possible, video calling to loved ones
- Taking help from other family members for house chores
- Humour
- Listening to music, singing or watching movies
- Reduced screen time
- Prayer/meditation

#### 2. Physical health

Taking care of physical health is very important. There is a mind-body connect. Physical health helps in maintaining mental health.

- Eat nutritious food, stay hydrated
- Maintain sleep hygiene
- Yoga
- Exercise
- Morning/evening walk
- Avoid excessive intake of sweets and caffeine
- Medication and treatment adherence incase of comorbidities.
- Online consultation with your physician if you have co-morbidities and difficulty in following the treatment

#### 3. Handling self-criticality

Self-criticality refers to the behavior of pointing out one's own perceived flaws and a

negative evaluation of self. It could be directed towards various aspects of the self, like not being able to take care of family, behavior, inner thoughts and emotions, personality or intellectual attributes.

Self-criticality often generates negative emotions leading to stress.

Ways to deal with self-criticism:

1. Try to be objective about yourself and identify the





- behaviors/situations that is leading to these feelings. Criticize specific behaviors not in entirety.
- 2. Practice self-care, such as having some 'me time', spending time for own hobby or whatever gives you happiness.
- 3. Identify and avoid negative self-talk which are obstacles to self-care, such as:
  - "It would be selfish to take time to rest."
  - "Others are working around the clock, so should I."
  - "I can contribute the most by working all the time."
  - "Only I can do...

#### 4. Avoid the following

- Working too long hours by oneself without checking in with colleagues
- Working "round the clock" with few breaks
- Feeling that one is not doing enough
- Viewing helping others as more important than self-care

#### 5. Practice self-compassion

- Self-compassion is a concept about learning to love and support oneself.
- Self-compassion has been shown to:
  - ▲ Impact positive emotions toward ourselves, our behaviors and our mistakes, and develop compassion for others.
  - ▲ Important to sustain motivation and remain positive- in the face of adversity.
- Reducing self-criticality and increasing resilience by learning to be more compassionate towards yourself.
  - ★ Reduced self-compassion and increased self-blame, associated with depression and other negative health outcomes (including burnout)
  - → Increased self-compassion helps in generating or cultivating positive emotions and also in feeling less unhappy about self
  - ★ Keeps you motivated in the face of challenges/others

#### Some strategies to enhance self-compassion

- By changing the negative self-talk (e.g. "I am no good, I cannot do anything well"), using reframing and by being less judgmental about yourself.
- Treating yourself as a good friend would (appreciate and acknowledge yourself).
- Taking time off for yourself.
- Self-care-important part of self-compassion.
- Writing a self-compassion diary.
- Writing a letter to yourself- appreciating yourself.

Homework: Write a letter of compassion to yourself

**Hints:** Think of any one component of yourself which you do not like. Now imagine that you have a best friend who likes you as you are, supports you, and encourages you always. Write a letter on behalf of that friend to you with soothing and comforting words. Take a deep breath and write a letter of compassion to yourself in the voice of your best friend.

Start with...

Dear (Your name)		





# Managing interpersonal relationships and seeking support



**Duration of the session:** 

Two hours



#### Aim:

To help participants manage interpersonal relationships (IPR) and seeking support as well as providing support



#### **Learning outcomes:**

Participants will be able to-

- Manage IPR issues
- Seek support as well as provide support
- · To learn problem-solving and communication skills



#### 3.1 IPR issues in family



**Description:** Ask the participants to make three groups. Show a case vignette to each group. Give some time to brainstorm and then ask them to present before the larger group.



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by discussions



Materials: Case vignettes, pen, paper



**Procedure:** The case vignette will be presented to the participants. Participants will note down the answers on their own and raise their hand when they are ready. Few of them are asked to share their thoughts before the larger group.

## Case vignette



Mr. Anand, 32 years old, Lab technician, who is working in COVID ICU, lives in another city from home. He is the only son and his parents are elderly and sick. They are now being cared by their daughter-in-law in the village. He does not go home on weekends which he used to do earlier because he is worried that he may carry infection to the family. His wife repeatedly asks him to come home as it is difficult for her to take care of them alone. He tries to convince her, but she continues to

argue. At the same time, he feels bad when he thinks about not being there to take care of his parents and is concerned that if something happened to them, he might not be in a position to go and take care of them.

## Case vignette



Mrs Deepa, 41 years old, Senior Nursing Officer of a private hospital is posted in a COVID ward and stays with her family. She has two children studying in 10th standard and 5th standard. Her husband is a Govt. servant and working from home. His parents are elderly and having co-morbidities. She follows all the safety precautions as much as possible. Yet, her in-laws are afraid as she goes to hospital every

day and work with COVID patients. There is always argument at home regarding her workplace. Of late, her children also do not come close to her unlike before. She feels guilty and helpless.

## Case vignette



Mrs. Ranita, 35 years old, respiratory therapist working in a central Govt. institute is posted in a COVID ward. She has the provision of staying within campus when she is on COVID duty and after seven days of quarantine goes home. Her husband works in a Govt. office and has to regularly go to office. Her mother-in law has to take care of the children during that period. At times she feels that it is too difficult for her to look after them as she is also having osteoarthritis and knee

pain. She persuades her daughter in-law to stay with them so that she gets constant help in the household. Her husband also complains that she does not take care of family causing more burdens to his mother. She is unable to convince them that she stays within the hospital campus for the safety of the family.

**Issues:** Some of the common issues in family experienced by nurses during the current pandemic are differences of opinion, conflict over sharing of family responsibilities, fear of infection to the family members, and feeling guilty due to not being available to the family.

#### Strategies to manage:

- May be guiding children to help the mother-in-law,
- Assisting them over call to organize their work,
- Buying things that can ease the cooking (ready-made mixes etc.).
- Cooking certain dishes in large amounts and refrigerating for later use.
- Taking support from the spouse.
- If required, the supervisor may provide support to their staff's families in the form of checking if they are fine or if they need any help.

## Facilitator's notes:



#### Points to remember

#### **Physical health**

- Taking safety precautions: bathing after coming home and maintaining distance from the elderly members in the family.
- Taking help from family members.
- Healthy communication: To express one's feeling and thoughts appropriately and responding to others feeling and thoughts sensitively, is the first step in resolving issues in the context of family.
- Maintaining distance with the vulnerable members in the family when going for continuous COVID duty.
- Talking/video calling: Circumstances in which you are away from the family due to job, you can stay connected with them through regular telephonic or video calls.

