



“We-Safety” is a newsletter aimed at providing PolyU staff and students with safety information and news about how the University is working to keep our community safe.

May **We** work together to achieve **Safety** on campus.

## Job Burnout in Recent Days



### What is “Job Burnout”?

Job burnout is a type of work-related stress. It is a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment. It refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.

Regarding the World Health Organization (WHO), burnout is an occupational phenomenon and not classified as a medical condition. As described in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) of WHO, burnout influencing health status which includes reasons for which people contact health services but that are not classed as illnesses or health conditions. It is resulted from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

In May and June 2021, Health & Safety Office (HSO) collaborated with Department of Rehabilitation Sciences (RS) to release a poster series namely “Wellness in the Workplace Series”. Self-awareness about job burnout and tips for job burnout prevention can be learnt from the poster series.

In this issue, it is our honor to have Prof. Hector Tsang, Chair Professor of Rehabilitation Sciences and Head of Rehabilitation Sciences to share with us the situation of job burnout in Hong Kong recently and his advice for our University community.

### Common Causes of Job Burnout in Hong Kong

Prof. Tsang highlighted that the economic characteristics of Hong Kong, traditional value of Hong Kong people and the world trend of technology development are the main causes of job burnout for Hong Kong people.

#### Economy

Hong Kong’s economic history has been primarily determined by its geographical location. There is considerable continuity in Hong Kong’s position in the international economy since its origins were as a commercial entrepot for China’s regional and global trade, and this is still a role it plays today. Hong Kong was boosted to have economic growth for long years and people believes that higher labour productivity growth enables the economy. People have to work hard for more income to support current and future living.



*Prof. Hector Tsang, Chair Professor and Head of Rehabilitation Sciences*

### Traditional Value

Hong Kong people are grown up with in an international city with Chinese culture. Most of them prioritize their job or work in front of the other aspects of their living. They work very hard to prove their value and status in the society.

### Technology Trends

Technology today is evolving at such a rapid pace, enabling faster change and progress. It is not only technology trends, top technologies are also evolving. It made Hong Kong people to work under stress as even they are not IT professionals, they have to learn the new technology at workplace constantly.

### Work Stress of University Staff Members

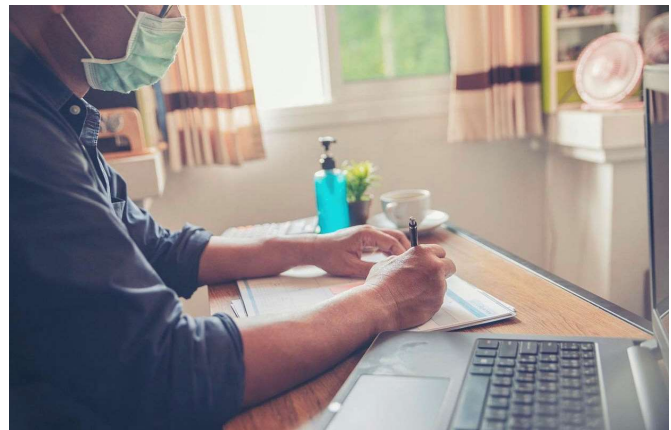
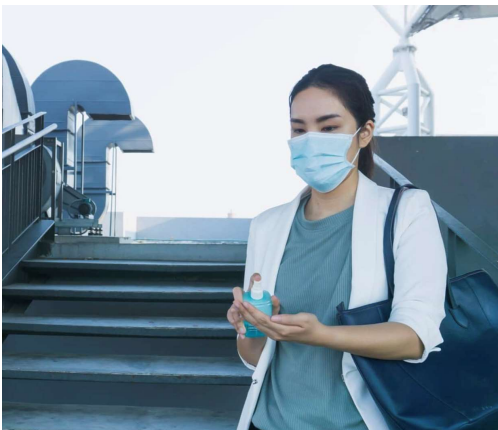
In the University context, in addition to the competitions among the universities in Hong Kong, general public have a higher expectation on University staff members, especially academic staff members. They are expected to work very hard to contribute the University and also the society.

