# PA Burnout, Stress, and Coping:
## Recommendations for Organizational Success

**Daytheon Sturges, PhD, MPAS, PA-C, DFAAPA, CHES®**

**Quanté Greenlee, PhD, MPH, MHS, PA-C, RRT, CHES®**

UW Medicine
UW SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE

UW Medicine
MEDEX NORTHWEST
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT PROGRAM

# Objectives

- Discuss the relationship between stress, coping, and burnout.

- Differentiate between individual- and organizational-level burnout interventions.

- Present best practices gleaned from the literature regarding burnout prevention health interventions.

# Defining Burnout

- Burnout is a syndrome exacerbated by chronic occupational stress, and should be described within the context of one's occupation (Schaufeli et al., 2001; WHO, 2020)

- "Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people-work' of some kind. A key aspect [is] increased feelings of emotional exhaustion. As their emotional resources are depleted, workers feel they are no longer able to give of themselves at a psychological level" (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, p. 99).

- Three subscales: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment

# Burnout

- **Contributors to Job Burnout**: workplace non-conducive to employee wellbeing; role conflict/ambiguity; mistreatment; lack of equity (Dandar et al., 2019; Grandey et al., 2012; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

- **Burnout in Clinical Providers:** Health providers (e.g. PAs) are consistently exposed to long-term stress, increasing the likelihood of experiencing burnout (Essary et al., 2018; Tetzlaff et al., 2020). A 2016 - 2017 national study measuring burnout and job satisfaction among clinically practicing PAs indicated that 40% reported burnout symptoms (Dyrbye et al., 2020).

# Example: Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey

## Review Copy: MBI for Educators Survey

| How often: | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Never | A few times a year or less | Once a month or less | A few times a month | Once a week | A few times a week | Every day |

**How often 0-6**  **Statements:**

1. _____ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. _____ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. _____ I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. _____ I can easily understand how my students feel about things.
5. _____ I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.
6. _____ Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
7. _____ I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.
8. _____ I feel burned out from my work.
9. _____ I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
10. _____ I've become more callous toward people since I took this job.
11. _____ I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
12. _____ I feel very energetic.
13. _____ I feel frustrated by my job.
14. _____ I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
15. _____ I don't really care what happens to some students.
16. _____ Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
17. _____ I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.
18. _____ I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.
19. _____ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
20. _____ I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
21. _____ In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.
22. _____ I feel students blame me for some of their problems.

(Administrative use only)

EE Total score: _____    DP Total score: _____    PA Total score: _____

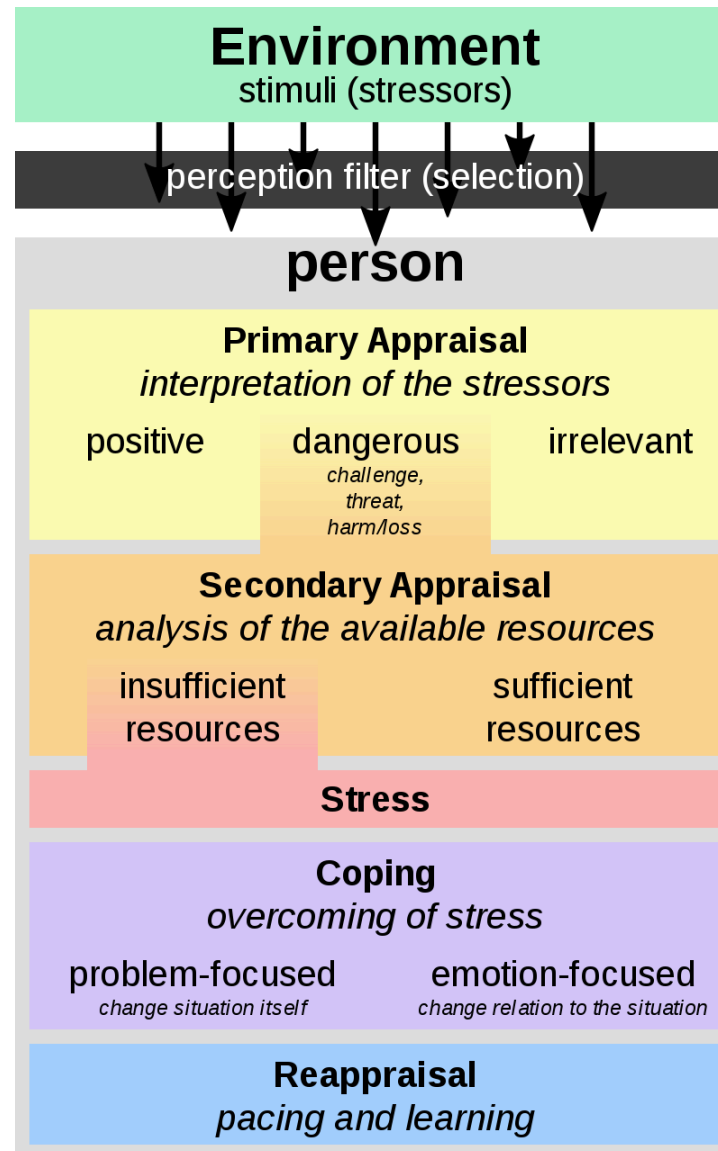EE Average score: _____    DP Average score: _____    PA Average score: _____

