Burning Brightly Without Burning Out

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify potential signs and symptoms of burnout.
2. Explain the three component dimensions of burnout.
3. Review some of the current research data regarding burnout.
4. Propose strategies for dentists to reduce the likelihood of experiencing burnout.
Dental Burnout

This article seeks to increase our understanding of burnout and its relationship to modern dentistry. Potential signs and symptoms of dental burnout are outlined. Three component dimensions of dental burnout are identified and used to define an eight-phase model. Strategies for the treatment of dental burnout are proposed.
What is Dental Burnout?

• Burnout has been defined as a syndrome of counter-productive beliefs, feelings and behaviors associated with stress in the workplace.

• For the individual dentist, the consequences of burnout may vary from mild annoyance to total debilitation.

• For the dental profession, the consequences of burnout may have profound and pervasive implications.
WHO Redefines Burnout in 2019

Burnout Definition (Found in ICD-11 under Code QD85)

• “Burnout is a syndrome…resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions:
  – feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
  – increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
  – reduced professional efficacy.

• Burnout refers specifically to…the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.”

*Defined as an “Occupational Phenomenon,” not a “Medical Condition.”*
“Burnout: an erosion of the soul caused by a deterioration of one’s values, dignity, spirit and will.”

– Christina Maslach
Physicians Are More Burned Out than Dentists
Scope of the Problem: Physicians

Pessimistic about the future

62%
Scope of the Problem: Physicians

At full capacity or overextended

80%
Scope of the Problem: Physicians

Sometimes, often or always experience feelings of burnout

78%
Plan to change career paths

46%
Scope of the Problem: Physicians

Have their compensation tied to quality/value

47%
Scope of the Problem: Physicians

Would not recommend a career in medicine to their children

49%
Scope of the Problem: Medical Students

Experience burnout: 50%
Experience thoughts of suicide: 10%
Six Sources of Burnout

1. Work overload
2. Lack of control
3. Insufficient rewards
4. Breakdown of community
5. Absence of fairness
6. Conflicted values
Signs and Symptoms of Burnout

- Social avoidance and withdrawal
- Feelings of cynicism and detachment
- Irritability, impatience and perfectionism
- Boredom, depression and rigidity
- Low self esteem, worthless feelings and a lack of accomplishment
- Overwhelming physical and emotional exhaustion
3 Dimensions of Burnout
DEPERSONALIZATION

Also referred to as Cynicism
Burnout Results: Physician Survey

High levels of depersonalization

29%
PERSONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

Also referred to as Inefficacy
Burnout Results: Physician Survey

Low sense of personal accomplishment

12%
EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION
Burnout Results: Physician Survey

High levels of emotional exhaustion

38%
Burnout Results: Physician Survey

Report feeling burned out

46%
Effects of Burnout

• Burnout is associated with alcohol and substance abuse.

• Burnout and alcohol abuse are associated with medical errors.

• Burnout is associated with a perception of a diminished quality of life.

• Burnout is associated with depression.

• Burnout is associated with suicide ideation.
Estimated Costs of Physician Burnout

• Reported in the June 2019 *Annals of Internal Medicine*

**Results:** On a national scale, the conservative base-case model estimates that approximately $4.6 billion in costs related to physician turnover and reduced clinical hours is attributable to burnout each year in the United States. This estimate ranged from $2.6 billion to $6.3 billion in multivariate probabilistic sensitivity analyses. At an organizational level, the annual economic cost associated with burnout related to turnover and reduced clinical hours is approximately $7600 per employed physician each year.

$4.6 Billion Per Year  
$7600 Per Physician
“Burnout is not a condition that gets better by being ignored… nor is it any kind of disgrace.”

– Herbert J. Freudenberger
2015 Dentist Well-Being Survey

ADA American Dental Association®
### Question 21: Burnout

During the last **two weeks**, how often have you:

*(Circle one number for each question using the following scale: 1 = always, 2 = sometimes, 3 = rarely, 4 = never.)*

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. been feeling low in energy?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>b. been blaming yourself for things?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>c. had a poor appetite?</td>
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<td>d. had difficulty falling or staying asleep?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>e. been feeling hopeless about the future?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>f. been feeling blue?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>g. had no interest in things?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>h. had feelings of worthlessness?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>i. thought about or wanted to commit suicide?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>j. had difficulty concentrating or making decisions?</td>
<td>1</td>
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Low energy

36%
Dentist Well-Being Survey

29%

Have issues with sleep
Dentist Well-Being Survey

Report self-blaming behavior

21%
Feel helpless about the future

13%
Dentist Well-Being Survey

10%

Have difficulty making decisions
Feelings of worthlessness

6%
Dentist Well-Being Survey

Thoughts of suicide

1.32%
Why Do Dentists Seem Less Burned Out than Physicians?

MDs Leads the Way…

- Employment Status
- Scope of Practice
- Electronic Health Record
- Health Insurance
- Government Intrusion
- Quality Measures
- Sanctity of the Doctor/Patient Relationship

“Nearly everything a physician does in 2019 is monitored, rated, assessed and reported.”
How can we stop the burnout cycle?

Anger? Yelling? Getting sick? Missing work?

There has to be a better way...
Do We Fix the Dentist or Fix the Practice?
Six Solutions for Burnout

1. Sustainable workload
2. Choice and control
3. Recognition and reward
4. Supportive work community
5. Trust, respect and fairness
6. Clear values and meaningful work
Start with Mindfullness

• Mindfulness-based stress relief

• Be present with what is happening here and now, and release thoughts and feelings that keep you from this present moment without judgment.

• Let go of worries, negative self talk and regrets.

• Stay focused on the moment, what you are feeling, what is going on around you and take a deep breath.

Eliminate Stressors

• Get control of the things you can
• Reward yourself
• Maintain positive relationships
• Discover your passion
• Find the humor in everyday life
Get Control and Accentuate the Positive

- Believe in your goodness.
- Acquire leadership and delegation skills.
- Create systems to handle repeated tasks.
- Master your personal and practice finances.
- Invest in your personal relationships with your time.
Reward Yourself and Pursue Your Passion

- Establish a “boundary ritual” between work and home.
- Find a hobby, club, society, charity or other creative pursuit.
- Make a bucket list and cross one item off each year.
- Sitting is the new smoking… so go take a walk.
Assess Yourself with Ohm’s Law

How charged are your batteries?
\[ V = I \times R \]

Ohm’s Law

To stay charged, decrease the pressure and/or decrease the load.
Laugh often...and when you don’t feel like laughing, smile!
Stress Reduction Kit for Dentists

**Directions**
1. Place kit on a FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle of kit.
3. Repeat step 2 as necessary, or until unconscious.
4. If unconscious, cease stress reduction activity.
Burnout is... Recognizable Reversible Treatable

"Identifying and treating burnout will decrease the risks of depression, suicide, substance abuse, medical errors, and personal and professional losses."

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Some Simple and Sincere Concluding Advice

Do Something Positive Each Day for Your:

- Health
- Wealth
- Family
- Friends
- Community

You Will Burn Brightly and You Won’t Burn Out