

Working During a Crisis: Introductory Strategies to Cope with the Accompanying Burnout

Tonya Wilhelm, LICSW



This is About You

- Not your students
- Not your boss
- Not your family
- Not even your pets
- Just you
- You deserve it

What Are We
Doing Today?

Signs and symptoms of
burnout

Strategies to manage
burnout

Q and A: Ask Questions in
the chat box

Additional Resources

Who Am I?

- Tonya Wilhelm, LICSW,
Tonya@wilhelmtherapy.com
- BA in Psychology, Masters in Social Work
- Working with traumatized clients since 1992
- Therapist and Consultant in private practice, specializing in treatment of trauma in professionals exposed at work

Guiding Principle

- **Experiencing symptoms related to burnout at work is not due to individual weakness or error, it is an occupational hazard.**
- **“There are emotional costs to practicing in a profession based on an ethic of caring” – Angela Lewis-Dmello**

What is a Crisis?

A crisis is an event where the circumstances exceed our ability to cope.

- A contagious virus that threatens the well-being of ourselves and our loved ones
- Changes in family routine, functioning, health, finances
- Quickly changing how you perform your job
- Sustained uncertainty about the future

We need to take as good care of ourselves mentally as we are physically



CRISES TEND TO LEAD TO BURNOUT

STRATEGY ONE: EDUCATION

What is Burnout?

- A state of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion caused by excessive or prolonged stress
- Crisis Burnout vs. Standard Burnout

1. **EXHAUSTION** – PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL, FEELING OF “NOTHING LEFT TO GIVE”

2. **PHYSICAL** – SLEEP DISRUPTION, HEADACHES, STOMACH ISSUES, RASHES, INJURY FLARE-UPS, IN CRISIS – BRAIN FUNCTION CHANGES

3. **DISILLUSIONMENT** WITH WORK: DREAD WORKING, DISTANCE FROM OR REDUCED TRUST IN PEERS OR LEADERSHIP, DECREASED PLEASURE IN WORK, CYNICISM, NEGATIVITY, FEEL INCOMPETENT

4. **REDUCED PERFORMANCE** AT WORK OR AT HOME: NEGATIVE FEELING ABOUT TASKS, LACK CREATIVITY, LACK MOTIVATION OR DESIRE TO COMPLETE TASKS

Symptoms of Burnout

After
Education,
2 Main
Ways to
Combat
Burnout:

- Take care of your physical and mental health
- Make meaning of the experience

Strategy Two: Physical and Mental Health Self- Care

- Physical is well-known: Exercise, Sleep, Fresh Air, Healthy Food, Meditate, Learning, Spirituality
- However, in crisis we get back to basics. Timeouts for basic body care:
 - Eat
 - Rest
 - Breathe
 - Hydrate

Physical Health, Continued

- When are you going to take your body care breaks?
- Focus on finding brief relaxation breaks.
- You may not be able to sleep – can you rest? Can you lie down? Can you sit?
- When is your time off? Make a concrete plan for when this is over. Maybe that's when your self-care picks up again

Mental Health Self – Care: Control

- What is in your control and what is not? Stay with what is in your control
- What reality-based problems do I need to solve **today?**
 - Example: What am I going to eat for lunch?
 - Rather than: What will happen if schools remain online forever?
- Can you seek order rather than control?
 - Need for structure
- What limits can you put on work this week? Can you take one night a week where you do not work? Can you protect your weekend?

Mental Health Care – Thoughts

Sometimes thoughts are wrong and need to be challenged

Because you think something doesn't make it real or correct

Unchecked anxious thoughts lead to **catastrophizing**

Recognize negative or repetitive thoughts

Calm your body, then challenge negative or repetitive thoughts by evaluating if it's accurate or not

Use a partner if necessary

Is this worry real? If yes – do I need to spend time on it now?

Mental Health Care – Healthy Relationships



Connect with others



Connect with self – alone time



Regularly seek out supervision, consultation, mentoring and peer support



Avoid working too long without connecting with colleagues



(Avoid working too long, period.)

Mental Health Care – Avoid Unhealthy Connection

- Beware of Emotional Contagion – set boundaries and limits
- Distinguish between people who are consulting with each other with sound information and people who are in a frenzy
- Headline Stress Disorder
- **MAKE AND STICK TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND NEWS LIMITS** – have to limit our exposure
- Reject Comparison Trauma

Mental Health: Self- Compassion

- Kristen Neff 4 Step Self-Compassion Practice
- 1. Acknowledge This is a Moment of Suffering
- 2. Acknowledge Suffering is part of being human
- 3. Say “May I be kind to myself”
- 4. Close your eyes and make a kind statement to yourself internally
- Be easy on yourself!



STRATEGY THREE: REFLECTION

There is no way to get through Burnout with out reflection

Barriers to sustaining yourself

- Common thought traps that are barriers to self care:
 - The best way to help this situation is to work around the clock
 - Other people are suffering more than me so I shouldn't complain or take time for myself
 - Taking time to rest is selfish
 - "I'm the only one who can...."
- Are the barriers external or internal? A mix of both?
- Give yourself time and permission to figure this out. Reflect of why it's hard to give yourself the grace you would give another.

Making Meaning of A Crisis

- “Suffering is not distributed fairly among us, but it is a part of life we must all learn to live with” – Chani Nicholas
- What can I learn from this?
- How well do I know myself and what I need?
- What can I be grateful for?
- How can we come out on the other side of this crisis feeling like we’re changed for the better?

When to consider outside help

- Contact a doctor or therapist if you experience:
 - Difficulty with sleep for longer than 1-2 weeks
 - Loss of hope
 - Thoughts of harming yourself or others
 - Changes in thoughts or beliefs (no longer believing you are a good person)
 - Changes in appetite or eating for longer than one week
 - Loss of enjoyment of things that used to bring you pleasure
 - Sustained difficulty controlling worry
 - Symptoms of burnout persist after the crisis is over and you've had time to rest

Sustaining Yourself

- When am I taking body breaks throughout the day? (Eat, rest, breathe, hydrate)
- Can I add healthy movement to my day?
- When am I taking time off to regroup after the crisis has passed?
- What limits can I put on work this week?
- What are my social media/screen limits?
- What are my plans to connect with other professionals this week?
- What are my plans to connect with people outside my work this week?
- How am I practicing self compassion?
- What can I do just for myself this week?
- What am I learning about myself?



QUESTIONS?

How to reach me:

- Wilhelm Therapy and Consulting, PA
- www.wilhelmtherapy.com
- tonya@wilhelmtherapy.com
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/tonya-wilhelm-licsw-87b87945/>

Recommended Resources

Teacher Burnout Assessment: <https://notwaitingforsuperman.org/teacher-burnout/>

Professional Quality of Life Scale: https://proqol.org/ProQol_Test.html

STAT: Support for Teachers Affected By Trauma <https://statprogram.org/>

EduTopia: [Teaching Through A Pandemic: A Mindset for This Moment](#)

Harvard Business Review: [Coping With Fatigue, Fear, and Panic During a Crisis](#)

New York Times: [Burnout Isn't Just in Your Head. It's in Your Circumstances](#)

Free meditations from Calm: <https://blog.calm.com/take-a-deep-breath>

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