Self-help guide pertaining to burnout and the athletic trainer

Chris J. Heard
The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd
Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/3519

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
The University of MONTANA

Permission is granted by the author to reproduce this material in its entirety, provided that this material is used for scholarly purposes and is properly cited in published works and reports.

** Please check "Yes" or "No" and provide signature **

Yes, I grant permission  
No, I do not grant permission

Author's Signature  

Date 5/13/97

Any copying for commercial purposes or financial gain may be undertaken only with the author's explicit consent.
A Self-Help Guide Pertaining to Burnout and the Athletic Trainer

by

Chris J. Heard  A.T.,C.

B.S. University of Montana, 1995

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

The University of Montana

1997

Approved by:

[Signatures]

Chairman, Graduate Committee

Dean, Graduate School

5-14-97

Date
Abstract

Heard, Chris J. M.S. May, 1997

Health and Human Performance: Sport and Performance Psychology

A Self-Help Guide Pertaining to Burnout and The Athletic Trainer

Committee Chair: Lewis A. Curry, Ph.D.

Research indicates there is a possible problem with burnout in the athletic training profession (Campbell et al., 1985; Capel, 1986; Geick, 1984; Geick et al., 1992). The purpose of this research is the development of a self-help guide about burnout specifically related to the athletic trainer. The self-help guide is designed to provide easy access to the causes, signs, symptoms, coping, intervention and prevention techniques involved with burnout. There is no such guide in the literature that is specifically related to athletic training.

The major focus of the guide is to increase the athletic trainers knowledge about burnout. The guide is designed to be utilized in two functional manners. First, the guide is a comprehensive, yet concise, educational and reference resource for the athletic trainer. Second, current and future athletic trainers may use the guide as an educational tool which may decrease the chance of developing burnout. The guide may be incorporated into athletic training curriculums to help improve the students preparation to enter their profession. The athletic trainer can reference the guide, at their convenience, whenever they suspect a problem. This may allow the athletic trainer the opportunity for early intervention. The goal is for this guide to decrease the prevalence of burnout in the athletic training profession.
Acknowledgments

This guide is the culmination of my graduate work at the University of Montana. I would not have been able to complete such an important guide without the support and input of many people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank these individuals.

First, I would like to thank my graduate committee, Beth Ikeda, Scott Richter and Lew Curry. This guide is in great part due to your guidance and advice. Thank you for all your help, I could not have had a better committee to work under.

Second, I would like to thank Lew Curry separately, due to all the great advice about the guide and graduate school in general. Over the last two years you have been my advisor, committee chair and friend. Thank you, does not seem to express how much I appreciate how much you have done for me.

Third, I would like to thank all the staff at the Rhinehart Athletic Treatment Center. To Dennis Murphy, Chris Fry, JC Weida, Sean Collins and all the students that I have had the pleasure to know, thank you! I have not only gained excellent experience and education, but I have also made friendships that will last a lifetime.

Next, I would like to thank my family. Mom and Dad your support and love has allowed this to be possible. Ed, Mark, and Kerrie, I could not ask for better brothers and sister. Thank you all for the support and love.

Finally, I would like to thank my fiancé, Sara. I may have been able to accomplish the things I have with out you, however, they would not mean anything without you to share them with. Your love and support (and occasional typing skills) were vital to the completion of this guide and in my life. I love you and thank you!!

THANK YOU!
Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................. 1
  Statement of Problem ............................................................... 1
  Purpose of Study ................................................................. 1
  Significance of Study ............................................................. 2
  Limitations and Delimitations .................................................. 2
  Basic Assumptions ................................................................. 2-3
  Methods ................................................................. 4-6
  Definition of Terms ............................................................... 6-7

Chapter 2: Review of Literature ......................................................... 8
  Burnout Defined ................................................................. 8-9
  Antecedents/Causes .............................................................. 9-11
  Stages of Burnout ............................................................... 12-13
  Signs and Symptoms ............................................................ 13-14
  Prevention ................................................................. 14
  Coping/Intervention ............................................................ 14-15
  Methods of Measurement ..................................................... 15-16

Chapter 3: Discussion and Conclusions ............................................. 17-19
  References ................................................................. 20-21

Chapter 4: "Burnout: A Self-Help Guide For The Athletic Trainer" ............. 22
  Actual Booklet
Chapter 1

Introduction

Statement of Problem

Burnout syndrome is a widely recognized debilitating psychological, emotional, and physical condition. Anyone can experience burnout under a wide variety of circumstances. One of the more prevalent situations in which burnout occurs is professional (job-related) burnout. Professional burnout usually occurs in jobs where people are working with other people. This is especially true for those individuals in the helping professions, such as police officers, firemen, teachers, doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals (Maslach, 1982, p. 37). The athletic trainer is one of these health care professionals that have been shown to experience burnout. This is largely due to the nature of being an athletic trainer. Under most circumstances athletic trainers work long hours (60-70 hrs/week) for low pay, deal with emotions of others, while not dealing with their own, and a good portion of their work is performed under high stress circumstances (Campbell et al., 1985, p.110).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research is to develop a self-help guide to help prevent and cope with burnout for the athletic trainer. The self-help guide could then be used to increase awareness and knowledge about burnout syndrome among athletic trainers. In turn, hopefully, this will allow athletic training professionals access to a guide as a reference for understanding, preventing, and coping with the burnout syndrome.
Significance of Study:

There are several research studies in the literature about burnout and how it is related to athletic training (Campbell et al., 1985; Capel, 1986; Geick, 1984; Geick et al., 1992). However, there is not a comprehensive, yet concise, self-help guide that has been developed to this point. Hopefully this type of guide will help improve the athletic trainer's life and the profession in general. The guide will provide easy access to information that is useful, easy to follow, and specifically oriented towards the athletic trainer.

Limitations

There are a few limitations involved with this research. First, no original data collection has taken place. The self-help guide is based on previous research on burnout in general, and burnout related to the athletic trainer specifically. The second limitation is that everyone is an individual and may react differently to burnout. In turn, all suggestions and all of the information in this guide may not help everyone equally. Each athletic trainer must apply the information in a manner that best fits their circumstances and personality.

Delimitations

This self-help guide is specifically directed towards burnout and the athletic trainer. Therefore, this information may not be generalizable to other populations or to other occupations.

