Resilience in the Face of Grief and Loss:
A Curriculum for Pediatric Learners

Part D: Section D.2
Maintaining Personal Wellness
Goals of this Session

- Discuss the rewards and challenges of our profession
- Provide a forum to discuss these contrasts
- Learn about adaptive strategies to enhance well being and develop resiliency in our lives
- Develop an individualized wellness learning plan
Objectives

Learners will be able to

- Define wellness and its importance for the practicing physician.
- Recognize how a physician’s response to grief and loss may impact others.
- Identify one’s own responses to grief and loss.
- Learn adaptive strategies both in the moment and long term to enhance well being and develop resilience.
- Recognize the benefits of good self-care.
- Develop an individualized wellness learning plan.
Our Profession as Pediatricians

- We have a rewarding profession in providing service to our patients.
- Yet, our work in our profession can be challenging at times.
- We partner with patients and families who experience suffering.
- The impact of unexpected outcomes, emotions of family and team, fatigue, and uncertainty can take a personal toll.
What are the rewarding aspects of our profession?
Rewarding Aspects

- Provide a service to others
- Partner with families and patients
- Work as part of a team
- Identify the correct diagnosis
- Help patients to get better
- Help patients/families to adapt/thrive
- Contribute to something greater than self
What are some of the challenges?
Challenges

- Patients may not get better
- Situations with high emotions
- Grappling with uncertainty
- Medical errors
- Perfectionism of providers
- Fatigue
- Death of a patient
How are these juxtaposed?
The word patient comes from the Latin word “Patiens”
Which means “to suffer”
“In the sufferer, let me see only the human being.”

– Prayer of Maimonides
Humanism

“Set of deep-seated convictions about one’s obligations to others, especially those in need. Encompassing a spirit of sincere concern for the centrality of human values in every aspect of professional activity.”

Concept of Dual Intelligence

“The practice of medicine combines the life sciences with humanism. The science and art are not antagonistic, but supplementary.”

– Robichaud, Bioethics, 2003

Both science and humanism are essential.
“Humanism is the passion that animates professionalism”

– Jordan Cohen
1. Identify multiple perspectives
2. Reflect on how they converge or conflict
3. Choose to act altruistically

Miller and Schmidt. *Acad Med*, 1999
Acknowledging Our Own Humanism as Providers
Humanism to Self

Acknowledge our imperfections, fatigue, mistakes, discomfort with medical uncertainty
Critical Incidents During Medical Education and Practice Affect Us
What is an example of a critical incident that has stayed with you?

Influenced your life?
Examples of Critical Incidents

- Sudden decompensation of a patient
- Unexpected outcome
- Medical error
- Angry parents
- Death of a patient
- Recognizing and coping with uncertainty
- Inability to control outcomes
Important to Have Forum for Discussion of CIs

- Debrief with team, faculty member, colleague or friend
- Address intellectual decision making
- Acknowledge and articulate emotional impact
- Address ways to integrate experiences, rather than pretend that “it never happened”
- You need to have direct and deliberate dialogue to move beyond a critical incident
Stress!
“We have an obligation as educators to share with learners how we have coped with feelings of anger, anguish, shame or uncertainty in caring for patients.”

Defining Stress

- Stress is the arousal of mind and body in response to demands made on them.
- Distress results when the arousal is too high or too low.
- Each individual has his/her own zone of positive stress.
Factors Associated with Intern Stress

- Consider programmatic changes to reduce stress:
  - Improve sleep quality
  - Foster teamwork
  - Train in conflict resolution
- Decreasing the number of duty hours may be insufficient to reduce intern fatigue

Freisen, 2008
Develop self-awareness regarding stress

- Anticipate stressors
- Interpret stress as a sign or an opportunity
- Believe that you can influence events and reactions to them
- Talking about feelings and emotions can be healthy
Managing Stress: Coping

- You have a choice in how you respond to difficult situations and emotions
- Learn to respond in a healthy and productive manner
“The Violence of Modern Life”

“There is a form of modern violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence.”

– Thomas Merton
Depressed Residents?

- Study that included 220 residents from 3 large residency training programs
- 19.6% of residents screened positive for depression
- No significant change with work hour changes

Landrigan CP, 2008
Burned out Residents?

- 220 Residents (3 programs)
- Measures:
  - Emotional exhaustion
  - Depersonalization
  - Personal achievement
- Rates of burn out decreased from 75% to 57% with work hour restrictions

Landrigan 2008
What is Burn-Out?

- Emotional exhaustion
- Depersonalization
- Decreased feelings of personal accomplishment

Maslach, C. and Jackson, S. E. 1981
Burnout is an Occupational Hazard for Physicians

- Estimates of physician burnout range from 25%-75%.
- Onset is linked to residency training.
- Physicians have a higher rate of depression, anxiety, substance abuse and suicide when compared to the general population.
Why such a problem?

