## “Burnout-proofing:” burnout prevention

**As the process of burnout (grieving) continues, the burning out person can no longer give to clients/patients, the practice or to the firm; they are so depleted that they can only guard against their own fatigue. Burning out people deplete energy away form the organization. Burnout-proofing demonstrates commitment to the value of a scarce human resource: professionals.**

***Burnout proofing is an efficient retention process.***

*A Simple Summary of Burnout symptoms:*

* ***Decreasing Satisfaction with work***
* ***Heightening tension at work***
* ***Poorer performance appraisals***
* ***Decreasing self-esteem***
* ***Higher turnover***
* ***Greater physical symptoms***
* ***Greater negative effects such as anxiety and sadness/depression***
* ***Higher rates of non-psychotic psychiatric symptoms***

####

#### Individual suggestions

**1.      To reduce emotional exhaustion from unrealistic expectations:**

         “Reality shock” preparation in training, and during practice

         Un-stigmatized sharing by senior professionals of how they coped with disappointment, dilemmas and stress

         Availability of curricular (CLE/CME or otherwise) training in stress management

         Availability of non-stigmatized help resources

         Availability of peer support groups and peer coaching

         Availability of counseling on career fits that do not fit into the workaholic model

         Deep relaxation and transpersonal counseling to decrease self-criticism and approval seeking as a strong desire (Ex., “mindfulness” and “internal critic” training)

         Membership in a community of caring—identified vision/mission/goals/objectives/feedback

         Acceptance and understanding of “life is alright, no matter how things turn out?”

         Those who don’t become burned out or reduce risk use affirmations:

Use affirmations:

         “I am big-hearted and let others share the glory”

         “I am honorable and worthy of respect”

         “I am most fulfilled by championing others”

### Organizationally

**2.      What can be done at the work level to decrease burnout? Develop availability, access and use of the following:**

* Unconditional respect for the professional from peers: honest PRAISE
* Timely feedback, as a regular occurrence, so corrections can be made
* Consider, it may be the system causing stress not *primarily* the individual
* Acceptance of chaos and change—the information may be running us and control is a delusion; how do you accept some chaos?
* Working together to question so we develop adaptive strategies. (Collective thinking and collaboration)
* Acceptance of transition/change as reality—reinforcement by management
* Workshops on chaos and transition developing comfort with “out of control”
* Burnout workshops (de-stigmatizing burnout as a goal)
* Conflict management: dispute settlement skills
* Leadership training: effective mentoring
* Parent effectiveness training
* Availability and access to trained mediators (outside)

**General Burnout-Proofing suggestions**

         Team-building training with regular feedback on managing disagreements

         Effective communication training, especially when in a power differential situation

         Assertive communication (with continuous feedback on successful implementation)

         Peer coaching/counseling

         Mentoring training

         Facilitated support groups

         Regular orientation programs

         Spouse support groups-education (feedback on the firm)

         Grief education workshops

         “Juggling” workshops—peers share how they balance personal and professional life.

         Creativity exercises and retreats

John-Henry Pfifferling, Ph.D.

© 2012