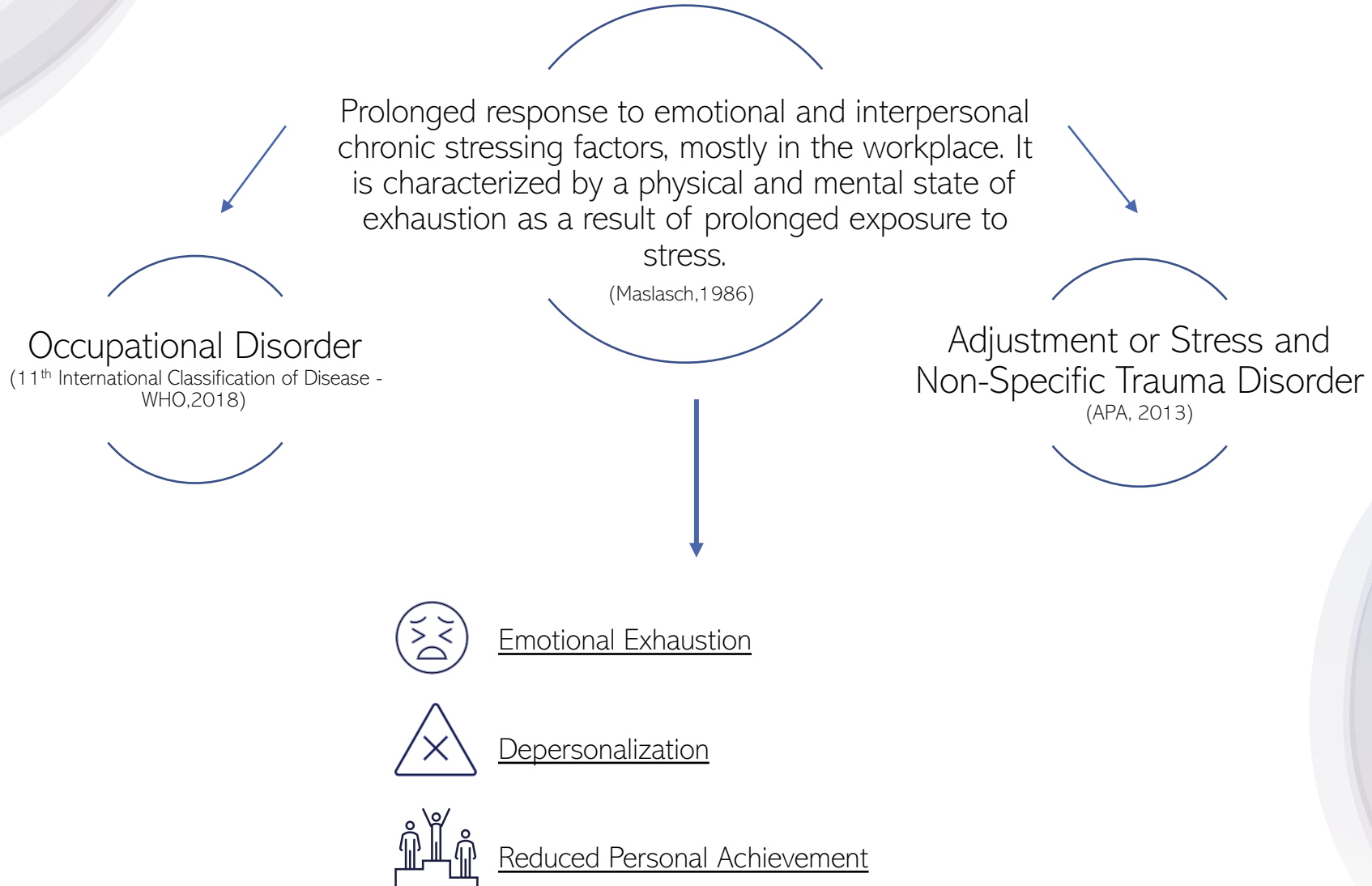


Burnout Prevention for Child Welfare Professionals

2021, September 17th
Vilnius, Lithuania



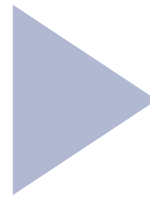
What is Burnout?



Burnout in Caring Professions

Given that burnout is an occupational phenomenon, associated with the workplace.

(WHO, 2018)



Higher risk associated with professions that imply intense social interaction and whose clients are people in vulnerable contexts.

(Skovholdt, 2008)

These professions are defined as “helping” or “caring” professions, which include health professions, psychologists, educators, social workers, and other professions associated with care (Skovholdt, 2008).

There are two types of Burnout associated with these professions: Meaning Burnout and Caring Burnout.





Burnout in Caring Professions

Meaning Burnout

Calling or vocation associated with physically, emotionally, or cognitively caring for other people, loses its meaning and purpose and becomes insufficient to satisfy the professional needs of the person.

Work is no longer considered useful or beneficial for the clients, leading to a crisis of meaning and self-questioning about the value of the work and if it's worth continuing it.

Caring Burnout

Associated with the professional relationships established with the clients. These relationships and connections can cause emotional depletion, due to the demands of the relationship, which can result in difficulties in relating to future clients.

These difficulties, in turn, contribute to feelings of professional frustration and failure and a lack of enthusiasm, motivation, and interest in the work.

Causes a professional and personal crisis, which consequently can result in a severe Burnout disorder.



Signals and Symptoms of Burnout

Emotional	Cognitive	Physical	Behavioral	Motivational
Depressive humor	Feelings of despair and impotency	Chronic fatigue	Withdrawal from pleasurable activities	Demoralization
Emotional exhaustion	Loss of hope and meaning towards daily life	Dizziness and headaches	Procrastination	Boredom
Unstable humor	Fear of "losing one's mind"	Overall restlessness	Impulsivity	Loss of enthusiasm
Diminished emotion control	Feelings of being trapped or stuck in the actual situation	Nervous ticks	Higher consumption of addictive substances (coffee, tobacco, alcohol e illicit substances)	Loss of idealism and motivation
Generalized fears	Feelings of failure or worthlessness	Nausea and gastrointestinal disorders Increased or decrease appetite	Avoid eating or compulsive eating	Disappointment
Anxiety	Low self-esteem	Higher susceptibility to infections Episodes of flu and cold-like symptoms	Higher probability of accidents	Resignation
Feelings of tension and higher irritability	Feelings of inappropriate guilt or excessive guilt	Tension and/or muscular pains	Compulsive complaining	Loss of interest and pleasure on the job
Feelings of impotency towards the suffering, feelings, and requests of clients	Recurrent thoughts about death, suicidal ideation, or attempted suicide	Changes in sexuality (Diminished or enhanced libido)	High-risk behaviors	Reduced motivation to contact with clients and colleagues
Negative, cynical, and indifferent approach towards other people (Dehumanization)	Difficulties in concentration, memory, and performing complex tasks	Sleep disorders (insomnias, hipersomnia e nightmares)	Hyperactivity	Inability to see positive results of the job



Signals and Symptoms of Burnout

Exercise

(Adapted from Nunes, 2017)

Think about your work experience, in general, and the stress factors associated for about five minutes.

