

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TO TAKE CARE OF OTHERS IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

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“**T**o care for” means to treat, assist, take care of something or someone, taking responsibility, giving attention¹. In Nursing, it gives meaning to the profession, considered one of the premises that accompany professionals from academic training, across the development of skills and competences throughout the career, appearing as both a subjective and objective feature.

Historically, Nursing has faced several challenges, from the period of Ancient Nursing based on practice to Modern Nursing based on science². With the arrival of the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), new challenges arise day after day, causing us to reflect and think.

In January 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared an outbreak of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), warning the world of the high risk of transmission across countries. In March of the same year, the outbreak was characterized as a pandemic, generating stress in the majority of the population, health professionals included³. There were several factors that contributed to putting the population in a scenario full of uncertainties amidst the pandemic and political-social issues⁴. Unfavorable working conditions, such as inadequate staffing for the high complexity of care for infected patients, inadequate remuneration, scarcity or low quality of personal protective equipment (PPE), and other situations in the daily work of Nursing professionals were intensified with the onset and spread of the pandemic. Such factors contribute to raising the level of mental and physical exhaustion, even causing organic changes in health professionals⁵.

Recommendations have been developed, gathered and published to guide and support the population as well as frontline healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients³.

Management and collective strategies such as therapeutic listening, psychological care, and support networks using digital tools have gained prominence in the management of psychological distress⁶.

Self-care, meditation, self-knowledge and strategies for coping with the possibilities of illness were established and continue to be suggested and applied to minimize the consequences of this period. Therefore, they support health professionals and must be accessible.

Raising awareness about the need for self-care has already been considered an important matter, but, currently, it has become fundamental for survival. Despite the challenges experienced and overcome so far, we remain in a setting of uncertainty as to the end of the pandemic, as new variants emerge.

Self-care practices have become essential for coping with situations to which we are constantly exposed and can serve as protective measures to avoid mental and physical illnesses⁷.

In addition to practices suggested and offered in support of health professionals, taking care of oneself is inherent to each person; it requires clarity of ideas and actions so that there are actual improvements in the quality of life. For this to happen, organized actions are necessary:

- Planning self-care time every day, so you can introduce healthier habits into your routine;
- Managing your time to achieve what can in fact improve your well-being;
- Developing your own menu with healthier foods that you like to eat;
- Being more selective with the information you receive;
- Setting aside quality time to do what you like or to do nothing;
- Practicing physical activities and going for walks, which contribute to maintaining physical and mental health;
- Caring for the quality of sleep, as a well-rested sleep calms the mind and renews energies;
- Being kind and prudent in the work environment creates mutual support between you and your peers;

- Perceiving conflicting situations, so you can assertively engage in the decision-making process;
- Keeping up-to-date on work processes to feel confident in the execution of tasks;
- Identifying signs of physical and/or mental illness and seek help.

“Take care of yourself: the principle of caring for yourself is the principle that underlies your need, commands your development and organizes your practice”⁸.

In order to take care of others, one must assume the responsibility of taking care of oneself and, for this to happen, a process of personal transformation must be faced, consisting of a set of attitudes and practices of a subject towards themselves, in search of a more harmonious and healthy way of life. Acting consciously creates conscious, healthy and better results for the quality of life of those who care and are cared for.

Regiane Faria Machado

University Hospital, Universidade de São Paulo (HU-USP).

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