Basic Assumptions

This self-help guide is being constructed under some basic assumptions about athletic trainers and their profession. First, all athletic trainers have approximately the same basic education (i.e. NATA BOC, A.T., C.). The second assumption is that the various basic work
environments of athletic trainers are similar. This is especially true when comparing working conditions from one high-school to another. The same would also be true for the clinical, collegiate, and professional settings. Finally, no matter which setting the athletic trainer is employed, there are general stressors and situations that are common to all in this profession (ie. dealing with the emotions of injured athletes). It is also assumed that the previous research was conducted using sound data collection and methodology. The recommendations and conclusions were theorized from these data.
Methods

This section will outline the format of the burnout self-help guide. The format for the guide will be as follows:

I. Title Page

II. Table of Contents

III. Instructions for Using the Guide

IV. About the Author

V. Body of Paper

1. Definition and discussion of burnout syndrome and how it is related to the athletic trainer.

2. The causes/antecedents of burnout.

   Workload, long hours, not taking time off, role ambiguity, locus of control, poor relationships with others, lack of coping skills, and stress are the main causes to be examined.

3. Stages of burnout.

   There will be a five stage approach to burnout discussed in this section. The five stage approach is from Greenberg (1990). (See review of literature pages 12 and 13.)

4. The signs and symptoms of burnout.

   This paper will discuss the signs and symptoms of burnout in two main categories, which are physical/physiological and behavioral/psychological.
For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical/Physiological</th>
<th>Psychological/Behavioral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fatigue</td>
<td>nervousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>headaches</td>
<td>irritability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight loss</td>
<td>depression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Prevention strategies to help decrease the development of burnout, specific to the athletic trainer.

Education about burnout, conscious awareness of potential problems, active outside lives are examples of some of the prevention strategies to be discussed.

6. Coping and intervention techniques for dealing with burnout, specific to the athletic trainer.

Realistic goal setting and time management are examples of behavioral/psychological interventions. Exercise and diet are examples of physical/physiological interventions. These and other coping techniques will be discussed and presented specifically relating to the athletic trainer. Specific interventions for specific causes and antecedents will also be examined.

7. Instruments or methods of measurement that can be used to help recognize if, and to what extent, that burnout may exist.

The most widely recognized and used method of measurement is the
Maslach Burnout Inventory. This will be discussed but not presented due to its extensive and difficult nature. However, the Brownout Inventory is a simple and easy to follow test that will give indications if burnout is fully present or just beginning.

8. Discussion and Conclusion.

VI. Suggested Readings

Definition of Terms

**Burnout Syndrome:** an adverse work stress reaction with psychological, psychophysiological, and behavioral components (Greenberg, 1990, p.288). A pattern of emotional overload and subsequent emotional exhaustion (Maslach, 1982, p.3).

**Professional Burnout:** a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur especially among individuals who do “people work” of some kind (Maslach, 1982, p.3).

**Athletic Trainer:** A health care professional who is currently employed as an athletic trainer (in any setting) and has successfully completed the NATABOC exam, becoming an Athletic Trainer Certified (A.T.,C.) (NATA, 1995).

**NATABOC:** National Athletic Trainers Association Board of Certification; which is the governing board that determines certification standards for athletic trainers (NATA, 1995).

**Intervention:** The act or fact of interfering so as to modify (Dorland’s Medical Dictionary, 1988, p.847).
Coping: A pattern of behavioral and emotional strategies used for dealing with anxiety-arousing situations (Barlow and Durand, 1995, p.26 and 706).

Stress: The sum of the biological reactions to any adverse stimulus, physical, mental, or emotional, internal or external, that tends to disturb the organism’s homeostasis (Dorland’s Medical Dictionary, 1988, p.1593).

Distress: Out of control stress, bad stress, stressors that cause physical, mental, and emotional difficulties (Hafer etal., 1996, p.43 and 591).

Eustress: Under control stress, good stress, positive stressors, one’s that are challenging, stimulating and rewarding (Hafer etal., 1996, p.43 and 591).
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The term "burnout" is widely used. It is common to hear a person refer to themselves as "burned out," especially after a stressful day. However, burnout is a clinically recognized syndrome, which involves specific signs and symptoms. Burnout can affect people in all professions, especially the helping professions, which includes athletic training. Athletic trainers appear to experience extremely high levels of stress and "many, if not all," members of the profession may experience some burnout (Gieck et al., 1982, p.36-38). A study by Campbell, Miller and Robinson (1985) surveyed 221 athletic trainers who attended the NATA Clinical Symposium in 1984. The study indicated that 60.3% of the athletic trainers surveyed were categorized as "burned out."

Burnout Defined

Burnout is defined as "an adverse work stress reaction with psychological, psychophysiological and behavioral components. Moreover, burnout appears to be a major factor in low worker morale, high absenteeism and job turnover rates, physical illness and distress, increased alcohol and drug use, marital and family conflict and various psychological problems" (Greenberg, 1990, p.288). There is a wide variety of definitions for burnout, such as stress-related definitions, symptom pattern definitions and a combination of both types (Capel, 1986, p.321). However, the definition given tends to cover the major aspects of the most commonly used descriptions of burnout and its relationship with professions. This holds true for health care professionals in general, and also specifically to athletic trainers. The athletic trainers lifestyle is stressful by nature (Gieck et al., 1982, p.36). High stress levels
and other antecedents, which will be discussed later, all add to the adverse working circumstances that can lead to burnout of the athletic trainer.

Antecedents/Causes

Burnout is not caused by contact with one individual or one circumstance or event. There is usually a combination of situations and relationships that lead to burnout. Throughout work environments, burnout-prone jobs have at least one thing in common -- overload or excessively large and difficult workloads (Maslach, 1982, p.38). The athletic trainer typically has a very large workload, such as being in direct supervision of a large number of athletes and students, administrative duties (ie. budgets, insurance claims), and supervision of the athletic treatment center (Campbell et al., 1985, p.110-113). This is just a portion of the typical workload of an athletic trainer. Other potential causes for burnout have been identified as long hours, not taking time off, changes or expansion of role (role ambiguity), lack of perceived control over outcomes (locus of control), poor relationships with colleagues, supervisors, students or athletes, monetary and lack of coping skills for dealing with stress (Edelwich, 1980, p.3).

Athletic trainers typically work exceptionally long hours (60-70 hours/week) for relatively low income (Capel, 1990, p.34-39). In addition, the athletic trainer does not take enough time off, especially when they are the only athletic trainer available. Some athletic training settings may allow for a vacation during the summer or off season, however, during the school year or in season it is difficult to take a break (Capel, 1990, p.35-36).

The athletic trainers role changes constantly. They experience the roles of teachers, administrators, and health care professionals on a daily basis. Role ambiguity has been shown
to have both positive and negative affects. Studies have shown it can lead to burnout due to role conflict and trying to accomplish too many things at once. However, it has also been shown to help reduce burnout by decreasing feelings of boredom and staleness at work. It seems that changes or expansion of role can be good in moderation but debilitating if overloaded (Capel, 1986, p.321-327). Conflicts with administrators and coaches has also been indicated in the attrition and job burnout of athletic trainers (Capel, 1990 p.37-38).

