



# Women at Work: Recognizing Burnout and Prioritizing Mental Health

*Article by Ascension Wisconsin*

Many women today are juggling demanding careers, family responsibilities, caregiving duties and countless other obligations. While women continue to pursue leadership opportunities and professional growth, the pressure of balancing it all can take a significant toll on both mental and physical health.

A recent study by TEMPO, *Voices of Women at Work: The Milwaukee Experience*, reveals a concerning reality for women in the workforce. While ambition remains strong, especially among younger women leaders, many workplaces are falling short in providing the support women need to grow, lead and remain engaged in their careers. Women continue to face challenges in the workplace that contribute to stress, burnout and disengagement. The findings highlight a reality that behavioral health specialists at Ascension Wisconsin see every day.

“Many women feel pressure to excel in their careers while also maintaining caregiving responsibilities at home,” says Deanna Depies, LCSW, ICS at Ascension Wisconsin. “The balancing act and the mental stress can impact overall functioning and lead to a heightened risk of chronic stress and burnout.”

The study’s findings suggest that addressing burnout is not simply a matter of individual resilience, it is a workplace issue. When organizations fail to create environments where women feel supported and valued, the result can be increased stress, reduced engagement and a diminished desire to pursue leadership opportunities. Prioritizing women's mental health in the workplace is therefore essential not only for individual well-being, but also for retaining and developing the next generation of female leaders.

Burnout is more than simply feeling tired after a busy week. It is a state of emotional, mental and physical exhaustion that develops over time. Women experiencing burnout may feel overwhelmed, irritable, disconnected or unmotivated. They may struggle to concentrate, lose interest in activities they once enjoyed or feel emotionally drained even after resting. Physical symptoms often accompany emotional stress. “Chronic tension, headaches, digestive problems and trouble sleeping are common manifestations of prolonged stress,” Depies explains. “Recognizing that the body is signaling distress is a powerful reminder that mental health and physical health are deeply connected, and both deserve equal attention.”

For many women, burnout develops gradually, Kelly Boren DuBord, Lead Therapist at Ascension Wisconsin, says societal expectations often play a role. “Women are often valued specifically



for their selflessness,” says DuBord. “Many don’t even know what they need because they’ve spent so much time focusing on the needs of others. Much of the work I do with women is framed in curiosity about oneself and self-compassion,” she explains. “We need to become better at understanding and responding to our own needs and be willing to care for ourselves despite the guilt that often comes from societal conditioning.”

The good news is that burnout is preventable and recovery is possible. Small, intentional steps can make a meaningful difference. Ascension Wisconsin’s behavioral health experts encourage women to set healthy boundaries, making time for rest and recovery, staying connected with supportive friends and family, and asking for help when responsibilities become overwhelming.

Depies encourages women to build resilience by focusing on acceptance, agency, autonomy and adaptability - skills that help individuals navigate challenges while protecting their well-being. “The most important message for leaders and women is that it is okay to seek treatment and support,” says Depies. “Taking care of your health is the best way to optimize your ability to show up and be present in many areas of life.”

At Ascension Wisconsin, behavioral health services are designed to support individuals at every stage of their mental health journey. Through therapeutic counseling and integrated care that connects behavioral health with primary care services, women can access the support they need before stress becomes a crisis.

As conversations about women in workplace leadership continue to evolve, one message remains clear: prioritizing mental health is not a sign of weakness - it is an important [step](#) toward living a healthier, more balanced and fulfilling life.

To learn more about behavioral health services at Ascension Wisconsin, visit the link [here](#).