



## SUPERVISORS AND THEIR ROLE *in employee self-care*

By Robert Jones | The Village Business Institute

**W**ork-life balance, work-life blend, self-care, and stress management – these concepts have been part of the workplace for decades. The idea is that people need to take care of themselves and set boundaries so they can be more effective at work. There is a societal expectation that employees are supposed to manage this, but they must be able to keep up with the expectations of their supervisor. The question becomes:

### What is the role of the supervisor in helping the employee practice self-care?

Self-care cannot rest solely as a responsibility of the employee. Supervisors must take a level of

responsibility in helping the employee manage themselves.

There are several things that we can do to encourage and support self-care among our employees.

### MODEL BOUNDARIES

One of the most important things that supervisors can do is model the behavior that we expect. Your staff are watching you to determine what those unwritten and unsaid expectations are for the team or the organization. If you work late your staff is going to believe that is what you expect of them, so they will most likely not set boundaries needed to successfully blend work and family.

### THE QUESTIONS WE ASK

How we talk to our staff can also influence the level of self-care that we allow them to practice.

When assigning work to someone, do you just present the task and walk away, or do you consider where that person is at and what they are currently working on?

Imagine you are trying to finish a report that is due at the end of the week. You also have a budget to review and maybe a couple of performance reviews to go through when your boss walks over and without asking drops another assignment on your desk. This is not going to encourage your self-care.

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## Support, from Page 1

Instead of the drop-and-run method of assigning projects, take a moment to ask what the person has going on and determine for them if they have the time to accomplish the task in a quality manner.

There are two reasons for this approach. The first is to keep the staff member from being overtaxed, because we as humans are not always good at setting boundaries, especially with people who are perceived to be in positions of authority. The second reason is to expand feelings of trust on your team. We often have a go-to person for tasks, and our reliance on a certain individual can tell other employees that you do not trust them. If your go-to person is not able, you can demonstrate that you have the faith in other people.

## BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

One important thing to remember is that all your employees have different interests, skills, and passions, not to mention they all have different things happening in their lives that may influence their ability to practice self-care. It is for this reason that supervisors need to take time to get to know their staff. By doing so, you can manage your team and their assignments in a way that sets your employees up for success.

Building a relationship also allows your staff to feel more comfortable in coming to you when they are dealing with issues both inside and outside the workplace. The struggles that we face can bring about unhealthy coping mechanisms that will inhibit a person's success. Take the time to know the personalities of your staff, so when something is going on you can address the situation before there is a negative impact on the individual and the organization.

## OFFER FEEDBACK AND SHOW GRATITUDE

A simple way to limit overtaxing your employees is to encourage and show gratitude. We look to the people around us to demonstrate expectations because we want to know we are a part of something. Unfortunately, many people think the only time they should offer feedback is when there is a behavior that needs to be corrected or when someone has done something wrong.

In reality, leaders need to be offering positive feedback more often than criticism because this allows for people to develop a confidence and a sense of security in their role. Encouragement and gratitude allow people to feel free to open up and will eventually give them the confidence to speak up and share new ideas.

## BE AN ADVOCATE

The last thing you as a supervisor can do is be an advocate for your team, especially if you are part of middle management. Be your team's voice to other departments and leadership. Stand up for the people who you lead and be the person who looks out for their best interest.

Most people entering the workplace strive for one thing: to feel valued within the organization and among their team members. As a supervisor, this rests with you and only you, because your actions set the tone.

TAKE THE TIME  
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*personalities*  
OF YOUR STAFF



If you take the time to build that relationship with your fellow team member and model a positive behavior for them to follow, you are presenting them with the expectations and the confidence to practice better self-care. In turn they will be more productive for the organization without developing the sense that work is a burden and the feeling of being overtaxed.



**Robert Jones** joined The Village Business Institute in April 2015 as an Employee Assistance Program Trainer, and regularly provides training sessions on diversity, leadership, and employee engagement. Robert has a bachelor's degree in history and a master's degree in education with an emphasis in counseling and leadership from Northern State University in Aberdeen, SD. He also has a bachelor's degree in communication studies from Minnesota State University Moorhead, and is a doctoral candidate for the Educational Doctorate in Leadership from St. Mary's University of Minnesota. He has been an adjunct faculty member for the University of Jamestown Master of Arts in Leadership program.