- Social isolation
- Self-blame for negative outcomes
- Lack of attention to emotional needs
- Inadequate attention to personal medical care
- Strong emotional responses to the care of complex patients

Eckleberry-Hunt J 2009
Factors Related to Burnout?

What do you think they would be?
Factors Related to Burnout

- Perfectionism
- Lack of coping skills
- Personal bad habits (smoking and recreational drug use)
- Lack of control over office processes
- Lack of control over schedule

Eckleberry-Hunt, 2009
Factors Related to Burnout (continued)

- Difficult and complicated patients
- Poor relationships with colleagues
- Not enough time in the day
- Excessive paperwork
- Regret over chosen career
- *Lack of time for self-care*

Eckleberry-Hunt, 2009
Strongest Factor Association

**Pessimism:** All three burnout scales associated with this view of the world
Emotional Intelligence

- The ability to recognize meanings of emotions
- The ability to reason and problem solve on the basis of emotions
- Enables one to
  - perceive emotions
  - assimilate emotion-related feelings
  - understand the information of those emotions
  - and to manage those emotions

Mayer 1999
Emotional Intelligence (continued)

- Higher emotional intelligence positively associated with
  - More compassionate, empathetic patient care
  - More effective coping of pressure and leadership
  - Improved teamwork

- Ability to regulate one’s emotional response important in controlling or minimizing stress and burnout.

- Emotional Intelligence training can include mindfulness training, mindfulness-based stress reduction or meditation.
Bridge the Continuum

Embrace patient suffering

Maintain joy in our work
Need to nourish ourselves to maintain our resilience
Well Being

Being challenged and thriving in both personal and professional life goes beyond the absence of distress.
Literature on Well Being Promotion

- Quill et al. *Arch Intern Med*, 1990
- Jones SH. *AM J Hospice and Palliative Med*, 2005
Strategies to Promote Well Being

- One size does not fit all
- Individual and personal journey
- Each of us must find a strategy that works for us
Immediate, In the Moment Strategies

- Develop self insight
- If you become frustrated or worry that you won’t perform in best way:
  - Step away
  - Take a few minutes
  - Go outside or to bathroom and scream
  - Splash water on face
  - Take time to rethink strategies
Strategies for Immediately Following an Event

- Walk away to gain some perspective
- Reach out to a colleague to discuss
- Play a favorite song
- Do something nice for yourself
Long Term Strategies

- Occupational Strategies
- Approaches to life
- Emotional/cognitive strategies
- Relationships with others
- Spirituality
- Promotion of self care
Occupational Strategies

- Honor the training process
- Be gentle with yourself
- Learn to relax
- Develop healthy doctor-patient relationships
- Learn to set limits
- Promote collegiality
- Develop a ritual of transition from work to home
“The Violence of Modern Life”

“There is a form of modern violence to which the idealist most easily succumbs: activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence.”

- Thomas Merton
Approaches to Life

- Finding meaning in work
- Maintaining perspective
- Maintaining sense of humor
- Celebrating successes
- Rituals to release tensions of day (e.g. music)
Approaches to Life Reflection

- Consider writing or talking about one of these questions:
  - Reflect on why you chose a career in medicine.
  - What keeps you, as a physician, going?
  - Think of a story that inspires you, such as an experience with a patient, a family, or a colleague.
  - Did anything happen this week that touched you or inspired you?
Emotional/Cognitive Strategies

- Taking time to grieve losses
- Time for reflection
- Skill in identifying signs of stress and frustration
- Mechanisms to address stress/frustration
Relationships with Others

- Connection with family and friends
- Protected time with family and friends
- Permission to say “no”
- Reaching out to others who may be struggling
Spirituality

- Belief in something bigger than self
- Contribution to greater good
- May go beyond specific religious beliefs
Promoting Well Being (Self-Care)

- Attention to own physical and mental health needs
- Keeping oneself well
- Good nutrition and sleep hygiene
- Relaxation, vacations
- Hobbies, exercise, yoga
Develop a Wellness Plan

- To maintain our work as humanistic providers, we must be nourished ourselves.
- As one develops an ILP for career development, one should develop an individualized wellness plan.
- Acquiring methods to maintain wellness during residency may help one adopt life-long strategies.
Develop a Wellness Plan (continued)

- Strategies should include:
  - Immediate or urgent strategies to incorporate “in the moment”
  - After an event occurs
  - Long term strategies for prevention
### Individualized Wellness Plan

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<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>How will I achieve my goals?</th>
<th>Indicators of success</th>
<th>Notes on progress (with dates)</th>
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“The secret of the care of the patient is caring for oneself while caring for the patient.”

– Cadib L, 1995
Conclusion

- Our role as pediatricians merges the intellectual and emotional aspects of patient care.
- While our responsibilities and roles can be rewarding, they can also be challenging.
- To maintain our resilience, it is essential to develop strategies for wellness.
- We need active and intentional ways to maintain personal resilience.
Return to the Meaning of Our Work