

# **BUILDING RESILIENCE IN MEDICINE AND PREVENTING BURNOUT**

**Course Director:** Blake Barker, MD

**Department:** Student Wellness & Counseling

**Student Liaisons:** Sarah Gibson (MS1), Christopher Joshi (MS1), Jennifer Edgar (MS1), Ashley Ciosek (MS2)

## **REQUIREMENTS**

Minimum participants for the course to be conducted: 8

Maximum number of students to be enrolled: 30

## **RATIONALE**

This elective aims to introduce UT Southwestern Medical Center (UTSW) students to the issue of burnout experienced among medical students, trainees, and professionals. The focus will be on understanding the causes and consequences of burnout (also known as moral injury), instilling practices and coping mechanisms to combat burnout, and shaping a healthy and balanced workforce that will be capable of navigating the professional medical environment.

Students will be exposed to physicians who have prioritized resilience in their lives, participate in group discussions around the theme of burnout, and gain an understanding of how their personal traits and goals might contribute to their abilities to cope with stress. This course will emphasize that students' willpower is not the problem; but while the systemic issues are being improved, they can do their best to maintain wellness.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- Recognize the signs, prevalence, and impact of burnout in healthcare professionals
- Explore how internal & external stressors lead to burnout, which in turn impairs our ability to provide quality care
- Reflect on possible mechanisms to alleviate burnout while in medical school, residency, and as a professional
- Practice skills and coping mechanisms to build wellness and resilience
- Implement effective coping mechanisms for dealing with death and dying
- Cultivate healthy peer-group relationships in which vulnerability and health-seeking behaviors are encouraged

## **FORMAT**

This course will consist of lectures, small group discussions, and active learning over 12 one-hour sessions; attendance at a minimum of 10 sessions, along with completion of the end-of-semester REDCap Course evaluation, is required for transcript course credit. Students may be expected to complete short assignments or short readings prior to meetings and are encouraged to contribute to discussions.

## **STUDENT EVALUATION**

Grades will be pass/fail. Attendance is required to receive credit for this course.

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

Grading will be pass/fail. To receive transcript acknowledgment, students must attend 10 of 12 participant hours and complete the online REDCap course evaluation form.

## **BUILDING RESILIENCE IN MEDICINE AND PREVENTING BURNOUT SCHEDULE**

All classes are scheduled for Mondays 4pm-5pm CST.

**SESSION 1-** (Jan 25) Introduction to Burnout. Elective leaders will give a presentation explaining the prevalence, signs, and impact of burnout among healthcare students and professionals. Students will learn about the systemic factors that lead to burnout, along with an introduction to individual changes that can influence these factors.

**SESSION 2-** (Feb 1) Psychological Safety: Giving and Receiving Feedback. Elective leaders will start by defining psychological safety, how it relates to burnout, and what psychological safety looks like at the organizational level. Then, most of the class will be spent discussing strategies for giving and receiving feedback.

**SESSION 3-** (Feb 8) Building Personal Resilience in Daily Practice. Elective leaders will start by describing how personal resilience relates to burnout and the practices that can build resilience, including self-compassion, gratitude, and mindfulness. Students will then learn about simple daily practices to work on these strategies and will be invited to try out these practices through the semester.

**SESSION 4-** (Feb 22) Work-life integration. A guest lecturer who has achieved a balanced lifestyle (Dr. Molly Camp) will talk with students about the importance of having balance and demarcating boundaries. They may encourage students to do things outside of medicine (ie art, movies, nature) and talk about the things they like to do. At the end of the session, students will be asked to go through their schedules and block off one hour a week for self-care/wellness.

**SESSION 5-** (March 1) Life Values and Goals—Is Medicine a Calling? Historically, physicians have viewed their profession as the ultimate priority in their life. Working long, grueling hours, especially during training, was an expected part of the job. This attitude has started to change. What is your view of the profession? What are your highest priorities and ultimate goals in life, and how do they relate to your future career in medicine? We will explore these questions and more in this highly interactive class.

**SESSION 6-** (March 8) Building Camaraderie and Teamwork. Having social support and a sense of community is an important mitigating factor against burnout. During this session, the elective leaders will briefly discuss organizational factors impacting camaraderie, followed by a longer discussion of how students can improve community within their class. As part of this class, we will address how racism, sexism, and other social inequities threaten camaraderie and teamwork for many.

**SESSION 7-** (March 15) Redefining Success and Dealing with Failure. Receiving recognition and feeling a sense of achievement is an important component of reducing burnout. Dr. Reeni

Abraham will speak about her career and how she has dealt with successes and failures throughout it.

SESSION 8- (March 22) Empathy: How It is Lost and How It Can Be Regained. One of the most important manifestations of burnout is a loss of empathy. Elective leaders will briefly describe the components and neurobiology of empathy. Then, we will discuss strategies to regain empathy by taking care of ourselves via wellness and contentment.

SESSION 9- (April 5) Death, Dying, and Empathy. Following the previous class on empathy, a panel of fourth year students will be invited to share their experiences with death and dying in clerkships. We will hear about and discuss various strategies to respond with empathy while practicing self-care. Students participating in this elective will get the chance to ask their own questions of the panel as well.

SESSION 10- (April 12) The Development of Resilience. Students, in small groups, will share stories of adversity and resilience. Through this activity, students will bolster their own sense of resilience and strengthen the confidence in their ability to effectively adapt to challenging situations.

SESSION 11- (April 19) How to Address Factors outside our Control. As we have explored this semester, burnout is a large, systemic issue, with many factors outside of our control. In this session, we will discuss how to address these factors so that we don't lose our sense of agency, a primary driver of burnout. As part of this discussion, we will explore how various personality traits, another factor outside of our control, relate to burnout and how we can best build resilience within our own unique personalities.

SESSION 12- (April 26) Building Personal Resilience in Daily Practice, Part 2. Earlier in the semester, students were asked to try one or more daily practice aimed at boosting personal resilience. This session will be spent sharing our experiences with those practices. We will close the elective recapping how these personal practices relate to the larger systemic issue of burnout and how we can continue to advocate for improvements at all levels throughout our future careers.