- Conflict resolution skills: When you have differences of opinion on some matters with the family members, conflict resolution strategy can be useful to reach a healthy resolution. It involves understanding of other person's point of view and expressing one's opinion effectively. When you are discussing the issue of conflict, it is important to stay calm, listen to other person's views attentively, think about it, and then express your feelings and opinion. Conflict can be resolved effectively if the goal is to find a middle ground, come to consensus, or to make a compromise. Learning to manage your emotions, like anger during conversation, can help you to avoid your discussion turning into heated argument and unsuccessful resolution of the matter.
- Appreciating and empathizing with family members if they are going through difficult time due to your unavailability.
- Problem-solving: You may come across number of problems in the family when trying to maintain work life balance. Successful resolution of these problems requires the use of problem-solving strategy. First step in problem-solving is to identify the main problem that is causing distress in the family, for example-increased burden of care on one of the family members. Once the problem is identified generate as a many solution as possible to solve the problem through engaging in brainstorming. After generating all the solutions analyze each solution in terms of its advantages and disadvantages and finally select the one which you think is better over other solutions. It is important that the solution is finalized in discussion and consensus with other family members
- Seeking advice from the trustworthy person friend, senior, or relative. You may come across situations in which you feel extremely distressed and helpless. Sharing your trouble with a person close to you, who can understand you, can help you look at things differently and receive some valuable suggestions.
- Seeking professional help: If you are unable to manage family issues and it is affecting
  your mental health and work, seeking consultation from a counselor or psychiatrist
  can be useful.

#### 3.2 Workplace communication



**Description:** Ask the participants to make two groups. Show a case vignette to

NOTHING PERSONAL, BUT I'LL'S TIAWAY FROM

each group. Give some time to brainstorm and then ask them to present before the larger group.



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by video demonstrations



**Materials:** : Case vignettes, pen, paper



Procedure: The case vignette will be

presented to the participants. Participants note down the answers on their own and raise hand when they are ready. Few of them are asked to share their thoughts before the larger group.

## Case vignette



Mrs Surekha, 34 years old, Nursing Officer has been working in COVID ICU since last three months, she did not get leave after COVID duty. Their hospital has three types of COVID zone - COVID ICU, COVID wards and COVID suspected wards. She is exhausted with continuous heavy duty in COVID wards with no proper break. She has also noticed that her colleagues who are posted in COVID suspected wards have never been posted to COVID ICU and there is no rotation

of staff in these three areas. One day, she decides to convey this to her sister incharge to ask for a regular rotation of staff and changes in her posting. She is also afraid that she may not be able to convey the message properly to her and rather may be criticized.

## Case vignette



Mr Rajat, 27 years old, Nursing Officer has been working in COVID wards since last two months. He and his colleagues had to work without adequate protective gear which has already put few of them at risk and some have become positive. Luckily, they have recovered but this should not continue. He has also noticed, the novice staff who are posted in the ward are asked to continue duty without proper orientation program or training in donning and doffing. The newly

joined staff are more confused and tend to make mistakes. He also experienced the same initially but as he was having previous experience of working in ICU, he could learn sooner. Now, he feels that t they should stand for their rights so that with proper protective gear and training, the risk can be reduced.

**Issues:** Communication problems, workplace issues, long working hours, work pressure, inadequate breaks, and issues related to equipment and safety.

#### Strategies to manage: Activity on

- Assertiveness training: Demonstration of the video followed by discussion.
- Buddy system/peer support at workplace: A WhatsApp group may be formed where they can share their problems and possibly, they may get helpful insights from others' experiences. This may also help in reduction of their emotional distress and building resilience.

Facilitator's notes:



**Responsibilities as a supervisor:** If you are also working as a supervisor, may find following tips useful.

Listening with empathy and sensitivity: Understanding staffs concerns and distress with empathy and sensitivity will not only reduce their distress but also increase the respect for the supervisor.

- Regularly checking with the staff if they are doing fine will make them feel supported. Ask them if they are comfortable with the work assigned to them. Do they have any problems or concerns? Do they receive enough support from their fellow colleagues?
- Keeping the staff informed about matters concerning them can make them feel safe and secure. During the initial period of pandemic things were changing rapidly. There was lot of uncertainty over what will happen. When will things get normal? Is it going to get worse? Is the work pressure going to increase or am I going to lose my job? so on, creating a lot of anxiety.
- Acting with integrity: If you keep your words and behave responsibly your staff will respect you and extend cooperation which is much needed in present circumstances.
- Include the staff in the process of solving the matters that are concerned to them using problem-solving. Take the suggestions from the staff and let the solutions come from them.

Ensure the staff that if they or their family members get infected, they will receive adequate support from you and the administration.

#### Points to remember

#### **Communication skills: Assertiveness**

Healthy communication plays an important part in making your workplace not only effective but also a pleasant place to be. Being a good communicator can assist you in building trust, help to solve differences and create an environment of respect that promotes problem-solving and builds relationships.

Being assertive means expressing your thoughts, opinions, feelings, attitudes, and rights in an open and honest way. When you're assertive, you stand up for yourself, while still respecting others. At work, assertiveness involves balancing getting what you need with being respectful of the needs and rights of your coworkers, subordinates, and supervisors.

Using assertive communication can help you to:

- Communicate your ideas, concerns, and wishes.
- Have more clarity about what is expected.
- Take control of your workload.
- Gain respect from others.
- Have your needs and wants met.
  - Ask for things you want.
  - Saying 'no' is appropriate to things you do not want to do.

#### **Assertiveness**



Express yourself openly & honestly positively & confidently



#### Video links:

 Submissive communication: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcSengmO1v8







 Assertive communication: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khfZr5ZopxM



#### 3.3 Seeking support and providing support

Responding to colleagues in distress



**Description:** Ask the participants to explore their understanding of seeking support; do they know where to ask help if they require.



**Methodology:** Group activity followed by video demonstrations and discussions



Materials: Case vignettes, pen, paper



to the participants. Participants note down the answers on their own and raise hand when they are ready. Few of them are asked to share their thoughts before the larger group.





Dr Sabina, 28 years old, Junior Resident has been working in a COVID ward of a private hospital. She stays away from home while her parents stay at her native place. Their neighbors criticized her family as their daughter is working in a hospital. They try to avoid them, and Dr. Sabina is afraid that if required, her parents may not get help from their neighbors. They don't have any relatives nearby whom they can rely on for help. She does not go home as her parents might be more

criticized by the neighbors. At times, she also feels exhausted and frustrated because of her workload and helpless as she does not know whom to approach if she requires support either for her family or herself.

