



# Case worker Burnout

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Burnout is a serious issue whose endpoint can entail mental confusion, psychosocial distress, and physical collapse.

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**DO YOU WANT BURNOUT?**

**BECAUSE WORKING ON A BURNOUT  
PRESENTATION ON YOUR VACATION  
IS HOW YOU GET BURNOUT**



# Burnout Definition

- Physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress.
- "high levels of professionalism that may result in burnout"



# Burnout Definition

- A syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.
- Loss of enthusiasm for the work, a loss of a sense of commitment to the profession, and a disengagement and distancing from clients



# Stress Versus Burnout

STRESS	BURNOUT
Characterized by over engagement	Characterized by disengagement
Emotions are overreactive	Emotions are blunted
Produces urgency and hyperactivity	Produces helplessness and hopelessness
Loss of energy	Loss of motivation, ideals, and hope
Leads to anxiety disorders	Leads to detachment and depression
Primary damage is physical	Primary damage is emotional
May kill you prematurely	May make life seem not worth living

Source: *Stress and Burnout in Ministry*

# Burnout or Something Else?

Compassion Fatigue or Secondary Traumatic Stress: the natural predictable, treatable, and preventable unwanted consequence of working with suffering people, that is, the cost of caring

Vicarious Trauma: a cumulative transformative effect or condition experienced by trauma therapist as they work with specific populations of survivors of traumatic life events



# Causes of Burnout

## Work-Related Causes



- Heavy caseloads
- Unrealistic timeframes
- Low pay
- Safety Concerns
- Conflict with coworkers/supervisors
- Lack of appreciation
- Limited or inadequate resources
- Unclear or overly demanding job expectations





# Causes of Burnout

## Work-Related Causes

- Work that is monotonous or unchallenging
- Conflict between personal values and work assignments
- Organizational structure
- Compassion fatigue
- Vicarious trauma



# Causes of Burnout

## Lifestyle Causes

- Working too much; No time for relaxing and socializing
- Being expected to be too many things to too many people
- Taking on too many responsibilities, without enough help from others
- Not getting enough sleep
- Lack of close, supportive relationships



# Causes of Burnout

## Personality Traits

- Perfectionistic tendencies; nothing is ever good enough
- Pessimistic view of yourself and the world
- The need to be in control; reluctance to delegate to others
- High-achieving, Type A personality



# Dealing With Burnout

## The Three “R” Approach

- **Recognize** – Watch for the warning signs of burnout
- **Reverse** – Undo the damage by managing stress and seeking support
- **Resilience** – Build your resilience to stress by taking care of your physical and emotional health

# How do I Prevent Professional Burnout?

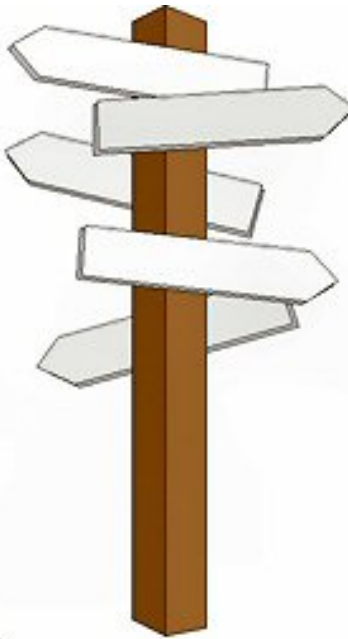
Professional Self Care  
“RECOGNIZE”



# Recognize The Signs

## Thinking/Cognitive

- Confusion
- Impaired judgment and decision-making;  
forgetfulness;
- Negative outlook;
- Sense of failure;
- Lack of motivation;
- Decreased ability to identify alternatives,  
prioritize tasks, and evaluate one's own  
performance





# Signs of Burnout

## Mood

- Burnout can cause emotional exhaustion;
- Loss of sense of personal accomplishment and merit; depersonalization and alienation;
- Depression, anger, and irritability;
- Self Medicating



# Signs of Burnout

## Somatic/Physical Functioning

- Burnout can lower energy level,
- Change appetite and sleeping
- Gastrointestinal problems,
- Hypochondriacal complaints,
- Feeling tired/drained and
- Exhaustion/extreme fatigue





# Signs of Burnout

## Behavioral functioning

- Burnout can cause increased or decreased activity level;
- Excessive isolation from coworkers, family and clients;
- Withdrawing from responsibilities;
- Skipping work or coming in late;
- Disorganization, misplacing of items, and impaired competence on the job

# How do I Prevent Professional Burnout?

Professional Self Care  
“REVERSE”





# Professional Self-Care

A core essential component to social work practice and reflects a choice and commitment to become actively involved in maintaining one's effectiveness as a social worker

A repertoire of self-care strategies is essential to support the social worker in preventing, addressing, and coping with the natural, yet unwanted, consequences of helping



# Professional Obligations to Prevent Burnout in the NASW Code of Ethics

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Social workers who experience these problems should “immediately seek consultation and take appropriate remedial action” by seeking professional help, making adjustments in workload terminating practice, or taking any other steps necessary to protect clients and others.

