



Campus Burnout in the COVID Era

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CEO, Founder & Owner of IMPACT Solutions from 1981 – June 2020

Acquired by AllOne Health in July 2020

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My Background Experience:



Joel R. Gecht, PHD

- **Psychologist specializing in Stress, Anxiety & Depression**
- **Executive Coach, Counseling & Assessment Specialist**
- **Behavioral Healthcare CEO - EAP, Student Assistance & Campus Health**
- **On-Air Staff Psychologist for ABC TV (1990's) in NE Ohio**
- **Son, Brother, Husband, Father, Grandfather, Friend & Colleague**
- **Subjectively as an Individual**

Agenda

Traditional View of Burnout Prior to COVID

A Moving Target - Burnout in the COVID Era

Effects on Higher Education

Coping Strategies

Mental Health Resources

Q & A



Traditional Definition of Burnout

- Coined by American Psychologist - Dr. Herbert Freudenberger in the 1970's
- Used to describe the consequences of severe stress & high ideals in the helping professions.



Facts about traditional Burnout (WHO)

- **Caused by not managing chronic stress**
- **Threatens coping with basic challenges & attending to day-to-day responsibilities**
- **Far more severe than ordinary fatigue**

Stress vs Burnout

- **Stress** = *“Too Much”* (people notice they are stressed)
- **Burnout** = *“Not Enough”* hope for positive change (doesn't happen overnight-creeps up on people)



Facts about Burnout

- **Anyone continually exposed to high levels of stress**
- **Those in the helping professions & caretakers are especially vulnerable (Includes Higher Education)**

Facts about Burnout

Lifestyle-Related Contributors

- **Overworking without time for socialization or fun**
- **Getting inadequate sleep**
- **Chronically taking on too much**
- **Displaying a tendency to not request help**
- **Engaging in poor health-related habits**

Facts about Burnout

Personality-Trait Related Contributions [Is this YOU?]

- **Perfectionistic tendencies**
- **Pessimistic view of yourself/ the world**
- **Excessive need for Control; Reluctance to delegate**
- **High-achieving, Type A personality**



You may be on the road to Burnout if:

- **EVERY** day is a bad day
- Caring about your work or home life seems like a total waste of energy
- Activities feel mind-numbingly dull or overwhelming
- **NOTHING** you do feels like it makes a difference or is appreciated

Physical signs of Burnout

- **Chronic fatigue**
- **Sleep disturbances**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Headaches**
- **Low immunity**

Emotional signs of Burnout

- **Irritability**
- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**
- **Sense of perpetual failure & self-doubt**
- **Loss of motivation**
- **Increasing cynical & negative outlook**
- **Feeling helpless, trapped, and defeated**

Depersonalization-related signs of Burnout

- **Loss of enjoyment in things that usually bring pleasure**
- **Isolation**
- **Pessimism**
- **Detachment**

Accomplishment-related signs of Burnout

- **Diminished productivity**
- **Hopelessness**
- **Negative self-talk about ability to complete tasks**
- **Dismissive about real accomplishments & compliments**
- **Procrastinating**

Behavioral signs of Burnout

- **Withdrawing from responsibilities**
- **Isolating yourself from others**
- **Using food, alcohol, or drugs to cope**
- **Skipping work, coming in late, leaving early**

Undetected and unmanaged – Increases risk of:

- **Cardiovascular disease**
- **Diabetes**
- **Gastrointestinal issues**
- **Low HDL cholesterol**
- **Musculoskeletal pain**
- **Depression and anxiety**



Pandemic-Related Burnout (PRB)

- **Billions worldwide experienced Chronic Stress at work, home, and in their communities**
- **Uprooted the way we live our lives (our comfort zones)**
- **Faced us with uncertainty, fear, grief, and loss**
- **We have had to homeschool children, work-remotely and isolate from human contact**

- **The Result: The pandemic had exacerbated the depth of and our exposure to Burnout**



What is COVID Fatigue?

- Feeling “demotivated” and exhausted with the demands of life during the COVID crisis (WHO)
- This fatigue could ultimately lead to a longer, more devastating pandemic-like phase (WHO)
- Need to pivot & navigate through the world as it now exists

The COVID Fatigue Process

- **Pandemic Fatigue is a COMPLETELY NATURAL Fight/ Flight Response**
- **[Alarm State-Resistance Stage-Exhaustion Stage]**
- **Initially - Our short-term survival skills kicked in**
- **Fear kept us motivated**
- **With time - fear was replaced with growing levels of frustration**
- **Then - Exhaustion and complacency began to emerge**

Symptoms of COVID Fatigue:

