



# Dr. Martin's Newsletter

MARCH/APRIL EDITION

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 3

**The Women's  
Healthcare  
Practitioner retreat**  
*was lots of fun,  
and we had a great  
group of women.  
There will be more  
retreats in the  
future....watch for  
dates and times!*

Martha Martin,  
Ph.D.  
Psychologist  
License No. PY2476

Office:  
106 SE Weir Street  
Suite 4  
Camas, WA 98671

(360) 835-1070

## Spring has sprung, finally!

Message from Dr. Martin



**Welcome** to the 3rd edition of Volume 2 of my FREE newsletter for clients and the community. There was not an edition last month, which is why you all are just now getting your next newsletter. My practice is getting pretty busy, plus I'm involved in some important community outreach that has taken extra time. So, rather than add more to my plate, I wanted to make sure that I was taking care of myself so I could take good care of my clients.

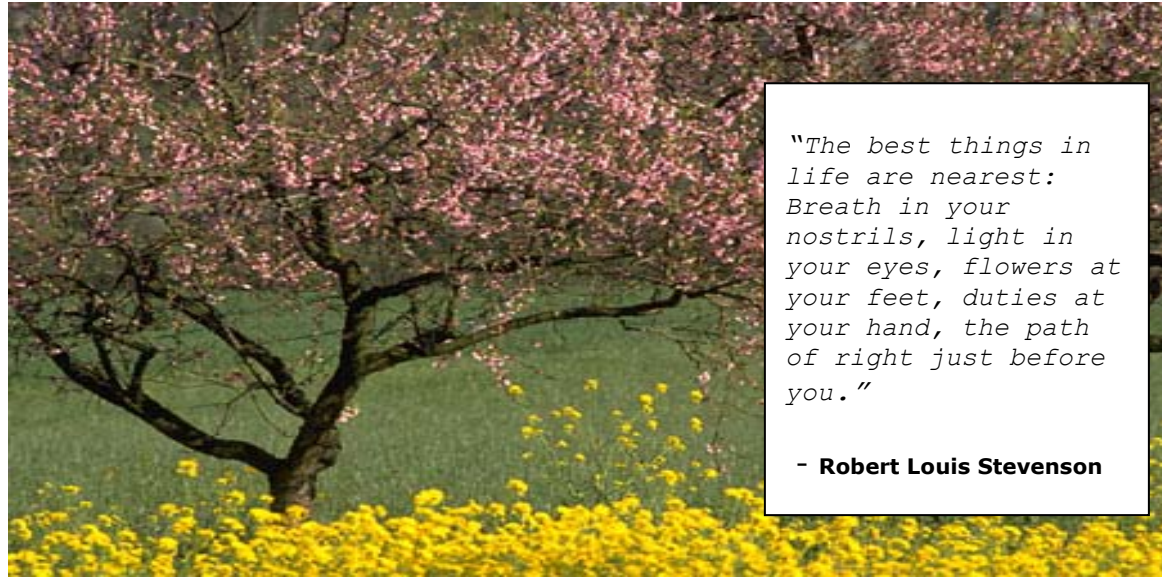
It's getting green everywhere you look, and the trees are bursting with new blooms. For those of you with seasonal allergies, my sympathies. Hopefully you are able to find relief, and enjoy the beauty and promise of summer just around the corner. I am always humbled by the way the seasons are expressed here in the Pacific Northwest with abundant new life in plants and animals. Get out and enjoy the ever changing landscape.

Thanks to all who attended the **Woman's Healthcare Practitioner retreat** at Royal Ridges Retreat Facility March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>. The feedback I've received so far lets me know that people enjoyed their time away. The Horse Trail ride was the most popular event, along with the Big Swing, and all the food and great service we received. Plans are underway to make this an annual event. Visit the website for updates on future events at [www.marthamartinphd.com](http://www.marthamartinphd.com).

As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, I will be accepting some insurance plans: **Regence BlueCross/BlueShield of Oregon, LifeWise, Premera Blue Cross, and soon will be adding Tricare/Triwest.** There was a great demand from clients and the community for me to be a provider on these insurance provider panels. My goal is to offer affordable service to the local community, and

this is another way to make services more accessible. I may be adding additional insurance plans in the future. These will be listed on my website at [www.marthamartinphd.com](http://www.marthamartinphd.com).

This edition will include several articles about burnout and its causes, an article about how exercise can boost your mood, and another about using writing as a tool for healing emotional pain. The new Humor Corner returns again, and will be a permanent part of all future editions. Enjoy reading these articles, and I look forward to hearing ideas, feedback, or requests for future newsletters.



