



# **PROCARE**

Professional Caregivers  
Burnout Prevention Initiative

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## **Module 1**

# **The Context of Mentoring for Caregivers**

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<b>Module Title</b>	<b>Module 1: The Context of the Burn-Out In the Field of Professional Caregiving</b>
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<p>Module 1 aims to introduce learners to the concept and importance of providing Mentoring support to Caregivers in LTC Units, as a measure to prevent and manage Occupational Burnout.</p>
<b>Learning Outcomes</b>	<p>Through Module1, learners will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.Understand the Concept of Mentoring for Caregivers</li> <li>2.Understand the Profile of a Mentor</li> <li>3.Understand the Definition of Occupational Burnout</li> </ol>

## 1. Introduction

Burnout syndrome is a serious inconvenience and hazard to a person's health and quality of life. This phenomenon negatively affects the whole of a human being's personality and also has significant negative effects on his social environment, work and relationships to clients. **Among caregivers, the risk of burnout syndrome is very high.** Caring for a sick person entails great psychological demands that can lead to burnout syndrome. Burnout is most often mentioned in the context of professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers and carers. However, family carers can also suffer from burnout. It is important to remember that burnout does not only affect naturally fragile or mentally endangered people, but it can affect any healthy person who has been in emotionally challenging and stressful situations for a long time.

Burnout syndrome is a **manifestation of prolonged and excessive stress**. It involves a whole range of symptoms, including loss of vigour, zest for life and, above all, the energy and enthusiasm needed to perform a profession. This gradually leads to general stagnation or even resignation. The person becomes frustrated, reacting with irritability, distrust, depression, apathy, cynicism and general exhaustion.

Therefore, it is crucial for the mentor-mentee relationship that both parties understand what is happening in the burnout field. This understanding then gives us the context of the whole problem we are dealing with and through which we can significantly reduce the risk through mentoring.

## 2. The Definition of Mentoring

At the very beginning of the module, we shall talk about the very definition of dealing with caregivers in terms of mentoring. The first step I must necessarily make is to state the definition as such. We will use the Cambridge Dictionary as a basic definition:

***„The act or process of helping and giving advice to a younger or less experienced person, especially in a job or at school.“***

***(Cambridge Dictionary)***

Mentoring is a professional relationship between two people where the mentor passes on his/her experience and knowledge to the mentee. The mentor acts as a guide in a particular area or topic and helps the mentee to find the right direction or solution. The transfer of knowledge and skills usually takes place in a natural environment, e.g. at the workplace. In the Czech environment, we can most often encounter corporate mentoring, in which professional knowledge and skills are transferred. It can be a relationship between an experienced employee and a new employee, but also between two experienced employees who transfer a specific skill in a specific area. Mentoring can be encountered at the level of support for young people, both in the areas of interests, leisure time, and help in choosing a career. Inter-company mentoring, sometimes also called "cross mentoring", is a form of mentoring where a mentor-mentee pair from different companies meet. This form of mentoring is promoted in the Czech Republic by the Together To Grow initiative, which aims to promote new opportunities for employee development, improve the quality of mentoring in individual companies, increase motivation and bring new inspiration from other market segments and other points of view.

In the course of mentoring, the mentee receives support and information on how to deal with different situations based on the mentor's experience. Clear and concrete examples of solutions are very motivating for the willingness to develop further. Formalised transfer of knowledge, skills, sharing of experience. The mentor provides the mentee with best practice, can advise how to solve a certain task or how to behave in certain situations. The mentor is an expert on the subject and contributes to the mentee's development by sharing his/her own experience.

In defining the basic contours of mentoring, we must clearly define what mentoring is and what mentoring is not.

- **Mentoring does not mean micromanagement!**

- **Mentoring should not only be described at the beginning (as an adaptation process for the new employee), but should be described as part of the job performance.**
- **A mentor should be an experienced staff member who is assigned to this activity and is rewarded and motivated to improve his/her own skills.**

**Mentoring is a continuous relationship** of mutual trust between mentor and mentee, designed to effectively build the professional skills of a less experienced person.

Mentoring includes:

- Support from the mentor on an individual basis (sometimes in groups) to develop the mentee's professional skills, expertise and knowledge over the long term.
- Supporting and guiding clients to develop in an area of interest in which they can naturally excel, but also where they need someone's help and support to succeed.
- Broadening horizons, professional and communication skills for the mentor's chosen area of strength.

