



## **Fanning the Flame of Passion in Social Work:**

*Challenges of Dealing with Burnout  
and Employee Engagement in Social  
Services*

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# Introductions

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- Who are we?
- Who are you?
- What makes us “qualified” to talk about this subject?





# Objectives

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- Participants will have a better understanding as to why social workers burn out at such a high rate
- Participants will walk away with at least 3 tangible ideas on how to reduce burn out for the social workers in their organization
- Participants will be given at least 3 ways to develop their staff in a way that reduces turnover and improves employee engagement



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I USED TO BE LIKE YOU,  
HAPPY AND FULL OF LIFE

BUT THEN I BECAME  
A SOCIAL WORKER

WHO SAYS SOCIAL WORK IS  
STRESSFUL?

I'M 36 AND I FEEL GREAT!

NEWLY QUALIFIED SOCIAL WORKER

SAME WORKER ONE YEAR LATER



## SELF-CARE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

- 1) Follow a balanced diet
- 2) Exercise regularly
- 3) Use mindfulness techniques
- 4) Scream into a Pillow
- 5) Try crying while eating cake over the sink



# Statistics

- Current turnover rates nationwide: 30%
- On Average, a social worker stays in a job for 2 years
  - Losing a worker costs an agency approximately \$54,000
- Our turnover rate in 2017: 7%
  - Our average stay: 2.5 years
  - Not including new programming: 3.8 years
  - Considerations: New Programs

**WHY THE WORKFORCE MATTERS**

NATIONAL CHILD WELFARE WORKFORCE INSTITUTE  
Learning. Leading. Changing.

**CHILD WELFARE WORK ISN'T EASY**

- ✓ Demanding caseloads
- ✓ A high degree of uncertainty
- ✓ Life and death decisions
- ✓ Trauma for children and families
- ✓ Traumatic stress
- ✓ Bureaucratic system
- ✓ External oversight and scrutiny

The child welfare workforce provides services and supports to keep vulnerable children, youth, and families safe, stable, and healthy.

**TURNOVER IS COSTLY**

Cost for each worker leaving an agency:  
**\$54,000\***

**REDUCED TURNOVER MEANS**

- ✓ Timely investigations
- ✓ More contacts/visits with children, families, and resource families
- ✓ Better service delivery
- ✓ Improved safety, permanency, and well-being

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS MATTER**

Address workforce issues with multiple strategies based on principles of equity, tolerance, respect, and diversity.

CLICK HERE to view NCWWI's Workforce Development Framework

Job analysis & position requirements	Professional development & training
Education & professional preparation	Organizational environment
Recruitment, screening & selection	Community context
Incentives & work conditions	Supervision & performance management

**EFFECTIVE PRACTICE** + **EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE** = **POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

\*Complete reference list: [https://ncwwi.org/files/Why\\_the\\_Workforce\\_Matters\\_References.pdf](https://ncwwi.org/files/Why_the_Workforce_Matters_References.pdf)



# So, why do social workers burn out?

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- No time for time off
- Emotional exhaustion
- Bad supervisors
- **Not enough PEEK Moments**
- **No relationship with peers**
- **Poor understanding of SELF CARE and focus on Life Balance**



# Peek Moments

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- Don't fix potholes!
  - Build PEAKS
- “Great experiences hinge on PEAK Moments”
  - Not trained to build peek moments.
  - Fixing problems doesn't make people happy, it overwhelms people.
  - Great experiences are mostly forgettable, occasionally remarkable. Some moments that are special, but don't create themselves.
- How do we do this in social work?





# Purposeful Relationships

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- KEY- Social Connectedness to each other
  - What happens BETWEEN people really counts
- Helpfulness- what drives helpfulness is people getting to know each other
  - FIKA
- Social Capital COMPOUNDS with time



# Work-Life Rhythm

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- The illusion of Self-Care
  - Getting a pedicure or working out when you hit your “limit” is not going to cut it
  - Value yourself all the way through
- Balance:
  - If you are finding balance, you may always be searching for center
- Rhythm
  - “A strong, regular, repeated pattern of movement or sound”
  - Rhythm can change. Find what works in your life.
- MODEL Rhythm



# Perseverance

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- As we all know, some last in social work and some don't. But why?
- Not social intelligence, not IQ
- It was GRIT
  - *Passion and perseverance- Able to make, and stick to, long term goals, having stamina and hard work. Seeing social work as a marathon, not a sprint.*



# Development

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- Intentional Relationship Building.
- Create opportunities for professional development.
- Be flexible!
- Create good teams.





# Take Aways

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- Develop a way for people to purposely connect- **REGULARLY**.
- Build Peak Moments in your workplace.
- Stop focusing on the problems.
- Model the rhythm you want to see in your teams.



# Questions/Comments? Resources

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- Peak Moments: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syA8Fyl6G-4>
- The Power Of Moments- Chip and Dan Heath
- Forget the Pecking Order:  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/margaret\\_heffernan\\_why\\_it\\_s\\_time\\_to\\_forget\\_the\\_pecking\\_order\\_at\\_work#t-507616](https://www.ted.com/talks/margaret_heffernan_why_it_s_time_to_forget_the_pecking_order_at_work#t-507616)
- GRIT: The Power of Passion and Perseverance- Angela Duckworth
- The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals- Chris McChesney and Sean Covey



# Happy to help...we are all in this together!

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