

# PREVENTING RISK MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT – STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING YOUR RESILIENCE

Tatum O'Sullivan, RN, BSN, MHSA,  
CPHRM, DFASHRM, CPPS  
Healthcare Loss Control Expert  
Munich Re Specialty – North America



# OBJECTIVES



Explore challenges that cause stress and burnout for risk professionals.

Identify signs of increased stress and warnings to be aware of that may require intervention.

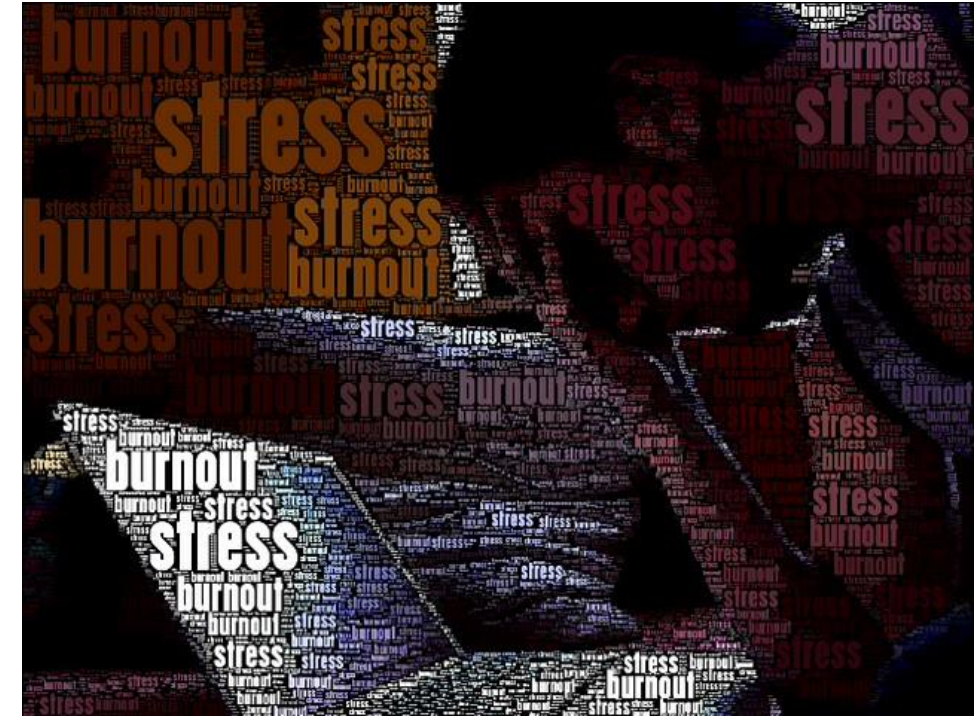
Review tools and resources to prevent burnout and promote resiliency and a life balance.

# BURNOUT IS...

“...a combination of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment caused by occupational **stress**.”

## Symptoms:

- Feeling tired or exhausted physically and emotionally
- No enthusiasm, and feelings of negativity toward your job, feelings of cynicism and emotional distance rather than empathy and compassion
- Reduced performance or inability to perform your job
- Decreased sense of accomplishment – feeling that nothing you do makes a difference



# STRESS IS...

“...a physical reaction to challenges encountered in life”

## Common Negative Effects:

### Physical Health Problems

- Heart Disease, High BP, Diabetes, Obesity
- Weakened Immune System

### Mental Health Issues

- Anxiety & Depression

### Cognitive Difficulties

- Impaired Cognitive Function

### Sleep Problems

- Fatigue → Other Physical and Mental Health Issues

### Behavioral Changes

- Over/Under-Eating, Smoking, Substance Abuse





**WHY IS RISK  
MANAGEMENT SO  
STRESSFUL?**



# RISK MANAGEMENT & STRESS

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Victim Impact

- Cumulative Stress
- Emotional Labor
- Abusive Supervision & Bullying
- Competing Loyalties & Duties

## Unrealistic Expectations

- Lack of Control
- Imposter Phenomenon – Out of Scope

## Lack of Recognition

## Pace

- Decreasing Teams - Workload
- Long Hours - Round the Clock

## Being “On”

- Zoom Fatigue
- Building Relationships
- Confidentiality

“Risk Professionals have great responsibility but almost never have a matching scope of authority” – Alan Card

