

Risks for Professional Burnout and Stress

Recognizing the Warning Signs

- Emotions
 - o Loss of enjoyment of previously enjoyed activities
 - o Increased irritability or anger
 - o **Feelings of helplessness or hopelessness**
- Cognitions
 - o Forgetfulness
 - o Overly critical self-talk
- Behaviors or Physical Symptoms
 - o Physical symptoms (i.e. chest pains, shortness of breath, stomach pain, headaches or heart palpitations) or panic attacks
 - o Loss of appetite
 - o Lack of energy
 - o Lack of productivity at work
 - o Increased absenteeism
 - o Increased illness
 - o Changes in sleep – sleeping more or less than normal with ample opportunity for sleep
 - o **Isolation** (can be identified in others)

Preventative Strategies

- Balance between personal life and work life
 - o Decrease your connection to your email/phone calls – put phone on silent and give yourself a break; ease into your day, don't start it by checking your emails
 - o Prioritize what is important to you (e.g. family dinners) and protect this
 - o Set limits – **learn to say NO to commitments that are not necessary**
 - o Take breaks from work and/or force yourself to leave work by a set time every day
 - o Resist the urge to take work home with you
- Relaxation techniques (make time in your schedule for this) (i.e. diaphragmatic breathing, meditation, listening to music)
- Sleep
 - o If you find yourself being kept awake because of new ideas/things to do the next day keep a pen and paper near you and make a to-do list for the next day
 - o Avoid sugary drinks and stimulants (i.e. caffeine) close to bedtime
 - o Have a set bedtime for yourself. This allows your body to unwind and anticipate sleep, rather than fighting it
- Eat a balanced diet
 - o Try not to skip meals (prepare meals ahead of time) and drink plenty of water
- Exercise
 - o Can help you feel more energized and motivated during the day and sleep better at night
- Understand what your stressors are
 - o Learn to recognize and anticipate your stressors to decrease stress before it starts

(Carter, 2006; Pirtle, 2006)

References

- Carter, S. B. (2006). When the Enemy Lies Within: Risk for Professional Burnout Among Family Lawyers. *American Journal of Family Law*, 20(3), 160–167. Retrieved from <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.pcom.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=i3h&AN=27246862&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Pirtle, J. (2006). Stressing Yourself Sick. *ABA Journal*, 92(9), 34–40. Retrieved from <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.pcom.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=i3h&AN=22323864&site=eds-live&scope=site>