

Work & Life Balance

Recognizing Burnout

Daily stressors are a given in healthcare. Burnout, however, is more than daily stress and it is important to recognize warning signs early in order to engage in effective self-care. Common indicators of provider burnout include:

- **Emotional Exhaustion:** chronically feeling physically and emotionally depleted
- **Depersonalization:** decreased empathy and dehumanization of patients
- **Lack of Personal Accomplishment:** limited confidence or feelings of achievement

Building Resiliency

There has been significant research aimed at identifying ways to mitigate provider burnout.

Three themes have emerged and providers are encouraged to consider how they fare in these domains to reduce rates of burnout.

- **Sense of Purpose:** identity as a provider, practice in line with personal values
- **Cognitive Flexibility:** perspective taking, problem solving
- **Distress Relief:** positive coping skills, building a support network

Three Good Things

A simple way to enhance the quality of work experiences

The benefits of the Three Good Things intervention is a practice that strengthens one's ability to perceive and relish positive emotions in order to reduce feelings of burnout.

The intervention: In research studies, individuals write down, just before going to bed, three good things that happened that day and label them with one of **10 positive emotions** that are closely linked to the reduction of burnout:

- amusement
- awe
- gratitude
- hope
- joy
- interest
- pride
- inspiration
- serenity
- love

The documented experiences can be minor but should be specific, such as laughing out loud during a television show, eating a delicious piece of pecan pie, or having a meaningful conversation with a colleague.

Healthcare workers who used this simple intervention for two weeks reported reduced burnout, less depression, less conflict and better work-life balance. Importantly, many felt more resilient even a year later.



Self-Care Strategies to Promote Provider Wellness

Identify Stressors

Take stock of the responsibilities that you have and identify which ones bring a sense of purpose versus stress. Think about how you respond to situations over the course of several weeks to give yourself a better indication of what responsibilities are stressful and could be contributing to burnout.

Know Your Limits

Pay attention to the amount of time you devote to work, family, and other demands and consider how to reconfigure these responsibilities to achieve more balance. Learning to say no to additional demands when your plate is already full is a very useful skill that takes practice.

Identify Self-Care Strategies

Identify positive coping strategies for stress. Any form of physical activity can be helpful, as well as meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, and guided imagery. Making time for hobbies and pleasant activities outside of work is also crucial to maintaining provider wellness. Engaging in overall healthy habits, such as ensuring quality sleep and nutritious food choices, is also important for overall balance.

Take Time to Recharge

Take small breaks throughout the day to engage in the self-care strategies you have identified as helpful to recharge. Be mindful about taking time to “switch off” throughout the day to avoid depleting coping reserves before the day is done. Also prioritize relaxation and non-work related activities during time off.

Seek Out Support

Develop support networks both at work and at home. Peer consultation, lunches with colleagues, and support groups are some ways to increase peer support. Be open with family when work stress is high so they can help you engage in self-care.

Embrace Flexibility

Learning to accept the unpredictable nature of healthcare and family life is important for overall provider wellness. Allowing for schedule changes, identifying folks who can step in when changes are needed, and understanding that flexibility is the norm versus the exception can provide a mindset that allows for less stressful adaptation when the need arises.



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