Hello Everyone!

This guide, intended for faculty, staff, and students, was inspired by the results of the 2012 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) of Students in Distress performed by the Rollins School of Public Health. The purpose of the CNA was to determine how faculty and staff could better recognize and support students in distress. One suggestion was to create a guide that describes the resources on campus for these students.

This guide emphasizes burnout as a common manifestation of distress. Burnout, or the state of mental and/or physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress, is a major problem among medical students. Depending on the source, the reported prevalence of burnout among medical students ranges from 45% to 71% (IsHak, et al., 2013). In this guide you will find information to help you:

1. Assess: Take inventory of the stressors and coping mechanisms in a medical student’s life, and recognize signs of medical student burnout,
2. Address: Approach a friend or student exhibiting signs of distress, and
3. Assist: Provide a list of resources to students in distress.

I would like to thank the following people who took the time to meet with me to explain how their resources work and give their opinions on issues of wellness and self-care in medical students: Dr. Mahlet Endale, Dr. Jane Yang, and Dr. Mark McLeod from Counseling and Psychological Services, Lauren Bernstein, MSW and Willie Bannister, LPC from the Office of Health Promotion and Dr. Schwartz from the SOM. And a special thank you to my advisors, Heather Zesiger, MPH, MCHES and Dr. Michael Huey!

Finally, thank you all for reading, and I hope you find it helpful!

Patrice Mann
MD Class of 2016
Examples of common stressors among medical students, by category:

**Academic**: Adjusting to the increasing volume and pace of material, gaining responsibility

**Clinical**: Role ambiguity, dealing with the chain of command/hierarchy, fear of infections or bodily harm in clinical settings

**Social**: Decreased contact with family and friends; forced contact with patients, students, and physicians you do not mesh well with

**Spiritual**: When spiritual values are called into question or disregarded, when demands on time compromise spiritual maintenance

**Psychological**: Unrealistic expectations that you must know everything

**Physical**: Chronic or acute illness, discomfort from standing in unnatural postures

**Familial**: Relationship problems with parents, spouses, and children

**Financial**: Relying on loans as income

If you are interested in strengthening your defenses against common stressors, consider:

- Making an appointment with a nutritionist through the Patient Portal
- Learning more about strategies to improve sleep through Emory’s SleepWellExcel program: [http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/sleepwell/index.html](http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/sleepwell/index.html)
- Finding more information from the Office of Health Promotion, including their videos on YouTube, here: [http://www.youtube.com/bewellexcel](http://www.youtube.com/bewellexcel)
- Taking a stress management class at Emory Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). (They even offer biofeedback for learning relaxation skills!)
- Discussing situations that intersect with your spiritual values with one of the Emory Chaplains. Make an appointment with one of the Chaplains on this list: [http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/about/staff.cfm](http://www.religiouslife.emory.edu/about/staff.cfm)

Each year brings new stressors, requiring that you reevaluate your coping skills.
Recognizing Burnout...

Burnout generally proceeds in this sequential order, with presence of two symptoms indicating presence of that stage of burnout.

This means that you have the opportunity to recognize symptoms and prevent it. Unfortunately, many people wait until they have reached the Exhaustion stage, when they are forced to receive help.

Stage 1: Stress Arousal
- Irritability, Anxiety
- Bruxism ( Grinding Teeth)
- Insomnia
- Forgetfulness/Poor Concentration
- Gastrointestinal Disorders
- Headaches
- Self-medication

Stage 2: Energy Conservation
- Lateness, Procrastination
- Excessive Time Off
- Decreased Sex Drive
- Fatigue
- Social Withdrawal
- Increased Substance Abuse

Stage 3: Exhaustion
- Chronic Sadness or depression
- Suicidal Ideation
- Chronic GI problems and/or Headaches
- Social Isolation
- Substance Use Disorders
- Unethical Behaviors (Disruptive Behavior, Boundary Violations)

Why does Burnout Matter as a Future Doctor?

Acknowledging your limits and asking for help when needed is a crucial skill to develop for success on and off the wards.

Burnout is characterized by three main consequences:
1. Emotional exhaustion, or feelings of depletion and being drained caused by excessive psychological and emotional demands, can lead to low morale, reduced effectiveness and health problems.
2. Depersonalization, treating people like objects, can result when a healthy level of “detached concern” for patients goes too far. Eventually this can turn into callousness and cynicism, which negatively affects patient-physician relationships.
3. Diminished sense of personal accomplishment, which means believing that your actions no longer make a difference. These feelings adversely affect patient-physician relationships and patient satisfaction.

So really, taking better care of yourself enables you to take better care of others.
Advice on how to approach another student:

• Choose a location that gives you privacy and a time when you will not be interrupted.

• Share your concern in a calm, non-judgmental way. For example, you could say, “You haven’t seemed like yourself lately,” Or “We’ve missed you in class.” Avoid statements that put the person on the defense, like “You’re never prepared for class anymore.”

• Start with an open-ended question, like, “How’ve you been?” or “How are you dealing with starting rotations?” Your goal is to listen, not necessarily offer solutions, especially if the student doesn’t request them. Resist the urge to spew out unsolicited advice, like “You need to tell your parents/the professor/the dean.”

• If appropriate, ask them about any options they were already considering.

• Offer to help brainstorm for the best resource or course of action. Maybe offer to call a resource with them or accompany them to an appointment.

