

Dealing with Moral Distress During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Adele A Webb*

Capella University, Minneapolis, USA

***Corresponding Author:** Adele A Webb, Capella University, Minneapolis, USA.

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During this unprecedented time in our history we find healthcare providers dealing with the daily stressors of the pandemic all around the world. Concern for self, concern for family and friends as well as care fatigue are a major cause of anxiety for the nurses. Finding ways to deal with the stress and anxiety is paramount as the pandemic rages on.

Moral distress occurs when the provider knows the right thing to do - but does not have the resources to do it. A perfect example of this concept is when providers must make decisions regarding who gets respiratory support and who does not. If there is an equipment shortage and large numbers of people needing ventilation - how are decisions made on which patients are prioritized for treatment.

Another issue that can lead to moral distress is the lack of (or shortage of) personal protective equipment. When a provider needs to care for patients but is unable to protect him/herself, moral distress occurs.

So how do we, as providers, deal with this distress? First, we must acknowledge and understand our reactions - what is the situation we are facing - and why. We need to exercise self-compassion and recognize that we are not alone. Others are in our same situation and suffering the same distress. We need to stay strong - eat right, exercise, rest. If you are sick - get tested/treated. Reach out to Employee Assistance programs, friends, and colleagues to share your thoughts, your fears, your concerns. Lean on one another.

Take a break from the media and concentrate on other self-care practices like journaling, meditating, reading. But always remember - you are a hero, you are courageous, you are an inspiration.

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