



TWELVE WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND PREVENT BURN OUT

1. Build in Organizational Supports

- A. Block of time in the morning for employees to do daily organization and planning
- B. Have time open (if possible on Friday) for employees to complete miscellaneous business
- C. Encourage “time outs” that also reward professional development like workshops, conferences and in-service trainings
- D. Build in more opportunity for job variety
- E. Sanction brief periods of withdrawal from direct contact with clients (lunch hour, breaks, planning time, “paperwork retreats”)
- F. Develop professional peer group support (staff / team meetings) in which sharing can occur
- G. Utilize judicious rotation of some job assignments
- H. Train staff for multiple roles; switch roles occasionally
- I. Encourage teamwork, especially with difficult clients
- J. Develop career ladders for direct service staff
- K. Train and encourage use of personal stress management techniques
- L. Use flexible work policies
- M. Build in variety

2. Manage Self by Objectives

- A. Set realistic goals for the morning; give self clear sense of direction by clear objective for self. Prioritize goals and plan slightly less than you think you might do. (Remember Murphy’s second law: no matter what you do, it will take longer than you planned.)
- B. Pinpoint with large, persistent problems pinpoint what you plan to work with; set small goals
- C. Avoid procrastination, it can become a cycle (procrastination → guilt → procrastination)
- D. Take one thing at a time. When possible, try to give self satisfaction of completing specific goals.
- E. Keep work place organized and pleasing to the eyes.

3. Build in mini-vacations.

- A. Take short breaks during the day.
- B. Midday walks or other exercise.
- C. Desk-side exercises between meetings or tasks (chair pushup, isometric exercises, relaxation exercises, shoulder shrugs, fist squeeze)
- D. Vacation during lunch period and breaks. (call a friend, knit, talk with a co-worker, don't do work straight through the day).
- E. Mental "desk-vacations" (e.g. mental meditation exercises, day-dreaming, "favorite spot" exercise).

4. Have Courage to be Imperfect.

- A. Learn to accept what you cannot change.
- B. Have clear separation between your personal life and career.
- C. Avoid taking too much responsibility for clients' progress.
- D. Think small.
- E. Don't expect rapid change.
- F. Promise less than you think you can achieve.
- G. Be open about shortcomings and get help from peers.
- H. Give help to peers.
- I. Set realistic goals and deadlines.
- J. Accept limitations, you won't be able to reach all clients.
- K. Learn to say "no."

5. Clarify and Update Career Goals

- A. Know what you want / need from your career.
- B. Periodically, check on your own progress and job satisfaction.
- C. Know the limits of your capability and avoid advancement to incompetence.

6. Blow Off Steam

- A. Exercise can provide physical a outlet for "fight" reaction
- B. Plan time to work off stress, especially at time of highest stress.
Examples: Running, tennis, yoga, bicycling, racquet ball, walking, gardening, basketball, punching bag, pounding on drums, etc.

7. Have Sounding Board

- A. Share worries / frustrations with someone you trust
- B. Enjoy catharsis before going home; car pool and blow off steam with co-workers
- C. Share problems or frustrations at staff meetings

8. Avoid Self-Medication

- A. Alcohol, tranquilizers, etc. may be tempting to people under “high stress.” However, they have a “rebound effect” and later increase the body’s reaction to stress.
- B. Try reducing intake of caffeine, sugar, nicotine and salt. Increase your calcium intake and exercise.

9. Get Enough Sleep and Rest

- A. Give yourself at least 7 - 8 hours a night
- B. Listen to your body, recognize when you’re tired
- C. Plan time to relax at your critical period

10. Creative Loafing

- A. Have time when you don’t need to accomplish anything (especially after work)
- B. Reward yourself with free-time activities and recreational outings
- C. “Lose yourself” in hobbies and activities
- D. Avoid letting recreation become another source of achievement stress

11. Calm the Work Area

- A. Anxiety is contagious and so is relaxation
- B. When working, monitor others’ stress; help them relax or recreate when on verge of distress
- C. Utilize relaxation exercises in work area.
- D. Avoid raising your voice unnecessarily; foster calm work environment

12. Utilize Relaxation Exercises

- A. Visualize your “favorite spot in the world”
- B. Use the “Emptying Mind” exercise
- C. Use the “Progressive Relaxation” Technique