**Professional Calm during Challenge – Self-Care Tips from the experts!**

From Australia, Dr Lynne McKinlay shared great material in a recent Medical Protection Society webinar.

Trained to find and focus on threats, health professionals often have obsessive and perfectionist traits which may spill over into emotional distress – as well as concern for our family’s or our own safety. Threats can shut down our frontal lobe (wisdom) thinking, and channel thoughts through the mammalian limbic system and reptilian fear process. Yet ‘we are far more often frightened than actually ever hurt’, said the Roman philosopher Seneca.

Lynne suggests **six key strategies** to help us manage the situation and cope well

1. **Manage Anxiety**. Prepare, compartmentalize and reframe. Preparing is understanding issues, and seeking early professional help for ourselves if needed. Creating a third space between home and work enables us to change pace, and prepare for what’s next. The space might be a shower, walk or change of clothes. Reframe negative behavior with a frame of generosity: ‘They’re not greedy people panic buying, they’re wise people preparing for shelter”.
2. **Limit exposure** to information, media and social media. Identify trusted sources.
3. **Channel energy** into things of value. Plan and prepare for success and satisfaction in your roles, whether clinician, team member, partner, parent, neighbour or friend.
4. **Develop helpful habits, routines and rituals**. Habits are automatic behaviours done in the same context, and support effortless performance. Routines give psychological inoculation against anxiety and distress, providing confidence, safety and security. Rituals are mindful and purposeful, and are used to regulate behavior and manage energy
5. **Practice Self-Care** We build wellbeing through **1 personal achievement, valuing ourselves** **2 gratitude and self-compassion** and **3 recovery and energy maintenance**. Remembering Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, we need food, water and sleep, breaks during and between shifts, and rest days. **Self-compassion** means we act kindly towards ourselves as we would towards a colleague or friend. **Psychological Safety** is important, created by: speaking human to human, inviting others to speak and really listening, inviting feedback and really listening, showing vulnerability admitting we make mistakes, being humble, using curiosity rather than blame, and creating a civil environment. **Civility creates safety**, reduces errors, increases teamwork, decreases emotional exhaustion, cynicism, burnout and sickness rates! A safe culture is where we know that if we make a mistake, or ask for information or help, others will neither punish us nor think less of us. **Connection** to community at work, friends, family and others are important, we should be proactive to avoid loneliness and isolation. **Be proud** of what we are doing – and grateful – much evidence links gratitude to wellbeing. **Cultivate curiosity, creativity, planning and play** – all these build our inner resources. Each day, find **1 Something I’m proud of, 2 Something I’m grateful for and 3 Something I can do to restore my energy**
6. **Care for others**. Although we do this professionally and personally, by ensuring Self Care first, we have made sure we’ve remembered our own oxygen mask. Then, wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness: as social creatures, a kindly focus outside ourselves brings us wellbeing. Lynne also asks us to ask ourselves “How do we move from a mindset of scarcity, fear and lack, to a mindset of abundance and generosity?”

From Britain, Janey Lee Grace of BBC fame shares some great thoughts on **SELFCARE** on her site <https://imperfectlynatural.com/self-care-isolation-tips/>

* **S for Sobriety and Sleep**
* **E for Exercise**
* **L for Love**, especially Self-Love
* **F for Friendship and Focus**
* **C for Connection and Creativity**
* **A for Awe** – wonder and Appreciation
* **R for Resources** – to top up your batteries
* **E for Energy**

Take Care and Go Well!