



# NENA position statement on the self-care of the ED Nurse

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## Problem

**E**mergency Department (ED) nurses are at risk for burnout due to recurrent high-stress situations. The daily responsibilities of the ED nurse may include crisis management, observing and managing tremendous human suffering, pain management, and violent or hostile patients or family members.

## NENA-National Position:

It is the position of the National Emergency Nurses Association that

1. there is a constellation of symptoms associated with burnout and that “ED nurses are at high(er) risk for burnout”
2. all employees are provided education on the importance of self-care and made aware of access to support resources.

## Rationale

According to the World Health Organization (WHO; 2022), self-care is defined as: “what people do for themselves to establish and maintain health, and to prevent and deal with illness.” The Oxford dictionary (2021) defines self-care as the practice of taking an active role in protecting one’s own well-being and happiness, during periods of stress. “By virtue of the work environment for ED nurses, 25%–30% of nurses meet the criteria for burnout (Valdez, 2019). According to Gomez-Urquiza et al., (2017) burnout in nursing has three dimensions, which include depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and feeling less accomplished. Emotional exhaustion is based on lack of reserve due to being physically and emotionally drained (Blomberg et al., 2016; Gomez-Urquiza et al., 2017; Valdez, 2019). Depersonalization is related to negative attitudes, cynicism and judgment of patients and coworkers shown by making biased and/or negative statements and being insensitive about patient presentations. Nurses who are identified as having burnout will experience these

characteristics and compassion fatigue (Blomberg et al., 2016 and Gomez-Urquiza et al., 2017; Valdez, 2019). According to the American Psychological Association (2015), self-care can be described as a conscious act one takes to promote one’s own physical, emotional, and mental health. Examples of this include getting enough sleep every night or sitting or walking outside for a few minutes for some fresh air. It may include meditation or yoga or regular therapy sessions. Self-care has also been defined as, “a multidimensional, multifaceted process of purposeful engagement in strategies that promote healthy functioning and enhance well-being.” (Dorociak et al., 2017, p. 326). While trying to prioritize care they often miss opportunities for self-care, including taking mental and physical breaks (Salvarani, et al., 2019; Valdez, 2019). The American Nurses’ Association (2015) mandated in their fifth provision of the Code of Ethics that it is the duty and responsibility of every individual to promote health and safety, preserve wholeness of character and integrity, and to maintain competencies and continual personal and professional growth. Being aware of one’s own reaction pattern can be vital learning of effective coping techniques (Crane & Ward, 2016). Research studies show there is value for organizations and individuals to be educated about self-care and provide opportunities in the workplace to practice strategies (Dreher et al. 2019; Sorenson et al. 2016; WHO, 2022).

A study conducted by Davidson et al. (2018) showed that an increased rate of suicide amongst nurses was attributed to stress and lack of autonomy. Melnyk et al. (2018) found that more than half of 1700 nurses studied reported substandard mental or physical health which correlated with increased errors in the workplace. Dorociak et al. (2017) describes self-care as any activity that we do deliberately to take care of our mental, emotional, and physical health. Self-care is key to improved mood, reduced anxiety, greater job satisfaction and increased productivity in the workplace. It is also key to a good relationship with oneself and others. By having those positive strong relations, it will help build

foundations for nurses as a collective team. One needs to assess which areas of their life that need attention and self-care; reassess often as this is vital for building resilience toward stressors

in life. Taking these steps to care for the mind equips nurses to be the best they can be, by building resiliency amongst teams which promotes a safe environment for all.

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