Facilitator's notes:

**Barriers in seeking support-** Fear of getting stigmatized, fear of discrimination, misinformation, faulty assumptions: "No point in talking", "It won't help"

#### Strategies to manage:



- Addressing stigma reduction
- Providing information
- Teaching problem solving skills

#### Points to remember

Seek support for both COVID-19 and mental health conditions. Stay connected and maintain your social networks. Though you are not allowed to go outside, you can stay connected via telephone, e-mail, social media or video conference.

#### Seeking support and providing support

Barriers in seeking support: Fear of being stigmatized/criticized by others

#### Impact of stigma/discrimination:

- Increased sense of emotional isolation, feeling of guilt and anxiety.
- Lack of self-esteem and confidence.
- Ostracisation of healthcare workers and others involved in COVID-19 management.
- Worsening of pre-existing psychiatric illness such as depression.

Viruses don't discriminate and neither should we.





#### Do's

- Be appreciative and supportive of efforts made by frontline workers.
- Simple skills of responding here- that is listening, allowing the person to speak without interrupting, not hastily offering solutions or trivializing (e.g. don't worry it is nothing, we all go through this), use of open ended questions, reflecting feelings (you look upset, what happened).
- Verify the information from a reliable source such as Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's website, before sharing or forwarding the same.
- Share positive stories of those who have recovered from COVID-19.



#### **Don'ts**

- Don't spread misinformation
- Don't blame any individual, group or area for spread of COVID-19
- Don't spread name, identity, locality of persons affected or under quarantine



#### 3.4 Conclusion

- Reflection of whole program
- Clarification of doubts
- Remember 4 key points, keep these in your MIND

Make contact through video chat with family/friends - stay anchored & grounded Information that is authentic to be accessed (i.e. WHO/MoHFW)
No to alcohol/tobacco use/substances/excess screen time
De-stress through yoga/deep breathing/exercise/music/dance

Remember - This too shall pass!

The unpredictable nature of the Covid-19 pandemic has taken an emotional toll on the health care system as well as the health care providers. The frontline workers must be prepared for its acute as well as chronic nature. Psychological preparedness supported by teamwork, professional commitment and staff welfare may be the crux for fighting against the pandemic! Please do not hesitate to seek professional help when not able to help yourself.



## References

1. WHO 2021. Year of the Nurse and the Midwife 2020. Accessed from https://www.who.int/campaigns/annual-theme/year-of-the-nurse-andthe-midwife-2020



2. MoHFW 2020. Guide to address stigma associated with COVID-19. Accessed from https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/ GuidetoaddressstigmaassociatedwithCOVID19.pdf



3. WHO 2020. Guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19. Accessed from https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/a-guide-to-preventing-andaddressing-social-stigma-associated-with-covid-19



4. WHO 2004. Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice: Summary Report. Geneva, World Health Organization. Accessed from <a href="https://www.who.int/mental">https://www.who.int/mental</a> health/ evidence/en/promoting mhh.pdf





# Part B: Trainee Manual

# Table of contents

1.	About the manual	39
2.	Introduction	41
4	Managing emotions and stress	43
5	Strategies to manage emotions	46
6.	Managing stress	50
7.	Self-care Self-care	53
8.	Managing interpersonal relationships and seeking support	58
9.	Conclusion	64
10.	Reference	65



# About this manual

This manual for ''Mental health self-care-A step-by-step guide for healthcare professionals" is an outcome of intense collaboration of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India (Nursing Division and Mental Health Division) and Directorate General Health Services, NIMHANS (Department of Nursing, and Department of Clinical Psychology) and the World Health Organization (WHO-India). This was developed as part of the Training of Trainers (TOT) Program on 'Promotion of Mental Health of Healthcare Providers'. The overall objective of this manual is to empower the nurses and other healthcare workers in India to promote their own mental health, that of their families, fellow healthcare providers as well as the patients and their families during disasters or stress in the workplace irrespective of the setting.

This manual was developed in two phases. Phase 1 was a situation analysis where an online Google survey was conducted to explore the nature of stressors experienced by the nursing professionals taking care of COVID positive patients in India. The data of 757 completed forms were analyzed and based on that, the draft manual was developed. The draft was shared with nursing experts who later participated in an online experts' discourse which was the Phase 2 of the TOT on 3 November conducted from the President's chamber, NIMHANS. Nursing experts representing the stakeholders for whom this TOT is being developed comprised of selected COVID-19 warriors i.e. Nursing Superintendents and Nursing Officers representing the north, south, east and west zones of India participated in the program online. An intense and highly interactive brainstorming session generated new suggestions which helped to modify and finalize the TOT program as well as this manual. Plagiarism check with Turnitin software was within acceptable range (11 %). The master trainers who participated in the Pilot TOT of Phase 3 also gave feedback about the ease of understanding, practical applicability and utility before finalization. Phase 3, i.e. a 'Training of Trainers (TOT)' program was organized by the Department of Nursing from 3rd December, 2020 onwards for 3 consecutive days every week until the 1st week of February. The participants were from various states of India with various nursing qualifications ranging from GNM to PhD in nursing with psychiatric nursing specialty.

A total of 463 nurses have participated in the ten TOT programs. Of these, 200 have qualified as master trainers and have in turn trained another 2000 nurses and are expected to further train more nurses from their state/UT. With this, a cascading effect would be created wherein a large number of nurses who have experienced varying levels of stress

during the COVID-19 pandemic would learn stress management and thereby enhance their mental health. Based on the feedback from the participants, all the strategies taught during the TOT could help nurses cope with stress in the workplace as a routine in any health care setting.

This self-training manual is a practical, easy to follow document which will allow its users to conveniently read, understand, and practice various strategies to promote their own mental health. The manual is aided with case vignettes and video links which will effectively guide the user in practicing self-help and mental health promotion strategies. It is developed in such a manner that it can be used in the work-place or while on the go. It can be uploaded on the websites of institutes and hospitals websites for easy and instant access.

#### Dr. Sailaxmi Gandhi

Principal Investigator, Professor & Head, Department of Nursing, NIMHANS (INI), Bengaluru 29



## Introduction

World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as: "... a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." WHO has also proposed that mental health is: "... a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community."

As integral as mental health is to overall well-being, COVID-19 pandemic has had an inadvertent impact on it. Multiple studies have shown that COVID-19 outbreak lead to high anxiety, depression and stress levels within the population. Healthcare professionals are particularly affected, as their work demanded long hours of duties, thus causing fatigue and disturbing their work-life balance.

Nurses have been playing a significant role in providing healthcare services. Acknowledging their contributions, the World Health Assembly had designated 2020 as the International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. They have been playing a great role during the COVID-19 pandemic as well. Hence, to ensure that quality care is delivered to patients, it is critical to protect and support the mental well-being of the nurses. This calls for strengthening the capacities of the nurses, to be able to address the psychosocial need for themselves as well as the people they serve.