# A STORY OF BURNOUT IN 2021

- Went remote in March 2020
- Role expanded
- Meeting schedule exploded
- Struggled with some team members
- Patients' opinions changed
  - Unhappy, challenged policies
- Uncertainty
- Workforce turnover & burnout

# PERSONALLY

- Credibility/Responsive
- Confidentiality – secret keeper
- Society admires & respects long hours
- Stigma – Afraid to wave the flag – needed to be approachable
- Feelings of anxiety → depression
- Breaking point – vacation July 2021
- Constant exhaustion
- I wasn't the only one



# IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING STRESS, YOU MAY...

## feel...

- Irritable, angry, impatient or wound up
- Over-burdened or overwhelmed
- Anxious, nervous or afraid
- Like your thoughts are racing and you can't switch off
- Unable to enjoy yourself
- Depressed
- Uninterested in life
- Like you've lost your sense of humor
- A sense of dread
- Worried or tense
- Neglected or lonely
- Existing mental health problems getting worse

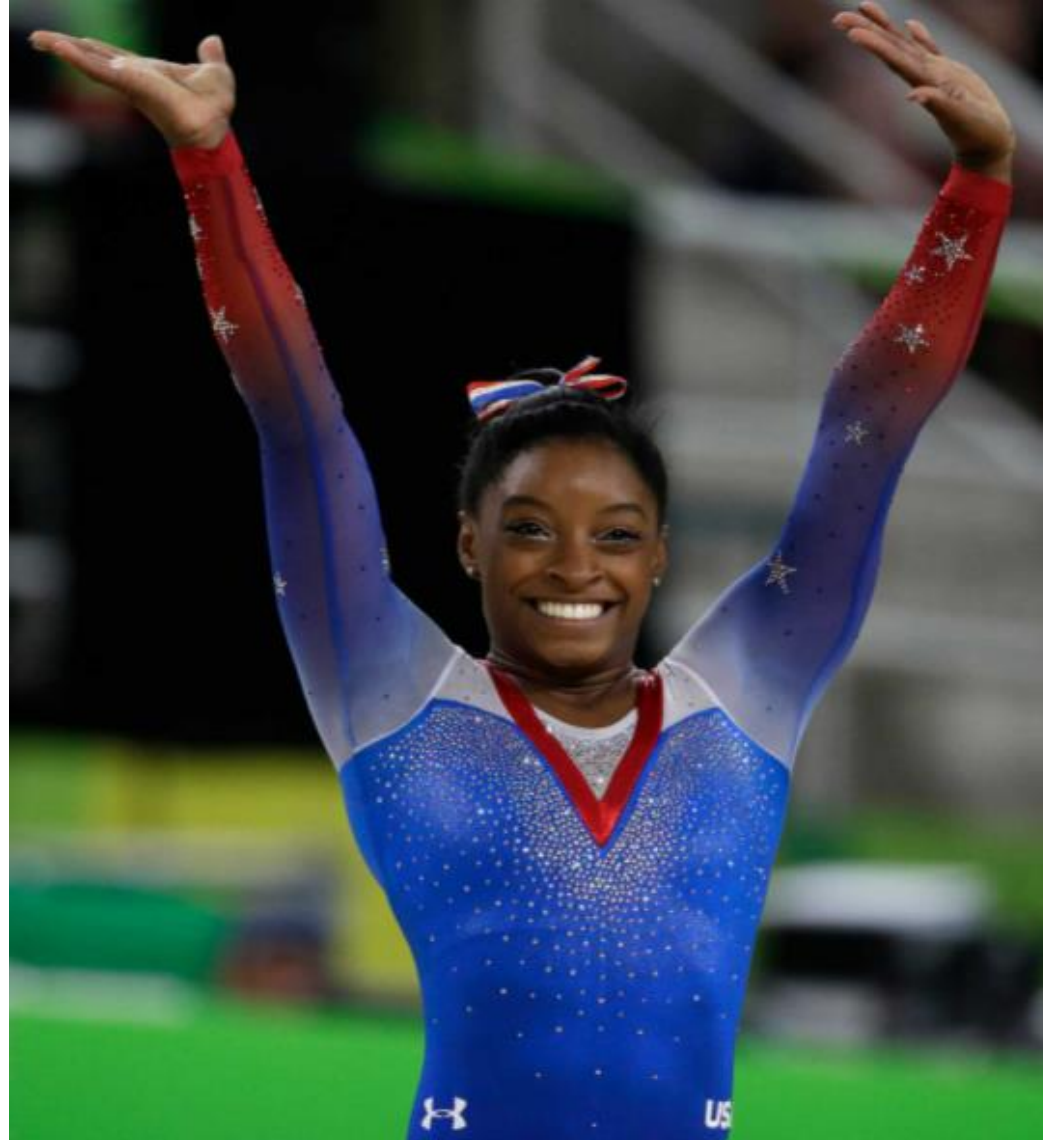
## have physical signs...