Identify the symptoms you have felt according to the previous categories:

Emotional

Cognitive

Physical

Behavioral

Motivational



Risk Factors for Burnout



Environmental Factors	Work Conditions	Individual Characteristics	Demographic Characteristics	Biological Factors
Excess/overload of work	Human-Computer interaction	Coping strategies	Gender	Genetic factors
Lack of control	Involvement or caring for people	Personality Traits: Neuroticism; Extraversion; Agreeableness; Openness; Consciousness; Negative Affect; Personality Disorders;	Age	
Insufficient rewards	Work schedule	Hardiness Proactivity Optimism	Marital status	
Break in the workplace community	Working in shifts	External locus control	Education	
Absence of justice and equity in the workplace	Ambient noise	Type A Behavior; Type D Behavior/Personality;		
Conflicting values	Overcrowding	Perfectionism		
Laboral insecurity		Psychiatric disorders (e.g., depression, post-traumatic stress disorder)		

Differences of Burnout and Stress



(Chronic) Stress

Tends to be a response to specific critical incidents.

- Not necessarily associated with work.
- Feelings of overwhelm and exhaustion towards job demands.
- Excessive engagement with work.
- Excessive emotional reactions to demands.

Burnout

Tends to be a response to cumulative stress as a reaction to an occupational and continuous stressor.

- Mostly associated with work.
- Feelings of overwhelm, exhaustion and stress towards job demands.
- Loss of sense of significance and connection to the work.
- Loss of motivation and negative implication for personal identity.
- Feelings of apathy, distancing and despair.

Burnout can be considered a behavioral result of stress, given that it is associated with a prolonged response to stress factors.

What Happens When We Burnout?

The
Honeymoon



The person is **highly motivated and enthusiastic** and considers the job as the ideal and meaningful.

There's **satisfaction** with the work, the colleagues and with the organization.





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The
Awakening



The person recognizes that the **expectations are unrealistic or not being accomplished**, and nothing satisfies the work needs, whether it is rewards or recognition for the performance.

There is an **effort to work harder**, but this effort does not seem to change the worker's feelings, which results in **fatigue and frustration**, and considering that accepting the job was a mistake.





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The person starts to manifest **chronic fatigue, irritability and detachment, and depersonalization** towards others and themselves.

Brownout



Engagement in impulsive activities may occur, such as partying, compulsive shopping, excessive consumption of alcohol and drugs, to cope with feelings of **frustration, exhaustion, and emotional emptiness**.

The **work performance and productivity** reduce drastically.



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Full-Scale
Burnout



There is a **generalized feeling of emotional exhaustion and failure**, which **compromises self-esteem, motivation, and confidence**, both in personal and professional domains.

Many aspects of **everyday life** are affected and may be accompanied by **somatic complaints**.



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The Phoenix
Phenomenon



After rest and intervention, **the person may recover**. It takes an effort to **adequate expectations, aspirations, and goals** to make them more realistic.

This is a **coping stage**, in which the person **uses personal resilience** (e.g., seeking psychological and social support, engaging in healthy and stimulating activities, and therapy).

How to restore balance?

Preventing, Coping and Recovering from Burnout

Coping with burnout requires a complex and integrated response from the worker and the organization.

Goals/Target-Group	Intervention		
	Individual	Individual-Organization Relationship	Organizational
Raise awareness and identify burnout	Self-monitoring Self-evaluation	Worker screening	Analysis of stress levels Psychosocial analysis
Primary prevention (avoidance or removal of burnout risk factors)	Stress management Health promotion (psychological, emotional, and physical)	Time management programs Social skills training Realistic work expectations Healthy family-work balance	Improve work content Task and schedule organization Career management Manager/supervisor training about burnout Wellness programs implementation
Secondary prevention (early recognition and intervention)	Cognitive-behavioral techniques Relaxation exercises	Peer group Provide support to workers (coaching and counseling) Career planning	Social activities and teambuilding Management of interpersonal conflicts Organizational development
Treatment/Intervention	Psychotherapy	Occupational health counseling Short-term therapy Referral for treatment	Occupational health and safety programs Worker assistance programs
Rehabilitation	Rehabilitation program	Individualized assistance	Work reassignment and change of working tasks

How to Prevent Burnout and Stress: A Guide



1 Burnout awareness-raising

The recognition and awareness of burnout are fundamental for the individual's well-being.

- Knowledge and information about the risk factors and causes of burnout.
- Knowledge and information of potential strategies to avoid or overcome its harmful effects.



Renew, reorganize and enhance internal resources.

Maximize their resilience and ability to cope with the negative symptoms.



2 Self-monitoring and Self-evaluation



How to Prevent Burnout and Stress: A Guide

Self-monitoring and Self-evaluation: Burnout Evaluation Scales

Maslach Burnout Inventory
(Abbreviated) – MBI-9
(Maslach et al., 1996)

(<https://www.teach.vtc.vt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/MBI-Abbreviated.pdf>)

Balance between Risks and
Resources
(Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018)

(<https://en.burnoutparental.com/test-br-en>)

Parental Burnout Assessment – PBA
(Roskam, Brianda, & Mikolajczak, 2018)

(<https://www.burnoutparental.com/instruments-and-materials>)

Work Engagement Scale
(Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004)

https://www.wilmarschaufeli.nl/publications/Schaufeli/Test%20Manuals/Test_manual_UWES_English.pdf



Exercise

Burnout Evaluation Scales: Maslach Burnout Inventory– MBI-9
(Maslach et al., 1996)

How often:	Never	A few times a year	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. I deal very effectively with the problems of my patients.							
2. I feel I treat some patients as if they were impersonal objects.							
3. I feel emotionally drained from my work.							
4. I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.							
5. I've become more callous towards people since I took this job.							
6. I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.							
7. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.							
8. I don't really care what happens to some patients.							
9. I feel exhilarated after working closely with my patients.							



