# Episode 4 – How organisations support the spiritual well-being of staff –Transcript

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| Colin Gray: | So far, this course has introduced you to a number of ideas:  We know that “spiritual” means religious beliefs or faith, but we also know that “spiritual” is about our purpose in life, the relationships we build and the things in life that are important to us. |
|  | So we need to look after our “spiritual well-being”. It will help us to cope with the stresses and demands of the workplace and it will help us to provide better care for the people we look after.  If we are feeling low or stressed or we’re having a bad day, then this will affect the people around us including the people we care for, their families too and other staff.  There are actions that we can take and the habits that we can develop to look after our spiritual well-being on a day to day basis like going for a walk or talking to somebody we trust.  But it is also clear that there may be times when an experience is more demanding on an individual like supporting someone at the end of their life or coping with your own grieving. Remember how Ellie talked about her feelings of sadness and the confusion she felt about her professional self and her emotional self.  This is when there may be a need for more formal or dedicated support to be provided. And each organisation, well that’s the care home, the hospital or the community provider, they’ll have different provisions for supporting staff. This may include supervision, time-out, or even counselling.  In today’s podcast we will hear from David Gordon, who works with the Staff Wellbeing Service in NHS Tayside. He’ll talked about what support is available for staff experiencing difficult or emotional situations. |
| Interviewer: | Welcome David, maybe you could start by telling us a bit about your role and the organisation you work for? |
| David: | So, my role is as a Chaplain with NHS Tayside and I have worked as a Chaplain in Tayside for quite a lot of years. I was based in Ninewells for over decade but we set up our Staff Wellbeing Service because we wanted to have a particular focus on supporting the staff.  Chaplains have always supported staff but we really wanted to be intentional about it and dedicate a good part of our time to supporting the staff; because they are supporting the patients and given that they’re working with people from birth to death, and everything in between. It can be a very tough and demanding role. And so we wanted to look after the staff because they deserved it, but also because if we don’t look after them we won’t have healthcare delivered at all. |
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| Interviewer: | Why is supporting the spiritual needs of staff important in your organisation? |
| David: | Spiritual need for us in healthcare is to do with whatever is vital to a person at any given time and so patients and relatives that’s going to be one thing, for staff is going to be other things, it might be things they’ve got going on at home, difficult things, challenges, worries, concerns and you carry all that stuff with you. So supporting people to manage those challenges, stresses, strains helps them to negotiate their way through these experiences. So that they retained a measure of control and well being rather than feeling at the mercy of events which does sometimes happen to us. |
| Interviewer: | Can you tell us how this kind of support has worked for staff? |
| David: | So the Wellbeing Service offers a range of interventions if you like. Some of which are urgent and reactive, so we’re responding to our sense of crisis or urgency. We do respond to emergencies and urgent things. We take it in terms to be on call so the services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and it’s highly responsive. So if something untoward happens that is distressing as it sometimes is for an individual or for a group, we will respond to that very quickly.  We still do a lot of one-to-one confidential support. But we also do group activities. We deliver values based reflective practice which is a national tool, the governance of which is hosted by NHS education for Scotland. VBRP is about giving staff a space at work to process work issues so that when you go home you can be at home and not psychologically back at work.  We trained people to use the tools of values based reflective practice. We trained people to become facilitators of values based reflective practice. We do training around communication, grief and loss, those kind of things and we do that across the board, we do it with nursing students, medical students. We started doing it more in social care settings now and day care facilities and things like that, because we are moving towards the integration of health and social care. It’s already here but we’ve still got a journey to go through on that. So we’re doing more and more of that and something I do an awful lot is introduced people to mindfulness, which is tremendous tool for supporting well being.  A lot of people have heard of it but a lot of people don’t know what it is. So I do a lot of that one to one, I do a lot of it in groups and the feedback on that is really powerful, positive. Because it’s a group activity, it’s a very productive method of reflection and it kind of changes relationships which is a wonderful thing to see. You see colleagues becoming closer, people tell us that trust levels are boosted by this activity and it decreases any sense of isolation or struggle people can have just through sharing and working through whatever issues they’re dealing with. |
| Interviewer: | David, I know you’re a big proponent of mindfulness and helping with this kind of issues. Can you tell me how people make it started in exploring mindfulness and how it can help them? |
| David: | So there’s a very good 12-minute video. It’s a segment from BBC Breakfast in 2012. So if you were just to typed in google or in Youtube app BBC Breakfast mindfulness it will come up and you just watch it. And it’s a good introduction to mindfulness it brings in some of the neuroscience cause that’s really an important part of mindfulness practice and I do sometimes say to people, “If you don’t like the word meditation cause we talked about mindfulness meditation call it brain training” because that’s what it is.  It’s a bit like exercising your muscles, it enables you to lift things in your daily life when we exercise our minds, we literally create pathways into the brain that enable us to go into a mindful zone on demand in the midst of daily life. So it just give us a bit of control back that helps us to be the person we want to be and that we choose to be rather than becoming somebody we don’t want to be, because somebody else is pressing our buttons. It was the Charge Nurse who asked me to get involved in the first place. She evaluated it and they said that they felt less stressed generally, that they felt they were communicating more effectively with each other and with patients. That they were managing conflict better and that they felt it had changed how they related to one another as a team, and that they were all kind of looking out for each other a bit more. So that was a big gain for them, it was all really positive. Somebody said being given the opportunity to take a small period of time in a busy working environment to practice mindfulness has helped me to reflect, prioritise and reorder my own thoughts and feelings. It helps create a positive and fresh approach to the rest of the day. |
| Colin Gray: | Thanks for that David.  Listening to David and the work of the Staff Wellbeing Service in NHS Tayside, it shows the different levels of staff support that’s available. From the urgent and reactive responses needed in a crisis situation to just helping staff develop the skills and the tools for coping with stress over the long term. David highlighted the value of group support and how staff have benefited from the use of mindfulness. As one staff member puts it: “the opportunity to take a small period of time in a busy working environment to practice mindfulness helped me to reflect, prioritise and reorder my thoughts and my feelings.”  If you want to know more about mindfulness, have a look at the video that David suggested – BBC Breakfast on Mindfulness. You can google for it or click on the link in your daily email.  As well as the actions you can take to look after yourself, there may be times when you need more formal support from your organisation.  In today’s task we’d like you to find out what support of that type is available in your organisation. We’d like you to arrange a short meeting with your supervisor or your mentor to ask about the support that’s available to staff. Ask about how the organisation supports the well-being of its staff, and how can you access this support if you need it? Remember to note down what you find out from this task for the future.  Now this is the last podcast of the course. Tomorrow we’d like you to focus on your learning and how you can use it to build your resilience and make changes in your day-to-day practice. |