"Help! I’m completely burned out."

Mary Margaret Kerr, Ed.D.

Essential Questions
• What is burnout?
• What are the indicators for burnout?
• Is burnout the same as job stress? A workplace problem? A personal problem?
• Given the stresses of our work, can we prevent or reduce the risk of burnout?

Isn’t burnout just the result of too much stress?

Stress is a major contributor. However, stress alone is not the problem, as we will come to find out.

In fact, the stress of a well-managed challenge is actually helpful.

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How would we detect burnout?

1. Ineffectiveness or meaning burnout.
   - The meaning of the work, its "psychic income" are lost.
   - Feeling that your work doesn’t make a difference
   - Not accomplishing much
   - In sum, you no longer feel helpful.

2. Cynicism
   - Doing the minimal required
   - Detaching from others at work
   - Focusing on negatives

3. Exhaustion, or caring burnout
   - Your battery is drained.
   - Overextended
   - Tired, "used up"
   - Too many "open circles" sapping energy—those loose ends you need to finish

Can you recall those?

"A day of worry is more exhausting than a day of work." --John Lubbock
Let's do a quick self-diagnosis

- Pause the video.
- Find the handout titled "Quick guide suggestions prevention/intervention with the negative effects of caregiving.
- Spend 5 minutes assessing yourself with this checklist: Can you tell which suggestions address ICE?

Remember: Three dimensions

- overwhelming exhaustion
- feelings of cynicism and detachment from the work role
- a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment

Stories from the field. . .

"I felt trapped. No matter how hard I worked, it was like nobody noticed. I never saw my principal unless there was a problem. Look, I didn’t go into this for the money. But, hey, even I need to feel I am accomplishing something. The lines between work and home were non-existent. I fought with teenagers at work and then went home and did the same thing. The only way I could unwind was with a few drinks. Then I woke up tired in the morning and started the cycle all over again."

Five-minute reflections: Let’s diagnose burnout

Is burnout a personal problem or a workplace problem?

It's both.

The demands of the workplace are major contributors, but employees who actively address problems experience less burnout than those who are passive.

(de Rijk, in Maslach & Leiter)
What puts me at risk for burnout?

- Work overload
- Values conflict
- Unfairness
- Insufficient reward
- Loss of control
- Loss of community

Does this sound familiar?

- As one counselor observed, "I go to another school to help them in a crisis. Then, I return to my own school, where no one is sympathetic. Everything I left on my desk is there, and more. Finally, I get home and the phone rings off the hook with people wanting to know what is going on." It feels like everyone wants "a piece of you." These effects are not limited to those on a crisis team. For example, office staff may be racing against deadlines to produce parent letters, and maintenance workers are called on to stay longer hours or take on additional roles.

What can we do to address these factors that contribute to burnout?

- Work overload
- Lack of control
- Unfairness
- Insufficient reward
- Value conflict
- Loss of community

Consider the Four R’s

“If no matter what you say or what you do, Results, Recognition, Reward and Relief are not forthcoming, and you can’t [say] ‘no’ or won’t let go…trouble awaits.”

Mark Gorkin
Let's do a little matching game

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signs of burnout</th>
<th>Remedies for burnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ineffectiveness</td>
<td>• Reward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cynicism</td>
<td>• Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exhaustion</td>
<td>• Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let's rewrite this story. How can we help this colleague with relief, recognition, results, and reward?

"I felt trapped. No matter how hard I worked, it was like nobody noticed. I never saw my principal unless there was a problem. Look, I didn't go into this for the money. But, hey, even I need to feel I am accomplishing something. The lines between work and home were nonexistent. I fought with teenagers at work and then went home and did the same thing. The only way I could unwind was with a few drinks. Then I woke up tired in the morning and started the cycle all over again."

Let's take a look at these four in your work life right now.

Find the handout entitled “Taking care of yourself.”

Victory over burnout: some helpful tips
*Routine has pluses—predictability, reliability and consistency. Habits can also be mind-numbing. However, avoid getting into a rut. Change by altering habits occasionally. Vary the commute to work. Breathe fresh life into your daily habits." —Quillery, 2000

“If you’re in a rut, the kids are, too.”

**Find “Guidelines for Burnout Prevention Using VICTORY”**

**Invite your colleagues for reward and recognition.**
- Rebuild your sense of community through rituals and celebrations.
- Seek the advice of others when you can’t reach a lot of family.
- "Lesson study" or exchange helpful ideas, materials, and tips.
- Take time at the beginning of your meetings to recognize one another.
- Be a little silly!

**Close those open energy circles for results and relief.**
- Be realistic about the time you have.
- Pace yourself and your family by planning ahead for the hectic times.
- Make lists!
- Remember that your results may be in the distant future, not today.

**Vary your routines for relief.**

*But I can’t do this. I see some colleagues for only a minute or two in the hall!*

Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness.
—Seneca

Moments matter more than you think.

**Let’s help her close these open circles**
Tackle one of the six workplace risk factors, with your colleagues for results, rewards, and recognition.

Remember this?
The stress of a well-managed challenge is actually helpful

Let’s work as a team to rewrite her story…

“I had been so enthusiastic at the beginning of the year. I had such high hopes. But after six thankless months of dealing with teenagers with behavioral problems in the high school, I was completely spent. I skipped lunch, rarely stopped to drink even a glass of water, and stayed late nearly every day. My friends never saw me, and I didn’t have time to make friends at school. When an angry parent accused me in a meeting of not helping her kid, I lost it—and nearly lost my job.”

Open up to your support system for relief, reward, and recognition.

• Spend time with your family and friends. Ask for help during hectic periods.
• Resist the urge to blend work and home.
• Find a professional listener.
• Renew your spiritual supports.
• Find the recognition you need in non-work activities.

Recharge your batteries for relief, results, and recognition.

• Exercise!
• Find recreation—a hobby.
• Learn something new.
• Ask colleagues about their life outside of work.
• Sleep.
• Drink water.
• Use relaxation strategies.
• Respect your personal limits.
• Laugh!
You are not your job.

- "Yes." Say it less often.
- Set non-career goals. Write two or three nonprofessional goals or desires, carry them with you, and look at them at least once a day.
- Email them right now to one of your friends or colleagues.

Reflection exercise:
Can you rewrite your story from the field?

- Build community at work?
- Explore something new outside work?
- Close those circles and enjoy that energy?
- Take better care of your health?

Are you spending too much time on goats on the road?

And when you leave work...

Finish each day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day.

- Emerson

Let's make a personal burnout prevention plan

- Find the handout entitled “Your burnout prevention planner.”
- Go through the list and try to think of activities that you might be able to try this week. Don’t be overly ambitious but come up with a few.
- You may want to share your ideas with someone in your support network and ask them to remind you.