

Boosting emotional intelligence in physicians can protect against burnout

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A Loyola Medicine study demonstrates that an educational curriculum for physicians in training improves their emotional intelligence, which may help protect against burnout.

Before and after completing this educational intervention, doctors took a test measuring their emotional [intelligence](#). There were significant increases in their scores for overall emotional intelligence, stress management and overall wellness.

The study by Ramzan Shahid, MD, Jerold Stirling, MD, and William Adams, Ph.D., is published in the journal *Advances in Medical Education and Practice*.

Teaching emotional intelligence skills "may improve stress management skills, promote wellness and prevent burnout in resident physicians," the researchers wrote.

Physician burnout has reached alarming levels, with one study finding it affects at least half of all doctors. Burnout is defined as overwhelming

exhaustion, cynicism, detachment from work and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others and to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships. People with high emotional intelligence have more effective coping strategies, enabling them to be more resilient and better able to manage stress. And unlike IQ, emotional intelligence can be taught.

The Loyola study included 20 pediatric and 11 med-peds residents at Loyola who completed a 133-item emotional intelligence survey before and after undergoing emotional intelligence training. The survey is called Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory 2.0, EQ-i 2.0.

(A resident is a physician who, following medical school, practices in a hospital under the supervision of an attending physician. A pediatric residency lasts three years. A med-peds residency, which combines pediatrics and internal medicine, lasts four years.)

The emotional intelligence training was integrated into the resident educational curriculum and focused on self-awareness (being aware of your emotions), self-management (ability to manage your emotional reactions to situations and people), social awareness (ability to pick up emotions in others) and social skill. The educational intervention included didactic teaching, discussions and videos.

"Our emotional intelligence curriculum may serve as a prototype for other residency programs that are developing their own approaches to promoting wellness and preventing burnout in their trainees," Drs. Shahid, Stirling and Adams wrote.

It also may be beneficial to incorporate [emotional](#)

[intelligence](#) education in medical schools, the authors wrote.

Dr. Shahid is an associate professor and vice chair of education and Dr. Stirling is professor and chair of Loyola's department of pediatrics. Dr. Adams is an assistant professor the departments of medical education and public health sciences of Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine.

Their study is titled, "Promoting Wellness and Stress Management in Residents Through Emotional Intelligence Training."

More information: Ramzan Shahid et al, Promoting wellness and stress management in residents through emotional intelligence training, *Advances in Medical Education and Practice* (2018). [DOI: 10.2147/AMEP.S175299](https://doi.org/10.2147/AMEP.S175299)

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