Avoiding Burnout
Avoiding Burnout

Following completion of this module, participants will be better able to:

• Identify the signs and symptoms of burnout
• Identify different strategies for reducing burnout
• Identify various resources available to better prevent (or alleviate) burnout
What is ‘Burnout’

The field of research related to ‘burnout’ is quite vast, with each new generation defining and redefining the word. A pioneer in the field of stress and burnout, Herbert Freudenberger, defined burnout as:

“…the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one’s devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results.”

“…a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.”

Reaching the point of experiencing burnout impacts our thinking, behavior, emotional experiences, relationships and work.

When you are stressed out, you keep chasing the same carrot, whatever that may be for you as an individual.

When you reach the point of burnout, you eventually give up the chase completely...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stress Symptoms</th>
<th>Burnout Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Over-Engagement</td>
<td>• Disengagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Emotions are Overactive</td>
<td>• Emotions are Blunt/Short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Produces Urgency and Hyperactivity</td>
<td>• Produces Helplessness and Hopelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loss of Energy</td>
<td>• Loss of Motivation and Ideals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can Lead to Anxiety Disorders</td>
<td>• Can Lead to Depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Primary Damage is Physical</td>
<td>• Primary Damage is Emotional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In many cases, the cause of burnout may be work-related stress; however, that is not the only cause. Researchers also note personality traits, how you spend free time and how you view the world are also factors contributing to burnout.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK-RELATED CAUSES</th>
<th>LIFESTYLE CAUSES</th>
<th>PERSONALITY TRAITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling like you have little or no control over your work</td>
<td>Working too much, without time for relaxing and socializing</td>
<td>Perfectionistic tendencies; nothing is ever good enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of recognition or rewards for good work</td>
<td>Being expected to be too many things to too many people</td>
<td>Pessimistic view of self and the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear or overly demanding job expectations</td>
<td>Taking on too many responsibilities without enough help</td>
<td>The need to be in control; reluctance to delegate to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing work that is monotonous or unchallenging</td>
<td>Not getting enough sleep</td>
<td>High-achieving, Type-A personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in a chaotic or high-pressure environment</td>
<td>Lack of close, supportive relationships</td>
<td>Rigid or uncompromising behaviors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Freudenberger and North, through extensive research, identified 12 stages all individuals progress through as they reach the point of complete burnout.

These 12 states may look a little different and last for varying times based on the individual and his/her circumstances and environment.

STAGE 1: Driven by an Ideal
• At this stage, individuals are driven by an internal compulsion to prove their abilities, knowledge and/or capabilities
• Individuals with Type A personalities, or those with a fear of failure, are at an increased risk of becoming susceptible to this

STAGE 2: Working Like a Maniac
• At this stage, individuals believe if they work harder and longer hours, they will move closer to their desired goal
• While this may work for a short period of time, eventually productivity will decrease and burnout begins to settle in
• This is demonstrated by the Yerkes-Dodson Law

The Yerkes-Dodson Law was first developed by psychologists Robert Yerkes and John Dodson back in 1908.

This law concludes there is a relationship between pressure (stress level) and performance. When one is either too high or too low, output begins to suffer and susceptibility to burnout increases.

The four main ‘influencers’ affecting this include:

- Skill Level
- Personality
- Trait Anxiety (either positive/negative self-talk)
- Task Complexity

12 Stages of Burnout

STAGE 3: Putting Your Own Needs Last
- This is the stage at which physical and mental health begin to be negatively impacted, as you are not tending to your own well-being

STAGE 4: Miserable, Not Knowing Why
- Taking the time to sort through what you are feeling can be difficult
- At this stage, it becomes critical for you to take an honest look at the various areas of your life, evaluating how each either positively or negatively impacts your mental and physical health
- Begin implementing slow changes for those negative areas by infusing a ‘time out’ for doing more enjoyable activities

12 Stages of Burnout

STAGE 5: *Death of Values*
- Freudenberger and North referred to this stage as ‘revision of values’ (i.e. what was once vital to us no longer matters)
- Experts recommend everyone schedule at least 1-hour each day for meditation, silence, prayer, reading, journaling, exercise, being with friends/family – to help better identify our core values

STAGE 6: *Frustrated, Aggressive & Cynical*
- At this stage, our own attitude can become our own worst enemy (think Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)
- When we operate in this manner, we block out any real recognition that the situation could be much improved if I made a change (great or small); not others

12 Stages of Burnout

STAGE 7: *Emotionally Exhausted*
- As burnout progresses, you experience continual decreases in both energy and vitality
- When we are emotionally drained, exhaustion quickly takes over
- Isolation, withdrawal or other potentially harmful behaviors present themselves

STAGE 8: *Loss of Self-Identity*
- At this stage, we lose a clear understanding of who we are, as outside forces begin taking over the aspects of our lives
- Self-reflective questioning can help you begin to identify who you are again:
  - If whatever is burning me out could be put aside right now, what would that be?
  - Who would I be without that situation?
  - What’s stopping me from letting it go?

