

Stress, Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout

Stress, Compassion Fatigue, and Burnout: How to survive and thrive while helping others

Elizabeth F. Howell, M.D., FASAM
Department of Psychiatry, University of Utah School of Medicine
President, American Society of Addiction Medicine

Western Federation of Professional Health Programs

September, 2006

<http://www.efhmd.medem.com>



The price one pays for pursuing a profession, or calling, is an intimate knowledge of its ugly side.

-- James Baldwin

Definitions

What is Stress, Anyway?

- A mentally or emotionally disruptive or upsetting condition occurring in response to adverse external influences and capable of affecting physical health, usually characterized by increased heart rate, a rise in blood pressure, muscular tension, irritability, and depression.
- A stimulus or circumstance causing such a condition.

Acute Stress

- Reaction to an immediate real or perceived threat
- "Fight or flight" response
 - ◆ Physiological changes when feeling threatened
 - ◆ Becomes inactivated when threat is removed or resolved
- Examples:
 - ◆ Hunger
 - ◆ Isolation
 - ◆ Infection
 - ◆ Noise

Chronic Stress

- Ongoing stressful situations
- Examples:
 - ◆ Ongoing highly pressured work
 - ◆ Persistent financial worries
 - ◆ Loneliness
 - ◆ Abusive relationships
- No resolution of fight or flight
 - ◆ Internalizing stress reactions
 - ◆ Can lead to illness
 - ◆ Chronic stress can become a way of life
 - ◆ Stuck in "stress reactivity" (Kabat-Zinn, 1990)

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Adaptation to Stress

- Three universal stages of coping with stress (Hans Selye, M.D.)
 - ◆ "Alarm reaction," preparation for "fight or flight."
 - No organism can sustain this condition of excitement and survive.
 - ◆ Adaptation: a resistance to the stress is built.
 - ◆ Stage of exhaustion after a long duration of the stress; a sort of aging "due to wear and tear."

Stress Response

- "Non specific response of the organism to any pressure or demand" (Hans Selye, 1950's)
- Hyper-arousal
 - ◆ Excessive release of stress hormones and neurotransmitters
 - ◆ Activation of the HPA axis (hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis)

Burnout

- "A state of mental and/or physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress."
 - ◆ Girdino DA, Everly GS, Dusek DE. Controlling Stress and Tension, Allyn & Bacon, 1996.
- Feelings of hopelessness and difficulties in dealing with work or in doing your job effectively (Stamm)
 - ◆ Gradual onset
 - ◆ Feeling that your efforts make no difference
 - ◆ Associated with a very high workload or a non-supportive work environment.

Burnout

- "Burnout is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do. It represents an erosion in values, dignity, spirit, and will--an erosion of the human soul. It is a malady that spreads gradually and continuously over time, putting people into a downward spiral from which it's hard to recover ... What might happen if you begin to burn out? Actually three things happen: you become chronically exhausted; you become cynical and detached from your work; and you feel increasingly ineffective on the job."
 - Maslach & Leiter: The Truth About Burnout (1997, Jossey-Bass Publishers).

Burnout Syndrome

- Three stages
 - ◆ Stage 1=Stress Arousal
 - ◆ Stage 2=Energy Conservation
 - ◆ Stage 3=Exhaustion
- 3 Principal components:
 - ◆ Emotional exhaustion
 - ◆ Depersonalization
 - ◆ Diminished feelings of personal accomplishment

Maslach Burnout Inventory-- Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS)

- Burnout characteristics:
 - ◆ Emotional exhaustion=HIGH
 - Excessive psychological and emotional demands on helpers leaves them drained and depleted
 - ◆ Depersonalization=HIGH
 - Treating people like objects to minimize emotional involvement; callousness, cynicism
 - ◆ Feelings of personal accomplishment=LOW
 - Sense of inefficiency and diminished competence

Available through www.cpp-db.com

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It is more important to know
what sort of person has a
disease
than to know what sort of
disease a person has.

-- Hippocrates

Stage 1 Burnout= Stress Arousal

- Persistent irritability
- Persistent anxiety
- Hypertension
- Bruxism
- Insomnia
- Forgetfulness
- Heart palpitations/arrhythmias
- Concentration problems
- Headaches
- Gastrointestinal symptoms

www.texmed.org/Template.aspx?id=4480 (Any 2 of these symptoms)

Stage 2 Burnout= Energy Conservation

- Attempts to compensate for stress
- Excessive lateness
- Procrastination
- Excessive time off
- Decreased libido
- Persistent tiredness
- Social withdrawal from friends/family
- Increased cynicism
- Resentment
- Increased substance use
- Excessive apathy

www.texmed.org/Template.aspx?id=4480 (Any 2 of these symptoms)

Stage 3 Burnout= Exhaustion

- Chronic sadness or depression
- Chronic stomach or bowel problems
- Chronic mental fatigue
- Chronic physical fatigue
- Chronic headaches/migraines
- Desire to "drop out" of society
- Desire to get away from family, friends
- Recurrent suicidal ideation

www.texmed.org/Template.aspx?id=4480 (Any 2 of these symptoms)

Don't get too
Hungry
Angry
Lonely
Tired.