The athletic trainers' locus of control has also been indicated in level of burnout. An external locus of control, such as feelings of no control when an athlete is injured, has been shown to possibly increase levels of burnout. However, the internal locus of control that follows the successful rehabilitation and return to activity of an injured athlete tends to help decrease feelings of burnout (Capel, 1986, p.321-327). A study by Campbell, Miller, and Robinson (1985) suggested that a greater portion of burned out athletic trainers are male, slightly younger, do not have children, head athletic trainers more likely than assistants to be burned out and surprisingly burned out athletic trainers tend to work with at least one other certified athletic trainer.

Stress in life as well as occupational stress can be both positive and negative. Eustress is what is known as positive, good stress that can be challenging, stimulating and rewarding. In turn distress is negative, bad stress that leads to the development of burnout (Hafen et al., 1996, p.43 and 591). A balance of stress is needed to function normally. Therefore, if there is too much occupational stress it can be detrimental but so can to little. The basic premise is that there needs to be a balance (ie eustress = distress) for optimal performance. If there is too much of either type burnout may result (Greenberg, 1990,
Too much distress in the athletic trainer gives rise to inappropriate responses of outbursts and hostility. In turn, too little stress (eustress) results in boredom and apathy (Gieck, 1984, p. 117).

High stress levels have been strongly indicated in the development of burnout among all professions (Maslach, 1982, p. 3). Stress affects people in all occupations, but those in the helping professions are especially susceptible. Most stress for the athletic trainer comes not from the science of athletic training but from the art (Gieck, 1984, p. 115). The athletic trainer deals with athletes emotions on a daily basis, and these are usually negative emotions that are associated with injury. Therefore, the athletic trainer must help the athlete with their stress management and often neglect their own (Gieck, 1984, p. 115). The development of poor relations with coaches, administrators and athletes can also cause high stress levels (Gieck, 1984, p. 115).

The athletic trainer also experiences stress from other sources. There is stress inherent in athletic contests, however, the observation of practices can become boring, which can also be stressful (Gieck, 1984, p. 117). In addition, the emergency medical aspect of athletic training is also very stressful. The athletic trainer may have to go from the boredom of observing practice to making life and death decisions about an athlete, in a matter of seconds. The athletic trainer is not always prepared for these, or other, high pressure and unpleasant situations (Gieck, 1984, p. 116). This may cause the athletic trainers stress levels to rise rapidly. This is especially true if the situation turn out negatively (ie. the athlete is permanently disabled or dies). The athletic trainer may feel, in someway, responsible for the athletes condition or death, which can cause extreme stress (Gieck, 1984, p. 116-117).
Stages of Burnout

Burnout has been shown to develop in stages. The following approach appears to be the most comprehensive and easy to understand.

Stage One (the honeymoon). At this stage, the worker is usually satisfied with the job and the tasks involved, and remains enthusiastic toward the work. However, as this stage continues, the tasks become unenjoyable and the worker loses energy.

Stage Two (fuel shortage). At this stage, fatigue sets in, and the worker may respond by abusing drugs. Difficulty sleeping is another symptom of this stage.

Stage Three (chronic symptoms). At this stage overwork leads to physical effects that include constant exhaustion and susceptibility to disease, and psychological effects that include acute anger and feelings of depression.

Stage Four (crisis). At this stage, actual illness can develop that results in the worker not being able to attend the job. Relationships at home may also be affected due to a sense of pessimism, self-doubt, and/or obsession with problems.

Stage Five (hitting the wall). At this stage, the physical and psychological problems can become severe enough to cause illness that is life-threatening.

The worker now has so many problems at work that his or her career is actually threatened (Greenberg, 1990, p. 289-290).

This five stage model can be applied to any profession. During the honeymoon stage the athletic trainer is energetic and excited about his/her job. Usually this leads to
overextending themselves, which leads to the fuel shortage stage due to fatigue. They are not allowing themselves to rest. The chronic symptoms stage begins because of the overload causes physical and emotional effects that start to affect work. During the crisis stage, burnout really starts to affect all aspects of a person's life. Their job performance and personal life suffer. If this continues the person will enter the hitting the wall stage and their career and family life may be threatened. However, by using the proper treatment techniques and prevention strategies these stages can either be reversed at any time or avoided all together (Greenberg, 1990, p. 291-295).

Signs and Symptoms

There are several signs and symptoms that may occur with burnout. The above three stage model lists several of these signs and symptoms. There are numerous psychological and behavioral signs and symptoms that may indicate burnout. The most common are changeable moods, nervousness, irritability, loss of caring for people, frustration, suspiciousness and cynicism, feelings of helplessness and lack of control, depression, and greater professional risk taking (Vernacchia et al., 1992, p.128). The athletic trainer may totally connect himself to their job in an attempt to achieve self-gratification and praise. They may give up on relationships or outside activities (Gieck, et al., 1982, p. 38). The most common physical/physiological symptom among athletic trainers is fatigue (Campbell et al., 1985, p.112). The other main physical signs and symptoms are headaches, gastrointestinal disturbances, weight loss, sleeplessness, short of breath (Vernacchia et al., 1992, p.128) and ulcers, increased heart rate or cardiovascular disturbances (Gieck et al., 1982, p.38). Burnout can produce any or all of these signs and symptoms plus others that research may not have
discovered to this point. Gieck, Brown and Shank (1982) reported that the most telling symptom that athletic trainers with burnout complain of is working longer hours and enjoying work less.

Prevention

The literature indicates there are several strategies for preventing the occurrence of burnout. Prevention requires conscious awareness of potential boredom, frustration, and diminishing returns associated with the job of an athletic trainer (Gieck et al., 1982, p. 39). Therefore, the more information about burnout that is available to the athletic trainer, such as the causes, consequences and coping strategies, will better prepare these professionals (Maslach, 1982, p.135). Other strategies that have been shown to help prevent burnout are an active outside life, proper health habits, diet, analyzing the job stressors related to athletic training (Gieck et al., 1982, p.39). Therefore, the athletic trainer should be educated about their job and its possible stressors, utilize time management techniques, sleep and relaxation, have other interests outside of sports and athletic training, engage in healthy habits including a proper diet. These suggestions may not totally eliminate the possibility of developing burnout, however, they may reduce the risk.

Coping/Interventions

Several of the interventions are the same or similar to preventions discussed earlier. The major difference is that now the discussion will concentrate on how to reverse burnout after it has started. Burnout can be treated or reversed at any time, with the proper techniques. Some of the most successful coping/intervention techniques are as follows;

realistic goal setting - do not try to accomplish more than personal limits will allow,
daily exercise - taking advantage of the facilities available at the athletic trainers place of work,

time management - schedule enough time to accomplish tasks and distinguish between need and desired tasks, also schedule time to relax if necessary,
delegating authority - allow assistants and student athletic trainers to help when appropriate (Vernacchia et al., 1992, p.134).

