

There has to be chocolate around here somewhere: stress and burnout in a small academic library

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 #IUG2019



Sunday, May 5th | Pre-Conference

Monday, May 6th – Wednesday, May 8th | Main Conference

Introduction

- Posts on social media
- British Psychological Association Study (2006)
 - 300 people
 - Occupations studied: firefighter, police officer, teacher, train operator, and librarian

Types of Stress



Acute stress

- Burnout and stress are different
- Example: When an e-content vendor crashes and takes half our databases down. There is an end date, and it's a relatively short outage. However, frustrated patrons and our having to wait on the vendor make the stress worse.
- Signs: Increases in heart rate, blood pressure; shallow breathing

Episodic acute stress

- More frequently occurring and longer lasting acute stress
- Example: The process of preparing to shut down our in-house Sierra server to go hosted between June and December 2018. Dizziness (from high blood pressure) and insomnia for most of the time.
- Signs: Signs of acute stress + snippiness, insomnia; Chronic illnesses progressively worsen; Cardiovascular disease risk

Chronic stress

- Long term stress that has no discernable end date for the person suffering from it
- Example: May 2015 – March 2017
 - 50,000+ volume weed
 - Full building renovation (spent almost a year in a concourse walkway)
 - VHS to DVD conversion project
 - Discovery layer evaluation project / Migrate to a new product
 - Ebook platform changed (requiring complete DDA program overhaul)
 - Insomnia, blood pressure went up, weight gain
- Signs: Chronic acute signs + withdrawing from relationships, dangerous coping behaviors, and thoughts of suicide/violence

Then there's burnout...

- Layman's definition from Harold White's 1990 *Library Journal* article
 - “Burnout does not come from simply working hard, when that work is toward achievable ends that carry successful conclusion, credit, reward, and celebration. Hard workers do not get burnout, and they sleep well at night. Burnout comes from frustration; from insoluble dilemmas; from the recognition that the backlogs cannot be eradicated no matter how hard we try; managers will neither understand nor care while they blithely cut budgets in the confident expectation that nothing bad for them will result.”

How can you tell?

- If you have it, you probably won't know at first
 - Signs are usually observed by others first
- Lose faith in what you do
- Lose faith in the goals of librarianship
- Lose faith in your value

Common Stressors



Commonly-cited stressors

- Management / Leadership
- Technostress
- Coworkers
- Public patrons
- Misconceptions of the public
- Budget
- Lack of work-life balance

Experiments in stress relief and management



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Professional help

- See if your institution offers an employee assistance program (EAP)
 - Most have a counseling component
- See if your insurance covers visits to a counselor or psychologist
 - If not, see if there is an agency that can help you (i.e. United Way sometimes can recommend local counselors willing to take a payment plan)

Your office or cubicle

- Can you wear earbuds and play music?
- Can you change your screensaver to something you find relaxing or enjoyable?
- Schedule the week so that all your projects get touched

Office or cubicle

- Can you take a day a month for a break?
- Be ok with saying no
- Can you decorate?



Yoga

Medicinal for me

Helps with muscular and skeletal issues

*If you have previous issues, please seek out a qualified teacher



Nutrition



- Food is fuel
- Noticeable uptick in stress/fatigue when I don't eat correctly
- Hydrate
- Watch caffeine intake

Contemplative practices

- Yogic breathing
- Mindfulness
- Journaling
- Meditation
 - I come from a meditation practice / community based in a religious tradition.

Apps and Social Media



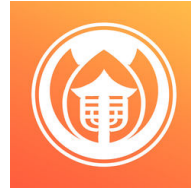
Apps



Sleep Melodies



Insight Timer



Plum Village



Splendo



Down Dog



Map My Walk



Calm



Stop, think, and
breathe

Facebook groups / Websites

- Facebook groups
 - Library Employee Support Network (LESN)
 - Has an alias for anonymous posting
 - Mindfulness for Librarians
 - Renewers: Recovering from Low Morale in American Libraries
- Websites
 - [Ask a Manager](#)
 - [American Institute of Stress – Stress Survey](#)

Closing thoughts and reminders

- Don't forget to laugh
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- If there are resources available, use them
- Be careful when venting – gossip creates an even more toxic environment
- You cannot give what you don't have. Self-care is a must.

Questions?



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