

## Preventing burnout

**Do you feel as though you simply can't face another client? Does the whole idea of getting up and going to work make you scramble under the doona and hide? If so, you could be suffering from BURNOUT!**

Burnout is common among anyone working with people, like social workers, counsellors and of course, sex workers. Providing a service for others can be very draining unless you have developed some strategies for coping. Often people who put a lot of effort into their work become burnt out because they are not replenishing their reserves by nourishing themselves.

If you give to others, you need to give to yourself first. It's simple. Developing healthy boundaries between work and private life is also important.

### What are the signs of burnout?

- Feeling disillusioned about work and life in general
- Adopting a sarcastic and cynical attitude towards work and clients
- Not turning up for shifts, switching your phone off or being rude to clients who call
- Feeling restless and frustrated, perhaps tearful and irritable
- Projecting negative feelings onto others
- Finding it increasingly difficult to see the positive aspects of work (even the money doesn't make you feel better)
- Feeling physically sick at the thought of seeing a client
- Your whole day is miserable if you know you are working that night
- You stop making an effort to look good.

To prevent burnout, you need to ensure that you lead a balanced life. Too much work and poor boundaries can take a toll.

It is possible to develop a happy medium where work is satisfying and fulfilling, but not so stressful that it takes over your entire life.

### Preventing and/or treating burnout

Here are some ideas:

- Develop and maintain a balance between work and personal life
- Develop clearly defined boundaries with clients and if necessary, co-workers
- Work out your priorities and manage your time to reduce unnecessary daily stresses
- Work reasonable hours and avoid double shifts if you are working for an agency
- Have realistic expectations of yourself and others
- Take plenty of breaks and do something you enjoy on days off
- Try and take a holiday each year to "get away from it all"
- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings, like a close friend or counsellor
- From time to time, look at the big picture – what are your goals?
- Challenge negative thinking and self-talk and focus on the positives
- Take responsibility for your wellbeing and happiness
- Practice nourishing your physical self with massages, warm baths, aromatherapy, exercise, yoga or a manicure
- Get back in touch with your sexuality and sexual self identity
- Nourish your emotional self by listening to soothing music, gardening or following a creative pursuit like writing or art – all are great methods of self expression.

### What can happen if burnout is not addressed?

If you ignore the warning signs of burnout, you may become very stressed, depressed or physically unwell.

## Fact sheet for sex workers

Unresolved feelings of frustration or anger may lead you to lose your objectivity about work to the point where you feel you simply can't work anymore. Before giving up, step back and take a look – are you burnt-out?

If the symptoms of burnout persist, you may be suffering from anxiety and depression. It is strongly recommend you visit your doctor to discuss any concerns.