

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

A PUBLICATION OF
DESERT WATERS CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH
A NONPROFIT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF PUBLIC SAFETY STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES

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The Basics of Caring for Criminals By Lorry Schoenly, PhD, RN, CCHP-RN

We have been asked repeatedly to print material that pertains to corrections healthcare professionals. This is our introductory article, reprinted with permission from: <http://correctionalnurse.net/the-basics-of-caring-for-criminals/>.

Providing health care to incarcerated patients is very different than other types of nursing practice; yet nursing principles remain the same. Nurses entering the world of correctional practice can have apprehensions and misconceptions about the patient population and expectations of their practice. Here is an overview of the similarities and differences of correctional nursing practice as compared to a traditional practice setting.

A Different Patient Profile

The inmate patient population has many distinct characteristics to keep in mind when providing care. Although each patient is an individual, the population, as a whole, is likely to have these characteristics that should be taken into consideration when providing care.

- Inmates have a biological age older than their chronological ages. Many experts consider the incarcerated patient to be 10 years older than their chronological age when it comes to the ravages of age and illness. So, many correctional settings consider elderly inmates to be 55 years and older.
- Less educated and less health-literate than the general population, inmates are more likely to have learning disabilities and have difficulty understanding basic health information.
- More infectious disease, especially HIV, Hepatitis C, sexually transmitted disease, and tuberculosis are found in this patient population.
- Inmates have higher rates of mental illness than the general public, especially depression, mania, and psychotic disorders. Mental illness can contribute to criminality. Borderline personality disorders that lead to poor impulse control, self-injury, and aggression are often present.
- This patient population also has higher rates of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder that can also lead to poor impulse control, erratic behavior, and inability to concentrate or understand health instruction.
- High levels of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use in this population increases the likelihood of withdrawal issues, liver toxicity, and respiratory conditions.

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DWCO Services



The Basics of Caring for Criminals (continued from page 1)

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- Increased risk of suicide is found in this patient population as compared to the general population. This is a concern in any stage of the incarceration but especially of concern at entry into the jail and after sentencing when hopelessness, shame, and guilt are at their highest.

The Same Nursing Care

Nurses enter the correctional facility as licensed in the profession and are expected to provide safe patient care in accordance with that license. This can be challenging in settings where the boundaries of their nursing scope of practice are not clearly defined. Many traditional practice settings are focused only on providing health care and have a strong nursing leadership structure that defines nursing practice within the boundaries of the nurse practice act. Correctional nurses, however, may need to establish their own boundaries of practice; possibly for the first time in their professional career. Three documents provide resources for establishing practice boundaries.

- **Nurse Practice Act:** Established by the nurse licensing board for the practice jurisdiction (mainly the state of licensure)
- **Code of Ethics for Nurses:** Established and periodically revised by the American Nurses Association and the International Council of Nurses
- **Nursing Scope and Standards of Practice:** Established and periodically revised by the American Nurses Association. There are both a general and specialty specific scope and standards of practice.

Nurses are ethically and legally bound to practice within the framework of the profession in every setting. Nurses working in corrections have an acute need to be fully aware of these boundaries as there are fewer safeguards present in our setting.

A Re-Focused Nursing Perspective

While correctional nurses must practice within the boundaries and responsibilities of licensure, the nursing perspective must be refocused to accommodate a secure setting and a criminal patient population. That means a re-focus of care provision to prioritize personal and professional safety.

The first area of refocus is the **nurse-patient relationship**. Although this relationship continues to be based on the health and well-being of the patient, the relationship in the correctional setting must include stronger physical, emotional, and mental boundaries. Caring behaviors cannot include physical touch, as may have been the case in prior nursing positions. Words and actions establish a caring relationship in this setting; not hand-holding, touch, or a shoulder squeeze. The high levels of narcissistic and manipulative personalities within the incarcerated patient population means that nurses must be especially careful to avoid being drawn into an inappropriate patient relationship.

