

Burnout is commonly conceptualised as a multidimensional syndrome consisting of three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion arises 'when emotional resources are depleted, workers feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level'. Depersonalisation occurs when workers develop 'negative cynical attitudes and feelings about one's clients'. Reduced personal accomplishment refers to the tendency to 'evaluate oneself negatively, particularly in regard to one's work with clients'.

Specific signs and symptoms of burnout include physical and emotional exhaustion; boredom, frustration; insomnia; headache; gastrointestinal symptoms; weight loss; interpersonal difficulties at the work place; poor job satisfaction; impaired work performance.

Multiple factors influence risk for burnout. These are: (i) Individual factors such as age, gender, designation and marital status (ii) Personality characteristics such as perfectionism, compulsiveness, rigidity and emotional instability (iii) Cultural factors such as family roles and social roles (iv) Organizational factors such as hours of work, work load, job satisfaction and nature of patients (especially patients with severe injuries, terminal illnesses and trauma).

Nurses and others working in the health care field are subject to two very different types of stress – systemic workplace stress and traumatic workplace stress. It has been found that six domains of the work environment determine job stress. These are: (i) Workload (ii) Community of people one works with (iii) Control over the work environment (iv) Fairness at the work place (v) Reward for one's work (vi) Values in the workplace. The greater the gap or mismatch

between the person and the job environment, the greater the likelihood of burnout.

SECONDARY TRAUMA

Secondary trauma is commonly referred to as "the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person". Secondary trauma also refers to the emotional distress that occurs when an individual hears about the first hand trauma experiences of another. Most of the professionals in the field of medical and paramedical such as physicians, psychiatrists, surgeons, therapists, counsellors, social workers, nurses, hospice workers, etc. are vulnerable for secondary trauma. Development of secondary trauma stress is recognized as a common occupational hazard especially for professionals who are working in health settings. Experience of secondary trauma by professionals has larger implications on service delivery and personal, occupational and social health of the professionals.

Signs and symptoms of secondary trauma:

| Physical | Psychological/ Emotional |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exhaustion• Weakness• Easy fatigability• Reduced appetite• Reduced functioning• Aches and pains• Physical illness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intrusive thoughts• Anxiety and sadness• Anger• Poor concentration• Second guessing• Detachment• Emotional exhaustion• Fearfulness• Shame• Absenteeism |

Consequences:

The consequences of secondary trauma are multi-fold and affect all spheres of life. Secondary trauma might affect the professionals functioning and capacity to deal

with certain professional issues. At the same time, it also has significant impact on personal and social life of professionals. Some traumatized professionals, believing that they can no longer help the clients, end up leaving their jobs and some of them, due to failures and severe mental health problems, even try to commit suicide.

Management and Prevention:

It is important for the nursing professionals and their employers to identify (a) Identify the signs and symptoms of secondary trauma and (b) When required, consult mental health professionals.

SELF-CARE

Regular practice of self-care strategies to prevent burn-out and secondary trauma is critical. There are many variations in the manifestation of burn-out and secondary trauma. It is important to be aware of your body and mind respond to stress and choose from an array of self-care strategies that work best for you!

- 1. Nutrition/Diet:** Make sure you are eating regular balanced meals, drinking enough water and restricting consumption of addictive substances such as alcohol and caffeinated drinks.
- 2. Physical Exercise:** Regular physical exercise is known to have remarkable benefits for one's body and mind. About 30-45 minutes of physical exercise in the form of brisk walking, jogging, running, Yoga or playing a sport may be built into your daily routine.
- 3. Get enough Sleep/Rest:** Adequate rest is very essential for our body and mind to recover and bounce back. About 6-8 hours of quality sleep is critical to improving our efficiency during waking hours!