

Q&A Professional burnout

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1. Who is at risk of burnout?

The occurrence of professional burnout depends on many social and organisational factors, as well as individual personal predispositions of employees. The consequences of this phenomenon are adverse for the employee, his family, friends and the employer. Therefore, it is worth devoting time and attention to this phenomenon. When professional burnout hits you, then:

- 1) At the very thought of returning to work after the weekend you shiver.
- 2) You often think of quitting your job and running away somewhere.
- 3) You feel that what you are doing is pointless.
- 4) You are unable to rest, even when you are not working.
- 5) You distance yourself from people around you at work, both customers and colleagues.
- 6) You perform your duties mechanically, without any emotional involvement.
- 7) You have no sense of empowerment.
- 8) You are cynical, impatient and sometimes rude, quick to irritate and anger.
- 9) You are not satisfied with yourself
- 10) You often look at your watch to get out of work as quickly as possible.
- 11) You are exhausted, tired all the time and sleep doesn't give you rest.
- 12) Somatic symptoms begin to appear, such as headaches, stomach aches, etc.

1.1. Why are social workers at risk for professional burnout?

It is a profession in which the direct relationship with another person is asymmetrical, i.e. one person helps and the other accepts or rejects help. It particularly affects those workers who are very ambitious, perfectionists and have an unrealistic idea of what can and cannot be done. They are often workaholics, who live only for work and are not interested in much else

in their lives. It often happens that they are young people who, in the pursuit of a career and money, do not notice their tiredness and exhaustion.

Also lonely people without close family relations are more exposed to professional burnout, because it is the family and friends who re-establish our emotional strength. Psychologists also point out that professional burnout can occur in people who have low self-esteem, do not believe in their abilities, and are dependent on others. On the other hand, they may be people who have a deep conviction that everything depends on them, on their ability to perform. They put high demands on themselves, they get so involved in their work that it stops being work and becomes a "mission" to be accomplished, for which they sacrifice everything. If they do not achieve their goals, they feel frustrated and disappointed.

2. What is vital energy?

Maintaining vital energy is not at all easy. It can happen that there is a drop in energy - the organism signals it to us, raises the alarm. Then we may feel tired all the time, we have trouble falling asleep, we wake up during the night, we have negative thoughts, we are consumed by anxiety, we may also have physical symptoms such as: headache, stomach ache, weight loss, etc.

We have two sources of energy: the so-called "birth" energy, which determines the length of our lives (it is non-renewable), and the "daily" energy, which we create and save and which can be renewed. If we do not take care to balance the "daily" energy, we have to use the "birth" energy. If we do this often, we overload the body and cause problems. Wise management of daily energy is our key to well-being.

1.2. How do you maintain life balance?

The key here is wise management of our own energy and constant control of our personal costs. A big challenge in everyday work is to achieve our goals. In order to have the will and enthusiasm to carry out our tasks effectively, we need to learn how to manage our physical, emotional, mental and spiritual energy.



1.3. What is vital energy management?

Energy management is nothing else than monitoring our energy expenditure and supplies and replenishing them regularly. Unlike time, which is limited (24 hours a day) and cannot be restored, energy is fortunately a renewable resource.

1.3.1. Physical energy - what is it?

Physical energy is the energy of our body strongly dependent primarily on breathing, sleep and rest during the day, physical activity, nutrition.

1.3.2. Mental energy - what is it?

Mental energy flows from our cognitive resources and makes us able to concentrate on a task. A high level of mental energy has a positive effect on, among other things, concentration, attentiveness and creativity, and thus on our performance at work. Mental energy comes from the balance between use and regeneration, and the mind has to be taught to switch between focus and rest.

1.3.3. Emotional energy - what is it?

To perform at our highest level and reach a state of full engagement we need to include positive emotions: contentment, enthusiasm, joy of life. The key qualities that drive our positive emotions are: confidence, self-control, interpersonal skills, empathy. It is important to remember that negative emotions serve our survival but they cost a lot and are useless energetically in terms of productivity.

1.3.4. Spiritual energy - what is it?

It comes from an inner sense of meaning and purpose in our actions, of being in harmony with ourselves and our values, of our vision of ourselves in the world and the future. Increasing spiritual capacity often requires subordinating our needs to a higher good. Paradoxically, the

more we focus on ourselves, our fears, the less energy we have for positive, developmental activities. Devoting one's time, attention and energy to a purpose beyond one's own interest usually gives a sense of great satisfaction and builds positive self-esteem.

2. How to prevent professional burnout?

Scientific studies have shown that the energy expenditure of people working in the "helping" area is very similar to that of athletes. However, athletes undergo mandatory psycho-physical regeneration. "Helpers," including those who work with foster families, are subjected to long-term stress and often have to rely only on themselves. An additional burden is the conflict between the role of a "helper" and the role of an "intervener". The "helper" pursues the goals of his client and the "intervener" pursues the goals of the institution in which he works. These goals are often divergent.

