Preventing Professional Burn-Out: Putting Wellness Research into Action

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Learning objectives

• Review research on professional burn-out.
  – particularly in academic and medical settings

• Identify ways you may be impacted by professional burn-out.

• Develop a personalized plan for applying research-based wellness interventions to current professional practices by setting SMART goals.
What is professional burn-out?

- Burn-out is defined in ICD-11 as:
  - A syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that’s not been successfully managed. Characterized by 3 dimensions:
    - feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
    - increased mental distance from one’s job or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
    - reduced professional efficacy
- Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.
- Different from depression.

Burn-out: Warning signs

- Loss of pleasure in work
- Persistent thoughts about work
- Problems focusing attention
- Increased cynicism
- Social withdrawal
- Irritability or agitation
- Substance abuse
- Negative feelings about patients
- Increased errors/reduced quality of care
Ways to measure burn-out

• Self-report measures
  – Maslach Burnout Inventory
    • 22 questions, The first and most recognizable of all burnout inventories
    • Requires a fee for each use
  – Oldenburg
    • 16 questions assessing physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of burn-out.
    • Can be used to measure burnout irrespective of occupation.
  – ProQOL https://www.proqol.org/
    • 30 questions assessing burnout, job satisfaction, and compassion fatigue
    • May be too stringent.
    • Free!

• Assemble a group of trusted colleagues who can help monitor each other for burn-out or other signs of waning competence

Training and Education in Professional Psychology, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2014
Measure your professional burn-out
How common is burn-out?

• Burnout is common among health care workers.
  – 10%–70% among nurses
  – 30%–50% among physicians, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants.

  US Dept of Health and Human Services
  Lyndon, A. Perspectives on Safety. 2016; February

• High, and increasing, levels of stress in academic settings.
  – Academics: overload and work-life balance particularly stressful
  – Non-academics: work conditions/unnecessary change, work relationships, and pay/benefits particularly stressful

  Johnson, Wills, & Evans, 2019
What causes burnout?

• Characteristics of the environment:
  – time pressure
  – lack of control over work processes
  – work overload
  – poor relationships between groups and with leadership
  – job security
  – pay/benefits
  – emotional intensity of clinical work

• Personal factors
  – High levels of empathy
  – Being part of marginalized groups/communities
Ways to treat burn-out

- Treatments most often have focused on a combination of principles, drawn from mindfulness, positive psychology, and self-determination theory.

- Coaching programs often consist of clarification of values, professional, and personal goals, along with strategies for accessing individual strengths and reframing negative thinking.

- Focus is often in individual/personal rather than systematic factors.
Translating research into action

• Examine one model of wellbeing:
  – The Professional Fulfillment Model.

• Overview of factors associated with successfully changing workplace culture and efficiency of work.
  – Direction toward resources to help make changes

• Review research on ways to build personal resilience.
  – Direction toward resources to promote resilience

• Set goals for change!
Professional Fulfillment Model

• **Culture of Wellness**
  Shared values, behaviors, and leadership qualities that prioritize personal and professional growth, community, and compassion for self and others.

• **Efficiency of Practice**
  Workplace systems, processes, and practices that promote safety, quality, effectiveness, positive patient and colleague interactions, and work-life balance.

• **Personal Resilience**
  Individual skills, behaviors, and attitudes that contribute to physical, emotional, and professional well-being.
Professional Fulfillment Model

- Culture of Wellness
- Efficiency of Practice
- Personal Resilience

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Culture of wellness

• **Key Success Factors:**
  – Leadership support, commitment, and accountability for wellness
  – Infrastructure and resources to support wellness
  – Regular measurement of wellness/professional fulfillment
  – Recognition and appreciation
  – Fairness and inclusiveness
  – Transparency and values alignment
Culture of wellness

• American Psychiatric Association toolkit for ways to take action to promote wellness in your workplace

• UW Madison Wellness Programs
  – UWell - https://uwell.wisc.edu/
  – Wellbeing resources at UW Madison
    https://hr.wisc.edu/well-being/

