



# Burnout in Emergency Services

## Tip Sheet

*Burnout appears to be increasing and can be particularly harmful in workplaces including the emergency services.*

Burnout can occur from exposure to both accumulated and prolonged stress from situations that are emotionally demanding and mentally exhausting. For individuals, these heightened stress levels are a combination of situational stress, high expectations for oneself and increased levels of pressure which can span from the work itself to strains on personal life.

## Contributing factors

- *Work overload*
- *Quality of teamwork*
- *Lack of control*
- *Insufficient rewards*
- *Lack of community (social and peer support)*
- *Lack of fairness*
- *Conflicting values (work vs family)*

## Features & Complications

Burnout can progressively worsen over time. There are a range of emotional, behavioural, cognitive and physiological signs that an individual may feel when burnt out. These are:

### Emotional:

- Feelings of hopelessness
- Hostile and negative feelings towards their profession and/or patients
- Numbness
- Feelings of guilt & self-pity
- Temper outbursts

### Behavioural:

- Over-commitment (no healthy distance from work)
- Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning
- Becoming accident prone

### Cognitive:

- Difficulty making decisions & staying focused on tasks
- Feeling a sense of alienation, impatience and negativisms

*The **Ambulance Victoria Wellbeing & Support Services** is AV's internal mental health support service available 24/7 to all employees and their immediate family members, RANs, ACO's and CERTs providing 24-hour mental health and wellbeing support.*

## 11 Psychological Tips

1. Be respectful and kind to yourself
2. Practice self-care: complete Mindarma at AV
3. Identify and do the things that help you to re-charge
4. Implement and keep a routine: structure is key
5. Get good sleep
6. Allow yourself to be human
7. Lead by example
8. Keep looking forward – even if it is in small time periods
9. Focus on what you can control
10. Consider a self-care plan and complete SMART 2.0 assessment with Wellbeing
11. Have a monthly therapy session for support and reflection

## Helpful resources

- [Hearspace](#)
- [Beyond Blue](#)
- [Black Dog Institute](#)
- [Lifeline](#)  
131114
- [Kids Helpline](#)  
1800 551 800
- [RUOK](#)



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- Feelings of detachment towards work, place, family, friends
- Mood swings

### Physiological:

- A sense of running on empty and depleted energy
- Tiredness & exhaustion
- Muscle tension & headaches

### And these symptoms in combination can lead to...

- Anxiety, depression, substance abuse
- Low emotional attachment
- Reduced empathy
- Increased isolation, detachment & avoidance
- Problems with interpersonal relationships
- Disrupted personal and family life
- Impaired patient care and increased medical error
- Decreased productivity and job satisfaction
- Increases in absenteeism, health care costs and personnel turnover

### Management & Prevention

- Engage in self-care (e.g., exercise, healthy eating, meditation, mindfulness)
- Take time-off when necessary
- Have good boundaries around work hours ensuring adequate breaks
- Learn how and when to say no
- Time management and set limits for yourself rather than letting someone else set them for you
- Learn to recognise the symptoms of burnout, be open and willing to ask for help
- Strengthen personal and workplace relationships (e.g. team-building and use of effective communication strategies)
- Knowing how you are feeling and recognising your symptoms of stress and burnout
- Reassessing your values and priorities regularly and pacing yourself

- Suicide Call Back Service  
1300 659 467
- Alcohol and Drug Foundation  
1300 85 85 84

### Visit our Family Website:

<https://familysafe.ambulance.vic.gov.au/>

### Email for VACU support:

[vacu@ambulance.vic.gov.au](mailto:vacu@ambulance.vic.gov.au)

### Want to Know More?

You can find more resources and helpful information on the Wellbeing and Support Services **Links and Resources** Intranet page and also in our **Videos and Podcasts**.



### Option

- 1 Peer Support
- 2 VACU Counselling Line
- 3 AV Chaplain
- 4 Bullying & Harassment
- 5 Police Statements & Court Attendance
- 6 Alcohol and Other Drugs Advice and Support