

HELPING THE HELPERS: PREVENTING BURNOUT & BUILDING RESILIENCE

The causes of burnout vary, but for mental health care workers, it can include heavy caseload, unrealistic scheduling, low pay, lack of appreciation, and unfavorable working conditions without foreseeable relief. In addition to these general causes, mental health care workers are subject to vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and secondary traumatic stress which can all lead to burnout. At Give an Hour®, our providers offer no-cost care to those in need – despite the growing needs and rise in appointments they are experiencing in their practices. This increase in need, while managing their own mental wellness, can challenge even the most seasoned professional. Thankfully there are ways to mitigate these stressful issues. Here are some tips on how to identify and prevent burnout and build resilience.



SIGNS OF BURNOUT

Cognition: confusion; impaired judgement and decision-making ability; difficulty prioritizing tasks; etc.

Somatic Functioning: low energy level and exhaustion; change in appetite and sleeping patterns; gastrointestinal problems; hypochondriacal complaints; etc.

Mood: emotional exhaustion; depression; easy excitability, anger, and irritability; loss of a sense of personal accomplishment and merit; depersonalization, etc.

Behavioral Functioning: disorganization; misplacing of items; decreased or increased activity level; extreme fatigue; excessive isolation from colleagues, family, and clients; etc.

Burnout is a serious concern for mental health care workers not only for their own mental health, but because of potential professional impairment; creating danger to the client and liability for practicing therapists. It is imperative that mental health care workers take preventive measures and be attuned to the early warning signs of burnout.



HELP & HOPE: WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- **Reduce Isolation.** Find a professional peer network and spend time with friends or family. Be open to asking for and accepting help. Do not practice in a bubble.
- **Set physical and emotional boundaries.** Take scheduled and unscheduled “mental health days” and pay attention to your increasing client load. Avoid unnecessary additional exposure to secondhand trauma (news, social media).
- **Practice regular self-care.** Create a list of ways you can support your emotional, practical, physical, psychological, and social needs.
- **Conduct periodic self-assessment for burnout.** Request feedback from mentors, supervisors, and friends. Seek professional help (therapy) when necessary.