



RUSTELEFONEN – BURNOUT PREVENTION

Description of how we made our routine
for preventing burnout - 2018

How can work-related vicarious trauma risks be reduced?

Providing help-line services differs from other types of counselling/advisory support in several ways. Each contact is unique, and staff lack opportunity to prepare themselves for challenges presented by the caller. We, as helpline staff, talk to callers who are experiencing difficulty when trying to cope with complicated situations in their lives. This is demanding for staff wishing to be helpful and provide good service. They are expected to be able to tackle callers' anger, sorrow and fear, and at the same time act as a professional and provide appropriate professional advice. We are on our own with the caller without opportunity to involve a colleague in these difficult conversations. We are aware that this is the only chance we have to speak with the caller, so we need to focus on providing all the information we feel is necessary in each situation.

With only ourselves, and our voices to rely on, it is hardly surprising if we experience workday stress when providing help-line services. We read from a survey done by Helplines partnership in 2015 that:

“Helplines Partnership worked with the helplines sector to explore the challenge of vicarious trauma, which is the concept that listening and responding to service users relaying traumatic experiences could be harmful for the emotional wellbeing of the listener with the intention of looking at whether vicarious trauma may present a risk for helpline staff or volunteers.

Our research has shown that vicarious trauma could be a problem for helpline staff. Helplines supporting vulnerable people have seen an increase in calls over the past years, and there has been a trend for helplines receiving higher proportions of calls from people in distress.”

Based on these findings we decided to create a routine procedure on the prevention of burnout in consequence of emotional stress and high demands that we as staff aim for in order to meet needs of callers in difficult life situations.

We want this routine to mirror the experiences of all those working on our helpline, so we shall make a plan for implementation for all our staff.

1. We identify vulnerability factors at work, both physical and psychological.
2. We identify factors that can protect staff. What can the workplace do in order to lighten stress and strain on staff?
3. We make a list over signs and symptoms of burnout.
4. We make a routine so that everybody checks the list regularly to see if they have any symptoms that cause concern.
5. If staff feel in danger of developing burnout, they themselves, their leader or workplace safety representative must ask for advice, and suitable prevention measures be implemented immediately. If the symptoms are serious, or have developed over a longer period of time a doctor should be contacted. The person involved may already be burnt out and in need of more help than the work place can provide.

From our work-shop:



Program for work-shop: Burn-out prevention– RUS-telefonen

12.30	Presenting the term «Burn-out prevention»	<p>Why do we have burn-out prevention on our agenda?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing the topic with reference to our Erasmus+ project 	Cathrine
12.32	Presenting the agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual reflections • Share our reflections • Sort out symptoms • Make suggestions for checklist and routines; How do we identify and prevent burn-out? • Make a plan for how to implement this in our everyday work 	Ann
12.35	We work individually under guidance from Ann	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial attention (silence, concentrate on our breathing and relax) • We reflect individually over the term «burn-out» in relation to personal experiences at work. <p>Everybody is given post-it notes in three colors: yellow, green and orange.</p> <p>Instructions from Ann:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When I hear the term «burn-out» I think of.... (One word on each yellow post-it. As many post-its as you want) ○ In connection with burn-out I think of.....(green post-its) ○ If burn-out means something for me personally it would have to be....(orange post-its) 	<p>Ann</p> <p>Ann has prepared three flipovers with one keyword for each sheet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding - Connecting - Meaning
13.00	Sorting our post-its on the three flip-over sheets.	All three flip-over sheets were hung on the wall and the post-its were attached	<i>Yellow post-its on sheet 1 (When we hear the term “bburn-out we think of...)</i>

			<p><i>Green post-its on sheet 2 (In connection with burn-out we think of....)</i></p> <p><i>Orange post-its on sheet 3 (For us burn-out means....)</i></p>
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Achievment	3 New flip-over sheets: Symptoms of burn-out in categories as follows:	<p><i>How can you tell that you might are on your way to burn-out?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and emotional exhaustion (signs) • Lack of engagement (signs) • Emotions of ineffectiveness and lack of achievement (signs) 	We replace the post-its on the three new flip-over sheets (ref. The Tell-Tale Signs of Burnout)
14.00	Definition	<p>Short summary and confirmation:</p> <p>Our results correlates with theory</p>	Show Power-Point with definition and symptoms of burn-out
14.05	Break		
14.15	Make the self-surveillance check-list	Concretize the sign and symptoms that should be on our check-list for self-surveillance	From the post-its we make common keywords for signs and symptoms of burn-out in the three categories
15.00	Discussion, suggestions for routine when someone is in danger of burn-out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What can help? - Personal responsibility? - Leaders responsibility? - Co-workers responsibility? 	We make a list of the suggestions
15.55	We summarize the day	Thanks for the attention!	Cathrine/Monika (Ann)

Plan for follow-up burn-out workshop

Issue	Responsible	Deadline
<p>Based on the results (flip-overs with post-its and list of suggestions for routine) – make a draft for self-surveillance form and routines for how to deal with co-workers who are in danger of burn-out</p>	<p>Monika Anja (Cathrine)</p>	<p>ASAP</p>
<p>Clarify the reasons for the choice / criteria that form the basis for the design of the theme / text in the checklist</p>	<p>Monika</p>	<p>Continuous during the design of the checklist</p>
<p>Discuss the proposal with Ann</p>	<p>Monika Cathrine Ann</p>	<p>Forslag: 3. april</p>
<p>Quality-proof checklist and routine with leader</p>	<p>Monika Cathrine Sturla</p>	<p>1. mai</p>
<p>Begin testing of the Check-list and routine</p>	<p>Monika Sturla Alle</p>	<p>16. mai</p>
<p>Follow-up: Clarify responsibility for who does what to secure that any signals of burn-out are taken hand of according to the routine</p> <p>Make sure that the self-surveillance form and routine works as intended: to prevent burn-out by focusing, be aware of, and map out possible symptoms and follow-up.</p>	<p>Monika Cathrine Sturla</p>	<p>16. mai</p> <p>Continuous during the test period</p>

Do you have symptoms of burnout?

In the last four weeks, have you experienced:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Daily
Headache						
Trouble with memory / concentration						
Pain in back / neck						
Problems with sleep						
Being irritable/short tempered						
Fatigue						
Anxiety/fast heartbeat/uneasiness						
Change in appetite						
Avoiding social activities/being with others						
Impatience						
Dreading work						
Feeling incapable of doing my job						
Feeling that my work is pointless						
Bad conscience related to work						
Not being able to express my problems and needs at work						

- If you either have any cross in the darkest red zone or more than three in the light red zone: consider immediate action – have a talk with your leader about what can be done or contact your GP
- If you have one or two crosses in the light red zone – consider taking this test again in one week
- If you have more crosses in the yellow zone than in the green – consider taking this test again in 2 weeks
- If most of your crosses are in the green zone – keep on the good work!

Possible adjustments at work: Working from home, longer and/or more frequent breaks, change of duties at work, more support from leader and adjustment of work hours.