Greenberg (1990) discussed more specifically work related interventions. The athletic trainer should try to never take work home with them, due to their already long hours this will only add more difficulties. They should take a full lunch break, try not to discuss work at lunch and if at all possible eat healthy and away from the work place. This may be as simple as eating in the park or at the cafeteria. The athletic trainer may also try to see things for what they really are - is it really a deadline or just about the time something should be accomplished, attempt to look for humor in the stressors at work - try to laugh when possible, and separate personal self-worth from tasks - if a task does not get accomplished, the athletic trainer should not feel like a failure (Greenberg, 1990, p.293). Also, attempt to be flexible and expect the unexpected, such as an unexpected schedule change. This will help decrease anxiety levels and allow the athletic trainer to handle difficult situations more effectively. This may also help the athletic trainer feel more in control of their lives and their job (Gieck et al., 1982, p.40). One of the most important strategies for prevention and treatment of burnout for the athletic trainer appears to be taking time to be good to themselves and enjoy life.
Methods of Measurement

There are several methods or surveys used to detect or determine if an individual is suffering from burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is the most widely used and recognized measure in the literature. The MBI has been shown to be both a valid and reliable measure of burnout among health care professionals. This instrument measures burnout through emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maslach and Jackson, 1981, p.104). This method is difficult to administer due to the difficult nature of interpretation of the results.

Another method that is easier to self-administer and interpret the "Brownout Inventory" (Greenberg, 1990, p. 290). These two scales will help indicate tendencies and rough estimates about the level of burnout, if any, the athletic trainer is experiencing. The "Brownout Inventory" scale is found in the guide (page 13), along with how to interpret and understand the results.

Vernacchia, McGuire, and Cook (1992) reported a concise three stage model of burnout. The three stages are the stress arousal stage, the energy conservation stage, and the exhaustion state. Burnout will progress through these three stages, but can be interrupted or reversed at any point. This approach is another method the athletic trainer can use to examine if they are experiencing, and to what level, some of the signs and symptoms of burnout.
Chapter 3
Discussion and Conclusions

The focus of this research is the relationship between burnout syndrome and the athletic trainer. There is an enormous amount of literature on burnout in general. The majority of this research indicates that people employed in the helping professions (ie. police, firemen, nurses) and/or the health care professions are highly susceptible to burnout. The athletic trainer is one such health care professional. The limited research on burnout among athletic trainers does indicate a potential problem. Campbell, Miller, and Robinson (1985) reported that 60.3% of the athletic trainers they surveyed were categorized as "burned out." The actual numbers vary among studies, but there is no question burnout occurs in athletic trainers and that it can be devastating.

The purpose of this research is to develop a comprehensive, yet concise, resource on burnout specifically related to the athletic trainer. There is no such resource in the current literature. The result of the research is a self-help guide about burnout for the athletic trainer. This includes discussion of the causes, stages, signs and symptoms, methods of detection and especially prevention and coping/intervention techniques for burnout specifically directed towards the athletic trainer. Hopefully, this guide will be utilized in, at least, two functional ways. First, the guide can be used as an educational resource. Current and future athletic trainers may use the guide to educate themselves about burnout. Athletic training curriculums may incorporate the guide into one of the several athletic training courses already in place for the student athletic trainers. This will help improve their preparation for entering the athletic training profession, which can be very stressful at times. This may help decrease the
prevalence of burnout in the athletic training profession in the future. Increasing the current athletic trainers knowledge about burnout will improve their understanding of burnout and its relationship to their profession.

Second, the guide will provide a quick reference about burnout, for the athletic trainer. The athletic trainer may then access the information, at their convenience, about the syndrome, its causes, signs and symptoms, stages, methods of detection and especially the prevention and coping techniques. The information in this guide is specifically designed for the athletic trainer and their profession. This will allow the athletic trainer access to specific suggestions and knowledge about burnout related to their field. The guide is very easy to follow and the information is readily accessible. This will, hopefully, improve the guides usefulness to athletic trainers.

Burnout has been shown to have devastating effects on both professional and personal lives. The fatigue, irritability, and cynicism (to name just a small sample) that accompany burnout can cause work to suffer. The athletic trainer may become less interested in their work and even begin to care less about the welfare of the athletes. This can rapidly lead to difficulties on the job, including the possibility of dismissal. The emotional and physical affects of burnout will also damage the athletic trainers personal life. They will have difficulty in maintaining relationships and friendships. This may lead to feelings of isolation and possibly even divorce. Burnout may be so debilitating that professional help may be necessary to recover. The athletic trainer must not feel like a failure or incompetent if professional help is required. Burnout can be very difficult to handle on their own. This self-help guide should be used whenever possible, however, if there is any questions please seek professional advice.
The major focus of the guide is to increase the athletic trainers knowledge about burnout. I believe this will help decrease the prevalence of burnout in the athletic training profession. Education has been shown to be the key to the prevention of, and coping with burnout. Therefore, the guide may help improve the individuals within the profession, which will improve the profession as a whole. This is the goal of almost anyone in any profession. I believe the guide will be very useful for any athletic trainer who takes the time and makes an effort to utilize the information.
References


Chapter 4

Burnout

A Self-Help Guide For The Athletic Trainer
Table of Contents

Section 1

What is Burnout? ............................................................... 1
Burnout and The Athletic Trainer ........................................................1-2
Burnout Defined .......................................................................................2
The Dangers of Burnout .................................................................3

Section 2

Am I Susceptible to Burnout? ............................................................4
The Causes/Antecedents .......................................................................4-7
How does Burnout Develop? .............................................................8
Stages of Burnout ..................................................................................8-9

Section 3

What are the Signs and Symptoms of Burnout? ............................10
Physical/Physiological ...........................................................................10
Behavioral/ Psychological .....................................................................11
How Can I Detect the Presence of Burnout? ........................................ 12

Self-evaluation Checklist ...................................................................... 12-13

Brownout Inventory ............................................................................ 14-15

Section 4

How Can I Handle Burnout? ................................................................. 16

Overview of Coping/Intervention Techniques ..................................... 16-23

Physical/Physiological Techniques ..................................................... 16

Behavioral/Psychological Techniques ............................................... 19

Section 5

How Can I Prevent Burnout? ............................................................... 24-25

Section 6

Where Can I get more Information? ................................................... 26

Suggested Readings ........................................................................... 26-27

The Authors Conclusions about Burnout
and the Athletic Trainer .................................................................. 28-29
Instructions for Using This Guide

This self-help guide was designed for the athletic trainer to utilize as an educational tool and a comprehensive, yet concise, reference pertaining to burnout. There are several articles in the literature about burnout and how it is related to athletic training. However, this information has never before been compiled into one resource. This guide provides easy access to important information for every athletic trainer.

