Moral Distress Information and Help

What is moral distress?
You know the ethically appropriate action to take, but you are unable to act in an ethical way. You act in a manner contrary to your personal and professional values, which undermines your integrity and authenticity.

What effects does moral distress have?
Moral distress results in significant physical and emotional stress, which contributes to feelings of loss of integrity and dissatisfaction with the work environment. Research demonstrates that moral distress may contribute to staff leaving the work setting and profession. It can affect relationships with patients and coworkers and the quality, quantity, and cost of care.

What can be done about moral distress?
- Education and tools to address and manage moral distress in the work environment are imperative.
- Trained facilitators can provide a 45-60 minute session as an open, safe forum to address issues related to any situation causing moral distress – end-of-life care, cultural issues, communication, treatment choices, etc – or ways to prevent moral distress by dealing with power or personality conflicts based on issues of concern on the unit.
- Staff can bring a case for discussion that is causing or has caused moral distress, anxiety or concern.
- If requested, facilitators can bring a case to match a need on a unit and will bring resource information to help clarify available resources to aid with moral distress situations.
- Facilitator will also work with the staff to develop action plans for decreasing moral distress on the unit.

How do I schedule a moral distress session for my unit?
Discuss the following questions with the staff:

- What issue would you like to discuss?
- What is the background, who is involved, what has been done to help already? (If you have a unit example)
- What would you hope to gain from the session?
- What days/times are best for staff to have a facilitated session?

Once you have the answers, contact Ann Rebera at acr4b@virginia.edu to schedule a session.