12 Stages of Burnout

STAGE 9: *Isolation* (MBI assessment provided as a handout)
- People who reach this level of burnout suffer from what experts identify as ‘depersonalization’ (compassion fatigue)
- The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) measures burnout in three areas:
  - Emotional Exhaustion – feeling emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work
  - Depersonalization – an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one’s services, care, treatment or instruction
  - Personal Accomplishment – feeling of competence and successful achievement in one’s work

STAGE 10: *Inner Emptiness*
- This stage is best described as feeling as though your body is physically ‘going through the motions’ but your soul or passion has departed
- This stage looks at how you see the world, view your hopes and dreams, your compassion for those around you
- At this stage, those not coping well often resort to high-risk behaviors and/or actions which could have long-term consequences

STAGE 11: *Who Cares, Why Bother?*

- While this stage might sound as if the individual is depressed, researcher Veerle Brenninkmeijer proved that depression and burnout are two different entities.
- Distinguishing characteristic which make burnout different from depression include: an ability to still enjoy activities, little or no changes in weight, no suicidal ideation.

STAGE 12: *Physical and Mental Collapse*

- The final stage of burnout is also the most impactful in overall mental and physical well-being.
- At this stage, physical health has been compromised, often resulting in a need for medical intervention; the same is true regarding mental health.

The debate in the medical field continues regarding the effectiveness of antidepressant medications in the treatment of burnout. Presently, the U.S. uses two-thirds of the world’s supply of antidepressants. If you break the numbers down, it looks something like this:

U.S population: approx. 309 million
World population: approx. 6.8 billion

That means...

Approximately 4% of the world’s population account for 67% of the global supply taking antidepressants for various reasons

The potential for experiencing high-risk side effects makes antidepressants a questionable means of treating burnout

The ‘Stress-Hardy’ Personality

In 1979, psychologist Suzanne Kobasa presented the term ‘stress-hardy’ following years of research. She found that individuals who were more self-reflective and disciplined fared better (physically and psychologically) and were less likely to fall victim to burnout.

In modern psychology, we would identify these individuals as demonstrating the concepts behind the mindfulness movement.

Kobasa identified three essential characteristics that make (or can keep) a person ‘stress-hardy’ in life: Control, Challenge & Commitment

The ‘Stress-Hardy’ Personality - Control

**Control**

This is the inclination to authentically believe and act as if you can influence the events in your life; you actively work to positively guide yourself through various events in life...

Individuals who possess this characteristic take responsibility for their own part in whatever is happening without always second-guessing or self-criticizing themselves; avoid the negative self-talk...

Individuals lacking in this characteristic become susceptible to burnout because have adapted to a helpless mindset and are unable to identify the steps necessary to get ‘back on track’ in their life.

The ‘Stress-Hardy’ Personality - Challenge

**Challenge**

This is based on the understanding that change is constant in life; to fully be ‘in control’ you must know when to let go (emotionally and/or physically) of the way things were and accept how things are...

Individuals who possess this characteristic are often realists who anticipate stressful events and are more prepared when they happen...

Individuals lacking in this characteristic become susceptible to burnout because they attempt to cope through denial and fail to anticipate potential changes/challenges.

The ‘Stress-Hardy’ Personality – Commitment

**Commitment**

This is based on an inner sense of self-respect that is evident through a willingness to participate meaningfully in every aspect of life, adding value to work, personal relationships and their community...

Genuine and passionate engagement with those around them results in a true sense of values and resilience...

Individuals lacking in this characteristic become susceptible to burnout because they often withdraw from those around them; opting for isolation rather than engagement; cynicism rather than optimism

Needs and Motivation  
( Needs Assessment Handout )

Researcher, David McClelland, identified three types of basic needs individuals possess that work as motivators in both personal and professional settings:

• The Need for Achievement (nAch) – individuals are motivated to set challenging goals and work to achieve those goals
  • Caution: Can easily become susceptible to experiencing stress, disappointment or resentment if achievements are not recognized

• The Need for Affiliation (nAff) – individuals are motivated to seek out and build loving relationships/connections with others
  • Caution: Will often conform rather than question, concerned more about relationships than job/task completion, focus on popularity rather than meeting goals

• The Need for Power – (nPow) – individuals are motivated to assume positions of leadership
  • Caution: May become controlling and begin micro-managing others, focus on self rather than others/project, may become rude, harsh or uncaring/empathetic

