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Land acknowledgment

I acknowledge that my workplace resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations.

Learn more: <https://www.whose.land/en/about>

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Burnout in the nonprofit sector: What you need to know

CharityVillage

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The background is a teal gradient with white decorative elements. In the top left, the word "Lyra" is written in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below it, the title "Recognizing Burnout" is written in a larger, bold, white, sans-serif font. Underneath the title, the words "Definition" and "Signs & Symptoms" are listed in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The background features several thin, white, curved lines that sweep across the top and left sides, and a cluster of small, white, curved lines in the bottom left corner. There are also a few small, white, circular dots scattered in the upper left area.

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Recognizing Burnout

Definition

Signs & Symptoms

Mental Health

- Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. (WHO)
- Health is not the absence of illness.
- It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.

What is Burnout?

- **WHO definition:**

Burnout is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress *that has not been successfully managed*.

- **Broader definition:**

Burnout is a state of physical, mental, and emotional weariness induced by continuous periods of stress, pressure, and an overwhelming workload.



Nonprofit Stats

Stanford Social Innovation Review 2023:

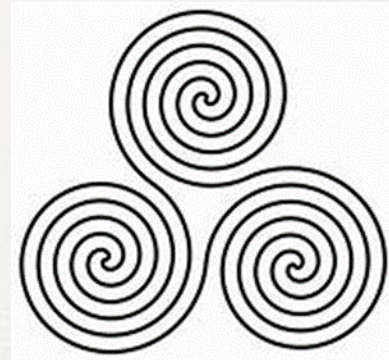
- Approximately 50% of nonprofit employees experience high levels of burnout.

Nonprofit: HR 2020

- About 25% of nonprofit employees plan to leave their current employer.
- 45% are seeking new or different employment.
- 23% would not pursue a career in a nonprofit organization.
- 3 in 4 Canadian employees burned out some of the time.
- 1 in 3 often /always (Gallup).

(WHO) Burnout is Characterized by:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; physical
- Increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; psychological
- Reduced professional efficacy



What it looks like day-to-day:

BODY

- Fatigue
- Low immunity
- Aches and pains
- Changed appetite
- Changed sleep

MIND & HEART

- Self-doubt
- Helplessness
- Cynicism
- Hopelessness
- Demotivated
- Low mood
- Low joy return on effort
- Feeling disconnected
- Mistakes
- Concentration
- Efficacy