Exercise

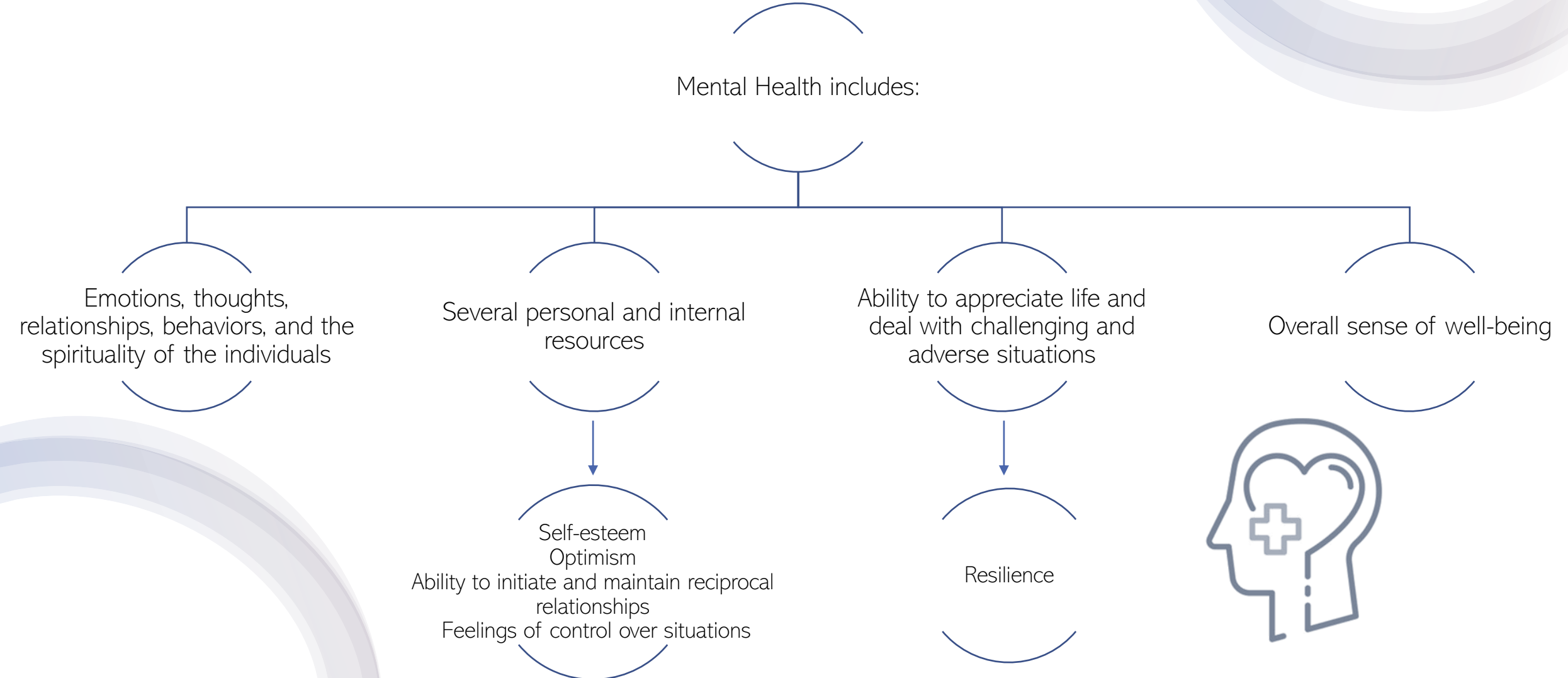
Burnout Evaluation Scales: Maslach Burnout Inventory– MBI-9
(Maslach et al., 1996).

Add items 1, 6, 9	Add items 2, 5, 8	Add items 3,4,7
Total: _____	Total: _____	Total: _____
<p>Personal Accomplishment</p> <p>≥ 15: Low Burnout</p> <p>13-14: Moderate Burnout</p> <p>≤ 12: High Burnout</p>	<p>Depersonalization</p> <p>≤ 3: Low Burnout</p> <p>4-6: Moderate Burnout</p> <p>≥ 7: High Burnout</p>	<p>Emotional Exhaustion</p> <p>≤ 6: Low Burnout</p> <p>7-10: Moderate Burnout</p> <p>≥ 11: High Burnout</p>



How to Promote Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being

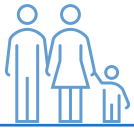
Mental Health includes:



General Recommendations for Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being

The promotion of psychological well-being and mental health is based on several strategies, activities, and practices for building, developing, and promoting internal resources and personal resilience.

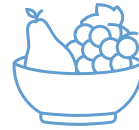
(Lahtinen et al., 2005)



Keep a good balance between personal and professional life.



Satisfy basic needs, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping regularly.



Keep healthy eating habits and sleeping routines.



Make frequent work breaks to "recharge" your energy.



Rest appropriately and perform relaxing, fun, and comforting activities.

Exercise regularly to stimulate good mood and energy levels.



Maintain and invest in relationships with family and friends, whether in person or virtually.



Share feelings and worries with close people, to reduce stress, and feelings of overload and anxiety.



Avoid negative coping strategies, such as using caffeine, sugar, alcohol, or illicit drugs in excess.



Ask for help when feelings of anxiety and overload are excessive, frequent, or debilitating.





Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being:

Promoting Resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability to recover and adapt positively from danger, risk, or previous adverse situations.

(APA, 2012; Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Kulig & Hansen, 1996; Masten, 2014; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016)

Build significant relationships

Prioritizing relationships with understanding and caring people to overcome loneliness.

Getting involved in a support or community group can, also, provide a sense of support and purpose in life.

Promote Well-being

Maintaining self-care practices and a healthy lifestyle can help stimulate general well-being.

Practicing Mindfulness, whether through diaries, yoga or meditation, can help restore the feelings of hope and optimism.

Avoid the use of negative coping strategies (e.g., alcohol consumption).

Find a Vocation or Purpose

Helping other people, by volunteering or providing support, can promote feelings of purpose and self-worth.

Being proactive and questioning how to influence the actual situation to promote a sense of control and motivation.

Create personal attainable goals and work daily to achieve them.

Keep positive and healthy thoughts

Keeping a hopeful, positive, and optimistic vision of the situation.

Put things into perspective.
The situation might not be alterable, but how you interpret it and respond to it is.

Relativize the situation, by remembering that it doesn't determine the future.

Accept the aspects that cannot be changed and focus on those that can.