In 2018, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India (GoI), in collaboration with the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Bengaluru and WHO India, created a pool of Master Trainers, under the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP). The capacities of these master trainers can be strengthened to take forward capacity building activities for psychiatric nurses, at the sub-national level, as COVID-19 response. Further, this pool could be expanded by training a larger cohort.

The focus is on developing a pool of master trainers from the psychiatric nursing specialty with representatives from every state and UT in the country. These master trainers would undergo the online Training of Trainers (TOT) organized at NIMHANS and following this would each train other nurses in their respective state/UT to address stress management, resilience building and adaptive coping of nursing professionals working in COVID-19 designated hospitals in the country. Nurses with psychiatric nursing specialty would be strengthened and empowered to use their expertise for the promotion of mental health of

fellow nursing colleagues taking care of COVID-19 patients.

These master trainers undertook the online ToTs organized at NIMHANS and train other nurses in their respective state/UT to address stress management, resilience building and adaptive coping of nursing professionals working in COVID-19 designated hospitals in the country. Nurses with psychiatric nursing specialty would be strengthened and empowered to use their expertise for the promotion of mental health of fellow nursing colleagues taking care of COVID-19 patients.

The TOT program on 'Promotion of Mental Health of Healthcare Providers during the COVID-19 Pandemic' was organized by Department of Nursing, NIMHANS in collaboration with Department of Clinical Psychology, NIMHANS, WHO-India and MoHFW. The program involved online training using didactics, videos, case scenarios, role plays, demonstrations and return demonstrations in a group of minimum of 30 participants for 3 consecutive sessions of 2 hours duration each.

This book is dedicated to all the COVID-19 warriors- the nurses and the frontline workers who are taking care of persons with COVID-19.

#### Points to note:

- There are few stories in every session, which will help you understand the situation better. If you have come across similar situations, this manual may help you!!
- Names used throughout the sessionsin case vignettes or illustrations are pseudonyms.
- Some methods are common to manage emotions, stress and self-care, for e.g. eating and sleeping habits, physical exercises and being involved in hobbies, social interaction etc.



# Managing emotions and stress

Emotions often arise from our interpretation of events/situations. When we view them as threatening, burdensome or catastrophic, it is difficult to manage but when we see them as neutral and think that it will pass, we can cope with it.

- **Positive emotions:** Love, appreciation, happiness, hope, enthusiasm, joy etc.
- **Negative emotions:** Fear, anger, shame, frustration, regret, sad etc.
- Both are required for adaptive functioning in moderate amounts.

Positive emotions help us open up new possibilities whereas negative emotions warn us of threats or challenges that we may need to deal with. Thus, both emotions are important, it is equally important to learn how to regulate our emotions effectively, especially when these emotions cause distress, interfere in meeting goals, or performance.



#### **Need to regulate emotions**

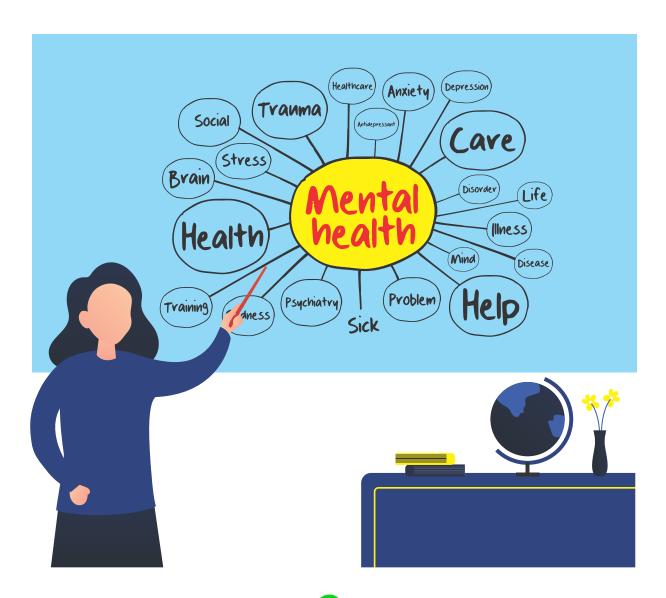
- When they interfere in achieving your goals.
- Not appropriate to the situation.
- Excessive in comparison to what is expected.
- Creates distress and negative mood e.g. anxiety interfering in performance, sensitivity to criticism, rejection, feeling sad often etc.
- Both under expression and over expression are problematic.

#### **Emotion regulation**

Builds empathy in us that enables us to build healthy relationships with others and with ourselves and function better.

#### Poor emotion regulation

Negative emotions can impact on the body, mind and behaviors. Some of these are:



### Body



Headache



Backache



Muscle tension or pain



Fatigue



Sleep problems

### Mind



Anxiety



Lack of motivation or focus



Irritability or anger



Sadness or depression

### **Behaviour**



Over-eating or under-eating



Anger outbursts



Drug or alcohol misuse



Social withdrawal



# Strategies to manage emotions



# 1. Identify the situations that cause emotional distress to you:

It may be a patient's condition deteriorating, long duty hours, staying with family while on COVID duty or staying away from family.



#### 2. You may experience various emotions such as:

Sadness, anger, fear of infecting family members, etc.



#### 3. Tips to manage:

Acceptance is an alternative to our instinctive response to avoid thinking about negative or potentially negative experiences. It is the active choice to allow unpleasant experiences to exist, without trying to deny or change them. We become conditioned to solving problems automatically, often without thinking (like an automatic pilot). When problem-solving is very rigid or inflexible, it generates stress. For example, using the same solutions to all problems, believing that one should not experience problems, there must be a perfect solution to problems or all problems must be solved completely. Rather some problems have no perfect or single/complete solutions. It is important to identify source of distress and look at the problems differently. One of the ways in reducing stress generated from problems is acceptance. It is an active process that leads to less struggle and thereby less distress Video on acceptance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-L3tmfV3zc.



Problem-solving is a skill, and can be acquired, however it is important to remember that having the right attitude to problems and problem solutions, is a key factor. However, always solving a problem may not be feasible, in that case, acceptance becomes the best option: Accept few things which are beyond your control

- Identify that you are experiencing emotions.
- Make sure that you will not respond based on the emotions.

- Accept few things which are beyond your control.
- You have done your best and you cannot do more than that.
- Mindfulness and self-compassion may help.
- Not responding and keeping the expression under check are important.
- You may use switch on and off technique.

