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Can We Talk About Moral Distress When It Isn't Life-or-Death?

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Concept: Moral Distress

When you're responsible for taking action
but external constraints
make it nearly impossible to do the right thing¹

Example from nursing literature²: Your patient
needs pain relief, there's no order for medication

Based on 1. Jameton p.6 (1984); Nathaniel (2017); Ulrich, Zeitzer, &
Ravitsky (2009) and 2. Rushton & Kurtz (2015)

Moral Distress in the Library

What might lead to moral distress in a library workplace?

- ▶ When we are required to take actions that do not align with our personal values.
- ▶ When we don't feel that we can trust the systems that are in place in our organizations.

Examples

- ▶ **Hiring practices:** Being required to hire temporary or student workers to do work usually associated with higher paid, benefit-earning, professional positions.
- ▶ **Budget concerns:** Needing to make significant collection cuts with little data, or with little time for input.
- ▶ **Work/life balance:** Needing time off during busy/high traffic times of year.

Space to share!

- ▶ We'd love to hear from you on our [Padlet!](#)
 - ▶ What workplace situations might result in moral distress for a library worker?
 - ▶ How do you care for yourself during/after distressing situations?
 - ▶ Please feel free to share resources related to moral distress!
 - ▶ Wild card – tell us anything!

Thanks!

Questions?



More about us

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Resources

- ▶ Jameton. (1984). *Nursing practice: The ethical issues*
- ▶ Miller & Janke. (2022). Canadian academic nursing librarians: impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on librarianship practice. J Can Health Libr Assoc. 2022 Aug 4;43(2):47-57
- ▶ Nathaniel. (2017). Moral Distress. *Encyclopedia of Nursing Research*
- ▶ Rushton & Kurtz. (2015). *Moral Distress and You*

Ethics statements from library organizations: [ALA](#), [MLA](#)

Acknowledgements

The land on which we live and work is the traditional and ancestral land of the Keyauwee and Saura peoples. Widespread, state-sponsored colonial violence forced both tribes to leave these lands and consolidate with other Indigenous groups for protection. Neither tribe exists today, though North Carolina is home to 8 state-recognized tribes and 1 federally recognized tribe.

We encourage you to research local and national organizations/initiatives that support the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, lands, and bodies in ways that resonate for you. For us, those include the [Guilford Native American Association](#), [Missing Murdered Indigenous Coalition of NC](#), the [Native American Rights Fund](#), and [Indigenous Safe Space](#) (a set of Canvas modules about Indigenous pedagogy and community)

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