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Flexing Your Core: The Palliative Workout ECHO

At the Core of Caring

February 18th, 2026

AGENDA ITEM	NOTES
Introductions	<p>Session Facilitators: Sue Bartnik, RN Consultant, Practice and Education BCCPC.</p>
Objectives/ Overview	<p><u>Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on one’s own self-care needs in relation to supporting end of life journeys. • Identify ways to support each other as a team. <p><u>Overview</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This session focused on self-care for healthcare providers, particularly those working in palliative care settings. • The presenter, Sue Bartnik, emphasized that self-care is vital not only for personal wellbeing but also directly impacts patient care outcomes and team effectiveness. • The session explored various self-care tools, strategies for supporting colleagues, and practical exercises to help participants assess their current wellbeing and identify areas for improvement.
Session Key Points and discussion	<p><u>Key Concepts or Theories:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-care as a core component of effective healthcare delivery. • Holistic wellness (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual). • Connection between provider wellbeing and patient care outcomes. • GRACE framework for clinician self-regulation (Gather attention, Recall intention, Attune, Consider, Engage). • Team support as essential to individual wellbeing. <p><u>Important Questions Raised:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can healthcare providers balance caring for others while maintaining their own wellbeing?



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- What practical tools can help integrate self-care into daily routines?
- How can teams better support each other in high-stress palliative care environments?
- What organizational changes might better support healthcare provider wellbeing?

Key Takeaways

- Self-care is not selfish but essential for providing quality care to patients.
- Research shows strong links between staff wellbeing and patient care outcomes.
- Creating tiny habits anchored to daily activities can help integrate self-care practices.
- Team support and organizational acknowledgment are crucial components of wellbeing.
- Self-care encompasses physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions.
- Vulnerability and asking for help are signs of strength, not weakness.

Self-Care Assessment and Awareness

- The session introduced a wellness wheel exercise where participants drew a circle divided into four quadrants representing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing.
- Participants assessed their current state in each area by coloring in how "full" they felt in each dimension. This visual representation helped identify areas needing attention and balance.
- Sue emphasized that this tool can serve as an ongoing self-assessment, noting that when placed somewhere visible (like a computer screen or car dashboard), it serves as a reminder to check in with oneself regularly.
- The exercise highlighted the importance of holistic self-care that addresses all aspects of wellbeing rather than focusing on just one dimension.

Practical Self-Care Tools and Strategies

- The session explored various practical tools for self-care, emphasizing the importance of anchoring new habits to existing daily activities.
- The presenter introduced the concept of "tiny habits" from Stanford research, suggesting that making small, manageable changes is more effective than attempting major lifestyle shifts.
- Participants shared their own self-care practices, including daily positive quotes, going for walks outside, playing quick games for a sense of accomplishment, listening to audiobooks while doing chores, and taking baths for relaxation rather than just cleanliness. Sue also shared Indigenous practices such as "calling your spirit back" at



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the end of the workday by saying your name three times, and the importance of setting boundaries between work and home life.

Team Support and Organizational Responsibility

- The session emphasized that self-care is not solely an individual responsibility but requires team and organizational support.
- The presenter discussed the importance of regular team check-ins, debriefs after difficult cases, and creating safe spaces for vulnerability.
- Participants shared examples of team support practices, including monthly support groups with food, team vision board sessions, acknowledging colleagues' contributions, and establishing team caring principles.
- The discussion highlighted that while individual self-care practices are important, organizational acknowledgment of challenges and systemic support are equally necessary.
- The presenter also noted that conversations about self-care should not feel like "adding another thing" to healthcare providers' plates but rather should help lighten their load.

Discussion from Participants

- A participant shared that building confidence is an ongoing journey. She reflected on the internal questions many may experience, such as whether they are knowledgeable enough or compassionate enough. She noted that striving to feel "good enough" can be challenging and may contribute to why the topic feels difficult to discuss openly. The presenter acknowledged the comments, agreeing that developing confidence is a continuous journey.
- Another participant described a personal strategy for managing moments of self-doubt or feeling stuck in decision-making. She shared that taking a short break and completing a small, achievable task; such as finishing a quick game on her phone helps create a sense of accomplishment and momentum. The presenter affirmed this approach, noting that small wins can provide a motivating boost, similar to the satisfaction of completing a piece of a puzzle.
- A participant shared a personal practice of keeping a "quote jar" filled with daily positive affirmations as a source of encouragement and reflection. Sue responded positively to the idea, noting that a quote jar could also make a thoughtful gift, such as for the holidays.
- Another participant reflected on the emotional demands of bedside work, explaining that healthcare providers often need to compartmentalize their emotions during a shift moving between patients experiencing fear,



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	<p>sadness, or celebration. She noted that vulnerability can feel more accessible at home, where others are not relying on them in the same way. Sue acknowledged the insight, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the emotional impact of this work and intentionally creating time and space to process and unpack those experiences at the end of the day or when possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighted the importance of acknowledging contributions was emphasized. Just as in patient and family care where even small concerns or comments are recognized, the same principle applies here. Acknowledging each person's input, no matter how minor it may seem, fosters respect and engagement.
<p>Actions/ Resources</p>	<p><u>Actionable Next Steps</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose one self-care practice to implement today. Consider creating visual reminders of self-care tools to place in visible locations. Attend the next two sessions in the "Flexing Your Core" series: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Session on optimizing comfort and quality of life, focusing on the last hours and days. Final session covering professional and ethical practice, education, evaluation, quality improvement, and research. <p><u>Supplemental Resources and Readings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GRACE framework by Joan Halifax for supporting clinicians working with end-of-life clients. BC Center for Palliative Care framework and resources. First Nations Health Authority wellness wheel resources. "The Boy, the Mole, The Fox, and the Horse" book recommendation. Stanford research on tiny habits for behavior change.
<p>Next session info</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Next Flexing Your Core ECHO Session: <i>Providing Comfort & Care</i>. Register here! ➤ Other upcoming ECHO sessions listed here