

Unraveling Faculty Burnout: Pathways to Reckoning and Renewal

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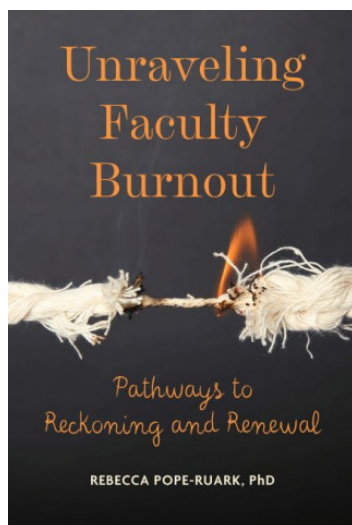
ProMedica Monroe Family Medicine
Residency, Monroe, MI

HOW TO CITE: Murdoch W. Unraveling
Faculty Burnout: Pathways to Reckoning
and Renewal. *Fam Med*.

2023;55(3):211–212.

doi: [10.22454/FamMed.2023.460248](https://doi.org/10.22454/FamMed.2023.460248)

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Book Title: Unraveling Faculty Burnout: Pathways to Reckoning and Renewal

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Publication Details: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022, pp. 243, \$25.95, paperback or e-book

The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) launched an emphasis on physician well-being in 2017, including relevant language in their Common Program Requirements and even going so far as to host monthly GME (graduate medical education) well-being calls for residency faculty.¹ This highlights the importance of well-being issues, including burnout, to residency and medical school faculty.

In this context, *Unraveling Faculty Burnout: Pathways to Reckoning and Renewal* by Dr Rebecca Pope-Ruark would seem to offer a timely resource to faculty and medical education leadership for addressing and improving the causes and sequelae of faculty burnout. Dr Pope-Ruark is a faculty development professional with a PhD in communication and an author of multiple books on faculty advising; she is well-suited to address this topic. The central challenge of the book, though, relates to its seemingly intended audience; though nothing on the book's cover or in its online synopses references this, the text is clearly intended to be read by, and provide guidance to, women faculty. In this, the book might do itself a disservice; as described below, many of the text's observations and recommendations would seem applicable to all faculty.

The book's introduction, "Burnout," contains some of the best passages in the book while also setting the stage for its central conundrum: that the vignettes and perspectives stem exclusively from women faculty. Indeed, the author almost humorously relates that she had trouble getting men faculty to reach out to her with their experiences. It's also worth pointing out that the experiences, context, and advice presented in the text all arise from "traditional" academia, not the world of medical education. While this should not blunt the effectiveness and relevance of the recommendations found therein, bearing that context in mind helps to explain some of the book's more puzzling assertions.

The first half of the book deals largely with explaining the origins and progression of faculty burnout. The author weaves her personal journey with burnout through the text, along with a liberal sprinkling of personal anecdotes from women faculty. Many of these vignettes, including the author's, are relatable, but the sheer number of them risks bogging down a few of the chapters. In switching from vignette to text, the author employs a lamentably casual writing style that seems out of place in an academic work.

Family medicine faculty may be caught off guard by the author's assertion on page 32 that the core mission of education is "typically done by women, people of color, and contingent faculty." While this may be true in traditional academia, it is not in medical education.² This statement, and others through the first half that imply that teaching and advising are undesirable activities compared with grant-writing and other forms of scholarship, are very unlikely to resonate with faculty in medical education.

Readers who traverse the ups and downs of the book's opening sections are rewarded as the book progresses. In "Purpose," the author presents the importance of value and purpose as faculty make career choices, and vignettes paint an enthusiastic picture of the meaning

that many faculty find in teaching. These present a useful counterpoint to the assertion above. As the book pivots to recommendations for faculty in navigating burnout in the second half, readers are presented with relevant, if somewhat bland, ideas for moving forward. Having compassion for oneself and one's learners is certainly admirable, and the chapter "Connection" makes excellent points about the value found in both spousal and mentorship support during trying periods in a faculty career. The idea that many faculty are workaholics will likely resonate, although the recommendations to focus on wellness and get more rest don't really break new ground. Multiple appendices add little to the overall text.

It's worth restating that, while the author's faculty interviews and intended audience only encompass half of potential readers, many of the points raised are applicable to all. Recommending this book to an audience of family medicine educators is difficult; the book simply arises from a different context, and what relevant points are made could readily be found in the many excellent burnout resources that are intended for physician faculty.

REFERENCES

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