- **Anxiety about the future for us, the world**
- **Deep concern/ mixed emotion - when will the pandemic “really” end?**
- **Perpetual feeling - Loss of CONTROL**
- **Diminished confidence/ heightened self-doubt**
- **Feeling globally cynical & emotionally exhausted**

Effects on Higher Education

- Altered the higher education framework
- Staff and faculty positions eliminated, furloughed, or reduced
- Early retirement options accepted
- In classroom, virtual, and hybrid balancing act
- Multi-level student pressures
- Led to - increased workloads, additional challenges, and pressure to do more with less



Effects on Higher Education:

- **Still battling significant grief, loss of loved ones, trauma (PTSD for some), and exhaustion**
- **Anxiety and uncertainty regarding direction**
- **“New Normal” coexists with the need to process deaths and lost significant milestones**
- **Losses and trauma experienced cannot be erased
Effects of Burnout and Exhaustion will NOT magically disappear**

Effects on Higher Education:

- **Compassion fatigue from support for the academic and emotional needs of students**
- **The current stage of change and challenge from COVID trauma has created the perfect storm**

Statistics - 2021 data for the IMPACT EAP for *Ohio Higher Education*

- **(Based on 24 Institutions – 80,000+ Employee Lives covered)**
- **“Stress” was a presenting issue = highest in past 5 years**
- **“Mental Health” & “Stress” = highest percentage vs any other client type (including Healthcare)**
- **“Children/Dependents” usage = highest in past 5 years**
- **“Budgeting” was a top navigated topic on the EAP Website (suggesting financial-related stress)**
- **“Mental Health” related cases tripled in the 4th Quarter from the 1st Quarter (COVID Fatigue)**



Coping with Burnout: the “Three R” Approach:

- **RECOGNIZE** – Watch for the warning signs of Burnout
- **REVERSE** – Undo the damage by managing stress and seeking support
- **RESILIENCE** – Build your resilience to stress by taking care of your physical and emotional health

**Suggested strategy to
take control over the
stressors that elevate
your risk factors**



Influence Over Stress

I → “I can manage”

H → “Help from others needed”

O → “Out of my control!”

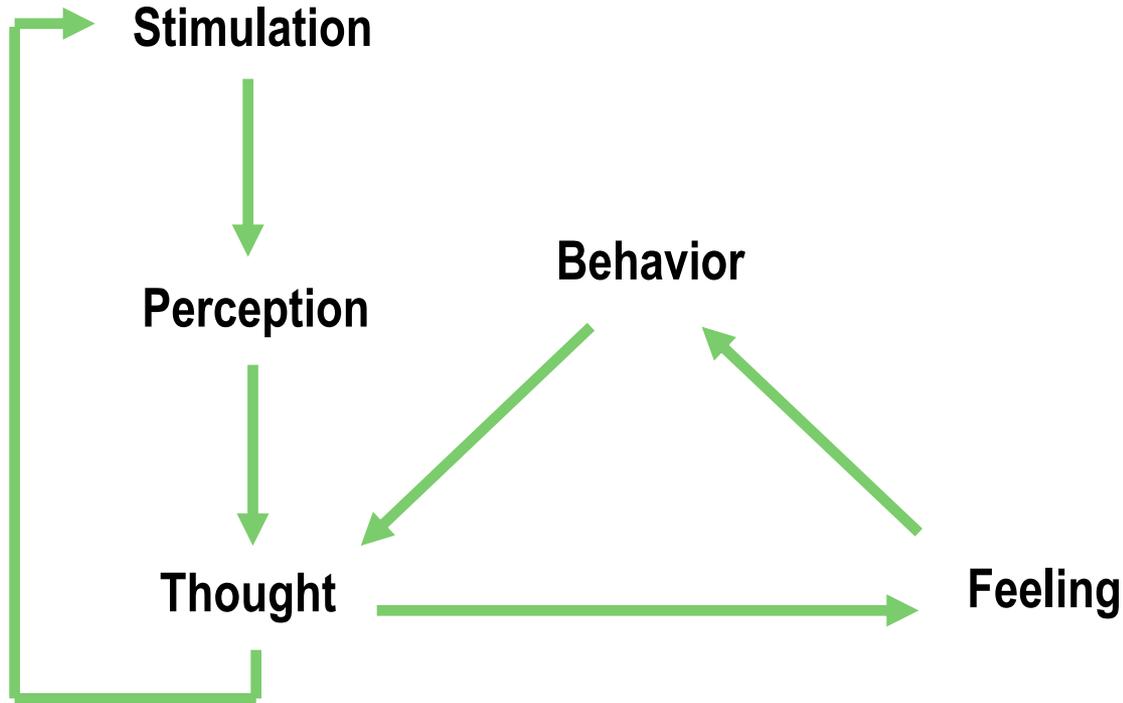
Distress Occurs When...

