

# MIND BREW

Office of Student Success



## Gearing up for burning out

THE LEARNING SPECIALIST TEAM

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, burnout has become a prevalent and relevant topic of discussion in the healthcare sector. We have seen an increasing number of healthcare workers experiencing burnout and leaving the industry altogether.

All of us have either experienced or have some vague idea of what burnout entails, but is there more to it than just being exhausted?

Christina Maslach first coined the term burnout while conducting research during the 1980s. Per her definition burnout is a psychological phenomena that emerges as a response to chronic work stressors. Most of us equate burnout to feeling drained. However, that is only one part of burnout.

According to Maslach, there are three primary dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of achievement. Indicators of emotional exhaustion include anhedonia, disengagement, and lack of concentration. People stop engaging in activities they enjoy, start distancing themselves from loved ones, and have a difficult time focusing on daily tasks. For medical students, these behaviors can manifest in numerous ways including decreased academic performance, not showing up for mandatory classes, and isolating.

Students who are also burned out may display signs of depersonalization. This can include feeling irritated at small inconveniences, being callous towards others, and harboring a cynical attitude. They may express not feeling like a person or that the things they do don't matter.

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"You can do anything, but not everything"

DANIEL ALLEN



Lastly, burnout is likely to manifest feelings of insecurity and lack of achievement. Students may demonstrate lower self-efficacy, express disenfranchisement with serving in the medical field, or display a sense of hopelessness that nothing will ever change.

It is important to appreciate that those experiencing burnout may display symptoms or indicators in all three dimensions or only on one specific dimension. Regardless, burnout is a systemic problem particularly within the medical field. According to recent studies, 35 to 71 percent of medical students indicate feeling some form of burnout (Fares et al., 2016). This is also reflected in physician burnout rates. The Mayo Clinic published that 44% of physicians reported experiencing burnout.

Burnout is a serious issue that has long-term implications if it isn't addressed early on. Quality of patient care decreases, medical errors increase, and suicidal ideations increase when burnout is left unchecked for physicians. So what are ways that we can successfully intervene and mitigate burnout early on?

#### Successful Interventions According to Science

Because there are multiple domains of burnout, successful interventions under one domain may not be applicable to other domains. Here are the most statistically significant interventions for each domain according to the science (Eckleberry-Hunt et al., 2009):

#### Emotional Exhaustion:

- Meditation and Relaxation Techniques (MBSR for 30 minutes a day over 8 weeks, Breath Relaxation Techniques)
- Professional Counseling
- Deliberately setting aside time daily for activities you enjoy
- Getting 7 hours of sleep or more

#### Depersonalization:

- Professional Counseling
- Peer Support Groups
- Meditation and Relaxation Techniques

#### Lack of Achievement:

- Development of healthy coping skills
- Developing relationships and connections with patients
- Peer Support Groups

Remember, these are just the most significant ways to mitigate burnout. It may require a combination of different techniques if you are experiencing burnout on more than one domain. Burnout is rarely fixed by one strategy but can be successfully addressed by a holistic plan that is implemented consistently. In other words, make sure that you are taking time to practice some daily self-care so you can continue to thrive.

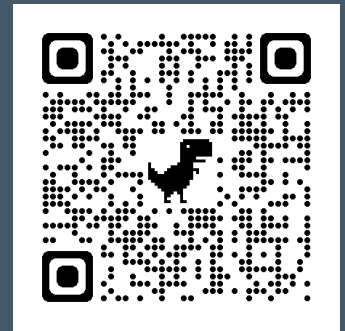
**For more strategies and tips, please email your assigned learning specialist.**

#### References:

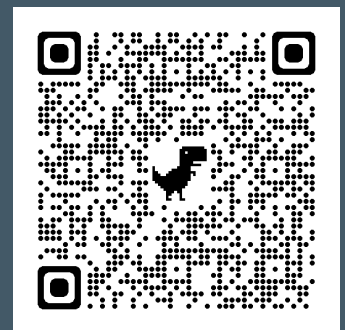
Eckleberry-Hunt, J., Lick, D., Boura, J., Hunt, K., Balasubramanian, M., Mulhem, E., & Fisher, C. (2009). An exploratory study of resident burnout and wellness. *Academic Medicine*, 84(2), 269-277.  
Fares, J., Al Tabooh, H., Saadeddin, Z., El Moubayyar, C., & Aridi, H. (2016). Stress, burnout and coping strategies in preclinical medical students. *North American journal of medical sciences*, 8(2), 75.

## Cognitive Science in Media

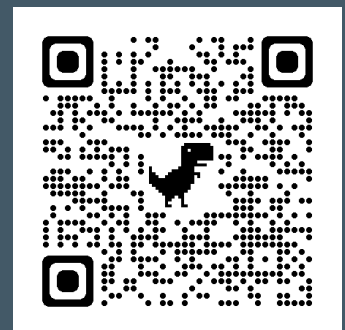
Why we're burned out and what to do about it (APA's Speaking of Psychology)



Burnout isn't just exhaustion, here is how to deal with it (NPR's Life Kit)



Burnout: Can We Fix Work? (Science Vs.)



## Contact Your Learning Specialist

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