

Combat Stress in Healthcare Environments Using ARSENAL™

Abby Ward, High Performing Systems, Inc.

“Decreased productivity, short staffing and patient and employee injury are byproducts of stress that greatly impact the overall health of the organization, as well as its bottom line.”

“Amy, your patient in room 402 needs pain medication.”

Amy’s beeper sounds. It’s time for the patient in room 412 to receive his diabetes medication.

“Amy,” Nurse Linda calls down the hallway, “Dr. Smith is in room 409. He wants to speak with you about his patient there STAT.”

The intercom overhead sounds, “Code Blue, room 405. Code Blue, room 405.” Amy rushes down the hallway to help provide advanced life saving measures to her patient suffering from cardiac arrest.

When she emerges from a stressful, emotionally charged situation, Amy finds one patient still in pain, another registering an elevated blood sugar and Dr. Smith irate because she did not join him in room 409 to discuss the care of his patient. Still feeling the stress and emotional overload from just a few minutes ago, and faced with an irate doctor and patients in need, Amy freezes, unable to make a decision or prioritize the tasks she faces. Brian, another nurse on the floor, steps in to assist with the patients and physician as Amy takes a much needed break. She thinks back on what just happened and knows something has to change; she has to manage her stress better, or she will have to find another job.

The scenario above plays out daily in hospitals and healthcare facilities across the country. Doctors, nurses and patient care technicians are becoming increasingly overwhelmed with the growing volume and escalating acuity level of patients they are required to care for. According to the American Psychological Association (2012), 75% of all healthcare costs are related to chronic illnesses. Stress is a key contributing factor to chronic illness and, if left untreated, can cause severe health issues.

Stress has been attributed to the \$2.9 trillion dollars Americans, including healthcare professionals, spent on health expenditures in 2013 (CDC, 2015).

Stress impacts healthcare workers to a far greater degree than they are aware. Decreased productivity, short staffing and patient and employee injury are byproducts of stress that greatly impact the overall health of the organization, as well as its bottom line. In these times where CMS reimbursement is challenging, productivity is critical and the shortage of nurses negatively impacts staffing. Furthermore, frequent turnover resulting from stress costs organizations hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in recruiting and training costs. Therefore, it is critical that healthcare organizations use the tools available to help staff reduce their stress. Stress reduction will assist in increased retention rates and decreased employee and patient injury occurrences. Reduce stress now to positively impact the overall health and environment of the organization.

In Amy’s case, stress controlled the situation and caused her to freeze. Her emotions took over, and she was unable to make critical decisions in a highly stressful situation. A powerful tool to help individuals such as Amy become aware of the impact of and build resistance to stress is the ARSENAL Assessment. The ARSENAL Assessment identifies the seven best practices for recognizing, coping with and mitigating the effects of stress. A personalized report identifying the individual’s overall stress level and current performance in each of the seven best practices is provided in order to begin a Development Plan for building stress resilience.



706-769-5836 • www.hpsys.com

V1 July 2015

© 2015 High Performing Systems, Inc.

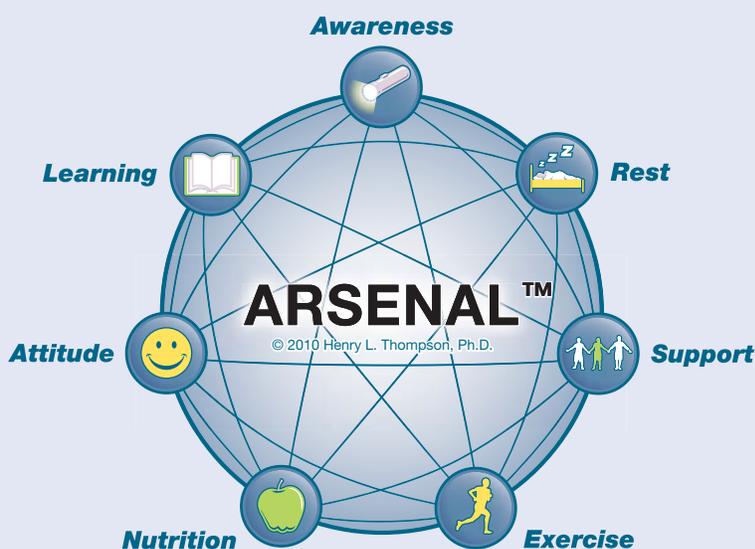
“Being able to recognize and combat the signs and symptoms of stress in critical situations is crucial for health-care professionals, but stress resilience is imperative to the day-to-day operations within healthcare facilities.”

Being able to recognize and combat the signs and symptoms of stress in critical situations is crucial for healthcare professionals, but stress resilience is imperative to the day-to-day operations within healthcare facilities. Help yourself and your staff begin building stress resilience today so you are ready for what comes tomorrow. The catastrophic events planned for hopefully will never occur. The day-to-day patient care, life-or-death situations and emotional turmoil experienced by direct patient care staff has a far greater impact on staff and the organization overall. Become more aware of stress, its impact on you and tools you can use to reduce and combat stress when it occurs by taking the ARSENAL Assessment. Be ready today for what comes tomorrow.

References

Martin, S. (2012). Our health at risk. *Monitor*, 43 (3), 18. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org>

Health Expenditures. (2013). CDC/National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov>



The ARSENAL Assessment can help you manage stress, develop stress resilience and make better decisions. It is based on the ARSENAL Model (above) of the seven best practices that are key to resisting the negative effects of stress. ARSENAL measures your overall level of stress as well as how well you are doing now in each of these seven areas.