Burnout vs. Depression

- Major depression
 - ◆ Pervades all aspects of a person's life
 - ◆ DSM-IV-TR criteria
- Burnout
 - ◆ A distinct work-related syndrome
 - ◆ Most likely to occur in jobs that require extensive care of other people

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Physician Burnout

	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Low to moderate Personal Achievement
Practicing Physicians and Residents	46-80%	22-93%	16-79%
Academic Ob-Gyn Chairs	56%	36%	21%

Data compiled from a variety of studies;
Summarized in Chopra SS, Sotile WM, Sotile MO, 2004

Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.

--Winston Churchill

Myths in Medicine Contributing to Burnout

- Physicians should be all-knowing
- Uncertainty is a sign of weakness
- Patients should always come first
- Technical excellence will provide satisfaction
- To reveal emotions=weakness
- Physicians don't have needs
- Please everyone (home, work, play)
- Make lots of money

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Values of Medicine Contributing to Burnout

- Emotional needs ignored
- Peer rivalry, competitiveness
- Obsessive-compulsive traits
- Delayed gratification
- Personal sacrifice
- Neglect of personal needs (sleep, free time)
- Overdeveloped sense of responsibility
- Hard work, long hours
- Dedication to quality patient care
- Compulsive perfectionism
- When stressed, work harder!

www.texmed.org/Template.aspx?id=4478

Characteristics of Physicians that Increase Risk for Burnout

- Perfectionism
- Compulsiveness
- Need for control
- Exaggerated sense of responsibility
- Difficulty asking for help
- Excessive, unrealistic guilt
- Suppression of feelings
- Difficulty taking vacations and enjoying leisure time

www.texmed.org/Template.aspx?id=4477

"Addiction is a disorder of the brain's reward system. Functional imaging shows the vulnerable circuitry for addiction originating in the paleocortex. Paradoxically, humankind's greatest adaptive advantage, the neocortex, responsible for the phenomenon of consciousness, is at best only minimally protective from addictive disease and may pose a hurdle for recovery. Unlike most medical disorders, in addiction a net effect of supraphysiologic reward, impaired inhibition, or both paradoxically leads the limbic drive system to reinforce exposure to the disease vector. This is in direct violation of the principle of survival of the species. In individuals with underlying vulnerabilities, limbic drive progressively recruits neocortical function to protect continued access to abused substances, the polar opposite of self-preservation. Thus, when physicians, whom society selects for high-level cortical functioning, become alcoholic or addicted, they often manifest exceptionally rationalized denial and sophisticated resistance."

Gastfriend DR: Physician Substance Abuse and Recovery: What does it mean for physicians--and everyone else?
JAMA. 2005;293:1513-1515

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*True knowledge exists
in knowing that you know
nothing.*
--Socrates

Is the practice of medicine
an addiction?

Compassion

- "Feeling of deep sympathy and sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering or misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain or remove its cause."

◆ Webster, 1989

Compassion Fatigue or Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Exposure to vicarious trauma
- State of tension and preoccupation with traumatized patients
- Re-experiencing the traumatic events
- Avoidance/numbing in response to reminders
- Persistent arousal (anxiety) associated with the patient

Figley CR, 2002.

Secondary Traumatic Stress

- "The natural, consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowledge about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other. It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person."

Figley CR, 1999

Secondary Traumatic Stress

- Nearly identical to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - ◆ Except that exposure to the knowledge of the trauma is the stimulus
- People coming into contact with trauma survivors, most notably those in helping professions:
 - ◆ Experience emotional disruption
 - ◆ Become indirect victims of trauma

Figley CR

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Compassion Fatigue

- "A form of burnout characterized by deep physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion accompanied by acute emotional pain."
- "Compassion-fatigued physicians continue to give themselves fully to their patients, finding it difficult to maintain a healthy balance of empathy and objectivity."

