

## *Sr. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Lake Worth, Florida*



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South Florida

Lake  
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### **UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIANITY**

A monthly forum on the third Saturday of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 or 8 P.M.  
following Evening Prayer at 6  
usually with Canon Richard T. Nolan  
Retired Philosophy & Religion Professor; Editor of [www.philosophy-religion.org](http://www.philosophy-religion.org)  
Saturday, September 15, 2007

### **TOPIC: *EMBATTLED:* *HOW TO AVOID BURNOUT AND BATTLE WEARINESS* *AT HOME AND AT WORK***

#### *A Prayer To Be Said In Unison*

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who has committed to your holy Church the care and nurture of all the faithful; Enlighten with your wisdom those who teach and those who learn, that, rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth, they may worship and serve you from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
*Amen.*

### **NOTES FOR THE FORUM**

#### **BURNOUT**

#### **I. Victims:**

social workers, counselors, nurses, physicians, teachers, police, clergy (helping professionals), parents, employers and employees in all occupations

#### **II. Symptoms:**

feelings of uselessness, helplessness, frustration, isolation, exhaustion, irritability (short-tempered); chronic invalidating of others and self via faultfinding and qualified approvals. Any symptom by itself is not indicative of burnout

#### **III. Causes:**

1. prolonged, intense, emotional involvement with other people's needs & problems
2. unhealthy, exaggerated level of needing to be needed
3. constantly on the go

**4. unrealistic investments and expectations from work**

*i. status*

*ii. indifferent clients*

*iii. unrealistic (or realistic) job vulnerability*

**5. stress: personal & professional; overload**

**6. feeling demeaned/unappreciated/unjustly treated**

**7. monotony**

**8. management by crisis (via neglect or needed combat)**

**IV. Results:**

**chronic low morale (cynicism, sadness); absenteeism; high job turnover; poor delivery of services (spinning wheels, forgetfulness), impaired human relations (including being hypercritical); sense of failure; in the extreme – suicide**

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**BATTLE-WEARINESS**

**I. Victims: same as above**

**II. Symptoms:**

**avoidable distancing & disengagement; cynicism; weary of the job setting, but continued interest (even enthusiasm) for the work; however, sometimes degrees of apathy**

**III. Causes:**

- 1. perceived undermining by supervisor(s) and/or co-workers**
- 2. perceived obstacles as unnecessarily preventing achievement of goal(s)**
- 3. perceived subjection to endless, unproductive meetings and pointless bureaucratic procedures**
- 4. perceived embattled occupational setting**
- 5. perceived change for the sake of change**
- 6. perceived fraud/dishonesty for which there is no "clean" remedy**
- 7. feeling unappreciated/trivialized/demeaned/unsupported**
- 8. perceived "empty" (unproductive) positions wasting resources**
- 9. perceived job vulnerability**
- 10. monotony**
- 11. lack of confidence in the setting (the institution)**
- 12. management by crisis (via neglect or need for combat)**

**IV. Results:**

**moderate-at-best morale; little or no commitment to the context (company, family, hospital, etc.); less than optimum performance; coolness toward all or some others in the setting; in the extreme: retaliation (theft, absenteeism, etc.); relatively low priority given to the setting**

**PREVENTION/MODIFICATION of Burnout and Battle-Weariness**

**1. Secure Identity**

- a. usual sources of personal identity and consequences**
  - i. cultural negativity ["human nature"]*
  - ii. roles/performances (especially occupation)*
- b. alternative identity and consequences**

- i. *humanistic or theological*
- ii. *primary vocation*
- c. issues of success
  - i. *personal & occupational success differences*

**2. Check perceptions for their reality.**

**3. Reduction of causes (see "Causes" above):**

**a. Limit-Setting**

[Useful For Self and Said To Others]

*"I'm not comfortable with that."*

*"That's not what I'm here for."*

*"I'm already overextended and can't help you with this. Let me suggest that you ..."[referral]*

