This continuing education attachment, previously issued in September of 2004, addresses a serious and persistent problem among Americans—whether they volunteer for Hospice or not, whether they work for pay or not, whether they are raising a family or caring for elderly parents faraway or are responsible only for themselves. We are re-running it to help you celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Month 2009 by pampering a very important person—you. Most of the information on Stress and Burnout that you will find here is pure common sense, things you already know. But I ask you to take the time to read it nonetheless. With early identification and a commitment to your own self-care, you will be healthier and stronger—mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Read this material and initiate some simple steps to comfort yourself (a “Spread Eagle” from “10 Seconds to Relaxation” or a “Power Nap” from “Longer than 10 Seconds”). Save the pages in your training binder and review them periodically.

You are the only you that you have. You are the only you that we all have. Take care of yourself ... for all our sakes.

Carolyn

Continuing Education—April 2009
Adapted from First Aid for Burnout & Compassion Fatigue
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THE ART OF RELAXATION

Learning how to relax can be your best stress-busting strategy. Unfortunately many people try to relax at the same pace that they lead the rest of their lives. Set a kitchen timer for 10 minutes and simply relax … clearing your mind of any thoughts that wander by. Let go of your worries about time, productivity and “doing it right”. Stop striving for those 10 minutes and allow yourself to “BE” instead of “DOING” something. Learning how to “BE” will renew, refresh and recharge your body and your mind. Even 10 minutes can make a difference! Focus on YOU for a few moments.
10 SECONDS TO RELAXATION

Deep Breathing: Sit comfortably, breathe in through your nose to a count of four, hold for a count of six, exhale through your mouth for a count of eight. Do this twice. Breathe normally. Repeat deep breathing.

Super Shake: Shake off fatigue and tenseness by jiggling your arms, letting muscles ripple like a swimmer getting ready to swim. Jiggle each leg while keeping arms moving.

Spread Eagle: Lounge back in a comfortable chair, spreading out your legs, letting your arms flop down. Lean your head back and let out your breath. Close your eyes and soar above the earth, leaving all your cares below for a few seconds.

Rag Doll: Stand up, then bend over from the waist and hang down like a floppy rag doll. Do not bounce or jerk. As your muscles relax, your hands will reach closer to the floor without effort. RELAX!

Whole-Body Tensing: Sit up straight. Then tense every single muscle in your body, all at once, for 5 seconds frown, clench your fists, toes and everything in between! Then completely relax in the “Spread Eagle” position for 10 seconds.

Isometrics: Push palms together or push against a wall. Interlock fingers and try to pull them apart.

LONGER THAN 10 SECONDS

Imagine: While sitting in a relaxed way, in your mind, take a trip to a favorite place. Mentally use all 5 senses to experience your “trip.” Stay on “vacation” for 10-15 minutes.

Naps: Take a “power nap” of no more than 20 minutes. Set an alarm for 15-20 minutes. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and let your mind go completely blank. Send thoughts away until your mind is completely empty and you seem to be “floating.” Do not think of anything. Learn to just “be.”

Yoga or Tai Chi: These are 2 “centering” techniques that relax and stretch you, increase circulation and decrease fatigue. Take a class and enjoy.

Sleep: We sleep in cycles of about 90 minutes (1.5 hours). Plan to wake up tomorrow after getting 1.5 times the number of sleep cycles you feel you need (3, 4, 5 or 6. 1.5 x 3 = 4.5 hrs., 1.5 x 4 = 6 hrs., 1.5 x 5 = 7.5 hrs., 1.5 x 6 = 9 hrs.) Add on how long it takes you to get to sleep and subtract it from when you want to wake up. Example: You want 7.5 hours of sleep and your alarm goes off at 7 a.m. It takes you 20 minutes to fall asleep, so 7 a.m. minus 7.5 hrs = 11:30 p.m. minus 20 minutes = 11:10 p.m. should be your bedtime.
THOUGHTS TO PONDER

♦ If compassion does not include you, it is incomplete.

♦ You are valuable. You can choose to value and honor yourself … or not.

♦ How do you measure your worth? By what you do or who you are?

♦ Never underestimate the power of good thoughts and kind deeds.

♦ Do a random act of kindness today. You will feel better.

♦ Take an old dream out of a drawer and dust it off.

♦ Someone thinks of you as his or her real-life angel.

♦ Decide to have a great day.

♦ Think of stress as a TV program …. Now change the channel.

♦ Something great is going to happen today …. Wonder what it is.

♦ Try “being” for a few minutes … not so much “doing.”

♦ Watch the clouds go by. See what shapes you can see.

♦ Don’t forget how to dream. Catch a dream and made it happen.

♦ Put some wonder back into your world.

♦ Let the light within you shine. It might become someone’s ray of hope.