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TEAM WORKING & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

for Nursing Associates





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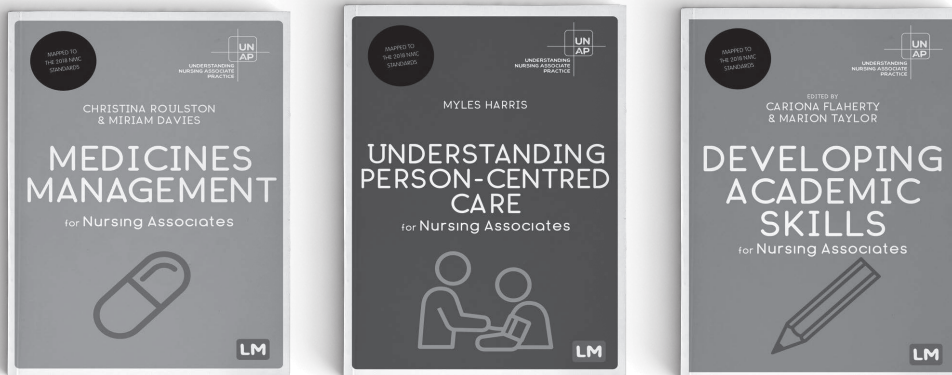
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Maintaining your sense of identity and resilience as a nursing associate

NMC STANDARDS OF PROFICIENCY FOR NURSING ASSOCIATES

This chapter will address the following platforms and proficiencies:

Platform 1: Being an accountable professional

At the point of registration, the registered nursing associate will be able to:

- 1.5 understand the demands of professional practice and demonstrate how to recognise signs of vulnerability in themselves or their colleagues and the action required to minimise risks to health
- 1.6 understand the professional responsibility to adopt a healthy lifestyle to maintain the level of personal fitness and well-being required to meet people's needs for mental and physical care
- 1.8 understand and explain the meaning of resilience and emotional intelligence, and their influence on an individual's ability to provide care
- 1.15 take responsibility for continuous self-reflection, seeking and responding to support and feedback to develop professional knowledge and skills

Platform 5: Improving safety and quality of care

- 5.9 recognise uncertainty and demonstrate an awareness of strategies to develop resilience in themselves. Know how to seek support to help deal with uncertain situations

Chapter aims

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- explore the importance of self-care and seeking support in healthcare;
- explain some of the benefits of using self-care strategies when working in clinical practice;
- understand the concept of emotional intelligence and the impact of this when working with patients and team;
- identify how 'burnout' can impact on emotional and physical well-being;
- identify your resilience strategy.

Introduction

Working within healthcare means that you will encounter multiple stressors, daily practical dilemmas alongside the ever-changing emotional demands as part of your role. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has further challenged our mental health and well-being like never before. The changes that have occurred has meant a big shift in the way we work and how we approach the demands of our job. This chapter will allow you to navigate through and provide you with an understanding of why self-care is important. This will be undertaken by delving into concepts such as resilience, emotional intelligence and the impact of these in response to daily stressors as part of your role. As healthcare workers, your focus is centred around meeting the physical, social and emotional needs of the patients and families that you provide care for. This means, at times giving care under extremely emotionally intense conditions and in complex environments. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an example of how as healthcare workers there has been a need to deliver care and meet organisational targets under pressure in a continual changing healthcare landscape. This brings its own challenges as the role of the healthcare worker is associated with compassion in healthcare, but what impact does this have on healthcare workers caring for themselves in a role that is both physically and emotionally demanding? Can applying the concept of self-care reduce levels of stress, burnout, and attrition from the profession? The following chapter will allow you to explore how resilience can be maintained without losing the identity of your profession as providers of high-quality safe and compassionate care.

In 2021 the NHS employed 1.3 million people in England and there were 1.65 million jobs in adult social care which accounted for 8.6 per cent of the working age population (NHS Digital 2022). With such a percentage accounting for the NHS workforce, the health and well-being of society is dependent upon the commitment of our healthcare workforce. This has been more prevalent during the pandemic whereby healthcare workers have gone above and beyond through goodwill to provide quality of care to patients. As a nursing associate you have a professional duty as *The Code* (NMC, 2018b) states *you must maintain the level of health you need to carry out your professional role*. This means having the ability to recognise and implement strategies to maintain your mental health, to cope with stress, and acknowledge how your own feelings and emotions guide your thinking and actions.

