

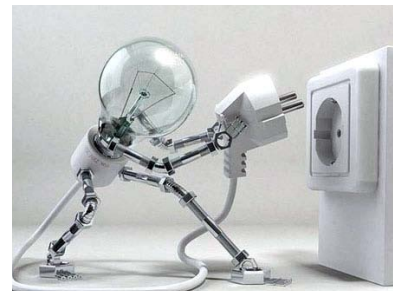


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"Syndrome of emotional burnout"

The present theme is very important for people working in sphere of "helper" professions. In the frames of realization of our project we often face the problem of emotional burnout among the experts who work in "person – person" sphere. We included this theme in our work for the change agents who participated in our trainings.

We hope the information given in the bulletin will be useful for the employees of expert centers and for the colleagues we are collaborating with.



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§ 1 Syndrome of emotional burnout

Definition

Emotional burnout is the syndrome developing on a background of chronic stress and leading to an exhaustion of emotional and personal resources of a working person.

Syndrome of emotional burnout is the most dangerous professional illness of those who work with people.

Syndrome of emotional burnout is the result of the constant or periodic emotional loadings connected with intensive interaction with people during a long period. Such intensive loadings are especially met in sphere of public health, education and social services in which experts render support to people with psychological, social and physical problems.

Burnout is a painful feeling of impossibility to help suffering people, and feeling of that you can not give them anything anymore. (A. Pines, E. Aronson. Burnout: from tedium to personal growth, New York, 1981).

Originally this term was applied towards the people working in sphere of "helper" professions: doctors, priests, teachers, lawyers, social workers, psychotherapists, etc. Nowadays "the group of risk" has extended up to all area of professions "person – person". Managers on ART projects, advertising and PR exactly belong to this group.

On the one hand syndrome of burnout is a personal problem of a person; on the other hand it is a problem of the organization in which the person works. When person has syndrome of burnout the efficiency of activity of the person reduces, the quantity of mistakes increase, a wish to leave or to forget problems appears, wrong decisions are taken, the personnel is wrongly hired and fired, the inefficient decisions are taken that can cause huge financial and other losses.

§ 2 Stages of emotional burnout

Emotional burnout appears as a result of internal accumulation of negative emotions without corresponding "discharge", or "getting rid" of them. It leads to an exhaustion of emotional and personal resources of a person. From the point of view of the concept of stress (G.Selje), emotional burnout is the distress or the third stage of the general adaptable syndrome - a stage of exhaustion.

Syndrome of emotional burnout develops gradually. It passes three stages (Maslach, 1982)

The first stage

- emotions and feelings become weak; the expert unexpectedly notices like everything is still quite normal, but... it is so boring and empty in soul;
- positive emotions disappear, some dispassionateness in attitudes with members of family appears;
- condition of anxiety and dissatisfaction appears; on coming back home, even more often it would be desirable to tell: «do not bother me, leave me alone!»

The second stage:

- Misunderstandings with clients appear, the expert begins to talk badly about his colleagues;
- Hostility starts to be shown gradually at the presence of clients; it begins as hardly controlled antipathy, and then it becomes irritation. Such behavior of the expert is an unconscious feeling of self-safety while communication and that exceeds a safe level for organism.

The third stage:

- imagination of values of life become weak, the emotional attitude towards the world become dull, the person becomes dangerously indifferent to everything, even to his own life;
- Such person can still keep external respectability and some aplomb, but his eyes lose shine of interest to anything, and almost physical cold of indifference settles in his soul.

§ 3 Symptoms of emotional burnout

Aspects of syndrome of emotional burnout

There are three aspects of emotional burnout.

The first - reduction of self-esteem.

As a result such "burned out" workers feel feebleness and apathy. Further it can proceed in aggression and despair.

The second - loneliness.

People suffering from emotional burnout, are not capable to come into normal contact with clients. They consider clients as objects, not personalities.

The third - emotional exhaustion, somatization.

The weariness, apathy and depression that accompany emotional burnout, lead to serious physical indispositions - gastritis, migraine, increased arterial pressure, syndrome of chronic weariness, etc.

Burnout appears itself:

- In condition of emotional and physical exhaustion with lack of motivation to work and lowered trust to others;

- In depersonalization of clients, cynicism and lack of care in relation to them;

- In self-charge, depression and deep sensation of a failure.

Syndrome of burnout entails the whole spectrum of the phenomena, among which are:

- Psychosocial exhaustion,
- Weakness or sharpness of emotions,
- Propensity to confrontation,
- Physical and mental weariness,
- Astenisation (weakness in vitality),
- Psycho-somatic frustrations,
- Depressive condition develops,
- Syndrome of chronic weariness and irritation appear,

- Doubts in common self-utility and sensation of senselessness of life appear, self-estimation is reduced,
- Constant anxiety concerning professional, sexual and personal inconsistency develops,
- It seems to the person, that he does not have future, that life has ended, and it has no sense,
- There is a negative and cynical attitude to partners, clients, colleagues, family,
- There is a reduction of professional achievements,
- There is a substitution of productive creative activity by formal discharge of duties,
- The person is not capable to distract from work and problems,
- Absence of ability to think logically - to consider a problem from different angles, to estimate set of all factors, to predict the result.