Senior management also have a high expectation on both academic and administrative staff members and expect them to have a higher quality output in teaching, research and executive areas. People's high expectation is always the cause of work stress and job burnout.

In general, the heavy workload, long working hours and the demands of working standard (both self-demand and demands from supervisors) are common in Hong Kong and it would make staff members to work at a stressful environment.

### COVID-19 and Job Burnout

With the outbreak of COVID-19 in Hong Kong, special work arrangement of "work-from-home" was implemented in most of the companies as one of the epidemic prevention measures for employees. Some of the employees considered themselves much more stressed with working at home and faced increased burnout at work since the work-from-home arrangement started due to the pandemic.



### Stress = Changes + Uncertainty

Prof. Tsang explained that stress mainly came from "changes" and "uncertainty". At the beginning of the pandemic, people were facing various kinds of changes that never occurred before, such as social distancing, special work arrangements (work-from-home), online teaching and studying in schools/universities etc. People had uncertainty on the COVID-19 situation, the epidemic development and the new ways of anti-virus measures that they did not experience before. All these changes and uncertainty made people felt more stressful.

"The special working arrangement was a new mode to work for both employers and employees. Staff members had concerns on supervisors' expectation on their works at home. Without the face-to-face interactions at office / workplace, some of the people had more online meetings, taking more ad-hoc calls and managing more





incoming chats than they did before the pandemic. Supervisors approached their team members after office hours had increased. All these changes made staff members felt more stressful to burnout at work,” Prof. Tsang said.

### **Tips to Handle the Stress of New Mode to Work**

Know that some of the staff members working from home and feel intense pressure. To prepare for any unknown special work arrangements in the coming future, Prof. Tsang advised some strategies for managing your overall stress from working:



#### ***Established personalised working routine***

Set a working routine that fit your personality / work pattern. For example, if you can concentrate the attention on efficiency in the morning, it is better to handle the paper work / difficult task first. It help reducing potentially feeling overwhelmed later in the day. After lunch, you may schedule some duties that interacting with others. Understanding your own working pattern / style to establish personalised working routine may enhance the efficiency and relax the stress.

#### ***Reward yourself***

To keep up your motivation, you may reward yourself for completing one single task / step of project. You may decide your own reward, such as taking a well-deserved break, having a delicious snack etc.

#### ***Make good use of special work arrangement***

To make good use of working from home such as creating a relaxing working environment or preferable workspace that you cannot do so at office.

You may allocate your tasks followed by a break time. Do not hesitate to allocate rest time to release stress. Make working remote a joyful and sustaining experience.

#### ***Physical exercise***

To have aerobic exercise to get sweaty. Getting sweaty not only boosts your mood, it can also spread happiness.

#### ***Mindfulness practice***

Mindfulness practice such as meditating, diaphragmatic breathing, yoga, eight-sectioned Exercise (Baduanjin / 八段錦) help cutting off the anxiety from your daily life.

### **Prof. Tsang's Message for University community**

Last but not least, Prof. Tsang advised staff members and students to pay attention to one's work-life balance. “Do not only focus on work or the competition in the working environment, otherwise job burnout is not far away from you. As a supervisor, please also review staff members' workload regularly. More encouragement to staff members can enhance the efficiency and incentive to work,” Prof. Tsang expressed.



***Prof. Tsang's mental health relating programme***

## University's Support

If you detected symptoms of deteriorating health due to feeling overwhelmed at work, ask for help from your doctor / professional consultant as soon as possible. Please find the following support from the University:

Mental Wellness Clinic  
University Health Service  
Click [HERE](#) for details

Employee Assistance Programme  
Human Resources Office  
Click [HERE](#) for details

Student Counselling Service  
Student Affairs Office  
Click [HERE](#) for details

## We – Listen

We *value* your opinions and We always *Listen*.

In views of the awareness and University community's feedback on the issues of work stress, a talk series of "Work and Wellness" was organized. Two sessions of online lunch talks were held in the first semester of 2021/22 with guest speakers from different industries and share their views and knowledge on work stress management.

