



Southwest Virginia Legal Aid Society  
Southwest Regional Elder Abuse Conference

*Keys to Preventing Burnout and Reducing Stress with  
Humor, Humility and Heart*

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# *Learning Objectives*

- To comprehend the differences between “burned out” and “stressed out”
- To understand the value of **humor** in reducing stress
- To recognize the significance of self-care in demonstrating **humility**
- To become more effective at *heart over head* decision-making
- To consider key action steps to preserve and improve long-term professional and personal health and effectiveness

“Burnout is the result of too much energy output and not enough **energy self-invested**. In other words, it's burning [more] fuel than you've put in your tank.”

— Melissa Steginus, Self Care at Work: How to Reduce Stress, Boost Productivity, and Do More of What Matters

The term *burnout* was coined in the 1970's by the American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger. He used it to describe the consequences of **severe stress** and high ideals in helping professions who would often end up being burned out – exhausted, listless, and unable to cope.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279286/>

# *Burnout*

**Job Burnout** - A state of physical, emotional or mental exhaustion caused by overwork or chronic stress combined with doubts about your competence and the value of your work.

— Mayo Clinic

# *Chronic Stress?*

- Chronic stress occurs when stress is constant, and your body is in high gear off and on for days or weeks at a time.
- Chronic stress may lead to high blood pressure, which can increase risk for heart attack and stroke.

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/stress-and-heart-health>

- With chronic stress, you may feel like your hair is on fire.







# *Stressed Out or Burned Out?*



# *Stressed Out vs. Burned Out*

## *Stressed Out*

- Characterized by *over-engagement*
- Emotions are *overreactive*
- Produces *urgency* and *hyperactivity*
- Loss of *energy*
- Leads to *anxiety disorders*
- Primary damage is *physical*

## *Burned Out*

- Characterized by *disengagement*
- Produces *helplessness* and *hopelessness*
- Loss of *motivation, ideas, and hope*
- Leads to *detachment* and *depression*
- Primary damage is *emotional*

<b>BASIS FOR COMPARISON</b>	<b>STRESS</b>	<b>BURNOUT</b>
<b>Meaning</b>	Stress implies an adaptive response to any kind of demand caused due to adverse circumstances.	Burnout refers to a state of mental or emotional tiredness, occurs out of continuous exposure to stress.
<b>Feeling</b>	Anxiety, mood swings, guilt.	Hypertension, mental depression, impatient, irritable.
<b>Encounters</b>	Fatigue	Chronic Exhaustion
<b>Loss of</b>	Motivation and hope	Physical energy
<b>Work</b>	Dissatisfaction with work	Bored and cynical about work.
<b>Job commitment</b>	Dropped off	Virtually zero
<b>Results in</b>	Lack of concentration, tends to forget things.	Forgetfulness is frequent.
<b>Undergoes</b>	Physiological changes	Psychosomatic complaints







# *Consequences of Ignoring Burnout*

- Excessive stress
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Type 2 diabetes, especially in women
- Stroke
- Obesity
- Vulnerability to illnesses
- A negative spillover into personal relationships or home life



# *Overcoming Burnout*

- Great news! **Burnout is not a terminal** condition.
- Don't give up, give in or *give out!*
- Just say "no." High-octane people have a bad habit of saying "yes" when they can say "no." Resist the urge to always say "yes."
- You don't have to (nor can you) *do it all*. Delegate when possible.
- Give yourself permission to slow down. Life is not about who crosses the finish line first! It's a marathon, not a sprint.
- That *work/life balance thing* is real and significant to you and your loved ones.

# *Which Way from Here?*



*Follow the path ...*



*... that leads to serving with  
humor,  
humility,  
and heart.*



# *Humor*

- “Choosing to laugh doesn’t undermine the serious work we have to do. *It enables us to do it.*”  
— Colleen Patrick-Goudreau
- “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.”  
— Proverbs 17:22

# *Humility*

- “You are not required to set yourself on fire to keep other people warm.”  
— Unknown
- “... what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?”  
— Micah 6:8b

# *Heart*

- “There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.”  
— John Holmes
- “Anxious hearts are very heavy, but a word of encouragement does wonders!”  
— Proverbs 12:25 (TLB)

# *10 Keys to Preventing Burnout and Reducing Stress*

1. Have quiet time everyday.
2. Develop a vision for your personal and professional life.
3. Exercise every day.
4. Quit giving excuses.
5. Have an attitude of gratitude.
6. Become more respectful of differences.
7. Learn to listen and listen to learn.
8. Serve from your heart and not your head.
9. Laugh more often.
10. Give people flowers while they live!



*Thank you for  
your service to  
others.*