From Burnout to Engagement: A Framework for Wellness in Critical Care Settings

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The Big Idea

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Work load

Burnout
The Big Idea

- A “growth mindset” for resiliency
- The field of positive psychology offers highly effective practices
- Resiliency is foundational to “improving the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities”
The Practice of Critical Care

• “Critical care as **determinative**”
• Personality = Assertive, Competitive, Persevering, and Responsible/High Achieving
• Ability to make decisions in the face of uncertainty
• Loves for hands-on work with patients and the ability to help people immediately

https://www.thoracic.org/professionals/career-development/residents-medical-students/choosing-pulmonary-critical-care.php

The Practice of Critical Care

• More people coming to the ER
• Doing more with less
• Meeting performance criteria vs. doing good medicine
• Reduced sense of control over the work environment
About Me

• Clinical Psychologist by Training
• Organizational Consultant
• Division Psychologist for 1st Infantry Division, US Army
• Combat Stress Control Officer for 2BDE, 1ID, US Army – Balad, Iraq

Context for Burnout

• **Imbalanced** – Job demands exceed resources
• **Chronic** – Imbalances are enduring
• **Conflict** – Between people, sources or authority, or values

Leading to an environment characterized by continuous emotional tension and unrealistic expectations

A psychological syndrome of:
- Exhaustion
- Cynicism
- Inefficacy

...experienced in response to chronic job stressors

A psychological state of:
- High Energy
- Strong Involvement
- A sense of Efficacy
Burnout

A Model of Burnout

Personal Experience

Demands
- Work Overload
- Conflicts

Resources
- Control
- Support
- Skills Use
- Autonomy
- Involvement

Burnout
- Exhaustion, Cynicism,
  Reduced Efficacy

Impact
- Reduced Commitment,
  Turnover, Illness

Personal Risk Factors

- Professionals underestimate their vulnerability to burnout
- Perceiving risk for burnout is different than accepting those risks
- Fatigue makes for “values congruent,” quick decisions

Cognitive Biases

Under-accumulation bias

– The inability to understand the relationship between the risk from a single experience and the risk from multiple experiences
– Past experience predicts future experience


Cognitive Biases

Optimism bias

– Bad things are less likely to happen to us than they are to other people
– This is especially true for consequences of behaviors that are under our control

• Risky behaviors (e.g., working long hours week after week) are often also psychologically beneficial
• Seeing ourselves as someone who cares enough to go the extra mile

• Workload
• Control
• Reward
• Community
• Fairness
• Values


• Job demands exceeding human limits
• Strong correlation to the “exhaustion” component of burnout
• Depleting the capacity of people to meet the demands of the job
• Critical point is when people can’t recover from work demands

• Capacity to influence decisions that affect one’s work
• Exercise of professional autonomy
• Gain access to necessary resources
• Role conflict – multiple authorities with competing demands


• Rewards (monetary, social, and intrinsic) are inconsistent with expectations
• Lack of recognition is strongly predictive of feelings of inefficacy
• Being excluded from rewards of an organization heighten a personal sense of neglect and disconnection

Overall quality of social interaction at work

Job settings can either isolate people from one another or make contact impersonal


Extent to which decisions are perceived as fair and people are treated with respect

Fairness of a process is more important than the favorability of the outcome

Supervisors seen as fair and supportive reduce likelihood of burnout

• Values are at the heart of people’s relationship with their work
• The ideals and motives that attracted them to the work in the first place
• Gaps between organizational and personal values predict burnout

• **Personal Risk Factors**
  – Risk Recognition
  – Risk Estimation
  – Risk Evaluation

• **Situational Risk Factors**
  – Workload
  – Control
  – Reward
  – Community
  – Fairness
  – Values

• **The Tools**
  – Maslach Burnout Inventory
  – Areas of Worklife Survey

• **The Process**
  – Transparency of results
  – Quarterly meetings
  – Develop risk-mitigation approaches based on group results
Workload

Strategies for Engagement

• Opportunities to use and refine skills while also becoming effective in new areas

• A sustainable workload stops the cycle of exhaustion that is the driving force in the experience of burnout


Control

Strategies for Engagement

• Enhance conditions for personal experience of control

• Participative decision making

• Aligned sources of authority

Strategies for Engagement

• Intrinsic rewards are just as – if not more – important than extrinsic

• Day-to-day pleasure and satisfaction is what keeps people coming back


Strategies for Engagement

• Thriving is enhanced through community with people we like and respect

• This reaffirms our membership in a group with shared values

• Supervisor support predicts exhaustion

• Peer support predicts efficacy

• A live, attentive, responsive community is incompatible with burnout

Questions