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(Maslach et al., 2018)

# Stress and Coping

- **Primary appraisal** – ". . . a person's judgement about the significance of an event as stressful, positive, controllable, challenging, benign, and/or irrelevant" (Wethington et al., 2015, p. 226).

- **Secondary appraisal** – ". . . an assessment of coping resources and options in a situation" (Wethington et al., 2015, p. 228).

# Stress and Coping

- <u>General:</u> The processes of stress and coping are informed by appraisal of the perceived threat. Prolonged stress and being ill-equipped to employ proper coping mechanisms are contributors to burnout (Awa et al., 2010; Lazarus, 1990).

- <u>Health Impact:</u>
    - The accumulation of stressors over one's life can lead to an increased allostatic load resulting in unfavorable health outcomes (Gomez-Gascon et al., 2013; Wethington et al., 2015).
    - The emotional exhaustion subscale informs stress-associated health outcomes more than the other two subscales (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).
    - The burden of emotional exhaustion often results in fatigue, illness, social problems, and psychosomatic disease (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Maslach, 1978).

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping

Lazarus & Folkman (1984)

**Environment**
stimuli (stressors)

perception filter (selection)

**person**

**Primary Appraisal**
*interpretation of the stressors*

positive | dangerous | irrelevant
challenge, threat, harm/loss

**Secondary Appraisal**
*analysis of the available resources*

insufficient resources | sufficient resources

**Stress**

**Coping**
*overcoming of stress*

problem-focused | emotion-focused
change situation itself | change relation to the situation

**Reappraisal**
*pacing and learning*

# Burnout Contributors

- A workplace culture that is non-conducive to employee wellbeing adversely affects occupational stress levels (Dandar et al., 2019).

- There is a moderate to high correlation relating role conflict and role ambiguity and burnout (Maslach et al., 2001).

- Burnout can also be influenced by mistreatment from superiors, customers, and patients resulting in emotional exhaustion (Grandey et al., 2012).

- The absence of equity and fairness exacerbates burnout symptomatology (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

# Burnout in Clinical Providers

- Health providers (MDs, nurses, PAs, dentists, pharmacists) are consistently exposed to long-term stress and associated risk factors, increasing the likelihood of experiencing burnout (Essary et al., 2018; Tetzlaff et al., 2020).

- Advanced practice providers may perceive decreased internal motivation regarding their jobs, exhibit frustration secondary to feelings of disempowerment, report reduced job satisfaction, and elevated burnout symptoms (Hoff et al., 2019).

- A 2016 - 2017 national study measuring burnout and job satisfaction among clinically practicing PAs indicates that 40% reported burnout symptoms (Dyrbye et al., 2020).

# Six Domains of the Work Environment

- Workload

- Control

- Reward

- Community

- Fairness

- Values (Leiter & Maslach, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008)

# Six Domains of the Work Environment

- Overworking is a leading source of burnout especially when the duties exceed the employee's limits.

- Elevated **workload** is directly related to the EE component of burnout.

- EE results from the depletion of personal capacity associated with completing job duties.