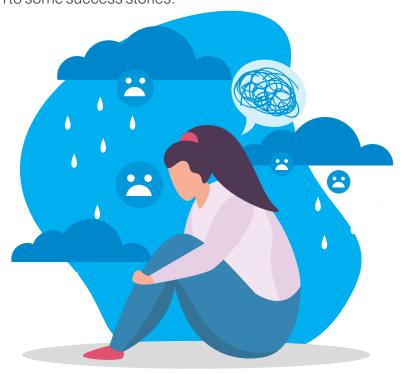
**Changing negative thoughts:** Identify the negative thought and whether it is based on evidence or is it just a thought, what could be alternative ways of thinking about it? Have a balanced thought, reappraise and use positive statements.

**Positive self-talk:** A positive affirmation makes you feel good and reminds you that you can do it if you want to. You can talk to yourself positively standing before the mirror or put sticky note around your work table or computer. The more positive affirmations you say, the more you start believing in yourself.



#### **4**■ If you are sad:

- Try to increase your activity levels as much as you can.
- Minimize newsfeeds: Avoid following news on COVID-19 excessively. Try to reduce how much you read, watch or listen to news that makes you feel anxious or sad. Seek the latest information at specific designated times of the day, once or twice a day if needed.
- Do not watch TV/news related to COVID -19 an hour before going to bed.
- Listen to some success stories.



#### If you are afraid of infecting family members:

- Recognize your emotion and rate it on a scale of 1-10.
- Follow COVID-19 protocol.
- Maintain safety measures at home.
- Maintain distance from older persons with comorbidities.
- Ensure that your family eats nutritious food and engages in exercise/ walking/physical activity. If they are co-morbid, ensure that they adhere to medications/treatment regime.



- Talk (avoid pandemic related talk) to friends/parents.
- Listen/access authentic websites such as WHO or MoHFW and state government health portals.
- Rational thinking: Engaging in rational self-talk may be helpful in reducing worries/fear of infecting others in the family, such as "I am taking all necessary precautions to prevent infection to others", "My family is safe and protected", "Some degree of risk will always be there despite taking all the precautions. Worrying about it may not help reduce that risk, on the contrary, if I continue to worry it can negatively affect my mental health".
- Practice relaxation techniques: Deep breathing lowers stress in the body and thus helps calm down or relax the body as well as mind.



#### 5. If you are angry:

#### Immediate measures:

- Self-awareness: Awareness about one's frustration or anger is the first step towards managing anger. The next step would be to try and accept these emotions as a reaction to the circumstances and telling oneself that "it's Ok to
  - feel frustrated or angry as long as it doesn't affect my work or interaction with others". The third step is learning to stay with the anger without reacting to it. It also includes being mindful about not allowing the emotions to affect your work and communication with others.
- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm.
   Anger is accompanied by physiological and biological changes, such as increased heart rate, blood



pressure, and levels of the hormones - epinephrine and nor-epinephrine. Deep breathing increases the supply of oxygen to brain and stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which promotes a state of calmness. Breathing techniques help you feel connected to your body; it brings your awareness away from the worries in your head and quitens your mind and thus reduces your anxiety.

- Count slowly to ten.
- Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as 'relax', 'take it easy'
- Take a short break if possible.

#### Long term measures:

- Understand your anger and the source or triggers (Your thoughts also can be triggers) for it.
- Is there any other /alternative way you can view this situation?
- What would be the effect of taking a different perspective?
- Remember if you have tried all of the above to manage your negative emotions and you still have not felt better, then do seek help from a professional.

Story of **Dr Manasi** 

Dr Manasi, 32 years old Resident doctor working in a COVID ward is taking care of patient Mr Sekhar who is 41 years old, obese and has history of COPD. The patient was stable when she took charge for the day but he suddenly developed breathing difficulties and collapsed. He was put on ventilator as his GCS score was 3. Dr Manasi was in her PPE and could neither go to the washroom nor eat anything for more than 8 hours. She was feeling extremely suffocated inside and was getting angry. While handing over, she shouted at the staff and went to change. As she stepped out to go home, she met patient's young wife with a baby in her arms sadly sitting in the waiting area. She felt sad for her and went home. When she entered her home, she found her 3-year old baby asleep in her room and parents were waiting for her to have dinner together. Her mother is a retired nursing superintendent. Dr Manasi requested them to have food and take the child to sleep with them. When she sat down for dinner, she could not eat properly as she was feeling bad for not being available for her child and family. She was also afraid of infecting them despite taking precautions.

Based on the suggestions given in the above section, what would you suggest to Dr Manasi?



# Managing stress

**Identify the stressors:** Workplace related, family related (complicated pregnancy Physical health issues, financial difficulty).

**Strategies to manage:** Activity on practicing relaxation techniques.



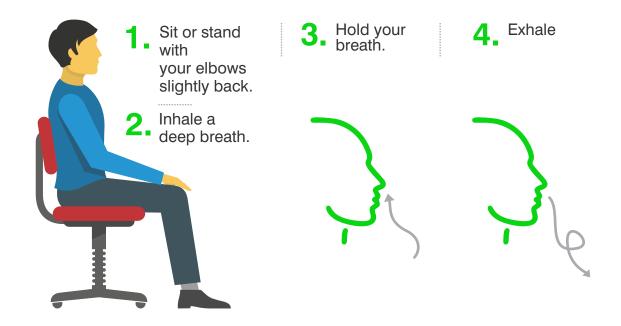
#### 1 Deep breathing and body scan

#### **Procedure:**

Before training in this skill, remember that if you have respiratory or lungs related problems, then you need to consult a doctor before doing this exercise. Also, if you experience significant pain or discomfort while doing this exercise, you need not continue it. Practice the following steps at least 3 times a day and when you have recognized difficult emotions.

- Place one hand on your abdomen and the other on your chest. Let your shoulder and hands feel loose and relaxed. When you breathe in, allow the abdomen to rise. When you breathe out, allow the abdomen to flatten. The chest needs to have little or no movement during this process.
- Take a slow and gentle deep breath in through your nose to a count of 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 4 seconds.
   (Request the individual to hold their breath only for the amount of time that she or he feels comfortable).
- Then slowly and gently exhale through your mouth for 8 seconds. Let your upper body relax down as you exhale.
- Repeat the cycle at least 5 times.





#### Incorporate into this exercise, the following as required:

- While inhaling: Take in what you want. Thinking of a word like 'peace' or visualizing a scene that helps you relax.
- While exhaling: Release what you don't want. So you can think of words like 'stress' or 'anger'.
- You can do it at any place, any time; at your desk, on your bed, while sitting, etc. Make it a practice or habit to do it 4-5 times daily. Remember, practice is very important in strengthening any skill.