Suddenly the person understands that he cannot go on living this way; that he has neither strengths nor desire to carry on his usual daily burdens. The person breaks, feeling universal weariness and indifference; he understands that he has exhausted all his precious vital resources; that he is exhausted morally, mentally and physically, that he has "burnt out from within". By the way, it is possible to "burn out" not only on favorite creatively interesting job, but also on unloved, uninteresting and badly paid job that like an ugly bog slowly makes you drown in it.

Factors of emotional burnout and groups of risk

§ 4

Personal factor

First of all it is the feeling of own importance on a workplace, an opportunity of professional promotion, an autonomy and a level of control by managers. (A.Pane, 1982). If the expert feels the importance of his activity he becomes invulnerable enough for emotional burnout. If he considers his work insignificant the syndrome

develops faster. Its development is promoted also by dissatisfaction with professional growth, excessive dependence on opinion of other people and lack of autonomy and independence.

Role factor

Researches showed that development of burnout is influenced essentially by the conflict of roles and role uncertainty (H.Kujnarpuu), and also professional situations in which joint actions of employees substantially are not coordinated: there is no integration of efforts, but thus there is a competition (K.Kondo). And the harmonious, coordinated collective work in a situation of the responsibility as though protects the worker of social-psychological service from development of syndrome of emotional burnout, even if work loadings are essentially higher.

Organizational factor

Development of the syndrome is influenced by a long-hours work; not any one, but uncertain (an illegibility of functional duties) or not estimated one. Thus bad influence is also brought by the style of management (that was exposed to criticism many times) at which the chief does not allow the employee to show independence by a principle «the initiative is a subject to a punishment») and with that the chief deprives the employee the feeling of the responsibility for the business, comprehension of importance and importance of carried out work.

The social workers specializing in the field of HIV/AIDS, are exposed to stress practically at all levels of their work.

Major factors of stress are the specificity of requirements of the client caused by the wide-spread discrimination and the prejudiced attitude in society towards people living with HIV, and the atmosphere of despair and hopelessness that the majority of clients have.

In some cases these problems become more complicated for the worker because of feelings related to his own HIV status. Constant presence of stress factors leads to fast mental and physical exhaustion and, as consequence, to significant turnover of staff among social workers.

Taking into account the amount of time, means and energy which are necessary for training the personnel of services of social support, the maintenance of further support of them is extremely

important. Having such support it will be possible to keep at least the most skilled staff.

Such support includes various kinds of activity on reduction of influence of stress, the organization of group of mutual support, restrictions in amount of clients for one worker, taking into account the gravity of a condition of the client and the character of his requirements.

Prevention of emotional burnout

§ 5

It is necessary to try to warn burnout. For this purpose it is necessary to investigate motives of a choice of an assisting profession, and then constantly "to trace" all displays of stress, to create healthy system of support and to aspire to live with joyful and physically active life outside a working situation.

It is important to note one more aspect - to which in the majority of sources it is not given attention - is an apathy and loss of interest which develop in the workers who in the middle of the career quit study and as though cease to grow professionally. They rely on the settled models of communication with clients, i.e. they treat each new client as previous one.

The prominent aspect for granting the qualitative services on social support is introduction of principles of supervision on a workplace. Supervision enables the social worker to look at himself "from side", to check up his own knowledge, to discuss with colleagues a situation or complications in work with clients, to make the analysis of the carried work and to make the plan of work for the following period. Besides it, supervision promotes strengthening of belief in own forces and in opportunities of the client.

To prevent burnout it is necessary to create training environment around the employee, he must have precisely definite duties and working loadings.

The qualities assisting to the expert to avoid emotional burnout:

- good health and conscious, purposeful care of own physical condition (regular sports, healthy way of life).
- a high self-esteem and confidence in

abilities and opportunities;

- experience of successful overcoming on professional stress;
- ability to vary logically in intense conditions;
- high mobility;
- sociability;
- independence;
- aspiration to rely on own forces.
- ability to form and support positive, optimistic models and values - concerning himself, other people and life in general.

How to avoid syndrome of emotional burnout?

1. Be attentive to yourself: it will help you notice the first symptoms of weariness in due time.
2. Love yourself or at least try to like yourself.
3. Choose the business you like, in compliance with your propensities and opportunities. It will allow you to find yourself, to believe in your own forces.
4. Don't search happiness or rescue in work. It is not a refuge but activity which is good in itself.
5. Stop to live life of others. Please, live your life. Live not instead of people but together with them.
6. Find time for yourself; you have the rights not only for work but also for your private life.
7. Learn to comprehend soberly events of each day. Make it tradition to revise the events at evenings.
8. If you want to help very much to someone or make his work for him, ask yourself a question: Does he really need it? Maybe he can do it himself?