Personal safety is the next area of refocus for correctional nurses. Personal harm from patients is of greater concern when practicing in the criminal justice system. Always be alert when in the work environment. This means being aware of location of officers and following all facility safety policies and procedures. In a correctional setting, personal safety is of higher priority than immediate emergency care. Thus, correctional nurses must be sure the environment is cleared by officers before entering to provide treatment in an emergency situation such as an unconscious patient in a housing unit.

The final area of practice re-focus is **professional safety**. As described earlier, it can be tempting to practice beyond licensure in an isolated and resource-challenged setting such as a jail or prison. It can also be easy to slide into a cynical and jaded attitude to patient requests when so many may be manipulating the system for their own benefit. Yet, overstepping the bounds of licensure or disregarding patient health requests can jeopardize your career and create significant legal risk.

Staying Well—Strategies for Corrections Staff: Highlights from the Book and My Reflections

By D. J. Halford

Printed with permission.

I am someone's child, a parent, and a spouse. I maintain high standards, and I represent my agency even though I see things that hurt my soul and damage my spirit. I lead by example and have a family of loved ones at home and a family of partners at work. I am well trained and part of a team. I am sometimes verbally and occasionally physically abused, but I remain professional. I accept my work is stressful, yet I maintain honor. My career environment contains chronic stress, continual alertness, and the ever present possibility of violence and incidents of a sordid nature. The exposure to violence over the years adds up to significant impact over time. Vigilance and protection remain constant in my being; I am a guardian.

There's an expectation to quickly recover when I am down and to ignore my feelings, all to maintain the image I am tough. My coworkers are demanding of seeming perfection and the offenders never seem to change their criminal thinking. Sometimes I don't know who's harder to take – the offenders or the coworkers. Many thoughts and feelings remain unprocessed and become burdensome over time. And this is just at work – don't forget, I have the usual home stressors, which turns my day job into a 24-hour life. This "correctional fatigue" is a nearly unavoidable occupational hazard, but I can't ask for anything related to mental health, and I even hesitate to display physical infirmities because if it gets back to work, I'll lose respect and perhaps even be questioned about my fitness for duty.

I can barely admit to a crack, much less to being broken. As I watch a fictional TV show where a detective displays his anger at a suspect who harmed a child, my mind instantly replays a call from sixteen years ago in which I rescued a toddler girl from belt-buckle beatings from her mother's boyfriend—and the tears instantly flow. I can feel the child in my arms, hear her little giggles as she snuggles up to me, and remember wishing I could keep her with me and protect her always.

I am surprised at the instant recall and the detail and realness of the replay and at my reaction, considering I thought it processed and compartmentalized as many years ago as it occurred. I refuse to consider any of the other countless negative things I've seen in my career and firmly lock the door on those memories after finding how just this one event affected me today, and hope the lock doesn't breach. I find myself restless, unable to easily fall asleep, and with extreme feelings of sudden "fight or flight" for no reason. The physical symptoms become beyond an annoyance to be ignored; high blood pressure, restlessness, anxiety, difficulty falling asleep, difficulties with my memory and concentration, hypervigilance, and irritability. Even the innocent question of "How are you doing" is a burden I'd rather avoid because my answer is no longer honest, yet I know no one expects the truth. Disconnecting and detaching work most of the time except when the occasional demon slips through a crack in the façade.



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Staying Well: Reflections (continued from page 3)

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First it was a decision to retreat from the “frontline” and no longer work the streets. Then it became a decision to work a desk job, consoling myself I was still “in the business.” The relief from no longer working overnights and constantly rotating schedules lasts for a time but then the daytime stressors of courts, deadlines, attorneys, and judges soon becomes equally cumbersome. I “only” read about everyone’s crimes now instead of being on scene, but find even the written details disturb my peace as much as the physical presence of evil. I question my strengths, training, and experiences, even my own capabilities, and I wonder if there is enough left in me to finally reach career retirement with honor—“a job well done.” It seems so far away.

