











10 Tips for Preventing and Addressing Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

Know the Warning Signs

We all face stress sometimes. When it becomes overwhelming or if you are completely disengaged and unmotivated to do your work, this could be burnout. Burnout results from unmanaged stress, being chronically overextended, and feeling like you are alone. This can affect physical and mental health with symptoms of depression, gut issues, migraine headaches, unexplained pain, and severe fatigue. Certain behaviors to watch for include overeating, overdrinking, over-spending, or even over-working, as well as withdrawal from routine pleasures, avoidance, or self-neglect. The effects of burnout can occur slowly over time. It's advisable to use the strategies and resources listed here to prevent symptoms before it becomes serious.

	<p>Meet the mood!</p>	<p>Notice how you are feeling in the moment. What is your energy level? What is your mood? Start by noticing internal bodily sensations. Examples include body temperature, digestion, heart rate, or breathing. Ask yourself if there have been any changes in your energy level, relationships, immune system, sleep, or appetite.</p>
	<p>Respond with curiosity and kindness!</p>	<p>Honor the information from your mood assessment rather than judging yourself or pushing yourself past your sensations to the point of exhaustion. Investigate when, where, and why your sensations started. What were the conditions, situations, people, and places where you noticed the sensations or feelings (biological, psychological, environmental, or spiritual).</p>
	<p>Stay present!</p>	<p>Accept that this feeling or situation is temporary. Rather than attaching to thoughts or narrative, practice staying with bodily sensations and feelings in the present moment. This form of “detachment from story” allows us to stay in present-centered awareness.</p>
	<p>Choose one thing!</p>	<p>Commit to <u>one</u> tiny daily habit or routine that you can do easily and quickly. Examples: send one email, text, or phone call expressing gratitude to one person each day, notice 3 cycles of breath between appointments, make small circles with your shoulders between meetings, walk a designated short distance from your workspace at least once during your workday.</p>

	Be your own advocate!	Practice self-compassion by asking for what you need to feel safe and supported in this moment. Rehearse it out loud to yourself in the mirror, to a trusted person, or write it down. Be prepared to compromise for additional or alternative solutions.
	Identify your resources!	These could include simple, tangible items such as a favorite place to sit for quiet reflection, listening to music, having a favorite water bottle, etc. or it could be something or someone of significance such as a supportive person, group, or program, or a supportive coworker or supervisor who can offer reassurance or guidance.
	Connect!	Create a “favorite 5” in your phone contacts list so that you can easily reach out to someone you trust in the moment. This could be friends, colleagues, or even formal sources of support such as the organizational Employee Assistance Program. It could also be a group of individuals with similar characteristics or experiences. There is power in peer support.
	Detach and unplug!	Let go of what you cannot control, change, or correct. Reduce the number of decisions you make alone or the number of meetings or duties you alone must attend or complete. If available, delegate and collaborate. Allow yourself and your team to have time away from work responsibilities so that you can return refreshed.
	Create space!	Communicate when you are available and how you would like people to contact you. Have a backup plan when you are not available. If you work from home, create a separate physical workspace away from living spaces. Break up your workday between the first half and second half with a chance to re-set in the middle.
	Recognize you are enough!	Trust that you (and everyone else) are doing your best and that is enough. Practice makes progress, not perfection. We are all a “work in progress” and we need grace for our mistakes.

Resources

How to rebalance an overwhelmed nervous system (workshop series):

[Part 1](#)

[Part 3](#)

[Part 2](#)

[Part 4](#)

Holly Jones videos for increasing energy:

[OACB Workshop Part 3 - YouTube](#)

[What Happened to You? Chapter 3 - Yoga and Meditation - YouTube](#)

Holly Jones videos for increasing ease:

[Mindful Movement - YouTube](#)

[Mindful Movement Letting Go - YouTube](#)

[Back & Leg Care - YouTube](#)

[Breath Awareness Meditation - YouTube](#)