Try to:

- develop an attitude that will promote self-efficacy in your work and allow you to manage your own energy wisely
- protect, renew and strengthen your own energy resources
- manage stress and your time effectively

2.1. What are the key elements of a smart and efficient work system?

Mission - work is an important part of our life. Thanks to it we accentuate our value, we have the satisfaction that we manage to achieve something meaningful. The questions "Why do I work", "How does my work affect my life?", "What is the meaning of what I do?", "What is my work for me?", "What was I called to do?" arise. The belief that we know the answer to these questions is like the foundation of a solid house that can withstand anything, even the biggest earthquake. Thanks to this we still have hope and energy to act when all around gets complicated and others have already doubted.



Vision - vision is our idea of who we are, where we are going, and what guides us. Our clearly articulated vision will enable us to achieve our mission. It gives us an idea of our future.

Values - helper has a clearly formulated system of values which guide them in their work, i.e. the conviction that a certain catalogue of qualities is desirable in achieving how to do something, e.g. honesty, loyalty, integrity, responsibility, etc.

Principles - helper has the conviction that he/she should be guided by firm and fixed principles. By applying these principles in life, one can show others a certain pattern of behaviour. They can have an influence in modelling life so that they can steer around the "reefs".

Goal – helper should have clearly set goals that she or he wants to achieve in their work.

Change – helper is able to make changes not only in themselves but also in others. These changes are necessary in order to achieve their vision and goal. He/she encourages to take risks and motivates to overcome barriers.

Response - helper reacts quickly to the needs of his/her clients, e.g. changes established strategies, when changes are necessary due to the current situation.

Communicating - helper should have the ability to adapt his/her communication to the specific interlocutor. This requires a certain amount of flexibility and at the same time knowing the interlocutor well.

Consequence - helper is consistent in what he/she does. He or she does not change his or her views at a moment's notice, e.g. for mercantile reasons.

Team work, innovation and positive attitude - helping and solving problems in an interdisciplinary team is faster, more effective and more professional. Also, building a positive working environment is extremely important. Looking for new solutions, being creative also contributes to better results.

Conflict management - in every work environment conflicts and disputes arise. Helpers must have the knowledge and skills to manage and resolve them.

Ethics and empathy - helper must be guided by accepted principles of professional ethics, showing understanding for others and for themselves.

2.2. What exercises help prevent professional burnout?

Exercise 1



This exercise is to reflect on whether I am taking care of my burnout prevention? Am I at risk of professional burnout? What do I need to work on in order to change certain things in my work and be more satisfied with it.

The table below is meant to help you discuss the problem.

	Question	Discussion
1.	Do you start your work with something nice?	Tell us what nice thing is that ?
2.	Do you have breaks at work?	How often? What do you do then ?
3.	Do you have the impression that you are well-trained and prepared for your job?	What skills and knowledge do you lack to do your job professionally? What are you doing to continuously improve your knowledge and skills? Are there any obstacles so that you can say you don't feel sufficiently trained?
4.	Do you have a feeling of isolation from the group you work in?	What makes you feel isolated or what makes you feel part of the group you work in?
5.	Do you have a realistic sense of your work and pay?	Do you feel that your work has meaning? Does your work bring you satisfaction? Is your work appreciated? Are you satisfied with your earnings?
6.	Do you find yourself putting your customers' needs ahead of your own?	Tell us what this is like? Do you have any difficulties or dilemmas as a result?

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7.	Do you work according to your own rhythm (between 90% and 120% of your strength)?	Do you rest when you need to? Do you work in 'bursts'? Do you sometimes work beyond your capabilities? Or do you get bored at work? What could you change in your work organisation? Do you rest when you need to?
8.	Do you have your net of support outside work?	What is this support ?
9.	How do you plan your holidays?	Do you take frequent, short holidays? Do you take short but long rests? Do you really spend your holidays relaxing?
10.	Do you do anything apart from work?	Do you have a hobby? What relaxes you and makes you happy? Tell us about it.
11.	Do you follow the "end of work = end of work" principle	How do you deal with leaving work at work and not carrying it home in your 'head' or 'briefcase'?
12.	Do you regret not having different job?	What made you do what you do? Are you fulfilled in your job? Are you thinking about changing your job? Why?

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Exercise 2

The exercise consists of developing unfinished sentences and sharing good practices aimed at "energy prevention".

TEAM 1

1. Before making an important decision
2. Before leaving work and returning home ...
3. Before going to bed ...

TEAM 2

1. For a good start to the day ...
2. For pain relief ...
3. For tiredness ...

TEAM 3

1. To protect yourself ...
2. To say goodbye to a difficult emotion ...
3. To recharge ...

2.3. What is the Dilts pyramid?

Each of us has a unique lifestyle. Some of us are hugely successful, others not really, waiting forever for change. Have you ever asked yourself, "Why does my life look the way it does now?" If so, the Dilts Pyramid helps to answer this question. It is a model of personal change often used in the coaching process.