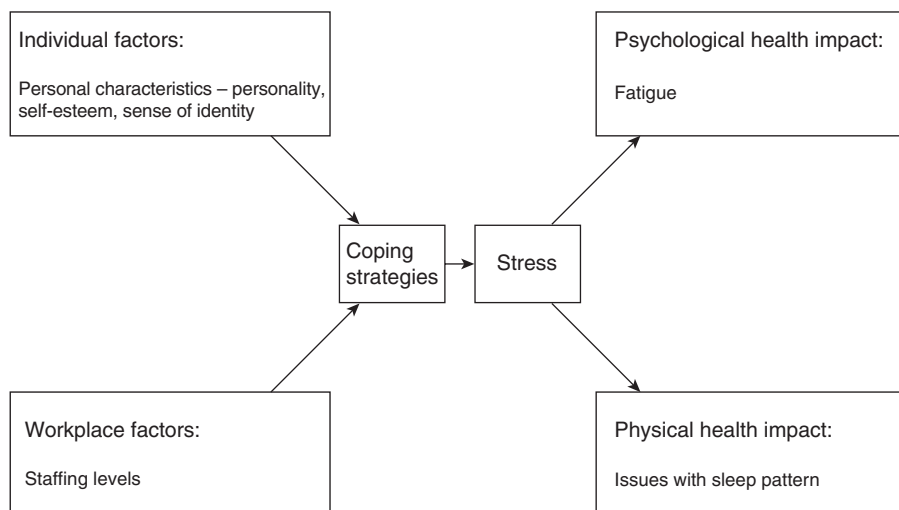
What is stress?

Stress is a term that is used often within healthcare to describe feelings of being overwhelmed with workload (demands of the job) with diminishing resources available (to undertake the job). While stress is common within modern work organisations, nursing, which is the largest healthcare profession, has been universally described as a stressful career choice. The impact of stress on healthcare workers is well documented in literature, however, there are many factors that directly influence how an individual will react to work-related stress. As a nursing associate, you and a colleague may be providing care to a patient under the same intense conditions and under considerable pressure, but how you respond to the patient and the direct impact on you may differ. For the following activity you are required to identify and consider the factors involved in workplace stress; this will include factors such as job and individual characteristics that directly impact on how an individual responds to stress. The *Nursing Job Stress Model* conceptualised by Zeller and Levin (2013) has been adapted below to guide you in completing the activity.

Activity 7.1 Reflection

Critically think about the individual and workplace factors involved which have a psychological and physical health impact on an individual during stress.

Use the adapted guide below to complete the activity. I have added some factors in the boxes below to help.



An outline answer has been provided at the end of the chapter.

The above activity would have allowed you to start thinking about the effects of stress on an individual's physical and mental health. While completing the activity you may have been able to identify with some of the factors which you may have experienced yourself. Later in the chapter you will have the opportunity to explore coping responses to workplace situations by exploring the concept of resilience.

Workplace stress can cause:

- inability to focus;
- inability to think clearly;
- inattentiveness can lead to medication and other errors;
- injury such as needle stick injuries;
- direct impact on patient care and outcomes– poor quality of care, poor patient safety, patient negative experience (dissatisfaction);
- organisation impact– worker stress will mean increased absenteeism, staff turnover, decreased productivity.

Workplace stress can also lead to burnout and compassion fatigue. Self-compassion in nursing has been described as *being receptive to one's feelings that cause suffering and hardship*,

approaching one's feelings with concern and warmth (Senyuva et al., 2013). Working within the health profession we are taught to put our patients first, a notion instilled through education and training. While this is a fundamental aspect of our roles, should this be at a detriment to oneself? In everyday practice, regardless of the field of nursing you practise within as a nursing associate, you will witness situations that at times may be traumatic, ethically challenging and distressing. During these times, patients and families you care for will take priority and your feelings of being overwhelmed and exhaustion will not be an area of focus. Why do you think, as a nursing associate, this may not be an area of focus? In nursing education, we are taught skills to recognise when patients need support to look after themselves, but do you not think it is necessary for healthcare workers to recognise when they are stressed and how they can support themselves?

The concept compassion fatigue has been described because of prolonged and intense contact with patients suffering, where providing compassionate care is exceeded by the individual's ability to prioritise the self. This is usually evident in highly stressed environments in which individuals work. Prevention of compassion fatigue can be achieved through many ways including increasing compassion for self, through setting professional boundaries, self-care and self-awareness. But how easy is it to implement these prevention strategies to avoid compassion fatigue? Barriers to self-compassion can be related to internal and external factors.

Read the case study below and reflect on what you think is preventing Hanna from being compassionate to herself during times of stress.

