RESPONDING TO THE CORONAVIRUS / COVID-19 PANDEMIC:
Toolkit for Emotional Coping for Healthcare Staff (TECHS)

To learn more, visit: healthcaretoolbox.org/tools-and-resources/covid19.html
Who is This Slide Set For?

- This slide deck was put together in response to the rapidly unfolding COVID-19 pandemic and made available on March 25, 2020. This version updated April 2, 2020.*

- This resource is designed for healthcare staff, including:
  - Clinical staff (nurses, physicians, medical assistants, social workers, psychologists, etc)
  - Security
  - Front desk
  - Dispatch
  - Environmental service workers
  - Leadership
  - Any others working in healthcare settings

*We may update slide deck periodically, please check [www.healthcaretoolbox.org/COVID](http://www.healthcaretoolbox.org/COVID) for the latest version.
Who Developed This Slide Set?

- This resource is based on materials developed by the Center for Pediatric Traumatic Stress (CPTS), a treatment and services adaptation center in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN).

- We hope that these slides will be helpful in working with healthcare teams. Please use them freely, with attribution to CPTS.

- Questions or feedback? Please send to: Julia Price, PhD, Psychologist
  Center for Pediatric Traumatic Stress
  julia.price@nemours.org
Overview

I. Traumatic Stress and COVID-19
   • Effects on healthcare staff
     • As professionals
     • As potential patients themselves
     • As parents, partners, caregivers of older family members

II. Tool #1: ABC Model
    • Understanding our beliefs & thoughts and how these affect us

III. Tool #2: Steps to Reframing
     • Differentiate uncontrollable versus controllable
     • Identify strengths and look towards the positives

IV. Tool #3: Future Orientation

V. Resources

Please view as a slide show for the links to work correctly.
Goals of This Slide Set

1. Provide concrete, usable tools for healthcare staff

2. Tools support emotional coping in the face of challenging, stressful situations in healthcare settings
Common Concerns with COVID-19

- Worldwide pandemic
- Quickly changing situation
- Working in an overwhelmed healthcare system
- Healthcare professionals asked to change roles, perhaps to less familiar duties
- Ethical dilemmas related to allocating resources for patients (e.g., ventilators)
- Worries about enough PPE for healthcare staff
- Healthcare staff may become patients with COVID-19
- Protecting family members of staff from becoming infected
- Potential need for staff to self-quarantine, removing them from supporting colleagues and own families
DEFINITIONS

Trauma (Oxford English Dictionary)

1. A deeply distressing or disturbing experience

2. [Medicine] Physical injury

For our purposes:

“Trauma” = potentially distressing event / experience

“Traumatic stress” = reactions to that experience
DEFINITIONS

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Response to being exposed to trauma experienced by others, especially in one’s work / professional role.

“The changes helpers experience in their identities, world views, and spirituality affect both the helpers’ professional relationships with clients/patients and colleagues and their personal relationships”

– International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies
Role as Healthcare Staff

- All healthcare staff are at risk for secondary traumatic stress, even in “normal” times

- Witnessing suffering and death among patients and other staff

- Unsure of the future, with ever-changing, often worsening situation
Roles as Family Caregiver, Potential Patient

Additional roles in time of pandemic:
- May be a caregiver for own children, partner, older family members
  - Limited access to child and elder care
- Healthcare staff may also become infected and become patients

In all of their roles, healthcare staff are at risk for traumatic stress, and may experience other emotional impact such as anxiety or depression.
What Do We Know From Past Experience and Emerging Studies?

You are not alone – it is very common for healthcare staff to experience emotional stress and distress in this situation.

- **Learning from SARS in the early 2000’s**
  - In the midst of the crisis healthcare staff experienced traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems
  - In the longer term (3-5 yrs), healthcare staff did not show increased levels of mental health disorders, but burnout & general stress remained an issue

- **Early studies from China in the midst of COVID-19 (Feb 2020)**
  - Healthcare staff reporting
    - Traumatic stress, anxiety, depression – at same levels as general public
    - Sleep problems (more than general public)
  - What is associated with more risk of stress / anxiety / depression?
    - Worrying about family members at home, past medical (chronic illness) or mental health history
  - What might protect against stress / anxiety / depression?
    - Being satisfied with: care provided by hospital and with PPE coverage (protective measures for nosocomial infection)
What Does Traumatic Stress Look Like? (PTSD)

- **Re-experiencing**
  - “It pops into my mind.”
  - “Feels like it’s happening again.”
  - “I get upset when something reminds me of it.”