### 3. Understand the Value and Impact of Mentoring for Caregivers in LTC

Continuing education of carers is the main theme of this methodology. This training should be systematic and run as an ongoing cycle:

- identifying training needs planning training implementing training
- evaluation of training results identification of training needs

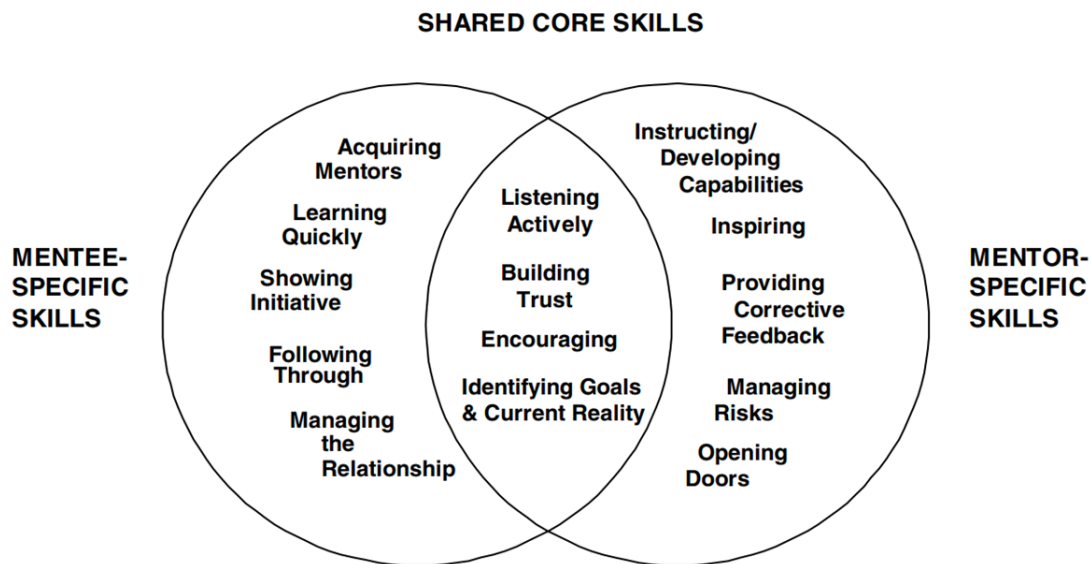
The knowledge and experience gained through further education should be reflected in direct work with the elderly, people with disabilities or the ill .It is therefore desirable for staff to retain information from participation in training events (face-to-face and self-learning to be shared and then applied in practice.

We see many benefits of mentoring that cause positive change. These include:

- Increased self-confidence
- Increased self-awareness
- Leadership skill development
- Art of delivering feedback
- Art of asking questions
- Becoming a good listener
- Exposure to new and different perspectives
- Growing a personal network
- Increased job satisfaction
- Supporting another person
- Paying it forward
- Learning from someone else

## 4. The Skills and Abilities of a Mentor

In the same way that we can see and name the impact of mentoring on caregivers, we can very easily sketch a diagram that shows us the skills and abilities of a mentor. The author of this very accurate diagram is Linda Phillips-Jones (2003):



The diagram shows the key shared core skills. We consider the following areas to be absolutely crucial for a successful mentoring process in long-term care and for the satisfaction of both mentors and mentees:

- Empathy
- Active listening
- Organisation
- Relationship-building
- Leadership
- Observation
- Creativity
- Ability to provide constructive feedback
- Conflict management
- Problem-solving
- Self-management
- Communication

Mentoring relationships can occur at all professional levels. The key feature of a mentoring relationship is that a more experienced individual helps another achieve his or her goals and develop as a person. The mentor may help the protégé (the person being mentored) develop specific job skills or leadership capacities. The mentor may work in the same organisation, have experience in the protégé's organisational context, or have experience in the same field.

If you have been approached to be a mentor, or would like to offer to be someone's mentor, reflect on these questions prior to committing to the relationship:

- What experiences and learning can I bring to the mentoring relationship?
- What are my own expectations for the relationship?
- Are there any obstacles that could impede the relationship's development?

Although mentors can be sought for various spheres of one's life, this guide focuses on mentoring within a professional context. The guide's format is intentionally simple and brief to facilitate its use by busy people.



