

The Meaning of Moral Distress and Resilience

Moral Distress is the uncomfortable feeling that can happen when you feel unable to act in a way that aligns with your values, training, or expectations. Sometimes this happens because of constraints, such as limited time, workplace policies, workload pressures, or expectations within the care environment.



Moral Resilience is the ability to stay grounded in your values and regain strength when facing difficult or ethically challenging situations.



For more information on Navigating Moral Distress in LTC resources and the Ontario CLRI, please visit our website: <https://clri-ltc.ca/navigating-moral-distress-in-ltc>

Developed with specialized subject matter expertise, healthcare ethics review, and vital input from our Co-Design Advisory Group.

Social Signs of Moral Distress

Moral distress can affect how we think, feel, and act. Recognizing the signs early helps us care for ourselves and one another.

You might be experiencing moral distress if you:

- Feel irritable or withdrawn
- Are reluctant to share or connect with residents to protect yourself
- Are hesitant to speak up or share concerns

If you think you might be experiencing moral distress, talk to your team leader, supervisor, mentor, or other trusted peer.



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Physical Signs of Moral Distress

Moral distress can affect how we think, feel, and act. Recognizing the signs early helps us care for ourselves and one another.

You might be experiencing moral distress if you:

- Feel more fatigued than normal
- Have headaches
- Feel abnormal tension in your neck, back, or shoulders
- Have changes in your appetite or sleep
- Have existing health conditions that feel worse than normal

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Cognitive Signs of Moral Distress

Moral distress can affect how we think, feel, and act. Recognizing the signs early helps us care for ourselves and one another.

You might be experiencing moral distress if you:

- Have trouble focusing or are feeling mentally “stuck”
- Have brain fog
- Are overthinking or second-guessing decisions
- Have difficulty completing tasks or making decisions

If you think you might be experiencing moral distress, talk to your team leader, supervisor, mentor, or other trusted peer.



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Emotional Signs of Moral Distress

Moral distress can affect how we think, feel, and act. Recognizing the signs early helps us care for ourselves and one another.

You might be experiencing moral distress if you:

- Feel anxious, sad, or overwhelmed
- Feel alone or unsure who you can turn to for support

If you think you might be experiencing moral distress, talk to your team leader, supervisor, mentor, or other trusted peer.



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Spiritual Signs of Moral Distress

Moral distress can affect how we think, feel, and act. Recognizing the signs early helps us care for ourselves and one another.

You might be experiencing moral distress if you:

- Are questioning your sense of purpose
- Are feeling a loss of identity or direction
- Are feeling disconnected from work
- Are feeling guilt or shame

If you think you might be experiencing moral distress, talk to your team leader, supervisor, mentor, or other trusted peer.



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Team Support for Moral Distress

You are not alone with feeling moral distress. Connecting with your team can help you navigate situations where you feel unable to act in a way that aligns with your values, training, or expectations.

1. Talk with a trusted colleague
2. Debrief during shift meetings or with a peer
3. Connect with a moral resilience champion
4. Hold an ethics discussion

Seeking support is a sign of courage and strength.

**It's okay to not be okay.
It's okay to ask for help.**



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Moral Resilience as a Tool for Change

Small, intentional actions can help us stay grounded and build moral resilience. Here are some ways you can practice staying grounded:

1. Pause and rest when possible.
2. Take time to reflect on what you're feeling.
3. Practice self-compassion by treating yourself with care and attention.

Staying grounded can help you bring up your moral distress concerns to your team.
Seeking support is a sign of courage and strength.

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Connection with Residents as Moral Resilience

Moments of connection, such as a resident's smile, can help anchor us during difficult days. Cherishing these moments can help reinforce the meaning behind the work we do. You can do this by:

1. Creating meaningful moments with residents
2. Reflecting on your connections and purpose
3. Finding shared humanity

Use these anchoring moments to motivate you to seek support from your team.

Doing so is a sign of courage and strength.

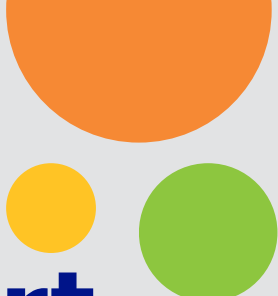
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Organizational Support for Moral Distress

Moral distress does not have to be faced alone. Your organization or employer may offer additional supports such as:

1. Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
2. Wellness initiatives
3. Connections with social workers and/or spiritual care providers
4. Ethicist support for complex situations

Seeking support is a sign of courage and strength.

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