

# Got Stress?



## Ever feel like the Nurse in this picture?

### **Not sure whether to laugh, cry or just hunker down and handle a chaotic day?**

Stress can compromise our ability to navigate our busy healthcare careers on a daily basis. If stress is left untreated, feelings aren't expressed, or the difficult situations we see every day are left buried deep within us, the results can be catastrophic.

Addictions and / or diversion of drugs, maladaptive coping strategies and unprofessional conduct are just a few of the negative consequences that can occur when healthcare professionals are unsuccessful in managing the stress we all face on a daily basis. The need to think and act quickly in fast-paced healthcare environments is not always easy for nurses and clinical teams faced with the present challenges found in healthcare - but it is necessary.

The Jones report (2005) stated that when a hospital loses a nurse, the cost to the hospital ranges from \$61,000 - 67,000 per nurse.

When nurses develop addictions, this does not include the cost of medications stolen or diverted or the unknown cost to patients in their care as well as the effects on the cohesiveness of the clinical team. Most importantly, there are immense effects on the physical and emotional health, family relationships and career of the nurse involved.

Here are 10 ways to cope with a stressful nursing career.

1. Take care of yourself: make sure you get enough sleep and food to eat. If it's 10:00 am and you think you would like some coffee and then 7 hours later you realize you still haven't had that

[www.RN-Coach.com](http://www.RN-Coach.com)

Supporting Nursing Excellence in Healthcare



**RN Coach.com offers:**

coaching specifically for healthcare professionals. We help you assess and sharpen your strengths, communication, interpersonal and leadership skills. We work collaboratively with you to enhance both your personal and professional relationships and your healthcare career. You will also learn to foster more compassionate interactions with your patients, families and colleagues in fast-paced, critical situations.

**Visit us on the web at  
[www.RN-coach.com](http://www.RN-coach.com)**

cup of coffee and you've had to go to the bathroom for the last 4 hours, you're not taking care of yourself.

2. Keep the lines of communication open with the members of your team. Remember, you are all "in it" together. If you have had a difficult case or multiple codes, debrief. Talk about the effect the day has had upon you and what you have learned about yourself both professionally and personally. Express your feelings as 'stuffing them' eventually leads to additional stress, burnout or compassion fatigue.
3. Be aware of your defenses: the way you manage your stress. Nurses never walk into a code room and say "eewwww blood!" We all see overwhelming things everyday; our defenses help us navigate the feelings and emotions we have. There are appropriate times to talk about our feelings / emotions and inappropriate times. Our patients and families are often emotional, as they have to manage the stress of their family members illness and a lot of acronyms they may not understand in a culture that is very overstimulating. They may interpret our defenses as uncaring or insensitive. Counterbalance this by asking if they have questions regarding care or if they require additional information or support.
4. If you are precepting a new nurse or graduate, they may not know how to manage the stress of a fast-paced healthcare area. The better you are at "modeling" appropriate coping strategies, the easier your preceptee will adjust to the challenges at hand. Review cases clinically but also take a few seconds to 'check in' and make sure they are handling the pace, patients and families and teamwork from an interpersonal level as well.
5. Do you have a ton of accrued hours to use for vacation? You're not alone. Usually we hear: "there's no one to cover for me" or "it's too busy now - I'll take it later". What usually happens is you either cash out the hours or lose them. Use them! Even if it's only to take a few days away, it's rest that you need. Have fun, relax and take care of yourself.
6. If you're at the grocery store and the overhead signal goes off and you look for a crash cart instead of listening about the spill in isle 4, you may be working too hard.
7. Pay attention to the way your team is coping with the stress they have. If you notice a colleague hasn't shown up since a code a few days ago, make sure you check in with them or have someone give them a



## What sets us apart from other healthcare consulting firms and coaching organizations?

Our consultants and coaches have experienced the demands and challenges of Emergency Departments and busy healthcare environments firsthand.

