Moral Courage: Building Resilience

A PRESENTATION RECAP FROM ONS CONGRESS 2016 - “MORAL COURAGE: BUILDING RESILIENCE” BY VICKI LACHMAN PHD, RN & KATHERINE BROWN-SALTZMAN, MA, RN
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Objectives

• Describe and define moral courage and provide one example of a situation where nurses may exhibit moral courage.

• Describe the key skills and traits necessary to demonstrate moral courage.
1.4 Right to Self-Determination: Patients have the moral and legal right to determine what will be done with and to their own person, and to be assisted with weighing the benefits, burdens, and available options in their treatment, including the choice of not treatment. If the patient lacks capacity to make a decision, a formally designated surrogate should be consulted. The role of the surrogate is to make decisions as the patient would, based upon the patient’s previously expressed wishes and known values. In the absence of an appropriate surrogate decision-maker, decisions should be made in the best interests of the patient, considering the patient’s personal values to the extent that they are known.
Related Terminology

- **Moral Uncertainty**: Being unsure if there is an ethical dilemma, or if one is identified, being unsure what ethical principles to apply.

- **Moral Distress**: Knowing the right thing to do, but being unable to act in accordance with the identified right thing.

- **Moral Dilemma**: Arises when two or more principles or values conflict.

- **Moral Wisdom**: Moral perception, Moral Sensitivity, Moral Imagination.

- **Moral Integrity**: Being complete & undivided (“whole”).

- **Moral Resilience**: Perception of oneself as a person of character that lives a moral life, ability & willingness to act ethically in the face of adversity.

Lachman & Brown-Saltzman, 2016
Definitions

- **Moral Disagreement: (Expected):**
  - Differences in conceptions of the good
  - Different beliefs about moral obligations and who has a right to what

- **Ethical Conflict (Disruptive):**
  - Clashing of moral perspectives
  - Evolve from moral disagreements that are ignored, poorly managed, intractable, authoritarian

Lachman & Brown-Saltzman, 2016
Moral Courage

- Ability to overcome fear and distress to stand up for one’s values and ethical obligations
- Willingness to speak out and do what is right in the face of forces that would rather have you act in some other way

Lachman & Brown-Saltzman, 2016
Influencers of Action:

- Moral uncertainty
- Significant power differentials
- Inadequate management support
- Fractured care planning
- Relational conflict

Overcoming the Fear

CODE

Courage to be moral requires:

Obligations to honor (What is the right thing to do?)

Danger management (What do I need to handle my fear?)

Expression and action (What action do I need to take to maintain my integrity?)

Lachman, 2010
Moral Characteristics Expected of Nurses

- Courage
- Altruism
- Compassion
- Knowledge
- Skill
- Honesty
- Wisdom
- Patience

From: ANA Code of Ethics 2015
Supporting Nurses’ Ability to Act with Moral Courage

- Management Support
- Assertiveness
- Negotiation
- Conflict Resolution
- Build Resiliency

Lachman & Brown-Saltzman, 2016
“Everyday courage has few witnesses. But yours is no less noble because no drum beats for you and no crowds shout your name.”

Robert Louis Stevenson
References