*"The best things in life are nearest: Breath in your nostrils, light in your eyes, flowers at your feet, duties at your hand, the path of right just before you."*

**- Robert Louis Stevenson**

### **Topics for this edition:**

- ***The Origins of Burnout***
  - ***Enjoy Your Job More or Know When to Change***
  - ***Lifestyle Stressors that Increase Burnout***
  - ***Studies Show that Exercise Can Boost Your Mood***
  - ***Writing as a Tool for Healing***
  - ***Humor Corner***
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## The Origins of Burnout

### Edited By Dr. Martin

*Those who are experiencing high amounts of stress in their lifestyle need to always be aware of the idea of burnout potentially looming in the future. While the term 'burnout' is often thrown around in discussions of stress, do you really know what it means, and how it's caused?*

The term "burnout" is a relatively new term, first coined in 1974 by Herbert Freudenberger, in his book, "Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement". He originally defined 'burnout' as, "the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one's devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results."

While burnout isn't a recognized clinical psychiatric or psychological disorder, there are some similar features between burnout and diagnosable conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders or mood disorders. However, burnout is much more common; for example, it's estimated that 25%-60% of practicing physicians experience burnout! It's also less severe, more temporary in duration, and clearly caused by situational stressors rather than a biologically mandated chemical imbalance. (It's kind of like depression's non-clinical, less intense cousin that just comes for a visit and leaves when you reduce the stress in your life.) Classic symptoms include the following:

- **Depleted Physical Energy:** Prolonged stress can be physically draining, causing you to feel tired much of the time, or no longer have the energy you once did. Getting out of bed to face another day of the same gets more difficult.
- **Emotional Exhaustion:** You feel impatient, moody, inexplicably sad, or just get frustrated more easily than you normally would. You feel like you can't deal with life as easily as you once could.
- **Lowered Immunity to Illness:** When stress levels are high for a prolonged amount of time, your immune system does suffer. People who are suffering from burnout usually get the message from their body that something needs to change, and that message comes in the form of increases susceptibility to colds, the flu, and other minor illnesses (and sometimes some not-so-minor ones).
- **Less Investment in Interpersonal Relationships:** Withdrawing somewhat from interpersonal relationships is another possible sign of burnout. You may feel like you have less to give, or less interest in having fun, or just less patience with people. But for whatever reason, people experiencing burnout can usually see the effects in their relationships.
- **Increasingly Pessimistic Outlook:** When experiencing burnout, it's harder to get excited about life, harder to expect the best, harder to let things roll off your back, and harder to 'look on the bright side' in general. Because optimism is a great buffer for stress, those suffering from burnout find it harder to pull out of their rut than they normally would.
- **Increased Absenteeism and Inefficiency at Work:** When experiencing job burnout, it gets more difficult just to get out of bed and face more of what's been overwhelming you in the first place. This may be an unconscious defense against burnout, but those experiencing it tend to be less effective overall and stay home from work more often. (This could also be due to increased illness resulting from lowered immunity, as discussed above.) This is part of why it makes sense for workers to take some time off *before* they're feeling burned-out, and why it makes sense for employers to refrain from running their workers into the ground; they might not get back up so quickly!

## What Makes Some Jobs More Stressful?

There are several factors that can contribute to burnout, including job-related features that can cause or exacerbate burnout. Some companies and industries have much higher rates of burnout than others. The following features tend to cause more stress, taking more of a toll on workers:

