



BREATHE Provider Well-Being Series

BURNOUT REDUCTION: ENHANCED AWARENESS, TOOLS, HANDOUTS AND EDUCATION

Presented by Michelle Saylers, PhD

MODULE 1: REMINDING OURSELVES TO BREATHE IN OUR WORK

MODULE 2: MANAGING OUR WORKLOAD

MODULE 3: CONNECTING WITH COLLEAGUES



Defining Burnout: A state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion as a result of chronic stress

Signs of Burnout:



Interpersonal:

Deterioration of relationships, Withdrawal from clients, family, friends



Occupational:

Lower job satisfaction, thinking of leaving job, poor job performance



Behavioral:

High levels of substance abuse



Physical and emotional:

Depression, irritability, insomnia

Causes of Burnout:

- **Client factors:**

High service needs

- **Job factors:**

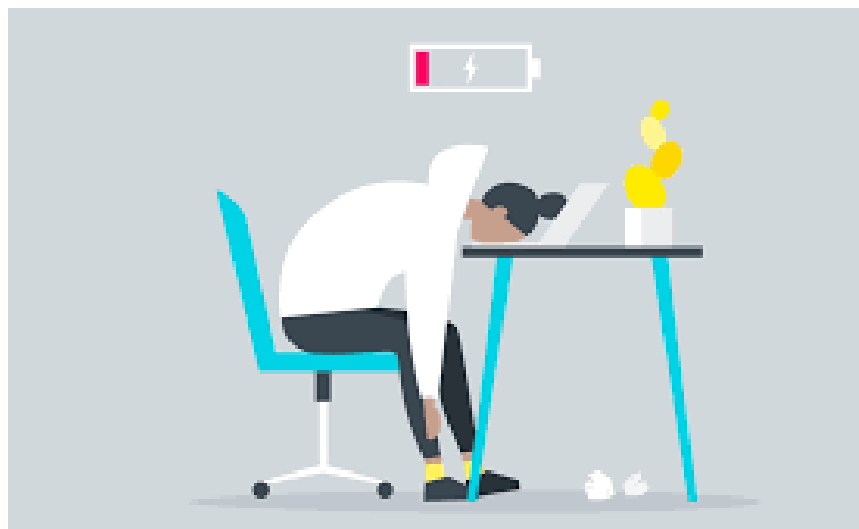
work overload, role conflict, role ambiguity

- **Personal factors:**

lack of support from family & friends, limited active coping skills

- **Organizational factors:**

lack of structure, lack of support from co-workers or leadership, low autonomy



Reducing burnout begins with awareness and then learning skills to address it.

Addressing Burnout:

PREVENTION PRINCIPLES:

- Personal Intention
- Permission to take care of yourself
- Present-Oriented

PRACTICES:

- Core Contemplative (e.g., mindfulness)
- Cognitive (e.g., reconnect with meaning)
- Time management
- Build social support

PLANNING:

