“Burn Out: How to Recognize, Prevent or Recover”

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Burn Out
Recognizing, Avoiding, Recovering
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For handouts:
www.skills4.org
Click on Fact Sheets
• Go to Current workshops, then Links
• Click on Burn Out: Recognize and Avoid
Note: it’s a big file. Access with DSL/cable.

Our Training Objectives
By the end of this brief workshop you will be able to
1. Describe why Case Managers are especially susceptible to burn out.
2. Recognize signs of burn out.
3. Take steps to prevent burn out.

Defining Burn Out

• Burn out is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.
• It occurs when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands.
• As the stress continues, you begin to lose the interest or motivation that led you to take on a certain role in the first place.

Resources and Satisfaction

• “Clients reporting seven or more contacts per year with their case manager were consistently more satisfied with case management services than those with fewer contacts.
• “Clients living in geographic regions characterized by low population density, greater distances between services and fewer dedicated HIV/AIDS service providers were less satisfied with case management services.”

Why Do Case Managers Burn Out?

- Caregivers are vulnerable to “heart fatigue.”
- “We may be better at addressing our clients’ needs than our own. … The life and death nature of (HIV work) brings an urgency to our responses to clients’ needs.”


- If case manager is also HIV+ “These providers may be particularly affected by cumulative loss due to their stronger identification with their patients.”


Is Stress = Burn Out?

- Burn out can come from unrelenting stress.
- Duration and control matter more than severity.
- High stress from too many pressures and demands doesn’t lead to burn out … if an end is in sight, or imaginable.

- If you can still imagine that you can eventually get everything under control, you’ll feel better.
- Burn out means feeling empty, devoid of motivation, and beyond caring. You don’t see any hope of positive change.
- Key warning: while you’re usually aware of being under a lot of stress, you don’t always notice burnout when it happens.

Stress and Burn Out

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress vs. Burnout</th>
<th>Stress</th>
<th>Burnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characterized by overengagement</td>
<td>Characterized by disengagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotions are overreactive</td>
<td>Emotions are blunted</td>
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<tr>
<td>Produces urgency and hyperactivity</td>
<td>Produces helplessness and hopelessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of energy</td>
<td>Loss of motivation, ideas, and hope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads to anxiety disorders</td>
<td>Leads to detachment and depression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary damage is physical</td>
<td>Primary damage is emotional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May kill you prematurely</td>
<td>May make life seem not worth living</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Stress and Burnout in Ministry

How Stress Can => to Burn Out

- You find yourself doing more with less
- You have plenty of responsibility but not enough authority,
- You are juggling an unmanageable schedule.

- The majority of your day is spent on tasks you find either mind-numbingly dull or overwhelming.
- You feel like nothing you do makes a difference or is appreciated.
- You’re exhausted all the time.
Physical Warning Signs

- Feeling tired and drained most of the time.
- Lowered immunity, feeling sick a lot.
- Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches, acid stomach.
- Change in appetite or sleep habits (too much or too little).

Emotional Warning Signs

- 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.

Behavioral Warning Signs

- 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.

The Conflictive Relationship

- Burn out can lead to conflict. Unchecked, it can be “contagious.”
  Ways it appears:
  - “Poisoning the well”--turning others against an idea before it's attempted.
  - “Splitting”--rallying others to one's position by raising wedge issues that put them on the defensive.
  - “Bunker mentality”--performing bare minimum to keep oneself “alive” as a staff member.
  - “Stonewalling”--using tradition / bureaucracy to stymie change.
  - “Sinking ship”--throwing colleagues off the “ship” to save self.


**Work Related Factors**

- 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

**Lifestyle Factors**

- 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.

**Personality Trait Factors**

- 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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Human “Needs”


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Our Feeling Brains

Evolution of human brain structure

Reptilian (survival instinct)

Limbic (feeling and caring centers)

Neocortical (logic)

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Bonds are Vital for Survival

• Babies and their mothers are emotionally synchronized. Blind infants smile back when the mothers smiles while talking.