- Difficulty breathing
- Panic attacks
- Blurred eyesight or sore eyes
- Sleep Problems
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches and headaches
- Chest pains and high blood pressure
- Indigestion or heartburn
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Feeling sick, dizzy or fainting
- Sudden weight gain or weight loss
- Developing rashes or itchy skin
- Sweating
- Changes to your period or menstrual cycle
- Existing physical health problems getting worse

## behave...

- Find it hard to make decisions
- Unable to concentrate
- Unable to remember things, or make your memory feel slower than usual
- Constantly worry or have feelings of dread
- Snap at people
- Bite your nails or pick at or itch your skin
- Grind your teeth or clench your jaw
- Experience sexual problems
- Eat too much or too little
- Smoke, use recreational drugs or drink alcohol more than you usually would
- Restless, like you can't sit still
- Cry or feel tearful
- Spend or shop too much
- Not exercise as much or exercise too much
- Withdraw from people around you

# OVERCOMING THE STIGMA



# HOW DO I FIGHT STIGMA?

- **Talk Openly About Mental Health**
- **Educate Yourself And Others**
- **Be Conscious Of Language**
- **Encourage Equality Between Physical And Mental Illness**
- **Show Compassion For Those With Mental Illness**
- **Choose Empowerment Over Shame**
- **Be Honest About Treatment**
- **Let The Media Know When They're Being Stigmatizing**
- **Don't Harbor Self-Stigma**

DURING THE AVERAGE WEEK HOW  
OFTEN DO YOU EXPERIENCE SIGNS  
OF STRESS?

- a. Every day
- b. 3-4 days a week
- c. 1-2 days a week
- d. Never



# THE 12 STAGES OF BURNOUT



## Stage 1

You feel there is a strong need to prove yourself



## Stage 2

You keep working harder and harder to achieve this



## Stage 3

You begin to neglect your own needs more



## Stage 4

You are conflicted and blame others or the situation



## Stage 5

You change your values to focus on work more



## Stage 6

You deny the problems that arise due to work stress



## Stage 7

You withdraw from social life and your family as well



## Stage 8

Your behavior changes which upsets your loved ones



## Stage 9

Depersonalization happens, you do not feel like yourself



## Stage 10

You feel empty and numb, substance abuse can occur



## Stage 11

You feel depressed, lost and completely exhausted



## Stage 12

You mentally and physically collapse, full burnout

# EVIDENCE-BASED WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS

## Exercise

- Releases Endorphins, Improves Sleep

## Mindfulness or Meditation

- Train Mind to Focus on Present

## Sleep Hygiene

- Consistent Schedule, Sleep Conducive Environment, & Avoiding Caffeine & Alcohol at Bedtime

## Time Management

- Prioritize Tasks & Manage Time Effectively

## Social Support



# STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING/COMBATING

- Identify the cause
- Hobby – music/art
- Mindfulness
- Meditation
  - Apps
- Medical Care
- Therapy – early on
- Coaching
- EAP
- Alcohol
  - To drink or not to drink
- Create balance in your life
- Supportive Network - Talk it out
- Take a time out
- Healthy Lifestyle
- Faith
- Yoga
- Peer Support
- Self Care
- Breath
- Exercise
- Monitor Social Media Impact/Use
- Boundaries



me going on a stupid little daily walk  
For my stupid physical and mental health



# WHAT TO DO AT WORK

- **Set manageable goals each day**

- Research shows that the more control we have over our work, the less stressed we get.
- Be realistic about workloads and deadlines
- Make a “to do” list
- Ask for help when necessary

