

# Protecting Our Missionaries from Burnout: A Strategy to Assess and Assist

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Joel MacFarland Presentation – February 6, 2022

To watch the full presentation: <https://www.missionhills.org/outreach/outreach-resources/>

## Introduction: Protecting Those Hard Pressed on Every Side

### What is Burnout?

One Definition "...a loss of enthusiasm, energy, idealism, perspective, and purpose. It can be viewed as a state of mental, physical, and spiritual exhaustion brought on by continued stress." (Beating Burnout: Balanced Living for Busy People, Minirth, Meier, Hawkins, Thurman, Flournoy)

Biblical Example: Elijah (1 Kings 19)

## The Role of OUTPUT Versus INPUT: A Couple Visuals

**Fuel Tank:** The OUTPUT of personal resources (ie: emotional and physical energy) without restoration (INPUT) facilitates Burnout through DEPLETION

**Pressure Tank:** The INPUT of negative stress without processing and resolution (OUTPUT) facilitates Burnout through BUILDUP

## The Important Role of Assessment

Assessment Guides Intervention

You cannot help with what you cannot see

*And*

You cannot see if you don't know where to look

Managing Output and Input Relies on Accurate Assessment

## Trying to Simplify the Complex

All factors for burnout fall into one or more of only four categories

1. Biological
2. Psychological
3. Social
4. Spiritual



## The BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL-SPIRITUAL Model:

**BIOLOGICAL**- Assess What Biological Factors May Be Increasing Risk

Examples:

Sickness	Exposure to the Elements
Chronic Health Problem	Alcohol or Drug Use
Poor Diet	Age Related Decline
Lack of Exercise	Cognitive Decline/Dementia
Medications	Insomnia

**PSYCHOLOGICAL**- Assess What Psychological Factors May Be Increasing Risk

Examples:

Depression	Negative Preoccupation/Rumination
Anxiety	Addiction
Grief	Guilt
Trauma	Self-criticism
Anger	Distorted Beliefs

**SOCIAL**- Assess What Social Factors May Be Increasing Risk

Examples:

Marriage	Mission Agency
Parenting	Finances
Team Dynamics	Culture Adjustment
Friends	Legal Issues
Extended Family	Social/Political Unrest

**SPIRITUAL**- Assess What Spiritual Factors May Be Increasing Risk

Examples:

Spiritual Dryness	Dark Night of the Soul
Spiritual Warfare	Theology of Suffering
Absence of Prayer	Absence of Sabbath
Spiritual Abuse	Theology of Grace Versus Works
Inaccurate Beliefs	Sin

## So What? The Payoff of Assessment

Assessment Guides Intervention

1. Step One: Prioritize the Factors Assessed (Frequency, Duration, Severity)  
The Pie Chart Approach
2. Step Two: Apply solutions that manage the Output versus Input dynamic  
Base solutions from your BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL-SPIRITUAL Assessment  
One Size Fits Most: The Power of Processing

Pray---Assess---Prioritize---Solve



## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

### Sample Questions for Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Assessment

#### Biological Assessment Questions

Are there any physical issues causing you difficulty?  
How is your sleep?  
What has exercise looked like for you recently?  
How are you eating?  
How is your health?  
When was the last time you had a medical check-up?  
Have you been taking your prescribed medications?  
How well are your medications working? Any side effects?  
Any use of alcohol or drugs?  
What have you done this month to take care of yourself physically?  
Others?

#### Psychological Assessment Questions

Are there any thoughts that have been difficult for you lately?  
What are you noticing in your emotional life?  
How have you been thinking about yourself lately?  
Any difficulty with depression?  
Any difficulty with anxiety?  
How is your stress level?  
How is your level of satisfaction in ministry? Why do you think that is?  
To what degree are your expectations being met?  
What has given you joy recently?  
What have you been focusing your attention on that is helpful? Unhelpful?  
Others?

#### Social Assessment Questions

How have your relationships been lately?  
How are things in your marriage?  
How is parenting going?  
What has been the best relationship for you recently? Most problematic?  
How are things going with your team?  
How are ministry relationships going?  
How is your relationship with your sending agency? Supporters?  
Are there any challenges adjusting to the culture?  
How is the community responding to your ministry efforts? What is that like for you?  
What are your country's socio-political dynamics like?  
Others?

## **Spiritual Assessment Questions**

What are you noticing from God lately?

What is currently most challenging for you spiritually? Most rewarding?

How are you nourishing your soul?

Are you observing the Sabbath?

How do your spiritual beliefs influence how you view your current circumstances?

Is there anything you notice interfering with your spiritual journey?

What scriptures seem to apply to your circumstances?

Is there any sin getting in the way that God is prompting you to address?

Who is praying for you regularly?

What do you feel you are needing most from God right now?

Others?