Case study: Hanna

Hanna has been working on the dementia unit for 18 months since she qualified as a nursing associate. Prior to this she had been employed as a healthcare assistant for two years on the same ward. She had a lifelong ambition of caring for the elderly which was influenced by her grandmother who she cared for when she was receiving treatment for cancer. She was her sole carer and looked after her until she passed away three years ago. Hanna has always been an enthusiastic individual, willing to extend her shifts at work when the unit is short staffed. Since Hanna qualified, she has witnessed the hospital undergoing many changes, one being a closure of some units due to staff shortages. This was a temporary measure until staff shortages were resolved; however, this has been ongoing for the last 12 months. Hanna has been told by her manager that her current increased patient allocation will be reviewed, and support will be put in place. Hanna has been struggling with patient care as she is not being able to spend time with her patients as she would like. This frustration is impacting on her anxiety. She gets overwhelmed with her elderly dementia patients asking her to sit and spend time with them but is unable to. She recalls memories of her grandmother and the reasons why she chose healthcare as a profession. Hanna is tired all the time and is spending most of her free time sleeping which has impacted on her relationships with others. She is unable to focus on work but carries on because everyone on the unit is experiencing the same as her.

While reading this case study you may have considered some of the following internal and external barriers that Hanna is experiencing, which is preventing her from being compassionate to herself.

Internal barriers

Professional identity

In nursing, professional identity is related to how you perceive yourself and in relationship with others. This is influenced by the norms and values of the discipline and will result in how you think, act and feel. If we look at this in relation to self-compassion and your profession as a nursing associate, *The Code* (2018b) states you must uphold the standards and values set out in *The Code*; this includes treating people with compassion and responding compassionately to their needs. *The Code* (2018b) also states *You must maintain the level of health you need to carry out your professional role*. You may wonder why these two specific standards have been mentioned side by side. You will agree that to care for others compassionately you must care for yourself. However, this is not always easy when the professional identity of a healthcare worker is *hardwired to be caregivers*. Andrews et al. (2020) explore the concept of *hardwired to be caregivers* and argue nursing identity and sense of self are intertwined. The ability for one to accept caring for themselves wholly depended on how nursing identity is perceived. One of the barriers that prevents individuals from giving permission to look after their self-care is dependent on the lack of nursing education around this subject and workplace cultures that do not prioritise self-care and being compassionate to the self.

Character

Hanna is young, early in her career and relates her passion of wanting to care for others stemming from her personal experiences. The mental and physical exhaustion she is experiencing is being overlooked by her due to her relationship with others on the unit and accepting unreasonable demands because of this. Often when individuals are caught in situations where the emotional impact is high, it can be difficult to do anything else but to plough on and reach the end. This can create a negative cycle where exhaustion, frustration and anxiety make it difficult to think about a situation and how to manage the demands of the workload.

External barriers

Environment /culture

Cultures within organisations impact on how staff respond to and react to stressful working situations. In the case study, Hanna has expressed her concerns about her workload to her manager but it does not seem there has been an outcome to the concerns raised. A report by the Kings Fund (2021) explored the necessity of compassionate leadership to enable nurturing cultures within healthcare, a culture where staff are encouraged to speak up when they see things going wrong. While NHS organisations have a formal structure to raise concerns through Freedom to Speak Up Guardians, there is no equivalent for adult social care. Are you aware of Freedom to Speak Up Guardians in your area of practice? Compassionate leadership in the report is described as *leaders listening with fascination to those they lead, arriving at shared (rather than imposed) understanding of the challenges they face*. The ability to employ empathetic listening to staff concerns and valuing their views can only help and support staff that need 'permission' to acknowledge their own self-care needs.

Organisational demands

Constant changes within the NHS and organisations you work within can leave a de-stabilising effect on staff. An example of this can be restructuring of a service: during these times, staff self-care may not be a priority as the impacts of service re-structuring will take priority. One of the biggest barriers that adds to this are operational targets that come at the expense of quality of care, staff and patient experience.

Working conditions across all settings – in primary, secondary, mental health, community and social care – need to ensure support is embedded from an organisational level to combat the ever-increasing exodus of staff leaving healthcare. This means that organisations need to embed changes to the workplace that impact on health and well-being rather than tackling the issues when they become a problem. To understand this better, the report *The Courage of Compassion* (The Kings Fund 2021) sets out the ABC framework for staff to help them better understand what core needs they need to recognise to minimise workplace stress they encounter. It is important to remember this approach requires a level of self-awareness. While the framework explores core needs of the nurse and midwife, this is adaptable to nursing associates who have a key role in the healthcare team.

A - Autonomy

This looks at staff having control over their work life and to be able to act consistently with their values.

