

Burnout Busters

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Burnout is a state of chronic workplace stress that leads to emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional effectiveness. The high demands of dentistry make practitioners particularly vulnerable.

Signs of Burnout

Emotional Exhaustion: Feeling drained, fatigued, or overwhelmed by daily work demands.

Depersonalization: Developing a detached or cynical attitude toward patients and staff. **Reduced**

Sense of Accomplishment: Questioning the value of your work, feeling ineffective or unmotivated.

Common Causes of Burnout in Dentistry

- Long hours and high patient volume
- Financial stress and practice management challenges
- Patient expectations and conflicts
- Repetitive tasks and lack of variety
- Isolation from peers or lack of support

Understanding the mismatch between worker and workplace

Three critical mismatches in dentistry include:

1. **Community & Values Mismatch** – When personal values don't align with workplace culture.
2. **Workload & Control Mismatch** – When excessive workload and limited autonomy create stress.
3. **Reward & Fairness Mismatch** – When compensation, recognition, or opportunities feel inadequate.

Practical Strategies to Combat Burnout

1. Time & Energy Management

Prioritize high-impact tasks and delegate when possible. Schedule buffer times between appointments. Set boundaries—avoid bringing work stress home.

2. Team & Leadership Strategies

Foster a supportive office culture. Delegate tasks and empower your team. Lead with empathy and collaboration.

3. Personal Well-being & Resilience

Practice mindfulness or meditation for stress relief. Maintain regular exercise, proper nutrition, and good sleep habits. Engage in hobbies and activities that bring joy outside of dentistry.

4. Work-Life Balance & Career Longevity

Define personal and professional success beyond production numbers. Consider mentorship, career coaching, or professional development. Explore alternative paths in dentistry if clinical practice is overwhelming.

Action Plan

 Write down 2-3 key strategies you will implement this week:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Need additional support? Connect with professional organizations, mentors, or wellness programs to build a long-term plan for career sustainability.

Final Thoughts

Burnout is a challenge, but it is not inevitable. By recognizing the signs early and taking proactive steps, you can regain balance, find renewed passion in dentistry, and build a career that is both fulfilling and sustainable.

Self-Assessment: "How Unbalanced Are You?"

Rate each statement on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always):

Emotional Exhaustion

- ___ I feel emotionally drained after a day at the office.
- ___ I often feel physically or mentally exhausted before my day even starts.
- ___ I have trouble getting excited about going to work.
- ___ I feel like I don't have enough energy to engage fully with my patients and team.

Depersonalization & Disconnection

- ___ I feel detached from my patients, as if I'm just going through the motions.
- ___ I find myself being more cynical or short-tempered with patients or team members.
- ___ I don't feel like I make a meaningful impact on my patients' lives anymore.

Work Engagement & Fulfillment

- ___ I still find joy in practicing dentistry. (Reverse scored)
- ___ I feel motivated and engaged in my work. (Reverse scored)
- ___ I often question whether I want to continue practicing dentistry.

Work-Life Balance & Stress Management

- ___ I struggle to "turn off" work when I go home.
- ___ I feel like I never have enough time for myself, family, or hobbies.
- ___ I frequently experience physical symptoms of stress (headaches, muscle tension, insomnia, etc.).

Scoring & Interpretation

1. Total Score Calculation – Add up all points.
 - Reverse score positive items (e.g., if someone marked a "5" on a positive question, it is counted as a "1").
 2. Unbalanced Level Assessment:
 - 15-30 (Low Dysregulation): You have a healthy work-life balance but should stay mindful of stress.
 - 31-45 (Moderate Dysregulation): You may be experiencing some early dysregulation signs. Focus on self-care strategies.
 - 46-60 (High Dysregulation): You are experiencing significant dysregulation and should consider changes to improve well-being.
 - 61-75 (Severe Dysregulation): You are at high risk for professional dysregulation. Seek immediate strategies for support and intervention.
- What did you learn from your score?
 - Were any of the statements eye-opening?
 - What is one small change you could implement today to reduce stress?