I fear leaving the business for the selfish reasons—wanting that retirement prize after all I’ve been through (no other work in this area offers the same pay and retirement), and knowing that once I leave, I likely can’t return.

I acknowledge the damage. I do not seek solace in alcohol or drugs. I’m far too firmly entrenched in disdain for them from seeing the damage it has caused countless others, and knowing they do nothing for my comfort. I seek spiritual guidance, but caregivers can only provide limited time, as they care for so many others. I request and receive training in resiliency and work/home balance and it helps, but it feels like a Band-Aid and not a means to get me through to the finish line.

I close my office door so no one can see the struggle and gather my strength—I wipe away tears, practice deep breathing and focus, recall my countless blessings and joys, and I put on God’s armor faithfully, the spiritual equivalent of putting on a duty belt full of tactical gear. Once recomposed, I open the door and can cope a little longer as it all comes crashing back on me. It is this and a multitude of prayers that keep me going from day to day.

Desert Waters’ Products & Services

Assessments

- **Corrections Fatigue Status Assessment—version 5**
- **Corrections Staff Resilience Inventory**

Books

- **Staying Well: Strategies for Corrections Staff, 2nd Edition**
- **Passing It Along: Wisdom from Corrections Staff, Volume 1**
- **Processing Corrections Work: A Workbook to Combat Corrections Fatigue and Increase Corrections Fulfillment**

Posters

- **Fulfillment Reminders—set of 3 (ABC’s of Self-care; The Big 7; Positive Climate Promoters)**
- **From Manure to Fertilizer: Key to Resilience**

Trainings

- **From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment—instructor training and workshop**
- **Peer Supporter Training**
- **Professional Boundaries**
- **Resilience after Trauma**
- **The Resilient Supervisor**

For more information about Desert Waters’ products and services, please go to www.desertwaters.com.

When I Was a Kid Sgt. Russel Artz



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When I was a kid, my parents told me “Rusty, you can do anything you want when you grow up.” It took a while for me to realize that my parents only had my best interests at heart. They were the only ones to think I could actually be “Something” and especially someone else’s definition of “Something.” (I’m actually trying to figure out if I ever grew up, and if so, when did it happen?)

My definition of “Something” happened to me 26 years ago. I got this new job, Correctional Officer. Who knew what that was going to entail besides the much needed raise in pay?

I hated it! Not the pay; the job. For the first three months, I absolutely HATED it. After I figured out parts of the job, it wasn’t too bad. It actually started to grow on me, and I started to grow into the job. Fast forward twenty years and I’m sitting

on a housing unit, in a shop, on the yard, in the dining hall, or _____ (you fill in the blank), and it has been a wild ride. There have been lots of ups and downs in this career, some self-created and others forced upon me. I have found that in order to continue to grow as an officer and as a human being, I have to take control of my own attitude, and not let other people decide my fate. I have found that I have the ability to control my own destiny.

I have spent a lot of time trying to figure out the inner workings of the DOC and am still stumped. However, that doesn’t mean I’m lost inside of it. I have learned to see how my actions and attitudes have an effect on each and every other department inside the institution. If I make a decision about _____, how is it going to affect physical plant, kitchen, medical, or transitions staff? My intention is always to fix the immediate problem, but the wrong decision creates another problem. (perhaps not for me, but for my co-workers). How can I help? How can I keep from creating unnecessary waves for everyone else? I have learned to ask myself “If this were (my Boss)’ decision, what would s/he do? By utilizing this approach, I take myself out of the situation and think through the situation before putting myself back into it. If we each risk trying the approach of helping each other, we are likely to make our little corner of the world a better place for each of us.

I said earlier that I hated the job early on. Now all I hate is what the job can create in each of us. While working with the negative members of society every day, we tend to overlook the positives in our lives and dwell on the not-so-pleasant things. I continue to see the effects of the job on the friends I work with. I’ve seen heart attacks, high blood pressure, strokes, divorce, and all types of other ailments brought about by the stresses that we needlessly carry around.