Athletic trainers may incorporate the guide into in service educational sessions. Increasing the current athletic trainers knowledge about burnout will improve our understanding of burnout and its relationship to our profession. Athletic training curriculums may incorporate the guide into one of the several athletic training courses already in place for the student athletic trainers. This will help improve their preparation for entering the athletic training profession, which can be very stressful at times. This may help decrease the prevalence of burnout in the athletic training profession in the future.

The guide may also be used as a quick reference about burnout. The athletic trainer may then access the information, at their convenience, about the syndrome, its causes, signs and symptoms, stages, methods of detection and especially the prevention and coping techniques. The information in this guide is specifically designed for the athletic trainer and their profession. This will allow the athletic trainer access to specific suggestions and knowledge about burnout related to their field. The guide is very easy to follow and the information is readily accessible. This will, hopefully, improve the guides usefulness to athletic trainers.
About the Author

Chris J. Heard A.T.,C. has been a certified athletic trainer for approximately two years. He earned his B.S. in Health and Human Performance with an emphasis in Athletic Training in 1995, from The University of Montana. This guide is the culmination of his Master of Science in Health and Human Performance with an emphasis in Sport and Performance Psychology at The University of Montana, May 1997. Burnout in athletic training has been the major research emphasis throughout his graduate work. Chris has also been an Emergency Medical Technician for approximately six years and works part time for a local ambulance company. He was recently hired as the Head Athletic Trainer for Montana Sports Medicine in Butte, Montana.
SECTION 1

WHAT IS BURNOUT?
Burnout and The Athletic Trainer

The term "burnout" is widely used. It is common to hear a person refer to themselves as "burned out," especially after a stressful day. However, burnout is a clinically recognized syndrome, which involves specific signs and symptoms. Burnout can affect people in all professions, especially the helping professions, which includes athletic training. Athletic trainers appear to experience extremely high levels of stress and many, if not all, members of the profession may experience some burnout. A study by Campbell, Miller and Robinson (1985) surveyed 221 athletic trainers who attended the NATA Clinical Symposium in 1984. The study indicated that 60.3% of the athletic trainers surveyed were categorized as "burned out."

♦ There is a wide variety of definitions for burnout, such as stress-related definitions, symptom pattern definitions and a combination of both types.

♦ The definitions given tend to cover the major aspects of the most commonly used descriptions of burnout and its relationship with professions.

♦ This holds true for health care professionals in general, and also specifically to athletic trainers.
Section 1: What is Burnout?

♦ The athletic trainers lifestyle is stressful due to the nature of their profession.

♦ High stress levels and other antecedents, which will be discussed later, all add to the adverse working circumstances that can lead to burnout of the athletic trainer.

Burnout Defined

Burnout Syndrome: "an adverse work stress reaction with psychological, psychophysiological and behavioral components. Moreover, burnout appears to be a major factor in low worker morale, high absenteeism and job turnover rates, physical illness and distress, increased alcohol and drug use, marital and family conflict and various psychological problems" (Greenberg, 1990, p.288).

Professional Burnout: a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur especially among individuals who do "people work" of some kind (Maslach, 1982, p.3).
The Dangers of Burnout

Burnout has been shown to have devastating effects on both professional and personal lives. The fatigue, irritability, and cynicism (to name just a small sample) that accompany burnout can cause work to suffer. The athletic trainer may become less interested in their work and even begin to care less about the welfare of the athletes. This can rapidly lead to difficulties on the job, including the possibility of dismissal. The emotional and physical affects of burnout will also damage the athletic trainers personal life. They will have difficulty in maintaining relationships and friendships. This may lead to feelings of isolation and possibly even divorce. Burnout may be so debilitating that professional help may be necessary to recover. The athletic trainer must not feel like a failure or incompetent if professional help is required. Burnout can be very difficult to handle on their own. This self-help guide should be used whenever possible, however, if there is any questions please seek professional advice.
SECTION 2

AM I SUSCEPTIBLE TO BURNOUT?

AND

HOW DOES BURNOUT DEVELOP?
First, this section will present an easy access list of the antecedents/causes of burnout that relate to the athletic trainer. Then each of these will be examined separately to give a clearer understanding of how they affect the athletic trainer. Second, this section will give an overview of a comprehensive five stage approach for examining burnout. This stage approach will be discussed specifically relating to the athletic trainer.

Common Causes/Antecedents for the Athletic Trainer:

1. Excessively Large and Difficult Workload
2. Long Hours
3. Low Pay
4. Not Taking Time Off
5. Role Ambiguity
6. Locus of Control (External)
7. Poor Relationships with Colleagues, Supervisors, Students, or Athletes
8. High Stress Levels
9. Lack of Coping Skills for Stress

Specific prevention, coping or intervention techniques for each of these antecedents/causes are addressed in their respective sections. (Prevention - section 5 and Coping - section 4)
Burnout is not caused by contact with one individual or one circumstance or event. There is usually a combination of situations and relationships that lead to burnout.

1. Maslach (1982) found that throughout work environments, burnout-prone jobs have at least one thing in common -- overload or excessively large and difficult workloads. The athletic trainer typically has a very large workload, such as being in direct supervision of a large number of athletes and students, administrative duties (i.e., budgets, insurance claims), and supervision of the athletic treatment center. This is just a portion of the typical workload of an athletic trainer.

2-4. Athletic trainers typically work exceptionally long hours (60-70 hours/week) for relatively low income. In addition, the athletic trainer does not take enough time off, especially when they are the only athletic trainer available. Some athletic training settings may allow for a vacation during the summer or off season, however, during the school year or in season it is difficult to take a break.

5. The athletic trainers role changes constantly. They experience the roles of teachers, administrators, and health care professionals on a daily basis. Role ambiguity has been shown to have both positive and negative affects. Studies have shown it can lead to burnout due to role conflict and trying to accomplish too many things at once. However, it has also been shown to help reduce burnout by decreasing feelings of boredom and staleness at work. Capel (1986) indicated that changes or expansion of
Section 2: Am I Susceptible to Burnout?

role can be good in moderation but debilitating if overloaded.

6. The athletic trainers locus of control has also been indicated in level of burnout. Capel (1986) indicated an external locus of control, such as feelings of no control when an athlete is injured, has been shown to possibly increase levels of burnout. However, the internal locus of control that follows the successful rehabilitation and return to activity of an injured athlete tends to help decrease feelings of burnout.

7. Conflicts with administrators and coaches has also been indicated in the attrition and job burnout of athletic trainers. The development of poor relations with coaches, administrators and athletes can also cause high stress levels.