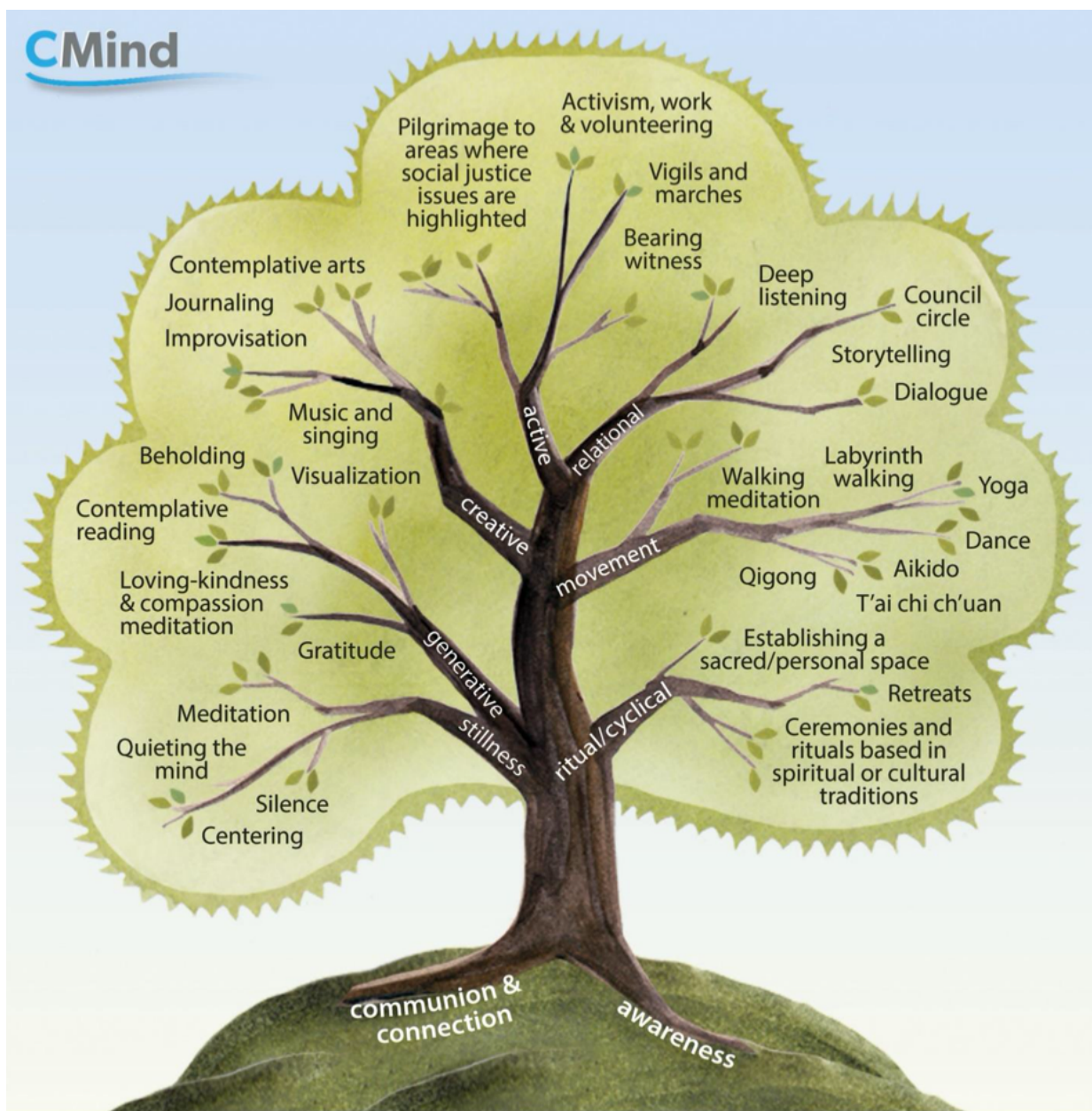
- S.M.A.R.T goals
- Write it down



CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES

WHAT ARE CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES?

Active strategies for focusing on the present and finding gratitude from reflecting on meaningful work experiences



Breathing Techniques

Alternate Nostril

Begin in a seated position, then place your right thumb on your right nostril. Take a deep inhale and exhale using your left nostril. Before beginning the next inhale, place your right ring finger on your left nostril. Inhale and exhale through your right nostril. Then switch back to your thumb on your right nostril, inhaling and exhaling through the left nostril. Follow this sequence at least three times.

Box Breathing

Begin in a seated position. On an inhale, count to 4 while breathing in. Hold your breath for 4 counts. On the exhale, count to 4 while breathing out. Follow this sequence at least three times.

Diaphragmatic (Belly) Breathing

Begin in a seated position, then place one hand on your chest and another on your belly, just below your ribs. Take a deep inhale through your nose, feeling your belly rise as you inhale. Slowly exhale through pursed lips, feeling your belly fall. The hand on your chest should remain stable as this type of breathing is focused on deep, belly breathing. Follow this sequence at least three times.



When can I use these techniques?

Contemplative practices can be used throughout the day, such as before a meeting, while driving to work, during a break, or any free time after work responsibilities.

Remember: Self-care is necessary for personal health and well-being. Normalizing self-care activities in your personal life and in the workplace can be an effective way to decrease burnout. Additionally, by taking care of one's self and engaging in self-care activities can help providers better serve their clients.

More examples of contemplative practices and breathing techniques can be found [here](#).

COGNITIVE PRACTICES

HOW CAN WE REFRAME OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT WORK?