Seek Professional Help, when needed

Professional support and therapy can contribute to building resilience.

A professional can provide support, by outlining strategies to overcome the problem and by providing resources to deal with the actual and future challenging situations.





Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being:

Stress Management Capacitation

(APA, 2014, 2019)

Identifying and monitoring stressful factors

→ Record thoughts, information, and feelings, in a journal, about the situations, the physical environment and people involved, to help you find the stressors and reactions.

Try to eliminate stressful factors

Develop healthy responses

Establish boundaries between personal
and professional life

Take time to "recharge batteries"

Learn how to relax

Talking with a supervisor (when stress is
related to work)

Diversify support through the support
network





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Diversify support through the support network





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- Reserve some time dedicated to activities non-related to work, that help you disconnect, physically and mentally and take regular vacations.
- Reserve some minutes of the day for simple activities such as breathing exercises, taking a walk, or appreciating a meal.
- The goal is to delineate a plan to manage stressful situations, and to potentiate work performance, through developing personal competencies or accessing to wellness services.
- Accepting help from close friends and significant ones or attending stress management / well-being promotion programs can minimize the effects of stress.
- ★ Lastly, seeking professional help can be fundamental for cases of severe chronic stress.



Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being:

Specific strategies and exercises to deal with challenging and stressful situations.

(APA, 2014; World Health Organization, 2020b)

1 Focusing on the actual situation

Engaging in and paying full attention to what you are doing (e.g., drinking a glass of water/coffee).

2 Grounding

Reconnect with your own body through:
Breathing exercises (e.g., breathing in and out deeply, several times sequentially)
Sensory and body stimulation exercises (e.g., stretching; tapping your feet on the floor and pressing them lightly; pressing one hand against the other).

3 Refocusing on the surroundings
(through the five senses)

Notice the place around you and the action you are performing.
Notice:
Five things you see; three or four things you can hear, what you can smell and taste, and touch an object that is nearby.

4 Recognizing your negative
thoughts and feelings

Recognize what you are thinking and feeling.
Name the thoughts or emotions silently (e.g., I am feeling sad, distressed, frustrated...)
Refocus on the surrounding environment through the senses.





Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being:

Specific strategies and exercises to deal with challenging and stressful situations.

(APA, 2014; World Health Organization, 2020b)

5

"Make room" for negative emotions and feelings

Accept the negative thoughts and emotions through:
Visualization exercises - visualize them as objects (e.g., a box) that need to be "put away" so that it don't take up too much "space" in your mind.

6

Act according to personal values

Establish an action plan according to the values that you are committed to follow.
Start each day by remembering/selecting three or four values by which you want to live by.

7

Be kind to others and to yourself

Recognize negative thoughts and emotions directed at others and to yourself.
Approach it with curiosity and question yourself about it and what it means.
Reformulate these feelings into positive feelings through the exercises described before.





Mental Health and Psychological Well-Being:

Exercise: Jacobson's Progressive Muscle Relaxation

(Student Wellness Centre, 2021)

Audio: <https://wellness.mcmaster.ca/topics/mindfulness-and-relaxation/>





Cognitive-Behavioral Strategies

(JOBIS, 2016; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016)



Use active problem-directed coping strategies.



Practice positive self-evaluation.



Use stress management and relaxation strategies/practices.



Use and promote positive thinking.



Attend psychotherapeutic intervention programs (relaxation techniques, stress management, cognitive therapy, and job reintegration programs).



Exercise: Critical Reflection

(Adapted from Nunes, 2017)

Think about stressful situations that occurred in your working life (in general).

1. How did you feel?
2. How did you overcome that situation?
3. Were you assertive? (Or could you have been more assertive?)
4. Was it possible to say “no”?
5. Did you need more time to address the situation?
6. Did you need help or ask for it?
7. Did other co-workers offer you help?
8. How did they feel?
9. How did you deal with your feelings?
10. What did you do to feel better?
11. What did you do that, somehow, make you feel worst? (If applicable)



In which professional situations you would like to refuse or say “no” to a task and in which situations you would like to have more time to reflect and make decisions?

What can you do to reduce the stress associated with a task or situation you know cannot be avoided or changed?



Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

Self-Care

“Self-care is not an indulgence. It is an essential component of the prevention of distress, burnout, and impairment. It should not be considered as something ‘extra’ or ‘nice to do if you have the time’ but as an essential part of our professional identities.”

(Barnett, Johnston, & Hillard, 2006)

Physical, Psychological, and
Emotional Well-Being.

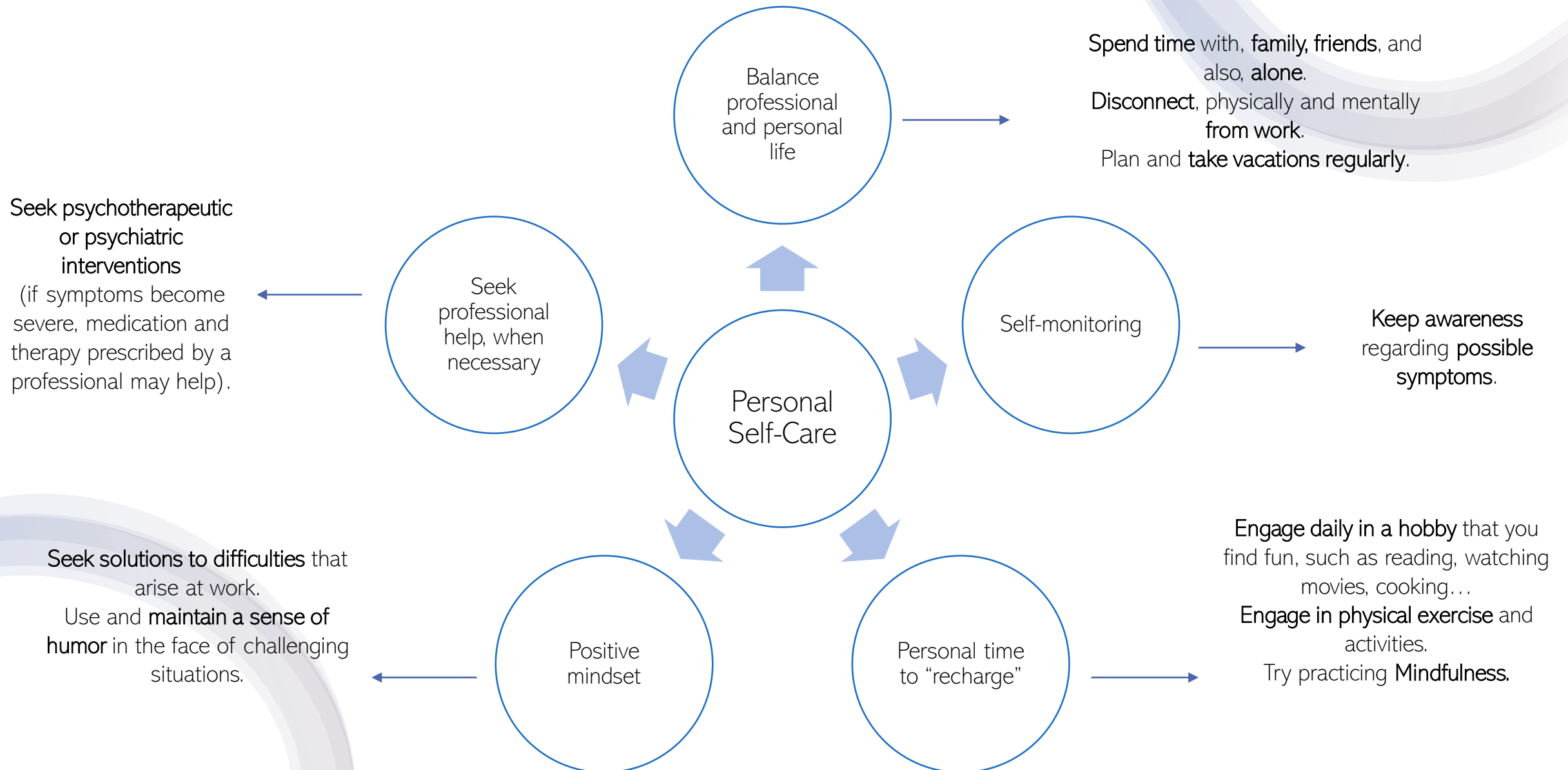
Job Performance.

