



FAST FACT AND CONCEPT #169: Health Professional Burnout: Part III

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Parts I and II have described burnout, its risk factors, symptoms, and consequences. Part III will address strategies to avoid burnout while sustaining personal and professional health, integrity, and growth. Part IV will describe assessment tools validated for burnout.

I. Individual Strategies

- Reflection upon work: journaling, discussion with colleagues
 - Am I burned out/healthy?
 - Why do I do this/continue to do this?
 - What inspired/moved/surprised me today?
- Attend to health: diet, exercise, rest, regular health care
- Plan activities that rejuvenate: Play!
- Professional supervision: Regular interaction with a mental health professional with the express purpose of exploring dynamics of the provider/patient relationship
- Make time for yourself
 - Plan vacations at regular intervals
 - Allow for "timeout" when stressors increase

II. Interpersonal Strategies

- Give important relationships priority – strengthen existing relationships with family and friends
- Expand your community beyond existing relationships through activism or spiritual engagement

III. Professional Strategies

- Debrief emotional events
 - Reach out to colleagues
 - Seek out or strengthen a mentor relationship
 - Write about your work for a larger audience
 - Utilize your institution's *Critical Incident Response Team* if available
 - Psychosocial rounds with colleagues to explore these issues
 - *Schwartz Center Rounds* : interdisciplinary hospital rounds to explore emotions surrounding provider/patient interactions.
- Advocate for change in your job, organization, or profession

Triggers for Professional Counseling

- Persistent feelings of sadness, exhaustion, anger, worthlessness, hopelessness, suicidal ideation, or anxiety interfering with work or interpersonal relationships
- Self-prescribing sedative/hypnotic medication
- Substance abuse: alcohol, prescription, or non-prescription drugs
- Other 'addictions' interfering with work/relationships: gambling, exercise
- Persistent sleep disturbance: nightmares, difficulty initiating or staying asleep, early morning awakening
- Loss of professional boundaries
 - Inappropriate relationships with patients, families, or trainees
 - Lack of attention to patients' rights, safety, or autonomy

If, after careful attention to the variables within your control, you still feel burned out and at risk for serious consequences, it may be necessary to temporarily or permanently leave your current job to regain your health.

References

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<http://www.theschwartzcenter.org>
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Purpose: Self-Study Guide, Teaching

Audience(s)

Training: Fellows, 3rd/4th Year Medical Students, PGY1 (Interns), PGY2-6, Physicians in Practice

Specialty: Anesthesiology, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, General Internal Medicine, Geriatrics, Hematology/Oncology, Neurology, OB/GYN, Ophthalmology, Pulmonary/Critical Care, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, Surgery

Non-Physician: Nurses, Pharmacists/Clinical Pharmacists

ACGME Competencies: Professionalism

Keyword(s): Miscellaneous