- **Alterations in cognition or mood**
  - Feeling very scared, angry, guilty, or ashamed.
  - Thoughts: “All people are bad” / “The whole world is a scary place.”

- **Avoidance**
  - “I block it out, try not to think about it.”
  - “I try to stay away from things that remind me of it.”

- **Increased arousal**
  - “I’m always afraid something bad will happen.”
  - “I jump at any loud noise.”
  - “I can’t concentrate, can’t sleep.”

It is not unusual to have some or all of these reactions during an unfolding stressful situation like the COVID-19 pandemic.
PTSD and Other Emotional Responses

What emotional responses might you notice in yourself or your peers?

- Irritability
- Inability to concentrate
- Feeling angry / cynical
- Intrusive or recurrent disturbing thoughts
- Sleep problems
- Feeling emotionally detached
- Overly aware of any signs of danger
- Hopelessness
- Guilt
- Avoiding reminders of difficult experiences
- Social withdrawal
- Fear
- Chronic exhaustion
- Physical ailments
- Diminished self-care
- Feeling ineffective
- Feeling down or depressed
- Feeling apathetic
How Can We Practice Being Trauma-informed with Ourselves and Our Colleagues?

Even in “normal” times, healthcare workers are at risk.

Results from a hospital-wide survey of healthcare staff:

- **39%** High risk for compassion fatigue / secondary trauma reactions
- **21%** Moderate to high risk for burnout
Why Might Working in Healthcare During COVID-19 Lead to Traumatic Stress?

- **Challenges beliefs** about the world as safe place
- Realistic (or subjective) **sense of life threat**
- Lack of healthcare resources may be **frightening**
- Staff may feel **helpless** in professional and personal lives
- **Uncertainty** about course and outcome of COVID-19
- May involve **pain or observed pain**
- Exposure to injury or death of **others**
- May have to make **important decisions** in times of great distress
- **Long hours** and **little sleep**
Am I Experiencing Traumatic Stress Reactions?

- Gauge your own reactions
- You may wish to complete an evidence-based assessment – now or later – to check on your own traumatic stress reactions

CLICK TO RATE YOUR REACTIONS NOW

- What is this tool?
  - Assesses current traumatic stress reactions in adults
  - Caveat: Based on a validated tool* – adapted here for use during the evolving pandemic situation

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How To Address Traumatic Stress Reactions

- **Universal Self-Care**
  - Everyone can benefit from learning more about coping
  - Learn specific coping tools, based in solid research, in the following slides: *Toolkit for Emotional Coping for Healthcare Staff (TECHS)*
  - Find links to other resources on HealthCareToolbox.org

- **Significant Reactions**
  - If you experience significant traumatic stress reactions or you have any reactions that worry you, contact your Employee Assistance Program
  - Evidence-based psychosocial treatment (e.g., trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy) is often effective and may be available via telehealth or online
Toolkit for Emotional Coping for Healthcare Staff (TECHS)

INTRODUCTION
Toolkit for Emotional Coping for Healthcare Staff (TECHS)

- Learn and use evidence-based tools for coping

- TECHS includes 3 tools to understand and manage adversity

- Interpersonal/team-based approach *

- Tools are based on:
  - Cognitive-behavioral therapy skills
  - Skills for groups and families

* Best in a team – but you can use parts of it on your own if needed.
Individual Practice with Tools

We will introduce 3 tools:

1. **ABC Model**
2. **Steps to Reframing**
3. **Future Orientation**

**First:** Individually, complete each of the 3 tools

**Next:** *If you are doing this as a team*, complete the tools with your team, to help develop group resilience
TECHS TOOL #1: ABC Model
Why Are You in Healthcare?

Let’s begin by spending a few minutes considering the current context.

Why did you choose this profession?

- What drew you to it?
- What, if any, reservations have you had about this career choice?
- What are the best parts of this career?
- What are the most challenging parts?
ABC Model
based in cognitive theory / research

Next, you’ll take a little time to understand your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

- These tools will help you reflect on
  - Where you are emotionally in this moment
  - How feelings, beliefs, behaviors have an impact on your wellbeing
Directions:
Find a blank piece of paper (or open up a blank document on your tablet / computer) so that you can work through this form on your own or in your group.
A = Adversity

- Identify an **event that is particularly upsetting to you** in this moment

- Examples (adversities)
  - So many patients at once
  - Working outside of my usual role
  - My kids are at home and need me
  - I’m not available to help my partner/family
  - Feeling emotionally isolated from family and support systems
B = Beliefs

- What **thoughts** are you having about the adversity you chose to focus on?