8-9. Stress in life as well as occupational stress can be both positive and negative. Eustress is what is known as positive, good stress that can be challenging, stimulating and rewarding. In turn distress is negative, bad stress that leads to the development of burnout. A balance of stress is needed to function normally. Therefore, if there is too much occupational stress it can be detrimental but so can to little. The basic premise is that there needs to be a balance (ie eustress = distress) for optimal performance. If there is too much of either type burnout may result. Gieck (1984) indicated too much distress in the athletic trainer gives rise to inappropriate responses of outbursts and hostility. In turn, too little stress (eustress) results in boredom and apathy.
Stress affects people in all occupations, but those in the helping professions are especially susceptible. Stress for the athletic trainer comes not just from the science of athletic training but also from the art. The athletic trainer deals with athletes emotions on a daily basis, and these are usually negative emotions that are associated with injury.

The athletic trainer also experiences stress from other sources. There is stress inherent in athletic contests, however, the observation of practices can become boring, which can also be stressful. In addition, the emergency medical aspect of athletic training is also very stressful. The athletic trainer may have to go from the boredom of observing practice to making life and death decisions about an athlete, in a matter of seconds. The athletic trainer is not always prepared for these, or other, high pressure and unpleasant situations. This may cause the athletic trainers stress levels to rise rapidly. This is especially true if the situation ends negatively (ie. the athlete is permanently disabled or dies). The athletic trainer may feel, in someway, responsible for the athletes condition or death, which can cause extreme stress.

A study by Campbell, Miller, and Robinson (1985) suggested that a greater portion of burned out athletic trainers are male, slightly younger, do not have children, head athletic trainers more likely than assistants to be burned out and surprisingly burned out athletic trainers tend to work with at least one other certified athletic trainer.
**How Does Burnout Develop?**

Burnout has been shown to develop in stages. This five stage approach, hopefully, will help the athletic trainer understand the process of burnout. The following approach appears to be the most comprehensive and easy to understand or follow.

**Stages of Burnout**

**Stage One (the honeymoon).** During this stage the athletic trainer is energetic and excited about his/her job. Usually this leads to overextending themselves, which leads to the fuel shortage stage, due to fatigue.

**Stage Two (fuel shortage).** Fatigue is very prevalent. The athletic trainer does not allow themselves to rest. Some athletic trainers may respond by abusing drugs and they may also experience difficulty sleeping.

**Stage Three (chronic symptoms).** This stage begins due to the overload of work is not handled appropriately. The athletic trainer may develop constant exhaustion and susceptibility to disease. They may also have psychological difficulties including anger and depression.
Stage Four (crisis). During this stage, burnout really starts to affect all aspects of the athletic trainer’s life. Their job performance and personal life suffer. They may develop a sense of pessimism, self-doubt, and/or obsession with problems.

Stage Five (hitting the wall). At this stage, the athletic trainer's physical and psychological problems can become severe enough to cause illness that is life-threatening. They now have so many problems at work that his or her career is actually threatened.

(This five stage model was adapted to the athletic trainer from Greenberg, 1990, p. 289-290.)

Burnout has been shown to develop by passing through these five stages. There are no set time frames for each stage. The length of each stage will be based individually on a person's reaction to burnout. However, an individual may feel some of these signs and symptoms as part of a normal reaction to a period of high stress. It is normal for a person to be excited about a new job and possibly overextend themselves, which leads to fatigue. The problem occurs when these feelings begin to persist over time. Feeling fatigued for a couple of days or occasionally is a normal response to high stress.
SECTION 3
WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF BURNOUT?
AND HOW CAN I DETECT THE PRESENCE OF BURNOUT?
There are several signs and symptoms that may occur with burnout. These signs and symptoms will be divided into two main categories, which are physical/physiological and behavioral/psychological. Signs and symptoms of burnout may occur in one, or both, of these categories at any time. The literature has identified the most common physical/physiological symptom among athletic trainers to be fatigue. In turn, the most common behavioral/psychological symptom indicated is also fatigue or emotional exhaustion. Burnout can produce either of these symptoms, any of the following symptoms, plus others that research may not have discovered to this point. The following is a list of the most common signs and symptoms of burnout. In addition, a possible corresponding prevention, coping or intervention technique is also listed. (See sections 4 and 5 for a detailed description.)

**Signs and Symptoms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical/Physiological:</th>
<th>Prevention/Coping Technique:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Fatigue</td>
<td>-Exercise, Diet, Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Headaches</td>
<td>-Variable: Exercise, Relaxation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Gastrointestinal Disturbances</td>
<td>-Diet, Stress Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ulcers</td>
<td>-Diet, Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Weight Loss</td>
<td>-Exercise, Regular Physicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Shortness of Breath</td>
<td>-Diet, Exercise, Regular Physicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Cardiovascular Disturbances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-increased heart rate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 3: What are the Signs and Symptoms of Burnout?

Physical/Physiological:
- heart palpitations
- increased blood pressure
- sleeplessness

Behavioral/Psychological:
- Fatigue or Emotional Exhaustion
- Changeable Moods
- Increased Irritability
- Frustration
- Suspiciousness of Others
- Helplessness
- Greater Professional Risk Taking
- Aggression or Withdrawal
- Conflict with Colleagues etc...
- Nervousness
- Depression

Prevention/Coping Technique:
- Exercise, Stress Management
- Exercise, Stress Management
- Exercise, Stress Management
- Time Management, Relaxation
- Stress Management
- Time Management, Sleep
- Take Time Off, Active Outside Life
- See Things for What They Are
- Time Management, Goal Setting
- Active Outside Life, Take Time Off
- Separate Self-Worth from The Job
- Flexibility
- Goal Setting, See Things for What They Are
- Goal Setting, Active Outside Life, Time Management ect..

These prevention and coping techniques are examined in more detail in the next two sections. The most important technique was not listed above because it applies to all the signs and symptoms. Education is a vital prevention and coping technique and is the purpose of this guide. (This list was compiled from a variety of sources.)
How Can I Detect the Presence of Burnout?

Vernacchia, McGuire, and Cook (1992) reported a concise three stage model of burnout. The three stages are the stress arousal stage, the energy conservation stage, and the exhaustion state. Burnout will progress through these three stages, but can be interrupted or reversed at any point. This approach is one method the athletic trainer can use to examine if they are experiencing, and to what level, some of the signs and symptoms of burnout.

The following is a self evaluation checklist that may be used by the athletic trainer to determine if he/she is currently experiencing any of these stages. This checklist should not be used to diagnose burnout but merely indicate a tendency toward burnout.

Stage 1: The Stress Arousal Stage (The athletic trainer may be experiencing this stage of burnout if any of the following two symptoms are present.)

1. Persistent irritability
2. Persistent anxiety
3. Periods of high blood pressure
4. Bruxism (grinding your teeth at night)
5. Insomnia
6. Forgetfulness
7. Heart palpitations
8. Unusual heart rhythms
9. Inability to concentrate
10. Headaches
Section 3: How Can I Detect the Presence of Burnout?

Stage 2: The Energy Conservation Stage (The athletic trainer may be experiencing this stage of burnout if any of the following two symptoms are present.)