## 5. Understand the Role and Responsibilities of mentors and Mentees

According to Shonna Watters, The mentor-mentee relationship is one of the most crucial you will develop during your career. Finding and working with a mentor is a defining career moment for many people. One that accelerates professional growth and helps them meet both short-term and long-term goals. And once you gain significant experience, you can influence the next generation of business leaders by becoming a mentor yourself.

Mentorship is important because it helps people realise their potential. This allows them to reach their goals more quickly than they would on their own. This is because it's easier to tap into your potential with the support and guidance of an experienced mentor.

### MENTOR

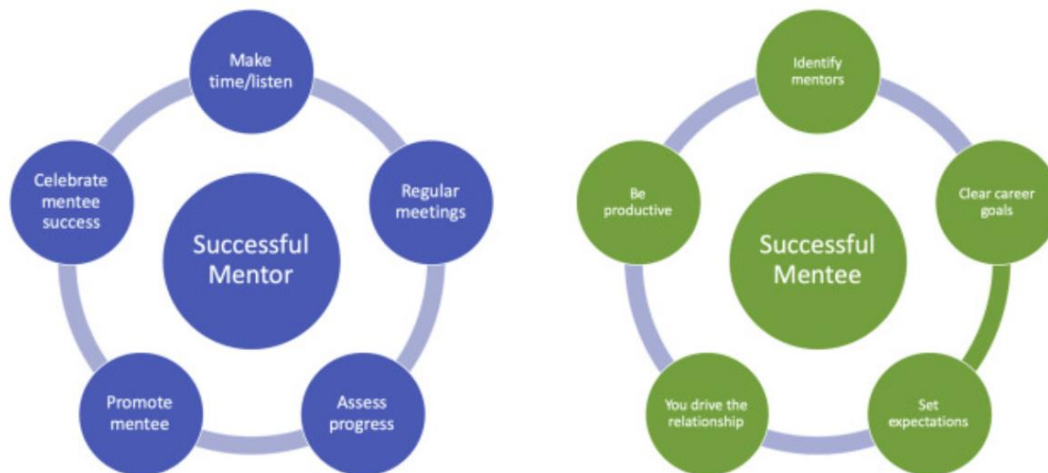
- **Coach:** Mentors will provide constant feedback, share advice, and give insights into their specific industry. Oftentimes, mentors will share personal anecdotes like, "I wish I knew this..."
- **Devil's advocate:** Mentors will challenge the mentor when it comes to making major decisions. That means playing the opposite side and providing new angles to a decision.
- **Support System:** Mentors are a huge fan of the mentees. They celebrate the big and small wins, show support when mentees face setbacks, and consistently provide words of encouragement.
- **Resource:** Mentors have countless resources from tools to people to jobs. When mentors and mentees build a strong rapport, the mentor is inclined to provide the necessary tools, introduce their network, and create new professional connections.

### MENTEE

- **As for the role of the mentee,** it's simple too: To learn and absorb as much information as they can from the mentor. While the role of the mentee is less varied, they still play an integral role in the relationship.
- **Planner:** A mentee takes the initiative to schedule meetings, provide agenda, and create action plans for their short and long-term goals. Essentially, a mentee's primary responsibility is to show proactiveness.
- **Investigator:** A mentee keeps a flow of communication. That means asking probing and open-ended questions, follows up frequently, and consistently communicates updates to their mentor.

- Student: All and all, a mentee takes on the student role. They act as a sponge and soak in the knowledge from their mentor, continue their learning even outside of their mentee-mentor relationship, and they find opportunities to learn even in moments of challenges.

According to Successful Mentor and Mentee Relationship, we can draw this very clear graphic:



*Successful Mentor and Mentee Relationship, Committee on Academic Advancement of the Association for Academic Surgery,*

Mentors may help mentees define their career path through goal-setting. Together, they set out an action plan so that they can achieve their goals within a specific time frame.

Since a mentor's role is to support their mentee's growth and development, it's essential for them to provide constructive feedback. The mentor has experience that the mentee lacks and can use that experience to guide their mentee to their desired destination.

A good mentor knows when to use coaching techniques and when to intervene with advice. A coach encourages their clients to look for their own solutions. But a mentor will also give career advice to their mentee based on their own career.