Coin-box of exercises and methods of prevention of emotional burnout

We introduce you a coin box of the methods collected on trainings on prevention of syndrome of emotional burnout among doctors, psychologists and consultants. This coin-box will allow to expand your choice, basing on experience of others.

On work:

- Organization of a workplace; creation the most comfortable conditions.
- Constant improvement of professional skills; trainings.
- Discussion of difficult work situations with colleagues.
- Keeping the regime of work, rest and meal.
- Defining the purposes and opportunities of the further career growth.
- Change of work places (as an extreme variant).
- Search of positive moments in routine work.
- Relaxation in proportion to loadings.
- Vacations.

Outside of work:

- Fiction (including philosophical)
- Different kinds of art.
- Watching comic films.
- Favorite movies.
- Dances, yoga, shaping.
- Healthy food.
- Different kinds of sports, walk.
- Sauna.
- Aromatherapy, massage, diet.
- Counseling of psychologist.
- Communication with relatives, friends.
- Sex.
- Picnic, travel (trip to "a beautiful place").

§ 5 Self-control

Definition

Self-control is management of own psycho-emotional state, achievable by the influence of the person on himself with the help of words, mental images, control of muscular tone and breath.

Thus, self-control can be carried out with the help of four basic means used separately or in various combinations.

As a result of self-control there can be three basic effects:

- Effect of relaxation (elimination of emotional intensity);
- Effect of restoration (easing of displays of exhaustion);
- Effect of activation (increase of psycho-physiologic reactance).

Duly self-control acts as original psycho-hygienic means that prevents accumulation of the residual phenomena of overstrain, promoting the completeness of restoration of the forces, normalizing an emotional background of activity, and also strengthening mobilization of resources of whole organism.

Ways of self-control:

- Laughter, smile, humor;
- Thoughts about good and pleasant things;
- Various movements like strengthening and relaxations of muscles;
- Watching flowers in room, a landscape behind a window, photos and other pleasant or expensive things;
- Mental reference to the God, the universe or great idea;
- "Bathing" (real or mental) in solar beams;
- Inhalation of fresh air;
- Recitation;
- Saying praises or compliments to somebody just for pleasure.

Exchange of experience § 6

Experience of the Expert Center

The team of the Expert Center "Mental health and HIV/AIDS" practices various methods of prevention and methods of self-control for managing own psycho-emotional condition.

We want to share our experience in prevention of emotional burnout among employees of the Expert Center and change-agents.

1. Methods of breath control is an effective means of influence on muscles tone and emotional part of brain. Slow and deep breath (with participation of stomach muscles) lowers the excitability of nervous centers and promotes muscular relaxation. Often (chest) breath, on the contrary, provides a high level of activity of organism and supports nervous-psychical intensity.

2. It is known, that "a word can kill, a word can rescue". The second signaling system is the supreme regulator of human behavior.

Verbal influence involves the conscious mechanism of autohyponosis, there is a direct influence on psycho-physiological functions of organism. Formulations of autohyponosis are constructed as simple and brief statements, with positive orientation (without a particle "not").

For this purpose we use simple techniques – in the office of the Center we place slogans "We can do it!", "We're together!", etc.

3. Under influence of mental loadings the muscular clips or tension appear. Skill to weaken them allows to remove the psychological intensity and to restore forces quickly.

As it is not possible to achieve a complete relaxation of all muscles at once, it is necessary to concentrate attention on the most intense parts of body.

The employees of the Center use various techniques of Thay-Tzi under the supervision of the trainer on Chi-kung.

4. The employees of the Center attend sport trainings, yoga, dances, swimming-pool, make trips to mountains, snowboarding and skiing.

5. Trips outside the city are also organized by the employees of the Center.

6. Trainers of the Center have conducted two-day training on prevention of syndrome of burnout in the beginning of 2008. For change-agents it is planned on August 2008.

7. The employees of the Center attend courses of improvement of qualification, cooperate with other various organizations and exchange the experience.

Recommendations

The great role in struggle against this problem belongs, first of all, to the worker himself. Observing the recommendations listed below, the employee not only can prevent occurrence of syndrome of emotional burnout, but also achieve decrease the degree of its acuteness.

1. Defining short-term and long-term objectives.

Testifying that the person is on a correct way not only provides a feedback, but also raises long-term motivation. Achievement of short-term objectives is a success which raises a degree of self-education. One should not forget that the purpose should be concrete, measurable, achievable and realistic.

