Chapter 3
Emotional Labor, Emotional Exhaustion, and Burnout

ABSTRACT

This chapter explicitly articulates and explores the chain reaction that occurs starting with emotional labor through emotional exhaustion and into burnout. It examines the interrelationships of these concepts with the end view of burnout firmly in mind. It establishes emotional labor as an antecedent to emotional exhaustion and more fully implicates emotional exhaustion as one of the three main components in burnout which include EE, cynicism, and depersonalization. The chapter presents the work of Maslach and Jackson as well as offering another perspective on burnout as articulated by Aronson and Pines. Aronson and Pines include the dimension of tedium in the models of EL, EE, and burnout. The chapter explores the signs and symptoms of burnout and the impact it can have on an individual's mental and physical health as well as how burnout affects the organization. This chapter serves a critical foundation for appreciating why it is important to consider the emotional dimensions of academic librarianship.

INTRODUCTION

It does not seem possible that one's emotions could be so involved in one's job and have such an impact. Nevertheless, since people have emotions and personalities and react to stimuli and experiences in their sphere, one must expect that emotion is going to be a part of one's daily experiences, including

one's job. According to findings of the "American Time Use Survey" by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) an employed American, aged 25 to 54, with children, spends an average of 8.8 hours of the day working or engaged in work-related activities. Nothing, not even caring for children or sleeping, take up as much time as work does.

It should therefore come as no surprise that any emotional experiences an individual has while on the job can have such an impact. While dealing with the necessary demands of the job, we are also dealing with the emotional side of the experience. As the previous chapter demonstrated, there are many aspects of work that influence emotional labor. Perhaps it is simply the nature of one's job, like healthcare: seeing people at their worst, dealing with families, dealing with illness and death, and a host of other emotionally intense activities require a high degree of emotional labor. Individuals who work in the hospitality industry, such as in restaurants or hotels, have to work with a smile, no matter how they are feeling or being treated. To do otherwise is to risk the wrath of the customer and in turn risk their jobs. Maintaining a surface persona and having to hide one's personal feelings requires a high degree of emotional labor. Maybe one works with difficult people – that is, one has a coworker (or a few) who does not 'play well with others.' That person's inability or unwillingness to consider the feelings of others requires the other people in that work environment to compensate or accommodate which requires a high level of emotional labor.

When one considers these emotional labors in the context of the findings of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016), a very significant circumstance may emerge – that is, one may find themselves embroiled in emotionally laborious work environment for eight hours (or more) in the course of a work day. The work of regulating one's emotions, managing their expression or modifying one's real feelings to authentically reflect the emotional demands of the situation, certainly seems like genuine work. Given its psychological and physical effects, the evolution of emotional labor into emotional exhaustion is unsurprising. To some degree, it might be said to be inevitable, particularly if one works in a job or profession which is high in "people work" (Grandey 2000; 2015). For individuals who work in professions that require a great deal of surface acting, the emotional dissonance and prolonged emotional inauthenticity compound, requiring more and more emotional resources, eventually depleting the individual's emotional resources, i.e. emotional exhaustion. This in turn can lead to *burnout*.

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