Pfifferling J-H, Gilley K: Family Practice Management 2000;7(4) 39-

Compassion Satisfaction

- Pleasure you derive from being able to do your work well
- Satisfaction related your ability to be an effective caregiver

<http://www.isu.edu/~bhstamm/documents> Stamm BH

Self-Assessment for Compassion Fatigue

Personal concerns commonly intrude on my professional role.
My colleagues seem to lack understanding.
I find even small changes enormously draining.
I can't seem to recover quickly after association with trauma.
Association with trauma affects me very deeply.
My patients' stress affects me deeply.
I have lost my sense of hopefulness.
I feel vulnerable all the time.
I feel overwhelmed by unfinished business.
Answering "Yes" to 4 or more may indicate that you are suffering from Compassion Fatigue.

Pfifferling J-H, Gilley K: Family Practice Management 2000;7(4) 39

Warning Signs of Compassion Fatigue

Abusing alcohol, drugs, food	High self-expectations
Anger	Hopelessness
Blaming	Hypertension
Chronic lateness	Increased irritability
Depression	Low self-esteem
Diminished sense of personal accomplishment	Less ability to feel joy
Exhaustion (physical or emotional)	Inability to maintain balance of empathy and objectivity
Frequent headaches	Sleep disturbances
GI complaints	

Pfifferling J-H, Gilley K: Family Practice Management 2000;7(4) 39

Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout, and Compassion Fatigue

- The ProQOL: Professional Quality of Life Scale: Compassion Satisfaction, Burnout and Fatigue Scale. Version IV.
 - ◆ http://www.isu.edu/~bhstamm/documents/progol/ProQOL_vIV_English_Oct05.htm
 - ◆ Stamm BH
- What are your scores?
 - ◆ Burnout
 - ◆ Compassion Fatigue
 - ◆ Compassion Satisfaction

What's your profile?

ProQOL-IV Scores	Burnout	Compassion Fatigue	Compassion Satisfaction
Enjoy your job!	Low	Low	High
Change Careers	High	High	Low
Change Jobs	High	Low	High
Stay and manage emotional toll of your work	Low	High	High
Change population served	Low	Low	Low

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That which is to give light
must endure burning.

--Viktor Frankl

Problems cannot be solved
at the same level of awareness
that created them.

--Albert Einstein

Relief from Compassion Fatigue

- Recognize when you are in trouble
- Learn or re-establish life habits that increase emotional resilience
 - ◆ Exercise, healthy eating, family time
- Develop a self-care plan
 - ◆ Spend plenty of quiet time alone
 - ◆ Recharge your batteries daily
 - ◆ Hold one focused, connected and meaningful conversation each day

Pifferling J-H, Gilley K: Family Practice Management 2000;7(4) 39

Resilience

- Maintaining flexibility and balance in life
- Ability to bounce back from stress

Life is not a problem
to be solved, but a reality
to be experienced.

--Soren Kierkegaard

We must become the change
we want to see.

--Mahatma Gandhi

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Relief from Compassion Fatigue

- Reconnect to the world
 - ◆ Spend time in nature
- Live in the present
 - ◆ Still the mind
 - ◆ Be present in the moment
 - ◆ Mindfulness meditation
- Connect with a spiritual source
 - ◆ Spiritual practices

Pfifferling J-H, Gilley K: Family Practice Management 2000;7(4) 39

Mindfulness

- Respond vs. react to stress through awareness and mindfulness
- Reactivity is an addictive behavior
- "Mindfulness in this sense is learning to let go of the desired outcome, to practice non-doing as an alternative to the addictive fix."
 - ◆ --G. Alan Marlatt

*The affairs of the world will
go on forever.*

*Do not delay the practice of
meditation.*

--Milarepa.

Relief from Compassion Fatigue

- Honest self-reflection
 - ◆ Fear, anger, self-doubt
 - ◆ Suppressed emotions
- Connect to others
 - ◆ Therapist, counselor
 - ◆ Support group
- Avoid self-recrimination

Pfifferling J-H, Gilley K: Family Practice Management 2000;7(4) 39

The 12 Suggested Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

You don't have to see
the whole staircase,
just the first step.

--Martin Luther King, Jr.

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You cannot teach a man anything; you can only help him find it within himself.

--Galileo Galilei

Self-awareness has never been the strong suit of those who choose to become doctors.
When so much fuel is readily available for stoking the fires of ego, there is little inclination to apply it in raising the candlepower of the searching light that might illumine the inner man or woman.

-- Sherwin B. Nuland

Words of Advice

- Don't make big decisions
- Don't blame others
- Don't spend your energy complaining
- Don't try a quick fix

Pfifferling J-H, Gilley K: Family Practice Management 2000;7(4) 39

Follow the three R's:
Respect for self
Respect for others
and
Responsibility for all your actions.

--His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

The Promises

- If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.
- Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize *if* we work for them.

Happiness comes
when your work and words
are of benefit to yourself and
others.

--Siddhartha Gautama

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