Burnout

? Definition

Burnout is characterized by feeling emotionally depleted or drained and can result after a period of long-term, work related stress. There are three key aspects to burnout which you may experience in varying degrees.[2, 3]

Burnout may include:	
1. Emotional exhaustion	Feeling that your personal energy is gone or depleted
2. Depersonalization and cynicism	Feeling detached from your work, including a loss of motivation or interest
3. Feelings of inefficacy	Feeling helpless or hopeless about your work and a sense of failure to reach your personal work-related goals

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⚠ Signs & Symptoms

Physical	Emotional & Cognitive	Behavioral	Work Related
• Fatigue/exhaustion • Headaches • Sleep disturbances: difficulty falling or staying asleep increased/decreased sleep • Digestive problems • Increased physical complaints	• Emotional distress (e.g., feelings of sadness, depression) • Anger & irritability • Inwardly directed criticism • Difficulty concentrating • Increased cynicism or negativity • Increased doubts and uncertainty	• Excessive use of substances: nicotine, alcohol, illicit drugs • Risk-taking	• Avoidance or dread of working with certain patients or colleagues • Withdrawing from colleagues • Decreased job performance • Negative attitude toward the job, organization, and/or patients • Depersonalization • Absenteeism • Lack of satisfaction from achievements • Decreased sense of personal accomplishment • Feeling unable to help • Disillusionment • Reduced job commitment • Reduced job motivation • Low career satisfaction

| | | | • Feeling over-worked and over-extended |
| | | | • Increased medical errors |

Mohamad is a 35-year old gastroenterologist. He was contacted by his supervisor after a heated argument between him and a surgeon. They argued about a critical care case which involved a 26-year old female patient with complicated Crohn's disease who expired with sepsis. Mohamad's colleagues report that he has been aggressive with the physician and nurse colleagues and they feel that he is inappropriate in his interactions with them. Mohamad has a reputation for being a hard worker and excellent physician. He spends most of his time at the hospital because of his commitment to his patients and his clinical work. Mohamad is married and his wife is pregnant with their first child. His wife has expressed concerns to another physician's spouse about Mohamad, stating that he his irritable and not participating in family life when at home. When Mohamad meets with his supervisor to discuss the conflict with his colleague, he denies any problems. He expresses that he did not have much of an impact to help the patient who expired or many others. He feels he has lost some direction, and the conflict with his colleague made him frustrated. He reports feeling worn out and that he is not able to accomplish much in his work.

🙁 Vulnerability Factors

Work-related and organizational factors increase vulnerability to burnout. These factors include:

Working Hours & Environment	• Long working hours • Difficult work environment • Too much challenge in your work • Not enough control over one's working conditions • Chronic work-related stress • Intense work demands
Work/Life Balance	• Lack of boundaries between work and rest • Limited opportunity for rest and recovery • Continual boredom (this can be either a cause of or a symptom of burnout)
Unclear Roles or Expectations	• An unclear or non-existent job description or unclear role in the team • Poor preparation and briefing for work related tasks • A persistent gap between job expectations and one's skills, abilities, and/or knowledge • A poor match between the job and the person • Not enough signs of effectiveness or progress within one's work • Challenges in balancing the expectations of managers, co-workers, donors, patients, and family • Responsibility for things you can't control or experience of lack of control over your work.

Lack of Support or Adequate Supervision	• Inconsistent or inadequate supervision • Lack of fairness or feedback • Lack of support can lead to unresolved conflict and greater risk of burnout • Limited autonomy at work and a high degree of interference
Lack of value for wellbeing	• Efforts are not being acknowledged and appreciated • Feeling devalued and not rewarded for your work • Lack of engagement in the workplace

Prevention & Recovery

Self-care practices can help prevent the development of burnout. Engage regularly in replenishing self-care strategies that promote physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Once you begin to routinely practice healthy self-care habits, they become part of your overall prevention plan. Not only do self-care practices strengthen your ability to cope while in the moment, they can help your body remember how to bounce back to a healthier state.

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By focusing on building your strengths and carrying out self-care activities, you contribute to your behavioral, cognitive, physical, spiritual, and emotional resilience which supports the prevention of burnout. In addition, organizational practices and protocols are important in preventing employee burnout. Strategies include:

Organizational practices:

Improve Working Hours & Environment	• Reasonable working hours • Balance the intensity of work and ensure there is down time
Encourage Work/Life Balance	• Encourage rest breaks and employee vacations, facilitate an organizational culture where self-care is valued and seen as necessary for quality work
Ensure Roles or Expectations are clear	• Clear job descriptions and ensuring that staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities • Ensure that employees are appropriately trained to meet their work responsibilities
Provide Support and Adequate Supervision	• Regular meetings with supervisees/employees and encourage them to seek help as needed • Establish peer support or buddy systems as needed to provide employees with support
Value wellbeing	• Implement regular team meetings and ensure effective team work • Promote the importance of wellbeing

	• Implement systems that celebrate success and show appreciation • Ensure that employees know that they are a valued team member • Information about stress and its impacts is provided and good coping strategies are encouraged

Individual practices:

Through focusing on your behavioral, cognitive, physical, spiritual, and emotional self-care practices you can begin to build your resilience. Some suggested activities include:

Behavioral	• Ensure adequate sleep (6-8 hours per night) • Seek help from colleagues and/or your supervisor when you need it • Develop competence (the skills you need to do your job) • Develop confidence (the knowledge that you can do it) • Assess the fit between your interests, talents, and skills and your job description • Assess your workload • Take on new tasks if this balances with your workload. New tasks can give you energy • Reorganize the way you currently do your work or restructure your work day to ensure more self-care time[4,]
Cognitive	• Assess how well your values and those of your agency fit one another. If fit of values is an issue, it helps to look for commonalities, places where your values match, as well as to think about whether you can learn to value the things your agency thinks are important. You can also consider advocating for values you think are important in your workplace.
Physical	• Engage in physical exercise regularly • Ensure a healthy diet (i.e., fruits, vegetables, avoiding processed foods, reduce sugar, salt and caffeine)
Spiritual	• Make time for your spiritual practice (e.g., prayer, meditation, spending time in nature, engaging in meaningful contributions to others) • Find meaning or purpose in your daily activities, use strategies to help you remember this sense of meaning every day (e.g., leave yourself notes on your desk, put a photo where you will see it
Emotional	• Practice gratitude (e.g., set some time aside each day to reflect on a few things for which you are thankful) • Ensure that you have good social support (individuals in your personal and professional life from which you can get emotional support and ask to help when you need it) and connect with your social support networks regularly

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