


Toxic Positivity

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Disclosures and Conflict of Interest


- Dr Licari declares no conflicts of interest, real or apparent, and no financial interests in any company, product, or service mentioned in this program, including grants, employment, gifts, stock holdings and honoraria.



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Disclosure of AI Use

AI was not used in development of this presentation.




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Pharmacist Objectives

At the conclusion of this program, the pharmacist will be able to:

1. Recognize the difference between toxic positivity and optimism.
2. Identify options to improve workplace culture to reduce employee's compassion fatigue and/or moral distress.
3. Outline the updates included in COEPA 2022/ACPE Standards 2025 update and how that may affect the expectations of graduates entering the workforce.



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Technician Objectives

At the conclusion of this program, the pharmacy technician will be able to:

1. Recognize the difference between toxic positivity and optimism.
2. Identify options to improve workplace culture to reduce employee's compassion fatigue and/or moral distress.
3. Outline the updates included in COEPA 2022/ACPE Standards 2025 update and how that may affect the expectations of graduates entering the workforce.



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I know the difference between "optimism" and "toxic positivity."

- A. Yes, and wow do I have opinions about it.
- B. Sort of, I have seen content about it, but I am not sure of the nuance.
- C. No, I thought this was a CE on toxicology, and I am in the wrong room.

Pre-Test Questions via Poll Everywhere



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Toxic Positivity is the assumption one should only have a positive mindset or positive vibes, despite any personal struggles.

- A. True
- B. False

Pre-Test Questions via Poll Everywhere



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The online pharmacy/healthcare campaign #PizzalsNotWorking directly addresses the concept of toxic positivity.

- A. True
- B. False

Pre-Test Questions via Poll Everywhere



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According to recent research, 25% of millennial Americans would take a 20% pay cut "to achieve a lifestyle that prioritizes my quality of life."

- A. True
- B. False

Pre-Test Questions via Poll Everywhere



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Background



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Let's Compare

Optimism⁽²⁾:

- a doctrine that this world is the best possible world;
- an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events or to anticipate the best possible outcome.

Toxic Positivity⁽³⁾:

- "encouraging statements are expected to minimize or eliminate painful emotions, creating pressure to be unrealistically optimistic without considering the circumstances of the situation."

Merriam-Webster, 2025.
ADAA, 2025.



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The nuance comes from administrative expectations:

- Mental health professionals and psychologists believe optimism is great for mental health – when it is 'self-inspired.'⁽⁴⁾
 - But "conversely, optimism imposed by others has a pernicious effect on psychological well-being."
- I am guessing the majority to all of us went into healthcare because of our self-inspired optimism to help.

Russell J. J Urog Care Med. 2021



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Continuing with that example:

Example: You're fully staffed with clinically manageable patients with zero drug shortages and competent colleagues in every department ... but...

- You are going through a stressful physical diagnosis.
 - Your spouse or partner is taking care of an ailing elderly parent and not available at home.
 - Your child is dealing with a frustrating situation that is distressing to them.
- Are you expected to be optimistic for your 8-10-12 hour shift?
- And now let's go back and assume some (or none!) of the above working conditions above are true - - and administration says you received negative feedback on a patient survey, and they would like to meet with you to discuss a performance improvement plan.



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#Pizzaisnotworking; a campaign that addresses toxic positivity⁽⁵⁾

Angry Customers, More Work and Longer Hours Strain Pharmacists

Pharmacists and technicians, who have played a critical role in administering Covid-19 tests and vaccines, say they are burned out nearly two years into the pandemic.

People on social media have aired their concerns under the hashtag "PizzaisNotWorking." Bled Tanoe, 35, an Oklahoma City pharmacist who left Walgreens in August to work at a hospital, started the campaign to underscore the strain that pharmacists and technicians were feeling. Dr. Tanoe now is pressing pharmacies to increase pay and provide more support to staff.

Ngo M. MYT. 2022



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Compassion Fatigue and Moral Distress

1) "Compassion fatigue (CF) is stress resulting from exposure to a traumatized individual. CF has been described as the convergence of secondary traumatic stress (STS) and cumulative burnout (BO), a state of physical and mental exhaustion caused by a depleted ability to cope with one's everyday environment."⁽⁶⁾

2) "The concept of moral distress (MD) was introduced to nursing by Jameton who defined MD as arising, 'when one knows the right thing to do, but institutional constraints make it nearly impossible to pursue the right course of action'."⁽⁷⁾

Cooker F, Joss N. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2016.

