



Stabilizing the Emotional Erosion from the COVID Pandemic



David Mitchell, General Partner
Employee Assistance of the Pacific

David Mitchell, General Partner Employee Assistance of the Pacific

- Co-owner of Employee Assistance of the Pacific
- MA in Child Development
- Decades working as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor
- Critical Incident Response Experience and Training
- Certified Employee Assistance Professional
- DOT-Qualified Substance Abuse Professional
- Ran two other EAPs before acquiring Employee Assistance of the Pacific
- Oversees all EAP services to over 250 Hawaii-based employers
- Provide daily consultation to HR, Managers, and Executives

Relevant financial relationships:

- Owner of Employee Assistance of the Pacific, LLC, serving over 250 businesses across Hawaii
- Receives payment for Employee Assistance and Physician Assistance services from a variety of healthcare organizations, including Queen's Health System, Kaiser Permanente, Hawaii Residency Programs, and Clinical Laboratories of Hawaii



Emotional Erosion (these days)

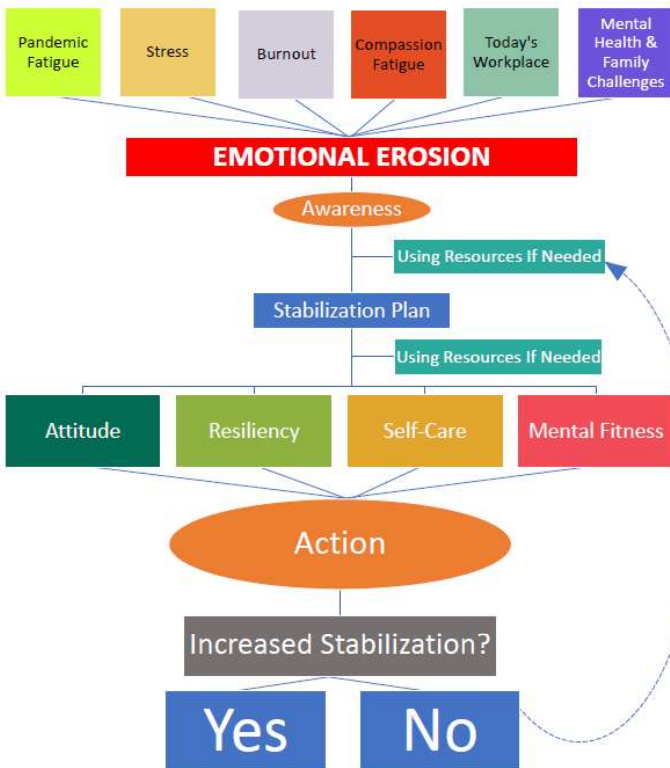
Cause #1 - Pandemic fatigue

MOST DISASTERS HAVE A FAIRLY PREDICTABLE TRACK

TORNADOES COME AND GO
EARTHQUAKES COME AND GO
HURRICANES COME AND GO



COVID-19 has had many beginnings, middles, ends (lockdowns, masks, new variants)



Cause #1 – Pandemic fatigue

Fear
Worry
Brain Fog
Remote Work issues
Ongoing Safety concerns
Impacts on keiki
Impacts on kupuna
Grief over those we lost
Financial challenges
Distance
Disconnected



etc.

Cause #1 – Pandemic fatigue

You know about
Trauma-Informed Care...



Many have been impacted differently:

1. Trauma/abuse survivors
2. Current or history of illness
3. Military or combat veterans
4. History of addiction
5. Recent loss of a loved one

And what about: Ukraine war, school shootings, financial challenges, travel restrictions, political differences...

Cause #2 – STRESS

WHAT CAN *TOO MUCH STRESS* FEEL LIKE

- | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| ▶ Absentminded | ▶ Face flushing | ▶ Mentally sluggish | ▶ Tooth and jaw pain |
| ▶ Aches and Pains | ▶ Fatigue | ▶ Mood swings | ▶ Weird dreams |
| ▶ Agitation | ▶ Frequent colds | ▶ Negativity | ▶ Lost Concentration |
| ▶ Appetite changes | ▶ Frustration | ▶ Nothing is easy | ▶ All or nothing at all attitude |
| ▶ Crying | ▶ Fuzzy thinking | ▶ People are annoying | |
| ▶ Decreased energy | ▶ Hair loss | ▶ Rapid heartbeat | |
| ▶ Depression | ▶ Headaches | ▶ Self harm | |
| ▶ Decisions are harder | ▶ Insomnia | ▶ Sickness | |
| ▶ Changes in digestion | ▶ Irregular periods | ▶ Skin changes | |
| ▶ Eyelid twitches | ▶ No libido | ▶ Sweating | |
| | ▶ Look worn out | | |

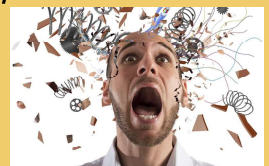
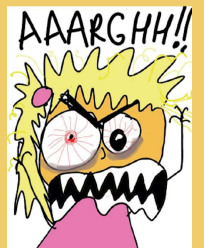


