

HELPING STAFF COPE WITH TRAUMA

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My Role: I supervise our Helping Healers Heal (H3) program and work with patients who have Substance Use Disorders. One of my main priorities now is to make sure our amazing staff feels supported. I helped set up our respite room where staff can take breaks from patient care areas, the H3 debriefings with staff and coordinate wellness rounds to check on staff in each department.

I work with social workers and also with peer support champions, who are colleagues from every department trained to provide emotional support to staff. We ask staff how they are feeling and if they're taking care of themselves. When we do speak, we let the person decide how they would like to spend our time together. It's not therapy. We're here to support them and to let them know

that they're not alone, so we talk through feelings.

That's what I do, anytime and anywhere I'm needed. This is a unique situation we're facing and it's a lot to bear. Nobody should feel like they can't or shouldn't reach out to talk.

Impact of COVID-19: I'm working with the Caring Connections program, led by Jodi Romano at Elmhurst. We use iPads to reconnect COVID-19 patients with their family, and for some it may be the last time they speak. Helping make that connection has been one of the most rewarding things I've ever done.

I'm not always in the respite room but I check-in and talk to people. On one occasion, an ICU nurse came to talk and she confided that what was happening was like nothing she had ever seen before. We spoke briefly to help her recharge before heading back out to work. As she was leaving, tears filled her eyes and she said thank you.

Many nurses and staff say they feel there are few people who can relate. Even talking to family is difficult because they can't comprehend the experience. That's when it hit home for me that this helps, and it's my contribution. I'm so proud of the work we do.

Why I'm on the frontlines: It's heart wrenching when you hear what's going on from rapid response teams and knowing that so many people have lost family members, friends and loved ones. I wanted to help anyway I could. I work in healthcare to help people, and that's a major part of who I am. So, I'm doing what I can to help my community.

Managing Stress: I feel positive every time I hear music playing over loud speakers in the hospital. When I do, I know someone has been discharged. It's a shining light.