#### 2. Being mindful in everyday activities

Most of us perform our day to day activities mechanically, we do not enjoy things. This is like being in automatic pilot mode - neither enjoying nor being aware of the things. On the contrary, being mindful is being aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. You can practice this when you perform your household activities or your daily routine. For example, just observe the various experiences when you are having coffee/tea-the warmth, the taste and sensations in the body, etc. Similarly when you have your bath or your meal. Choose one activity in a day that you can do mindfully.

This helps you to shift your awareness from an auto pilot mode to a more being mode.

Similarly, when you are at work, you can practice this exercise too.



#### 3. Other strategies (Refer to the next case vignette)

- Sharing the responsibilities.
- Making time for self: quality time, bonding with husband, thinking of pleasurable moments, planning for the baby's arrival.
- Adequate eating and sleeping habits.
- Time management at home.
- Problem-solving.
- Sharing your concerns with colleagues and seniors.



## Mrs Krupa, a Nursing Officer with 7 years of experience in critical care unit is working in a COVID

ward. She was undergoing infertility treatment and has conceived four months ago. She has hypothyroidism and complicated pregnancy, with history of miscarriage in the previous pregnancy. She has requested for leave but has not been sanctioned due to shortage of staff. Of late she gets irritated over trivial matters and has anger outbursts when interacting with her junior staff. She finds it difficult to pay attention to her work. She stays with her husband who was in a private sector but has lost his job last month. Her parents are in her home town and are not in a position to come and take care of her. Although her husband helps her in household chores, she is not able to finish her work at home and always becomes late to duty.

Based on the suggestions given in the above section, what would you suggest to Mrs Krupa?



## Self-care

Self-care is any activity that we do deliberately in order to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Although it is a simple concept in theory, it is something we very often overlook. Good self-care is key to improved mood and well-being.

**Issues:** Work life imbalance, physical health problems, self-criticality

#### **Strategies for self-care:**

#### 1. Maintain work-life balance

- Follow routines with regular work, hobbies, rest, exercise
- Taking breaks/relaxation time
- Spending quality time with family, friends and pets. If not possible, video call to loved ones
- Taking help from other family members for house chores
- Humour
- Listening to music, singing or watching movies
- Reduced screen time
- Prayer/meditation

#### 2. Take care of your physical health and build resilience

Taking care of physical health in this period is an important aspect.

- Eat nutritious food, stay hydrated
- Maintain sleep hygiene
- Yoga
- Exercise
- Morning/Evening walk
- Avoid excessive intake of sweets and caffeine
- Online consultation with physician if



you have co-morbidities and following up of instructions

Resilience is not the absence of distress or difficulty. Resilience is the ability to adapt and grow following adversity.

- Adaptability, agility, in the face of adversity (difficulties)
- Flexibility in coping with newer demands and challenges
- Not all are equally resilient; resilience can be developed as a skill

#### People who are resilient have:

- Social support and close relationships with family and friends
- The ability to manage strong feelings and impulses (emotion regulation skills)
- Good problem-solving skills
- The courage to ask for help and seek resources (help-seeking)
- Healthy ways to cope with stress (stress coping skills)
- The capacity to help others and find positive meaning in life (positive emotionsother focused)
- A view of themselves as a resilient person (self-efficacy & positive self-evaluation)

#### Ways to enhance resilience:

- Increasing our flexibility in responding: not being rigid in responding to situations and events
- Strengthening and building our support networks
- Having greater emotional awareness and managing our emotions in a balanced way- so that we are able cope better with challenges
- Developing skills necessary to deal with challenges (preparedness in handling)
- Using humor and seeing things in alternative perspectives

#### 3. Dealing with self-criticism

- Try to be objective about yourself and identify the behaviour/situation that is leading to these feelings. Criticize specific behaviors, not your whole self
- Practice self-care, such as having some 'me time', spending time for own hobby or whatever gives you happiness
- Identify and avoid negative selftalk, which are obstacles to selfcare, such as:
  - "It would be selfish to take time to rest."



- "Others are working round the clock, so should I."
- "I can contribute the most by working all the time."
- "Only I can do..."

#### 4. Avoid the following

- Working too long without checking and getting help from colleagues
- Working 'round the clock' with few breaks
- Feeling that they are not doing enough
- Viewing helping others as more important than self-care

#### 5. Practice self-compassion

- Self-compassion is a concept about learning to love and support oneself
- Self-compassion has been shown to:
  - Impact positive emotions toward ourselves, our behaviors and our mistakes, and develop compassion for others
  - Important to sustain motivation and remain positive- in the face of adversity
- Reducing self-criticality and increasing resilience by learning to be more compassionate towards yourself
- Reduced self-compassion and increased self-blame, associated with depression and other negative health outcomes (including burnout)
- Increasing self-compassion helps in generating or cultivating positive emotions and also in feeling less unhappy about self/others
- Keeps you motivated in the face of challenges

#### Some strategies to enhance self-compassion:

- By changing the negative self-talk (e.g. "I am no good, I cannot do anything well."), using reframing and by being less judgmental about yourself.
- Treating is yourself as a good friend would (appreciate and acknowledge yourself).
- Taking time off for yourself.
- Self-care, important part of self-compassion.
- Writing a self-compassion diary.
- Writing a letter to yourself- appreciating yourself.

#### 6. Write a letter of compassion to yourself

**Hints:** Think of any one component of yourself which you do not like. Now imagine that you have a best friend who likes you as you are, supports you, and encourages you always. Write a letter on behalf of that friend to you with soothing and comforting words. Take a deep breath and write a letter of compassion to yourself in the voice of your best friend. Start with ...

Dear (Your name)			

#### 7. Gratitude activity:

Every day for the next week, write down 3 things each day that you are grateful for. The practice of gratitude is one of the most time-tested and proven methods for enhancing resilience.



Watch the video clip

(Link: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Zl9puhwiyw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Zl9puhwiyw</a>)



#### 8. Activity- Three good things:

Consider ending your day by reflecting on and writing down 3 good things that happened today.

Be focused about reflecting on the experiences, noting how you felt, and what was the best thing about the experience.





Mrs Sajiya, 27 years old Nursing Officer with 3 years of experience in female medical ward is working in a COVID unit of district hospital. She is on antihypertensive drugs since last 2 years. She is recently married, staying with her inlaws and has to take care of the family. She does not get any help from her husband in the household activities. Her father-in-law is diabetic and mother-in law is hypertensive and has arthritis. At the end of her duty, when she comes back to her home, she feels dehydrated and too tired to perform the household chores. She feels frustrated and exhausted due to the work pressure. She is not able to sleep properly, cries sometimes and gets scolded by her seniors for making simple mistakes at work place. She always criticizes herself, remains preoccupied with these thoughts and cannot concentrate on her work and tell herself, 'I can do nothing right'!