2. Use of "time-outs".

For maintenance of mental and physical well-being "time-outs", i.e. rest from work and other loadings are very important. Sometimes it is necessary "to escape" from vital problems and to have a good time, it is necessary to find an occupation which would be fascinating and pleasant.

3. Mastering with skills of self-control.

Mastering with such psychological skills as relaxation, ideomotor acts, definition of the purposes and positive internal speech promote reduction of stress level that leads to "burnout". For example, definition of the real purposes helps to balance professional work and private life.

4. Professional development and self-improvement.

One of the ways of prevention of syndrome of emotional burnout is the exchange of the professional information with representatives of other services. In general, cooperation gives sensation of world wider than that one existing inside of a separate collective.

For this purpose there are various courses of improvement of qualification, various professional, informal associations, conferences and meetings for people with experience, who work in other systems. There it is possible to talk on different and abstract topics.

5. Avoiding of competition.

In life there are a lot of situations when we cannot avoid competition. But the great achieving to win makes pressure and anxiety, makes the person too much aggressive, and that promotes occurrence of syndrome of emotional burnout.

6. Participation in groups of self-help for professionals.

When the worker analyzes the feelings and sensations and shares them with others, the probability of burnout is considerably reduced, or this process is not so obviously expressed. Therefore it is recommended for employees of the organizations in difficult working situations to exchange opinions with colleagues and render professional support to each other. If the worker shares the negative emotions with colleagues, those can find for him the reasonable decision of the problem.

7. Maintenance of good sport shape.

Between body and mind there is a close interrelation. The chronic stress influences the person; therefore it is very important to support good sport shape with the help of physical exercises and a rational diet. Bad diet, alcoholic drinks, tobacco, decrease or excessive increase of weight aggravate the displays of syndrome of emotional burnout.

If syndrome of emotional burnout is already the integral attribute of the personality of the worker there is a necessity in professional psychological help.

§ 8 Conclusion

In conclusion we shall note the following:

In work on prevention of psychological intensity the primary role should be given to development and strengthening of cheerfulness, belief in people, constant confidence in success of affairs.

The vital success cannot be achieved without effort, sometimes even without heavy losses. It is necessary to be ready to pass through abuses and losses with the least sufferings. For this purpose it is necessary to learn how to prevent passing of negative things and feelings into private emotions.

The great wisdom contains such a saying: "My God, give me forces to change what I can change, patience - to accept what I cannot change, and mind - to distinguish one from another".

Appendix

Prevention of syndrome of burnout in organization

Nº	Necessary skills, actions	Responsible	Comments, consequences
1	Precise definition of the tasks	Manager	Increase of feeling of satisfaction from work
2	The detailed description of official duties	Manager	Increase of feeling of satisfaction from work
3	Skill to allocate tasks (daily, weekly...)	Executor	Increase of feeling of satisfaction from work
4	Understanding of impossibility of achievement of the purposes such as «to rescue the world»	Executor	Structurization of the purposes and their realness allows easier achieving and receiving more satisfaction
5	Realistic estimation of the opportunities in help	Executor	The critical attitude towards yourself and own opportunities will allow to avoid emotional and physical overloads. It is necessary to understand, that you cannot know all, and there is no problem in answering "I do not know"
6	Conducting of team-discussions	All	Exchange of experience of overcoming unpleasant situation/stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - removal of stress - opportunity to share - opportunity to ask advice - updating of the plan of the further actions, - concrete definition of the purposes and tasks - revealing of requirements of target group for rendering the most effective help that brings satisfaction to employees - conducting of trainings on relaxation and planning - estimation of own needs and requirements
7	Consultations of a psychologist	executor	If you feel discomfort or stress, immediately refer to a psychologist.
8	Skill to use free time to have a rest	executor	Correctly plan your rest. If you do not have a rest the efficiency of your work will decrease.
9	Overcoming of conflicts inside of the team	executor, manager	Solve the conflict in process of occurrence in the most effective way, try not to sharpen the conflict, try to reach mutual understanding, listen to both parties.
10	Constant improvement of professional skills	executor	Revealing of requirements of target group for rendering the most effective help that brings satisfaction to employees. Carrying out of trainings on relaxation and planning. Obtaining of new knowledges.
11	Skills to control stress; increase of stress-sustainability.	executor	Do not drive yourself in stressful situations. Have a rest, go for sports, yoga, do not lose sense of humour, do not concern all too seriously, do not take another's responsibility, answer for your acts, plan correctly your activity
12	Development of personal skills of problems solving	executor	Make a critical approach to your activity, do not be afraid to ask for advice, analyze mistakes, develop flexibility in yourself
13	Use of mechanisms of social support	executor, manager	- groups of mutual support - meetings
14	Understanding of psychological aspects of relations inside of the team and with clients	executor, manager	- development of communicative skills - understanding of mechanisms of consultation - development of skills of empathy