While the framework suggests key areas that need to satisfy autonomy as a core need such as influencing decision making in how care is delivered and sustaining just and fair psychological cultures, the key area that is of particular interest is staff autonomy over working schedules and conditions. Ask yourself as a nursing associate if you were involved in shared decision making about working conditions such as staff rest opportunities during work, flexibility in work schedules. Will this have a direct impact on your ability to cope?

B - Belonging

This looks at the concept of being ‘connected’ to and cared for by colleagues. Do you feel valued, respected and supported?

The core work needs that belonging explores are that of team working, culture and leadership. Ask yourself is team well-being an important feature of your team? Does the shared objective of team well-being feature as a core need in your workplace environment? Shared objectives within a team are usually reinforced by compassionate leadership. Therefore, does the leadership structure in your organisation nurture cultures and encourage compassionate leadership whereby staff support is a priority?

C - Contribution

This looks at areas of practice where you experience how your contribution can deliver valued outcomes. This can be influenced by a variety of factors that are essential to feel effective at work. Does management provide the opportunity for personal reflection, mentorship, and supervision so you are able to thrive at work. Do you have the opportunity to undertake development that continues personal and professional growth?

The above three core needs are the starting point for organisations to consider which contribute to staff well-being. Embedding these components within the culture of the organisation will play a key role for staff to thrive at work.

Impacts of stress - burnout

Concept of burnout

Exhaustion is an experience healthcare practitioners can often feel at the end of a shift and if it continues over time, we can shut down our awareness of what we feel, running on empty. You may find when working with others you are able to pick up on others' feelings and want to help by unconsciously taking on their energies. This makes us prone to 'burnout' if we don't learn to clear our energy field. Burnout is a term that as a healthcare practitioner you may or may not have experienced. It is difficult for everyone to be around someone who is in a burnout state, as the person seems to have lost the ability to care and connect with self and therefore others.

Burnout

The term burnout was introduced by Freudenberger in 1974 when he observed a loss of motivation and reduced commitment among volunteers at a mental health clinic (Dal'Ora et al., 2020). This concept was then further developed by Maslach in 1981 who created a scale, the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which internationally is the most widely used instrument to measure burnout. Burnout is identified as a *state of fatigue or frustration that resulted from professional relationships that failed to produce the expected results* (Freudenberger, 1974). Since this definition there have been evolving definitions of the concept which have further gone to focus on the diminished sense of personal accomplishment amongst professionals who work with other people in challenging situations. Burnout is likely to have a direct impact on quality of care, patient safety, sickness absence and job dissatisfaction. Workload such as staffing levels were the most frequently examined factor in relation to burnout. High workload as well as time pressure is associated with emotional exhaustion.

Self-care and *The Code* (NMC, 2018b)

The previous section has introduced the concept and impact of stress through experiencing burnout. You would have recognised that this impacts not only on you as a healthcare practitioner, but impacts on the quality of care provided to patients and families. So how as a nursing associate can you look after yourself and why is it important?

The Code (2018b) specifically states your role in maintaining your health to undertake your role. You have a professional duty as well as an ethical obligation to adopt self-care as a duty to yourself in addition to a duty of care to your patients. A notable theory in examining the importance of self-care is Watson's theory of human caring. The core of the theory looks at humans who *cannot be separated from self, other, nature, and the larger workforce* (Watson, 1979). Self-care features heavily in that caring is an experience for both the patient and the nurse, as well as between all team members.

What does self-care mean to you?

Self-care is defined by the World Health Organization (2013) as the steps people take for themselves to establish and maintain their health. These steps are wide ranging from the lifestyle individuals lead to nutrition, impact of environmental factors and socio-economic factors that all impact on the ability to maintain health. While you may recognise the importance of self-care, implementation of self-care practices may sometimes prove more difficult in practice.

Nursing culture plays a prominent role in how as a nursing associate you may perceive the importance of looking after the self especially in the clinical environment. Permission from the self and others is usually a determining factor in how individuals perceive self-care and what steps they take to look after themselves. Recognition from managers, team members and the organisation towards prioritising self-care can enable healthcare workers to make it acceptable in everyday practice rather than to be implemented when individuals are stressed, experiencing burnout and fatigued.

