

**Sigma Theta Tau International, the Honor Society of Nursing**

**Creating Healthy Work Environments 2022**

**Poster**

**(PST) Poster Presentations**

**Presentation Title**

Bringing Self-Care to the Frontlines: Engaging Nurses at the Bedside to Sustain Healthy Work Environment

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**Abstract Pertains To:** Clinical

**Abstract Topic Category:** Acute care

**Target Group:** Clinical

**Is Body System / Disease Process:** No

**Completed:** Completed Work/Project

**Summary**

The pandemic has compounded workplace stress and burnout for nurses leading to unprecedented challenges. Self-care opportunities were presented to nurses, but they found it difficult to engage in these opportunities mainly due to time constraints. To advocate for a healthy work environment, self-care practices were brought to the bedside.

**Abstract**

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Even before the COVID-19, workplace stress and burnout were a concern for nurses leading to increased turnover rates and dissatisfaction for nurses (Sabei et al., 2020). The pandemic only compounded the issue. To maintain a healthy work environment (HWE) during the pandemic, self-care opportunities were offered via

Zoom platform, but few nurses engaged in those opportunities. Current, unprecedented staffing challenges, due to several factors and high patient acuity, have increased stress and burnout to a crisis level. In spite of this, nurses are still not engaging in self-care provided by the organization.

Improving the work environment reduces stress and burnout (Kiss, 2017), so, to engage the nurses, self-care needed to be brought to the bedside where it was accessible. Studies have shown that mindfulness, gratitude, and deep breathing all provide positive outcomes that decrease stress (Roux & Benita, 2020). The Maslach's Burnout Inventory was used to measure the level of burnout for nurses. The HWE council also used two strategies to bring self-care to the bedside to engage the nurses. The first strategy involved providing peer to peer support using mobile caring carts. The caring carts are designed with battery operated candles, aromatherapy, and meditative music to provide a calming, therapeutic presence in an otherwise hectic unit. Members of the HWE council also rounded with the caring carts using therapeutic communication skills and provided nurses with a break, healthy snacks, organizational swag and an authentic presence. Council members also listened and advocated for staff if any issues came up during discussions and followed up with appropriate administrators. Nurse managers were able to request caring carts if they felt that their units needed extra self-care and support. In addition, council members also provided mini-restorative sessions on the unit. They taught staff how to engage in simple mindfulness activities that could be done in 3-5 minutes which reduced stress. The activities included box breathing, joyful dance, chair yoga, and expressing gratitude and joy. Nurses were encouraged to practice these mindfulness activities each day and teach their peers the activities as well. The other strategy to engage nurses in self-care was to increase public recognition by using the organization's social media platform and townhall meetings. Nurses were encouraged to participate in self-care activities such as participating in the great outdoor challenge and sending in pictures to the HWE council. These pictures were then posted on the internal social media site and shared on townhall meetings. Gratitude is another powerful but simple way to sustain a HWE and reduce burnout (Roux & Benita, 2020). A gratitude team was created to personally deliver handwritten notes to selected teams thanking them for a job well done. Pictures were then posted on internal social media to enhance recognition of the teams.

Providing self-care to nurses at the bedside through mobile caring carts, engaging in mindfulness, and increasing public recognition will reduce stress and burnout and sustain a healthy work environment.

Keywords: Healthy Work Environment, Burnout, Self-Care, Frontlines

## References

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