

FEELING BURNED OUT?

KEY POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND IF YOU ARE THINKING ABOUT LEAVING CLINICAL PRACTICE

It is common for practicing physicians to experience burnout or to feel unsatisfied with their clinical practice at some point during their career. Some physicians may leave clinical practice for this or other reasons. Physicians experiencing burnout or career dissatisfaction should keep a number of key points in mind:

Seek Advice and Resources to Help Manage Stress and Career Overload

Talk with colleagues and others. Seeking support and insights from individuals in similar situations, as well as from others, both professionals and non-professionals (mental health professionals, clergy, colleagues, career advisors, etc.) may help you manage stress and career overload. Resources to help physicians manage stress and burnout are often available through employers and medical society and specialty associations such as the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) Physician Health and Wellness website](#).

Plan Ahead

Be aware that even a short-term sabbatical from clinical practice, can make it difficult and expensive to just step back into clinical practice. Be open to the possibility that your professional future may include going back into clinical practice even if at the moment it is not something you see yourself doing. Being prepared for that option is important. Plan ahead as much as possible and be informed about what leaving and reentering clinical practice may involve. A good starting for information on physician reentry is [The Physician Reentry into the Workforce Project website](#).

Explore Ways to Not Leave Clinical Practice Completely

Find out if there are ways to not leave clinical practice completely. Explore opportunities to lessen your workload and/or number of hours worked by looking for possible part-time or more controllable work schedules. Burnout among physicians can be related to having less control over work schedules and having greater workloads.¹

If you are considering leaving clinical practice remember licensure is a privilege. It is often hard to reinstate a license once it has expired. Before you leave clinical practice, contact your medical licensing board to find out about its policies regarding a leave of absence. Ask your board how it handles physicians who are not in clinical practice, if they issue limited licenses, and what statutes, if any, your state has in place to facilitate a return to practice. Overlooking regulatory issues can result in great difficulty and frustration when trying to reestablish a lapsed license.

Find Ways to Stay Healthy

Whether you plan to leave clinical practice or not, stay physically healthy. Being physically healthy is a key to success and managing stress both in and outside of the workplace.

¹ Starmer, AJ, Fritner MP & Freed GL. Work-Life Balance, Burnout and satisfaction of early career pediatricians. *Pediatrics* Apr 2016, 137 (4) e2015-3183.

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