Morley G, Joss J, Bradburn-Jones G, Jelliffe E. Nurs Ethics. 2013.



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What is the rate of burnout in pharmacists?

Quantifying the rate of burnout can help leadership understand the impact of toxic positivity on their collective workforce.

"Burnout prevalence data were extracted from 19 articles involving 11,306 pharmacist participants across eight countries. More than half (51%) of pharmacists were experiencing burnout. Associated risk factors included:

- longer working hours
- younger age/less professional experience
- high patient and prescription volumes
- excessive workload and poor work/life balance

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted pharmacist burnout and resilience. Involvement in education and training and access to burnout management resources were associated with lower rates of burnout, but burnout intervention effectiveness is unknown."⁽⁸⁾

Dee J, Dhuhalbawi N, Hayden JC. Int J Clin Pharm. 2023



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Impact of BO, CF and MD:

1) Burn-out (BO)

- Likely to leave the profession completely which leads staff shortages relating to compromising quality of care and increased rate of medication errors⁽⁷⁾
- “Burnout, resource shortages, and high risk for severe COVID-19 infections have unevenly impacted women and health care workers of color. This is due to preexisting inequities around social determinants of health, exacerbated by the pandemic.”⁽⁸⁾

2) Compassion Fatigue (CF)

- ASHP reports “Exhaustion, compromised immunity, sleep disturbances, anger, absenteeism, avoidance, impaired clinical decision-making, increased use of alcohol and drugs, cynicism, depersonalization, and a feeling of helplessness are some of the signs and symptoms of compassion fatigue.”⁽⁹⁾

3) Impact of Moral Distress (MD)

- Predicted shortage of around 100,000 critical health care workers by 2028.⁽¹¹⁾
- The impact of this prediction will vary based on geographic and demographic disparities.

Morley G, Nies J, Bradbury-Jones C, Ivime F. Nurs Ethics. 2019
Doe J, Dhruvabai N, Hayden JC. Int J Clin Pharm. 2023.
Health and Human Services. 2024.
AHA. 2022.



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No easy answers, but here are a few starters:

- Addressing Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) “System improvements are needed to better support doctors and nurses, to ensure adequate staffing, well-functioning teams that include social workers and behavioral health counselors, and user-friendly electronic health records.”⁽¹⁰⁾ to address moral distress.
- Addressing staffing shortages from BO/MD/CF: “Equitable, scalable and accessible education and training.”⁽¹¹⁾
- Implement evidence-based policies to address BO: ⁽⁸⁾
 - Listen to your frontline staff and involve them in workflow processes.
 - Build in paid leave, sick time, family leave and rest breaks.
 - Zero-tolerance policy for workplace violence, bias, racism and discrimination.

Doe J, Dhruvabai N, Hayden JC. Int J Clin Pharm. 2023.
ASHP. 2023.
NPR. 2024.



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“The Striking, Startling Realities of Pharmacy Burnout”

- “... authors touted organizational-level remedies addressing burnout causes and contributors. They called upon healthcare leadership to be more involved in organizational research and solutions promoting a positive workplace culture, more invested in resources to promote resiliency and self-care, and more committed to fostering improved work-life integration.”⁽¹³⁾
- “The authors, in fact, cite one healthcare organization that developed a task force to reduce work overload. When that organization, spurred by the task force members’ own lived experiences, implemented ground rules for checking and responding to e-mails outside of work hours, team members’ efficiency jumped while perceived stress declined.”⁽¹³⁾

<https://pharmacy.uic.edu/news-stories/startling-realities-pharmacist-burnout/>



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“American hustle culture is dying. Millennials are willing to take a 20% pay cut for a better work-life balance.”⁽¹⁾

About 60% of surveyed American millennials said they would take a 20% pay cut “to achieve a lifestyle that prioritizes my quality of life,” which is 5% more than the global average.

