
Understanding Stress, Burn Out, and Compassion Fatigue

Keeping Your Own Light Lit
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Stress

- **Stress** – What you experience when you believe you cannot cope effectively with a threatening situation.
 - Positive stress
 - Negative stress or distress
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Identifying the Effects of Stress

- 50% surveyed said that stress was affecting their health.
 - 21% said that stress was negatively affecting their friendships.
 - 19% said that stress was hurting their marriages.
 - 15% said that stress was affecting their performance at work.
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Stress Can Make You SICK

- 75%-90% of all visits to primary care physicians are for complaints and conditions that are, in some way, stress related.
 - 112 million people take some form of medication for stress-related symptoms.
 - Muscles are a prime target for stress – stress-induced muscle tension.
 - Stress is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.
 - Stress affects the secretion of stomach acids.
 - Stress increases your cholesterol, increases your blood pressure, constricts your blood vessels, triggers arrhythmias, exacerbates irritable bowel syndrome and colitis.
 - Stress compromises our immune system and lowers our resistance to colds.
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Understanding Stress is as Simple as "ABC"

- **A** - The stressful event/situation
 - **B** - Your beliefs, thoughts, and/or perceptions about "A"
 - **C** - The emotional consequence or stress that results from holding these beliefs ("B")
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Coping with Stress

Unhealthy Ways of Coping With Stress

These coping strategies may temporarily reduce stress, but they cause more damage in the long run:

- Smoking, drinking
 - Over or under eating
 - Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
 - Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
 - Using pills/drugs to relax
 - Sleeping too much
 - Procrastinating
 - Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
 - Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)
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Preventing Burnout

What is Burnout?

A state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

Burnout

Signs and Symptoms

- Irritability and general distrust of other's intentions
 - No new ideas in the past six months
 - Lack of energy – physical or emotional
 - Feelings of isolation and lack of personal support
 - Overwhelming urge to leave the work
 - Attempts to feel good about oneself by focusing on how much one does rather than the quality of work completed
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On the Road to Burnout

You may be on the road to burnout if:

- ✓ Every day is a bad day
- ✓ Caring about your work or home life seems like a total waste of energy
- ✓ You're exhausted all the time
- ✓ The majority of your day is spent on tasks you find either mind-numbingly dull or overwhelming
- ✓ You feel nothing you do makes a difference or is appreciated

The negative effects of burnout spill over into every area of life – including your home and social life. Burnout can also cause long-term changes to your body that make you vulnerable to illnesses like colds and flu. Because of its many consequences, it's important to deal with burnout right away.

Burnout

Warning Signs and Symptoms

Physical signs and symptoms of burnout:

- ✓ Feeling tired and drained most of the time
 - ✓ Lowered immunity, feeling sick a lot
 - ✓ Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches
 - ✓ Change in appetite or sleep habits
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Burnout

Warning Signs & Symptoms

Emotional signs and symptoms of burnout:

- ✓ Sense of failure and self-doubt
 - ✓ Feeling helpless, trapped, and defeated
 - ✓ Detachment, feeling alone in the world
 - ✓ Loss of motivation
 - ✓ Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
 - ✓ Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment
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Burnout

Warning Signs and Symptoms

Behavioral signs and symptoms of burnout:

- ✓ Withdrawing from responsibilities
 - ✓ Isolating yourself from others
 - ✓ Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
 - ✓ Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
 - ✓ Taking out your frustrations on others
 - ✓ Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early
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Causes of Burnout

Work-related causes of burnout:

- Feeling like you have little or no control over your work
 - Lack of recognition or rewards for good work
 - Unclear or overly demanding job expectations
 - Doing work that's monotonous or unchallenging
 - Working in a chaotic or high-pressure environment
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Causes of Burnout

Lifestyle causes of Burnout:

- Working too much, without enough 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
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Causes of Burnout

Personality Traits can Contribute to Burnout:

- Perfectionist 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
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Preventing Burnout

Burnout Prevention Tips:

- Learn how to manage stress
 - Start the day with a relaxing ritual
 - Adopt healthy eating, exercising, and sleeping habits
 - Set boundaries – Learn to say NO
 - Take a daily break from technology
 - Nourish your creative side
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What is Compassion Fatigue?

- ▶ Compassion Fatigue symptoms are normal displays of chronic stress resulting from the caring work we choose to do.
 - ▶ Leading traumatologist Eric Gentry suggests that people who are attracted to caring professions often enter the field already compassion fatigued.
 - ▶ Simply put, these are people who were taught at an early age to care for the needs of others before caring for their own needs. Authentic, ongoing self-care practices are absent from their lives.
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Recognizing Compassion Fatigue

Symptoms present in an individual include:

- Excessive blaming
 - Bottled up emotions
 - Isolation from others
 - Receives unusual amount of complaints from others
 - Voices excessive complaints about administrative functions
 - Substance abuse used to mask feelings
 - Compulsive behaviors such as overspending, overeating, gambling, and sexual addictions
 - Poor self-care (i.e., hygiene, appearance)
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Recognizing Compassion Fatigue

(Symptoms Continued)

- Legal problems, indebtedness
 - Reoccurrence of nightmares and flashbacks to traumatic event
 - Chronic physical ailments such as gastrointestinal problems and recurrent colds
 - Apathy, sad, no longer finds activities pleasurable
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Mentally and physically tired
 - Preoccupied
 - In denial about problems
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Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

A form of Posttraumatic Stress that is a result of indirect exposure to trauma that arises from a relationship with a traumatized client.

- Is a typical human response
 - Comes from our perceptions of the client's traumatic experience
 - Can worsen and become debilitating if ignored or unattended
 - Sometimes referred to as Vicarious Traumatization or Compassion Fatigue
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Secondary Trauma

- Generally speaking, persons at risk for developing secondary trauma are those who have the responsibility of providing care to a person who has had some type of crisis.
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Symptoms of Secondary Trauma

- Anger
 - Anxiety
 - Depression
 - Low self-esteem
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Difficulty remembering things
 - Fatigue
 - Headaches or body aches
 - Changes in sleep habits
 - Changes in eating habits
 - Increase in addictive behaviors
 - Withdrawing from others
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Secondary Trauma

There are several reasons why professionals working with maltreated or traumatized children are at increased risk of developing secondary trauma:

- ❑ EMPATHY
 - ❑ CHILDREN ARE VULNERABLE
 - ❑ UNRESOLVED PERSONAL TRAUMA
 - ❑ INSUFFICIENT RECOVERY TIME
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An ethical imperative

“Self-care is an ethical imperative. We have an obligation... to ourselves, our colleagues, and our loved ones- not to be damaged by the work we do.”

-Saakvitne and Pearlman (1996)