*"I'm sorry, but I have other commitments."*

*"No." (said calmly)*

[Useful Said To Oneself]

*"Not everyone has to like me."*

*"Who appointed me God and the world's Caretaker?"*

*"I work for myself at \_\_\_\_\_."*

*"I can't win them all."*

*"I'll do what I reasonably can in the situation."*

*"I don't have to do anything perfectly. (Only God can do that!)"*

**b. elimination of dependency/addiction to person(s) or activity(ies) for sense of identity/worth/success**

**c. modified expectations from the setting**

**d. realistic loyalty expectations from others in the setting**

**4. Distinguish between empathy and "my own problems"- avoid exaggerated sense of responsibility.**

**a. "Samaritan BurnOut"**

**5. Personal friendships (support group away from setting; friendships separate from others in the setting; co-workers are not necessarily friends).**

**6. Time Management: cultivation of balance: tasks/leisure (Retire?)**

**7. Implementation of Relevant Ethical Principles:**

### CONTEMPORARY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

Several ethical principles have been widely adopted, because they offer practical guidance for discussions of specific moral issues. These broadly stated principles are justified on the grounds that their opposites are repugnant to the cross section of people wrestling with moral dilemmas. For some people, the principles are of divine origin; for others, they are reasonable; for others, they are built into the very fabric of human existence. For some individuals, these principles are absolutes without exceptions; for others, they function as highly valued guidelines, a framework for moral explorations. In all instances, their meanings must be interpreted and applied, and more than one resolution may result from their use.

**RESPECT FOR PERSONS.** Human beings should be treated as subjects, not objects; human life is of significant value. Individuals should never be treated as "things" whether in business, medical care, sexual relations, political and economic systems, etc. Degrees of respect may be justified; for example, one is not called upon to submit to an unjust aggressor, also a person. Autonomy. Human beings deserve personal liberty in

order to make informed judgments and decisions about their lives. However, degrees of autonomy must be applied to prisoners, military personnel, the mentally ill, children, property owners, employees, etc.

**BENEFICENCE.** Do good; promote goodness. Criteria of "good" need elaboration.

**NONMALEFICENCE.** Do no harm; prevent harm. Criteria of "harm" need elaboration.

**JUSTICE.** Human beings ought to be provided with what is fair and deserved; goodness should be distributed in fair and equitable ways. Interpretations consider whether the distribution is according to need, merit, or equally.

**HONESTY.** Telling the truth is the norm; it is essential to promote and maintain respect for persons and for autonomy. However, some would propose a "moral lie" in some circumstances; criteria for such a lie might include protecting someone from likely harm.

**OTHER PRINCIPLES.** "Informed consent" is the understanding of and consent to a procedure an individual is about to undergo. "Confidentiality" is the restriction of information based on the right to privacy. "Double effect" means that the intended good result requires a secondary harmful or bad effect. "Paternalism" involves the interference with an individual's liberty of action.

**CONFLICTING PRINCIPLES.** Solutions to conflicts among principles relevant in an actual situation are shaped by appealing to the mostly highly valued principle(s). Disagreements about which is/are the most highly valued may lead to an impasse and, perhaps, an agreement to differ.

from Nolan and Kirkpatrick, *Living Issues In Ethics* (rev. ed., 2000)

## REMINDERS

"To allow one's self to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit one's self to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. Frenzy destroys our inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful." - Merton

"Successes originating in addictions to busyness are to be pitied, not admired; such achievements come from sadly weakened people who have little inner sense of well-being."

## Job Stress: Rating Your Workplace

### Stress Producers

*Three points each:*

1. Company has recently been purchased by another company.
2. Reductions in workforce or layoffs have occurred in the last year.
3. Department or employer has had a major reorganization.
4. Employees expect that the company will be sold or relocated.
5. Employee benefits were significantly cut recently.
6. Mandatory overtime is frequently required.
7. Employees have little control over how they do their work.
8. Consequences of making a mistake on the job are severe.
9. Workloads vary greatly.
10. Most work is machine paced or fast paced.

