How Can Dentists Develop Emotional Resilience in a World Full of Stress?: Practical Strategies from Psychology, Public Health, and Neuroscience

Sheela Raja, PhD
April 19, 2022

To interact during the webinar:

- Questions for the Technical Team
- Questions for the presenter(s)
Disclosures

• Sheela Raja has no relationships to disclose.
# TOPICS

- **Brief**
  - Brief Overview of Current Data on Stress and Mental Health

- **Explore**
  - Explore How Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and Moral Injury Affect Us

- **Discuss**
  - Discuss How Resilience Skills Apply to Our Lives

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**WE ARE IN A PERIOD OF CHRONIC STRESS**
OUR BODIES ARE BUILT FOR SHORT TERM STRESSORS

SOMETIMES I AM SO STRESSED ABOUT THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC THAT I STRUGGLE TO EVEN MAKE BASIC DECISIONS

% STRONGLY/SOMewhat AGREE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen Z adults</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennials</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen Xers</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boomers</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older adults</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
AMA SURVEY: CAREGIVERS COPING WITH COVID-19

- 42 health care organizations across the U.S. assessed their workers’ stress during the pandemic. (N= 20,947 physicians and other healthcare workers)
  - 61% felt high fear of exposing themselves or their families to COVID-19
  - 38% self-reported experiencing anxiety or depression.
  - 43% suffered from work overload
  - 49% reported burnout
- Stress scores highest among nursing assistants, medical assistants, social workers and inpatient workers (including housekeepers)
- Stress scores were higher among women and Black and Latinx health care workers
- 46% felt valued by their organization (their odds of burnout were 40% lower)


STRESS AND HEALTH PROFESSIONS STUDENTS

- 42 health care organizations across the U.S. assessed their workers’ stress during the Kim et al. (2021) found that >50% reported moderate-to-severe symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Halperin et al. (2021) study of medical students representing 40 medical schools found 30.6% and 24.3% rates of significant anxiety and depression, respectively (61% higher for anxiety and 70% higher for depression compared to pre-COVID era).
- Sabourin et al. (2019) found that >25% of PharmD students scored in the high severity range for depression, generalized anxiety, academic distress, and eating concerns.
- Chi et al. (2021) found that residents and dental students with clinical levels of anxiety (22.2%) and depression (16.7%) were 8% and 11% more likely to consider leaving their program, respectively.
UIC Holistic Study: Mental Health

Question: Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, or difficulties with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good? (CDC, 2018)

PANDEMIC SURVEY

1 in 4 Essential Workers (25%) Diagnosed With Mental Health Disorder Since Start of Pandemic

75% say they could have used more emotional support than they received.

34% received treatment from a mental health professional.

© American Psychological Association
ADA 2021 DENTIST WELL-BEING SURVEY REPORT
SELF-REPORTED MEDICAL CONDITION BY GENDER OR AGE, 2021

DEPRESSION SCREENING QUESTIONS: “IN THE PAST 2 WEEKS HAVE YOU...”

Thought about or wanted to commit suicide?
Had no interest in things?
Had feelings of worthlessness?
Had difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep?
Had difficulty concentrating or making decisions?
Had a poor appetite?
Been feeling low in energy?
Been feeling hopeless about the future?
Been feeling blue?
Been blaming yourself for things?
HEALTH PROFESSIONS ARE AT HIGH RISK

• A sick workforce cannot provide healthcare

HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

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When you do your work well, when you care, it can take a toll.

The overall practice of caring for oneself in order to remain effective at — and avoid negative effects of — caring for others.

A cognitive process or shift in “world view” when you are repeatedly exposed to trauma.

Happens in the helping professions.

Also called “secondary traumatization.”
COMPASSION FATIGUE

• Emotional and physical reactions when you cannot replenish or regenerate
• You do not need to be in a “helping field” to experience this

BURNOUT

Physical and emotional exhaustion when you have low job satisfaction, powerlessness, or a very high workload

Can be resolved by changing jobs (unlike CF and VT)

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WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

1: A set of skills that help you develop a healthy and body.

2: Techniques that help you develop strong and emotional connections and sense of purpose.

3: A set of practices that help you cope in healthy during times of stress.

RESILIENCE ISN’T ALL FAIRIES AND UNICORNS

• You can still have reactions and symptoms and be resilient—resilient people may still have symptoms, but they are able to function (often well) on a daily basis.
• Resilience skills can be learned and practiced.
• Resilience involves finding ways to survive and adapt under stress, while post-traumatic growth is a way to find meaning in what you’ve experienced.

