Self-Care and Avoiding Burnout in a Pandemic

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Symptoms of Burnout

Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion

Increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job

Reduced professional efficacy
High Rates of Burnout Across Career Fields

Pre-pandemic times:

• 75% of employees have experienced burnout at work (FlexJobs & Mental Health America, August 2020)

• 49% of employees have experienced burnout while working from home (Monster, May 2020)
High Rates of Burnout Across Career Fields

Pandemic times:

• 40% of employees have experienced burnout specifically during the pandemic (FlexJobs & Mental Health America, August 2020)
  • 37% said they were currently working longer hours than usual since the pandemic started

• 69% of employees have experienced burnout while working from home (Monster, May 2020)
High Rates of Burnout in Academia

- Academics self-report high levels of stress
  - At greater risk of work overload and work-life conflict compared to nonacademic staff

- Faculty members frequently report high stress and burnout levels

- Graduate students over 6x more likely to experience depression and anxiety compared to general population
COVID-19 and Burnout

Working from home

Illusion of extra time

Social Isolation
Living through a pandemic is cognitively taxing

- Social amplification of risk
- Uncertainty increases stress
- Higher rates of anxiety and depression
- Mind-wandering impacts cognitive performance
Take breaks

Work hours do not have a linear relationship with productivity

Frequent breaks from computer work increases output

Well-timed breaks beneficial for productivity and wellbeing
Take breaks

Take normal office breaks
  Coffee break
  Transition time

Use break management
  Pomodoro or 52-17
  Calendar reminders

Turn off from work
  24-hour rest periods
Engage in “micropractices”

- Find small triggers for wellness
  - Mindfulness
  - Mood check-ins
- Use small/awkward breaks
- Set the tone for the day in the morning
  - Practice gratitude
  - Set relevant personal and professional goals
Connect with your lab/colleagues

- University connectedness predicts completion of Bachelors degree
- Perceived colleague support predicts faculty “intent to stay”
- Academic social integration predicts progress and completion of PhD + less stress
Connect with your lab/colleagues

- Implement regular check-ins
- Stay connected with the department
  - Service
  - Attending brown bags
- Join writing groups/work from home groups
  - Academic Twitter
  - Friends
  - Department members
Limit social media, pandemic news

• Limit reading pandemic-related news to a short amount of time

• Stay informed from reputable sources, but avoid getting wrapped up in constant news coverage
Manage working from home

• Set dedicated work hours

• Designate a spot in your home as office space
  • Create some physical display of the work that needs to be done

• Make time to be active

• Make weekends feel different from weekdays
Take care of your Physical Health

Exercise

Sleep
Exercise - Why it’s important

IMPROVES MOOD

ALTMANN ET AL., 2016; HOFFMAN & HOFFMAN 2008

REDUCES STRESS

Olpin 2016

BOOSTS THE IMMUNE SYSTEM

Best and Asplund, 2020
Exercise and COVID

- Physical Activity has dropped world-wide
- We are more sedentary than ever
- People feel unsafe
Exercise - Tips

Stay Safe  Find online options  Try something new
Exercise Resources

- UNL online workout videos
  - https://crec.unl.edu/fitness-programs

- Lincoln Bike Trails
  - https://www.gptn.org/the_trails/overview.html

- CDC and physical health
  - https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/
Sleep - Why it’s important

Poor sleep:

- Higher risk for heart disease and stroke (Cappuccio et al., 2011)
- Linked to depression (Hayley et al., 2014)
- Worsens concentration and productivity (Williamson & Feyer, 2000)
Sleep and COVID

- ‘Coronasomnia’
- Nightmares
- Anxiety
Sleep - Tips

- Schedule and Routine
- Bed Reservation
- Be careful with naps
Sleep Resources

• Sleep Education (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)
  • http://www.sleepeducation.org
• Insomnia Treatment Help
  • https://www.sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/treatment
Take care of your Mental Health
Mental Health and COVID

• 75,000 projected deaths due to alcohol or drug misuse, and suicide.
• Increased depression and anxiety
• Reduced access to care
Online Therapy
Mental Health Resources

• Mental Health support - Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 402-472-7450

• LGBTQ youth suicide prevention & crisis intervention: The Trevor Project

• Suicide-prevention help line: 1-800-273-8255 or 911
Help Others
Helping Others - Why it’s important

- Makes us happy
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces academic stress
How Can We Help Others?

- Consider changing email signature
- Reach out to others
- Donate
Community Resources

• Free COVID-19 testing to the campus community

• Campus news about COVID

• Campus health services - University Health Center: 402-472-5000

• Mental Health support - Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): 402-472-7450

• Individualized academic and personal support - Student Advocacy and Support: 402-472-7030

• Well-being support - Big Red Resilience & Well-Being: 402-472-8770

• Emergency: Call 911
References


• Wellbeing Trust Annual Report