

6 Ways to Manage Private Practice Burnout

Nobody said that being a therapist would be easy. As a therapist, your attention is constantly focused on the needs of others, which can be draining. When you add the stress of owning a private practice to an already challenging profession, the odds of becoming burned out increase significantly.



Image: Freepik.com

Though each person is different, some of the most common signs of private practice burnout include:

- Lack of enjoyment in your work
- Difficulty concentrating during sessions
- Recent changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Feeling drained or emotionally exhausted after meeting with clients
- A sense of relief when a client cancels their appointment
- The inability to get caught up on all your practice paperwork
- Frequent feelings of depression, anxiety, or agitation
- Routinely starting sessions late or ending them early
- Experiencing a decline in empathy
- Dreading going to work

Ways to Manage Private Practice Burnout

If some of the signs outlined above sound uncomfortably familiar, it's likely that you're experiencing a bit of private practice burnout. The good news is that it doesn't have to last forever; you can make changes to reduce and eventually eliminate burnout.

1. Take Breaks Regularly

Life is already demanding as it is, but when you add in the many responsibilities that come with owning your own private practice, feeling overwhelmed and burnt out comes as no surprise. An unfortunate side effect of having too much to do is that you stop making time to recharge yourself by taking regular breaks, both daily and throughout the year.

You may think you're accomplishing more by seeing one client after another, but with no breaks throughout the day you're more likely to end up drained once it's time to go home. The same thing goes for taking an extended leave. Working 52 weeks out of the year is an unreasonable expectation; you need time away from work to recharge your batteries. You shouldn't feel at all guilty for taking a couple of weeks off throughout the year to either get away or simply rest at home. By taking regular breaks - and taking care of yourself – you'll be better equipped to provide your clients with the help they need.

2. Hire Out Some Tasks

While there are many benefits to being in private practice, like being your own boss and setting your schedule, owning your own business also comes with a lot of extra work. Thankfully, you don't have to do everything; it's very easy to hire others to take care of some of the business-side tasks while you focus on therapy.

For example, you could work with a company that files out-of-network insurance claims, which would free you from cumbersome paperwork. You could also hire a service that matches new patients seeking therapy with qualified counselors in their area—a great marketing tool that can reduce your workload even further. Another possibility would be finding a virtual assistant (V.A.) to help with administrative duties so you can focus on your first love: helping others.

3. Take Care of Yourself

As a therapist, it's easy to lose sight of your own needs in taking care of others. To reverse burnout or avoid it altogether, it's vital that you make your own needs a priority and take care of yourself. As you've probably told many clients in the past, you should be mindful about what you eat and make sure you're getting enough rest every night. Regular exercise and time with friends and family are also important; prioritize your own physical and mental health so that you're better able to care for the clients who need you.

4. Do Things You Enjoy

When you're not at work, it's important to take time to do things that you enjoy. Yes, of course you have other responsibilities outside of work, but if you're always consumed

with running errands, taking care of family members, cleaning the house, and meeting other obligations, you'll end up feeling overwhelmed and anxious.

Be intentional with your time and schedule activities that give you pleasure. You can do whatever you like: playing sports, participating in hobbies, dining out, watching movies, going to a concert, etc. The activity itself can be anything you choose; all that matters is that you make time outside of work to enjoy your life.

5. Network with Other Therapists

It's also vital that you have access to a supportive professional network to help you deal with the symptoms of burnout. You likely chose this career because it's what you love to do. If you're currently feeling burned out, you might also be struggling with confusion and guilt because you're no longer finding as much joy in your work as you once did.

The good news is you're not the first to experience this – burnout is fairly common among therapists, especially those who operate their own practice. When you talk with other therapists, including your own, you'll soon find out that you're not alone; many other mental health professionals have struggled with similar feelings and can help you process what you're going through and support you as you heal.

6. Give It Time

Don't expect that burnout will resolve itself quickly. This condition didn't develop overnight which means it's going to take some time to recover completely. By making conscious lifestyle changes, delegating non-therapeutic tasks, tapping into a strong support network, and allowing yourself time to heal, you'll once again find joy and satisfaction in your work.

Overcoming Burnout: A Journey Towards Fulfillment and Balance

Being a therapist in private practice can be immensely rewarding, but it's not without its challenges. The risk of burnout is considerable, and it can take a toll on your mental health, performance, and satisfaction with your work. It's crucial to recognize the signs of burnout and implement strategies to combat it.

Remember, as a therapist, your wellbeing is not just essential for you, but also for the clients you serve. Prioritizing your needs, incorporating joy into your daily life, connecting with your community of therapists, and allowing for recovery time can restore your enthusiasm and dedication towards your profession. Burnout may seem like an insurmountable mountain, but with patience, persistence, and the right strategies, it's one that can be conquered.