The Dilts Pyramid is a hierarchical model of neurological levels developed by Robert B. Dilts, one of the most well-known experts in neurolinguistic programming. This pyramid is a multi-level activity, a model of personal change that moves from one level to the next. The word 'change' itself is very important in this process, because changing something at a higher level would necessarily mean changing things at lower levels. It will help you to look at aspects

of your life on a deeper level. Any change that occurs on a particular level can improve the quality of your lifestyle. You change your perspective, your point of view.

2.3.1. Levels of the Dilts Pyramid

Learn about the different levels of the pyramid and the questions within them below, but remember: the answer to the question at each level can be found at the level above.

Level 1 ENVIRONMENT

The environment is where people live, it is the answers to the questions:

"What?"

"What do I have?"

"When?"

"Where?"

"With whom?"

"Who has something?"

The question of this level is directly related to responsibilities, finances, family and everything else that consists your environment. The unifying question is: "Why do you have everything you have?". But, to answer these questions, you need to go to a higher level.

Level 2: BEHAVIOUR

The behaviour/action level is the answer to the question "What should I do?" At this level we can find information about changes and moves. You need to ask yourself the following questions:

"How do you behave or react in a given situation?"

"What are the physical signs of your body language?"

"What are your habits?"

"What is your current lifestyle?"

"Are there any strong patterns for you?"

You can find the answers to these questions at the next level.

Level 3 SKILLS

The skills/abilities/competencies level is the answer to the questions:

"How do I choose?"

"What skills do I have?"

"Why do I choose what I choose?"

We are made of the choices we make in our daily lives. These can be influenced by various factors: goals, health, passions and loves, etc. Of course, the answers to these questions can be found a level above.

Level 4 VALUES

In the values/belief level we are guided by the questions:

"What do I believe in?"

"Why is it so important?"

Here we are talking about your beliefs, for example: if you believe that everything can be achieved without effort, you will not try too hard to achieve it. However - if you believe that everything requires a lot of effort, you will do your best to achieve your goal. The value level allows us to remove all obstacles that prevent access to the chosen goal. At this level we can ask ourselves the additional question "How can I do this?"

Level 5 IDENTITY

"Who am I?" or the level of I, where we can find out how a person sees themselves, who they are, how they build relations with others. We are talking about self-awareness and self-understanding (and these concepts define our beliefs). It is very important to assess oneself realistically, avoid weakening strengths and hiding flaws.

Level 6 LIFE MISSION

The last level deals with the most important concept - the mission, or the meaning of life. Dedicated questions:

"Why do I live?"

"Where am I going with my life?"

"What is the meaning of?"

"What is my purpose?"

"Why do I exist?"

It is important for everyone to have a mission with which they go through life. You should not deny yourself, your beliefs, your choices or your actions.

If you analyse the above levels and questions and learn more about yourself then you will probably identify all the gaps in your life. Try to find out what is going on in it and answer the questions level by level. Think about the moments you experience at work, with friends or at home, where are you currently in life? Are you satisfied enough? If not, what actions can you take to change?

Exercise 3

Try to think of your own significant change. Write what you want your change to consist of

Environment level:

"What would you like it to look like (here list what you would like to achieve e.g. lose weight, change job, move out to "your own" etc. ?"

"What will you be doing, ?"

"Who will be around you?"

"What will your day look like then?"

"What obstacles will you face to achieve this?"

Behavioural level:

"What do you need to do as a result?"

"What actions do you need to take to deal with all the obstacles?"

"What do you need to give up?"

To be clear, moving within the same levels at which your challenge is defined can be useful for you. However, if you want to create an opportunity for yourself to expand your awareness then look at your change from the perspective of other levels as well. You could ask yourself the following questions:

Skills level:

"What skills can you use to achieve your goal?"

"What skills do you lack?"

"How can you develop the skills you lack?"

"And if there is no time to develop these skills, then what?"

"What can offset the lack of needed skills?"

Values/beliefs level:

"What beliefs of yours support you in achieving your goal?"

"What beliefs are preventing you from achieving your goal?"

"What other alternative beliefs would be useful here?"

"If you achieve your goal, what values that are important to you will you be able to fully embody?"

"Which of your values will you have to sacrifice?"

"Which of your values stand in your way?"

Identity level:

"Who will you be when you reach your goal?"

"What will characterise you then?"

"How will you change?"

"What will your mission statement sound like then?"

"What will others say about you then?"

"What will you see when you look in the mirror?"

Spirituality level:

"How will all this affect your life?"
 "How will it affect the lives of others?"
 "What will the universe gain by you changing?"
 "Who or what will benefit most from this?"
 "Who or what will lose the most?"
 "In what sense will your life then be better?"
 "In what sense will the lives of others be better?"

Erasmus+ Project „Conscious Parent Academy” No 2020-1-PL01-KA204-062283 Implementation period - 01.09.2020-31.08.2023

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- improving the image of foster families

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