Awareness around the 'self' is required to some extent to be able to recognise times when you may need to adopt the self-care measures. In nursing you may have heard of or applied in practice Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943). Maslow conceptualised human needs as a pyramid with five levels in ascending order including the following:

1. Physiological needs
2. Safety
3. Belonging
4. Esteem
5. Self-actualisation

Maslow believed humans will work on meeting their unmet needs at a physiological level before attempting to meet the needs at the top of the pyramid which is self-actualisation. Self-actualisation refers to the human need of achieving their full potential including creative abilities and growth. For humans to meet their needs at the top of the pyramid they will work through each stage until their needs are met before they move to the next. So how does this apply to you as a nursing associate? Think about the Hierarchy of Needs in relation to your work and clinical practice. If your basic practice environment needs are not being met, you will be less likely to be motivated to progress to higher level functions. When referring to the work environment this includes your workload, scheduled breaks, staffing levels and overtime. As discussed earlier in the chapter, high workload, low staffing levels and a lack of breaks will result in job dissatisfaction, mental exhaustion and potentially burnout. As healthcare workers, when presented with low staffing levels, we may compensate by reluctantly taking regular breaks or not taking any at all. While this may seem like the 'safest' option this puts the safety of patients at risk. Lack of concentration results in impaired performance. In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the need for air, food and water are essential for physiological functioning and taking regular breaks is an important element of meeting those basic needs in the work environment. As the stages of the pyramid progress through to esteem, belonging and self-actualisation, they mirror the core needs as identified in the Kings Fund (2021) *The Courage of Compassion*. As a nursing associate the need to feel part of a team (belonging) as well as having the autonomy to develop your professional practice through education and training are essential components of self-care.

For the following task you will have the opportunity to consider seven areas of self-care. This activity will allow you think about areas of your personal well-being that you may not have considered before.

Activity 7.2 Critical thinking

Review the seven areas of self-care listed below (Mental, Physical, Emotional, Spiritual, Social, Personal and Professional). Think about what each area means to you by providing a definition, then explore how you can maintain your self-care for that area. The first two areas have been completed for you, so you can think about the rest.

Maintaining your sense of identity and resilience as a nursing associate

1. **Mental** – *Intellectually looking after your health can strengthen confidence in the work-place. Think about the following questions. What learning opportunities do you want to be part of? What can develop your confidence in your clinical practice? This can encourage belief in your own capabilities and know what they are.*

Activities might be:

- attendance to training;
 - participating in clinical supervision;
 - mentoring students;
 - reading journals;
 - listening to podcasts on a topic of interest.
2. **Physical** – *Exercise is a stress reducer as well as an energy booster. When you exercise, the body releases endorphins which are natural painkillers that can elevate mood and give you more confidence. Physical exercise can also promote good sleep.*

Activities you can do at work that can promote physical activity might be:

- take a walk during your lunch break;
- using the stairs instead of the elevator;
- if you drive to work park your car further away from the car park;
- at home, taking a nap for 20 minutes can be extremely beneficial.

Now add your own notes against the following five areas:

1. Emotional
2. Spiritual
3. Social
4. Personal
5. Professional

As this activity is based on your own critical thinking, no outline answer is provided at the end of this chapter.

Your well-being is in your control, while the above activity will make you think about self-care by adopting a holistic model of care. Having awareness of factors that may be influencing and preventing you from implementing self-care is self-awareness. Finding what works for you is important as implementing proactive approaches early in your career will allow you to build greater capacity to manage stress and increase resilience.

Emotional intelligence

Before discussing emotional intelligence (EI), it is worthwhile to define the term ‘intelligence’. Traditionally you may associate intelligence with IQ performance; however, it has been recognised that IQ is only one of several types of intelligences. EI has its roots in social intelligence where human interactions and relationships are valued. Simply EI is described as having the ability to understand one’s own emotions and others’ feelings and emotions. This includes self-awareness as a core component of being able to impact relationships and how you manage this.

Ask yourself is empathy a required feature of working in healthcare? Many would agree without empathy, a therapeutic relationship cannot be developed, nor are you able to understand a situation from another person's perspective. Discussing the connection to EI do you think as a nursing associate you can have empathy without EI? Empathy can be defined as having the ability to understand and see someone else's viewpoint without judgement. You may ask how does this relate to your self-care? You can only implement approaches to self-care if you are able to identify when emotions are impacting behaviour and how this can positively or negatively impact others. As a registered nursing associate, you may lead a team of healthcare support workers, nursing associates in training and student nurses: your ability to connect with others easily in the workplace, read other people's feelings and responses accurately when interacting with them is a key feature of EI. These attributes have been deemed central to healthcare practice, in response influencing leadership abilities. It is understood the way in which emotions are experienced by individuals can affect the work of the team and performance. Emotions in this environment are not ignored but acknowledged and appreciated as there is an awareness of the importance of EI.

EI may be an asset to your path to self-care, as approaches such as reflective practice and self-evaluation will encourage you to explore your own experiences and practices by considering your emotions and behaviours.

