Mindfulness Strategies for Prevention and Coping with Burnout in Healthcare Professionals

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Abstract

Strategies for prevention and coping with burnout in an occupational setting can focus on the individual or an organization as a whole. This project reviewed current research to unveil strategies for prevention and coping with burnout specifically at the individualistic level in the healthcare profession. Mindfulness can help with burnout by reducing stress and increasing feelings of calmness, understanding, acceptance, and kindness (Harolds, 2019). There are numerous mindfulness techniques including mindful movement, various meditations, and yoga styles (Harolds, 2019).

Why is this Important?

Burnout among healthcare professionals poses a concern due to the dangerous consequences that can occur. It is found to be associated with an increased likelihood of medical error, which can pose a major risk to patients. A study among junior doctors and medical residents found those who were burnt out had a significantly higher chance of making an error than those who weren’t. (O'Connor, 2016) A meta-analysis of 17 articles found that burnout may affect 30-50% of physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and physicians, while it may affect 10-70% of nurses. (Bridgeman et al., 2008) A longitudinal study found that mindfulness training reduced burnout, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion, but increased feelings of personal accomplishment (Suleiman-Martos et al., 2020).

What is Burnout?

Burnout in an occupation is described by long-term stress related to an individual’s job and the inability to resolve this issue. It is characterized by an array of negative behavioral and physical symptoms, including, but not limited to anger, paranoia, frustration, and symptoms common with those who have depression. (Bridgeman., et al 2018)

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a clear state of mind that is focused on the current moment. It includes the physical and emotional sensations of one’s own body and an awareness of the environment that surrounds them. (Harolds, 2019) It can be practiced as a mindset every day or as a meditation (Thompson et al., 2007).

Mindfulness Strategies

Yoga

A yoga practice referred to as Hatha yoga is useful for mindfulness. It uses specific body positions and incorporates mindful breathing. (Harolds, 2019)

Mindful Movement

This practice involves awareness of the body while performing exercises such as stretching (Harolds, 2019).

Meditation

Individuals beginning the practice of mindfulness often start with breathing meditations. These are helpful in staying in the present moment by focusing on breathing. Breathing practices that require strong concentration are best recommended for those who are experiencing burnout. Meditations that focus on aspects not entirely focused on breathing are often the next step of progression. Walking meditations are another type of mindfulness meditation. They entail going for a walk and paying close attention to how the entire body feels with each step. (Harolds, 2019)

References


Conclusion

This research reinforces the need for prevention and coping techniques for burnout in healthcare professionals. Mindfulness was found to be an effective solution in reducing burnout, stress, and other negative emotions, while increasing positive feelings such as personal accomplishment.