

Understanding How Burnout Impacts Mental Health in Farmers and Extension Personnel



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Objectives

- Understand burnout on the mental health continuum
- Understand cumulative stress and burnout
- Understand causes and identify strategies to address and/or manage them
- Understand the role seeking help can play in managing mental wellbeing

The Mental Health Continuum



Level of Concern	Very Low/ Flourishing	Low/ Going OK	Moderate/ Struggling	High/ Severely impacting everyday activities
Core features	Optimal Wellbeing	Overall positive wellbeing with a few isolated experiences of distress	Occasional and time limited periods of distress with mild impact on wellbeing	Poor mental health and wellbeing causing distress and significantly impacting daily activities
How to Support Self and Others	Maintain/ Continue actions	Enhance or support to help move toward flourishing	Monitor and support/ Manage low periods and work toward adding actions that help manage stressors	Find external support and collaboration to manage stressors; explore new ways of managing stress



Burnout Can be Observed Along this Part of the Mental Health Continuum

Farmers and Burnout

Compared to non-farmers, farmers experienced higher overall burnout, and higher exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy.

Gender differences indicated that women experience higher burnout than males.

Other factors included: farming as primary occupation, being a dairy farmer, and work stress.

Understanding Burnout

No one is immune to burnout

It presents as a combination of three symptoms:

- exhaustion (a depletion of mental or physical resources)
- cynical detachment (a depletion of social connectedness)
- a reduced sense of efficacy (a depletion of belief in oneself)

When individuals suffer from burnout, many feel too overwhelmed to participate meaningfully in wellness or self care initiatives.

Signs of Burnout

Physical/Emotional Exhaustion

- Chronic fatigue
- Insomnia
- Forgetfulness
- Physical symptoms
- Loss of appetite
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger

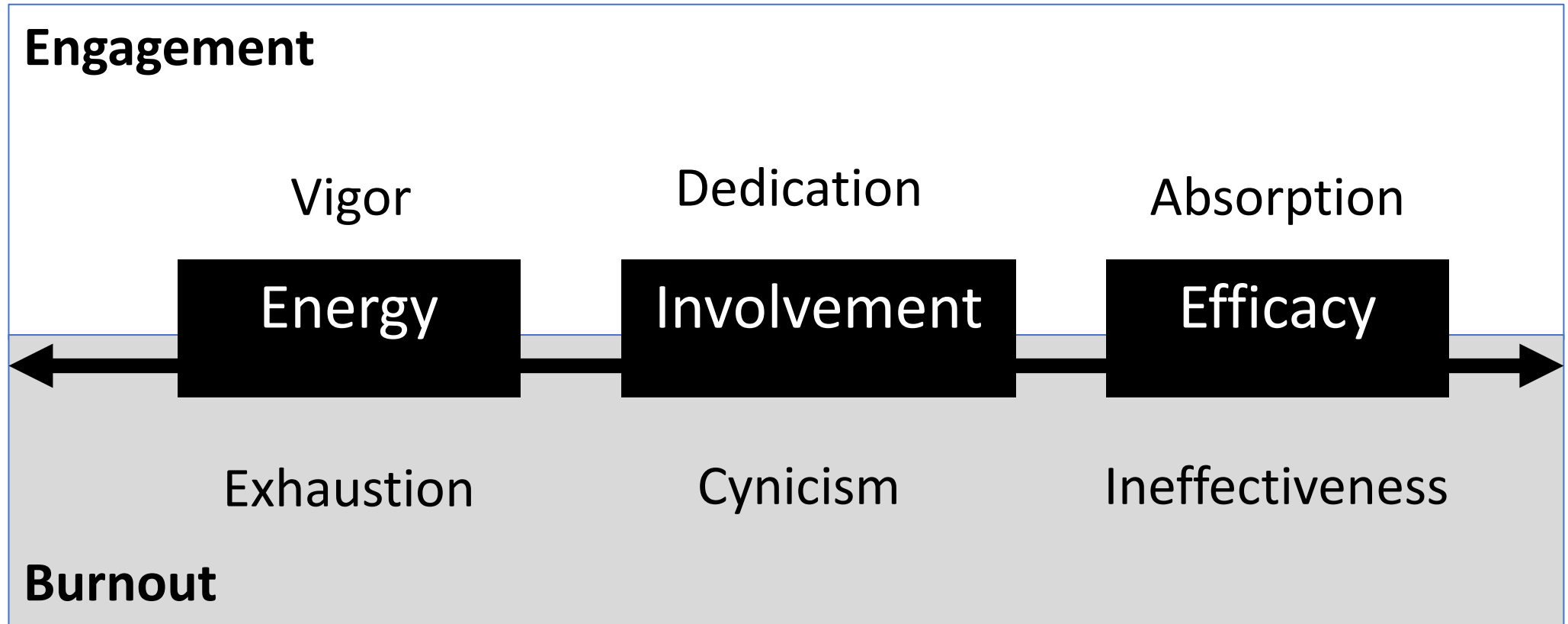
Cynicism

- Loss of enjoyment
- Pessimism – (i.e. negative self talk)
- Isolation
- Detachment

Feeling Ineffective

- Feelings of apathy and hopelessness
- Increased irritability
- Lack of production and poor performance

Another Way to Depict Engagement vs. Burnout In Your Business



Key Aspects of the Work Environment To Consider:

- **Job Demands-** are aspects of the work environment and job that:
 - Cost energy (workload, complexity of job, conflicts)
 - Physical workload, time pressure, working with others
 - Overall workload, complexity of the tasks
- **Job Resources-** are aspects of the work environment that help individuals deal with job demands, achieve goals and stimulate personal growth and development. These might include:
 - Feedback, rewards, supervisor support
 - Job control, decision making authority, job security

Why is Managing Burnout Important?