Two sets of strategies emerge to promote well-being
in personal and professional domains.



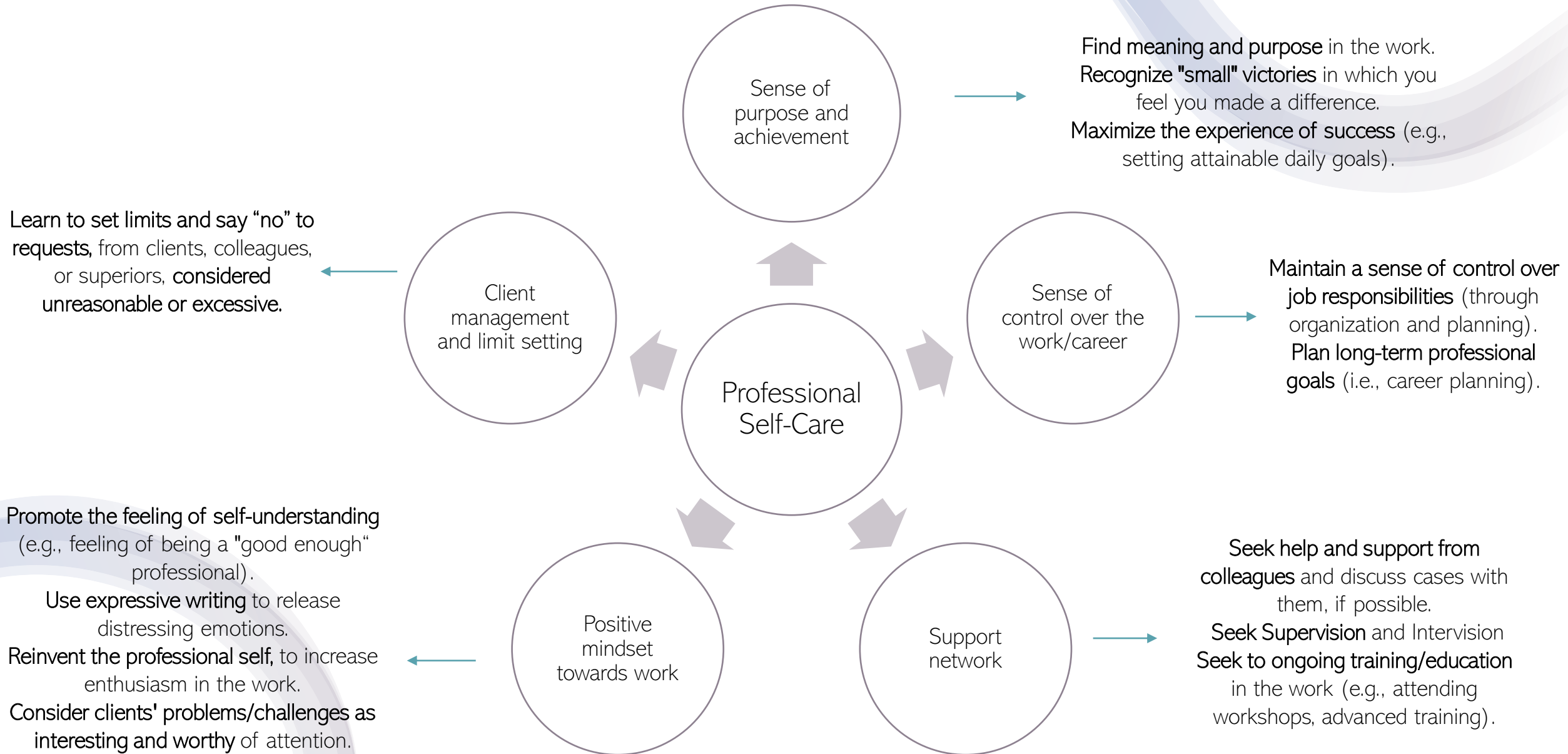
Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

(for a review, see Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016)



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(for a review, see Skovholt & Trotter-Mathison, 2016)





Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

(Adapted from Nunes, 2017).

Assertive Communication Techniques facilitate communication by clarifying thoughts and feelings.