US millennials were the most willing among their generational cohorts. Just 33% of Baby Boomers were willing to take that salary cut, while 43% of Gen X and 56% of Gen Z agreed.

Business Insider. 2024.



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The future of employee expectations

- AACP Curriculum Outcomes and Entrustable Professional Activities (COEPA) 2022 ⁽¹²⁾
 - The most recent update is the 5th version of the Center for the Advancement of Pharmacy Education (CAPE) educational outcomes (EO.)
 - EO's are descriptions of what the learner should be able to perform at the end of the program.
 - Preceptors: EPA's are activities you should observe in experiential education.



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The future, from COEPA pharmacy curriculum guidance:

Domain: Attitudes 3.1, Subdomain: Self-awareness: ⁽¹²⁾

Examine, reflect on, and address personal and professional attributes (eg, knowledge, metacognition, skills, abilities, beliefs, biases, motivation, help-seeking strategies, and emotional intelligence that could enhance or limit growth, development, & professional identity formation).

Example objectives⁶

- Use metacognition to understand and regulate one's own thinking and learning.
- Demonstrate motivation (eg, desire to learn, attention, interest, habits of mind, persistence, flexibility) during didactic and experiential activities.
- Identify, create, implement, evaluate, and modify plans, using available resources (eg, career counselors, mentors) as needed, for personal and professional development for the purpose of individual growth.
- Recognize, correct, and learn from errors.
- Select and use constructive coping strategies or help-seeking behaviors (personal, professional, or academic support) to manage stress and improve well-being.
- Utilize elements of emotional intelligence when working with others.
- Reflect on the evolution of one's own professional identity formation during the doctor of pharmacy program and how it will continue to evolve across one's career.



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Standard 4. Students and Student Services⁽¹²⁾

- The college or school has an appropriately staffed and resourced organizational element dedicated to providing a comprehensive range of services that promote student success and well-being.
- The college or school develops, implements, and assesses its policies and procedures to promote student success, resilience, and well-being; ensures the selection of a qualified and diverse student body into the program; and supports student progression through the Doctor of Pharmacy curriculum.
- **4.1.f Wellness and well-being – The college or school offers students access to wellness and resilience programs/services.**

ACPE Standards 2025



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Questions???



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Final tips & Take-Home Points

Thank you for attending, participating and considering a better workplace for everyone.



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BINGO

PUTTING MYSELF FIRST

24 HOURS SOCIAL MEDIA FREE	PLAN SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO	TRY SOMETHING YOU ENJOYED AS A KID	PLAN A COMPLETE DAY OFF JUST FOR YOU	LISTEN TO YOUR FAVORITE SONG A BIT LOUDER
SPEND AT LEAST 15 MINUTES IN THE SUNSHINE	SCHEDULE YOUR ANNUAL PHYSICAL AND LAB WORK	WATCH YOUR FAVORITE MOVIE	TAKE YOUR 15 MINUTE BREAK AND STEP AWAY	COOK YOUR FAVORITE MEAL
SCHEDULE AN APPY YOU'VE BEEN PUTTING OFF	DONATE OR VOLUNTEER TO A CAUSE YOU CARE ABOUT		GIVE YOURSELF AT LEAST 1 COMPLIMENT	SPEND 15-30 MINUTES MOVING IN A WAY THAT IS FUN FOR YOU
DEDICATE TIME TO STRETCH/ MOVE IN YOUR DAY	SET ASIDE TIME RIGHT AFTER WORK TO DECOMPRESS	UNFOLLOW PAGE ACCOUNTS THAT MAKE YOU FEEL LESS THAN	ASK FOR HELP/ DELEGATE A TASK	SCHEDULE TIME FOR YOUR FAVORITE HOBBY
DO SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE YOU LAUGH	TOUCH BASE WITH SOMEONE YOU HAVEN'T TALKED TO IN AWHILE	SET A HEALTHY BOUNDARY SAY NO	BUDGET FOR SOMETHING FOR YOU WILL ENJOY	GIVE YOURSELF TIME FOR AT LEAST 8 HOURS OF SLEEP

Final tips & Take-Home Points

Self-Care Bingo Card disseminated to employees of a regional health system with small gifts awarded for completing.



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Thank you

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