- **Unclear Requirements:** When it's not clear to workers *how* to succeed, it's harder for them to be confident, enjoy their work, and feel they're doing a good job. If the job description isn't explained clearly, if the requirements are constantly changing and hard to understand, or if expectations are otherwise unclear, workers are at higher risk of burnout.
- **Impossible Requirements:** Sometimes it's just not possible to do a job as it's explained. If a job's responsibilities exceed the amount of time given to complete them properly, for example, it's really not possible to do the job well. Workers will put in a lot of effort and never quite feel successful, which also leaves them at risk for burnout.
- **High-Stress Times with No "Down" Times:** Many jobs and industries have "crunch times", where workers must work longer hours and handle a more intense workload for a time. This can actually help people feel invigorated if the extra effort is recognized, appropriately compensated, and limited. It starts becoming problematic when "crunch time" occurs year-round and there's no time for workers to recover.
- **Big Consequences for Failure:** People make mistakes; it's part of being human. However, when there are dire consequences to the occasional mistake (like the risk of a lawsuit, for example), the overall work experience becomes much more stressful, and the risk of burnout goes up. (This is part of why nurses have such a high rate of burnout.)
- **Lack of Personal Control:** People tend to feel excited about what they're doing when they are able to creatively decide what needs to be done and come up with ways of handling problems that arise. Generally speaking, workers who feel restricted and unable to exercise personal control over their environment and daily decisions tend to be at greater risk for burnout.
- **Lack of Recognition:** It's difficult to work hard and never be recognized for one's accomplishments. Awards, public praise, bonuses and other tokens of appreciation and recognition of accomplishment go a long way in keeping morale high. Where accolades are scarce, burnout is a risk.
- **Poor Communication:** Poor communication in a company can cause or exacerbate some of these problems, like unclear job expectations or little recognition. When an employee has a problem and can't properly discuss it with someone who is in a position to help, this can lead to feelings of low personal control.
- **Insufficient Compensation:** Some occupations just *are* stressful, and it's one of those things that you just accept along with the paycheck—if the paycheck is sufficient. However, if demands are high and financial compensation is low, workers find themselves thinking, "They don't pay me enough to deal with this!" And the burnout risk goes up.
- **Poor Leadership:** Company leadership can go a long way toward preventing or contributing to burnout. For example, depending on the leadership, employees can feel recognized for their achievements, supported when they have difficulties, valued, safe, etc. Or they can feel unappreciated, unrecognized, unfairly treated, not in control of their activities, insecure in their position, unsure of the requirements of their jobs, etc. Poor company leadership is one factor that can influence many others—many of which can put an employee at risk for burnout.



## Enjoy Your Job More or Know When to Change

### Edited by Dr. Martin

*If you're overstressed and at risk for job burnout, you may feel that a major life overhaul is necessary for you to be able to enjoy your job and avoid burnout. Before making major changes, maybe you should consider a few minor adjustments before deciding whether major changes may be necessary.*

#### **Be Clear About Job Requirements:**

It's nearly impossible to do a good enough job at your work if you don't know what the requirements are. Unfortunately, sometimes it's difficult to know all of the requirements at a job when those in charge are poor communicators. Some bosses and supervisors are vague with expectations, assign new tasks with little advance notice, request new tasks without providing training, and inadvertently set workers up to fail in other ways.

While you can't prevent things like this from happening altogether, you can gain a clearer view of what you need to do and help your situation with assertive communication skills. Learn to speak up for yourself in a respectful way and you'll improve your work life and your relationship, and decrease your risk for burnout.

#### **Find Rewards and Recognition:**

We all need to feel recognized and rewarded for what we do. If your job doesn't have built-in opportunities for recognition, or if rewards are infrequent, you may need to add rewards and recognition to your own life. You may decide to take yourself to a movie, have a home spa experience, buy yourself something nice, or give yourself other small but nurturing rewards when you complete a project or complete another month of hard work. You can also team up with a supportive friend and agree to listen to each other's successes and provide support to one another if you don't get that support and recognition from your job. These things can nurture you emotionally and remind you of the importance of the work you do, especially if you work in a job or field where these rewards are sparse.

#### **Maintain a Balanced Lifestyle:**

Keeping balance in your lifestyle is important; if it's all work and no play, you may find your ability to work beginning to wane. In order to maintain balance in your lifestyle, the first step is to take an overview of your current lifestyle and see which areas are out of balance. Do you have enough time for relationships, hobbies, sleep, self care, exercise, healthy eating, and other important features of a healthy lifestyle, in addition to your work responsibilities? If not, the next step is to look at your priorities and make some changes so that your lifestyle reflects them better

### Think Positive:

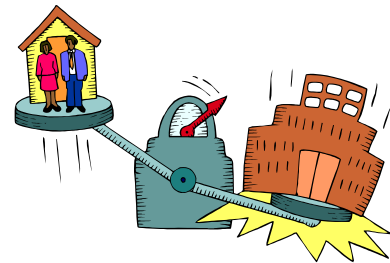
You can usually change your experience of your current circumstances by changing your attitude. Developing an optimistic point of view and changing negative self talk patterns can go a long way toward helping you see the glass half-full, as well as actually making you more productive and less stressed. Assess your current state of mind, and make some changes in yourself so that you see things in a more positive light, and you may just find you're much happier where you are in life!

### Know Yourself and Work With Your Personality:

Certain features of your personality make some jobs a better fit for you than others. If you're in a job that's not well-suited for your personality, you may be putting yourself under unnecessary stress every day you go to work. The following are some good questions to ask yourself:

- Do you like to work toward deadlines, or do you like your tasks to come in a relatively steady stream?
- Do you like to work as part of a team, or independently?
- Do you like things to be structured and routine, or loose and variable?
- Do you enjoy being a 'big fish in a small pond', or would you like to be a 'small fish in a big pond'? (Meaning, would you like to be a small part of a large company or a large part of a small company, or something else?)
- Do you believe in what you do, and is it important to you that you do?