Based on the suggestions given in the above section, what would you suggest to Mrs Sajiya?



# Managing interpersonal relationships and seeking support

Family can be a great source of support for anyone but sometimes family issues can lead to stress for them.

### Family issues

Some of the common issues in family experienced by nurses during the current pandemic are differences of opinion, conflict over sharing of family responsibilities, fear of infection to the family members, and feeling guilty due to not being available to the family.

### Strategies to manage family issues



- **Taking safety precautions:** Bathing after coming home and maintaining distance from the elderly members in the family.
- Taking help from family members.



- **Healthy communication:** To resolve issues in the context of family, both express and respond to feelings and thoughts sensitively and appropriately.
- Maintaining distance with the vulnerable members in the family when going for continuous COVID duty.



**Talking/video calling:** Circumstances in which you are away from the family due to job, you can stay connected with them through regular telephonic or video calls.



- Conflict resolution skills: When you have differences of opinion on some matters with the family members, conflict resolution strategy can be useful to reach a healthy resolution. It involves understanding of other person's point of view and expressing one's opinion effectively. When you are discussing on the issue of conflict, it is important to stay calm, listen to other person's views attentively, think about it, and then express your feelings and opinion. Conflict can be resolved effectively if the goal is to find a middle ground, come to consensus, or to make a compromise. Learning to manage your emotions like anger during conversation can help you to avoid your discussion turning into heated argument and unsuccessful resolution of the matter.
- Appreciating and empathizing with family members if they are going through difficult time due to your unavailability.



- Problem-solving: You may come across number of problems in the family when trying to maintain work life balance. Successful resolution of these problems requires the use of problem-solving strategy. First step in problem-solving is to identify the main problem that is causing distress in the family, for example-increased burden of care on one of the family members. Once the problem is identified generate as many solutions as possible, to solve the problem through engaging in brainstorming. After generating all the solutions analyze each solution in terms of its advantages and disadvantages and finally select the one which you think is better over other solutions. It is important that the solution is finalized in discussion and consensus with other family members.
- Seeking advice from the trust worthy person friend, senior, or relative. You may come across situations in which you feel extremely distressed and helpless. Sharing your trouble with a person close to you, who can understand you, can help you look at things differently and receive some valuable suggestions.



• Seeking professional help: If you are unable to manage family issues and it is affecting your mental health and work, seeking consultation from a counsellor or psychiatrist can be useful.



Mr Anand, 32 years old, lab technician who is working in COVID ICU, lives in another city from home. He is the only son to his elderly sick parents who are now being taken care by their daughter-in-law in the village. He does not go home on weekends which he used to do earlier because he is worried that he may carry infection to family. His wife repeatedly asks him to come home as it is difficult for her to take care of them alone. He tries to convince her but she continues to argue. At the same time, he feels bad when he thinks about not being there to take care of his parents and is concerned about what if something happens to them and that he may not be in a position to go and take care of them.

Based on the suggestions given in the above section, what would you suggest to Mr Anand?



Mrs Ranita, 35 years old, respiratory therapist in a central government institute is posted in a COVID ward.

She has provision of staying within campus when she is on COVID duty and after 7 days of quarantine goes to home. Her husband works in a government office and has to regularly go to office. Her mother-in law has to take care of the children for that period. At times she feels that it is too difficult for her to look after them as she is also having osteoarthritis and knee pain. She persuades her daughter in-law to stay with them so that she gets constant help in the house. Her husband also complains that she does not take care of family causing more burden to his mother. She is unable to convince them that she should stay in the hospital campus for the safety of the family.

Based on the suggestions given in the above section, what do you suggest to Mrs Ranita?



## **Workplace communication**

**Issues:** Communication problems, workplace issues, long working hours, work pressure, inadequate breaks, and issues related to equipment and safety

## Strategies to improve

#### **Communication skills: Assertiveness**

Healthy communication plays an important part in making your workplace not only effective but also a pleasant place to be. Being a good communicator can assist you in building trust, help to solve differences and create an environment of respect that promotes problem-solving and builds relationships.

Being assertive means expressing your thoughts, opinions, feelings, attitudes and rights in an open and honest way. When you're assertive, you stand up for yourself, while still respecting others. At work, assertiveness involves balancing getting what you need with being respectful of the needs and rights of your coworkers, subordinates, and supervisors.

Using assertive communication can help you to:

- Communicate your ideas, concerns and wishes.
- Have more clarity about what is expected.
- Take control of your work load.
- Gain respect from others.
- Have your needs and wants met.

- Ask for things you want.
- Say no when appropriate to things you do not want to do.



#### Video links:

 Submissive communication: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcSengmO1v8



 Aggressive communication: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWDTcluwNg0">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWDTcluwNg0</a>



 Assertive communication: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khfZr5ZopxM



#### Responsibilities as a supervisor

If you are also working as a supervisor, may find helpful following tips useful.

- Listening with empathy and sensitivity: Understanding staffs concerns and distress with empathy and sensitivity will not only reduce their distress but also increase the respect for the supervisor.
- Regularly checking with the staff if they are doing fine will make them feel supported. Asking them if they are comfortable with the work assigned to them. Do they have any problems or concerns? Do they receive enough support from their fellow colleagues?
- Keeping the staff informed about matters concerned to them can make them feel safe and secure. During the initial period of pandemic things were changing rapidly. There was lot of uncertainty over what will happen? When will things get normal? Is it going to get worse? Is the work pressure going to increase or am I going to lose my job? so on, creating a lot of anxiety.
- Acting with integrity: If you keep your words and behave responsibly your staff will respect you and extend cooperation which is much needed in present circumstances.
- Include the staff in the process of solving the matters that are concerned to them using problem-solving. Take the suggestions from the staff and let the solutions come from them.

Ensure the staff that if they or their family members get infected, they will receive adequate support from you and the administration.



Mrs Surekha, 34 years old, Nursing Officer working in COVID ICU since last 3 months and does not get proper leave after COVID duty. Their hospital has three types of COVID zone: COVID ICU, COVID wards and COVID suspected wards. She is exhausted because of continuous heavy duty in COVID wards with no proper break. She has also noticed that her colleagues who are posted in COVID suspected wards have never been posted to COVID ICU duty and there is no rotation of staff in these three areas. One day, she decides to convey this to her sister in-charge to ask for a regular rotation of staff and changing of her posting. She is also afraid that she may not be able to convey the message properly to her and rather may be criticized

Based on the suggestions given in the above section, what would you suggest to Mrs Surekha?