I challenge each of you to find a fellow staff member or inmate doing something right and reward them for it. It doesn’t have to be much, just a small “thank you” or a pat on the back. You’d be surprised how something so small can affect the health and well-being of your co-workers. Small gestures can actually have huge impacts on each other. How are you going to affect your little corner of the world? Who knows? You could cause someone’s “Something” to happen and not even know it.

Staying Sane During the Holiday Season

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The colorful holiday season is supposed to be a time of fun, love and joy around family and friends, and for some, also a time of spiritual reflection. Yet, there might be some downsides to this time of year, in spite of the touted “holiday cheer.” This article is about identifying some of the factors that may try to creep in and steal the true joy of the season, and suggesting ways to reduce or avoid avoidable stress associated with the holidays.

So what can happen from Thanksgiving through New Year’s day? Words like overstimulation, overindulgence, and overdrive may capture the average picture. We may find ourselves on the go nonstop, overeating, overdrinking, and overspending, not wanting to miss out on any of the fun. Weighed down with buyer’s remorse, some of us might start the new year exhausted and frazzled, and staring a pile of holiday debt in the face.

One of the culprits may be the seemingly obligatory gift giving. There is this pressure floating around, this expectation, that we must prove our love to significant others through the purchase of “the” perfect gifts for them. Parents and others may compete as to who will spend more on a child or on someone else, as if number of dollars spent is the gauge of sincere love and devotion.

Along the same lines, we may feel obligated to buy gifts for just about every person we know, so no one feels left out. So we might buy “stuff” we don’t necessarily even like to give to someone we may not even really like, because this is the thing to do during the holidays. And regarding this compulsory gift buying, we might not really care what we buy, as long as it fits our budget, and helps us cross that person off our shopping list. Gift bought for ___? Check. That can end up being a lot of pressure.



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This not-so-subtle competition can spread to who has the prettiest Christmas lights, who has the tallest and most elegant Christmas tree, who has the most guests show up to their Christmas party, who... who ... who ... to no apparent end.

Another culprit may be the sheer volume of activities associated with the holiday season, causing essential down time and other “me” time to get pushed aside in order to meet children’s, employers’, friends’ and relatives’ expectations, by attending numerous events. And on top of that, we may also host a party, with all the expense and preparation this requires, the energy it takes, and the clean-up that follows. Why have all these gatherings bunched up during a few weeks of the year instead of spreading them out throughout the year?

A third factor that saps energy during the holiday season can be the extended family gatherings on “the” special days. Oftentimes, these are not the easiest to pull off. There can be tension and even outright verbal clashes regarding whose house we go to for Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, or whose house we visit first from among key relatives when we make our rounds on these holidays.

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Hurt feelings, pouting, complaints and guilt trips by dissatisfied relatives can rob us of the joy of the holiday season.

Moreover, spending time with family members one tends to avoid the rest of the year can cause old conflicts to resurface. Such pressures, not so subtle competition among relatives for others' affection, and overt conflict among (at times) inebriated guests has led a friend of mine to declare that the holiday season is the "Olympics of dysfunctional families."

How might a season of celebration end up becoming a season of overindulgence, overstimulation, buyer's remorse, exhaustion, the dreaded weight gain, and even the "blues?"

I think that part of the reason is that, somehow, we've been led to believe that the holiday season with its opportunities for indulgence on many levels will bring us the perfect emotional state, the perfect gift, the perfect meal, the perfect gathering, THE perfect whatever. High expectations for satisfaction and happiness abound. And such unrealistic expectations are most likely going to lead to disappointment when they do not come to pass like we thought they would, or evaporate after the novelty of a present or excitement of an event—no matter how special—wears off. The fantasy bubble of holiday happiness bursts, followed by the day of reckoning, when the credit card statement hits our mailbox or our inbox.

