



Mental Health Association of Northern Kentucky

A LEADER IN PROVIDING ADVOCACY, EDUCATION, AND SERVICES THAT PROMOTE MENTAL WELLNESS

EDUCATION AND SCREENING OUTREACH PARTNER FOR THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND
NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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TWELVE WAYS TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AND PREVENT BURN OUT

1. Build in Organizational Supports

- A. Block of time in the morning for employees to do daily organization and planning
- B. Have time open (if possible on Friday) for employees to complete miscellaneous business
- C. Encourage “time outs” that also reward professional development like workshops, conferences, and in-service trainings
- D. Build in more opportunity for job variety
- E. Sanction brief periods of withdrawal from direct contact with clients (lunch hour, breaks, planning time, “paperwork retreats”)
- F. Develop professional peer group support (staff / team meetings) in which sharing can occur
- G. Utilize judicious rotation of some job assignments
- H. Train staff for multiple roles ; switch roles occasionally
- I. Encourage teamwork, especially with difficult clients
- J. Develop career ladders for direct service staff
- K. Train and encourage use of personal stress management techniques
- L. Use flexible work policies
- M. Build in variety

2. Manage Self by Objectives

- A. Set realistic goals for the morning, give self clear sense of direction by clear objective for self. Prioritize goals and plan slightly less than you think you might do. (Remember Murphy’s second law : no matter what you do, it will take longer than you planned.)
- B. Pinpoint with large, persistent problems pinpoint what you plan to work with; set small goals
- C. Avoid procrastination, it can become a cycle (procrastination → guilt → procrastination)
- D. Take one thing at a time. When possible, try to give self satisfaction of completing specific goals.
- E. Keep work place organized and pleasing to the eyes.

3. Build in mini-vacations.

- A. Take short breaks during the day.
- B. Midday walks or other exercise.
- C. Desk-side exercises between meetings or tasks (chair pushup, isometric exercises, relaxation exercises, shoulder shrugs, fist squeeze)
- D. Vacation during lunch period and breaks. (call a friend, knit, talk with a co-worker, don’t do work straight through the day).

- E. Mental “desk-vacations” (e.g. mental meditation exercises, day-dreaming, “favorite spot” exercise).

4. Have Courage to be Imperfect.

- A. Learn to accept what you cannot change.
- B. Have clear separation between your personal life and career.
- C. Avoid taking too much responsibility for clients’ progress.
- D. Think small.
- E. Don’t expect rapid change.
- F. Promise less than you think you can achieve.
- G. Be open about shortcomings and get help from peers.
- H. Give help to peers.
- I. Set realistic goals and deadlines.
- J. Accept limitations, you won’t be able to reach all clients.
- K. Learn to say “no”.

5. Clarify and Update Career Goals

- A. Know what you want / need from your career.
- B. Periodically, check on your own progress and job satisfaction.
- C. Know the limits of your capability and avoid advancement to incompetence.

6. Blow Off Steam

- A. Exercise can provide physical a outlet for “fight” reaction
 - B. Plan time to work off stress, especially at time of highest stress.
- Examples : Running, tennis, yoga, bicycling, racquet ball, walking, gardening, basketball, punching bag, pounding on drums, etc.

7. Have Sounding Board

- A. Share worries / frustrations with someone you trust
- B. Enjoy catharsis before going home ; car pool and blow off steam with co-workers
- C. Share problems or frustrations at staff meetings

8. Avoid Self-Medication

- A. Alcohol, tranquilizers, etc. may be tempting to people under “high stress”. However, they have a “rebound effect” and later increase the body’s reaction to stress.
- B. Try reducing intake of caffeine, sugar, nicotine and salt. Increase your calcium intake and exercise.

9. Get Enough Sleep and Rest

- A. Give yourself at least 7 - 8 hours a night
- B. Listen to your body, recognize when you’re tired
- C. Plan time to relax at your critical period

10. Creative Loafing

- A. Have time when you don't need to accomplish anything (especially after work)
- B. Reward yourself with free-time activities and recreational outings
- C. "Lose yourself" in hobbies and activities
- D. Avoid letting recreation become another source of achievement stress

11. Calm the Work Area

- A. Anxiety is contagious and so is relaxation
- B. When working, monitor others' stress ; help them relax or recreate when on verge of distress
- C. Utilize relaxation exercises in work area.
- D. Avoid raising your voice unnecessarily ; foster calm work environment

12. Utilize Relaxation Exercises

- A. Visualize your "favorite spot in the world"
- B. Use the "Emptying Mind" exercise
- C. Use the "Progressive Relaxation" Technique