By catching negative, irrational and/or stressful thoughts and replacing them with more realistic, valid and healthier thoughts.

Catch the negative or distorted thought and REFRAME it:

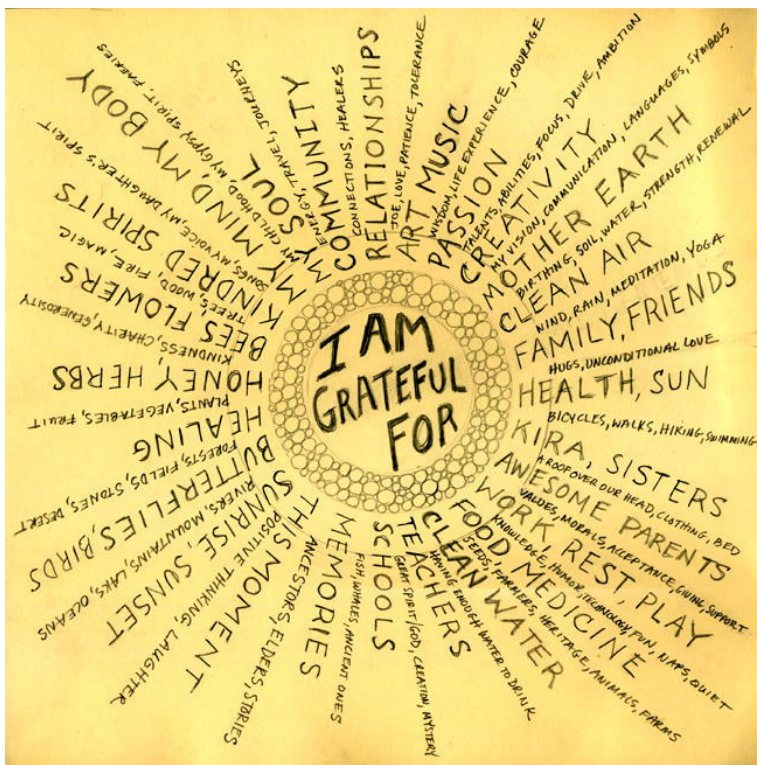
Instead of believing:

"I've always done so much for that client, and he only ever gets upset with me, and is always complaining."

Reframe the thought:

"Maybe he's having another hard day. I hope he appreciates the help I'm trying to give him, even if he shows appreciation differently."

Focus on Meaning and Gratitude



Reconnect with Meaning

Try it out exercise:

Think of a time when you were your best at work? What happened? What made it special for you?

Experience Gratitude

Try it out exercise:

Reflect on things about your work that bring you meaning, joy, and gratitude. What is one thing outside of work that you are grateful for?

TIME MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES



SET COMPASSIONATE BOUNDARIES



ORGANIZE YOUR TIME



CHANGE YOUR APPROACH AND EXPERIENCE WITH TIME

Setting Boundaries

1. How much do you work, and does that fall within your capabilities?
2. How much do you integrate work and life?
3. What do you do with your work time?

Choose what should take priority. It is ok to say NO.

Organizing Time

1. Set goals and prioritize activities to enhance productivity, limit wasteful activities, and make time for meaning and purpose.
2. Set up blocks of time for email responses, phone calls, meetings.
3. Schedule around your strengths.

Ask yourself: "What needs to be done? What renews my energy?"

Changing our Experience with Time

1. Clear thoughts to focus on current task
2. Practice contemplative exercises before moving to the next task
3. Reclaim "unwanted" parts of your day with intentional practices

Mindfulness, presence, and intentionality can influence our experience with time.

SOCIAL SUPPORT



Colleagues and co-workers can play a role in contributing to burnout. Common problems in the workplace include:

