

5

Managing stress

How do I know if I am stressed?



Stress

The stress response

- Floods the body with chemicals to prepare for fight or flight
- Helpful in true emergency situations, to stay alert
- Wears the body down when constantly activated.

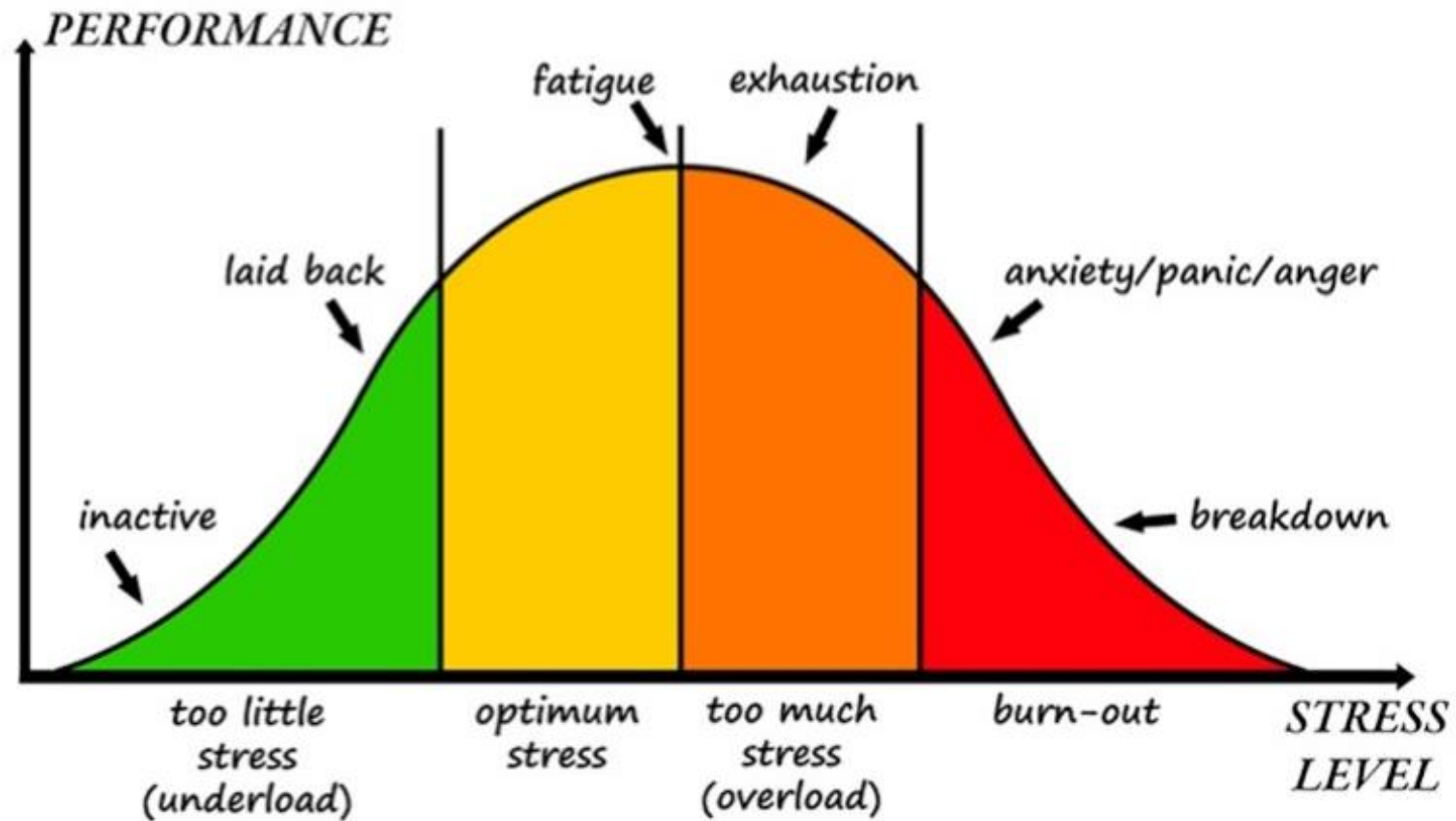
The relaxation response

- Brings your system back into balance
- Deepens breathing
- Reduces stress hormones
- Slows heart rate
- Reduces blood pressure
- Relaxes muscles.

