

MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF BURNOUT

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JOB BURNOUT IS NOT WELL UNDERSTOOD

- **“Burnout is an individual health problem that can be diagnosed”**
- **“The burned-out person is overworked and is not handling it well”**
- **“If people burn out, then they are not really good enough to do the job”**
- **“The burned-out person needs to practice better self-care and become more resilient”**

IMPACT OF A PERSON-ONLY FOCUS

- The key question becomes “WHO is burning out?”
- Answers to that question focus on what the person should do
 - Rest, meditation, fewer work hours, vacations from work, etc.
- Assumption is that fixing the person, by various coping strategies, will make burnout go away
 - *However, coping focuses more on effects, not causes*

NEED TO CHANGE THE QUESTION

- The key question should be “WHY are people burning out?”
- Answers to that question focus on what to do about the causal sources in the work environment
- Assumption is that fixing the work environment, by improving the match, or good fit, between people and their jobs, will prevent burnout
 - *Prevention strategies focus more on changing the causal stressors, rather than simply coping with them*

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION STATEMENT ON BURNOUT

- Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stressors that have not been successfully managed.
- It is characterized by three dimensions:
 - feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
 - increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
 - reduced professional efficacy
- Burnout is an occupational phenomenon.
- It is **not** classified as a medical condition.

RESEARCH MEASURE OF JOB BURNOUT

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

- Measures all three dimensions, in terms of frequency
- The patterns of the three dimensions yield five work profiles:
 - **Burnout** (3 high frequency negative scores)
 - **Disengaged** (Cynicism only)
 - **Overextended** (Exhaustion only)
 - **Ineffective** (Inefficacy only)
 - **Engagement** (3 low frequency negative scores)

MANAGEMENT MANTRAS FOR MISMATCHES

- **Burnout begins as a management issue.**
 - **“If you can’t take the heat, get out of the kitchen”**
 - **“You are going to have to do more with less”**
- **But if chronic job stressors are not managed successfully, the resulting mismatches between people and their jobs can lead to negative work outcomes (poor performance, absenteeism, turnover) and negative health problems (chronic illness, anxiety, depression).**
- **Chronic mismatches are often called “the pebbles in your shoe”**

FIX THE JOB, NOT JUST THE PERSON

- Common response to a crisis is to help employees cope with ongoing stressors
- But burnout research points to a different response:
 - **HELP THE WORKPLACE MODIFY ITS SOURCES OF STRESS**
- Given the current changes in the world, there are new opportunities to “think out of the box” and to experiment with new procedures and alternative strategies
 - *SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY SOLUTIONS (e.g. hybrid schedules, redesign workflow, etc.)*

JOB-PERSON MATCH IN SIX AREAS OF WORK LIFE

- DEMAND OVERLOAD

SUSTAINABLE WORKLOAD

- LACK OF CONTROL

CHOICE AND CONTROL

- INSUFFICIENT REWARD

RECOGNITION AND REWARD

- BREAKDOWN OF COMMUNITY

SUPPORTIVE WORK COMMUNITY

- ABSENCE OF FAIRNESS

FAIRNESS, RESPECT, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

- VALUE CONFLICTS

CLEAR VALUES AND MEANINGFUL WORK

- SIX PATHS TO A HEALTHIER WORKPLACE

MATCHING PEOPLE TO THE JOB

- **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

- Development of skills
- Practical experience

- **COPING WITH STRESSORS**

- Resilience, strength
- Time away from work

- **THESE INDIVIDUAL SOLUTIONS DO NOT MAKE THE JOB LESS STRESSFUL**

MATCHING THE JOB TO PEOPLE

- Modify the work conditions that create negative outcomes for employees
- Use **Environmental Psychology** and the model of **Ergonomics** – which focus on the relationship between workers and their **PHYSICAL** environment
- Apply design model to the **SOCIAL** and **PSYCHOLOGICAL** environment

A BETTER “MATCH” IS ACHIEVED BY SATISFYING CORE SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS

- *Autonomy*
- *Belongingness*
- *Competence*
- *Psychological safety*
- *Fairness*
- *Meaning*
- *Positive emotions*

HELPFUL POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **COLLABORATE**

- *Get feedback and buy-in*
 - *Reach out and listen*

- **CUSTOMIZE**

- *Adapt to local culture*
 - *One size of “best practice” does not fit all*

- **COMMIT**

- *Sustain effort to achieve positive gains*
 - *Evaluate and modify until get it right*

BOTTOM LINE

- There are many possibilities, within all six areas of job-person fit, to make a “better match” between people and their job.
- These changes can be small, inexpensive, and customizable.
- This healthy job environment takes care of both the workers and the workplace, so that the former will thrive, and the latter will succeed.

Regular checkups – “how do we make things a little better around here?”

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Managing People's
Relationships with Their Jobs

BURNOUT

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CHALLENGE