Healthcare Worker Burnout: Lean in or Walk Away

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Background:
This presentation will explore the resources available at UNM for health care workers at a time of great change in the health care industry. Both authors have worked and taught hospice and end of life care for nursing students. Hospice has a long history of health care worker support.

Definitions of Burnout:
Burnout syndrome was first described in two scientific articles published in 1974, one by Herbert Freudenberger and one by Sigmund Ginsburg. In subsequent years, it was Freudenberger, a German-born U.S. psychologist and psychotherapist, who made the term popular in a number of further publications. He, therefore, widely considered as the founding-father of the concept.

Freudenberger describes the state of being burned out as “becoming exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” in the workplace. Burnout is characterized by physical symptoms such as exhaustion, fatigue, frequent headaches and gastrointestinal disorders, sleeplessness, and shortness of breath. Behavioral signs include frustration, anger, a suspicious attitude, a feeling of omnipotence or overconfidence, cynicism and signs of depression (Freudenberger, 1974, pp. 159-161).  

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) the leading measure of burnout, the MBI is validated by the extensive research in the more than 35 years since its initial publication. The MBI takes between 10–15 minutes to complete and can be administered to individuals or groups. The 22 - item MBI is a three part scale testing for occupational burnout syndrome in a self-report questionnaire measuring:

1. Feelings of emotional exhaustion [EE]: Measures feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one’s work
2. Tendency to depersonalize others [DP]: Measures an unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one’s service, care treatment, or instruction
3. Diminished feelings of personal accomplishment [PA]: Measures feelings of competence and successful achievement in one’s work, playing down or disregarding positive job performances

Scored with a 1 - 7 Likert Scale where:
1 = very unlike me, through to 7 = very much like me.

A high degree of burnout is reflected in high scores on the EE and DP subscales and in low scores on the PA subscale which is rated inversely. When a high level of Burnout is noted, it is wise to seek additional support.

https://www.statisticssolutions.com/maslach-burnout-inventory-mbi/  

Recommendations for Ongoing Self Care
• Self Soothing via Meditation, Prayer, etc.
• Support Groups
• Exercise regularly and eat healthy
• Attend to one’s own emotions and spiritual needs
• Set good and clear boundaries
• Reach out to family and friends
• Increase socialization, but limit contact with negative individuals
• Reframe how you view your work
• Re-evaluate priorities
• Balance professional life with personal life

Support & Wellness Promotion at UNM:
Ombuds for staff & faculty: 505.277.2993 https://ombudsforstaff.unm.edu/  The UNM Ombudsman works in a manner that preserves confidentiality of those seeking services, maintains a neutral/impartial position with respect to the concerns raised.
Counseling, Assistance and Referral Services (CARS): https://cars.unm.edu/
505-272-6868 Highly professional, confidential source of help for faculty and staff at UNM. Direct services include individual and couples counseling; crisis intervention during business hours; and other services.
Cheri Koinis PhD, ckoinis@salud.unm.edu 505-272-3898 Associate Professor, Clinical Psychologist. She provides counseling for all HSC students and residents and works closely with the UNM Accessibility Resource Center for students and residents with disabilities.
UNM Wellness Center 505-277-6947 https://hr.unm.edu/wellness offers a variety of programs focused on health, wellbeing, and personal development.
Center for Life Classes 505-925-7464 https://hsc.unm.edu/health/patient-care/integrative-medicine/index.html Helps integrate both conventional and complementary medicines and practices – whether through massage, acupuncture or mindful eating and yoga classes.

References: Please see handout for more details on wellness promotion.