- What are you saying to yourself in private about this adversity?

- Examples (beliefs / thoughts):
  - I can’t handle this stress.
  - I’m ineffective at work.
  - I’m not a good parent/partner/healthcare worker.
  - This situation has no end.
C = Consequences

- What **outcomes and consequences** are related to this adversity and your beliefs / thoughts?

  - **FEELINGS**: How are you **feeling** as a result?
    - Angry?
    - Sad?
    - Worried?

  - **ACTIONS**: What do you **do** when you feel that way?
    - Show or hide your feelings?
    - Healthy choices?

  - **RELATIONSHIPS**: How does all of this impact **others**?
    - Your colleagues?
    - Your friends and family?
    - Your patients?
Summarizing Your Answers for ABC

Some other things to consider:

- How might the ABC’s be different
  - Across your medical team?
  - In your family?

- Are others aware of your ABC’s?
  - Have you talked with anyone about your feelings, beliefs, actions, or relationships?
TECHS TOOL #2: Steps to Reframing
Steps to Reframing

- During ABC: You identified a specific adversity, and developed a greater understanding of your beliefs/thoughts and their consequences (e.g., on your feelings, actions, and relationships).

- Next, let’s consider how to shift those consequences to a more positive place.
4 Steps to Reframing

**Step 1:**
Accept the Uncontrollable

**Step 2:**
Focus on the Controllable

**Step 3:**
Acknowledge Your Own Strengths

**Step 4:**
Use the Positive

**Directions:**
Using the back of your paper (or the next page in your electronic document), work through these steps on your own or in your group.

The next slides will help you do this.
Step 1: Accept the Uncontrollable

It can be difficult to accept some things are out of our control.

- List: What parts of this adversity are truly beyond your control?

- Write: What is it like to give up that control?
Step 2: Focus on the Controllable

- List: What in this situation is within your control?

- List: What aspects can you focus on that will
  - Improve the situation?
  - Help you cope better?
  - Help you feel more in control?
  - Help your patients / your colleagues / your family & friends?

Step 2
Step 3: Acknowledge Your Own Strengths

Think back to a time when you dealt with a challenging situation in the past.

Write a few notes about:

- What strengths helped you cope?
- What strengths do you have with your medical team or family that maybe you don’t have alone?
- Which of these strengths can be applied to this situation?
Step 4: Use the Positive

If you accept the uncontrollable, focus on the controllable, and apply your strengths.

- How can using the previous footsteps help me think differently?
- How would you see the adversity differently?
- How would it impact others?
- Based on this exercise, is there a positive take-home message for you?
TECHS TOOL #3: Future Orientation
Consider your COVID-19 Roadmap
Dealing with this pandemic is like a journey, with a beginning, middle, and end.

Individual challenges, patients, and families may be a part of your journey.

We can sometimes get stuck focusing on just certain parts of a stressful experience.

It’s often useful to think broadly about the past, present, and future – across the entire journey.
Future Orientation

- Where do you see yourself on the roadmap right now? Why?

- Where were you on the roadmap in the first or earlier portion of this journey?

- How do you think your position on the map impacts your
  - Coping?
  - Daily life?
  - Personal relationships?
  - Professional relationships?
Future Orientation

Consider a time in the future (e.g., 2 weeks, 2 months, 2 years).

- Where are you on the map?
- What’s happening at work at this point?
- What’s happening at home at this point?
- What is daily life like?
- What will help you move to a more positive place by this time point?
BUILDING TEAM RESILIENCE
Building Team Resilience

It can be very helpful to use this tool with your healthcare colleagues related to a challenging situation.

