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Burnout Among Helping
Professionals: Challenging
Workplaces or Sign of Depression?
Michael Flahive, PhD, CCC-SLP/A

Moderated by:
Amy Natho, MS, CCC-SLP, CEU Administrator, SpeechPathology.com

2/5/19



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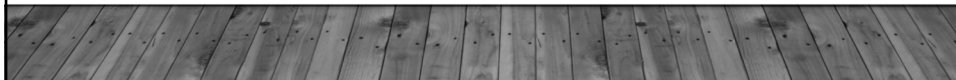
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BURNOUT AMONG HELPING PROFESSIONALS: CHALLENGING WORKPLACES OR SIGN OF DEPRESSION?

MICHAEL FLAHIVE, PH.D.,
C.C.C. SP/A, F-ASHA



FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE

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Michael Flahive is receiving compensation for today's presentation. There are no other financial relationships to disclose.

LEARNER OUTCOMES

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- List common sources of burnout among helping professions (e.g., medicine, education, therapies, etc.).
- Describe current economic and societal implications of workplace burnout.
- Explain how burnout can affect speech-language pathologists.
- List proactive steps to reduce prospects of burnout onset.

MENTAL HEALTH / WELLNESS

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- Mental Wellness: “A state of emotional and psychological well-being in which an individual is able to use his or her cognitive and emotional capabilities, function in society, and meet the ordinary demands of everyday life.”
- Burnout and mental health are related.



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- Burnout: *a psychological term for a syndrome characterized by long-term exhaustion and diminished interest, especially in one's career.*
- <- Herbert Freudenberger, the first psychologist / researcher to publish a paper utilizing the term “burnout.” (1974)



WHO

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- According to a Mayo Clinic report (2017), physicians, nurses, social workers, and police officers are among professionals for whom burnout is reported to be common.
- Speech-language pathologists are among helping professionals and subject to similar workplace conditions and challenges.

WHO

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- *Medscape*, Jan. 17, 2018:
 - 42% of physicians say they feel burned out (upgraded information [1/17/19] suggests a revised figure of 44%)
 - Highest rates among critical care physicians, neurologists and family medicine doctors.
 - Half of the respondents indicate they have those feelings on a regular basis.
 - Women physicians tended to report feeling burned out more than males.

WHO

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- Mid-career seemed most impacted – half of those 45 – 54 reporting burnout.
- 15% of those “burned out” reported feeling depressed – 70% called it “colloquial” while 19% said they had clinical depression.
- 7 of 10* physicians indicated they would not recommend their profession to family members.

WHO

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- In nursing this topic has been under investigation for at least forty years and remains a concern.
- Common issues include: emotional exhaustion, alienation from job-related activities, reduced performance.
- Suggesting possible connect between burnout and depression.

WHO

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- K – 12 education systems loses more than 200,000 teachers per year.
- 19 – 30% leave during the first five years of teaching.
- Early mentoring reduces increases retention.
- Reminder: Employees are free to leave their jobs for various reasons – burnout isn't the only cause.

US

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2017 U.S. job satisfaction data indicate that....

- 89 % of SLP's report being generally satisfied with their jobs.*
- Speech-language pathologist's job satisfaction ranks 22nd in healthcare professions - based on upward mobility, stress level and flexibility.

US

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- SLP job satisfaction is about careers – not necessarily workplaces.
- Workplace factors may effect overall mental wellness.
- “Better” for SLP's doesn't minimize concern about workplaces fostering burnout conditions.



BURNOUT IN HELPING PROFESSIONS

- *Lancet Psychiatry*, (May, 2018) reported 14% of common depression could be prevented by reducing job strain.
- Another report found “people experiencing job strain at age 45” were at increased risk of anxiety and depression by age 50.
- Increasing evidence linking burnout to depression.

WHAT

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- Depression costs the U.S. economy more than \$51 billion dollars a year in absenteeism, \$26 billion in treatment costs.
- People with depression lose the equivalent of 27 work days per year.
- Modifying workplaces to make them more mentally healthy can improve employee well-being.

WHAT

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- Productivity – SLP's who lack motivation will often work slower.
- Sick time leave – Many SLP's suffering from burnout get sick more often and may need medical care.
- Increased errors – In practice this may translate into poor judgments, missing cues, etc.
- Higher turnover rate: Lost personal investment - prompt to seek other options.