<p>"I feel..." (Express emotions)</p>	<p>The person expresses his/her/their feelings in a certain situation.</p>	<p>Example: Assertive style: "I feel concerned about the number of cases I manage." Not assertive: "I have too many cases!"</p>
<p>"I think..." (Give an opinion)</p>	<p>The person interprets a certain situation but leaves some space for other interpretations and other opinions.</p>	<p>Example: Assertive style: "I think / I suppose that family A is ready to continue the process." Not assertive: "Family A is ready to continue the process."</p>
<p>"I see..." (Describe)</p>	<p>The person refers to a situation clearly and objectively, without judging or using personal opinions. It is based on the five senses.</p>	<p>Example: Assertive style: "This room has too many things out of the place." Not assertive: "This room is very messy."</p>
<p>"I want..." (Transmit decisions)</p>	<p>Transmit clearly what is the objective of a conversation.</p>	<p>Example: Assertive style: "I want to talk to you about the noise in our working room." Not assertive: "I don't want you to make noise."</p>
<p>"I intend..." (Express goals/objectives)</p>	<p>Express objectively the purpose of one's actions or thoughts, clarifying the aspects related to the dialogue.</p>	<p>Example: Assertive style: "I intend to meet with the team to talk about a case." Not assertive: "This case should be discussed."</p>



Exercise

(Adapted from Nunes, 2017)

How would you address these situations?

What assertive affirmations could be used?

1

Sarah is the new co-worker of the team. She started recently working with families and was given 50 cases to manage. Sarah recognizes that she is not ready yet for too many cases.

2

Ron is a very experienced worker. He loves his job and the families he accompanies. However, Ron is going through a personal situation that has some impact on how he is feeling towards a specific family.

3

Jenny and Mary are working together for 2 years. In the last months, since they are working closely, Jenny is bothered with Mary's behaviour, such as inadequate jokes, interruption of conversations with other co-workers, and waiting for Jenny to make decisions regarding the cases they have in common.



Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

External Strategies – The Support of Organizations

Educational, Training and Wellness Programs	Support Policies/Services for the Worker	Support Practices to create a Healthy Work Environment	In the case of professionals already exhibiting Burnout symptoms
Educational programs on burnout awareness	Worker assistance and occupational health services, within the organization itself	Redistribute the high workload	Grant leave of absence/sick leave
Educational programs on time, stress and conflict management	Support groups with co-workers	Establish work breaks	Refer the worker for professional psychological counseling
Educational programs on interpersonal communication and career management	Regular internal supervision, by colleagues and superiors	Allow extended vacation (when justified)	Consider and deliberate together with the worker, the possibility of a change of position at work or job outplacement, which implies a less stressful and more peaceful work pace and less workload
Training programs to manage negative coping strategies	Promote family-work balance	Describe and structure the tasks and responsibilities of the professionals	
Training programs in strategies focused on emotion management	Flexible policies to support personal life of professionals	Frequent meetings to discuss difficulties at work, with superiors/managers	
Wellness programs (physical, psychological, and emotional)	Flexible working hours and allowing family care days off	Promote social activities for managers, professionals, and colleagues	





Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

External Strategies – The Support of Organizations

Reflection Group Exercise

(Adapted from Nunes, 2017)

Think about your type of organization and profession and reflect about:

The positive and negative aspects of
my type of job.

(As a psychologist, a social worker, a
social educator, a professor...)

The positive and negative aspects of
my type of organization.

(In general, schools, social/community
centers, residential childcare facilities...
think about these organizations as a
group, not yours specifically)





Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

External Strategies – The Support of Organizations

Reflection Group Exercise

(Adapted from Nunes, 2017)

Think about your type of organization and profession and reflect about:

You don't need to answer the next questions if you don't want to or if it's uncomfortable.

Reflect on them individually.

- What are the positive aspects of the organization where I work?
- What should be modified in my organization and how?
- What the organization might do for me, so I can feel less stressed?
- How does my organization influence (positively and negatively) my personal life?
- How does my organization influence (positively and negatively) my professional life?
- How does my job/profession influence (positively and negatively) my personal life?

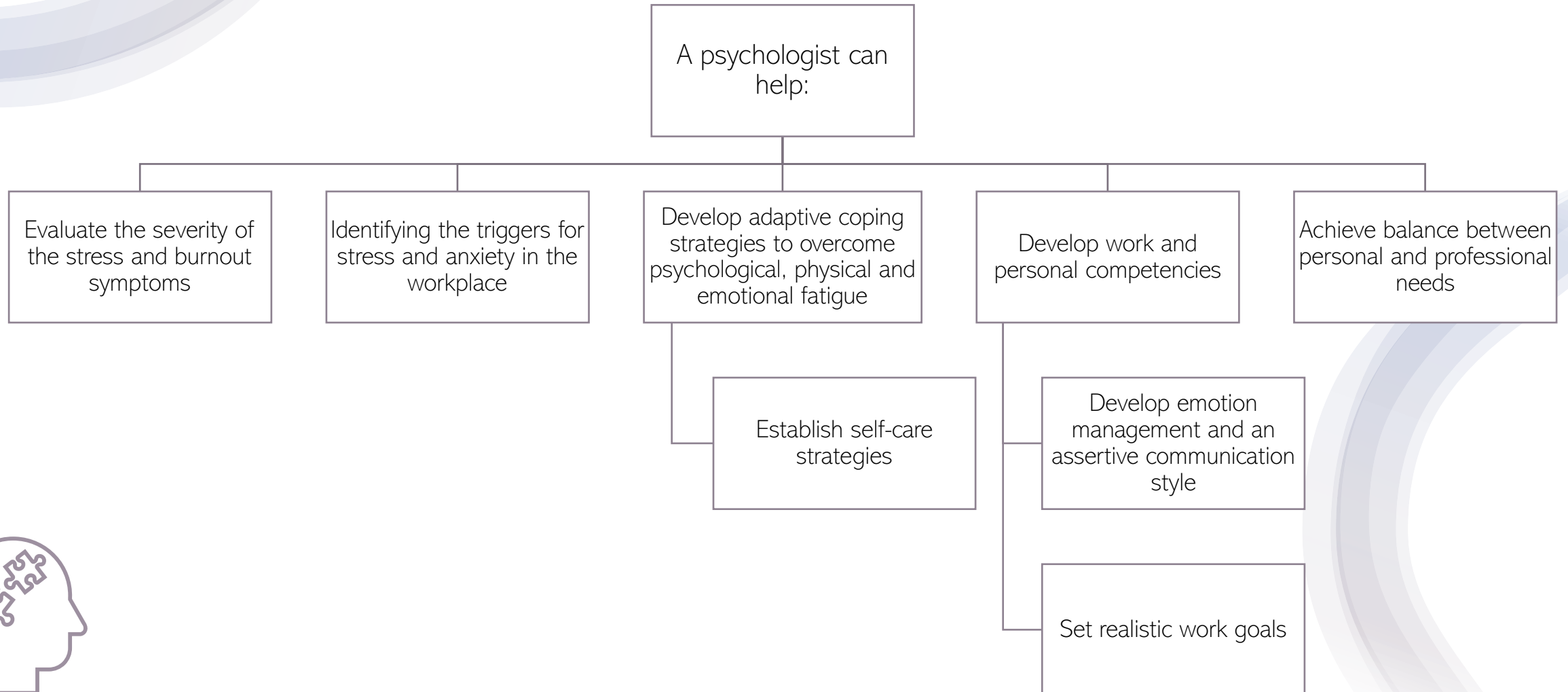




Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

How can a Psychologist Help?

