

A CAREGIVERS GUIDE

How to Avoid Burnout Using the Enneagram

The deep, debilitating affects of caregiver burnout, which includes the hardworking doctors and nurses in our modern healthcare system, has been recognized and well-documented.

This tool, based on the Enneagram Personality System, provides deeper insight for caregivers specifically by presenting risk factors for burnout based on personality type and recommendations for healthy coping strategies.



1 THE REFORMER/ PERFECTIONIST

High standards, wants to do the right thing, disciplined, focused on improvements. Wants to avoid mistakes, can be self-critical, judgmental of others.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Working in an environment where integrity & respect are lacking
- Being obsessive/compulsive regarding charting and tasks
- Feeling guilty when relaxing and not being “productive”
- Having difficulty delegating and trusting others to do a good job
- Having a harsh inner critic

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since you have a high degree of integrity and care deeply that things are done correctly, you can suffer greatly in a work environment that is not aligned with your values. You may be spending extra time and energy trying to change a system that does not see things as you do.

The Type One has a strong inner critic, which can be very hard on itself (and others). See how it feels to take on a kinder, more forgiving tone with yourself. There is often a subconscious fear in Ones that if they give themselves a little slack, they will turn into slackers, but this is not a risk! Allow yourself more freedom for guilt-free indulgence, and simple, pure fun.

2 THE HELPER

Enjoys doing for others and being needed. Warm, compassionate, connecting. Can over-do and get caught in people-pleasing.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Becoming overcommitted
- Having difficulty saying “No” and setting boundaries
- Allowing others to take advantage of the desire to please
- Losing focus on your own needs and wants
- Being overly empathic and suffering compassion fatigue

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You truly enjoy helping others, connecting,



and seeing how you can meet the needs of others. As a physician, this can put you at high risk for compassion fatigue and burnout from giving too much. Examine your current commitments. Before saying “yes” to additional commitments, consider whether this obligation serves you.

Take stock of your self-care and personal time. Try putting yourself first for a few weeks and see how that changes things. To do this, you will likely need to ask for more from others and redefine some boundaries.

3 THE ACHIEVER

Focused on accomplishments and getting things done. Motivating, efficient, adaptable. Likes to check off boxes and climb the ladder. Image conscious, competitive.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Looking to achievement for self-worth
- Being a workaholic
- Losing self in the pursuit of goals/status
- Letting relationships suffer from neglect
- Having difficulty slowing down and just “being”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You excel at setting goals and achieving. You thrive from performing well and having the high regard of others. Doing so can result in career success and a great CV, but it can also leave you feeling empty and disconnected from your heart. Ask yourself what is important about your goals, why do they matter to you? Find out what is driving the achievement.

In spite of significant achievement, Threes can have self-esteem issues. Fully accept who you are and let go of comparisons with others. Finding your own authenticity and being comfortable with all aspects of yourself, including your appearance, will create more inner peace than any outer achievement.

4 THE INDIVIDUALIST/ ROMANTIC

Values self-expression, creativity, and finding meaning. Well-developed aesthetic sense, stylish. May be moody and overly sensitive.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Working in an environment that is a mismatch for your True Self
- Being hypersensitive to criticism, feeling shame from mistakes
- Being prone to moodiness, melancholy, depression
- Becoming quickly dissatisfied with accomplishments, circumstances or people
- Allowing emotions to get in the way of staying on task, not being disciplined

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You are highly creative, intuitive, and seek meaning and connection in your work. As you like to express your ideas and unique approach, a work environment that is too confining and does not value your individuality will not be a good fit. Having a job primarily for income will not be sustainable.

Look for ways to custom tailor your work to match you. Allow yourself time for creative pursuits in your personal life. If your emotions are getting in the way of finishing more mundane jobs, schedule specific times for these tasks on your calendar. If you find yourself slipping into depression, seek help.

5 THE INVESTIGATOR/ OBSERVER

Tireless learner and experimenter. Perceptive, innovative. More comfortable acquiring knowledge and working with ideas than interacting with others. May feel socially awkward. Likes time alone for thinking.



RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Excessive patient and staff interactions (strong introversion)
- Having to be in a noisy, busy clinic or hospital setting
- Feeling intellectually stagnant in routine practice
- Avoiding dealing with issues because of emotional content
- Being preoccupied with “what if’s” – worries, scary thoughts

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You are an innovator and deep thinker. Your ideal work setting is one where you can focus deeply without interruptions and work independently in your area(s) of interest. A clinic setting with high patient volume, interruptions, and too many routine cases is going to burn you out quickly. Diversifying patient care with research, teaching, and projects can be helpful.

Try to find a quiet place to do your work and ask others to minimize their interruptions. Wealth and prestige are not huge motivators for you, but internal success is. You do what you do because it fascinates and intrigues you. If your work is not feeding this need, it may be valuable to reexamine your job/career.

6 THE LOYALIST/ QUESTIONER

Dependable, hardworking, reliable. Wants to know the rules, do what’s expected. Engaging, loyal. Concerned with security and preparing for the future. Prone to “what if” thinking and anxiety.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Over-working and preparing in order to exceed expectations
- Worrying about patients and catastrophizing
- Focusing on problems instead of possibilities
- Staying in a bad situation out of loyalty
- Being uncomfortable with uncertainty – (change is hard)
- Experiencing self –doubt (second guessing decisions)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You excel in organizations due to your hard work, problem-solving abilities, people skills, and desire to exceed expectations. Able to make sense of large amounts of complex information, you can readily explain things to others in simple terms. You easily over-work yourself, so set healthy limits on your own expectations and set boundaries in your work environment.

Because anxiety and self-doubt can be an issue, make a realistic assessment of your abilities and have more confidence in your own decision-making capacity. Pay attention to how often you are worrying about the future. Trust that you have the resources, both internal and external, to meet what the future holds.

7 THE ENTHUSIAST/ ADVENTURER

Optimistic, social, multiple interests and activities. Resists limits. Can become easily bored, scattered.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Becoming bored from limitations of routine practice
- Being impatient and seeking adventure can lead to impulsive decisions, risk taking
- Getting scattered from too many spinning plates
- Becoming dissatisfied with present, focusing on future
- Avoiding underlying issues/anxiety by keeping busy

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You bring energy, high spirits, and a sense of adventure and fun to those around you. You will do best in a work environment with a lot of variety, stimulation, and interaction with others. Jobs where you can take on new projects and then move on or the fast pace of the ER are good options.

If you’re feeling bored in your career, take time to understand yourself and your needs before



leaping into something else. Be careful not to overload yourself with so many activities that you get scattered, impatient and drained.

8 THE CHALLENGER/ ASSERTER

Assertive, big energy, likes to be in control, lead others. Entrepreneurial, may be a risk taker. Will suffer in order to protect others. Not overly concerned with others' opinions. Avoids vulnerability.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Pushing beyond healthy limits, overworking
- Getting into conflict/power struggles
- Not wanting to show vulnerability, not seeking help
- Taking risks that jeopardize financial stability

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You like challenges, autonomy, truth, and being able to be your own boss. You are no stranger to hard work and may put in longer hours than your colleagues. However, know that you're human too, and need rest and healthy limits.

Take a look at your weekly schedule. Are you overdoing it? If you are overly self-sufficient, see where others can meet some of your needs and support for you. When you are feeling passionate about something, others may interpret this as anger. If you are experiencing conflict with others, it could be helpful to hear their perspective and solicit feedback.

9 THE PEACEMAKER

Grounded, calm, agreeable. Goes-with-the-flow and keeps peace at any cost. Able to see all sides of a situation. Patient. Non-confrontational.

RISK FACTORS FOR PHYSICIAN BURNOUT

- Putting others needs, wants, and preferences first
- Failing to advocate for self by being conflict avoidant
- Having difficulty knowing what you really want
- Procrastinating, escaping reality (reading/TV, etc)
- Discounting your value, selling yourself short

RECOMMENDATIONS:

You bring a calm, accepting energy to your workplace and like to be in a comfortable environment where you feel connected to others and valued. You listen deeply and have a gift for seeing things from someone else's perspective without judgment. Your adaptability and sensitivity to others can cause you to lose sight of your own needs and wants.

As a type 9, you may be staying way too long in a job that you don't like. Inertia can take over and days can turn into years. Give yourself a pinch, set a deadline for action, and know that when you align with your own inner driver, you are unstoppable.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Enneagram Institute Website

Source: <https://doctorscrossing.com/burning-out-recommendations-for-your-personality-type/>