- **Be efficient with your time at work**

- Divide big projects it into smaller tasks
- Give yourself small rewards upon each completion - 5 minute break or a walk to the coffee

- **Ask for flexibility**

- Research shows that employees who work flexible schedules are more productive and loyal to their employers

- **Tune in**

- Listen to your favorite music at work to foster concentration, reduce stress and anxiety, and stimulate creativity
- Studies show the benefits of music in everyday life, including lowered blood pressure

- **Communicate effectively**

- Be honest with colleagues or your boss when you feel you're in a bind
- Rethink your strategy in times of disagreement or stand your ground, calmly and rationally - Make allowances for other opinions & compromise
- Retreat before you lose control, and allow time for all involved to cool off

- **Give yourself a break**

- No one's perfect! Allow yourself to be human and just do the best you can.

# SETTING BOUNDARIES AT WORK

**By**

Maintaining a good life-work balance

Keeping good mental health practices while working

Upholding a reasonable workload

**Helps to**

Raise productivity

Lower work-related stress

Raise your work satisfaction

Set an example for others

Reduce the risk of burnout

# EMOTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Avoiding engaging in someone's bad mood

Recognizing your emotions

Delegating work to others appropriately

Talking to your manager about how you prefer to receive feedback

Taking time off

Asking for advice

Building professional relationships

Respecting other professionals' boundaries



# MENTAL BOUNDARIES

Establishing the set hours you work

Advising management on strategies for more efficient meetings

Not gossiping with colleagues at work

Setting messages on instant messaging to alert others that you're focusing

Establish boundaries at home

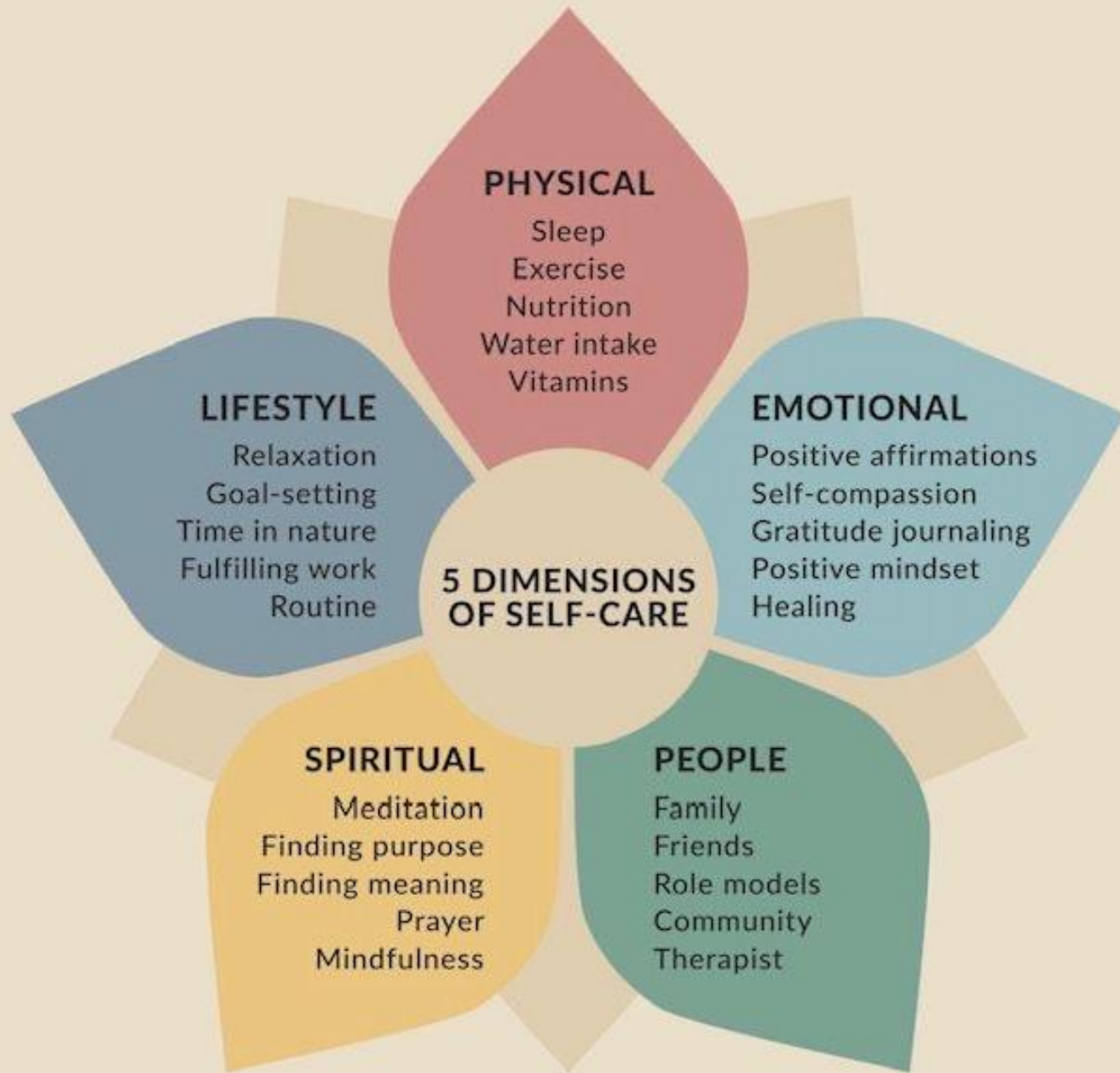
Work from home can make this more challenging