Studies show that burnout is real and has impact on enterprises:

- Employees who are burnt-out leave their place of employment or exhibit behaviors that can undermine the business
- Sole proprietors/small business owners who are burnt out can lose their sense of the values that motivate them (freedom, ingenuity, adventure, love of the land and meaning for their life/livelihood).



Work Environment Characteristics that Influence Burnout

Aspects of the Workplace	Characteristics of Work Environment	Burnout Causes
Organizational Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open communication and recognition Care and support Learning opportunities Climate of respect Fair treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conflicts with cooperation Lack of appreciation Lack of supervisory support Physical environment Reduced access to technology
Job-related Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job autonomy Job challenge Task support Reasonable time pressure Role clarity Manageable workload Flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time pressure/tight deadlines Lack of autonomy Role ambiguity Physical workload Shiftwork/work schedule
Personal Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work-life fit Work-life balance Satisfaction with earnings and benefits Provision for self and family Meaningful daily activity Pride, identity, business, and socialization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stress Anxiety Lack of motivation

Activity – Think About

What signs and symptoms of burnout do you see in your clientele or colleagues?

What contexts do you see these signs/symptoms (what are the characteristics of the operation?)

How Do We Help our Colleagues, Family or Friends?



Recommendations to Address Physical and Mental Exhaustion

- The best way to remedy exhaustion is to give yourself and others a break.
- Schedule downtime and high activity time and give yourself breaks in between
- Set boundaries for yourself around rest, sleep, and “down time.”
- Have conversations with your employees, colleagues and family members about priorities, boundaries and creating time for rest.



Recommendations about Addressing Detachment

- Set up routines to help you stay grounded and connected to your sense of purpose.
- Being kind to others helps you regain a sense of connectedness and belonging.
- Check in with others to help them through their struggles. This create a stronger sense of personal connection.
- Schedule time for downtime/fun activities in the workplace. Remember coffee breaks?



"You're so unapproachable these days, Derek."

Recommendations to Address Self Efficacy

- Celebrate successes – big and little.
- Simple gestures work well - you do not need to create grand gestures.
- Employers can invest in creating a supportive, collaborative, open, and fun workplace.
- Employees can request ways to create supportive, fun workplaces.

Activity- What do you do to recognize your own accomplishments?



What Does Low Self Esteem Look Like?

- Fear of Taking Risks
- Fear of Uncertainty
- Feelings of Failure
- Impression Management



How Can Self Efficacy be Improved?

- 1) Develop a skill set that you enjoy.
- 2) Model it for others
- 3) Focus on specifics
- 4) Positive reinforcement



Strategies that Prevent Burnout

- Workload – planning work, delegating, saying no, letting go of perfectionism and communicating about work overload
- Control – perceptions of vs. actual reality regarding control
- Community – feeling of support
- Fairness – feeling there is fairness
- Task Balancing – swapping between tasks between complex/hard and easy/less taxing tasks
- Mental Breaks – resting your brain
- Physical Breaks – resting your body
- Values Matching – ensuring your values align with those of the organization

Reflection Questions to Help Address Burnout

- Why are you doing what you are doing? What is the meaning that drives your business?
- What does your ideal team and work environment look like?
- What sucks the life out of you and what can you do to eliminate or spend less time doing it yet still accomplish your goals?
- What challenging and hindering demands are you currently managing?
- What job resources do you have access to that can help you buffer against the job demands?
- How might your habits, communication and management style cause or mitigate burnout?

Reflection Questions to Help Address Burnout

- What are the other key priorities in your life? What strategies can you put in place to balance between enterprise priorities and these others?
- What is one thing you can choose to say “no” to today that will give you back at least five minutes?
- How can you celebrate successes – even the little things – in a meaningful way?
- If the strongest leader you knew was struggling with stress, what would you advise them to do?

Activity –

Turn to your neighbor and discuss:

How would you integrate these questions into your work with clientele and colleagues?

Self-Care Is Not Self-Indulgence

Practical Approaches to Address Burnout

- Make peace with self-care (or whatever you want to call it). Acknowledging your resistance is the first step to overcoming it.
- Make it your own and experiment. Understand that self-care is as individual as the person practicing it and can take many different forms.
- Make it micro. Short diversions can provide a powerful boost.
- Schedule it!
- Share it – make it clear to others; be a good example.

Questions? Comments?



Thanks for Attending How Burnout Impacts Mental Health in Farmers

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Introducing - FRSAN-NE/Cultivemos

- Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network – USDA Funding in 2019 – 2025; managed by National Young Farmers Coalition in the NE; other regions are managed by Cooperative Extension
- To reduce stigma around mental illness & increase access to information and resources around stress, stressors and suicide prevention
- To provide training/resources for service providers to assist them in achieving these goals

Confident Conversations Curriculum

- Goals – to provide tools that service providers and growers can use to 1) improve communication skills, 2) understand character strengths, and 3) understand burnout and how to address it within an operation.
- Tools:
 - Curriculum Guide
 - Lesson plans that can be used in 1.5 hr, 1 hr or 20 minutes with audiences
 - Handouts that provide information about each topic
 - Humorous videos – each about 6 minutes that can be used in the 20 minute or longer versions of the lessons

Available for free by contacting pippidis@udel.edu. All materials are in a google drive

What are your clientele needs for addressing mental well-being?

- What types of resources are needed to support your clientele?
- How could you introduce mental well-being topics into your work?

Reach out to your local state FRSAN project, Cooperative Extension system or Health and Social Services Dept.

for support

Thanks for attending

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Using Humor and Improvisation to Build Communications Skills around Stress and Mental Health

WFRSAN Weather Report

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Northeast Farm and Ranch Stress
Assistance Network

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