



# STRESS AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

ALEXANDER CHERYOMUKHIN, PHD, AND SOPHIKO GOGOCHASHVILI, MA, 2023

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# BURNOUT

- Burnout is accumulated stress that is common among workers in helping professions and in CSO organizations. It impacts their wellbeing and the outcomes of their work. Those struggling with burnout typically experience emotional exhaustion and disengagement from their work and clients, along with problems with physical and mental health.

- **Definition:** When we've been stressed for a long time, we can reach a state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion: burnout (National Health Service). Burnout builds up and takes hold gradually. Common Symptoms:

1. Excessive and prolonged physical and emotional **exhaustion**;
2. Experiencing feelings of: Cynicism, Under-appreciation, Anger, Frustration, Discouragement, Prolonged and debilitating stress, Dread for the week ahead, Boredom with clients, work, and friends;
3. **Feeling overwhelmed** by simple everyday tasks and commitments;
4. **Feeling physically unwell**, both generally and specific ailments such as back and stomach pain and headaches;
5. Lack of excitement for or engagement in work. **Sense of professional ineffectiveness**;
6. Existential doubt regarding whether the career is appropriate.

# COMPASSION FATIGUE AND VICARIOUS TRAUMA

- Vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, as well as increased workload, safety issues, role ambiguity, time pressures, reduced resources, limited supervision, and lack of selfcare contribute to burnout.
- **Compassion Fatigue:** When we work with people who suffer, we are at risk of secondary stress called compassion fatigue (Figley, 2002). Our capacity to witness negative experiences of other people is limited.
- **Vicarious Trauma:** refers to being exposed to other people's traumatic experiences. VT involves the changing of the helper's schemas (mental frameworks or life beliefs) because of exposure to the traumatic experiences of others (Jenkins & Baird, 2002). Learning about the trauma of others can trigger profound shifts in how a helper perceives oneself or others.

# IMPORTANT OF SELF-CARE FOR WORKERS IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

- People working in CSOs are often expected to fix other people's problems. But you can't take responsibility to get everybody out of their stress, grief or depression. Helper's role is not to "fix" other people. We shouldn't take on responsibility for our client's well-being, but supply them with tools to use to look after themselves.
- We can help increase client's self-esteem and validate (de-pathologize) their feelings. This can make their experience lighter. Virginia Satir said that you give people a gift of being heard and validated, but you are not their fixer. You offer them a relief from carrying that burden of their bad experience.
- Our regular meetings with supervisors and support teams (peer support) at work can help us share our stressful experiences, be heard and relieve our stress.
- Self-compassion and self-acceptance help us deal with unrealistic high self-expectations.

# HEALTHY CHOICES AND STRESS MANAGEMENT (NHS, 2022)

- **Self-care and checking ourselves for early signs of stress and burnout is essential for people working in CSOs and helping other people in difficult situations.**
- Often it is a matter of choice or commitment. If you regularly make time for rest and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors when they inevitably come.
- New practices and behaviors can become habits.
- **Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury.**

# BENEFITS OF HEALTHY EATING (HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH, 2021)

- Stress places a greater demand on the body for energy and nutrients. People under stress may eat foods high in fat, sugar and calories but low in nutrients. To cope with daytime fatigue, some people increase consumption of caffeine, energy drinks and unhealthy food. Some people may lack the time or motivation to prepare balanced meals, or may skip or forget to eat meals. Some people lose appetite.

## Benefits of healthy eating:

- More energy to cope with stressful events;
- Preserving our health and strengthening our immune system to prevent and fight illnesses;
- lower blood pressure;
- a healthy weight;
- essential nutrients to support tissue growth.

# GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY EATING (WHO GUIDELINES, 2010)

- 1. Eat a nutritious diet based on a variety of foods, including fresh vegetables and fruits, beans and whole grains.
- 2. Maintain body weight within the recommended limits.
- 3. **Avoid: Fast food, junk food, processed food that is high in fat and calories but low in nutritional value; Avoid meals that have too much salt and sugar.**
- 4. Practice mindful eating; Take time to eat without distractions.
- 5. **Develop, practice and share cooking skills.**

# UNHEALTHY BEHAVIORS



- Avoid cigarettes and alcohol.
- Use care in taking medications. Excessive or continued use of either prescription or illegal drugs may cause physical and mental problems.
- Reduce consumption of caffeine and sugar.
- Limit your time on Facebook and other social media.
- These might provide temporary relief, but in the long term, these crutches won't solve your problems, but rather create new ones.



