

Nursing & Midwifery Wellbeing

"The hero's are those who find a clever way to keep on doing healthily, whilst their patients feel the warmth of their care" Louise, EASA

How can you attend to your health in the busiest and most difficult of times?

Balance in your life means looking after your health:

- **Basic needs:** having sufficient work, food and shelter. See nutrition tip sheet
- **Physical health:** making time for exercise, looking after your fitness, heart and weight.
- **Emotional health:** making time for love, relationships, family and friends.
- **Intellectual health:** using your brain for study, hobbies and stimulating conversations.
- **Mental health:** learning to manage depression, anxiety, stress and emotional issues.

At Home

When you finish work, also finish thinking about it. Try debriefing or thinking things over on the commute from work to home, e.g. "what went wrong -- what could have been done better?" Once you arrive home, stop thinking about work – your home is your *sanctuary* away from the workplace.

- Commit to an enjoyable after-work activity such as walking the dog, work-out at the gym, swimming some laps or playing outdoors with your children.
- Plan time for fun -- with your partner, children, family or friends.

At Work

- Take prescribed breaks! It is particularly important - have your lunch in nature, or take a walk around the block.
- Examine your work relationships – practise getting along with the people at work.
- Practise delegating or saying "no". If you find this difficult, investigate your options for assertiveness training – or contact EASA.
- Maintain your professional development with regular skills training.

Have a good support network:

- People who actively engage with friends, relatives and neighbours are less prone to depression or illness.

Trauma - Why don't we talk about this more?

A traumatic event is an incident that causes physical, emotional, spiritual, or psychological harm. Emotional and psychological trauma is the result of extraordinarily stressful events that take away your sense of security and stability. This may cause you to feel helpless, ineffective and vulnerable in a seemingly hostile or unsafe world. Any situation that leaves you feeling overwhelmed and alone can be traumatic, even without physical harm. It is not the details that determine whether an event is traumatic, but your subjective emotional experience of the event. The more frightened and helpless you feel, the more likely that you have been traumatised.

Symptoms of trauma

Following a traumatic event, it may feel like you're going 'crazy', but remember — these are *normal* responses to *abnormal* experiences.

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Emotional and psychological symptoms of trauma:

- Shock, denial, or disbelief
- Intense or persistent anger, irritability, mood swings
- Guilt, shame, self-blame
- Feeling sad or hopeless
- Panic reactions to sudden noises / smells
- Avoidance of reminders / location related to event
- Confusion, difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety and fear
- Withdrawal from others
- Feeling disconnected or numb
- Distorted thoughts on the causes / consequences of event
- Reliving the experience (i.e. flashbacks, nightmares)
- Crying

Physical symptoms of trauma:

- Sleep disturbances
- Easily startled
- Racing heartbeat
- Aches, pains and muscle tension
- Fatigue, lethargy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Edginess, agitation, feeling wound-up
- Uncontrollable crying

Healing:

To heal from trauma, you need to accept and address the feelings and memories you've avoided, or they may return, uninvited and uncontrollable. Giving up, denial or avoiding trauma-related conversation are related to a poor recovery from trauma (i.e. with ongoing symptoms such as depression, flashbacks, emotional numbing and relationship difficulties).

Healthy recovery involves acknowledging that the event was terrible while not allowing it to interfere with daily life.

Healing involves:

- Processing trauma-related memories and feelings
- Discharging unreleased 'fight-or-flight' energy
- Learning to control strong emotions
- Rebuilding the ability to trust others

If, after 4-6 weeks, the symptoms aren't easing, consider seeking professional help. Trauma-focused Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (TF-CBT) and Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) are both available at EASA in person or via telehealth.

Sleep can be affected by a range of issues but what can help promote good sleep?

- Cut out or cut down on stimulants, such as cigarettes, tea, coffee, chocolates, soft drinks, energy drinks, etc. (caffeine can stay in your system for up to 20 hours!)
- Reduce or cut out alcohol – avoid night caps, don't believe us! Try a sleep mapping app.
- Explore any chronic pain, trauma, shift work or sleep issues such as apnea and develop a plan – we can help
- Foods containing the amino acid Tryptophan which is converted to Serotonin in the body can assist sleep (peanuts, banana, milk).
- A dark and cool room stimulates melatonin (essential to get to sleep) a hot shower before bed can help.
- Magnesium via spray or a bath with Epsom salts can assist the body to relax.