• Deprivation of this link is dangerous.
  Frederick II, a 13th C Roman Emperor and King of Southern Italy: discover “innate” language, ordered “suckle and bathe and wash the children, but in no wise prattle or speak with them.”

• All children died. “Could not live without clapping of hands, and gestures, and gladness of countenance, and blandishments.”

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Bonds are Vital for Survival (cont’d)

• Babies raised in orphanages or separated from mothers in prison were given proper food/shelter.

• Well-intentioned institutions tried to protect babies by keeping them isolated (germ theory).

• Measles: typical mortality rate, 0.5%. In sterile institutions, 40%. Among most sterile: 75%-100%. That is, the most sterile nurseries experienced the highest deaths.

• Conclusion? “A lack of human interaction--handling, cooing, stroking, baby talk, and play--is fatal to infants.”

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Danger of Social Isolation


• Men without spouse or intimate friends had higher levels of inflammatory chemical markers in their system (C-reactive protein, interleukin-6, and fibrinogen).


The Power of Connection

• “Limbic resonance”: mammals feel / match one another’s physiology.


• Female friends start to menstruate at same times.

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Work = Surrogate Family

- Think of the helpful qualities of many family interactions.
- Then think about the ways that connectedness leads to challenges, too.
- In what ways do you have too many eggs in the basket of work?

Stages of Burn Out

1. Physical, Mental and Emotional Exhaustion: seen in “crashing” once home, comfort food, withdrawal.
2. Shame and Doubt: still projecting confidence, but feeling conflicted. Want to retreat when new challenges or opportunities come up.
4. Failure, Helplessness and Crisis; a slight or an emotional bump can set off an overly sensitive and personal reaction.

Who’s Burnt Out? Not Me!

Preventing Burn Out

- Start the day with a relaxing ritual: meditate, write in your journal, stretch, or read something that inspires you.
- Take a break from technology: disconnect from phone, web, and e-mail.
- Set boundaries. Don’t overextend yourself. Learn how to say “no”.
- Adopt healthy eating, exercising, and sleeping habits.
- To reduce work stress, try to engage in “re-framing.” Look for the positive aspects of any situation, or ways to turn it positive.
Preventing Burn Out (cont’d)

• Be playful and creative: try something new, start a fun project, or resume a favorite hobby (should have nothing to do with work).
• Learn how to manage stress. Recognize triggers, re-fill your “psychological bank account.”
• My mantra: Feed the animal!
• Smell, see, taste, hear, feel.
• Varied sensory pleasures, try to avoid pre-packaged. (Not just cheesecake breaks!)

The Tools to Address Burn Out

• Actively address problems: Take a proactive approach – rather than a passive one – to issues in your workplace.
• Clarify your job description: Point out things you’ve expected to do that are not part of your job description and gain a little leverage.
• Ask for new duties: Ask to try something new: a different grade level, a different sales territory, a different machine.
• Take time off: Go on vacation, use up your sick days, ask for a temporary leave-of-absence—anything to remove yourself from the situation. Re-charge.

Recovering from Burn Out

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.

Recovering from Burn Out (cont’d)

• Slow down: an attitude check alone can cure the wounds. Force yourself to slow down or take a break. Give yourself time to rest, reflect, and heal.
• Get support: natural tendency is to protect what little energy you have left by isolating yourself. But friends and family are best cure. Share your feelings with another person can relieve some of the burden.
Recovering from Burn Out (cont’d)

- Reevaluate goals and priorities: take time to re-assess your hopes, goals, and dreams. Rediscover what really makes you happy and to change course accordingly.
- Acknowledge losses: Don’t deny losses. Suppression creates a heavy burden. Recognize and allow yourself to grieve losses. You’ll release that trapped energy and open yourself to healing.
- Re-create!