- The key contributor is when employees are unable to fully recover from their demanding **workloads**. By providing a tenable workload as a goal of the health intervention, the employee is able to develop new skills as well as use existing skills leading to better occupational effectiveness (Leiter & Maslach, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

- **Control** occurs secondary to role conflict and is also strongly associated with EE. Burnout is also increased when there is a lack of reward for peoples' work, be it financial, social, or organizational incentives.

# Six Domains of the Work Environment

- Lack of **reward** depreciates the value of the work and the employees. Community, or lack thereof, is important in the forms of social support, conflict management, togetherness, and team capacity.

- Lack of leadership support is related to emotional exhaustion and impacts workload.

- **Community** helps diminish feelings of occupational inequities, with social support being associated with larger job engagement.

- Available research supported diminished burnout in constructive, supportive work environments (Leiter & Maslach, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

- **Fairness** is the perception of fair and equitable practices on the job. Employees are most concerned with the fairness of procedures and processes than the actual outcome.

- Work environments with **fair** and equitable supervisors have less burnout susceptibility and are more welcoming of organizational shifts.

# Six Domains of the Work Environment

- **Values** represent psychological and emotional influence and expectations of the job.

- When there are disparities between employee and organizational **values**, employees usually find themselves with the dilemma of performing assigned tasks versus preferred tasks.

- **Value** conflicts are associated with all three subscales of burnout and are predictive of burnout and engagement levels.

- When both personal and organizational **values** prioritize shared knowledge, the result is increased professional efficacy (Leiter & Maslach, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

# Burnout Interventions

- Individual Level:

  - Health interventions targeting the individual-level usually employ a cognitive behavioral approach.

  - The aims of the intervention usually include elevating job competency, enhancing interpersonal skills, social support, individual coping skills, and relaxation methods (Awa et al., 2010; Maricutoiu et al., 2016).

  - These interventions reap short-term benefits for symptom reduction and occupational mental health outcomes (Awa et al., 2010).

# Burnout Interventions

- ## Organizational Level:

  - Burnout is not an individual malady. Instead, it is a workplace issue due to the existing social environment and interactions between employees and employers (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Maslach & Leiter, 2005).

  - Successful organizational-level interventions usually result in procedural changes, restructuring of job duties, shared decision-making, and expanding job control (Awa et al., 2010).

# Burnout Interventions

- ## Desired Outcomes:

  - Stress reduction is a desired outcome of burnout health interventions with approaches focusing on problem sources along with increasing self-efficacy and work performance (Breso et al., 2011; Innstrand et al., 2004) .

  - Burnout health interventions' desired goal should be to increase job engagement, resulting in an increased perception of employee professional efficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

  - Recent studies have focused more on achieving job engagement (Maslach et al., 2001), which results in an increased perception of employee professional efficacy (Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

# Burnout Interventions
## *Best Practices*

- Burnout health interventions should address the six domains of the work environment: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values (Maslach & Leiter, 2005; Maslach & Leiter, 2008).

- It is necessary for organizations to prioritize burnout interventions to change employee mindsets from broken to engaged and empowered in order to achieve a better future/occupational outlook (Shanafelt & Noseworthy, 2017).

- A combination of individual-level and organizational-level interventions is necessary to help positively change the six domains of the work environment, while also empowering and honing individual skills (Maslach et al., 2001).

- Combination and organizational interventions usually last approximately two to six months compared to individual-level interventions lasting two days to three months (Awa et al., 2010).

# Recommendations Informing an Organizational Burnout Health Education Intervention

- Burnout prevention interventions for PAs can include:

  - reflection/open sharing/creating a brave space regarding experiences as a PA;

  - defining burnout in terms of decreased satisfaction, emotional toll, and exhaustion;

  - discussing burnout contributors e.g., institutional issues, work-related stressors, social isolation, and occupational pressures;

  - discussing common work-related stressors to address provider and social issues;

# Recommendations Informing an Organizational Burnout Health Education Intervention

- acknowledging common responses to stress triggers and approaching discussion in terms of primary and secondary appraisal;

- offering coping strategies to include calming, cognitive/behavioral, and distancing techniques;

- and deploying possible organizational strategies aligning with the six domains of the work environment to address burnout among the priority population (e.g., workload distribution and/or offering targeted faculty resources).

# Open Discussion
# Question/Answer

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