



Open Letter

to nurses in the Winnipeg Health Region

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Stress is an inescapable part of life. Stress at work? Nursing is a physically, emotionally and intellectually demanding job. Regardless of your practice setting, the likelihood of stress decreasing any time soon is pretty unlikely.

How you choose to respond to and deal with stress is where your power lies. How are you responding to workplace stressors and demands? How are you managing within a stressful environment?

Each nurse has a responsibility to look at the choices they're making in their work life and how those choices impact them. Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, a mindfulness expert, notes: "You can't stop the waves, but you can learn how to surf."

Taking care of ourselves isn't optional if we are to be at our best, and the people we are working with deserve our best. Self care is about making a series of choices to ensure you are prepared to meet the high demands of your work.

Kouzes & Posner research talks about the use of self in the workplace. For each nurse, this looks unique. Perhaps it's your humour, your organizational skills, or your compassion. Those gifts are harder to share when you feel overly stressed.

It can be hard but not impossible to make choices that support your health and wellness and sometimes just little things help. During a particularly stressful time in my life – I had a very busy job, a family member who wasn't well and needed my support and I was busy with school – I chose a different route home. The prettier scenic route took a bit more time but it helped calm me by offering a different perspective, even after an intense day.

If you just thought, "I could do that," that's precisely the kind of choice I'm hoping to inspire you to make. Self care doesn't need to be overwhelming...it's a series of small choices you make that help you look after your physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual self.

I invite you to consider self assessment using tools that look at use of self: <http://www.hsc.mb.ca/leadership/?mode=view&id=142> or using the nursing assessment tool, Assess, Diagnose, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate (ADPIE) could also offer some insight and information.

A - Assess - How do you feel? Asking yourself this simple question after making certain choices can help you understand where small changes can be introduced. If you're sluggish on five hours of sleep, finding how much sleep you do need might be a

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Things To THINK ABOUT

Getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising regularly, working toward balance in your life...these are areas that can help you not only improve your health and wellness, they can also help you bring your best to your work.

For me, packing a lunch the night before helps ensure I can have healthy food within arm's reach, even on the days when I'm on the go. The alternative? Grabbing something from the vending machine, which doesn't fuel me in the same way and impacts my energy level.

If these concepts sound daunting, I invite you to consider the fact that there may be things to let go of, rather than a list of things for you to do. How much time and energy do you have? Hosting that family dinner when my workload is particularly challenging, for example, might be something I'd ask another family member to tackle. Or I might do it, but order pizza and salad.

Knowing yourself – including your limits – is at the heart of finding self care strategies that will work for you. No one answer will work for each person. That's why reflection – even creating a nursing plan for yourself – can help you determine what's right and best for you.

Creating a healthy culture in your workplace is something we can all contribute to, including managers. This requires collective effort and insight. Together we can create work environments that support healthy choices and encourage each other in making those choices.

starting point. Asking how you feel can also help point out what's working for you.

If coworkers, family or friends make observations, pay attention. Often others can see we're in trouble before we can or will admit it.

D - Diagnose - Your diagnostic lens for your own health and wellness must take into account the high demands, pace and expectations of your job. What do those elements require of you? How does that impact your energy level? How can you look after yourself given those factors?

P - Plan - In order to implement lasting, meaningful change, start small. Doing one thing differently can help you build a sense of accomplishment.

To create your wellness plan, consider the challenges/problems you've identified. What one thing could you do differently?

I - Implement - And then? Do it. Go to bed earlier. Set your alarm earlier to work out before work. Pack your lunch the night before.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Region's Learning Management System offers a range of course options, right at your finger tips. Over 2583 people have completed Transfusion Medicine Best Practices, a CAP Accreditation requirement. Interested in accessing?

Visit <https://manitoba-ehealth.learnflex.net>.

Kristin Ludwick, RN



SELF CARE TIPS

It takes 21 days to build a new habit. Be patient with yourself when you're trying something new. And be sure to offer yourself lots of positive reinforcement. Doing things differently can be scary. Think about supporting yourself through transition the way you'd offer support to your family or friends.

Are there days when it's easier to make healthier choices than others? Noticing this can help offer insight about where you may need additional support with taking care of yourself. Asking for this help is a healthful choice and there are Regional resources (see who can help?) you can access.

E - Evaluate - How does your new choice feel? Does it energize you? Does it make you feel stronger? Does it offer you more focus? Does it help you do your job better? Does it make you more pleasant to be around?

Change doesn't happen overnight. Progress is something to be mindful of tracking with compassion and patience. Slow progress – some movement in the direction you'd like to go in – is preferable than staying stuck where things aren't working.

What's working? What self care strategies are you using? What impact are they having? I'd love to hear about it. Drop me a line at wrha_nursing@wrha.mb.ca.

- Allow yourself to have fun.
- Get enough sleep.
- Build activity into your life.
- Engage in nature.
- Laugh.
- Try new things.
- Wash, prepare and store fruits and vegetables.
- Have healthy food within reach.
- Ask for help.
- Experiment with your choices.
- Introduce change slowly.

Who can help?

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
EAP workshops
STAR discounts
Spiritual Services (check with your site or facility)
Aboriginal Health Services
Critical Incident Stress Management

Find out more at

www.wrha.mb.ca/nursing.
Click on Lori's Links and Your Health.

Celebrating WELLNESS

Your nursing colleagues are choosing wellness. Get inspired and find out what works for nurses like Kristin and Haily at www.wrha.mb.ca/nursing. Click on Lori's Links, Your Health and Choosing Wellness.



Haily Hildebrand, RN

in the Spotlight

CELEBRATING one of your nursing PEERS



PATRICIA FOULIS, RN

Foulis's career as a public health nurse has spanned over 25 years. Working with healthy people by sharing important health information to prevent illness and injury is what she always wanted to do.

Workplace wellness is important to Foulis. She carves out time in her schedule to work out – occasionally with colleagues - over her lunch hour. Foulis also values and shares healthy nutrition with them.

Can you talk about the role of healthy nutrition in your life?

My parents modelled healthy nutrition, so it's always been a part of my life. No food is off limits, I enjoy everything in moderation.

Why do you share treats with your coworkers?

I love to cook and experiment with food by trying new recipes, foods and flavours. It's always fun to make and share food that tastes great but is also good for you. When I discovered naked oats developed in Arborg that also had a low glycemic index, I made a salad and shared it at an office pot luck. I also made oatmeal cake and brought it into the office. I'm so excited to make discoveries like that and I like to share what I've learned. Food is fun. It brings people together and starts a conversation.

"It's always fun to make and share food that tastes great but is also good for you."

How are your co-workers supporting each other in workplace health?

I'll put healthy treats on my filing cabinet for people to enjoy. A co-worker of mine posts yoga stretches you can do at your desk while another has fun reading available for us to borrow. It's great to try new things.

We all talk about what we're trying and support each other to stay motivated. If things are fun, they seem to stick because people don't have enough fun.

I recycled my water glasses from home when I bought new ones. My friend donated her dishes to our office kitchen. Along with being gentler on the environment, it helps us enjoy our snacks and meals at the office even more.

EVENTS

Wound Care Education
September 2012 - January 2013

Surgical Intensive
Care Nurses Education Day
Trauma Day
November 2, 2012

Pain Day - Less Pain, More Gain from Evidence to Practice and Beyond
November 5, 2012

Annual Diabetes Symposium
November 9, 2012

Visit the Nursing Calendar at www.wrha.mb.ca/nursing for details and nursing related events.