1. Lateness for work
2. Procrastination
3. Needed 3-day weekend
4. Decreased sexual desire
5. Persistent tiredness in the mornings
6. Turning work in late
7. Social withdrawal
8. Cynical attitudes
9. Resentfulness
10. Increased alcohol consumption
11. Increased coffee, tea or cola consumption
12. An "I don’t care attitudes"

Stage 3: The Exhaustion State: (The athletic trainer may be experiencing this stage of burnout if any of the following two symptoms are present.)

1. Chronic sadness or depression
2. Chronic stomach or bowel problems
3. Chronic mental fatigue
4. Chronic physical fatigue
5. Chronic headaches
6. Desire to “drop-out” of society
7. Perhaps the desire to commit suicide
Another method used to detect burnout that is easy to self-administer and interpret is the "Brownout Inventory." This method uses twenty true or false questions to determine the level of burnout present, if any.

**Brownout Inventory**

Are you suffering from burnout or are you only part way there - brownout? Complete the brownout inventory below and find out. For each statement below, write a T if that statement is true for you or an F if it is not.

__ 1. Is your efficiency at work declining?
__ 2. Have you lost some of your initiative at work?
__ 3. Have you lost interest in your work?
__ 4. Does work stress get to you more than it used to?
__ 5. Do you feel fatigued or run down?
__ 6. Do you get headaches?
__ 7. Do you get stomachaches?
__ 8. Have you lost weight recently?
__ 9. Do you have trouble sleeping?
__ 10. Do you experience shortness of breathe?
__ 11. Do you have frequently changing or depressing moods?
__ 12. Are you easy to anger?
__ 13. Do you get frustrated easily?
Section 3: How Can I Detect the Presence of Burnout?

14. Are you more suspicious than you used to be?
15. Do you feel more helpless than you used to?
16. Are you using too many mood-altering drugs (e.g., tranquilizers or alcohol)?
17. Are you becoming more inflexible?
18. Are you becoming more critical of your own and others’ competencies?
19. Are you working more but feeling that you’re getting less done?
20. Have you lost some of your sense of humor?

If you answered true for more than half of these statements you may be experiencing burnout. If you answered true for fifteen or more of these statements you may be burning out or are already burned out. (This scale is from Greenberg, 1990.)

The methods in this section are not intended to allow the athletic trainer to self-diagnose themselves with or without burnout. These measurements are intended to give the athletic trainer a resource that will help indicate tendencies towards burnout. This will, hopefully, allow for early detection of these tendencies and employment of the prevention or coping techniques discussed in the next two sections.
SECTION 4

HOW CAN I HANDLE BURNOUT?
Section 4: How Can I Handle Burnout?

Coping/Interventions

Several of the interventions are the same or similar to preventions discussed in the next section. The major difference is that this discussion will concentrate on how to reverse burnout after it has started. Burnout can be treated or reversed at any time, with the proper techniques. Some of the most successful techniques are realistic goal setting, exercise, time management, and delegating authority. Greenberg (1990) discussed more specifically work related interventions. The athletic trainer should try to never take work home with them, take a full lunch break, try not to discuss work at lunch and if at all possible eat healthy and away from the work place. The athletic trainer should also try to see things for what they really are, attempt to look for humor in the stressors at work, and separate personal self-worth from tasks. Also, attempt to be flexible and expect the unexpected, such as an unexpected schedule change. One of the most important strategies for prevention and treatment of burnout for the athletic trainer appears to be taking time to be good to themselves and enjoy life. There is overlap between physical/physiological and behavioral/psychological interventions. The interventions are separated into these categories to help understand the relationship between the causes, signs and symptoms and their corresponding intervention.

Physical/Physiological:

♦ Exercise: This intervention has a variety of positive effects.

- First, it will help decrease both mental and physical fatigue.

- Second, exercise has been shown to help decrease levels of stress.
Third, it will help decrease physical illness and injury, which can increase anyone's susceptibility to burnout.

Finally, exercise can increase social life or outside activities, which is also important to decrease burnout levels.

- Excuse: I don't have time. Answer: Schedule time to exercise, just as you schedule a meeting.

-- Time Management. Take advantage of the job. Use the facilities of the workplace. A majority of athletic trainers have access to an exercise bike, treadmill, or other exercise equipment, such as playing basketball (noon ball), going for a walk on the track, or simply walking to lunch. Remember, exercise does not have to take more than a few minutes per day to help decrease burnout.

The following are just some suggested exercises that can be done in a short amount of time. Most importantly, do the exercise that best suites the situation.

Exercises:

Stretching: - neck rotation, side bending, trunk rotation, back, hamstrings, quads and any other body parts exercised or feel tense.
Section 4: How Can I Handle Burnout?

**Anaerobic:** Set up an appropriate program for personal abilities. Should include situps, pushups and quarter squats. Why? Because these can be done anywhere at any time without special equipment.

**Aerobic:** Very important to remember to do aerobic exercise. This will help increase energy levels and decrease cardiovascular difficulties. This can be accomplished by scheduling time to walk (walk to work, to lunch, around campus - whatever is appropriate for the given situation), bike (inside or out, to work, with friends), run.

A very important aspect of every exercise program that is often overlooked is rest and sleep. The body has to be able to recover in order to function normally. Exercise has been shown to help decrease insomnia. The above exercise program is an example and adjust as necessary. This program was adapted from Welch et al., 1982.

**Diet:** Proper eating habits will help decrease stress and illness.

- High levels of caffeine or junk food should be avoided due to increased heart rates or other related health problems.
- Try to eat at least one balanced meal a day. This is not always easy with travel and long hours. Try to pack a lunch, instead of eating fast food. Bring healthy snacks, such as fruits and vegetables, instead of candy. Drink juices or water instead of soda or coffee. A proper diet will give the athletic trainer the needed energy resources to work long hours and still feel healthy. Take time to eat a lunch or, at least, a healthy snack.

**Behavioral/Psychological:** (Several of these interventions will also help relieve physical/physiological signs and symptoms.)

- **Realistic Goal Setting:** Define goals precisely.
  
  - Be careful to keep expectations from getting out of hand. Goals should be difficult, yet attainable.
  
  - Write the goals down.
  
  - Read and review the goals often.
  
  - Focus on successes and not on the failures.
  
  - This intervention will help with controlling role ambiguity, long hours and large workloads. Goal setting also decreases frustration, nervousness, depression and feelings of helplessness.
Section 4: How Can I Handle Burnout?

Time Management: The use of a day planner is an easy way to schedule time for tasks.

- There are literally thousands of styles on the market, including computer programs. The athletic trainer should find one that fits their personal situation.

- Schedule enough time to accomplish tasks at an appropriate rate.

- This can then be used to help manage large workloads, long hours and role ambiguity.

- It will help decrease fatigue or emotional exhaustion, irritability, and stress.