Case study: Workload

Workload management is one of the causes of stress in the work environment. Imagine you are in the staff room at your workplace. This could be in any clinical setting – a hospital, community service, mental health unit, GP surgery, special school. You walk into the staffroom after being part of a conversation breaking bad news to a family of a palliative care patient. One of your colleagues is discussing her workload and she appears overwhelmed by a patient who is being rude to her, and the healthcare support staff. The patient keeps telling the nurse he wants a proper nurse to look after him. The nursing associate (NA) is tearful, but also states she is overwhelmed with her workload which is making her emotional. You are feeling equally as overwhelmed with the difficult conversation that you have been part of.

Research outside of nursing practice has demonstrated a correlation between emotional intelligence and important workplace outcomes such as job retention, stress management, burnout prevention and job satisfaction (Dal'Or et al., 2020). More recently, the characteristics of EI have shown its central role within nursing. The above activity highlights the importance of having the ability of not only being aware of your own emotions and how it can impact others, but also the relevance of this in a profession where interpersonal skills are at the forefront of clinical delivery. An emotionally underdeveloped individual in the case study may possibly respond by not acknowledging the NA and her feelings about the rude patient and walk out of the room. Acknowledging the feelings and emotions of others through empathy and not allowing your own feelings to impact the interaction is what self-regulation is. This is where having a better understanding of your behavioural tendencies in situations of stress will allow you to work on your behavioural responses and adopt specific behaviours that will demonstrate you being emotionally aware. Team performance and morale is dependent on open and meaningful conversations between colleagues and especially for those in a leadership capacity. In your role as a nursing associate, the *Standards of Proficiency for Nursing Associates* (NMC, 2018a) state that to be an accountable professional you will be required to *recognise signs*

of vulnerability in themselves or their colleagues and the action required to minimise risks to health, the achievement of this proficiency is closely related to proficiency 1.8, which asks you to explain the influence of EI and resilience on individuals. The above activity provides an insight into how being able to recognise the emotions of others and then using your own emotions to assist reasoning by having tough discussions can positively impact team dynamics, consequently reducing stress and burnout.

Approaches to develop EI

Developing EI in your practice is a skill that can be nurtured if you pay attention to yourself. This may not always be easy, however, now that you have been able to distinguish the components of EI, the following approaches will support you in developing EI in your practice.

Reflective practice

Reflective practice can enable healthcare practitioners to enhance their emotional intelligence skills, specifically self-awareness through insight. When reflecting on practice you will take a step back to make sense of what has happened and why. This process allows you to be more conscious of your emotions on yourself and others in situations. Being able to self-regulate your responses will allow adaptability in handling change.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness can be seen to recognise ourselves through thoughts, emotions and physical sensations through meditation. Gaining greater control over your thoughts to gain a perspective can consequently impact on relationships with patients and colleagues. Evidence suggests the use of mindfulness meditation can result in the reduction of stress and promotes self-care and self-compassion for healthcare professionals (Jiménez-Picón et al., 2021). While mindfulness practice has been seen to improve the well-being of the healthcare worker, its function does not stop there. Constant practice of meditation can improve cognitive function, learning and memory and helps in reducing blood pressure and stress hormones (Green and Kinchen, 2021). Working in healthcare, you cannot always predict when stressful events may occur, however, the practice of mindfulness can prepare individuals to regulate emotions when situations occur.

As a nursing associate there are many apps that can be accessed to practise mindfulness. Have a look at your own organisation's health and well-being support, where you may be able to find out how to practise mindfulness. There are also useful activities available on the RCN's website that show how mindfulness can be practised. This can be accessed via the following web page: www.rcn.org.uk/healthy-workplace/healthy-you/time-and-space

Self-assessment

Self-assessment allows an individual to think about certain emotional intelligence (EI) statements and how they apply to them. There are many EI scales that can be used but it is important to understand the two main types introduced by Petrides and Furnham (2000), which are:

- Trait EI – this is a self-report measure of behaviours in an emotion-relevant situation, for example, when an individual is confronted with stress or an upset friend. While using this type of measurement, participants need to be mindful as people are not always good judges of their emotion-related abilities.

- Ability EI – this is a test of maximal performance; responses are measured that are deemed to be correct or incorrect. Participants will solve emotion-related problems. Ability-based measures give a good indication of individuals' ability to understand emotions and how they work.

When you research to find self-assessment scales to measure EI, you will come across many scales. The main task of these scales will help you to pinpoint which elements of EI you've mastered and which you need to develop.

Impact of change on well-being

The Kubler-Ross change curve

Understanding how change can impact well-being can be useful when processing emotions and behaviours. During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare practitioners experienced uncertainty which greatly impacted on health and well-being. How individuals process their emotions and their ability to respond can be illustrated by the 'change curve' derived from the work of Kubler-Ross (1969). This model is usually used in developing leadership capacity but is also a useful tool to apply when faced with unpredictable changes and situations in the workplace setting. Some of these changes may include restricting of a service, getting a new manager, moving to a new building, or even introducing new equipment/tools to undertake your job. Whatever the cause of the change it will follow the following five stages:

- denial;
- anger;
- bargaining;
- depression;
- acceptance.