• Quartz insurance wellness programs
Efficiency of practice

• **Key Success Factors:**
  – Identification and redesign of inefficient work
  – Design of workspace for interpersonal proximity for improved communication
  – Use of efficient communication methods to minimize e-mail time burden
  – Involvement of providers in redesign of clinical processes and work flows
  – Teamwork models of practice
  – Realistic staffing and scheduling that recognizes predictable absences
  – Designing roles to practice at top of licensure
  – Streamlining EMR and other IT interfaces
Efficiency of practice

Resources:

• Evidence-based models for enhancing teamwork

• Practice management tools for medical profession

• UW Tools
  – Learning space improvement
    https://teachlearn.provost.wisc.edu/documents/learning-space-improvement-report/
  – Improving workspace through ergonomics
    https://wholehealth.wisc.edu/tools/improving-work-surroundings-through-ergonomics/
Personal resilience

• **Key Success Factors:**
  – Self-care assessment and support systems*
  – Safety net systems for crisis interventions
  – Worksite evidence-based health promotion
  – Encouragement of peer support
  – Financial management counseling
  – Life-needs support mechanisms (e.g. Child and Elder Care, After hours meals etc.)
Aspects of Self-Care

• Sleep*
• Healthy eating** (in resource guide)
• Exercise*
• Intellectual challenges
• Activities – social and solitary
• Spiritual practice
• Gratitude*
• Compassion*
• Mindfulness** (in resource guide)
• Others?
Sleep

- Adults should sleep 7 or more hours each night for optimal health.
- Insufficient sleep (or short sleep) is defined as less than 7 hours of sleep daily.
- More than a third of U.S. adults report insufficient sleep.
- In 2014, 32% of Wisconsin adults reported usually sleeping < 7 hours/day.

https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/pdf/states508/FS_ShortSleepByState_WI_508tagged.pdf
Sleep

• Keep a consistent sleep schedule.
• Get at least 7 hours of sleep; ideally 7-9 hours/night.
• Don’t go to bed unless you are sleepy.
• If you don’t fall asleep after 20 min, get out of bed.
• Establish and maintain a relaxing bedtime routine.
• Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
• Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing.
• Keep bedroom at a comfortable, cool temperature.

American Academy of Sleep Medicine, February, 2017
https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/index.html
Sleep

- Limit exposure to bright light in the evenings.
- Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Don’t eat a large meal before bedtime. If you are hungry at night, eat a light, healthy snack.
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy diet.
- Avoid consuming caffeine in the late afternoon/eve.
- Avoid consuming alcohol before bedtime.
- Reduce your fluid intake before bedtime.

American Academy of Sleep Medicine, February, 2017
https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/index.html
Exercise

• Relationships between physical activity, cardiovascular, metabolic, neurological, immunological and bone health have been well-established.

• Exercise has been shown to mediate the impact of stressors on health and wellbeing

• Meta-analyses show exercise consistently benefits mood, depression, and anxiety.

Cooney, et al. (2013). Cochrane Database Systematic Review, Sep 12(9)
Exercise

• Resources
  – Associations between exercise and mental health
    • https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(18)30227-X/fulltext
  – Exercise as a treatment for mental health issues
    • https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/12/exercise
  – How much activity (and what kind) is most beneficial to wellness?
    • https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2019/05/29/727943418/do-you-really-need-10-000-steps-per-day
Gratitude

• People who express gratitude on a regular basis have better physical health, optimism, progress toward goals, well-being, and help others more.
  – Martin Seligman’s Happiness Exercise
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwkDEM4gFBA
Compassion

- Compassion, like physical and academic skills, appears to be something that is not fixed, but rather can be enhanced with training and practice.
  - Compassion training exercise
    https://centerhealthyminds.org/well-being-tools/compassion-training/access

Weng, Fox, Shackman, Stodola, Caldwell, Olson, Rogers, & Davidson, 2013
Summary

• Professional burn-out is common.

• Professional burn-out is NOT inevitable.

• Structural factors – culture of wellness and efficiency of practice play a role in wellness (and burn-out).

• Personal resilience is part of professional wellness
Summary

• Self-care promotes personal resilience

• Monitoring your wellness and self-care will enhance your professional practice.

• Daily activities that include things such as regular and adequate sleep, exercise, and gratitude and compassion may impact burn-out, improve wellness, and support professional competence.