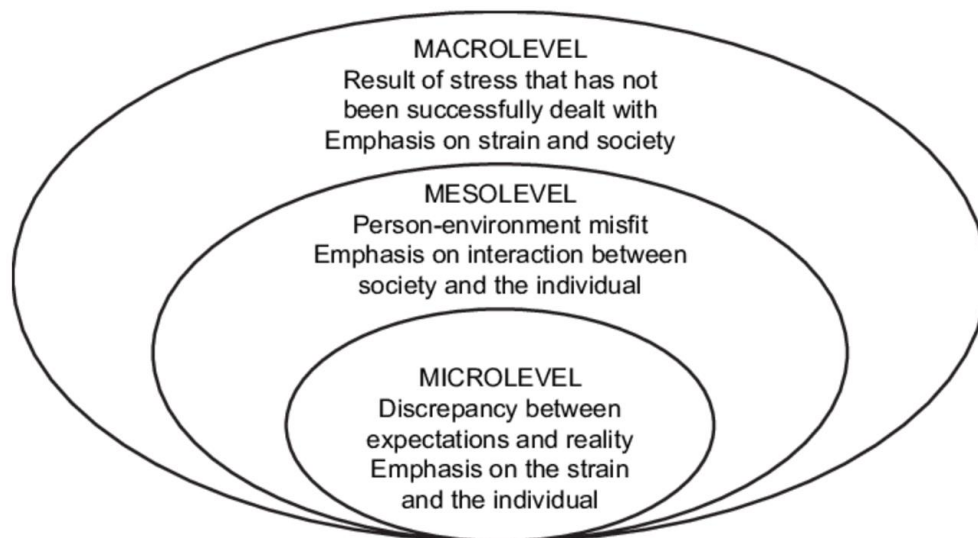
## 6. The definition of Burnout and its Symptoms

According to WHO (2022), we can define Burnout syndrome this way: Burnout is a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterised by three dimensions:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job;
- reduced professional efficacy.

Burnout is a synonym for the loss of balance that has disappeared from our lives in the name of what we still have to do. If this applies to you, set aside your responsibilities for a moment and make yourself a priority. Burnout syndrome, also known as burnout syndrome, is a condition that is insidious in its slow onset, much like chronic stress.

According to dr. Shivam Kapoor, Manjunath Puranik (2014) we bring this diagram:



As is well evident, burn-out syndrome is an extremely complex problem that starts subtly but progressively affects all aspects of life. It can even lead to restriction/exclusion from normal activities. Dr. Vasumathy Sivarajasingam (2022), GP from West London defines these things very well:

***„Burnout syndrome is particularly prevalent among healthcare professionals (HCPs), who chose their professions to care for and support people in society and may sacrifice their wellbeing to do so. The medical profession is intellectually demanding and involves complex decision making, especially when dealing with challenging patients, and there is an emotional element to almost***

*everything undertaken. In addition, HCPs often have to perform their roles with inadequate personal and organisational resources, such as skills, training, equipment, technologies, and staff, further increasing the risk of burnout.”*

Burnout syndrome typically has four phases:

- **Light dissatisfaction** - we are not yet fully aware that something is wrong, but we are slightly irritated when we are overworked.
- **Unconscious overlooking of the problem** - thoughts and emotions become increasingly unpleasant, dissatisfaction may also manifest itself by transferring the bad mood to those around us. We unconsciously resist the symptoms.
- **Conscious numbing** - symptoms of burnout such as exhaustion, stress and anxiety begin to appear. We consciously try to numb these unpleasant states, but this does not solve the problem.
- **Trauma** - burnout syndrome becomes chronic, panic attacks, complete physical and mental exhaustion may occur.

It is ideal to address burnout syndrome in the first stage to prevent the problem from developing further. **In general - the earlier the better!**

## 7. The Impact of Burnout on the Well-being and Performance of Caregivers

While caring for a loved one can be very rewarding, it also involves many stressors. And since caregiving is often a long-term challenge, the emotional impact can snowball over time. You may face years or even decades of caregiving responsibilities. It can be particularly disheartening if you feel that you're in over your head, if there's no hope that your family member will get better, or if, despite your best efforts, their condition is gradually deteriorating.

Burnout syndrome is a manifestation of prolonged and excessive stress. "It involves a whole range of symptoms, including loss of vigour, zest for life and, above all, the energy and enthusiasm needed to perform a profession. This gradually leads to general stagnation or even resignation. The person becomes frustrated, reacting with irritability, distrust, depression, apathy, cynicism and general exhaustion." (Janovsky, 2003).