When applying the 'change curve' the first stage is usually the most disruptive to our emotions when we first experience change. Individuals will move through each stage experiencing different emotions which will have an impact on how they behave. This is where the skills developed through emotional intelligence will provide a foundation for how you respond to the situation. It is also important to remember, progressing through the change curve is personal to everyone regardless of how resilient you are; it will take time. However, if you are faced with a similar change and you recognise your emotions and the process, that same change will be easier to progress through.

The following activity will allow you to apply the above stages of the change curve model to changes within the workplace environment.

Activity 7.3 Critical thinking

A new electronic health assessment form has been introduced for all healthcare staff to record and review patient assessment at your workplace. Staff were informed about the change, but the current health assessment form that is being used is fit for purpose and there are questions around why the change was needed. Time is required to implement the new form as it will need to be completed electronically when assessing patients.

Follow the instructions below to complete the critical thinking activity.

- Provide a definition of each stage of the change curve model.
- Now for each stage write how you may feel during this stage and what could be provided by your manager to support you during this stage.

An outline answer is provided at the end of this chapter.

Feelings during the early stages can impact productivity as employee reluctance to engage in new systems. Showing empathy and allowing individuals space to talk will support moving through the stages. As a nursing associate you will also be in the position of introducing change to healthcare practice through your leadership skills.

Resilience

Resilience is defined by the capacity in which someone recovers from difficult and tough situations. Setbacks are part of life whether in your personal or professional life. Having the ability to be resilient in situations of stress and change has a positive impact on mental and physical well-being. In healthcare, the relationship between resilience and burnout have been evidenced (Arrongate et al., 2017). Overcoming adversity and adapting in the workplace requires a build-up of personal resilience. This doesn't mean individuals will not experience negative emotional responses such as fear, anger and sadness to change, but because they have made an effort to be resilient, they can move through the change easily, experiencing better mental health.

Arguably, people can be faced with similar situations but how they deal with those situations will differ because there are different types of resilience.

These are:

- natural resilience – this is the resilience you are born with and that comes naturally;
- adaptive resilience – this type of resilience occurs when you are forced to change and adapt due to challenging situations;
- restored resilience – this is where you learn techniques to build resilience. This type of resilience will allow you to deal with past situations and deal with future situations by utilising skills you have learnt.

Recognising that there are different types of resilience means personal resilience can be learnt. Try the activity below to explore this further.

Activity 7.4 Research

This activity has two parts:

1. Watch the following Ted Talk:

Ted Talk: The three secrets of resilient people

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWH8N-BvhAw&t=50s

(Continued)

Chapter 7

(Continued)

2. What resilience strategies were identified in the Ted Talk and how can you adapt those strategies in the workplace to impact your well-being?

An outline answer is provided at the end of the chapter.

When going through change or grief we may need reminding of what is good in our lives and what our strengths are. We can concentrate on all the things we are not good at doing, but praising ourselves on all the things we can do is something we do not do often enough. If you were asked to write down seven of your strengths in one minute, would you be able to do that? Confidence in recognising strengths and areas of development is a key skill in self-awareness. Strengthening your support system and knowing when to ask for help plays a vital role in problem solving when faced with adverse situations. Problem solving with others will provide the opportunity to self-reflect on recognising and acknowledging the situation and can form part of your resilience strategy. You may want to ask yourself; how do you feel about asking for help? Can you identify individuals within your organisation who can be approached? If not, can you identify the barriers that prevent you from asking for support. What can you do to overcome these barriers? Some individuals may find being adaptable gives them the flexibility in how they examine a situation. Recovering from a situation if you recognise some situations can be beyond your control will give you the resilience to cope with change.

This chapter has explored many key concepts in giving you the insight into how stress and adverse situations can impact on health and well-being. By using the key concepts discussed throughout the chapter, you can complete the below task. Looking after yourself is essential in being able to maintain your health and well-being as well as adhering to your professional standards.

Activity 7.5 Reflection

Reflect on what you have read in the chapter and create your own self-care plan. This will be individual to you so really think about what matters to you and how the goals you create will benefit you.

As this activity is based on your own reflection, no outline answer is provided at the end of this chapter.

