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| |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  |  |  |  |   Addressing Compassion Fatigue and Burnout in Integrated Care | |  | |  | |  | |  | | For the integrated care workforce, addressing the complex needs of individuals with numerous and serious behavioral and physical health difficulties increases staff risk of [experiencing symptoms](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O68fkKii0W5JooKsqYBN9VOM) associated with burnout and compassion fatigue. Christina Maslach, a researcher with extensive professional experience studying the field of work burnout, defines burnout as “feelings of exhaustion, a cynical attitude toward the job and people involved in the job, and a reduced personal accomplishment or work efficiency. Burnout can be thought of as 'taking away a person’s spirit and will.'”  Burnout may be the result of workload demands, poor organizational practices, intense time pressures, unsupportive relationships with supervisors and co-workers, and lack of control across work environments. In addition to organizational factors, healthcare and social services providers face unique challenges associated with addressing the needs of people with serious behavioral and/or physical health difficulties. The frequent listening to and/or direct observation of the suffering of others may elicit strong emotional, psychological, and physical reactions that lead to emotional exhaustion, a cynical attitude towards one’s work, and a loss of empathic connections to others.  **The Symptoms of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue**   * Emotional coping difficulties * Anxiety * Dreading working for or taking care of another person and [feeling guilty](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O68Xdx623KAnaAQXIisLUGOl) as a result * Feelings of irritability and anger * Hypersensitivity or complete insensitivity to emotional material * Depression and PTSD-related symptoms * Loss of self-worth * Insomnia * Alcohol or substance abuse   Physical Symptoms and Increased Vulnerability to Illnesses   * Fatigue * Heart disease * High cholesterol * Type 2 diabetes, especially in women * Stroke * Obesity * Depersonalization * Headaches * Weight loss   Functional Difficulties   * Impaired decision-making * Feelings of inequity toward the therapeutic or [caregiver](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O69F6jTM6z50WMXsZCjKFrNU) relationship * Problems in personal [relationships](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6amZ6Hw9nzEIZ3YgWaJqcNt) * Poor work-life balance * Diminished sense of career fulfillment   The Mayo clinic lists the following burnout related problems: [http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/indepth/burnout/art-20046642?pg=2](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6b4RTvgcc4ivbatyg1IaXN2)    **Addressing Burnout and Compassion Fatigue**  One of the most critical shifts individuals need to make to avoid the harmful effects of compassion fatigue is to set firm emotional boundaries in a way that maintains an empathic connection while avoiding over-identification and involvement in a person’s suffering. Assuming unrealistic responsibility for a client’s life choices and problems can lead to frustration, disappointments, self-blame, and anxiety – all risk factors for emotional exhaustion and disconnecting from others. Organizations also play an important role in mitigating the most harmful effects of burnout and compassion fatigue by providing supportive supervision, encouraging work and personal life balance, and demonstrating, through policies and practices, a genuine regard for the well-being of their staff.   * [The American Psychological Association](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6cuDt6KhP3A3znu6TJFGtMa) identifies 10 strategies individuals may employ to strengthen resilience against the harmful effects of burnout. * The Harvard Business Review has offered a list of [five ways to build resilience at work](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6dcwfUukDydPLtZodAEreLJ), and you can read this [Mindful article](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6dUp2Iens2RBXAuFxrDbZLi) on the implementation of a mindfulness program for staff at Harvard. * You can use the [Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL)](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6eChPvYqgxvo9GZWRiBWKKR) to measure staff burnout, compassion satisfaction, and fatigue at your organization. * [The Provider Resilience app](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6fkaCjIt529alNveb9AHvKq), the first app focused on building resilience for health care providers, was developed by the Defense Department’s National Center for Telehealth and Technology. The app allows providers to complete self-assessments of the ProQOL to help providers measure their level of burnout and secondary traumatic stress as well as compassion satisfaction. * The [Trauma Resource Institute's iChill app](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6g23p7svTwMWxU0vv0zsgJZ) allows users to monitor their stress levels and suggests methods for reducing stress and preventing burnout and/or compassion fatigue using the [Trauma Resiliency Model](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6gJWbVcyI1qIK0vMORyd1Jy) and [Community Resiliency Model](http://ncbh.msgfocus.com/c/15O6hrOYIWBww4uW7148IwXMJ7).   Have questions or looking for additional information about burnout and compassion fatigue? Email us at [Integration@TheNationalCouncil.org](mailto:Integration@TheNationalCouncil.org). | |  | |