

Managing Stress and Preventing Burnout

As youth workers, social workers, psychologists, teachers, and health-care providers, our work within social and community services can be incredibly challenging. We are exposed to ongoing trauma, we often work with little feedback, and our work frequently relies on a less than stable political climate. The culmination of all of these factors, without adequate support and supervision, often makes us susceptible to burnout.

Whilst our work can be rewarding, it also contains an element of hardship. So, how do we work towards finding that meaningful work/life balance? There is no simple answer, as this is a process that will look different for everyone. However, Rainbow Network Coordinator, Lottie Turner, has come up with a few pointers to get you on your way.

Practical steps to take

Professional supervision



Engage in ongoing professional supervision. Whether it is internal, external, or both, remember that professional supervision is something quite different from line management. Having a safe and confidential space to unpack your work can be a powerful tool in critically reflective practice and self-care. Rainbow Network offers its members free access to professional supervision. Contact Lottie for more information.

Maintain your rituals



Employ your own unique rituals to start and end your working day. You may get off the tram a couple of stops early to clear your head before your day begins. You might consider getting changed out of your work clothes as soon as you get home as a way of peeling off the day and beginning your evening afresh. These rituals are a great way to prepare you for, and wind down from, your working day.

Practice mindfulness



Practice mindfulness when you feel anxiety or stress taking you away from the present. Congratulate yourself for noticing the anxious or stressful thoughts, take a few diaphragmatic breaths, and notice the details in your surroundings; the cool air passing over your cheeks, the way the fibres weave together in the carpet, the droplets of dew on the fallen eucalyptus leaves. When you are ready, come back to your task. Try practicing this mindful exercise a few times a day.