The drive for the high of indulgence is masterfully fueled by retailers' bombardment with "holiday specials," bargains and sales. We don't want to miss out on a good deal. So we buy. The shopping frenzy says a lot about what we consider to be important, what we think we cannot do without (the latest, biggest, best, 33% more), and the degree to which we may be susceptible to this special form of "peer pressure."

So here are some suggestions for staying sane during the holiday season stampede.

Regarding gift buying

- Make a realistic budget for holiday shopping (that is, within your financial means), and stick with it. Absolutely don't go into debt for Christmas presents. One way to do that is to save throughout the year for your upcoming Christmas shopping.
- Don't buy something to just buy it because it is advertised as a good deal. Do you, or the person you're buying it for, really need or have use for this item at this time? When accosted with all kinds of bargains, remind yourself that just because something is supposedly a bargain, you don't have to have it.
- Make symbolic personal gifts that are expressions of your affection or appreciation for someone. Bake some goodies, make something, sew something, or give a "coupon" for child sitting, house cleaning, or for a time together fishing, jogging, walking, playing a game.
- Create your own family traditions. You don't have to do it the way everyone else does. For example, you may choose to have your gift giving take place during New Year's eve, instead of Christmas eve or Christmas day. Or you can give small and inexpensive gifts as tokens of appreciation and demonstrations of affection during the holidays, while giving expensive gifts or making large purchases the rest of year, such as during someone's birthday, an anniversary, a graduation, as a surprise, and/or in response to a real need. These practices remove the societal pressure for expected (and almost competitive) mega gift giving during the Christmas holidays. Instead, you and your loved ones can focus on quality time together, shifting the season's focus from commercial or obligatory gift-buying to expressions of gratitude and love, and to relational and spiritual activities.

- Shop after the holiday season is over. This will increase the probability that you'll be able to buy items at truly reduced prices. Store them and give them during the rest of the year as suggested
- If you have a large extended family, consider drawing names and buying for the one person whose name you have drawn rather than knocking yourself out buying for each individual. Consider setting a price limit for gifts, for example, no more than \$25—and honor that. Don't try to outdo everyone else by buying presents that cost more than the set amount.
- Refuse to get drawn into competition with an ex-spouse or with other relatives or friends regarding how much was spent on gifts, what gifts were purchased, or how many people attended a holiday celebration.
- If your favorite way to express love is through gift giving, and you absolutely want to celebrate by emphasizing this aspect of the holidays, of course do that, but keep it affordable. And remember that you can express love that way throughout the year. There is nothing sacred or exclusive about bestowing gifts on others (or on yourself) around Christmas time.
- Instead of buying the seemingly obligatory gifts that people may put aside and not use much, if at all, consider giving to reputable charities that provide services to those in truly desperate straits. This practice can also help teach your children compassion and sharing.



© TC Brown, 2011

Family Gatherings and Other Social Events

- Try to maintain your daily and weekly routine as much as possible to avoid feeling disoriented and overwhelmed during the holiday frenzy. Protect your personal downtime and workout time.
- To avoid one person getting overloaded, divide up who brings what dishes to a family dinner, and annually rotate houses where the family dinner takes place. If traditionally everyone gathers at their parents' home, seek to expand and alternate the options as the years go by and the parents get older or are widowed, and make a special effort to include in-laws.
- Don't skip meals in order to splurge during a holiday dinner. Research shows that skipping lunch in order to splurge later can result in people eating over twice as many calories during that splurge as they would have eaten had they had their normal lunch and snacks prior to the holiday meal.
- If family gatherings are predictably toxic—high-pressure and high-conflict, consider spending key days of the holidays with your immediate family out of town.

