



Episode 129: How to Cope with Trauma on the Frontline

with Dr Caroline Walker

As a healthcare professional, have you ever felt like you're not allowed the space to react negatively to traumatic situations? Like you don't have permission to take a breather or grieve afterwards? Healthcare professionals are expected to act calmly, swiftly and "professionally" at all times. However, just like the patients you care for, you are also a human being with emotions. You experience sorrow and get hurt. And it's critical to address the trauma you face in your profession.

In this episode, Dr Caroline Walker joins Rachel to discuss how trauma can affect healthcare professionals working on the frontline. They share helpful and actionable steps you can take to help yourself and each other process traumatic situations in healthy ways.

If you want to process the unresolved trauma you've been putting at the back of your mind, this episode will help you. Hopefully, by listening to the episode and answering this workbook, you can find healing and give yourself permission to thrive and move forward with lighter and stronger steps.

Podcast links

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[This is Going to Hurt Series](#)

[This is Going to Hurt](#) by Adam Kay

[4000 Weeks](#) by Oliver Burkeman

TED Talk: [Oliver Burkeman: How to stop fighting against time](#)

Guest links

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Workbook, CPD & Reflection Log

Quote to remember:

‘One of the hardest burdens we can bear is an untold story. And I think that is the case for many, many, many doctors — that we have gone through circumstances, traumatic situations ourselves, as individuals, and we’ve held those inside ourselves and not necessarily had chance to share what that was like and experience the healing that that can bring.’

What You Will Learn

Being a healthcare professional and working on the frontline can feel like a battlefield. Every day, you witness traumatic things that you’re expected to take in like robots with no emotions. Often, the job demands you to move along the rest of your day as if you did not witness someone pass away or get into a life-changing accident. Likewise, you feel guilty for taking time off to process and heal from these traumatic events.

The activity below can help you dig deep into some unresolved trauma that may still be affecting your life. It aims to help you recognise your trauma response and discover the interventions that can help you heal.

Do not minimise the impact of trauma on yourself as a healthcare professional. Give yourself the permission to feel sad, dejected, angry and hopeless. Your emotions are valid and normal. In line with this, remember that the healing process will need time, space and human connection. Take the time to process what happened and reach out once you feel ready to talk about it. And please get professional help if you feel you need it.

Like Caroline suggests: remember ABC. Connect with **anyone**, **breathe**, and **cancel** some stuff. It’s alright to put yourself first. In order to truly heal, you must learn to extend to yourself the same kindness you give to your patients and the people around you.



Activity: Healing from Trauma

Reflect on your experience as a healthcare professional. Have you ever felt like you're not allowed to react negatively at the time and after traumatic situations?

How do you describe trauma? What counts as a traumatic event to you?

Reflect on how you coped with a traumatic event you've witnessed or experienced as a healthcare professional.



Write down some of the common medical and non-medical related types of trauma that you may have witnessed or experienced personally.

| Medical-Related | Non-Medical Related |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| | |

How do you normally deal with these traumatic events?

List some of your healthy and unhealthy coping strategies which you use to deal with trauma.

| Healthy Coping Strategies | Unhealthy Coping Strategies |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | |



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How did you know they are healthy/unhealthy? How did they affect you?

How would you describe and differentiate normal stress response, acute stress reaction and PTSD.

| Normal Stress Response | Acute Stress Reaction | PTSD |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------|
| | | |

If you are noticing any PTSD or Acute Stress symptoms in yourself, you may need to get some professional help with this – who could you approach?

Describe your support network. Do you feel safe telling them about your traumatic experiences and responses?



How do you plan to apply the ABC method of dealing with traumatic situations?

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>A</p> <p><i>Connect with anyone</i></p> | |
| <p>B</p> <p><i>Breathe</i></p> | |
| <p>C</p> <p><i>Cancel some stuff</i></p> | |



CPD time claimed:

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