Managing stress

- There are three kinds of stress:
 - day-to-day stress
 - critical incident stress (e.g., shooting, assault, fire)
 - cumulative stress.
- If cumulative stress is not managed properly, service providers can experience burnout or vicarious trauma.
- This can be damaging for the individual, and also for their clients, if it is not recognized and managed.

Stress



What is burnout?

Burnout is the result of chronic workplace stress that has not been managed successfully. It is characterized by:

- exhaustion or energy depletion
- feelings of negativity towards one's job
- reduced professional efficacy.

Burnout is common among those who work with people **in distress**.

Stress and burnout

Stress

Over-engagement

Emotions are over-reactive

Urgency, hyperactivity

Loss of energy

Leads to anxiety disorders

Primary damage is physical

May kill you prematurely

Burnout

Disengagement

Emotions are blunted

Helplessness, hopelessness

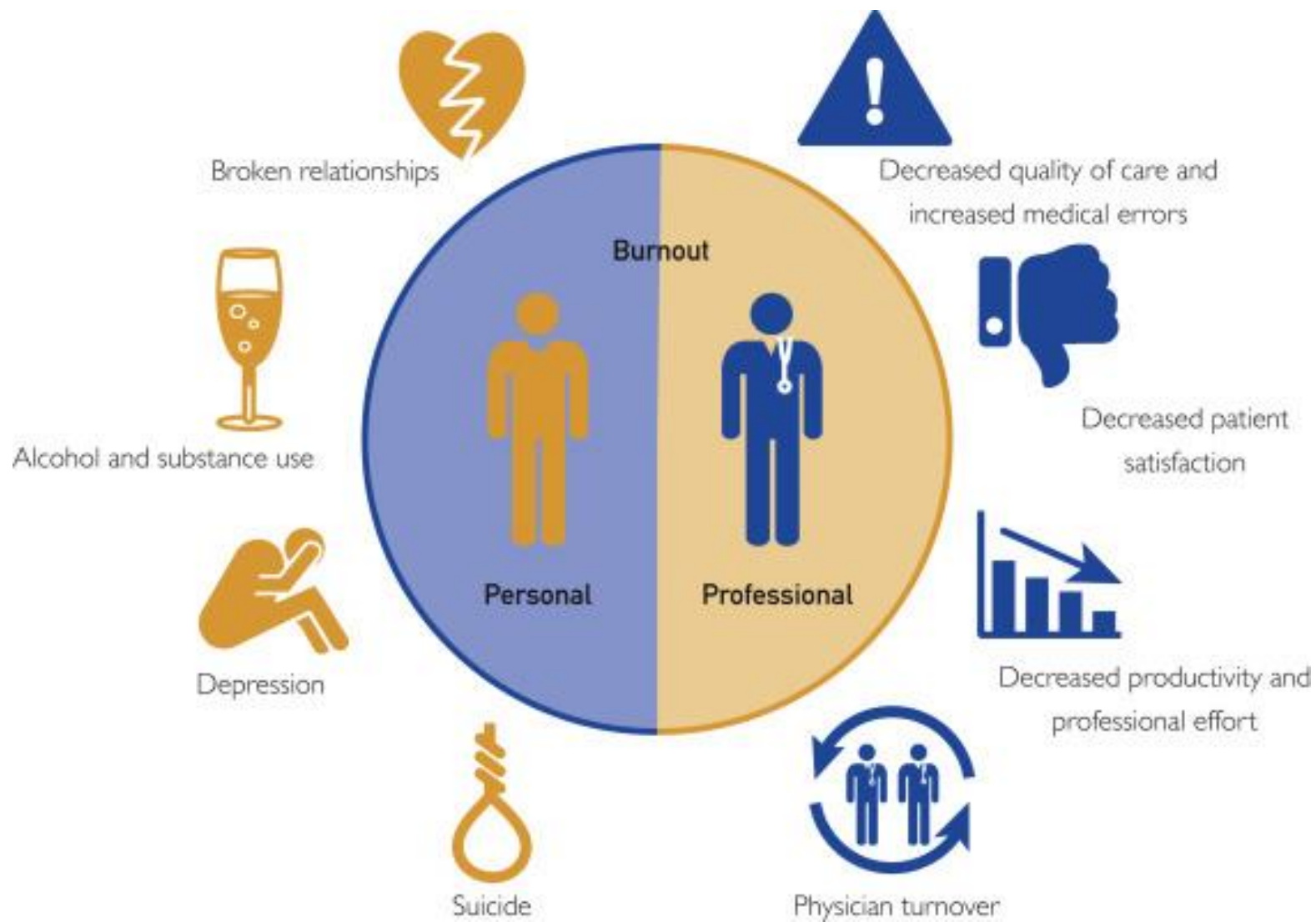
Loss of motivation, ideals and hope

Leads to detachment and depression

Primary damage is emotional

May make it seem that life is not worth living

The consequences of burnout



Caring for the carers

“Helping clients deal with physical abuse, sexual abuse, or HIV infection is emotionally draining. Issues that surface during counselling sessions may address painful or unresolved experiences of the counsellor. Counsellors often experience emotional burnout, depression, and difficulties in their own relationships.”

(Southern African AIDS Training Program, Counselling Guidelines on Domestic Violence, SAT, 2001, p. 21).

Vicarious trauma

- Sometimes called secondary trauma or compassion fatigue
- Involves absorbing clients' trauma
- Sufferers may re-experience difficult or traumatic events from their own past
- A process that unfolds over time – it is not a response to one person, story or situation
- Is the **cumulative** effect of contact with survivors of violence, trauma and loss.

Vicarious trauma: Impacts

- Persistently tense, upset or worried
- Job performance goes down, mistakes go up
- Morale drops
- Personal relationships are affected – home life may start to deteriorate