#### Seeking support and providing support

*Barriers in seeking support* - Fear of getting stigmatized, fear of discrimination, misinformation, faulty assumptions: "No point in talking", "It won't help".

#### Impact of stigma/discrimination:

- Increased sense of emotional isolation, feeling of guilt and anxiety
- Lack of self-esteem and confidence
- Ostracisation of healthcare workers and others involved in COVID-19 management
- Worsening of pre-existing psychiatric illness such as depression



#### Do's

- Be appreciative and supportive of efforts made by frontline workers
- Verify the information from a reliable source such as Ministry of Health & Family Welfare's website, before sharing or forwarding the same
- Share positive stories of those who have recovered from COVID-19
- Use problem-solving skill
- Seek support for both COVID-19 and mental health conditions. Stay connected and maintain your social networks. Though you are not allowed to go outside, you can stay connected via telephone, e-mail, social media or video conference



#### **Don'ts**

- Don't spread misinformation
- Don't blame any individual, group or area for spread of COVID-19
- Don't spread name, identity, locality of persons affected or under quarantine

Story of **Dr Sabina** 

Dr Sabina, 28 years old, Junior Resident is working in a COVID ward of a private hospital. She stays away from home and parents stay at her native place. Their neighbors criticized her family as their daughter is working in a hospital. They try to avoid them and Dr Sabina is afraid that if required her parents may not get help from their neighbors. They don't have any relatives nearby on whom they can rely. She does not go home as their parents might be more criticized by the neighbors. At times, she also feels exhausted and frustrated because of her workload and feels helpless as she does not know whom to approach if she requires support either for her family or herself.

Based on the suggestions given in the above section, what would you suggest to Dr Sabina?



# Conclusion

- Reflection of whole program
- Clarification of doubts
- Remember 4 key points, keep these in your MIND

Make contact through video chat with family/friends – stay anchored and grounded

nformation that is authentic to be accessed (i.e. WHO/MoHFW)

No to alcohol/tobacco use/substances/excess screen time

De-stress through yoga/deep breathing/exercise/music/dance

# Remember – This too shall pass!

The unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused an emotional toll on the health care system as well as the health care providers. Whether this pandemic will persist for long or there will be resurgence like in other countries it is still unknown. Hence, the frontline workers must be prepared for its acute as well as chronic nature. Psychological preparedness supported by teamwork, professional commitment and staff welfare may be the crux for fighting against the pandemic. Please do not hesitate to seek professional help when not able to help yourself.



# References

1. WHO 2021. Year of the Nurse and the Midwife 2020. Accessed from https://www.who.int/campaigns/annual-theme/year-of-the-nurse-andthe-midwife-2020



2. MoHFW 2020. Guide to address stigma associated with COVID-19. Accessed from https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/ GuidetoaddressstigmaassociatedwithCOVID19.pdf

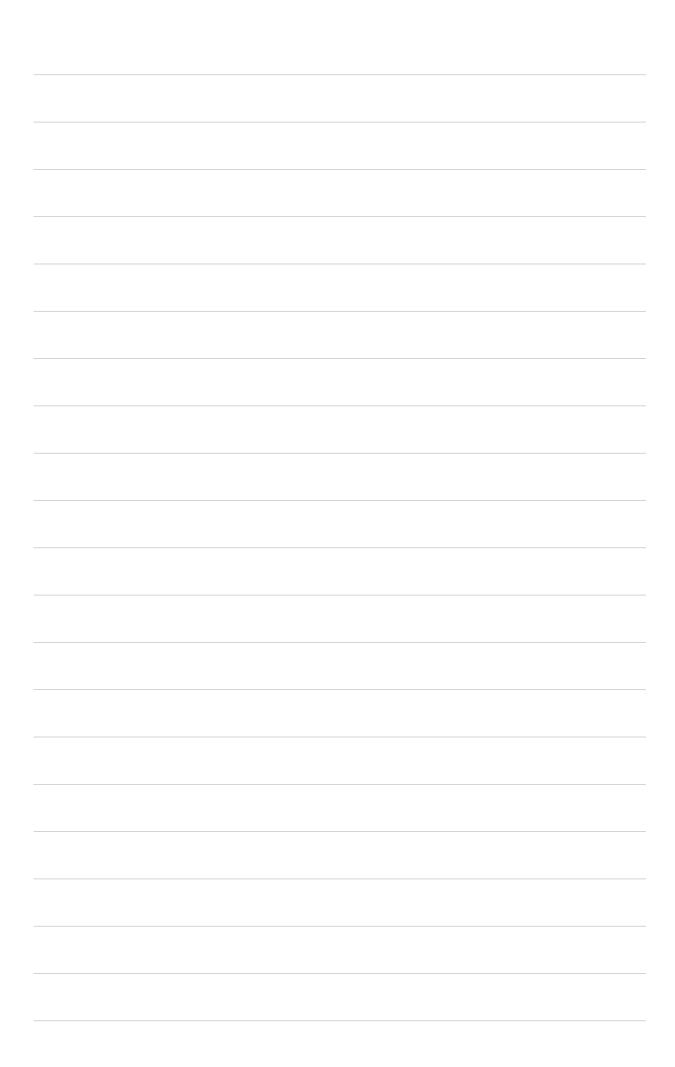


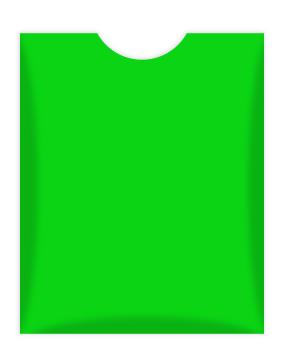
3. WHO 2020. Guide to preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19. Accessed from https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/a-guide-to-preventing-andaddressing-social-stigma-associated-with-covid-19



4. WHO 2004. Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice: Summary Report. Geneva, World Health Organization. Accessed from <a href="https://www.who.int/mental">https://www.who.int/mental</a> health/ evidence/en/promoting mhh.pdf







This module has been developed to promote mental health amongst healthcare professionals, particularly during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on strengthening and empowering the health professionals to take care of their mental health, especially those who are caring for patients with COVID-19. The training package consists of a facilitator guide and a trainee module. The skills acquired in this program can be applied in other emergency situations, health crisis and stressful situations in different work place settings such as the casualty, Intensive Care Unit, Operation Theatre, etc. Hopefully this training package with the accompanying video links will facilitate healthcare professionals to cope with the stress and anxiety.