

CHOICE B

Burnout

Been there, done that! Not a fun time in my life. Looking back on when it occurred, I can easily justify how it occurred. I had started my own practice not that long ago and we were being well accepted into the community. It is never easy opening a new hospital and competing against practices that have been around for thirty plus years. I almost didn't open where I did due to my fear of these practices. It is rather unbelievable to look back at such a major decision and how fortunate I was to make the decision to open where I did- Lots of luck involved and some stubbornness on my part. I believed in myself and the fact that I would run a hospital very differently from the multiple facilities I had worked at since graduating. Like many of us, I knew I had the right formula to be successful as a n owner- offer the best medicine in a clean odor free facility with staff that actually listened to our clients needs and did not rush them through their visits. Luckily it worked for myself and my family. Multiple young owners are faced with this dilemma. How to be successful – make enough gross and profit so that you can run your business well, pay staff fairly, pay yourself a livable wage, put aside something for the future and still have enough left over to invest in your building and staff for repairs and training. Add the concern if paying for expensive college tuition and finding ways to repay student debt plus stay current with your profession and it isn't a surprise that so much of us do "burn out".

So, There I am working diligently, attempting to "be there" for all of my clients, opening the place at 7am, closing routinely after 7pm so we could be there for that late pick up, coming back in for that "emergency" 2 hours later (broken toe nail or something that really wasn't an emergency but instead was perceived as an emergency – we have all been there) and trying to lessen costs by doing many of the weekend tasks myself. Before you know it, time has passed, your family and social life has pretty much disappeared and your attitude has changed without you realizing it. You are not as much fun to be around or work with. You are bit jumpy and quick to lose your composure or temper. It comes up quickly and surprises you as very few of us see it coming. The smart ones are those who have close enough friends who are willing to "try to talk to us about these changes". Not an easy thing to do, even for a close friend or family member. I wasn't that lucky. For me the realization hit me on a Sunday afternoon while in the hospital. Not sure I remember what brought my situation into view, but something did. Maybe it was my kids avoiding me, my staff not coming and simply chatting with me the last few weeks. I don't remember the "tip off", but I did realize that I had changed and I needed to do something and quickly or all the wonderful things I had accomplished would soon leave me. I had to take a break, hire a relief vet and completely adjust my schedule

and how I approached practice. I should have sought professional help but I was stubborn and had to do it by myself (lots of veterinarians have that wonderful quality). I was able to make the change and adjust, but there were deep scars that never disappear. Young children may not consciously realize that you were not always there during those formative years but it still takes a toll on the relationship. Many husbands and wives relationships suffer from the stress burnout causes and the multiple disagreements it enables. Don't allow yourself to fall into this very common trap. Watch out for the signs of it and do seek out others for advice. It is avoidable, but also easy to get sucked into.

I hope this helps everyone who reads it as it DOES happen gradually without us being aware of the changes until is too late to simply "turnout off"!

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