Signs of Struggle:
Burnout, Depression, & Substance Abuse
Warning Signs of Burnout
Warning Signs of Burnout

What is Burnout?

**Emotional Exhaustion**
As emotional resources are depleted, we are no longer able to give of ourselves at a psychological level.

**Depersonalization**
Negative, cynical, and dehumanizing attitudes and feelings about patients or training.

**Reduced Personal Accomplishment**
Tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regard to one’s work with patients.
Warning Signs of Burnout

Emotional Symptoms of Stress

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Irritability
- Feeling depressed
- Intolerance of others
- Aggressiveness and/or anger
- Suspiciousness
- Fussiness
- Restlessness
- Anxiety
Warning Signs of Burnout

Behavioral Signs of Stress

- Difficulty getting to sleep
- Increased smoking
- Increased alcohol consumption
- Increased casual sex
- Over eating
- Obsessive dieting
- Grinding of teeth
- Facial Tic
- Finger or foot tapping
Warning Signs of Burnout

Physical Symptoms of Stress

- Headaches
- Dry mouth and/or throat
- Indigestion
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Diarrhea
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain
Warning Signs of Burnout

Signs of Stress in the Workplace

- Absenteeism
- Working long hours
- Missing deadlines
- Drop in productivity
- Conflicts with co-workers
- Resentment over pay
- Inability to take feedback
- Boredom
- Frustration
Warning Signs of Depression
Warning Signs of Depression

What is Major Depression?

Per the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V), experiencing at least 5 of the following symptoms for a period of 2 weeks can cause distress/impairment in social, occupational, or other important functioning.

- Depressed mood*
- Decreased interest or pleasure*
- Significant variations in weight or appetite (gain/loss)
  - Insomnia or Hypersomnia
  - Psychomotor agitation or retardation
  - Daily fatigue or energy loss
  - Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
  - Difficulties in concentration or decisiveness
  - Recurrent thoughts of death or suicidal ideation, plan, or attempt

*One of these symptoms must be present
Warning Signs of Depression

What is Depression?

Common additional symptoms of depression:

- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Impatience
- Sleep disturbances
- Tearfulness
- Increased isolation
- Somatic pain
- Substance abuse
- Low sex drive
- Recklessness or Self Sabotage
- Change in work quality or attention to detail
- Apathy or amotivation
- Hygiene changes
Warning Signs of Substance Abuse
Warning Signs of Substance Abuse

Signs & symptoms of substance abuse in the workplace:

- Frequently absent from work without reasonable explanations
- Arriving late consistently
- Missing appointments with patients
- Inaccessibility to patients and staff
- Inappropriate behavior with colleagues, staff, and patients
- Avoiding a supervisor or other colleagues
- Rounding on patients at odd hours
- Large quantities of drugs ordered
- Inappropriate orders and forgotten verbal orders
- A disorganized schedule and missed deadlines
- Heavy drinking at hospital functions
- Vague letters of reference
- Multiple prescriptions for family members
- Long lunches or unnecessary breaks
- Decreased chart and work performance

Warning Signs of Substance Abuse

Possible signs suggestive of alcohol dependence

**Signs & Symptoms of Addiction That Might Appear in the Workplace**

- Alcohol on breath
- Slurred speech
- Ataxia
- Erratic performance or decrement in performance
- Tremulousness
- “Out-of-control” behavior at social events
- Problems with law enforcement (e.g., domestic abuse, driving while intoxicated)
- Hidden bottles
- Poor personal hygiene
- Failure to remember events, conversations, or commitments (“blackouts”)
- Tardiness
- Frequent hangovers
- Poor early morning performance
- Unexplained absences
- Unusual traumatic injuries
- Mood swings
- Irritability
- Sweating
- Domestic/marital problems
- Isolation
- Leaving the workplace early on a regular basis

Warning Signs of Substance Abuse
Possible signs suggestive of opiate dependence

Signs & Symptoms of Addiction
That Might Appear in the Workplace

- Periods of agitation (withdrawal) alternating with calm (drug was just taken)
- Dilated pupils (opiate withdrawal)
- Pinpoint pupils (side effect of opiate)
- Excessive sweating
- Addition of long sleeves (to hide needle tracks)
- Frequent bathroom breaks (to take another dose)
- Frequent unexplained absences during workday
- Spending more hours at work than necessary (access source of drug)
- Volunteering for extra call
- Volunteering to provide extra breaks or refusing breaks

- Volunteering to clean operating rooms
- Volunteering to return waste drugs to pharmacy
- Rummaging through sharps containers
- Sloppy record keeping or discrepancies between charted dose and actual dose administered
- Excessive narcotic use charted for patients
- Assay of waste drug returned showing evidence of dilution
- Never returning any waste at the end of a case
- Patients arriving in postsurgical recovery room with pain out of proportion to charted narcotic dose

Warning Signs of Substance Abuse

Professional Lapses

Writing prescriptions for self, staff, family, friends

Requesting prescriptions from colleagues

Diverting patient’s medications for self use
Your lives as trainees are incredibly busy and complicated. As physicians, you are vulnerable to mood disorders, anxiety, and substance use problems. Please consider reaching out for help if you are struggling. These problems do have solutions and they are easier to manage together.

**McGaw Online Wellness Toolkit**

[http://mcgaw.northwestern.edu/wellness/index.html](http://mcgaw.northwestern.edu/wellness/index.html)

Includes anonymous mental health screening, self-assessment sheet, and resources for Physical, Emotional, and Financial wellness.

**McGaw Wellness Liaison: Ashley Bassett, MD**

[abassettmd@gmail.com](mailto:abassettmd@gmail.com)  |  (312) 834-3814

Dr. Bassett will triage issues and refer trainees for counseling or medical treatment as needed. Any trainee contact with Dr. Bassett will remain confidential and will not be communicated with the program, faculty, or institution, except in cases of imminent harm.

**Perspectives: Housestaff Assistance Program**


Housestaff can receive up to three free counseling sessions without the use of medical insurance.