

# Rekindling the Passion for Nursing

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## Abstract

Nurses often experience compassion fatigue and burnout when working in stressful environments. Nurses tend to put the needs of their patients above their own. It is imperative for the work environment to promote relaxation and restoration, to avert compassion fatigue and nursing burnout. All employees of the project director's organization were encouraged to attend Caring for the Caregiver Day, a hospital-sponsored event providing education and promoting self-help interventions aimed to decrease compassion fatigue and burnout. The event included aromatherapy, music therapy, art therapy, pet therapy, massage therapy, and education on compassion fatigue for nurses. In addition, the Progressive Care Unit nurses were encouraged to utilize a created serenity room, a relaxing atmosphere equipped with massage chairs, aromatherapy, art supplies, and soothing sounds.



Serenity Room

## Introduction

The heart of nursing is caring and compassion for those we serve and heal. McHolm (2006) described compassion as an emotion in which we enter into the world of the patient, becoming conscious of their distress and taking action to comfort them. However, nursing can be a strenuous, emotionally challenging, and stressful career. Compassion fatigue occurs when nurses give more vitality and compassion than they receive, and is exhibited as exhaustion in the physical, emotional, and spiritual realm (Frandsen, 2010).

The goal of this project was to increase compassion satisfaction, decrease compassion fatigue and burnout among the nursing team of the Progressive Care Unit and improve employee engagement and patient satisfaction scores by providing educational resources and improved work environment.

When compassion fatigue and burnout are addressed, job satisfaction may improve and nurses are better equipped to deliver caring, compassionate care to their patients. It is vital for the nursing team to relax, rejuvenate, and de-stress during their work day. When nurses feel cared for, they will be more likely to treat others with caring and compassion. Self-management when caring for others is important to allow revitalization of the caregiver



Caring for the Caregiver Event

## Methods

Nurses of the Progressive Care Unit were invited to complete the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL V) survey via survey monkey two weeks prior to creation of the serenity room and given a two week time limit to complete. Approximately four weeks after completion of the serenity room, the nurses on the Progressive Care Unit received a ProQOL V survey with two additional questions (1. Have you utilized the serenity room? 2. Did you attend the Caring for the Caregiver event?). No personal demographic information was requested and participants remained anonymous.

Employee engagement scores were compared using August 2014 and August 2015 scores. The survey assessed the employees' perception of "the environment at the project director's organization makes teammates in my department want to go above and beyond what's expected of them". Patient satisfaction scores were evaluated monthly. The project director monitored the trend line for the patient satisfaction scores to evaluate impact, particularly for staff addressing emotional needs and communication with nurses.

## Results

The survey was sent to 35 Registered Nurses of the Progressive Care Unit. Responses were received from 24 registered nurses (68.6% response rate).

### Serenity Room

**Compassion satisfaction:** The test results show that the difference between the compassion satisfaction means at pre-test and post-test are not statistically significant:  $t(25) = 1.27, p = .22$  (two-tailed). Thus, even though the mean score of the compassion satisfaction scale was higher than the pre-intervention score, the difference is due to sampling error (i.e., chance).

**Burnout:** The test results show a statistically significant difference between the post-test mean ( $M = 19.74$ ) and the pre-test mean ( $M = 19.96$ ):  $t(23) = -2.16, p < .05$  (two-tailed). This means respondents were at a slightly lower risk of burnout after receiving the intervention.

**Secondary Trauma Stress:** The test results show that the decrease of 2.32 was statistically significant:  $t(24) = -2.02, p < .05$  (two-tailed). The significant results mean that respondents who received the intervention had a lower secondary trauma stress level.

### Caring for the Caregiver Event:

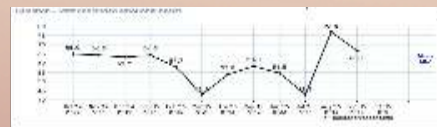
Results of the independent sample t-test show that respondents who attended the Caring for the Caregiver event and those who did not attend have statistically significantly different secondary trauma stress level at post-test [ $t(22) = -2.14, p < .05$ ], but not compassion satisfaction level [ $t(22) = -1.90, p = .07$ ] and burnout [ $t(22) = 1.64, p = .12$ ]. Respondents who attended the Caring for the Caregiver event have a slightly lower score on the secondary trauma stress scale ( $M = 20, SD = 4.44$ ) compared to those who did not attend the event ( $M = 24.68, SD = 6.25$ ). In other words, respondents who did not attend the event experienced significantly higher stress level compared to those who attended the event.

### Press Ganey Patient Satisfaction Survey:

Results have shown improvement since the intervention in the Communication with Nurses domain and Staff addressed emotional needs as noted below.

### Press Ganey Employee Engagement Survey:

Results for "The environment at the project director's organization makes teammates in my department want to go above and beyond what's expected of them" improved from 3.43 in 2014 to 4.04 in 2015.



## Discussion

Nursing is a profession of giving more than receiving. Nurses give so much of themselves; they need to be refilled. Nurses can suffer from low compassion satisfaction, burnout, and compassion fatigue, as evidenced by feeling emotionally drained; having a negative, uncaring attitude; and struggling to give quality input into their work (Trewick, 2008). In a study conducted by the American Nurses Association in 2001 revealed 70.5% of nurses reported acute and chronic effects of stress and being overworked. Of the surveyed nurses, 75.8% conveyed unsafe working conditions hinder their ability to provide quality nursing care ("Holistic Stress," 2015). Allowing nurses to decompress and relax during their shift can replenish the nurse to be able to care of others with compassion and caring. A serenity area to relax, take breaks, and eat meals can allow the nurse to rejuvenate and rest. It is imperative to help nurses deal with stress by educating on symptoms and self-help interventions to combat compassion fatigue and burnout and increase compassion satisfaction, which may improve employee engagement and patient satisfaction scores. Nurses can only provide compassionate, caring care to others when they are filled themselves. For this project director's organization to fulfill the mission, vision, and core values, an investment in the direct caregivers becomes a necessity.

## Conclusions

The Caring for the Caregiver event and the serenity room were aimed to improve compassion satisfaction, decrease nurse burnout, decrease secondary trauma stress, improve employee engagement, and increase patient satisfaction. The nurse's response to the serenity room has made the project successful. The nurses' gratitude and perpetual positive feedback was overwhelming and has made this project worthwhile. Because of the positive responses and results, an additional six nursing units have serenity rooms. The nurses had the same positive verbal responses as the Progressive Care Unit nurses regarding the serenity room. The Caring for the Caregiver event is planned to be an annual event.

## References

### References

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