Prepare for confrontations

Practice saying "NO"







**SELF**  
*Care*  
IS NOT SELFISH

# TYPES OF REST



## Physical

Rest the body: sleep, naps, breathing, yoga/stretching, meditation, stillness.



## Mental

Rest the mind: regular brain-breaks during your work day, music, silence, journalling.



## Emotional

Emotional rest: Expressing emotions, sharing/being witnessed, therapy, journalling, self-care, stopping people-pleasing.



## Sensory

Rest the senses: lying down or napping with eye mask and ear plugs, silence, turn off devices, turn down lights.



## Spiritual

Spiritual rest: Doing things that provide meaning, meditation, spiritual practice, community.



## Social

Social rest: Spending time with supportive people, filling your own battery, nurturing important relationships.



## Creative

Creative rest: Making creative spaces, putting beauty around you, being in nature, resting the brain, being childlike, reawaken wonder.

*Inspired by Sacred Rest and the work of Dr Sandra Dalton-Smith*

[www.startwithyou.co](http://www.startwithyou.co)

# HOW CAN WE CREATE BALANCE?

Evaluate your time spent at work (physically & mentally)

Is it really that urgent?

Boundary setting

Give yourself permission to let go



# WHAT IS RESILIENCY?



Resilience is the ability to cope with and recover from setbacks, change, or uncertainty. People who remain calm in the face of disaster have resilience.<sup>1</sup>

People with psychological resilience are able to use their skills and strengths to respond to life's challenges.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of falling into despair or hiding from issues by using unhealthy coping strategies, resilient people face life's difficulties head-on.<sup>2</sup>

1.Horn SR, Feder A. [Understanding resilience and preventing and treating PTSD](#). *Harv Rev Psychiatry*. 2018;26(3):158-174

2.Cherry, K. [Resilience: Meaning, Types, Causes, and How to Develop It](#)

# WHAT DOES RESILIENCY LOOK LIKE?

Being in control

Able to solve problems

Strong social support

Showing self-compassion

Controlling emotions

Good communicator

Survivor mentality

Positive view of self and abilities

"It's not about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward."



# HOW DO I BECOME MORE RESILIENT?

- Find purpose
- Reframe negative thoughts – small ways to tackle problems
- Focus on the positive
- Seek support
- Focus on what is within control
- Manage stress
- Develop problem solving skills
- Establish goals
- Keep working on your skills and learn from the past
- **Make yourself a priority!**



# WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Without treatment, burnout can impact physical and mental health

Burnout can lead to serious complications

Consider seeing treatment if:

- Experiencing stress-related symptoms including headaches or chronic pain

- Feeling overwhelmed, unhappy, or dissatisfied at work

- Depression or anxiety related to work

- Using substances to cope with work stress

- Thoughts of self harm

# SOME THOUGHTS...

Allow time to focus on what matters

Increase focus on **life-work** balance

Take time for yourself

Recognize you are just one person and cannot do it all

Know when it's ok to say "no"

**Thank You**

Tatum O'Sullivan  
tosullivan@munichre.com



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
TAKE CARE  
OF YOU**