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Finding a Routine: Sleep, Diet, Exercise, and Tech

Healthy Coping

- Face Unhealthy Habits
  - Tobacco, Alcohol, Prescription and Non-Prescription Drugs
Engaging with the world around you every day

Caring for your physical health

Finding meaning, joy, and purpose

Caring for your mental and emotional health

Resilience

Calming Your Mind and Body: Mindfulness

- BREATHING
- ART
- PRAYER
- MEDITATION
- WALKING
- CULTIVATE AN “OBSERVANT STANCE”
- GROUNDING SKILLS

### Tolerating Difficult Emotions: What To Control and What to Accept

- **Avoidance is the “go-to” strategy in American culture**
- **Is strength the same as stoicism?**
- Learn to identify primary emotions
- Secondary emotions cause even more damage
- Monitor your emotions
- Identify when you are numbing
- Find safe places to express those emotions

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### Learning from the Past: No Shame, Smart Blame

- What you can learn from, and what was out of your control?
- Shame is a feeling that you are somehow damaged and inadequate as a person
- Self-blame (guilt) focuses on controllable/situational factors, not traits
  - Identify invalidating thoughts
  - Change to behavioral self-blame
### Treating Depression and Anxiety: Thoughts and Behaviors

If you already depressed or anxious, then life’s setbacks are going to become even more stressful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn</th>
<th>Learn skills to catch thoughts that contribute to anxiety and depression</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>Do something you enjoy every day (or once a week?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Practice getting some distance from painful thoughts (the “conveyor belt”)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Engaging with the world around you every day

### Caring for your physical health

### Resilience

### Finding meaning, joy, and purpose

### Caring for your mental and emotional health

### Creating Safe Connections: Social Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify</th>
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<th>Identify</th>
<th>Plan ahead</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Get</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify your emotional support circle</td>
<td>Identify your instrumental support circle</td>
<td>Identify your “take a break” circle</td>
<td>Plan ahead for when you might need your support</td>
<td>Practice asking for help</td>
<td>Do a periodic audit</td>
<td>Get help for physical, sexual, or emotional abuse</td>
</tr>
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### Looking for the Bright Side: Realistic Optimism and Cognitive Flexibility

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<tr>
<th>Look</th>
<th>Look</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look at your everyday stressors and find alternative interpretations</td>
<td>Look at more difficult challenges, and identify ways you have changed</td>
<td>Practice holding “both realities” of stress and growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Taking Chances: Planning and Positive Risks

Dream About Your Long-Term Goals And Values

Put Those On Paper In Some Way (From Art To A Graph)

Break A Big Challenge Down Into Smaller Steps

Identify The Obstacles And Brainstorm How To Get Around Them

If you are afraid of taking chances, you are more likely to be overwhelmed during times of stress, and less likely to be able to use those opportunities to learn and grow. "Approach coping" isn’t the same and risky behavior.


Engaging with the world around you every day

Caring for your physical health

Resilience

Finding meaning, joy, and purpose

Caring for your mental and emotional health

Creating Meaning: Fun, Humor, Service, And Purpose

- You do not need to be worry-free to create meaning
- Humor and stress can live together

Donate ➜ Educate ➜ Volunteer ➜ Become an Activist

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HOW TO LEAD IN A PANDEMIC

Promote

- Safety through honest communication.
- Self- and Community-Efficacy with active coping strategies that amplify public health messaging.
- Connectedness using technology.
- Calming by encouraging mental health breaks and clinical services as needed.
- Hope by sending encouraging messages and inspirational stories.
- Resilience by using challenges as an opportunity for institutional change.

Reference: National Center for PTSD
Create Your Own Recipe for Resilience

Resilience

Engaging with the world around you every day
Caring for your physical health

Finding meaning, joy, and purpose
Caring for your mental and emotional health


UNDER THE OCEAN THERE ARE MANY ECOSYSTEMS
Session Two: May 18, 2022
Developing Your Own Emotional Resilience And Wellness Plan

Learning Objectives:
• Apply resilience skills to common scenarios in oral healthcare.
• Generate three personalized strategies to support resilience in your practice setting.

RECLAIMING HOPE

It’s easy to look at a news report and feel hopeless.

Within public health guidelines, there are a lot of decisions that everyone has to make for themselves.

Practicing your own resilience recipe can help you feel less hopeless and angry—and you may even end up being a role model for others who are struggling.

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THANK YOU!

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PLEASE EMAIL DR. RAJA IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO COPY OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS SLIDE DECK.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

“We were scared, but our fear was not as strong as our courage.”

--Malala Yousafzai
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