## McClelland’s Needs Assessment Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MCCLELLAND’S NEED</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>REAL-LIFE APPLICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| The Need for Achievement (nAch) | - Strong need to set and accomplish challenging goals  
- Takes calculated risks to accomplish goals  
- Likes to receive regular feedback on progress and achievements  
- Often likes to work alone/independently | - Help others identify goals and the steps necessary to achieve those goals  
- Provide regular feedback, noting even seemingly small achievements  
- Allow for flexibility in working alone or as part of a team  
- Celebrate all accomplishments |
| The Need for Affiliation (nAff) | - Wants to belong to a group/team  
- Wants to be liked, and will go to great lengths to be liked and conform to the group  
- Favors collaboration over competition  
- Does not like taking risks or uncertainty | - Focus on team tasks/projects  
- Provide balanced feedback  
- Some may prefer being praised in private rather than public  
- Provide tasks that provide more certainty and less risk |
| The Need for Power (nPow) | - Wants to control and influence others  
- Like to win arguments  
- Enjoys competition and winning  
- Enjoys status and recognition | - Do well with competition so goal-oriented projects work well  
- Often like to employ negotiation tactics to convince those around them  
- Provide direct feedback, eliminating frivolous details  
- Keep them motivated by helping them further their persona/career goals |

Individuals want to be happy, and research has show that those who are happy are more productive, healthier and sustain meaningful relationships with others. But... how do you go about increasing personal happiness?

Psychologist, Martin Seligman, developed the PERMA Model which outlines the five essential elements which need to be in place for individuals to experience long-lasting happiness and well-being.

The PERMA Model

- **Positive Emotion (P):** this comes from feelings of gratitude, satisfaction, inspiration, hope and curiosity; practicing mindfulness and living and appreciating the present

- **Engagement (E):** experiencing a state of ‘flow’ where time seems to stop, we lose our sense of self and work with passion on projects/tasks

- **Positive Relationships (R):** establishing positive connections to those around us; authentic relationships built on genuine care and compassion, empathy for others

- **Meaning (M):** serving a greater cause than ourselves; helping humanity in some way

- **Accomplishment or Achievement (A):** completing a task or reaching a goal; not about competition, but intrinsic/personal motivation to attain the ‘unattainable’

# The PERMA Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESSENTIAL ELEMENT</th>
<th>STRATEGIES FOR INCREASING/STRENGTHENING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Emotion</strong></td>
<td>• Identifying our strengths and how we can incorporate those into our life (take a Strengths Test online or complete a SWOT Analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifying the people, events and things that give us pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Scheduling time each day to pause, reflect and refocus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement</strong></td>
<td>• Connecting to past hobbies, activities or interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Spending time with friends and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Minimizing distractions at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Relationships</strong></td>
<td>• Making plans with friends and family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Working to build and maintain positive work relationships; avoid the gossip circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If current relationships are not positive, step back and reflect on possible changes to make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning</strong></td>
<td>• Volunteering with local organizations or groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Performing random acts of kindness each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflecting on positive impacts you have had on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accomplishment or Achievement</strong></td>
<td>• Establishing life goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identifying new skills or interests and working to improve at them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Remembering to celebrate all accomplishments (great or small); celebrate the small victories in your personal and professional lives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you recognize the warning signs of burnout, the following strategies may help prevent ‘full-blown’ burnout:

• **Start the Day with a Relaxing Ritual:** try finding 15-minutes each morning to meditate, journal, read, practice deep breathing or simply relaxing with a cup of coffee

• **Adopt Healthy Habits:** eat right, find time for regular physical activity and get plenty of sleep

• **Set Boundaries:** avoid overextending yourself, learn the right times to say ‘no’ if necessary

• **Technology Break:** put all technology away for even 15 minutes (this includes laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc.); try to find some silence in your daily routines

• **Nourish Creativity:** try something new, start a fun project, resume a favorite hobby – choose activities that have nothing to do with work

• **Learn to Manage Stress:** practice mindfulness, deep breathing strategies, walking away from something briefly before returning to it

Additional Strategies for Preventing Burnout

• **Work with a Purpose:** look at the deeper impact of the work you do each day
  How does your work make life better for others?
  How could you add more meaning to what you do each day?

• **Perform a Job/Task Analysis:** take time to review your job description, the mission and expectations for the position; are you spending more time on tasks that could be completed by other means

• **“Give” to Others:** take time to do random acts of kindness for others or simply help someone around you, whether it be at work or home; research has shown a direct, positive correlation between helping others and happiness/sense of worth

• **Take Control:** identify those items or areas of your life where you do have control of the timelines or outcomes; practice ‘letting go’ of those things which are out of your control (actions of others, weather, canceled flights, etc.)

Conducting a job/task analysis is the first step towards positively managing work-related stress. The steps of a job/task analysis are as follows:

1. Review Job Documentation
2. Understand Strategies and Culture
3. Identify Top Performers
4. Check for Available Resources
5. Confirm Priorities
6. Take Action

Remember to be a little sensitive in how you do this, as good team work often means helping others with their tasks, even if they do not directly benefit you.

