Trauma-Informed Toolbox Strategy Session: Burnout

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The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care
Possible Impacts of the Work

- Vicarious Resilience
- Decision Fatigue
- Secondary Traumatic Stress
- Vicarious Post-Traumatic Growth
- Moral Distress
- Compassion Fatigue
- Burnout
- Vicarious Trauma
- Compassion Satisfaction

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Wellness Resources 2022
Burnout is the result of too much energy output and not enough energy self-invested. In other words, it’s burning more fuel than you’ve put in your tank.

Melissa Steginus, Mindfulness Teacher and Productivity Coach
Signs of Burnout

- Apathy
- Cynicism
- Irritability
- Blaming others
- Easily frustrated
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Disconnecting from others
- Desire to use substances to cope
- Decreased compassion for others
- Feeling like nothing you can do will help
- Feeling like a failure/you aren’t doing your job well

(Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018; SAMHSA, 2014)
“There was a point where I could no longer contain the heartbreaking of everyone that has been lost.”

Kevin C., from Florida, Nurse

“Something has to change. Something good has to come out of this or it will be for nothing.”

Nisha B., from Pennsylvania, Palliative Social Worker

“The primary concern for burnout is not being able to emotionally take care of each patient individually or uniquely.”

Derick S., from Nevada, Respiratory Therapist

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Impacts of Health Care Worker Burnout

- Decreased empathy/compassion toward others
- Less person-centered interactions
- Increased errors while working/impaired attention and executive function
- Less intentional prescribing behaviors
- Higher staff turnover
- More sick/mental health days
- Increased health system costs
- Lower productivity

(Dept. of Health and Human Services; Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality)
Health Center Considerations for Burnout

- Create working environments that promote physical and psychological safety
- Provide mechanisms for peer and emotional support
- Review and revise policies related to sick time/mental health days, paid leave, accessing high-quality, confidential supports for mental health/substance use, etc.
- Be transparent and highly communicative about changes and what staff can expect
- Collaborate with local partners to increase access to wellness resources for staff
- Create a Chief Wellness Officer role and/or Workforce Wellbeing program
- Implement a process for confidential, ongoing feedback/suggestions/recommendations

(National Academy of Medicine; )
Leadership Considerations for Burnout

• Engage in regular check-ins and provide opportunities for trauma-informed debriefing
  • Possible settings: supervision, team meetings, huddles, consultations, etc.

• Pay attention to signs that staff may need additional support to mitigate/address burnout and offer resources/referrals as appropriate

• Identify and utilize multiple internal channels of communication to share information

• Allow flexibility and autonomy where possible

• Model and express the importance of utilizing health center resources and attending to self

• Celebrate triumphs, promote joy in the work, and talk about what’s working, too!
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Individual Considerations for Burnout

- Stay connected to yourself – notice and attend to what’s happening for you
- Set realistic expectations and boundaries
- Take care of your physical health
  - Eating a nutritious diet, staying hydrated, integrating movement into every day, sleeping enough
- Maintain fulfilling hobbies outside of work
- Make intentional attempts to remain connected to friends and loved ones
- Ask for and seek support as needed
Reflection Point

What makes sense as your next small step to supporting yourself and/or others to prevent burnout?
Additional Resources on Burnout

• U.S. Surgeon General – Health Worker Burnout
• National Academy of Medicine – Resource Compendium for Health Care Worker Well-Being
• American Medical Association – Caring for the Health Care Workforce During Crisis: Creating a Resilient Organization
• Health Policy Institute of Ohio – A Call to Action: Improving Clinician Wellbeing & Patient Care/Safety
• Institute for Healthcare Improvement – Promoting Health Care Workforce Wellbeing During & After COVID-19
• Institute for Healthcare Improvement – Framework for Improving Joy in Work
• American Hospital Association – The Clinician Wellbeing Playbook