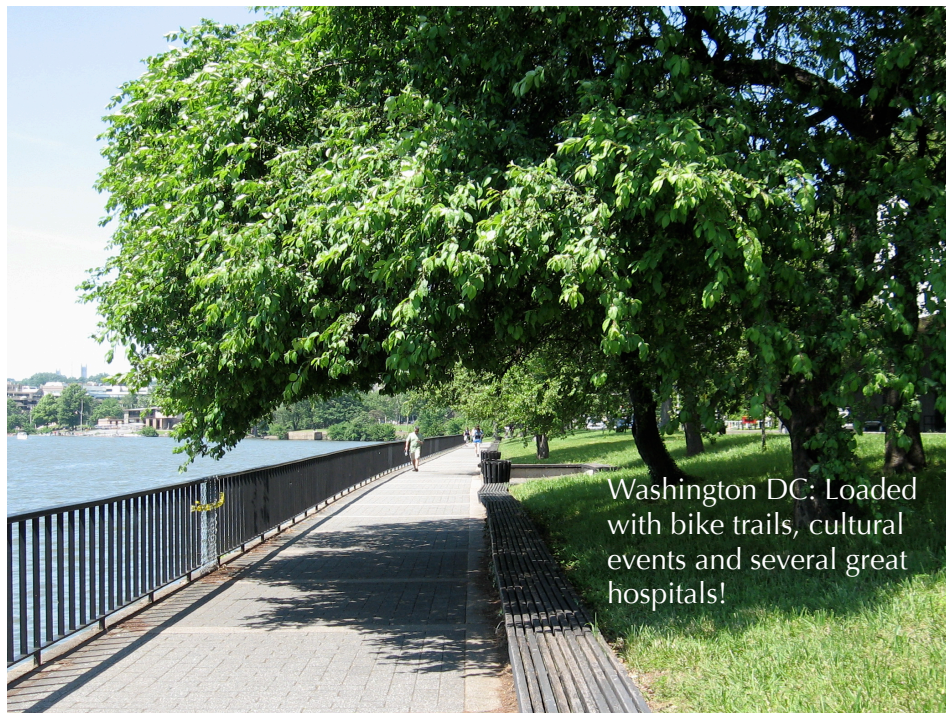
We understand and appreciate the importance of teamwork, collaboration and the ability to think and act quickly in acute healthcare environments. We know that, not only does this affect the quality of care for patients and their families, it affects the operational success of your hospital across levels of care.

Our team has a great appreciation for the difficult conversations healthcare teams need to have with patients and family members on a daily basis.

We can assist your healthcare team with developing the skills necessary to have those conversations while maintaining the defenses and self-protective strategies necessary to maintain compassion and professionalism in fast-paced, critical situations.

Contact our team at  
RN-Coach.com or  
Critical Success  
Strategies by calling  
301.512.9928.

We look forward to  
hearing from you!



Washington DC: Loaded with bike trails, cultural events and several great hospitals!

call and see how they are doing. The more cohesive and collaborative your team is, the better the care is you provide for your patients and each other.

8. If you or a colleague has developed an addiction, get help. Seek treatment or contact your employee assistance professional. They can refer you to a program. You've worked hard to get to where you are in your career, you've gained an immense amount of experience in interacting with patients and families - do not throw it away. Get the help you need. Find a treatment facility or contact us and we will help you get the help you need.

9. If you notice a colleague has developed a problem, talk to them. Confronting a problem is not easy for a lot of people but ignoring it all together may have more consequences. Our colleagues may become defensive if they are not ready to address the problem. This can be avoided by using "I statements" such as "I'm concerned about how you are doing - is everything okay?" or "I was concerned that I didn't see you after that tough code the other day, it was pretty overwhelming huh..." Using 'feeling' words such as "concerned" "overwhelmed" or "stressed out" usually carry more weight than "thinking" statements.

10. Need more information or help - we offer a free newsletter on managing stress and enhancing communication at [www.RN-coach.com](http://www.RN-coach.com) (see the sign up form which requires a confirmation by e-mail as we don't like spam either). Your information will remain confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone. Most importantly, taking care of yourself and taking care of your team will lead to enhanced care for patients and families.