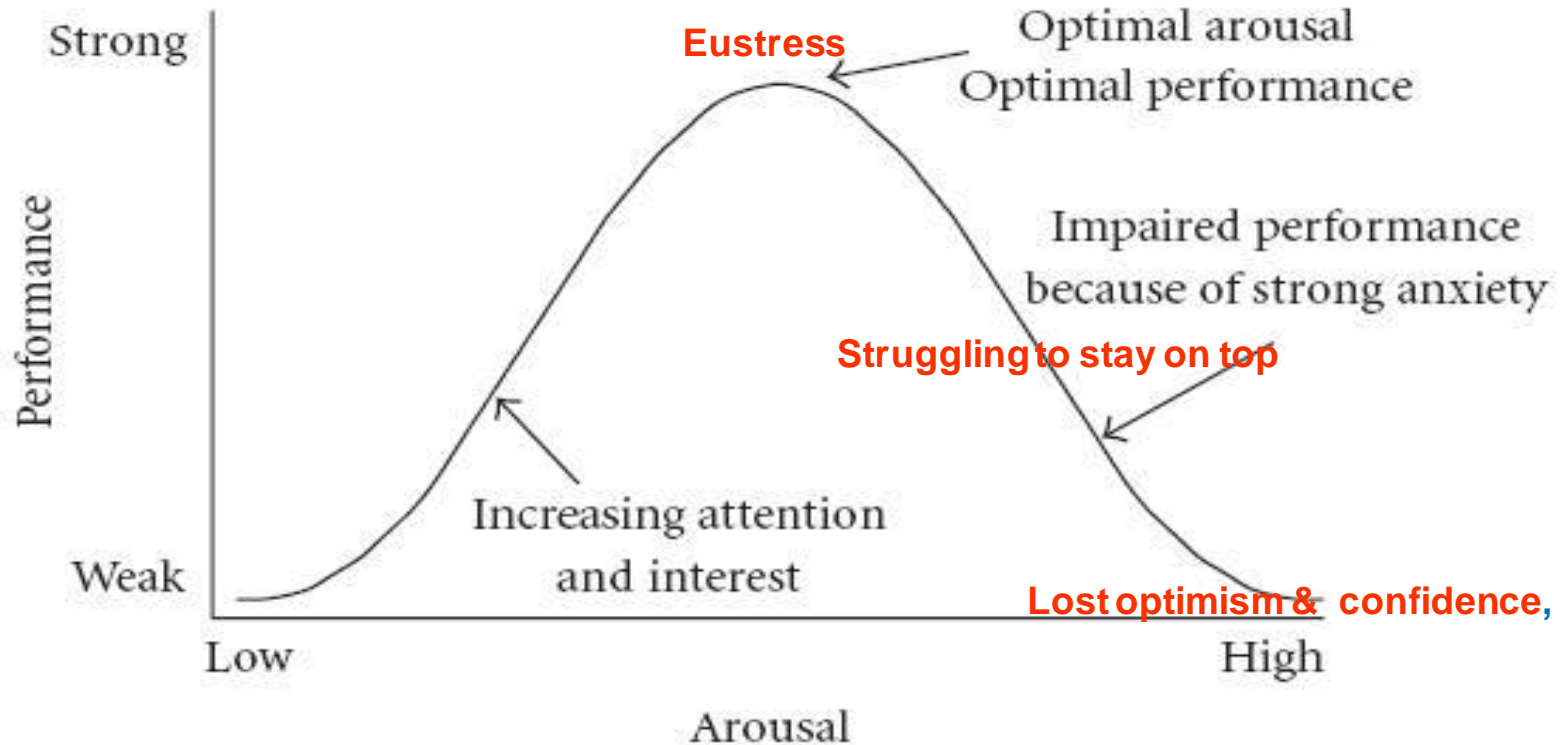
BEHAVIOURAL

- Can't be bothered
- Withdrawing
- Skipping
- Tardiness
- Isolation
- Procrastination
- Self-medicating
- Venting frustration
- Skipping, tardiness

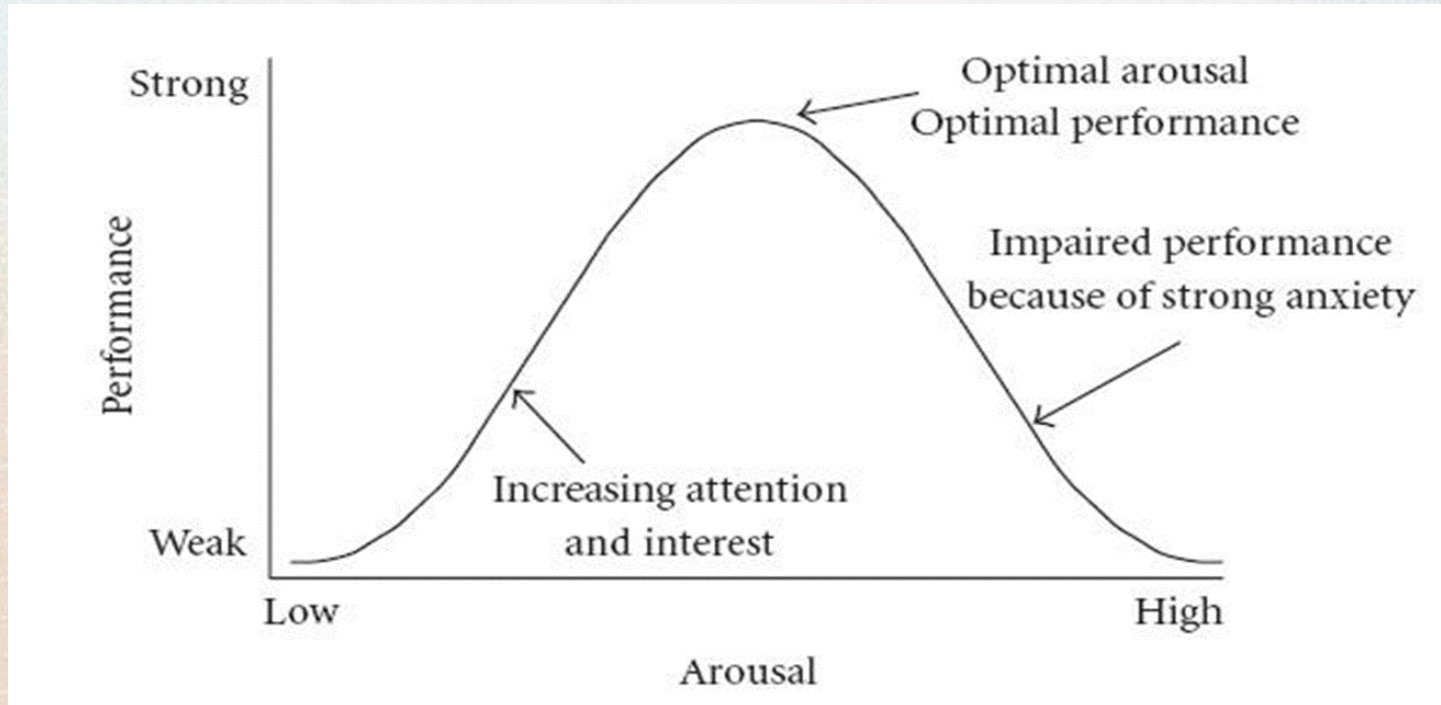
What It's Not

- Depression
- A bad day
- Stress
- An attitude problem
- A competence problem
- A “pull yourself up by your boot straps” problem

Slippery slope



You are invited to reflect on where you find yourself most of the time



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Recognizing Risk Factors

At Work
Personal

Risk factors at work:

