

Hey! What's New? 2026-8

Why Are CPAs So Prone to Burnout?

An article in the *Journal of Accountancy*, written By Randy Crabtree, CPA, notes that nearly half of U.S. workers (44%) reported feeling burned out at work, according to a 2024 report from the Society for Human Resource Management found that nearly all (99%) accountants experience exhaustion, feelings of inefficiency and alienation from their jobs at some point in their careers — the very dimensions that define burnout.

And the phenomenon isn't limited to the United States. A 2023 study by the AICPA, CIMA, and PwC found that 51% of team leaders in accounting and finance in Central and Eastern Europe felt symptoms of professional burnout. And more than half (55%) of accountants surveyed in 2022 by The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales were suffering from stress and burnout, compared with 41% of employees in other sectors.

Accounting work requires a meticulous, detail-oriented eye, the ability to frequently adapt to changing standards and protocols, and the discipline to constantly meet deadlines. Combine that with a penchant for sticking with a problem until it is fixed, a willingness to work harder and longer to catch up, and a fierce sense of control, and you have conditions that can lead to mental health problems.

To protect everybody's mental health, leadership must be intentional about cultivating and supporting a culture that keeps stress from creeping up, Crabtree says. At his firm, Tri-Merit, "we offer unlimited PTO or vacation days, we promote taking mental health days, and we use value-based pricing."

As he goes around the country evangelizing about mental health awareness, he tells practitioners and firms "that one of the best things they can do is make mental health resources readily available at their organization and to remove the stigma around accessing them. This could include an employee-assistance program, access to counseling services or allowing employees to take 'mental health' days without fear of judgment or loss of vacation days."

Crabtree says that "every year our firm's CPA Career Satisfaction Survey finds that CPAs who work at firms in which mental health resources are readily available (without stigma) are more than twice as likely to feel 'highly satisfied' in their careers than CPAs who work at firms in which those resources are not readily available."

You should also make holistic well-being part of your firm's DNA, he adds. "For instance, according to a Thomson Reuters report, firms such as Kearney & Company employ 'mental health ambassadors' who receive training to help remove the stigma of discussing mental health in the workplace. This strategy also increases the firm's ability to provide support and direct staff to additional resources."

It's also important to make sure everyone on your team "that it's OK to ask for help if they need it, and ensure that they know where and how to obtain those resources."

Crabtree suggests five tactics that he's found very effective for helping accounting firms of all sizes to reduce teamwide stress:

Prune your client list. “Have the courage to get rid of the clients who are chronically late payers, unprofitable, abusive to staff or constantly complaining.”

Ditch the time sheets and stop selling hours. “Change your billing strategy to focus on deliverables and client outcomes. Our CPA Career Satisfaction Survey found that three in five accountants (60%) who were *not* required to track their time were “highly satisfied in their careers” vs. less than half (48%) of CPAs who *were* required to track and report their time.”

Automate as much as possible “and delegate tasks that aren’t your immediate responsibility or that don’t require the highest and best use of your time.”

Stop trying to do everything. “Develop strategic relationships with people — inside and outside your firm — who have expertise that you don’t have.”

Bring a mental health coach into the firm. “You can start by hiring a licensed therapist to come on-site for office hours once or twice a week, say four hours per day.”

For more suggestions and advice, see [How a CPA beat burnout after strokes, years of depression.](#)