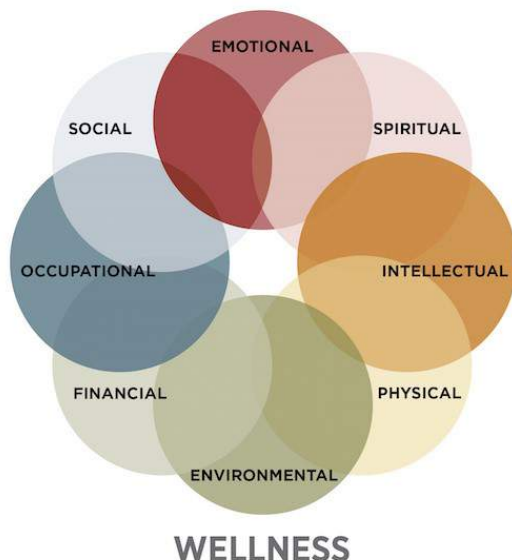
- Make sure you get sufficient rest and sleep on a daily basis.
- If you're working during the holidays—which very likely you will be—set up times to celebrate on your days off work.
- Mark your calendar for special get-togethers with family and friends during the spring, summer and fall. This will free up your holiday season so you can maintain a reasonable pace in your life and not get overloaded and worn out.

These are just some suggestions about ways to avoid “holiday fatigue.” You may have already figured out some that work for you. If you'd like, email your thoughts to me.

Wishing you all a safe and sane holiday season, reflecting on this special time, enjoying your loved ones, reaching out to those in need, and counting your blessings!

Eight Dimensions of Wellness

Reprinted from [SAMHSA](#).



According to SAMHSA, the eight dimensions of wellness are:

1. **Emotional**—Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships
2. **Environmental**—Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being
3. **Financial**—Satisfaction with current and future financial situations
4. **Intellectual**—Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills
5. **Occupational**—Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work
6. **Physical**—Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep
7. **Social**—Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system
8. **Spiritual**—Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life

As you read this list, ask yourself: In which of these eight areas would you give yourself a “satisfactory” rating or higher? Which ones would you say need improvement? And of these, which one is the one you should or can focus on the most at this time? What would be one small step to begin increasing your wellness along that dimension?

Miscellaneous



Peer Support

TRAINING

1. A 5-day **Peer Supporter Training** course is now offered by Desert Waters specifically geared to Corrections Professionals. Email us [HERE](#) for details.

Here are a couple of quotes from peer supporters who took the course:

- *I was skeptical at first of both the CF2F and Peer Support. But after the CF2F class it seemed to be like waking from a dream. I saw so many of my coworkers who are far gone into the fatigue and in desperate need of peer support. I am excited to help them. ~ G. M.*
- *This training is true to correctional officer needs to help them get through obstacles they are facing at work or in their home life. It seems that we (Correctional Officers) are pushed to the back about our feelings and it feels good to know there is help and training for the jobs we have to endure day in and day out. Desert Waters, thanks for the training and the future looks bright. ~ V. A.*

2. Holiday Staff Support Webpage: This is offered by Desert Waters to corrections agencies through mid-February, 2017. The webpage offers a diverse number of resources on resilience, emotional regulation, relationships, and much more, for corrections staff and their families. For more information, please contact us by emailing [HERE](#) or calling **719-784-4727**. Subscribing agencies are provided with a link to the page, which they disseminate to their employees.

3. Amazon Smile: Use <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/30-0151345> when shopping at Amazon , and you'll be donating to DWCO with your every purchase.

4. IACTP Award: Here are photos from IACTP's Award ceremony during the annual conference in St. Louis, MO, where Desert Waters' course "From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment" was awarded the Commercial Program Award of Excellence. The photos were taken by Missouri DOC's Lt. Mobley. We are humbled and delighted by this award.



Dr. Tracy Revel, IACTP's President Elect, & Caterina



Ted Tudor, DWCO's Office Manager; Caterina; & Gregory Morton, DWCO's Training Manager

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach



a non-profit organization
for the well-being of correctional
staff and their families

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Your gifts are tax-deductible.



Quote of the Month

"Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude."

~ Denis Waitley

Many Thanks!

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the mission of Desert Waters!**

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DWCO Mission

To promote the occupational, personal and family well-being of the public safety workforce through the provision of support, resources and customized data-driven solutions.