REALITY OF BURNOUT

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Top stress items for SLP's include

- Overwhelming paperwork
- Continued demand for increased efficiency
- Large caseloads
- Lack of preparation time
- Legal and employer regulations of practice

FACTOR ANALYSIS

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- What are the major stressors? Related to job description? Client issues? Co-workers or agency infrastructure? Inability to “roll” with change?
- Roles and responsibilities continue to evolve – not always in employees best interest.
- Weigh influential factors – personal gratification, family finances, etc.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

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- Let's develop a plan around “mental wellness” to preserve personal health and professional productivity.
- Similar to principles SLP's follow in treatment, one objective will be empowerment. Another will be continuous appraisal.



MEASURING JOB SATISFACTION

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- Reflection will be important – be prepared to examine how it really is.
- May be helpful to conspire with a colleague – one who can assist honest reflection.
- Consider paper and pencil tools to assist – for example:
 - *Job Descriptive Index* which measures five job facets: job itself, supervision, pay, promotions and co-workers (2013).
 - *Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ)*, [1977].
 - *Well-Being Survey* (Authentic Happiness website)

BURNOUT PREVENTION PROGRAM

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- Focus on physical and emotional health.
- Critically evaluate (Dx. annually) job satisfaction and external “pressure elements”.
- Establish goals (and timelines) to modify the modifiable.
- Groups align more resources and have greater leverage in work situations – help form a group!
- Prevention has been a fundamental principle for a long time...it fits here!

BUILDING PREVENTION PROGRAMS^{2/5/19}

- State or regional organizations may be able to sustain developing groups. Begin by addressing “stress management” and/or physical wellness.
- Contemporary ideas such as “mindfulness” may help identify local, established groups.
- Many local health facilities or wellness sources organize groups for yoga, tai chi, etc.

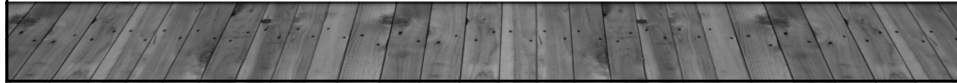
MINDFULNESS MAY BE HELPFUL^{2/5/19}

Mindfulness techniques involve paying attention to the present moment while nonjudgmentally observing one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

IDEAS THAT MIGHT HELP

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- Don't be afraid to seek support(s) to your answers
- Continue to be honest with yourself – call it what it is.
- Spend time with people who are uplifting – odds are you're a support to others.
- Perhaps as easy as any suggestion, get rest, eat right, don't get into abusive habits. (sound like your mama?)
- The glass can be half full.



IDEAS THAT MIGHT HELP

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- Look to the benefits of positive self-talk (think, “little engine that could”).
- Reinforce evidence of a more positive disposition.
- Others can compliment, reinforce, affirm – and you can do the same!



IMPORTANT ON-LINE RESOURCE(S) 2/5/19

- Authentic Happiness website - home to the Positive Psychology movement. See surveys, including:
- Well-Being Survey (Measures Well-Being)
- Satisfaction with Life Scale (Measures Life Satisfaction)
- Work-Life Questionnaire (Measures Work-Life Satisfaction)
- Grit Survey (Measures the Character Strength of Perseverance)
- VIA Survey of Character Strengths (Measures 24 Character Strengths)
- Stress & Empathy Questionnaire (Measures Empathy, Stress, and Overall Health)

ONLINE RESOURCES 2/5/19

- <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>

Authentic Happiness is the home of the positive psychology movement – it houses a number of survey instruments (free to take) that may be helpful in establishing a plan for establishing and maintaining mental wellness.

- <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk/communityconversation/services/index.html>

MentalHealth.gov - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services directory to assist in identifying mental health agencies and on-line information.

- <http://www.mentalhealthgeorgia.com/>

Sample state government mental health agency

ONLINE RESOURCES

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- <http://www.asha.org/practice/multicultural/self/> (this includes a “Personal Reflection”)
- <http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/Self-Assessment-of-Competencies-in-Supervision.pdf>
- <http://www.asha.org/Articles/Quality-Indicators-A-Self-Assessment-Tool/>
- <http://www.asha.org/uploadedFiles/SLPs-Performance-Assessment-Contributions-Effectiveness.pdf>

ONLINE RESOURCES

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- <http://www.mentalhealthgeorgia.com/>

Sample state government mental health agency

MINDFULNESS RESOURCES

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<https://ggia.berkeley.edu/#>

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0207765>

<https://centerhealthyminds.org/>

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Slide #29 *Do You Prescribe Mindfulness to Your Patients? - *Medscape* - Jan 02, 2019.