Professional help is important in learning how to effectively manage the signs and symptoms of Burnout Disorder.





Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

How can a Psychologist Help?

There are several programs to help people cope with stress, burnout, and its consequences, that a psychologist might recommend.

These programs address mainly:

- Differences between stress and burnout.
- Variables that might contribute to professional wellbeing and discomfort.
- Factors that lead to burnout.
- Burnout symptoms (physical, psychological, and behavioral) and its consequences.
- Individual differences in vulnerability to stress and burnout.
- Irrational beliefs and thoughts about the self and the job.
- How burnout is affecting personal life.
- Problem-solving and coping strategies.
- Behavioral changes.
- Exercises for physical symptoms management (e.g., breathing, and relaxing exercises).

- Emotion identification, expression and comprehension regarding the self and others.
- Emotion self-regulation.
- Assertive communication skills, non-verbal communication, and communication distortions.
- Learn how to say “no” and how to ask for time.
- Management of expectations and professional goals.
- Appreciate professional situations and events.
- Time management and teamwork skills.
- Management of potential conflict situations.
- Healthy lifestyle habits.
- Selfcare habits.



Coping, Recovering and Intervention in Burnout

How can a Psychologist Help?

Some of the activities these programs include are:

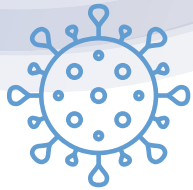
- Role-plays.
- Case studies.
- Self-assessment measures (instruments/questionnaires, such as Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, Maslach Burnout Inventory, etc.).
- Expression of one's own emotional state through writing or body expression.
- Breathing, relaxing, or body awareness exercises.
- Discussion and reflection of personal experiences.
- Brainstorming or thinking about adequate ways to solve past or hypothetical problems.





Burnout and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The devastating effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic have been felt for more than a year, worldwide, posing risks to the physical and mental health of the global population.



The measures implemented by governments globally, to decrease the number of people infected with the virus have **introduced significant changes in people's daily routines**

Permanent or temporary unemployment.

Remote work context.

Social isolation due to confinement measures.

Lack of contact with loved ones.

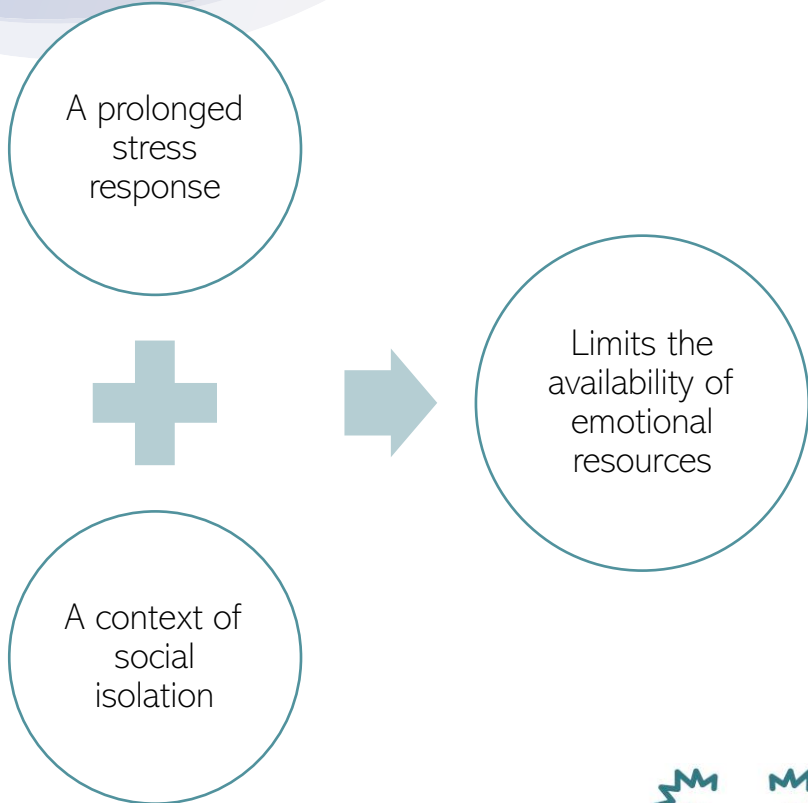
Challenges in balancing family (e.g., childcare, children's online classes) and professional demands (e.g., online meetings and deadlines).

Fear of contracting the virus and the fear of those closest to them contracting the virus.

These measures pose risks to mental health and psychological well-being, contributing to people feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, and anxious about the future.

Burnout and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Symptoms

It is expected that the prevalence of Burnout will continue, although it manifests in a slightly different way.
Burnout in the context of a pandemic is overwhelming, since it associates...



Sadness, apathy, dissociation, indifference, and hopelessness.

Lack of energy, tiredness, constant fatigue, exhaustion, and overwhelm.

Anxiety about the future and contracting the virus, or that someone close might contract the virus.

Lack of motivation, self-confidence, difficulty in meeting the family and professional, and overall sense of failure.

Greater frustration, irritation, tendency to blame others, and more conflicts in relationships.

Neglecting or diminishing self-care practices (whether physical or psychological).

Overwhelming feelings due to too much information and the negative nature of it (regarding COVID-19 Pandemic).

Increased isolation or disconnection towards others, even in the context of social isolation/distancing.

Greater tendency to resort to negative coping strategies (e.g., drinking alcohol and coffee/overeating...).

Physical symptoms (e.g, headaches, muscle pain, loss/increased appetite, and sleep difficulties (insomnia or hypersomnia).

Burnout and the COVID-19 Pandemic: Suggestions to prevent and deal with Burnout



Have or create a solid social support network.

Even though social isolation/distancing is mandatory, there are other (virtual) ways to keep in touch with loved ones.



Talk regularly with family, friends, and colleagues to cope with feelings of loneliness and sadness.

Working remotely and keeping social distance does not imply feelings of loneliness.



Maintain a routine (as much as possible).

