

# Managing Casework Burnout and Stress

**Presented by:**

**Congressional Management Foundation (CMF)**

**<http://CongressFoundation.org>**

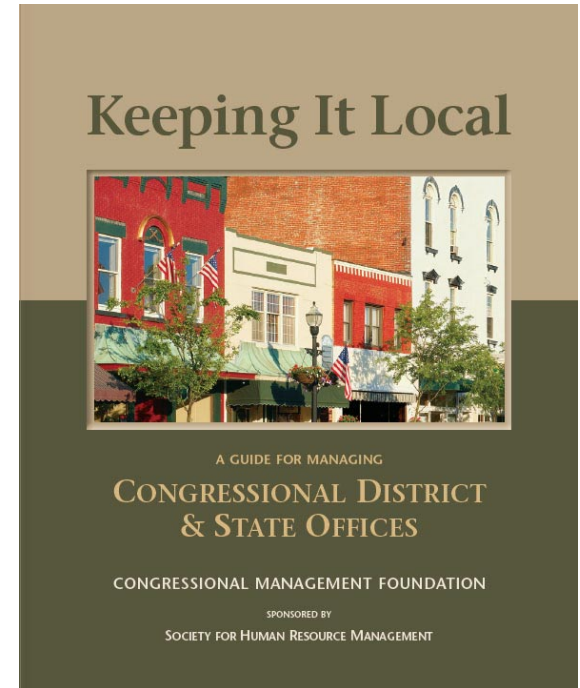
# About CMF

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- 501(c)(3) nonpartisan nonprofit focused on:
  - improving congressional operations
  - enhancing citizen engagement
- Provide congressional offices with:
  - Publications
  - Management Services
  - Training
  - Research
- <http://CongressFoundation.org>

# Keeping It Local

- Third edition published 2010
- Sponsored by a grant from SHRM
- Formerly “Frontline Management”
- Survey of and interviews with House & Senate District/State Directors



# Agenda

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- Recognizing Burnout and Stress
- Tips for Managing Stress
- Strategies for Minimizing Burnout
- How to Cope with Difficult Situations
- Q & A

# Recognizing Burnout and Stress

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**“A Harvard study showed individuals who lived in a state of high anxiety were four and a half times more likely to suffer sudden cardiac death than non-anxious individuals.”**

**“An estimated 75%-90% of visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related complaints.”**

**Source: [www.heartmath.com](http://www.heartmath.com)**

# Signs of Stress

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Which of the following symptoms have you experienced?

- Difficulty making decisions
- Lack of concentration or focus
- Changes in weight, appetite or digestion
- Irritability, impatience or anger
- Sleep pattern changes
- Memory lapses
- Heart palpitations
- Tingling in hands or feet
- Headaches
- Increased intake of alcohol or drugs; increased smoking

# Tips for Managing Stress

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1. How to reduce stress in the moment
2. How to take control of your environment
3. Good time management

# 1. Reduce Stress in the Moment: The 4 Step Method

**1**

**Get to  
Neutral**



**2**

**Feel  
Positive**



**3**

**Shift  
Thinking**



**4**

**Take  
Action**

1. Close your eyes
2. Focus your attention on the area around your heart
3. Breathe in through your heart – *for a total of 5 seconds*
4. Breathe out through your heart – *for a total of 5 seconds*
5. Repeat the cycle for 4 times

1. Activate a heart feeling (anything that feels good for you - e.g., a special place or person, something funny, your favorite meal, etc.)
2. Actually feel it – re-experience the moment
3. Keep the positive feeling for 30 seconds

1. Reflect on the result(s) that are needed or required in the situation you are in – give yourself time to focus on what is important
2. Reflect on the actions you need to take in order to achieve the results you defined
3. Take your time and allow your common sense to provide insights and solutions

1. Follow through with a concrete action
2. Notice the result this action produces
3. Sense the shift in your feeling state
4. Notice the thought habits you are holding



## 2. How to Take Control of Your Environment

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- Consider external stressors
- Modify your behavior
- Take care of yourself

***BREAK THE CYCLE***

# Stress Techniques

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Which of the following techniques have you tried?

- Behavior modification
- Physical exercise
- Diet changes
- Increased time for hobbies
- Left more time for sleep

### **3. Good Time Management is Good Stress Management**

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1. Allow 15 minutes between meetings
2. Schedule “unscheduled” work
3. Establish a “meeting-free” day

# Tips for Managing Stress

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## 1. Reduce stress in the moment

- ✓ Get to neutral
- ✓ Feel positive
- ✓ Shift thinking
- ✓ Take action

## 2. Take control of your environment

- ✓ Impacting the stressors – ergonomics, lighting, etc.
- ✓ Behaviors – humor, sleep, exercise, hobbies