### October 2021

"Experience Sharing Session - Work Planning & Management | Self-review on Work Stress" was held on 19 October 2021. Mr Mew Suppasit JONGCHEVEEVAT (Mew), a famous Thai singer, actor and current PhD student, was invited to share his experience on work planning and work stress management. In the Sharing Session, Mew shared with PolyU Community his work-life daily of taking up various roles. His work planning and management tips to make him got every success in his career and study.



### November 2021

On 16 November 2021, it is our honor to have Mr YIP Wai-kin, Chinese Medicine Officer of University Health Service (大學醫療保健處 葉偉建中醫師) to share with us the stress management with Chinese Medicine.

Views and feedbacks from staff and students help us to arrange and organize more interesting and useful health and safety activities for the University community.







## We – Learn

The Government's Labour Department is going to organize a public talk on topic of “**Occupational Stress**” on 7 December 2021 (Tuesday) from 3:00 to 4:30p.m. The talk will be conducted in Cantonese and is free of charge. You are welcome to visit <https://www1.oshreg.gov.hk/ocrs/talk/note.shtml> for further details and registration.

To minimize the health risk of contracting COVID-19, preventive measures will be adapted at the public talk venue. All the talks should be registered beforehand and on-site registration / talk-in is not accepted.

## We – Update

HSEO → HSO



The Health, Safety and Environment Office (HSEO) is renamed as Health and Safety Office (HSO) with effect from 18 October 2021, to better reflect the functions of the Office.

HSO will continue to develop and maintain a healthy and safe campus for the quest for excellence in learning, teaching and research with positive safety culture and risk management through provision of professional guidance together with effective and efficient services.

### Joint Fire Drill

With support from Tsim Tung Fire Station of Fire Services Department, a joint fire drill collaborated with Campus Facilities and Sustainability Office was held on 21 September 2021 for occupants of Chung Sze Yuen Building (Block A), AG Wing, Core B and BC Wing. Demonstration on rescuing someone injured (dummy figure) by firemen was also carried out.



HSO monitored and reviewed the performance of evacuation and will further discuss with concerned parties the ways to improve the arrangements for fire safety.

## We — People

### Mr Evan Wong & Mr Grandy Fu, Department of Computing

Mr Evan Wong, Senior Computing Officer of Department of Computing (COMP), has a long service in the University and COMP. Evan also serves as Departmental Health & Safety Officer (DHSO) for about ten years, will retire in late 2021. Mr Grandy Fu, Senior Information Technology Officer in the same department, is the current Deputy DHSO to cooperate and support Evan on the health and safety issues in COMP.

Over the years, Evan has worked with other colleagues in COMP, such as members of Departmental Health and Safety Committee, to keep reviewing the health and safety issues at the Committee meetings and departmental inspection. They worked together to provide a safe and healthy working and studying environment for staff members and students of the COMP.

Evan would like to thank the senior management and safety personnel of COMP and colleagues from HSO. “With the development of the department, renovation to computing laboratories or rooms or works have been carried out in the department. We worked closely with our colleagues on their concerns and HSO provided their professional advice on safety improvements. It is valuable as it ensured our staff members well protected. They also helped me to handle health and safety issues efficiently”, said Evan.

Looking back, Evan reflected that being a DHSO was a meaningful but thankless job. “Safety is the most important in a working / studying environment, but somehow people may forget its importance when working/studying in a low-risk environment for a long time. We have to work proactively and communicate with them clearly, especially when there are changes in the setting of the environment (no matter office or computing laboratories), risk review is required,” Evan said.

Being the Deputy DHSO in COMP, Grandy thought it was good for him to work with Evan in a mature safety environment. He thanked for Evan’s hard work and contributions. “Evan has shared his experience with me and this enables me to start a safety conversation with staff members and HSO more easily,” Grandy expressed. “We may face more diversified health and safety issues in the coming future, I would work closely with our safety personnel, colleagues and HSO members.”



**Mr Evan Wong (left) and Mr Grandy Fu**

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