These questions and others can give you a better picture of what kind of work would be best for you. If you find you're not in the type of position that's ideal for you, you can see if you can make additional changes in your job's structure to make it fit better with your needs, or you might think of what jobs might be better suited for you and see if working toward a change in jobs is a good idea.



## Lifestyle Stressors that Increase Burnout

### Edited by Dr. Martin

*Some people seem to thrive under pressure. However, over time, chronic stress with no down time can overwhelm us all, leading to a decreased zest for life and, eventually, burnout. Certain lifestyle features can lead to an especially high risk for burnout. Classic high-risk stressors include the following:*

- **Too Much Work With Little Balance:** A life of consistent 80-hour work weeks with no down time is a classic high risk scenario for burnout. And schedules approaching that level of fullness can also be very draining. Although we all tend to have especially busy weeks, those who devote all their time to work and work-related activities, and put other areas of their lives—like relationships, hobbies, and exercises—on hold, put themselves at higher risk for burnout. It's not just the fact that work can be draining and stressful, but that the lifestyle is out of balance. Activities that relieve stress and sustain us emotionally and spiritually are reduced or eliminated in favor of more stress-inducing work. Such a schedule is also a burnout risk because, as a person living such a busy lifestyle approaches a state of burnout, they're not able to easily get themselves back in balance with these stress relieving activities
- **No Help or Supportive Resources:** Taking on huge amounts of responsibilities that can't be delegated can also put people at higher levels of stress, increasing burnout risk. Having the feeling

that, ‘If I take a day off, things will fall apart,’ causes a generally elevated sense of stress. We all need support, backup, and others we can offload responsibilities to if need be.

- **Too Little Social Support:** In addition to needing people who can help us with responsibilities, we need people to help us shoulder the emotional burdens in our lives. Having someone to talk to about what stresses us, someone to play with when we have free time, and someone to understand us when times are tough, and someone to supply new ideas when we’re stumped are all important and necessary aspects of social support. Feeling isolated with our stress creates *more stress*, and elevates our risk for burnout, whereas adequate social support can be a buffer.
- **No Time For Hobbies:** Those who work hard often tend to play hard, which helps sustain them. Having an outlet for enjoying life outside of work can help you feel alive and supply you with a mental and emotional break from what’s stressing you. However, if your whole life consists of responsibility and work, and you don’t have a creative outlet or regular outlet for good old fun, it’s harder to sustain yourself through the stressful times in life.
- **Too Little Sleep:** People don’t always realize the importance of this one, but if you don’t get adequate sleep, you are less able to handle stress, and you’re also less productive and suffer other consequences. When you get inadequate sleep on a regular basis, you put yourself into a state of chronic sleep deprivation and chronic stress, and put yourself at a higher risk for burnout.
- **Too Little Time Off:** Part of living a balanced lifestyle is having regular times off. Taking a vacation at least once a year can help you get into a different situation and remind yourself *why you* are—outside of your responsible roles. Vacations help you to get back in touch with yourself and discover new parts of yourself, as well as just sit, relax, and think of *nothing*. While this can also be accomplished with meditation and other activities, nothing does it quite so easily and enjoyably as a vacation. When you return, you’re usually at least somewhat happy to get back to your life, and such times off can be good burnout prevention. If you haven’t taken time off in quite a while, you’re putting yourself at an increased risk for burnout.



## Studies Show that Exercise Can Boost Your Mood

Edited by Dr. Martin

A regular exercise program might be the answer to your emotional problems. A review of studies stretching back to 1981 concluded that regular exercise can improve mood in people with mild to moderate depression. It also may play a supporting role in treating severe depression.

One study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* in 1999, divided 156 men and women

with depression into three groups. One group took part in an aerobic exercise program, another took the SSRI sertraline (Zoloft), and a third did both. At the 16-week mark, depression had eased in all three groups. About 60%–70% of the people in all three groups could no longer be classed as having major depression. In fact, group scores on two rating scales of depression were essentially the same. This suggests that for those who need or wish to avoid drugs, exercise might be an acceptable substitute for antidepressants. Keep in mind, though, that the swiftest response occurred in the group taking antidepressants, and that it can be difficult to stay motivated to exercise when you're depressed.

A follow-up to that study found that exercise's effects lasted longer than those of antidepressants. Researchers checked in with 133 of the original patients six months after the first study ended. They found that the people who exercised regularly after completing the study, regardless of which treatment they were on originally, were less likely to relapse into depression.