- Feeling lack of fairness and justice
- Lack of control and autonomy
- Limited resources
- Micro-managing
- Lack of management support
- Work/life imbalance (at work and with home)
- Not working to your strengths
- Lack of recognition
- Lack of purpose
- Overwhelming workload



Personal risk factors

- Enmeshed with work
- Lack of work-life balance boundaries
- Feeling inadequate or incompetent
- Feeling you have limited or no control
- Unreasonable demands
- Poor fit to role – not working to your strengths
- Circumstances
- Life events/changes multiple and coinciding
- HGS – human giver syndrome

“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.” – Lou Holtz

Nonprofit Risk Factors

- Sense of urgency to care for community they serve
- High prevalence of HGS – human giver syndrome
- Work overload
- Restricted resources
- Emotional tiredness and compassion fatigue
- Inadequate support
- Nonprofit work may be all-consuming
- Organizational change

“Burnout is forgetting why you do what you do”

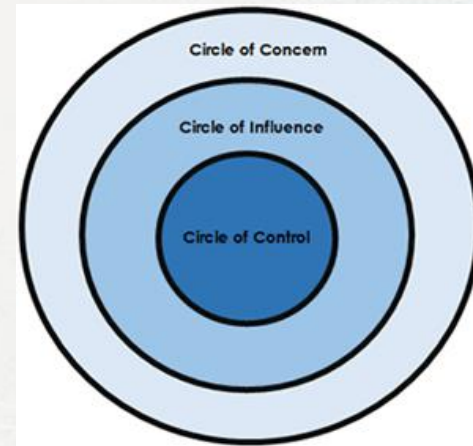
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Prevention and Recovery

Good news about burnout

- Burnout can be avoided,
- Burnout can be overcome,
- Burnout is often seen as an enriching turning point!



Organizational Level

People and communication

- Culture of transparency
- Listening & dialogue
- Team building and collaboration
- Trust and Autonomy

People and work engagement

- Purpose
- Strength-based feedback

Practical environment

- Access to resources
- Mental health supports
- Work distribution
- Train managers to recognize and address burnout
- Monitor and self-monitoring for manager burnout

Management

You

- Take care of yourself - you are the role model
- Get support (mentor, advisor)
- Role model respect, appreciation, collaboration

You and your team members

- Regular 1:1 meetings
- Informed open discussion
- “Focus me, free me, know me” approach
 - Expectations clear and priorities
 - Free from stress: resources, training, and tools
 - Know my strengths – do more of my best and help where needed
- Avoid one off fun and stress buster initiatives for burnout

“In dealing with those who are undergoing great suffering, if you feel “burnout” setting in, if you feel demoralized and exhausted, it is best, for the sake of everyone, to withdraw and restore yourself. The point is to have a long-term perspective.” — Dalai Lama XIV



Self Respect Prevention and Recovery – STEP 1

- Uniquely personal

Know thyself

- How are you doing?
- What is the root cause of your (di)stress?
- Reconnect with your purpose and meaning.
- What are your beliefs, attitudes, values?
- Are you true to them? Do they still serve you well?
- “What’s In It For Me” – Think Long Term

Self Respect Prevention and Recovery – STEP 2

Readiness:

Are you:

- Not thinking about change?
- Thinking about change now and then.
- Thinking about how and what.
- Do you have a plan of action?
- Are you taking action?
- Are you sticking to an action plan?
- Have you dropped off the action plan?
- Are you reviewing and adjusting your action plan and motivation?

You are invited to self reflect and to check your readiness for action

“Burnout is a sign that something in our life needs to change and that something might be us”

Self Respect Prevention and Recovery – STEP 2

Menu Items for Step 2 include (but are not limited to):

- Speak up
- Make requests, suggestions, recommendations and give feedback in the workplace
- Challenge harmful beliefs and HGS
- Listen to others about how you are doing
- Share with others how you are doing
- Give others permission to admit burnout
- Day to day practice in “stepping out”
 - mini-breaks
 - bio breaks
 - stress release
 - meditation
 - mindfulness
- Healthy nutrition
- Rest
- Exercise
- Be with people and socialize
- Get help



You are invited to brainstorm and share menu items for self-care and recovery.

Burnout in the nonprofit sector: What you need to know

- Burnout is real
- Burnout can have multiple root causes
- The nonprofit sector has unique risk factors for burnout
- Burnout can be prevented
- Burnout can be overcome
- There is life after burnout



“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another“: William James

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Thank You

Rensia Melles, rmelles@lyrahealth.com

Some Resources

Help resources:

- <https://togetherall.com/en-ca/> Online support community
- Canadian Mental Health Association CMHA

Articles and tips for burnout:

- <https://www.verywellmind.com/search?q=burnout>
- <https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/406727/how-to-overcome-burnout-with-strengths.aspx>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jun/08/a-career-change-saved-my-life-the-people-who-built-better-lives-after-burnout>

Breathing exercise:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxayUBd6T7M&t=10s&ab_channel=Calm

Guided meditation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Fy2GxrurO4&t=1026s&ab_channel=DrAmyGajjar (starts about 5 minutes in)

- Workplace: National standard psychological health and safety - <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/national-standard/>