In his free time, Robert volunteers with local organizations like the Rape and Abuse Crisis Center and is an alumni advisor for a fraternity at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

# 5 WAYS TO *prevent* JOB BURNOUT

By Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S. | PsychCentral.com

Everyone feels frustrated and frazzled with their jobs from time to time. But burnout goes beyond the occasional bad day – or bad week.

“Burnout is a ‘silent condition’ induced by chronic stress that is characterized by emotional (or) physical exhaustion, cynicism, and a lack of professional efficacy,” according to Christine Louise Hohlbaum, author of “The Power of Slow: 101 Ways to Save Time in Our 24/7 World.”

Psychoanalyst Herbert J. Freudenberger coined the term “burnout” in 1974. He defined burnout as “the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one’s devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results.”

In his book, Freudenberger compared job burnout to a burned-out building:

*If you have ever seen a building that has been burned out, you know it’s a devastating sight. What had once been a throbbing, vital structure is now deserted. Where there had once been activity, there are now only crumbling reminders of energy and life. Some bricks or concrete may be left; some outline of windows. Indeed, the outer shell may seem almost intact. Only if you venture inside will you be struck by the full force of the desolation.*

Psychologist Christina Maslach, Ph.D., has studied burnout since the early 1980s and created the widely used Maslach Burnout Inventory. She found that burnout occurs when certain areas of our lives are chronically mismatched with our belief systems. These areas are: workload, sense of control (or lack thereof), reward (or lack thereof), community, fairness and values.

For instance, your workload isn’t enough to spark burnout, Hohlbaum

said. “You can have a lot to do and still feel fulfilled and satisfied.” But if your boss is treating you unfairly, then your “workload becomes a burden, not a source of joy and fulfillment.”

## WARNING SIGNS OF BURNOUT

Hohlbaum described burnout as a “slow-creeping syndrome.” So it’s important to know the warning signs before burnout sets in. She suggested asking yourself the following questions:

- Are you starting not to care about work anymore?
- Is it hard to stay motivated?
- Do you feel your workplace is a dreaded place to be?
- Are you snapping at your colleagues?
- Do you feel disengaged from your work?
- Have you lost your passion for things?

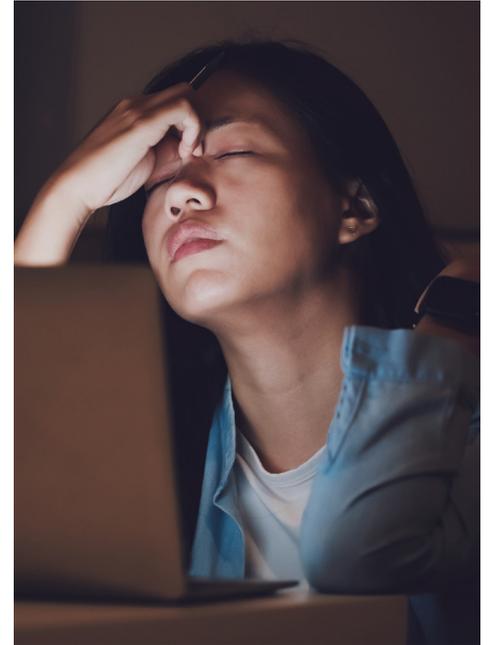
## PREVENTING BURNOUT

Hohlbaum offered these tips to prevent full-blown burnout.

**1. “Recognize when your passion has turned to poison,”** she said. “If you no longer wake up with fire in your belly – but rather with your stomach on fire – you are burned out.” In other words, she said that you might be burned out if: the work you were passionate about now feels like a burden; you avoid your coworkers and isolate yourself; and you can’t enjoy your professional accomplishments.

**2. Honestly assess your situation and work toward solutions.**

According to Hohlbaum, ask yourself the following questions: “What am I passionate about? Am I doing those things? Why am I doing what I am doing? What would I feel if I were to change my situation? What one thing can I change today? What action can I take to alter my position? Can I



allow myself to take a break from my current situation? How long would I need?”

**3. Make time for yourself daily.**

“It can be as simple as taking a brisk five-minute walk to the mailbox and back, grabbing your favorite cup of coffee or allowing one entire hour of uninterrupted time to just be.” Another idea is to head to bed 30 minutes earlier and cuddle up with your favorite book, she said.

**4. Seek support.** Talk to someone you trust about your feelings and work situation (like a Village EAP counselor).

**5. Be receptive to your own feelings and needs.** Check in with yourself throughout the day and try to respond to your needs as much as possible. “If afternoons are particularly difficult for you, plan some time to just breathe then,” Hohlbaum said.

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