



Linda's T'ai Chi

Preventing Burnout

July 12, 2020

Burn-out is defined as “a state of mental and physical exhaustion that can zap the joy out of a career, friendships, sense of wellbeing and family interactions” The term ‘burnout’ was first used in a clinical sense in the early 1970s by Herbert Freudenberger, a practicing American psychologist (1926-1999). He identified “occupational exhaustion” and coined the word, burn-out. Burnout is a common experience for care takers (social workers, nurses, case managers, family care takers, etc.) who give of their time and energy in their daily work. Without proper self-care, natural caregivers can experience periods of feeling burned out. Although burnout is not a medical condition, it is being added to the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a recognized phenomenon.

I decided to write about burnout now because so many people are working from home, or having to go to work and others of us are staying at home as a means to protect our health from COVID -19. This kind of confinement and the added stress related to all of the uncertainties of the disease and our society, led me to think about strategies to mitigate symptoms of burnout

Working from home and staying at home for extended periods has become the norm for millions. A survey from Monster.com showed that more than 50% of people working from home are experiencing signs of burn-out and we know that many of us who are not working but abiding by the stay- at -home advice express periods of distress, fatigue, monotony and overall sense of feeling down.

The following tips come from an article in the Seattle Times July 5, 2020 based on information from Healthline Media, a health based website with offices in San Francisco and New York. You can find their webpage at [Healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)

Here are 7 tips to avoid symptoms of Burnout. I added a few of my own.

1. Set boundaries and limits
  - a. Take breaks during the day
  - b. Know when to stop working and if you are not working, when to shut down your computer and/or turn-off the TV.

- c. Have a start time and end time to your day of working or being on the computer
2. Establish a schedule and make adjustments
  - a. If you are balancing work and home roles, it is important to have a schedule that can meet the needs of both home and work
  - b. Talk with your boss about setting your work hours to have more flexibility as possible
  - c. If you are not working, it is a good idea to have balance throughout your day from “work” and “play”. Work may be chores or other tasks you have to perform and play is when you engage your creativity, laughter, and have fun.
3. Get some Exercise
  - a. Take breaks- go for a walk , stretch, and move at intervals throughout the day
  - b. Practice some T'ai Chi. See how I slipped that in?
4. Ask for help
  - a. Let your trusted friends and family help if you find yourself drifting into burnout.
  - b. Trust your intuition and ask for help and words of wisdom from your posse
5. Practice Mindfulness activities
  - a. Meditation
  - b. Perform T'ai Chi, Qigong, Yoga
  - c. Practice deep breathing exercises like lifting air and pushing balloons under clear water, ocean breathing, earth breathing
  - d. Look at the sky, the water, the woods and let your mind drift
  - e. Make sure you are getting enough sleep- turn-off the TV, unwind; avoid alcohol or caffeine that can be disruptive to good sleep.
6. Eat well, go easy on sugar and stay hydrated
7. With proper masking, physical distancing, be with your family and/or friends as often as you can, safely. We want to physically distance but not social distance.

Peace, be safe and well,



Linda