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Building Resilience to Professional Burnout

Understanding how to build one's own resilience is critical to preventing feelings of being overwhelmed or "burned out" from reducing your enthusiasm and passion for caring for others – at home and at work. "Resilience" has been tossed around a lot over the past year of Covid, but it is also true for those early in their career, or at a key transition time: 5-7 years and 10 years.

"Burnout" is such a popular term right now that it even has its own ICD-11 code (coming in January). This validation is one indicator of the pervasive nature of this current workplace feeling – in all sectors of employment. A crucial component of combating burnout relates to staffing – with symptoms of overtime and longer days, difficulty using PTO and escalating caseloads. Ivy Rehab is doing everything possible to ease this burden by using outside recruiting firms to supplement our talent acquisition team, posting prn positions and making the recruiting and hiring process the number one priority.

Burnout is defined as "...a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress... a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity." If that is how someone feels, it is so challenging to be "up" for a patient who needs us. Three primary dimensions define a state of burnout – feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one's job; and reduced professional efficiency.

So what can we do for ourselves to build resiliency?

1. Recognize the signs of burnout and accept where you are.

Regular feelings of dissatisfaction, exhaustion when you get home with no energy for others, feelings of work stagnation, boredom – even when there are opportunities for engagement all around you; procrastination; being late or missing meetings. All of these may signal that you are missing your Mojo. Don't panic. You can make small changes instead of declaring war on your current work life.

2. Recognize that you are a unique individual... and your solutions are directly related to knowing yourself better than anyone else.

Re-think yourself. Why did I choose this career path in the beginning? Imagine yourself in school – what were you thinking; what excited you about what you were learning? And what

is different now? Where did that feeling go? When do you feel the best, the happiest, the least stressed?

3. Take small action steps for yourself.

If you are working every day for 8 hours without a lunch break, that is likely not sustainable to a happy job day. Take your breaks – you need them. Book your PTO today – look forward to something. Connect with an old friend – even 10 minutes on the phone – and get a new/old perspective.

4. Focus on what you love and what matters most to you.

Covid times pushed many of us to re-examine these priorities. Actively think about that question – “what matters most to me?” Doing what you love is the ultimate cure for burnout.

5. Reflect and bounce forward (not backward).

Reflect on every success every day – even the small things – especially when you are feeling overwhelmed. Write them down – 1 a day – and keep a running list. After a week, look at the list and don’t wait for someone else to praise you. Inspire yourself with your list of accomplishments.

6. Manage your email.

OMG. Email anxiety is real. Avoiding it doesn’t make it go away. Set up folders in your in box: “Today/ Important to Respond,” “Defer,” “Delegate,” or “File/ Important.” Put all of your email in one of these folders every day before you leave work. Delete emails right away if you don’t need to act on them. When you plan email time, start with the Today folder, then the Delegate folder. When you have more time, hit the Defer and File/ Important folders.

7. Build your resilience.

Remind yourself of your “why”: Why am I in this field? What can I do for myself? Remember that burnout is not just about work; personal life contributes to burnout – too much, too little fun, no break from thinking about work. How would your friends describe you? What do you like best about yourself? What is one thing you can do every day to show more gratitude towards others? This way of thinking builds resiliency by building you. The long-term mindset of understanding that life is not perfect but we can spend more time up than down, and we are in charge of our own feelings, are the keys to a resilient, positive outlook on life.

For more information, go to:

Compassion Fatigue [https://www.physio-
pedia.com/Compassion_fatigue_amongst_physiotherapists](https://www.physio-
pedia.com/Compassion_fatigue_amongst_physiotherapists)

Mindtools Guide <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/avoiding-burnout.htm>