- Can lead to overall decline in general health
- Changes in spirituality – hopelessness, loss of faith.

Recognizing signs of cumulative stress

Each individual experiences stress differently.

Have you observed any signs of cumulative stress in yourself or others?



Know your warning signs

- Increased anxiety or edginess
- Easily angered by minor events, or feeling anger towards a lot of people and/or institutions
- Increased feelings of depression
- Hopelessness: feelings that no progress will ever be made
- Frustration with specific clients or GBV/SVAMB work in general
- Avoidance of social situations
- Increased fatigue
- Feelings of heightened responsibility for the well-being of clients.
- Feelings of insufficiency.
- Working more hours than those required of you

Know your warning signs

- Feeling indifferent towards clients and the issue of GBV/SVAMB
- The absence of supervision and debriefing
- Inexplicable physical problems, such as tense muscles, persistent stomach aches or headaches, etc.
- Feelings of isolation: the sense that no one understands what you are experiencing
- Feeling guilty for being happy or for not having experienced GBV/SVAMB
- Nightmares about GBV/SVAMB
- Internalizing stories and being convinced that similar experiences will happen to you.
- Feeling overwhelmed by destructive or dangerous experiences (such as a suicidal client or staff assaults)

Emotional response

	Emotional response		What you can do	
	Survivor	LCM	For survivor	For yourself
Fear	Of rejection or hurt. Of injury or being killed.	Of what might happen to you. Of getting hurt.	Listen, safety plan, alert supervisors.	Establish safety procedures, talk with your organization about your fears.
Denial	Of severity or even the problem.	Of severity.	It is a defence, continue to encourage to seek help.	Find someone to talk to, process it.
Over-whelmed	Lack of options and resources.	Lack of options or resources for client.	Help to find support network of others.	Establish realistic goals, check expectations, mobilize support networks, talk to supervisor.
Discouraged	Tired of no one caring.	Can't do ANYTHING for survivor.	Understand significance of even small steps.	Know your resources, share concerns with others.