Or establish new routines (e.g., wake up and go to bed at similar times each day; maintain self-care and personal hygiene routines).



Exercise regularly to boost a good mood and energy.

Cardio exercises or going for a walk, outdoors, surrounded by nature can help relieve feelings of overwhelm and improve overall mood.



Eat a healthy diet.

Based on a balanced diet, consuming more fruits and vegetables, can help maintain physical and mental health.



Avoid or reduce the consumption of caffeine and alcohol, to manage anxiety, boredom, or social isolation.

The consumption of these in excess has negative effects on the overall mood.



Find something interesting at work that helps generate positive feelings of hope, meaning, and value.

To maintain engagement and prevent feelings of failure, emptiness and disinterest.



Establish a schedule for working/resting and disconnecting from the daily demands.

Take time to do comforting and pleasurable activities.



Keep yourself informed.

Knowing the recommendations and advice of national and local authorities and trying to follow reliable information sources, can help reduce anxiety.



Minimize exposure time to disturbing or anxiety-provoking news.

Establish 2-3 times a day to seek up-to-date information.



Monitor any symptoms and signs of Burnout that may arise.

If they seem to be progressing negatively, professional help should be sought to overcome them.

Case Study of Ellie

Ellie is a 39-year-old social worker, who is married and has two children.

She started working with families and children as a volunteer in her neighborhood community center. Since she was 22 years old, Ellie works at City Social Centre.

This institution's work is based on helping families in risk situations with their parental difficulties, empowering their capacities, establishing an adequate interaction with their children, promoting their social integration, etc. Ellie loved her job since day one and was always very enthusiastic and full of ideas to implement at the City Social Centre.

Ellie became a team coordinator, one year ago, during the Coronavirus Pandemic, and she is responsible for a multidisciplinary team of six people. The transition to this position went smoothly, but she accumulated other tasks that distanced her from the work with families. Ellie started working extra hours on other projects, which demanded more attention and time. She also had trouble with her children's school tasks because she had to help them while working and having meetings at the same time. In addition, part of the cases she managed was distributed to other team members, who complained about the extra tasks. This situation caused some arguments with her colleagues and decreased her tolerance to teamwork.

She feels devalued because she thinks no one is acknowledging her efforts, since she is responsible for other important tasks, such as getting sponsorships to fund the Centre and families' economic needs, doing reports to the court about some cases, designing and implementing projects for families, etc. On the other hand, Ellie thinks that she might not be good enough, because if there are complaints it means that she is doing something wrong. She thinks that she is going to fail, and that people are expecting it.

Ellie doesn't sleep much at night, thinking about ways to face these difficulties, and started to eat a lot. Her husband says that she is smoking in every break she has and is always anxious. Her children claim that she doesn't pay much attention to conversations and doesn't play with them as she used to. Ellie thinks about the "irony" of going through some of the difficulties that the families she helped had and believes that maybe this is not the ideal job for her.

Ellie feels trapped between her responsibilities as a mother, a wife, a social worker, and a team manager, and doesn't know what to do to overcome this situation, which is happening nearly for six months.

Case Study of Ellie

What to consider for Case analysis:

1. What is Ellie's type of burnout?
2. In which stage is Ellie's burnout?
3. What are Ellie's burnout signals and symptoms?
4. What are the possible causes and risk factors associated with Ellie's burnout?
5. What strategies Ellie should use to cope adequately with the situation?
6. Does Ellie have irrational thoughts about the situation? If yes, which?





Case Study of Ellie

What to consider for Case analysis:

1. What is Ellie's type of burnout?

- Meaning Burnout.

2. In which stage is Ellie's burnout?

- Transiting from "The Awakening" to "Brownout".

3. What are Ellie's burnout signals and symptoms? (Examples)

- Emotional: Anxiety; feelings of tension and higher irritability (discussions with colleagues and less tolerance to teamwork).
- Cognitive: Feelings of being trapped or stuck in the actual situation; feelings of failure or worthlessness; difficulties in concentration.
- Physical: Sleep disorders (insomnia); increased appetite.
- Behavioral: Higher consumption of addictive substances (tobacco); compulsive eating.
- Motivational: Reduced motivation to contact with colleagues (less tolerance to teamwork); Loss of pleasure and enthusiasm in the job ("*maybe this is not the ideal job for her*").

4. What are the possible causes and risk factors associated with Ellie's burnout? (Examples)

- Environmental Factors: Excess/Overload of Work; insufficient recognition from Ellie's co-workers; conflict with co-workers.
- Work Conditions: Work Schedule (pandemics, work from home).
- Individual Characteristics: Negative coping strategies (smoking and eating poorly).
- Demographic Characteristics: Education (higher education, higher propensity for burnout); Age (studies show that burnout occurs more frequently from 30-40 years and beyond).

Case Study of Ellie

What to consider for Case analysis:

5. Does Ellie have irrational thoughts about the situation? If yes, which?

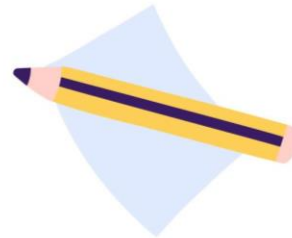
- *"Ellie thinks that she might not be good enough because if there are complaints it means that she is doing something wrong. She thinks that she is going to fail, and that people are expecting it."*
- *"Ellie thinks about the "irony" of going through some of the difficulties that the families she helped had and believes that maybe this is not the ideal job for her."*

6. What strategies Ellie should use to cope adequately with the situation? (Examples)

- Healthy eating.
- Avoid smoking.
- Rest appropriately.
- Do more activities with her family.
- Talk with her superiors and co-workers; clarify what is expected from each one, including herself.
- Talk about her difficulties and ask for help when she needs it.
- Establish goals – personal and professional – while living in a pandemic situation and working from home, tasks may accumulate, and Ellie may need to make diary/weekly goals to balance her work and family life.
- Change irrational thoughts – Although she is going through difficulties balancing her personal and professional life, doesn't mean she can't help other families or do her job properly. Even if there are complaints it doesn't mean that she is not doing her tasks right.

To summarize:
When you have a bad day...

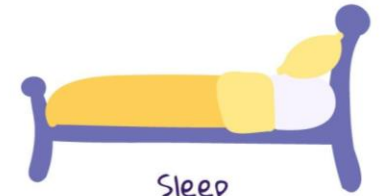
Breathe. It's just a bad day, not a bad life...



Find a hobby



exercise



Sleep

And remember to do some ...



Hot coffee



connect with
friends

SELF-CARE

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