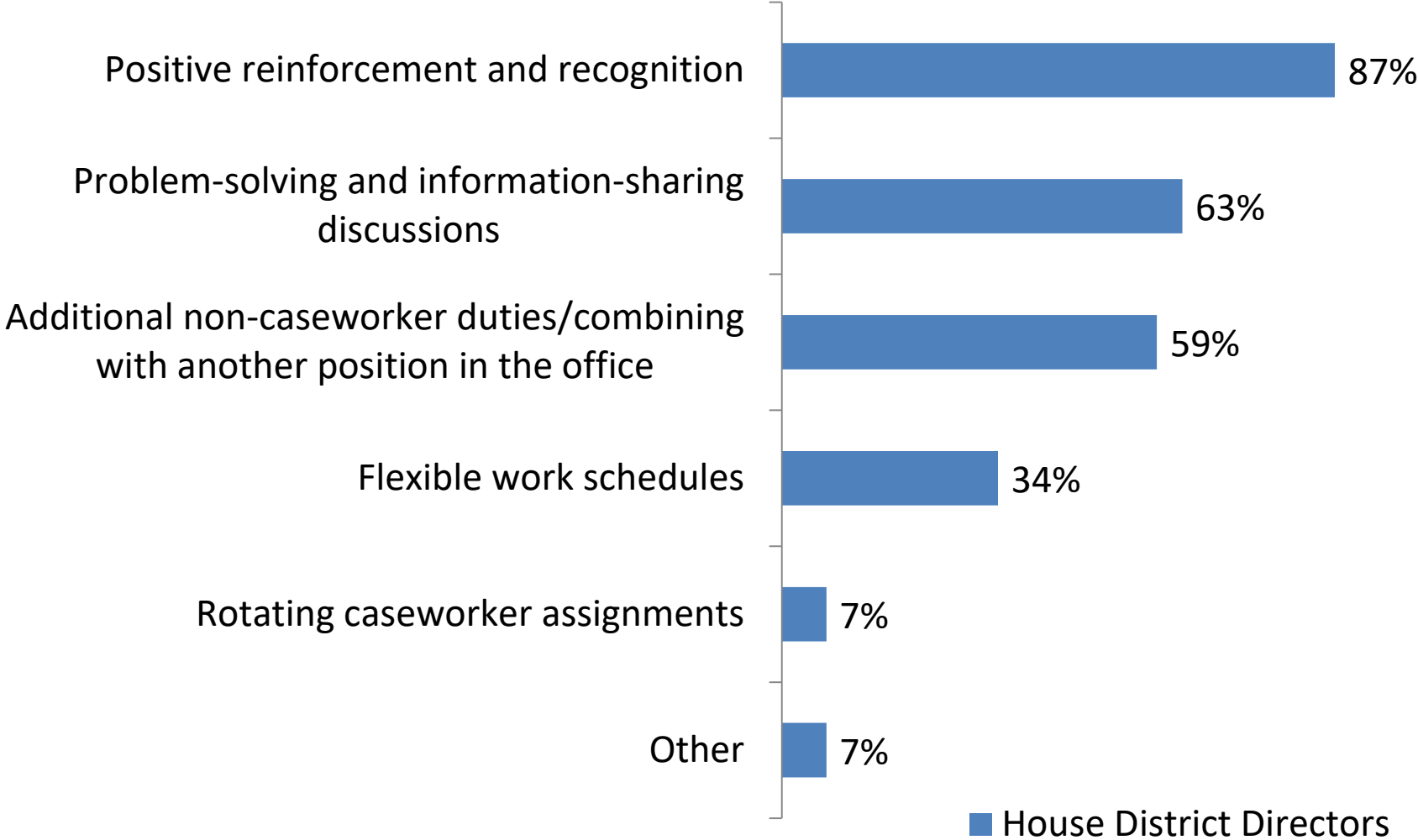
## 3. Practice good time management

- ✓ Allow 15 minutes between meetings
- ✓ Schedule “unscheduled” work
- ✓ Establish a “meeting-free” day

# **Strategies for Minimizing Burnout**

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# Strategies Employed to Reduce Caseworker Burnout



Source: "Keeping It Local," Congressional Management Foundation, 2010

# Office Strategies

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Which of the following strategies has your office tried?

- Positive reinforcement
- Problem solving/information sharing sessions
- Taking on non-caseworker assignments/job sharing
- Flexible work schedule
- Rotating caseworker assignments
- Other

# More Ideas for Reducing Burnout

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- Remember why you got into this work in the first place
- Set small goals for yourself and then celebrate your accomplishments
- Take advantage of training opportunities from the House & Senate, CRS, agencies, etc.
- Make sure you understand your Member's goals/vision and how casework ties in
- Create a "Stop-Doing" list



# **How to Cope with Difficult Situations**

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# 3 Steps for Difficult Phone Calls

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1. Demonstrate empathy
2. Calm the speaker
3. Focus the speaker

# 1. Demonstrate Empathy

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- practice active listening
- get and use the caller's name
- listen closely
- understand how caller is framing the problem
- paraphrase
- be neutral

## 2. Calm the Caller

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- be responsive to the caller's primary need
- size up the situation
- start planning your exit strategy

# 3. Focus the Caller

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- use a positive tone
- try to satisfy the need
- offer to take action you are authorized to take
- end the call

# Q&A

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# Managing Casework Burnout and Stress

Contact us with questions or for more assistance:

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