- **We believe we have no control over what happens**
- **We see few or no options**
- **The source of stress is ambiguous**
- **The stress is prolonged over a period of time**
- **Several sources of stress exist simultaneously**
- **We fail to plan for and manage transitions appropriately**

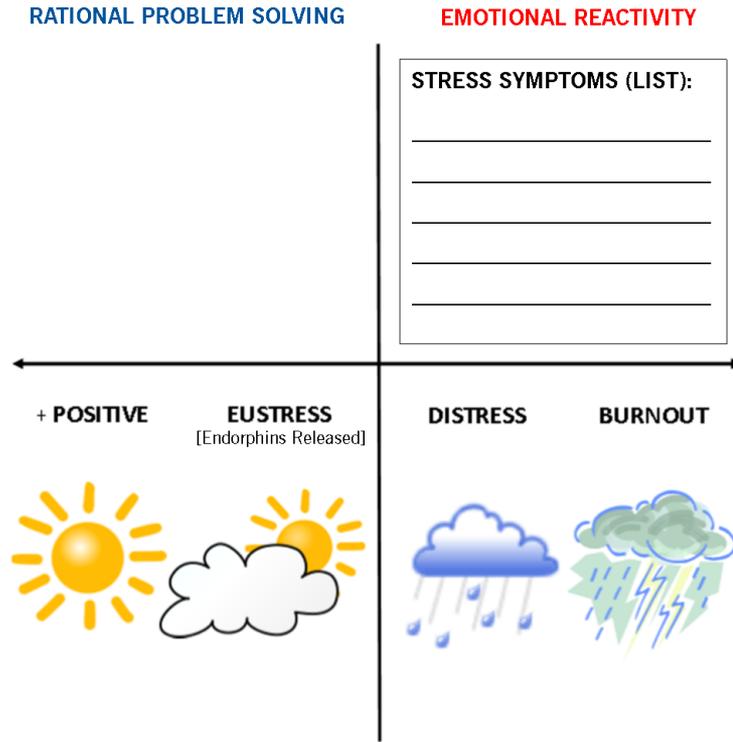
Influence Over Stress

- **Feelings**
- **Thoughts**
- **Behaviors**

Influence Over Stress



The Stress Continuum



Needed:

A Plan of Action

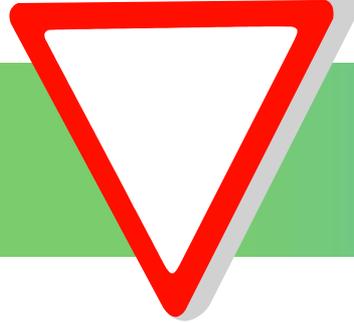
Taken from *Using Stress to Your Advantage*©, by Dr. Joel R. Gecht

The AOB Formula



Awareness

+



Options

=



Balance

Relaxation Training

How to Balance our Brake and Gas Pedals



Taken from *Using Stress to Your Advantage*©, by Dr. Joel R. Gecht

Stress Log

Gaining Insight in Real Time!

Commitment

If you always do what you've always done – you will continue to achieve the same result...

In order to improve – we can best benefit from a plan of action we are dedicated to follow...

Additional steps for coping with Burnout:

- **Get regular check-ups/well-care**
- **Eat a healthy diet (low sugar & refined carbs, no or less caffeine)**
- **Get enough sleep**
- **Ask for help (colleagues, supervisors)**
- **Seek emotional support, when necessary (family, friends, therapist, EAP)**

Additional steps for coping with Burnout

- **Reframe your philosophy about work (if counter-productive currently)**
- **Take appropriate time off (as available)**
- **Take breaks throughout your workday (as possible)**
- **Nurture your personal relationships outside of work**

Additional steps for coping with Burnout

- **Start your day out with a relaxing ritual**
- **Adopt healthy eating, exercise, and sleeping habits**
- **Set boundaries**
- **Take a break from technology**
- **Nourish your creative side**
- **Engage in self-care**
- **Stay in the Present – Be mindful**
- **As offered today, appropriately manage your stress**



Use Relaxation, meditation, Yoga

**A Set of Relaxation
Exercises is being
Provided for Your Use**

Mental Health Resources:

- **Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a CONFIDENTIAL 24/7/365 source of IMMEDIATE support for you and your family**
- **You have access to mental health sessions, life coaching, financial wellness and a wide range of work-life referrals and resources to help improve well-being and make life easier.**



Q & A

Thank you for Attending Today's Program

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