- Share different frames of reference (ABCs).
- Appreciate the range of consequences that result when frames of reference interact (e.g., are similar or different).
- Help each person own their feelings and actions and come to appreciate those of others
- Group reframing can help us appreciate each others’ strengths and the value of a variety of approaches.
Connect with Your Team

- Use the tools you learned today to share with your team, if you haven’t already

- Set a time to meet in person (with appropriate social distancing) or virtually
  - 2-4 people
  - May want to gather based on unit or discipline or both
  - Ideally, you are with colleagues with whom you work closely and feel comfortable discussing emotional reactions

- Follow your own comfort level in sharing within your small group
Work Collaboratively Through Tools

- Goal is to understand different perspectives around adversities at work
- Clarify differences and encourage acceptance rather than looking for “correct” answer
- Identify potential benefits (and challenges) that can come from having a range of different ways of seeing things, within a healthcare team
RESOURCES

Find much more on this topic at
healthcaretoolbox.org/tools-and-resources/covid19.html
Gauge Your Own Traumatic Stress Reactions

- You may wish to complete an evidence-based assessment – now or later

CLICK TO RATE YOUR REACTIONS NOW

- What is this tool?
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Want a Regular Self-Check for Reactions & Resilience?

- Provider Resilience App
  - Designed for health providers in military
  - Providers in other settings may find it relevant

  What’s in the app?
  - Professional Quality of Life Measure (ProQOL)
    - secondary traumatic stress, burnout, compassion satisfaction
  - Other resilience tools

  Score & track your results over time
  Repeat as often as you wish

Download the Provider Resilience app for iOS or Android & do a self-check on a regular basis.
Resources For Providers: Interactive Online Training

1. FREE Interactive Online Nursing CE at HealthCareToolbox.org

2. The “how to” of implementing trauma-informed pediatric care in the hospital and ED

3. 5 One-hour Help Courses

4. COMING SOON: Secondary Traumatic Stress Course
Resources For Your Patients
HealthCareToolbox.org

Patient Education Handouts
(English & Spanish)

Parent Tipsheets on COVID-19
(English & Spanish)
About the Center
Since 2002, CPTS has provided national leadership on medical traumatic stress & trauma-informed pediatric care as part of the NCTSN

- Focus on health care providers and systems
  - Tools for practice
  - Training (online & in person)
  - Resources for providers & families
  - Implementation projects

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
- Mission: Raise standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families and communities.
- 60+ centers across the US
- Address all types of child trauma and many different service systems
- Founded in 2001
Appendix: Self-assessment – Am I experiencing traumatic stress reactions?
Rate your stress reactions
Acute Stress Disorder Scale (ASDS) adapted for COVID-19

1=Not at all   2=Mildly   3=Medium   4=Quite a bit   5=Very much

Please consider how you have been feeling since COVID-19 started.

1) Have you felt numb or distant from your emotions? 1) ____
2) Have you ever felt in a daze? 2) ____
3) Have things around you ever felt unreal or dreamlike? 3) ____
4) Have you ever feel distant from your normal self or like you were watching it happen from outside? 4) ____
5) Have you been unable to recall important aspects of things that happened? 5) ____
6) Have memories of things that happened kept entering your mind? 6) ____
7) Have you had bad dreams or nightmares? 7) ____
8) Have you felt as if you were reliving things that happened? 8) ____
Rate your stress reactions
Acute Stress Disorder Scale (ASDS) adapted for COVID-19

1=Not at all   2=Mildly   3=Medium   4=Quite a bit   5=Very much

Please consider how you have been feeling since COVID-19 started.

9) Do you feel very upset when you are reminded of things that happened? 9) ____
10) Have you tried not to think about it? 10) ____
11) Have you tried not to talk about it? 11) ____
12) Have you tried to avoid situations or people that remind you of it? 12) ____
13) Have you tried not to feel upset or distressed about it? 13) ____
14) Have you had trouble sleeping? 14) ____
15) Have you felt more irritable? 15) ____
16) Have you had difficulty concentrating? 16) ____
Rate your stress reactions
Acute Stress Disorder Scale (ASDS) adapted for COVID-19

1 = Not at all  2 = Mildly  3 = Medium  4 = Quite a bit  5 = Very much

Please consider how you have been feeling since COVID-19 started.

17) Have you become more alert to danger?  17) ____

18) Have you become jumpy?  18) ____

19) When you think about it, do you sweat or tremble or does your heart beat fast?  19) ____

20) Thinking about all of these reactions together, how much are they bothering you or getting in the way of your work, relationships, or other parts of life?  20) ____

SCORING:
Am I having significant reactions?

Sum of items 1 to 19 $\geq 56$

and/or

Rated item 20 $\geq 3$