Do not let people take advantage of you, though. Be assertive when necessary and remember that delegating tasks to others is not a sign of weakness but a sign of effective leadership.

Job/Task Analysis Steps

**Step 1: Review Formal Job/Task Documentation** - identify key objectives and priorities, identify training opportunities and ensure attendance, identify suspense deadlines/timelines and then identify critical ‘markers’ to meet along the way.

**Step 2: Understand the Organization’s Strategy and Culture** - your job exists for a reason – review the mission statement and goals, learn about the historical culture, reach out to colleagues to better understand established practices.

**Step 3: Identify Top Performers** - identify those with a similar role as yours and talk about best practices, organizational strategies, trainings completed, key aspects for managing time and expectations.

**Step 4: Check for Available Resources** - identify subject matter experts you can contact, determine the materials and technology necessary to complete the job/task, identify other key players who might be involved/connected

**Step 5: Confirm Priorities with Your Supervisor** – by this point, you should have a thorough understanding of the job/task details and expectations – confirm/review these with your supervisor and seek clarification for those items still not clear to you; never hesitate to ask questions along the way

**Step 6: Take Action** – begin working on the critical/required tasks and identifying those of a lesser priority, seek out training/information when necessary and refer back to identified ‘markers’ to ensure you are remaining on-track

Strategies for Recovering from Burnout

Should you find yourself in the midst of burnout, you might try adopting the following strategies as a means for recovery:

• **Slow Down:** force yourself to slow down or take a break; cut back on the commitments and activities you can – give yourself time to rest, reflect and relax

• **Get Support:** resist the temptation to withdraw and isolate yourself from others; spend time with family and friends – share your feelings with someone else and begin opening up to others

• **Reevaluate Your Goals and Priorities:** think about your hopes, goals and dreams; is there something truly important to you that you are not able to do any longer – take the opportunity to rediscover pleasurable hobbies and activities

• **Acknowledge Your Losses:** unrecognized losses consume a great amount of energy; recognizing these losses allows us to grieve them and then begin the healing process

Coping with Job Burnout

If you find yourself experiencing burnout regarding work, consider the following strategies:

• **Actively Address Problems:** whether it be conflict with a co-worker, an overly demanding schedule or unrealistic expectations, take time to address those with the correct people – ‘brushing things under the rug’ will only prolong the situation and not allow you to move forward in a healthy manner.

• **Clarify Your Job Description:** if you feel something might be outside your scope of work, speak with a supervisor; take the time to review your job description so you have a clear understanding of your role and its expectations – ask for clarification if necessary.

• **Ask for New Duties:** if you feel you are ‘stuck in a rut,’ inquire about a new task or project; shake up your day-to-day routine by working on something new or that appeals to your interests – just be aware, if the new tasks require time to complete, it may make the situation worse.

• **Take Time Off:** you work hard to earn vacation hours, be sure to use them and take time to disconnect when you can; even a full or half-day out of the office can greatly improve your outlook, energy level and mindset.

Resources

• “Preventing Burnout: Signs, Symptoms, Causes and Coping Strategies.”
  Website: http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/preventing-burnout.htm

• “7 Strategies to Prevent Burnout.”
  Website: https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/pressure-proof/201306/7-strategies-prevent-burnout

• “8 Ways to Avoid Burnout.”
  Website: http://www.realsimple.com/work-life/life-strategies/job-career/avoid-work-burnout

• “Job Burnout: How to Spot it and Take Action.”
  Website: http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642
Resources

• “Preventing Burnout in Youth Athletics.”
  Website: http://www.centerforperformancepsychology.org/assets/resources/pageResources/CPP_Article_PreventingBurnout.pdf

• “10 Ways Parents Can Help Their Kids Avoid Overuse Injuries and Burnout in Sports.”
  Website: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/brooke-de-lench/10-ways-parents-can-help-_b_7138948.html

• “How to Avoid End-of-Semester Burnout.”
  Website: http://study.com/articles/How_to_Avoid_End-of-Semester_Burnout.html

• “10 Steps for Avoiding Teacher Burnout.”
  Website: http://www.edutopia.org/blog/ten-tips-to-avoid-teacher-burnout-ben-johnson (works for Youth Coordinators as well)
Quiz

As evidence of completion of this course, you will need to complete the short assessment tool provided. To access the assessment, please click on the link below:

CLICK HERE TO BEGIN YOUR ASSESSMENT:

https://www.classmarker.com/online-test/start/?quiz=3cf5745d0a810ea2

Please Note: Following completion of the assessment, please email the results certificate to your RAPM. This will serve as your documentation of completion.
You have now completed the Avoiding Burnout module. Congratulations!