

## Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

### Supporting the Mental Health of Nurses Through Stress Reduction Techniques

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**Purpose:** Healthcare can be a very stressful environment impacting one's mental health, regardless of the position in the nursing profession, across varying careers and workplaces from clinical to academic. Stress is a major factor in the nursing profession today as the hospital population and nursing student issues are more complex leading to job related stress including overload and burnout (Aquino et al., 2018).

**Methods:** The literature review was conducted to examine the state of the science related to the mental health of nurses related to the workplace. Stress reduction techniques in the nursing profession are described under results.

**Results:** Everyone experiences stress in some form causing physical, emotional, and/or behavioral problems. As nurses, we are excellent caregivers towards others with disregard for our own health (Ross et al., 2017). The lack of healthy behaviors and personal self-care can lead to not only physical illness, including sleep deprivation (Niu et al., 2017) and fatigue (Steege et al., 2017), but also emotional distress and mental health issues (Aquino et al., 2018). In the clinical and academic environment, healthcare providers have constant pressure to produce manuscripts, grants, educational programs, reports, clinical ladder documents for promotion, dossiers, etc. Unfortunately, these necessary "projects" are interrupted by required daily activities that occur in the workplace leading to longer work days and more time spent on work related activities outside of the work environment. This continuous work pressure and stress may ultimately result in issues with mental health and unhealthy behaviors leading many to search for a proper work-life balance (Pagnan et al., 2017).

Healthy lifestyle behaviors, including proper sleep, nutrition and stress reduction, are a crucial part of effective stress management to maintain mental health. Work-life balance is vital to the mental health of nurses as they need to shut down occasionally with consistent time off from work (Boamah & Laschinger, 2016). However, individuals need to find the "right fit" for their personal stress reducers and create a plan of action for relaxation and stress management. Incorporating behavioral change is easier said than done with proven psychology behind breaking bad habits and creating new ones. The Science of Behavioral Change method identifies the main reasons behind successful health behavioral changes for adequate mental health (Berglund, 2017). The Science of Behavioral Change research suggests that the main areas to identify the impetus of health behavioral change are self-regulation, stress reactivity and resilience, and interpersonal and social processes (Nielsen et al., 2018).

**Conclusion:** In order to effectively manage stress and incorporate healthy lifestyle behaviors to maintain mental health, one must first understand personal adaptability and reactions in stressful situations. Incorporating these skills into current practice and/or institutions is a process, but can be done successfully with the right guidance and personal practice. Overall, nurses must maintain and sustain personal mental health in order to effectively care for patients and educate students. Mental health of

nurses is more important now than ever and needs to be addressed not only in the home environment, but also in the workplace environment.

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**Title:**

Supporting the Mental Health of Nurses Through Stress Reduction Techniques

**Keywords:**

behavioral change, mental health of nurses and stress management

**Abstract Summary:**

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss the importance of mental health of nurses in the workplace. Participants will learn stress reduction techniques (progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness, and meditation) and healthy lifestyle behaviors that will promote positive mental health and well-being in the workplace.

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