

A Message from BHAC Board President Preventing and Battling Burnout: Tactics That Help

In this post-pandemic era, burnout is epidemic across the country. Currently, at least 41% of American workers report feeling burnout (Melillo, 2023). With inflation outpacing salaries, organizations removing flexible work schedules, and a return to productivity overshadowing the prioritization of personal well-being in many places, American workers are as disengaged with their work as ever. Consequently, almost 50% of Americans report the intent to leave their current job (Gallup, 2023). In a recent published study of Big 10 faculty, staff, and students, approximately 54.9% of faculty reported being burned out (Melnik et al., 2023). In this study, those who felt they mattered to their organization and had a culture that supported their well-being had less burnout as well as less depression and anxiety. Wellness workplace culture and mattering really matter so it is worth the investment as burnout negatively impacts productivity and leads to turnover. The stresses of our current era can feel overburdensome and unrelenting—too much work, too many tasks, and too little time for self-care. During such times, it is so important to prioritize our own health and well-being as well as to reconnect with what gives meaning and joy to our lives.

During the pandemic, we ramped up all our wellness initiatives even further at Ohio State in order to help our faculty, staff, and students cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. I was working 24/7 and personally starting to burnout, which evidenced itself one day when I snapped at my husband when he asked me a simple question. I am grateful to John as he made me face my true story (i.e., that I was burning out) and asked what I was going to do about the situation. After thinking about it, I told him that I wanted to take a bucket list trip to Tanzania to watch the Wildebeest migration and totally disconnect for 10 days from email. That trip was so worth the investment as it gave me an opportunity to experience a recovery break to build back my mental resiliency. We all need these types of breaks to get re-energized and restored. If you find yourself over hours on your vacation time, don't delay—make a commitment to take them to avoid getting to the place that I experienced.

Please reflect on this question (Dolan et al., 2015):

Based on your definition of burnout, how would you rate your level of burnout?

- 1 = *"I enjoy my work. I have no symptoms of burnout."*
- 2 = *"Occasionally I am under stress, and I don't always have as much energy as I once did, but I don't feel burned out."*
- 3 = *"I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, such as physical and emotional exhaustion."*
- 4 = *"The symptoms of burnout that I'm experiencing won't go away. I think about frustration at work a lot."*
- 5 = *"I feel completely burned out and often wonder if I can go on. I am at the point where I may need some changes or may need to seek some sort of help."*

If you answered 3, 4, or 5 to the above question, it is time to face your story and re-write a new one. If you are experiencing burnout to the point that it is beginning to interfere with either your functioning or the person whom you are, please take action and make a commitment to take regular recovery breaks or seek professional help. Remember, it is a strength to recognize when we need help, not a weakness. You cannot do a great job at your work or take good care of your family if you, yourself, are struggling.



Best wishes and stay well!

Fond regards,

Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk, PhD, APRN-CNP, FAAN

President and Founder, the National consortium for BHAC

Vice President for Health Promotion

University Chief Wellness Officer

Dean and Helene Fuld Health Trust Professor of Evidence-based Practice, College of Nursing

Professor of Pediatrics and Psychiatry, College of Medicine

Executive Director the Helene Fuld Health Trust National Institute for Evidence-based Practice

The Ohio State University

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