Cause #2 – STRESS

STRESS impacts our work

Job stress is estimated to cost U.S. industry over **\$300 billion** annually as a result of:

- Accidents
- Absenteeism
- Turnover
- Diminished productivity
- Direct medical, legal, and insurance costs
- Workers' comp/liability/torts



Cause #3 - BURNOUT

SYMPTOMS (Freudenberg, 1974)



PHYSICAL

- Feeling **exhausted**
- Unable to recover from a common cold
- Frequent headaches
- Frequent GI problems
- Sleep disturbances
- Shortness of breath

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

SYMPTOMS (Freudenberg, 1974)



BEHAVIORS

- Irritability
- Negative attitude, **cynical**
- Substance abuse
- Appears depressed, **indifferent**
- Heightened emotional responses (quick to cry, quick to anger)
- Suspicious and paranoid about colleagues, **alienated**
- Stubbornness, rigid thinking, and unwillingness to listen to others
- **Disconnected, pessimistic**

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

STATISTICS

Before COVID

- 48% felt burnout sometimes
- **21%** felt burnout **ALWAYS**

Those experiencing burnout:

- 63% more likely to take a sick day
- 23% more likely to visit the E.R.
- 13% less confident in their job performance
- Almost 3 times more likely to leave their job



Cause #3 - BURNOUT

STATISTICS (Gallup, 2021)

Since COVID

- Individuals have the same level of burnout
- People Managers went from 28% feeling burned out very often or always to 35%
- Project Managers went from 31% to 33%



Cause #3 - BURNOUT

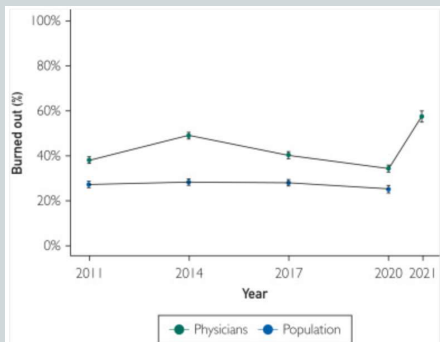
PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

(AMA, Nov. 2, 2022)



"Physician burnout is an epidemic in the U.S. health care system, with nearly 63% of physicians reporting signs of burnout such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization at least once per week."

<https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/physician-health/what-physician-burnout>



Changes in Burnout and Satisfaction with Work-Life Integration in Physicians During the First 2 Years of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Shanafelt et al, Sept. 13, 2022, Mayo Clinic Proceedings.

[https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196\(22\)00515-8/fulltext](https://www.mayoclinicproceedings.org/article/S0025-6196(22)00515-8/fulltext)

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

(AMA, Nov. 2, 2022)



"While burnout manifests in individuals, it originates in systems. Burnout is not the result of a deficiency in resiliency among physicians, rather it is due to the systems in which physicians work."

Christine Sinsky, MD, AMA vice president of professional satisfaction

<https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/physician-health/what-physician-burnout>

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

The Five Stages of Burnout (and what to do!)



1. Honeymoon Phase

All is well, you got a new job or promotion, you're excited with good energy, you're adapting well and positive!

- It's okay to give 100%, maybe even 105% for awhile. But 200% is too much.
- Nobody needs to be a superhero.
- Provide healthy boundaries for new hires and don't allow staff to burnout from going above 100% for too long.

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

The Five Stages of Burnout (and what to do!)



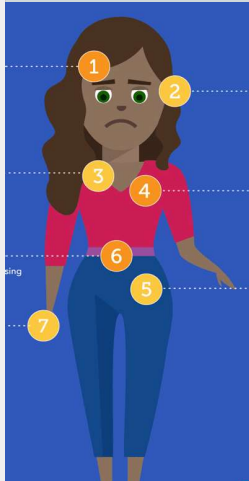
2. Onset of Stress

The balancing act has begun. Energy starts to decrease, coping skills don't work as well, dissatisfaction grows. You're tired and start getting cranky.

- Pay attention to your rising stress levels before symptoms develop.
- Mindfulness techniques can help.
- Supervisors can provide regular 1:1 meetings, team huddles, pulse surveys.
- Empathic listening is the key, from co-workers, supervisors, family members.
- Remind stressed employees about the EAP.
- Support staff if they take a day off for a "mental health day."
- Model self-care and boundaries at work.

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

The Five Stages of Burnout (and what to do!)



3. Chronic Stress

Symptoms start developing.
Your original energy is gone.

You're trying to stay afloat.

You're exhausted, start getting angry, feel depressed and more detached.

- Pay attention to the tipping point here!
- Speak up, make changes, prioritize what's important of the most important tasks.
- Call the EAP, seek help from experts on dealing with burnout.
- Supervisors can make a Formal EAP Referral for those whose stress impacts health.

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

The Five Stages of Burnout (and what to do!)



4. True Burnout

The crisis stage and more critical symptoms.