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# **Burnout Recovery Strategy #1: SLOW DOWN**

When you've reached the end stage of burnout, adjusting your attitude or looking after your health isn't going to solve the problem.

- Force yourself to slow down or take a break.
- Cut back commitments and activities where you can.
- Give yourself time to rest, reflect, and heal.



# Burnout Recovery Strategy #2: GET SUPPORT

When you're burned out, the natural tendency is to protect what little energy you have left by isolating yourself.



- Turn to your loved ones for support
- Simply sharing your feelings with another person can relieve some of the stress



## **Burnout Recovery Strategy #3: REEVALUATE GOALS and PRIORITIES**

Burnout is an undeniable sign that something important in your life is not working.

- Take time to think about your hopes, goals, and dreams.
- Are you neglecting something that is truly important to you?
- Burnout can be an opportunity to rediscover what really makes you happy and to change course accordingly.



## **Burnout recovery strategy #4: Coping With Job Burnout**

- Actively address problems
- Clarify your job description
- Ask for new duties
- Take time off



# How do I Prevent Professional Burnout?

Professional Self Care  
“RESILIENCE”





# Self-Care Tips

## Take Stock- What on your plate

- Take a nonjudgmental inventory of where things are in your life
- Make a list of all the demands on your time and energy
- Evaluate what you would like to change most and discuss it with a trusted friend, colleague, or counselor
- Learn to manage stress

# Self-Care Tips



## Find time for yourself everyday

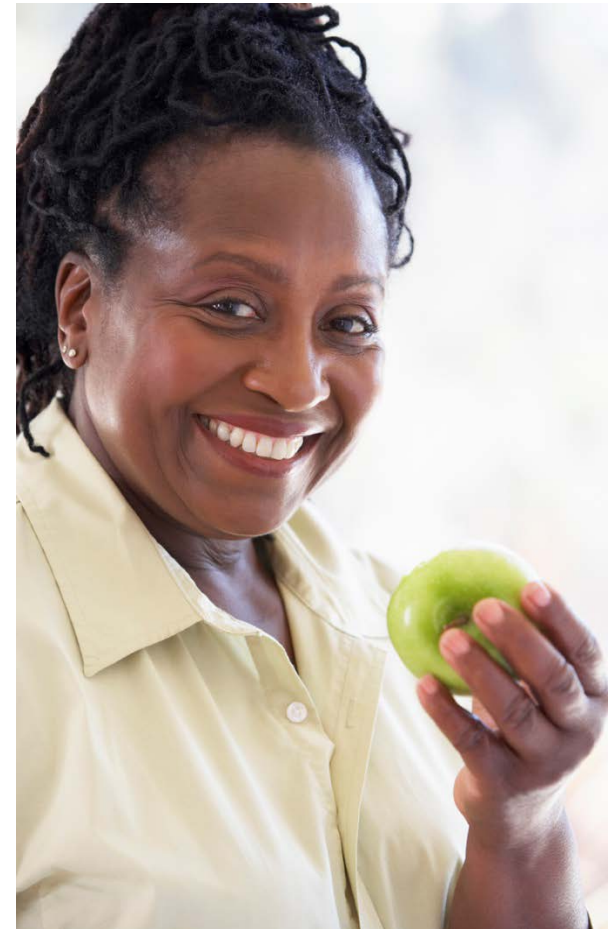
- Take a lunch
- Take quiet time to sit and relax

## Delegate

- Learn to ask for help at home and at work
- Give your family members responsibilities

# Self-Care Tips

- Start the day with a relaxing ritual
- Adopt healthy eating, exercising, and sleeping habits
- Take a daily break from technology.
- Have a transition from work to home
  - Change clothes when you get home
  - Take time to relax before tending to home obligations
  - Spend 10 minutes doing something relaxing after work



# Self-Care Strategies and Activities

- Know your boundaries
- Take a break from everything
- Make time for self-care
- Do at least one thing a day unrelated to work
  - Exercise
  - Read a book
  - Watch a movie
  - Watch the birds
  - Hang out with friends



# If You Are Experiencing Burnout

- Listen to concerns of colleagues, family, and friends
- Conduct periodic self-assessments
- Reduce isolation by maintaining regular supervision and network with colleagues
- Take needed “mental health days” and use stress reduction techniques
- Arrange for reassignment at work, take leave, and seek appropriate professional help, as needed.





# Professional Obligations to Prevent Burnout in the NASW Code of Ethics

Social workers with direct knowledge of another social worker's impairment should, when feasible, consult with and assist the social worker in taking remedial action.

Social Workers should not allow personal problems, psychosocial distress, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment, performance or responsibilities to clients



# How To Prevent Employee Burnout

- Managers should continually assess the organizational climate and work to create more humane, less adverse working environment
- Teaching stress management and time management skills
- Encourage employee self care





“Organizations must treat burnout as a priority; otherwise it’s just a case of blaming the victim.”



# References

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