ACADEMICALLY TIRED: PREVENTING PROFESSOR BURNOUT

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Occupational Burnout

• The term coined by Graham Greene (1961) in his novel, A Burn-Out Case, about a disillusioned architect who withdraws into the African jungle

• Popularized through the work of psychologists such as Freudenberger (1974), Maslach (1982), Pines (1982), Cherniss (1980)

• Two consecutive research phases—pioneering & empirical

• Sources of burnout are investigated at individual, organizational, and societal levels

• People in the caring professions are most susceptible to burnout (Senior, 2006)
• **Maslach and Jackson** (1981) – “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind”

• **Three dimensions**: EE (emotional exhaustion), DP (depersonalization), PA (personal accomplishment)

• **Education**: economic costs, teaching quality, student outcomes, etc.

• **Psychology**: “When those coping mechanisms fail to stem the demands, stress increases and threatens the teacher’s mental and physical well-being ultimately leading teachers to quitting or burning out” (Haberman, 2004)
Academic Culture and Burnout

“. . . an overloaded schedule, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown of community, absence of fairness, and conflicting values—are characteristics of workplaces, not individuals. . . . Academic culture fosters burnout when it encourages overwork, promotes a model of professors as isolated entrepreneurs, and offers little recognition for good teaching or mentoring. The persistent financial stress on colleges and universities only exacerbates the problem . . .”

-“The 40-Year-Old Burnout” by Jonathan Malesic
Lack of monetary and nonmonetary recognition to faculty

Guilt feelings when working with underprepared students

Lack of collegial discussion

Insufficient budget support for faculty development

Lack of promotional opportunities
Burnout: Symptoms

• Boredom
• Feeling grumpy and grouchy
• The blues
• Jealousy
• Cynicism
• Fatigue
• Feeling overwhelmed
• Lack of joy
• Low productivity
• Loss of inspiration

Burnout Prevention: Strategies of Self-Care

1. Examine your daily routine:
   - Diet/snacking
   - Exercise
   - Sleeping patterns/Circadian rhythm
   - Off-time non-negotiables
     - At least one full day off
     - Joy breaks (Ann McGee-Cooper in her *Time Management for Unmanageable People*: mini-activities)
     - Artist dates (Julia Cameron, a creativity guru: scheduled block of time for “nurturing your creative consciousness”; “quality time with yourself”)

Successful Academic, Mary McKinney, PhD
“Avoiding Burnout: Self-Care Strategies for Faculty” by Camille Freeman and Bevin Clare
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2. Examine how you spend your time and energy:
   • Camille Freeman and Bevin Clare, licensed nutritionists and associate professors at the Maryland University of Integrative Health: “prioritize the aspects of your job that build you up ... cultivate the art of saying ‘no’”
   • James L. Lang A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching: moderate prep time; find gaps; focus your obligations
   • “How to Prevent Burn-Out? About Staying Sane in Academia,” May 2016: Do not overcommit; wait 3 days before saying yes
   • Anne-Wil Harzing, Professor @ Middlesex University, London “top-3 remedy”:
     1. Don’t get involved in university politics.
     2. Don’t get involved in university politics!!!
     3. DO NOT GET INVOLVED IN UNIVERSITY POLITICS.
3. Rethink course design and manage student expectations:
   • Number and sequence of assignments (sometimes LESS is MORE), targeting outcomes, assessment procedures/rubrics
   • Set boundaries in your syllabus and communicate

4. Switch it up: design/teach a new course, course format, propose an activity, seize opportunities for action to optimize your work experience and create flow (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi)
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5. Connect and invest in your relationships.

6. Practice **self-acceptance and self-compassion** (Tchiki Davis, a happiness researcher and consultant); **Sfumato** (Wendi Pillars—Mom, #ELL teacher, author of **Visual Notetaking for Educators. Unquenchably curious**)

(continuous learning, learning from mistakes, continual refinements of the senses, balance between logic and imagination, cultivation of fitness, appreciation for the interconnectedness of all things—https://www.scienceofpeople.com)
7. Be mindful

Saki F. Santorelli, EdD, MA “Mindfulness and Mastery in the Workplace: 21 Ways to Reduce Stress During the Workday”:

- Change your environment during lunch
- “STOP” for 1-3 minutes to be present and regroup
- Acknowledge your accomplishments at the end of the workday
- When home, take a minute to orient yourself to transition from work to home
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Anything that costs you your peace is too expensive.
Additional Resources

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTCS_08.htm
https://wellmd.stanford.edu/test-yourself.html
https://magazine.startus.cc/european-countries-defy-9-5-work-paradigm/
https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/30/worker-burnout-worldwide-governments_n_3678460.html

The Truth About Burnout: How Organizations Cause Personal Stress and What to Do About It & Banishing Burnout: Six Strategies for Improving Your Relationship with Work by Michael P. Leiter and Christina Maslach; Burnout in Academia: The Impact of Academic Workload on Burnout Levels and the Need for Sustainable Workloads by Sylvia Gonzalez; Introversion in the Classroom: How to Avoid Burnout and Encourage Success by Jessica Honard; Addicted to Busy: Your Blueprint for Burnout Prevention by PaulâDavis-Laack; Time Management for Unmanageable People: The Guilt-Free Way to Organize, Energize, and Maximize Your Life by Ann McGee-Cooper, Advice for New Faculty Members by Robert Boice.