

Contributing Factors to Burnout

School Resources to Support Military-Connected Students is a project by the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness an applied research center at The Pennsylvania State University and is funded by the Department of Defense Education Activity Grant number HE1254-19-0009.

For more information click on the links below:

<https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/>

<https://militaryfamilies.psu.edu/>

<https://www.psu.edu/>

<https://dodeagrants.org/>

Our goal is to provide school personnel with free, evidence-based resources to support military-connected students. This training is part of our *Suicide Prevention* series.

Important Reminders

Before starting this training, please read the items below carefully and check the box in front of each item to indicate your understanding.

- The following content discusses suicide and may be upsetting to some individuals.
- Follow all district, local, state, and federal regulations. This training is **NOT** intended to replace or override existing procedures or laws.

Introduction

What is the purpose of this training?

In an effort to try to prevent burnout and identify those at risk (including ourselves, if necessary), it is critical to consider those factors that may have an impact on who is more likely to develop burnout symptoms and under what circumstances. There is a large body of literature that has endeavored to examine the relationship between workplace characteristics, personal traits, and interactions between work environment and individual factors that may contribute to burnout. A comprehensive review of these factors is beyond the scope of this training, however, there are a few emerging lines of evidence in the burnout literature that are particularly salient when considering burnout among professionals that should be considered.

Objective

The goal of this training is to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Identify how burnout can spread amongst school personnel and strategies to prevent it from doing so.

How confident are you in your ability to do this now?

Please click on the link below to submit your response.

https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6Gp3iBHLvhcTluR?modulenumber=suicide39

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below before proceeding with this training.

Answered the survey question in the link.

Clicked the arrow underneath the survey question to submit your response.

Recorded the ID number provided after you submitted your answer to the survey question. You will need it to complete the survey at the end of this training.

Research

What is most important for me to know?

Social contagion of burnout and social exchange relationships are two areas to contemplate when examining your own burnout or the potential overall health of professionals at your school.

Social Contagion of Burnout

It can be very healthy for professionals who work at the same organization or in the same field to spend time together processing the challenges they have in their jobs as a means of social support. Although reaching out to colleagues is an important protective factor in avoiding burnout, there is research that suggests that burnout within organizations may “spread” across employees. Studies of this phenomenon have notably included teachers in schools (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000) as it is noted that teachers experience high rates of burnout overall. In studies of teacher-related social contagion, it appears that there are two instances in which burnout is the most contagious including:

1. When teachers frequently talked to each other about student and work-related problems
2. When teachers were already more sensitive to the emotions of others

These findings should help to inform school-based practice in two ways. First, awareness of contagion can make school-based personnel and leadership aware that as more staff become burned out, the problem may get worse across the milieu and thus, building-level interventions and supports may be appropriate. Second, while school personnel should be encouraged to support one another in the challenges and realities of their jobs, professionals should focus on problem solving, encouragement, and positive aims at coping with the stressors rather than focusing on the negative.

Social Exchange Relationships

The ways in which professionals compare themselves to and relate to others can serve as either a protective or risk factor. Research on social exchange relationships as they affect burnout indicates that there are several ways that relationships may contribute to burnout (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Specifically, when professionals feel that they are “working harder” than those they serve (such as teachers and their students), this may contribute to burnout. Also, professionals that compare themselves to their colleagues may perceive social injustices such as disparities in pay, treatment by administrators or supervisors, or favoritism that may increase burnout. Given that school-based professionals are working in the middle of a complex system where they must deal with layered relationships (e.g., students, parents, colleagues, leadership, unions) the overall health of the organization to include student culture, relationships with families, leadership, and climate may serve to protect against or contribute to burnout for professionals.

Application

How might this look in my professional practice?

The objective of this training is to:

Identify signs of professional burnout in yourself and colleagues.

Practice identifying the signs of professional burnout in the activity below.

1. What factors may contribute to burnout? Answer all that apply.
 - a) When professionals frequently talk to each other about student and work-related problems
 - b) When professionals are already more sensitive to the emotions of others
 - c) When professionals focus on problem solving, encouragement, and positive aims at coping
 - d) When professionals feel that they are “working harder” than those they serve

- e) When professionals compare themselves to colleagues and perceive social injustices
- f) When professionals feel that their job is more important than other people in the school

Correct answer(s): a), c), d), e).

Implementation

How can I effectively implement this content in my professional practice?

Please review the considerations below regarding potential implementation strategies, barriers to implementation, and collaboration strategies related to this content. This will help you coordinate the next steps as you begin to incorporate the information presented in this training into your professional practice.

This information can also be found on a handout that you will be able to download at the end of this training.

Implementation Strategies

- Provide structured and clear processes for school personnel to address challenges in the workplace including mentoring, coaching, and ongoing training to avoid unhealthy climate among personnel.
- Make it a practice to start and end all meetings with a focus on positives. When positive asset searching is modeled at the leadership level, interactions may become more solution and strength focused.

Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

- When a teacher or staff member is known to have many complaints, is struggling with burnout, or other problems, it is important that that person receives the support that they need from leadership.
- Provide scaffolding to school personnel to help them reframe how they approach interactions with other professionals and parents. Teaching and modeling ideas like “the feedback sandwich” (positive – constructive – positive feedback), SMART goals, and growth mindset, may help to support a more positive climate in schools among professionals.

Collaboration Strategies

- Provide ongoing training, referrals for support, and guidance as needed to any school personnel who are struggling.
- Take steps to reach out to personnel, and their colleagues, who may have challenges in order to avoid contagion.

Resources

Are there any resources available to help me implement this content?

Click on the link below to download a tool that you can use to implement this content in your professional practice.

<https://documentcloud.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:4b8d59ac-3faa-4c0e-8c15-6a5cc0661b3f>

Feedback

How can I help improve this training?

The objective of this training was to increase your confidence in your ability to:

Identify how burnout can spread amongst school personnel and strategies to prevent it from doing so.

Answer the questions in the link below to let us know how well this training increased your confidence in your ability to accomplish this objective. Once you have answered all of the questions, click the blue arrow button underneath to submit your responses.

https://pennstate.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d771mLr9ZgW3kyx?modulenumber=suicide39

Verify that you have completed each of the tasks below.

Answered all of the survey questions above. You may have to scroll to see all of the questions.
Clicked the arrow underneath the last survey question to submit your responses.

Additional Readings

Where can I learn more about this content?

The following resources were used to create this training. If you would like more information about the information presented in this training, we encourage you to start here.

Bakker, A. B. & Schaufeli, W. B. (2000). Burnout contagion processes among teachers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30(11), 2289–2308. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2000.tb02437.x>

Halbesleben, J. R. B., & Buckley, M. R. (2004). Burnout in organizational life. *Journal of Management*, 30(6), 859–879. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jm.2004.06.004>

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this training. If you have any questions or comments, please email us at schoolresources@psu.edu.

Proceed to the next training

Click on the link below to move on to the next training titled *Responding to Feelings of Burnout*. In this training, you will increase your confidence in your ability to evaluate your current level of burn out.

https://learning.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/school-resources/modules/suicide_40-responding-to-feelings-of-burnout_201022/

Return to the module directory

Click on this button to return to the module directory.

<https://schoolresources.militaryfamilies.psu.edu/modules/>