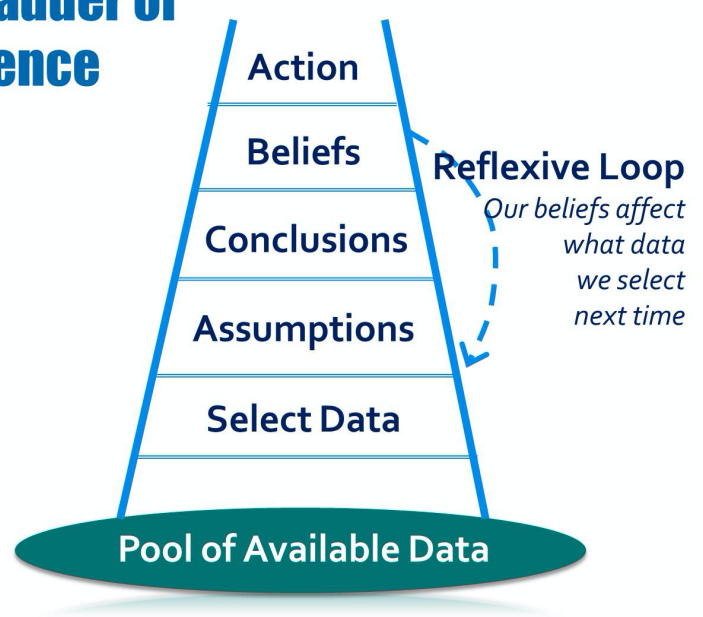
- Lack of respect
- Avoiding crucial conversations
- Lack of time, energy, or resources to build meaningful relationships

They can also play a role in reducing burnout.

How to Deal with Incivility in the Workplace

The Ladder of Inference

By using the ladder of inference, we can recognize how we observe others' behaviors and the actions that we take. The reflexive loop is associated with our perceived narratives about different situations and how becoming aware of the cycles that turn thought into action, can influence future observations and actions.



Check your place on the ladder

- Have I made an assumption?
- Is my assumption grounded in truth that requires action?

Seek support

- From colleagues
- From supervisor

Gain perspective on the perceived incivility

- Ask colleagues for potential clarification.
- "Help me understand..."

Create safe space and a positive culture by engaging with civility ourselves

- craft mindful emails
- build nurturing relationships inside and outside of work

Approaching Crucial Conversations



Crucial conversations involve three different components:

- *High stakes*
- *Varying opinions*
- *Strong emotions*

Natural responses to these conversations include **avoidance** and **confrontation**, which can lead to **tension** in the workplace.

Instead, approach these conversations with intentional dialogue.

Engaging in Intentional Dialogue

- Start with the heart: *What do I really want?*
- Identify threat: *Recognize when you or others feel threatened.*
- Make it safe: *Focus on mutual purpose and convey respect.*
- Tell your story through **STATE**.

Five Steps for Talking: STATE

S	• Share your Facts
T	• Tell Your Story
A	• Ask for Other's Path
T	• Talk Tentatively
E	• Encourage Testing

Building Relationships and Social Support

Strategies for relationship building:

- Invest in relationships outside of conflict
- Look for common ground
- Give positive feedback
- Practice acceptance and forgiveness
- Take a longitudinal perspective

Examples of relationship building strategies:

Give positive feedback:

What is one thing you appreciate that a colleague recently did?

Share this appreciation with them.

Invest in relationships:

Find someone that you can talk to about your dreams and joys, as well as stresses and concerns.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER



WHAT IS YOUR SELF-CARE RITUAL?

Identifying and creating practices of self-care will increase resilience against burnout. Begin to create mini-retreat rituals for renewal and practice them throughout the day (on your way to work, in between clients, and during moments of stress).

CREATE A BURNOUT PREVENTION AND WELLNESS PLAN THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Identify the strategies that renew you and incorporate them into your daily experiences:

- Practice breathing exercises
- Reconnect with meaning and gratitude
- Modify your experience with time
- Engage in intentional dialogue

If all of this seems too overwhelming to attempt at once, choose one or two practices that focus on certain skills you would like to expand on.

Remember: Take time to plan for you.



Resources:

Southeast MHTTC Archived Recording: [Breathe Module 1: Reminding Ourselves to Breathe in our Work](#) (March 23, 2021) Southeast Mental Health Technology Center.

Southeast MHTTC Archived Recording: [Breathe Module 2: Managing Our Workloads](#) (March 30, 2021). Southeast Mental Health Technology Center.

Southeast MHTTC Archived Recording: [Breathe Module 3: Connecting with Colleagues](#) (April 6, 2021). Southeast Mental Health Technology Transfer Center.

[Healthline Search Breathing Techniques](#) (Accessed July 26, 2021). Retrieved from <https://healthline.com>