You become cynical, pessimistic, start feeling incompetent, obsessing about your frustrations.

You start feeling you just need to escape.

- You're heading for an accident, injury, conflict at work, violence, bad decision-making, or impulsive acts.
- Is this the right job for you?
- Do you work and lead with your strengths?
- Can you delegate?
- Do you actually like your job?
- Consult with EAP and HR about helping employees in this stage.

Cause #3 - BURNOUT

The Five Stages of Burnout (and what to do!)



5. Habitual Burnout

You're enmeshed with your burnout.

Symptoms are so familiar you might not realize you're burned out.

Some quit their jobs, make radical changes, feel unhappy and trapped.

Suicidal thoughts/plans at the extreme.

- Do something different. Today.
- Seek medical help, EAP resources, 12-step resources, National Suicide Prevention hotline.
- If you hear suicidal statements, call the EAP or 911 -- don't ignore these!

Cause #4 - COMPASSION FATIGUE

Compassion Fatigue ≠ Burnout

Burnout = Extreme exhaustion from poorly managed stress.

Compassion Fatigue is more specific since it is triggered through specific traumas and experiences of specific patients/clients/customers

or

A result of overexposure to tragic news stories, images, and appeals for assistance

COMPASSION FATIGUE?



Emotional Erosion (these days)

Cause #5 – TODAY'S WORKPLACE

- 48% of Americans in the workforce are either looking for a new job or watching for openings.
- Increase in quit rates.
- Employees looking elsewhere are either not engaged or actively disengaged in their current job.
- Diagnosed depression for managers increased in 2021.
- Only 1 in 4 managers in 2021 strongly agree they are able to maintain a healthy balance between work and personal commitments.

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/357404/manager-burnout-getting-worse.aspx>

Emotional Erosion (these days)

Cause #6 – MENTAL HEALTH & FAMILY CHALLENGES

Greater Mental Health Challenges
+
Fewer Mental Health Resources
+
Increased Substance Abuse Issues
+
Increased Family Violence/Abuse
+
Isolation/Disengagement/Distance
=
???

Now we have Awareness... So Now What?

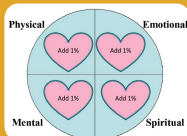
1. Attitude



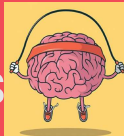
2. Resiliency



3. Self-Care



4. Mental Fitness



1. Attitude

Bounded Optimism

US Navy Vice Admiral James Stockdale was the highest-ranking prisoner in Vietnam, tasked to communicate to his fellow prisoners a sense of hope in a very difficult situation.



Those who felt they would be "home by Christmas" didn't do as well mentally and emotionally as those who understood and adjusted to that it might take much longer.

**Inspiration, hope, and optimism
tempered by reality**

2. Resiliency

The ability to overcome the challenges of all kinds -- trauma, tragedy, personal crises, plan 'ol da kine life problems -- and bounce ahead stonger, wiser, and more personally powerful



2. Resiliency

8 Practices that Build Resiliency

1. Build a network of support
2. Socialize
3. Regular exercise
4. 7-8 hours of sleep
5. Make time for Mindfulness
6. Embrace new perspectives
7. Savor positivity intentionally
8. Practice Gratitude



Center for Creative Leadership

<https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/8-steps-help-become-resilient/>

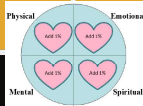
What is 1% More You Could Do...

Physical

- One breath
- One minute walk
- Look out window
- Stretch
- Stand and move

Emotional

- Manage your emotional temperature
- Chill by 1% or
- Raise your heat 1%



Mental

- Read a book
- Watch a musical or a documentary
- Use colored pencils or crayons
- Watch hula

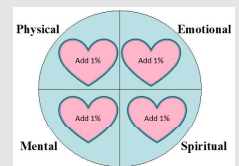
Spiritual

- Lean deeper into your personal spiritual practices with intention and mindfulness
- 1% more helps!

3. Self-Care

Self-Care for Compassion Fatigue

1. Get enough sleep
2. Eat a healthy diet
3. Exercise often
4. Drink plenty of water
5. Take time for self-care
6. Practice meditation
7. Take time off work
8. Ensure you have an identity outside work
9. Have someone you can talk to



4. Mental Fitness

1. Jigsaw puzzles
2. Cards
3. Build your vocabulary
4. Dance, dance, dance
5. Use all your senses
6. Learn a new skill
7. Teach someone a new skill
8. Music!
9. Try a new route
10. Meditate
11. Learn a new language
12. Do tai chi
13. Focus



The importance of Mental Fitness

By Erica Roth

Medically Reviewed by Dr. Timothy Legg

www.healthline.com/health/depression/mental-fitness

EAP and PAP Benefits:

- Counseling
3–6 free, confidential sessions
Master's-level or above provider
Across Hawaiian islands
- Legal Consultation
- Financial Consultation
- Mediation Consultation
- Eldercare/Healthcare
Navigation Consultation
- ID Theft Consultation
- Support to the Organization
Consultation, Crisis Response, Training



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