A study published in 2005 found that walking fast for about 35 minutes a day five times a week or 60 minutes a day three times a week had a significant influence on mild to moderate depression symptoms. Walking fast for only 15 minutes a day five times a week or doing stretching exercises three times a week did not help as much. (These exercise lengths were calculated for someone who weighs about 150 pounds. If you weigh more, longer exercise times apply, while the opposite is true if you weigh less than 150 pounds.)

How does exercise relieve depression? For many years, experts have known that exercise enhances the action of endorphins, chemicals that circulate throughout the body. Endorphins improve natural immunity and reduce the perception of pain. They may also serve to improve mood. Another theory is that exercise stimulates the neurotransmitter norepinephrine, which may directly improve mood.

Besides lifting your mood, regular exercise offers other health benefits, such as lowering blood pressure, protecting against heart disease and cancer, and boosting self-esteem. How often or intensely you need to exercise to alleviate depression is not clear, but for general health, experts advise getting half an hour to an hour of moderate exercise, such as brisk walking, on all or most days of the week.



## Writing as a tool for healing

Edited by Dr. Martin

There is evidence that the following journal exercise helps relieve ongoing sources of stress. A single attempt is not enough, though. When you first sit down to write about a problem, you may

feel more anxious. The wound, once exposed, may initially hurt more than it did while hidden. But continuing to write about the same problem over the course of several days often enables you to work through difficult emotions and reach resolution or acceptance.

Here's some advice before you begin:

- Deeply troubling events and situations, such as domestic violence, rape, or direct exposure to acts of terrorism or war, are best explored with an experienced therapist. For other situations, you can proceed on your own and seek professional help only if you feel you need assistance.
- If you're physically healthy, choose the most stressful event or problem you currently face. It's usually one that you frequently dwell upon. Or, if you think your current problems stem from past circumstance, write about traumatic events in your past.
- Truly let go. Write down what you feel and why you feel that way.
- Write for yourself, not others. Don't worry about grammar or sentence structure. If you run out of things to say in the time allotted, feel free to repeat yourself.

Do this exercise for 15–20 minutes a day for three to four days or as long as a week if you feel writing continues to be helpful.

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## Humor Corner



*This is the fourth edition to include the popular Humor Corner. Read and Enjoy!*

### **Important Words to Live By**

I assume full responsibility for my actions, except the ones that are someone else's fault.

I no longer need to punish, deceive or compromise myself. Unless, of course, I want to stay employed.

In some cultures what I do would be considered normal.

Having control over myself is nearly as good as having control over others.

My intuition nearly makes up for my lack of good judgment.

I am grateful that I am not as judgmental as all those censorious, self-righteous people around me.

***Some puns to bring a smile:***

A pun is its own reward (read carefully).

Sea captains don't like crew cuts.

Reading while sun-bathing makes you well red.

When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.

You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.

A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.

Dijon vu - the same mustard as before.

***Kid Wisdom***

When your dad is mad and asks you, "Do I look stupid?" Don't answer.

Never tell your mom her diet's not working.

Stay away from prunes.

Don't pull your dad's finger when he tells you to.

Never leave your three-year-old brother in the same room as your school assignment.

If you want a kitten, start out by asking for a horse.

Felt-tip markers are not good to use as lipstick.

Don't pick on your sister when she's holding a baseball bat.

When you get a bad grade in school, show it to your mom when she's on the phone.

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**Contact Dr. Martin for counseling appointments at:**

**(360) 835-1070**

- Appointments are scheduled Wednesday through Saturday.
- Available times are: weekdays 9am to 7pm; weekends 9am to 6pm.

- New clients are being accepted.
- Evening appointments are available.
- All major credit cards and checks accepted.
- Current insurance accepted: **Regence Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Premera Blue Cross, LifeWise. TriCare/TriWest** will be coming soon.
- For insurance that provide reimbursement for out-of-network providers, I will assist you by providing you with a paid invoice which you can submit to them following each appointment. Check with your insurance to see if this is available.
- The Counseling process can be short-term, brief, and solution focused. Let me help you move forward quickly!

Martha Martin, Ph.D.

Psychologist

License No. PY2476

Office:

106 SE Weir Street, Suite 4

Camas, WA 98671

**(360) 835-1070**

Email: [Dr.Martin@marthamartinphd.com](mailto:Dr.Martin@marthamartinphd.com)

Website: [www.marthamartinphd.com](http://www.marthamartinphd.com)

See my website for more details about services offered.

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**“See Spring through the eyes of a child; your eyes.”**