Know your needs

Each LCM should evaluate what they need in their lives in order to cope with their job.

Brainstorm

What are your signs that you are getting stressed and need a break?

What do you know you need to have in your life in order to cope with stress?

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“It’s a smoke detector. The boss thinks I might be headed for a burnout.”



Stress management

Stress reduction

Basic stress management

To maintain well-being, the body needs regular, good quality:

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Rest and sleep
- Relaxation

Emotional, spiritual and intellectual self-care are also important

What more can we do for ourselves?

- Escape! Rest! Play!
- Do things that you enjoy and that relax you.
- Talk to friends.
- Ask your friends to notice how you're doing.
- Debrief with staff/peers about particularly difficult cases, events or situations.
- Work to transform it – *vicarious transformation*.

Recap

- If cumulative stress is not managed properly, service providers can experience burnout or vicarious trauma.
- Each individual experiences stress differently, and it is important to recognize signs of cumulative stress.
- Basic stress management involves taking care of your body and mind. Paying attention to your physical health by eating right, getting enough sleep and exercising are also important.
- Escape, rest and play are three ways to manage stress and promote relaxation.

Ways to manage stress at work: Supervision

Supervision

- Is the key strategy to ensure that staff are coping professionally and personally with their work. It is important for continued staff capacity development and to ensure quality of care.
- Can be provided through different approaches, including through one-on-one support, in groups, through on-the-job observation and coaching, and in regular team meetings.
- Can take multiple forms and can vary between countries.

In the European context, we usually distinguish between:

- Internal supervision
- External supervision

Internal supervision

- Occurs between the supervisor and supervisee within an organization where, commonly, the supervisor is also the manager or team leader and holds organizational accountabilities for the supervisee's practice.
- Commonly defined as 'line management'.
- Is the most traditional form of supervision.

External supervision

- Takes place between a senior professional and a staff member who do not work for the same organization.
- Usually takes place outside of the staff member's place of work.
- Helps the staff member deal with work-related stress and conflict, workload management and work-life balance.

Communication is key in effective external supervision.

This means making sure that the people who provide the service get support with their own problems and feelings!

External supervision is a process

External supervision aims to:

- provide an opportunity to **discuss practices** to ensure quality service to clients
- provide a space **to share experiences** and to **debrief**
- ensure that staff do not become overwhelmed by their work **emotionally**
- monitor and manage **stress**
- give listeners the **opportunity to be talkers.**

External supervision can include:

- **individual discussions** with a staff member: asking questions, listening, observing, advising, teaching, coaching, and mentoring
- facilitated **debriefing sessions weekly** or **after particularly difficult or frustrating cases**
- regular scheduled **meetings** that include informal discussions and continuing education
- specific and enforced **policies and procedures** that ensure staff security and set professional boundaries
- **facilitated activities** with staff that are simply fun and relaxing
- **providing feedback** for staff on their work performance, focusing in particular on their strengths and achievements.

Peer supervision

- is an effective form of supervision
- provides staff with the opportunity to **talk** with each other about their work, to **reflect** on their work, and to **share** information, experiences and problems
- provides a space where service providers (and others) can listen to each other and give **valuable feedback** about their work-related challenges and effective strategies to overcome them
- should be a **supportive** learning and sharing experience.

Peer supervision: For managers (and others)

- Pay attention to staff, peers, colleagues, partners – notice how people are doing.
- Ensure clear roles and responsibilities of all staff – including limitations.
- Enforce policies and procedures for professional boundaries – and support staff in keeping within these boundaries.
- Make sure people use their time off.
- Consider virtual supervision for informal teams and peers through text messaging, chat groups or other forms of communication.

Exercise

Actions to take during the coming months

Recap

- Supervision helps staff to cope professionally and personally with their work.
- There are different forms of supervision, including external and internal supervision, as well as peer supervision and virtual supervision.
- LCMs can ask for supervision sessions to debrief, they can form work teams to manage stress, and they can collaborate with peers who are not in their organizations to provide debriefing and stress management.