# BENEFITS OF EXERCISING

- Regular physical activity – such as walking, cycling, or dancing – has significant benefits for health. Exercise can reduce some of the emotional intensity that we're feeling, clear our thoughts, feel more calm and more optimistic, improve our self-esteem. And it helps us sleep better. It can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, help control weight, reduce muscular tension and promote mental well-being.
- Taking part in physical activity increases opportunities for socialization and networking. It helps find new friends and learn new skills.
- Especially among children and young people, sports and other physical activities contribute to empowerment, self-confidence and positive attitude.

# EXERCISE AND HEALTHY SLEEP



- Any short physical activity is better than no exercise at all
- Identify which activities energize you and help you have fun
- Find partners or trainers
- Sleep is great stress-reducer. Poor-quality sleep is itself a stressor.
- Turn off your phone and slow down about 30 minutes before bedtime. Get enough good sleep: There is a very strong connection between sleep quality and quantity and our physical and mental health.

# SELF-CARE PRACTICES THAT HELP US COPE AND REDUCE STRESS

- Physical self-care: healthy eating, sleeping, exercising, attending to other physical needs
- Meditation, relaxation exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, and breathing techniques
- Guided imagery techniques
- Self-compassion; Prayers, celebrations of sacred moments and other spiritual practices
- Laugh and play, spending time with children and pets; Spending time in nature
- Massage, hot baths, yoga
- Professional supervision and peer support
- Counseling and psychotherapy

# ADDITIONAL WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS AND PREVENT BURNOUT

- Reduce your workload, stop and rest. Take **regular breaks** during the workday, which is better than one long annual vacation.
- Separation of personal and professional life: **Don't take your work home**. Keep your smartphone away, don't check work-related emails at home.
- **Limit media / Facebook consumption** around negative news topics.
- Build **supervisor relationships and safe spaces / peer support teams** at work, where people can discuss their challenges.
- **Reconnect with your values**: Revisiting values and increasing self-knowledge can help us identify the change we need to make.
- **Take responsibility for your wellbeing**: Blaming others or situation is not helpful. Remind yourself: "others may have contributed to my situation, but I can make choices that can improve my wellbeing". Review your choices in terms of how your work/life balance should be and what you will do to get there.
- Learn how to identify signs of stress. For example, not enjoying hobbies or feeling more irritable, demotivated, or tired? These could be signs that you need to recharge your battery.

# ADDITIONAL WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS AND PREVENT BURNOUT

- “Me time” and leisure activities: Set aside time for yourself and for doing things you really enjoy. This improves emotions, provides outlet for relief, gives you break from stressors.
- Spend time with people who have a positive impact on your life. Supportive relationships can help you relieve stress and see things in a different way and find solutions.
- Help other people: people who help others, often become more resilient.
- Give yourself permission to laugh and have fun during difficult times. Humor: great stress-reducer, it improves mood and relieves muscular tension, pumps endorphins into the bloodstream – the body's natural painkillers. Seek humor in everyday situations.

# ADDITIONAL WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS AND PREVENT BURNOUT

- Gardening, reading, getting a massage, hiking, spending time in nature, dancing or painting, and cooking a favorite recipe, lighting scented candles, listening to favorite music – are examples of good stress relievers.
- Challenge yourself: Set a new goal and challenge, identify what you want to learn or try, such as learning a new language or a new sport. This can help you build confidence, experience positive emotions, and overcome stress. Engaging in new learning and training creates opportunities to feel proud and more self-confident, focus on self-growth, and meet with other like-minded people.

# PRACTICE GRATITUDE AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE

- Name three people, things or experiences you are grateful for today. Discuss with your partner; or think about your appreciations in the morning or before going to sleep.
- Daily Gratitude Journaling: Use a journal to record things you are thankful for, or what went well, or even challenges that have been overcome with our skills during the day.
- Talk about the things you and your family are looking forward to in the future – events, activities, celebrations.
- Explore ways you can show your appreciation for your individual and family strengths.

# USEFUL APPS

- Breathe: Relax & Focus: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.havabee.breathe&hl=en&gl=US>
- Prana Breath: Calm & Meditate: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.abdula.pranabreath&hl=en&gl=US>
- Medito App: Meditations, Progressive Muscle Relaxations, Sleep: <https://meditofoundation.org/medito-app> or <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=meditofoundation.medito&hl=en&gl=US>
- Insight Timer: Meditations, Relaxations, Sleep: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.spotlightsix.zentimerlite2&hl=en&gl=US>
- Smiling Mind: Meditations, Relaxations: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.smilingmind.app&hl=en&gl=US>