

Wellbeing for the Bush

BURNOUT

As health care workers, our coping abilities can often be relatively high, and we 'just get on with it'. This can be a reasonable short-term solution; however, if stress issues are not addressed in the workplace, it becomes problematic and may lead to burnout. Burnout is very high among 'people who help people,' but the good news is there are ways to help prevent it.

What is burnout?

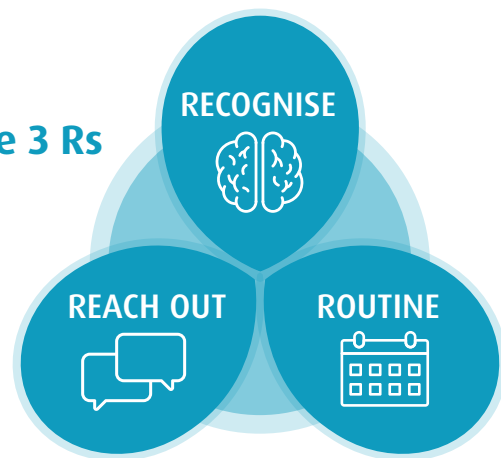
The World Health Organization defines burnout as a syndrome resulting from unmanaged workplace stress, marked by:

- Energy depletion or exhaustion
- Mental distance or cynicism about one's job
- Reduced professional efficacy¹

What are some of the signs?

- Feeling exhausted and unable to perform basic tasks
- Losing motivation in many aspects of your life, including your work, hobbies or relationships
- Feeling unable to focus or concentrate on tasks
- Feeling empty or lacking in emotion
- Losing your passion and drive
- Being easily irritated by minor problems
- Experiencing conflict in your relationships with co-workers, friends and family
- Emotionally withdrawing from friends and family²

The 3 Rs



What can I do if I am burnt out?

Recognise

Recognising that you are burnt out is the first step. Sometimes, it can be hard to recognise, but talking to others can be helpful. Friends and family can be a good start, or talking with a trusted colleague. The Bush Support Line is our 24/7 support line for rural and remote health workers. It is staffed by psychologists experienced in the rural and remote health sector who understand the context in which you work.

Reach out

Reaching out and getting support is the next step. We are hardwired for connection, and when we feel like we are not alone, we can work with the hard stuff. If you feel comfortable, talk to your line manager or seek support from your Employee Assistance Program. Talking to your GP or a psychologist or calling the Bush Support Line are also great supports to reach out to.

Routine

Keeping to a routine is important. A routine includes more than just getting up, brushing teeth, getting dressed, etc. Routines also include things that nurture and support your mental and physical health. If your routine is solely about survival, consider slight changes involving nutrition, moving your body, relationships, recreation, relaxation, spiritual practices, and nature. Contribution and service to others, especially outside your regular day-to-day work, can sometimes return positive rewards for your wellbeing. Refer to CRANaplus' resources on self-care.

Takeaway tips for burnout

- Trust the signs your body is telling you
- Be kind to yourself
- Remind yourself, "I am enough in this moment"
- Your joy matters
- Talk about it to others
- Take regular breaks during the day
- Take your annual leave
- Learn to identify your triggers and early warning signs
- Implement self-care into your routine

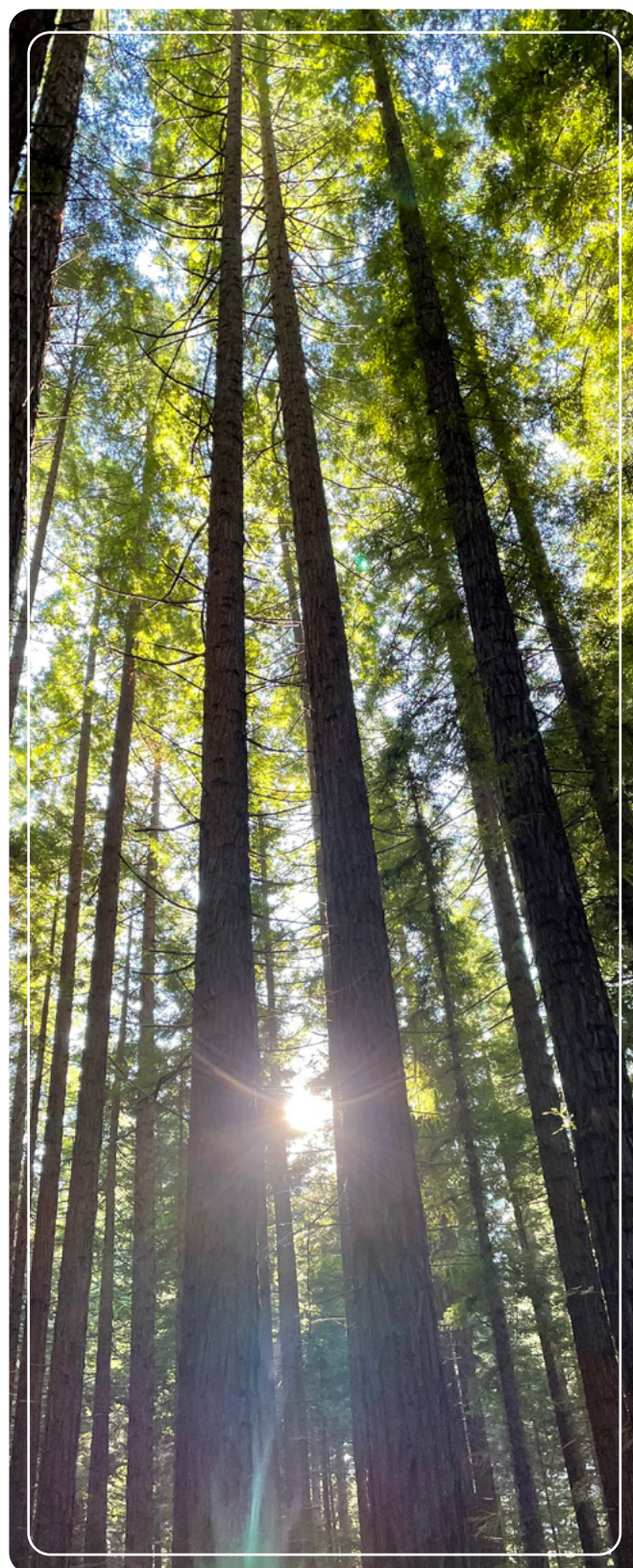
More information

Nagoski, E. & Nagasaki A. (2020). Burnout: The secret to unlocking the stress cycle. Ballantine Books, United States.

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/news/experiencing-burnout-heres-what-to-do-about-it/>

1. <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-disease>

2. <https://au.reachout.com/challenges-and-coping/stress/what-is-burnout>



Tall trees - Meredith Brown, Warburton
Entry from the 2023 CRANaplus Mindful Photography Competition