- This is accomplished by scheduling time to relax, take time off and distinguish between need and desired tasks.

- Once this distinction has been made make a list of things that are necessary to accomplish that day.

- Do Not include trivial items.

- If your schedule is interrupted try to stay flexible and reorganize to gain control of activities.

- Do not feel guilty for not accomplishing everything.

- Plan enjoyable activities daily for something to look forward to.

- Finally, delegate tasks that do not require your attention.
Delegate Authority: Allow assistants and student athletic trainers to help when appropriate. This will help decrease large workloads, long hours and role ambiguity.

- It will also help decrease conflicts with colleagues over responsibilities.

Work Related Interventions: These are more suggestions to help alleviate work related stressors.

- Whenever possible do not take work home. Hours are long enough!

- Take a full lunch break (if possible) and do not discuss work at lunch unless it is necessary.

- Eat healthy and not in the treatment center or office. Go to a park or outside on a bench when the weather permits.

- See things for what they really are - is it a deadline or just about the time something should be accomplished. Does this task need to be done today? Accept and understand there are things that cannot be changed.
Section 4: How Can I Handle Burnout?

-Look for humor in stressors at work. Try to laugh whenever possible.

Humor and laughter have been shown to decrease stress and increase positive attitudes.

-Separate self-worth from the task. The athletic trainer should not feel like a failure if an athlete becomes injured or rehabilitation is taking longer than expected. If other tasks are not accomplished, reorganize and attempt them again in the future.

-Be flexible and expect the unexpected, such as a change in practice schedule for a team at very short notice. As is well understood in this profession this happens quite often. In turn, flexibility will allow the athletic trainer to better handle the aversive situation.

-An active outside life has been shown to be one of the best resources for decreasing job stress. This helps the athletic trainer avoid total identification with their job. Each individual is more than just an athletic trainer. There are other interests and enjoyable activities. This helps decrease frustration, depression, and conflicts with colleagues.
Section 4: How Can I Handle Burnout?

-Learn to say NO. This will decrease stress and workload all on its own.

-Relaxation and meditation techniques have also been shown to help decrease levels of stress and burnout. These techniques take only a few minutes and can be done in the office. Pick a technique which is personally satisfying.

-Keep a Journal. There is no specific structure. Use any style that fits your personality. (i.e. write, draw pictures or both)

All of these interventions will help manage workloads, long hours, role ambiguity, locus of control, relationship difficulties and stress levels. These techniques may help the athletic trainer at any time. The best results occur when these techniques are used on a daily basis before burnout begins to occur. However, they may help reverse it once it has begun. Burnout can be a very devastating syndrome and it is possible that professional help may be needed to get better. Please do not hesitate to contact a family physician or other health care professionals for help. There is no shame in burnout -- it can happen to anyone.
SECTION 5

HOW CAN I PREVENT BURNOUT?
Section 5: How Can I Prevent Burnout?

Prevention

There are several strategies for preventing the occurrence of burnout. Geick (1982), found that prevention requires conscious awareness of potential boredom, frustration, and diminishing returns associated with the job of an athletic trainer. Therefore, the more information about burnout that is available to the athletic trainer, such as this guide, will improve the preparation of these professionals. Basically, education is the key to prevention, which is the goal of this guide. Other strategies that have been shown to help prevent burnout are an active outside life, proper health habits, diet, analyzing the job stressors related to athletic training. Therefore, the athletic trainer should be educated about their job and its possible stressors, utilize time management techniques, sleep and relaxation, have other interests outside of sports and athletic training, and engage in healthy habits including a proper diet. These suggestions may not totally eliminate the possibility of developing burnout, however, they may reduce the risk. Several of these techniques are also seen as coping techniques and will be discussed in greater detail in that section.

Prevention Techniques:

♦ Education: This is the most important aspect in the prevention of burnout. If the athletic trainer is educated about burnout, there is an increased chance they may prevent it from occurring.
Section 5: How Can I Prevent Burnout?

♦ **Active Outside Life:** Maintain a balance between professional life and personal life. This will help decrease the "Long Hours" cause of burnout. (Discussed previously in section 4)

♦ **Realistic Goal Setting:** This will help decrease frustrations and feelings of helplessness. (Discussed previously in section 4)

♦ **Proper Health Habits:** This includes diet, exercise and annual physical exams. These all help increase energy and decrease the risk of illness. (Discussed previously in section 4)

♦ **Conscious Awareness of Potential Problems:** Such as Boredom,-- sitting at practice all day every day.

  - Frustration -- Unable to help all the athletes all the time. Balancing roles.

  - Diminishing returns associated with the job -- Thank You is not heard often from the athletes, students or supervisors.

  - Being aware is half the battle.

All of these strategies, plus all of the techniques discussed in section 4 can be used both before or after the occurrence of burnout. Try to use these strategies now, do not wait for the problems to arise.
SECTION 6

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?
There are several resources available to the athletic trainer for obtaining more information about burnout. The athletic trainer may discuss issues with colleagues to determine the techniques they follow to deter burnout. Remember, other athletic trainers may be experiencing the same difficulties as yourself. There are also career counselors, and psychology professionals that can be contacted if the athletic trainer feels overwhelmed. The following is a list of resources pertaining to burnout in general and specifically related to the athletic trainer.

**Suggested Readings**

**General Resources on Burnout**


Section 6: Where Can I Get More Information?

Athletic Trainer Specific Resources


The Authors Conclusions about Burnout and the Athletic Trainer

The focus of this guide is the relationship between burnout syndrome and the athletic trainer. There is an enormous amount of literature on burnout in general. The majority of this research indicates that people employed in the helping professions (i.e. police, firemen, nurses) and/or the health care professions are highly susceptible to burnout. The athletic trainer is one such health care professional. The limited research on burnout among athletic trainers does indicate a potential problem. Campbell, Miller, and Robinson (1985) reported that 60.3% of the athletic trainers they surveyed were categorized as "burned out." The actual numbers vary among studies, but there is no question burnout occurs in athletic trainers and that it can be very devastating.

I believe this guide will help decrease the prevalence of burnout in the athletic training profession. Education has been shown to be the key to the prevention of, and coping with burnout. Therefore, the guide may help improve the individuals within the profession, which will improve the profession as a whole. This is the goal of almost anyone in any profession. I believe the guide will be very useful for any athletic trainer who takes the time and makes an effort to utilize the information.

This self-help guide will, hopefully provide the athletic trainer with valuable information pertaining to burnout. There are several causes and signs or symptoms that have been identified, which may increase the athletic trainers awareness of possible trouble indicators. The information in this guide may be useful to almost all athletic trainers at one
point or another during their career. The athletic trainer should utilize this information to the best of their abilities. They must remember that burnout can be very devastating to both their career and personal life. The most important information to remember is to be good to yourself and enjoy life.