11. Employees must react quickly and accurately to changing conditions.
12. Personal conflicts on the job are commonplace.

Two points each:

13. Few opportunities for advancement are available.
14. Employees deal with lots of red tape to get things done.
15. Staffing, money or technology is inadequate.
16. Pay is below the going rate.
17. Sick and vacation benefits are below the norm.
18. Employees are rotated between shifts.
19. New machines or ways of working have been introduced.
20. Noise or vibration levels are high or temperatures keep changing.
21. Employees are generally isolated from one another.
22. Performance of work units is generally below average.

One point each:

23. There are few or no windows or natural lighting.
24. Employees have little or no privacy.
25. Meal breaks are unpredictable.
26. Work is either sedentary or physically exhausting.

**TOTAL:**

## **Stress Reducers**

Three points each:

1. Management takes significant action to reduce stress.
2. Mental health benefits are provided.
3. Employer has formal employee communications program.
4. Employees are regularly given information on coping with stress.
5. Employees have current and clear job descriptions.
6. Management and employees talk openly with each other.
7. Employees are free to talk with one another.
8. Employer offers exercise and other stress-reduction classes.
9. Employees are recognized and rewarded for their contributions.

Two points each:

10. Work rules are published and are the same for everyone.
11. Child care programs are available.
12. Employees can work flexible hours.
13. Perquisites are granted fairly based on level in the organization.
14. Employees have access to the technology they need.
15. Employees and management are trained in resolving conflicts.
16. Employees receive training when assigned new tasks.
17. Employer encourages work and personal support groups.
18. Employees have a place and time to relax during the workday.

One point each:

19. An employee assistance program is available.
20. Each employee's work space is not crowded.
21. Employees can put up personal items in their work areas.
22. Management appreciates humor in the workplace.
23. Programs for care of the elderly are available.

TOTAL:

### Scoring

Subtract total points for stress reducers from total points for stress producers. The result may range from minus 50 points for no stress to 60 points for extremely high stress. The Northwestern National Life Insurance Company is developing a standard scoring method to allow for comparison of stress levels.

### SUGGESTED READING

*Living Issues In Ethics* (rev. ed. 2000) <http://www.philosophy-religion.org/living/index.htm>

Click on *Living Issues in Ethics* [pdf]

#### PART 2

##### PERSONAL IDENTITY AND FULFILLMENT

5. Who Am I?
6. Love and Friendship
7. Marriage and the Family

#### PART 3

##### HEALTH AND SEXUALITY

8. Mental and Physical Health

HTTP://WWW.PHILOSOPHY-RELIGION.ORG – CLICK REFLECTIONS, THEN THE TITLE INDEX

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| “Am I A Somebody?”                             | “Humility, Not Groveling”                               | “Summary of the Law (2005)”                               |
| “Anticipatory Anxieties”                       | “In What Ways Can Our Lives Be Genuinely Transfigured?” |   |
| “Class Night – St. Mary’s School of Nursing”   | “Labor Day (2006)”                                      | “When We Feel Paralyzed”                                  |
| “Dark Side of Lent”                            | “Love is .....?”  | “What is God's "Name" & What Does It Mean to "Love" God?” |
| “Do You Like The Way You've Turned Out?”       | “Qualities of Genuine Friendship (March, 2007)”         |   |
| “Embattled”                                    | “Rejection, Coping With (2007)”                         | perhaps others  |
| “Eternal Life Now”                             | “Responsibility for Well-Being”                         |   |
| “Expectations: Unrealistic & Realistic (2002)” | “Self-Love and Self-Denial”                             |   |

Browse the “All Handouts” subsite of [www.philosophy-religion.org/](http://www.philosophy-religion.org/).