• Acknowledge your limits. A listening ear from a trusted peer or advisor can be invaluable, but remember there are numerous resources on campus available to help.

• Ask for help on the best approach to take. Many of the resources listed on the next page are available to talk with you about what to do when you’re concerned about a friend/student. (Look for the resources with the asterisks.)

• Understand that your friend/student may reject your offer for help or deny needing help. Don’t try to force them into admitting anything. Leave the door open for future conversation. You could end the conversation by saying something like, “Keep me posted on how things are going,” or “Just wanted to check to see if things were ok.”

• Be reassuring. Students may feel embarrassed about seeking help or rationalize that their problems are not serious enough. All the resources listed are utilized by many students from both the undergraduate and graduate school populations, and there are services available for students experiencing issues of any severity.

If you’re the one in need of help:

• Often students hesitate to seek help because they are worried about what other people will think or what that means about their abilities as a medical student. These worries are often ungrounded and influenced by the student’s own perceptions. A study done at the University of Michigan found that medical students with moderate to severe depression were more likely to endorse statements like, “If I were depressed, fellow medical students would respect my opinion less” and “Telling a counselor would be risky.” In comparison, medical students with no or minimal depression were much less likely to endorse those beliefs about depressed medical students (Schwenk, Davis, & Wimsatt, 2010).

• What do you have to lose? All Emory resources are free and confidential (Standard HIPAA regulations apply), most can refer you to resources off campus if you prefer, and no one will force you to return if you don’t want to.

• Consider completing this free, confidential online stress and depression screening. You’ll receive a personalized response from an Emory counselor, and can even engage in dialogue before agreeing to make an appointment. (Available online at http://www.emorycaresforyou.emory.edu)
What resources are available for Emory medical students in distress?

**Emory Student Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**

http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/

Make an appointment. Call (404) 727-7450. Located at 1462 Clifton Road, Suite 235, 2nd Floor. Mon-Fri 8:30am-5:00pm.

Provides free and confidential individual, group, and couples counseling for enrolled students. CAPS staff can also provide consultations to students and faculty or staff who are concerned about an Emory student. When necessary, or at student’s request, CAPS also provides referrals to other agencies on campus, low-cost services in the community, or private practitioners in the community.

**Online Stress and Depression Screening**

Available online at http://www.emorycaresforyou.emory.edu.

After completing the anonymous Stress and Depression Questionnaire, students will receive a personalized response from an Emory CAPS counselor. In order to insure that only Emory students take the screening, students must provide their Emory net ID and password, but this is IN NO WAY linked to their responses.

**Psychiatric Services (at Student Health Services at 1525 Clifton Road)**

http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hs/services/psychiatry/index.html

Make an appointment. Call (404) 727-7751 or use the patient portal (link: https://www.shspnc.emory.edu/login_directory.aspx)

Services offered include diagnostic evaluations, crisis management, medication evaluations, and long-term management of psychiatric medications. They can also offer referrals/recommendations for Atlanta area-based mental health providers for those students who wish to seek services off-campus.

**Emory Student Health Services**

http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hs/

Make an appointment. Call (404) 727-7751 or use the patient portal (link: https://www.shspnc.emory.edu/login_directory.aspx)

Provides comprehensive outpatient medical care for enrolled students.

**Office of Health Promotion**

http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/index.html

Dedicated to engaging students in the work of creating a healthier campus, building their individual capacity, and advocating for them in times of crisis. Within this office are The Respect Program, the Substance Abuse Prevention Counselor, and SleepWell, all described in this guide. Their website has links to informative resources for students on a variety of topics dealing with wellness, like nutrition and mindfulness.
The Respect Program *
http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/respect_program/index.html
Contact Lauren Bernstein at (404) 727-1514,
LaurenBernstein@emory.edu or respect@emory.edu. The office is located at 1525 Clifton Road, 103 Suite, but the counselor can meet you anywhere on campus.
Offers support for students dealing with intimate partner violence, sexual assault, or stalking. They offer crisis intervention and immediate support, accompaniment to appointments, assistance with reporting to the Title IX Coordinators, confidential consultations, and advocacy for classroom accommodations. They can also make connections to counseling, medical care, conduct, and on and off-campus legal referrals.

Alcohol and other Substance Abuse Prevention Counselor *
http://studenthealth.emory.edu/hp/alcohol_and_other_drugs/substance_abuse_risk_reduction.html
Make an appointment with Willie Bannister, LPC: Phone: (404) 727-0395; Email: wbannis@emory.edu
A full-time alcohol and substance abuse prevention counselor is available by appointment for free, confidential screening interviews (not diagnostic assessments), ongoing counseling when appropriate, and referrals for other services and long-term addiction treatment on- and off-campus. You can also discuss concerns about problematic substance use behaviors of a friend or student.

Emory Helpline *
Call 404-727-4357. Available 8:30pm-1:00am every night.
An anonymous and confidential student-run support hotline for the Emory community. Helpline volunteers undergo intensive paraprofessional training to be able to offer help and direct to resources on and off-campus for a wide variety of issues, including crisis situations and suicide, class or work stress, interpersonal issues, and anything else students need to talk about.

Small Group Leaders, and the Deans Office *
Your small group leaders and the Deans are another resource to consider. These individuals can offer advice, as well as direct you to appropriate resources. During orientation, you received a laminated card with office and cell numbers.
Bibliography