Chapter summary

This chapter brings *Team Working and Professional Practice for Nursing Associates* to a conclusion. This chapter brings the concepts of resilience and maintaining your identity in professional practice to focus. Self-care is not a new concept but the benefits of this within healthcare have shown to have wide-ranging benefits on organisations through to the quality of care provided to patients. We all experience stress as part of life, but the chapter allows you to explore and recognise when stress is having a negative impact on health and well-being. You will be able to identify factors that impact on stress and how you can manage these negative

stressors through prioritising your self-care. The activities will enable you to critically think about identifying resilience factors and how these can then be used to develop a self-care plan. It is always a good idea to further explore concepts such as emotional intelligence and how these can be developed by accessing measurement scales available online. Working in healthcare will mean you will come across situations that will require you to be aware of your behaviours and feelings. It is not always easy to put aside some emotional responses but as a healthcare professional, you are bound by your professional standards. Your professional regulator (NMC) has been the underpinning driver in how you need to maintain your professional practice as a nursing associate working across all four fields of healthcare.

Activities: Brief outline answers

Activity 7.1 Critical thinking (page 101)

Individual factors:

- personal characteristics – personality, self-esteem, sense of identity;
- personal events – stressful life events such as marriage, divorce, illness, death of a loved one, family demands;
- professional demands of caring, professional experience.

Workplace factors:

- staffing levels;
- workload;
- organisational culture – not taking regular breaks;
- professional identity;
- lack of support from management;
- hours of work.

Physical health:

- cardiovascular symptoms;
- muscle tension;
- gastrointestinal symptoms;
- high blood pressure;
- exhaustion;
- aches and pains;
- psychological impact;
- inability to concentrate;
- fatigue;
- burnout;
- depression;
- unmotivated, overwhelmed, unfocused;
- easily distracted;
- memory lapses;
- anxiety.

Activity 7.3 Critical thinking (page 110)

- **Denial** – stage of shock and denial, individual may use defence mechanisms to challenge the change. While the introduction of the new health assessment form may have been planned and it was communicated to individuals, time is needed for staff to adjust. Clear communication is required by managers/those introducing the change to ensure individuals are not overwhelmed. Give clear direction where support and further information can be obtained.
- **Anger** – during this stage the reality of the change has begun to sink in. Feelings of anger and resistance are common. Threats will be identified in relation to the change and if not managed correctly, issues can spiral out of control. Careful management of the situation is required through planning and preparation. There needs to be understanding of the impact on staff and what the issues to change are. Those initiating the change need to listen; in the scenario of the introduction of the new electronic health assessment, it may cause anger as the element of time to implement the system will require commitment. Preparation is also key as information regarding why the change is happening needs to be clearly communicated.
- **Bargaining** – once the individual has passed the anger stage, they will attempt to explore the alternatives to find a compromise. If supported well, individuals will be able to explore what the change can mean. If support is not provided this can lead to the next stage of depression.
- **Depression** – in this stage an individual may lose all hope, and demotivation will develop. It can be difficult not to take responses personally during this stage, therefore emotional intelligence can be a useful skill in identifying how your behaviours can impact others. Those implementing the change need to recognise the change may be difficult for individuals as they may be on an emotional journey. An example of this can be the threat of the change. Implementation of the electronic form may mean some experienced staff may need to upskill themselves to undertake a task that they may have previously been experienced to do.
- **Acceptance** – individuals will come to terms with the change by accepting it. While for some it will continue to be uncomfortable, with time the change will be embraced. Celebrating success of the change is beneficial as it will make things easier if the change occurred again.

Activity 7.4 Research (page 111)

Watching the Ted Talk video, you would have identified the following three strategies:

- Acceptance and acknowledgment of the situation as part of life.
- Focus on the things you can change. To do this you need to identify what you can change rather than focusing on what cannot be changed. This process is referred to as 'selection attention' in the TED talk.
- Lastly, is your response and how you deal with a situation causing you harm or helping you? This is self-awareness through being emotionally intelligent.

Further reading

Green, A and Kinchen, EV (2021) The effects of mindfulness meditation on stress and burnout in nursing. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 39(4): 356–368

The journal article explores if mindfulness-based stress reduction programs potentially reduce stress and burnout in nursing. Peer-reviewed research related to the impact of mindfulness was reviewed.

Smart, A Creighton, L (2022) Professionalism in nursing 3: The value of self-care for students. *Nursing Times*, 118(6): 45–47.

This article provides proactive approaches that can be implemented to improve well-being by spotting and addressing the symptoms of stress.

The Kings Fund (2021) *The Courage of Compassion: Supporting Nurses and Midwives to Deliver High-Quality Care*. Available at: www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/courage-compassion-supporting-nurses-midwives

The report sets out recommendations designed to meet three work core needs that need to be met to ensure well-being and motivation at work.