The following case study shows what burnout syndrome can look like in a caregiver (Venglářová, 2011):

*"Mrs. Zuzana began to care for her sick mother, whose health deteriorated after the death of her husband. Her mother was dependent on the care of another person, had difficulty walking, needed help with self-care, and had memory problems. Susan always wanted to take care of her parents so she could return the care and love they gave her when she was a child. She decided fairly quickly to move her mother into the family home and stay with her. Together with her daughter, Susan arranged for the care allowance and all the related requirements, arranged for her mother's rehabilitation and all the aids she needed.*

*Initially the care was uneventful, but more and more health problems started to come up for mum, who eventually became uninsured, fully dependent on care. She needed to be cared for for 24 hours. Although she took turns in caring for her with her daughters and husband, it was still increasingly strenuous. At night mom couldn't sleep, so she would call out her daughter or son-in-law's name, and during the day she slept. Zuzana began to feel tired, became more irritable, her own health deteriorated, she suffered from lack of appetite, was often tearful, often solved even minor problems by arguing, and often had headaches. She no longer enjoyed caring for Zuzana, she was left with nothing but duty. However, she did not want to admit her problems and continued to care for her mother; she was not aware of her difficulties, but the people around her could already see it. The family wanted to offer her help, to arrange a carer or respite stay for the old lady, but Susan did not want to.*

*She felt a sense of her own failure, that she "just" could not leave her mother at the end of her life, that she could not stop caring for her. She did not want to perceive that she was doing all this at the expense of her health, her psyche and her good relationships with her loved ones. A daily stereotype set in, unchanging for several months.*

*After 8 months, Susan's mother died. Mrs. Zuzana felt completely exhausted, at this point all the symptoms to which she had not attached any importance during her care for her mother became fully manifested. Her health deteriorated significantly - her diabetes worsened, her blood pressure increased, and she became severely depressed. It took almost a year for Zuzana to come to terms with everything, return to work and resume her family and hobbies."*

At the beginning Mrs. Zuzana was very active in her care, she knew how to handle everything, she willingly left everything for her mother and arranged many things for her. From the phase of enthusiasm she gradually entered a phase of stagnation, when it became apparent that even the greatest care would not stop the creeping deterioration of her health and the increasing loss of independence.

## 8. How Mentoring Helps Prevent and Manage Burnout

Burnout syndrome has various definitions, but it is most often described by physicians as a complete loss of professional interest, personal commitment or enthusiasm in patients who have a great deal of responsibility in their work, are plagued by chronic stress and cannot cope with the high demands of their employers. This is manifested by feelings of exhaustion and a decline in work performance, but may also include depression, sleep and memory problems or various physical ailments.

What about prevention? The prevention of burnout syndrome, as we stated, definitely includes learning to notice yourself, your thoughts, feelings and having a kind of "inner dialogue" with yourself. Listening to yourself, trying to understand your emotions. To know what makes me happy, what makes me happy, what gives me meaning, where I can "blow off steam". To learn how to balance my workload with other activities and not to forget about relationships - with myself, with loved ones and with friends. To constantly seek balance between the six areas of our lives already mentioned: partner/family life, work, health and fitness, social contacts, individual hobbies, faith/spirituality.

### **The main hints of prevention:**

- The opportunity to seek advice from a more experienced colleague
- a sense of security of "working background"
- The opportunity to share feeling of uncertainty
- Space to name how he or she perceives the legal situation
- Opportunity for a personalised approach to the grandparent that strengthens the relationship
- Acceptance of personal problems and opportunities that can significantly impair job performance
- Finding a way to name and work with the situation

Finally, what to do with burnout syndrome? If burnout is not addressed in time, it can lead not only to depression and anxiety, but also to a complete loss of self-confidence and addiction to drugs or alcohol. Therefore, at the beginning it is necessary to admit that something is wrong and contact a professional (psychologist or psychiatrist). **No shame to do so - it's all about your own health!**

## 9. Summary

Burnout syndrome poses a serious hazard to a person's health and quality of life. This phenomenon negatively affects the whole of a human being's personality and also has significant negative effects on his social environment, work and relationships to clients. It is important to remember that burnout does not only affect naturally fragile or mentally endangered people, but it can affect any healthy person who has been in emotionally challenging and stressful situations for a long time. Burnout syndrome involves a whole range of symptoms, including loss of vigour, zest for life and, above all, the energy and enthusiasm needed to perform a profession.



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