

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICE AI IMPACT REPORT · 2026

# The Session Comes First

What nearly 1,000 therapists told us about burnout, presence, and what changes when the administrative weight of clinical practice **begins to lift**.

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**996**

Therapists surveyed

**2**

Independent waves

**49**

US states

**8 mo.**

Between surveys

FOR PRACTICE OWNERS

# A burned-out therapist is a retention problem before it becomes a staffing crisis.

When documentation piles up, therapists leave. Replacing a trained clinician costs more than most practices account for. **The ones who stay but are exhausted bring divided attention into every session**, which shows up in care quality before it shows up in any metric.

This report looks directly at what happens when that burden is reduced. Two independent surveys of nearly 1,000 Upheal users, conducted eight months apart, produced the same findings: reduce the documentation load, and therapists are more present, less burned out, and more likely to stay.

The APA's 2025 Practitioner Pulse Survey found that **51% of early-career psychologists** report feeling burned out, more than three times the rate of their late-career peers. **42% of psychologists now say AI can help reduce practitioners' administrative burden**, up from 33% the prior year.

# 94%

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of therapists report reduced  
cognitive burden from  
documentation

The strongest finding in the data. Consistent  
across two independent groups, eight months  
apart.

**93%**

Wave 1 · 2025

**95%**

Wave 2 · 2026

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*I actually love my job again due to the ability to use Upheal in my work.*

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UPHEAL USER · WAVE 2, 2026

# The real cost of administrative burden in mental health practice

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Every therapist knows the feeling. The session ends. The client leaves. And somewhere between that goodbye and everything that follows, there is a note to write. Not just one. Notes for every session, every day, across a full caseload, often finished after hours, long after the work was done.

For practices, the cost runs in two directions at once. **Burned-out therapists leave, and those who stay carry unfinished documentation into every session.** When a therapist's attention is divided between the client in front of them and the note that comes after, therapeutic presence is compromised. For organizations, this affects the quality of care delivered under their name.

The APA's 2025 Practitioner Pulse Survey found that 51% of early-career psychologists report burnout, more than three times the rate of their late-career peers. Behavioral health research consistently finds that mental health professionals spend more than 20% of their working hours on administrative tasks. For practices employing these therapists, that translates directly into turnover costs, coverage gaps, and the difficulty of replacing trained people in an already stretched workforce.

**The compounding cycle:** Administrative burden drives burnout → burnout drives turnover → turnover creates coverage gaps → coverage gaps increase burden on remaining therapists.

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Source: American Psychological Association. (2025). AI in the therapist's office: 2025 Practitioner Pulse Survey. [apa.org/pubs/reports/practitioner/2025](https://apa.org/pubs/reports/practitioner/2025)

# What therapists reported across both surveys

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**94%**

## Agreed or strongly agreed: reduced cognitive burden from documentation

The most immediate benefit, felt session by session. Held at 93% in Wave 1 and 95% in Wave 2. The single most consistent finding across both independent groups.

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**9/10**

## Feel more mentally present with their clients in session

Therapeutic presence is one of the strongest predictors of positive outcomes in therapy. When therapists report being more present, the implication runs directly to the quality of care clients receive.

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**88%**

## Report reduced burnout and emotional exhaustion

For practices, reduced burnout is a retention number. Both surveys included unprompted mentions of how close therapists had come to leaving the field entirely.

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**90%**

## Say time saved goes back into their clinical work

Documentation that takes minutes instead of hours creates real capacity: more sessions, less unpaid overtime, more headroom for caseload growth.

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*Upheal actually makes it possible for me to be a therapist. The stress of documentation was almost enough for me to leave the profession.*

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UPHEAL USER · WAVE 2, 2026

# What the data means for your practice

In both survey waves, without being asked, therapists described how close they had come to leaving the field, and what changed when the administrative burden lifted.

**Each of those responses is a retention event.** A therapist who stayed.

The findings point to five outcomes that matter for group practices and enterprise organizations:



## Lower therapist turnover before it becomes a staffing gap

Reduced burnout is the upstream signal. Both surveys show it consistently.



## More consistent therapeutic presence across the practice

Nine in ten therapists report being more present with clients. The outcome that drives clinical quality.



## Reclaimed capacity: more sessions, less unpaid overtime

90% say recovered time goes back into clinical work, not away from it.



## Sharper clinical judgment from reduced cognitive load

When mental energy is not consumed by documentation, it goes to the work.



## Built-in professional development through note reflection

Both survey waves included unprompted reports of therapists learning from their own Upheal notes, a benefit we never asked about.

# The same benefits, in the same order, every time

Both independent groups ranked the benefits identically. The administrative load lifts first, led by documentation. Engagement follows. Then presence. Then burnout. The sequence is not coincidence. It is a mechanism.

- 1**  
**MOST IMMEDIATE**  
**Administrative load reduces 94%**  
The first thing therapists feel, session by session. Documentation leads.
- 2**  
**FLOWS FROM COGNITIVE RELIEF**  
**More time and capacity for clinical work 90%**  
Recovered time goes back into the practice.
- 3**  
**DOWNSTREAM CLINICAL IMPACT**  
**More present with clients 89%**  
Therapeutic presence improves. Outcomes follow.
- 4**  
**THE RETENTION SIGNAL**  
**Reduced burnout and exhaustion 88%**  
Therapists who feel this stay. Both surveys included unprompted retention mentions.

For practice owners: address documentation and you move all four outcomes downstream, including the one that keeps your therapists from leaving.

# What therapists said, in their own words

Both surveys asked an open-ended question: what changes have you noticed in how you feel during or after sessions since using Upheal? Across both waves, 599 therapists answered. They did not coordinate. They were surveyed months apart. They said the same things.

## The mental tracking that stops

WAVE 1 · 2025

*"I feel less concerned about having to recall every single minute detail and I can be more present during client sessions."*

WAVE 2 · 2026

*"I am completely present with my client because I'm not trying to listen while also figuring out how to document what happened in the session."*

## The evenings returned

WAVE 1 · 2025

*"This program has given back time in my days and weekends to enjoy and engage with life outside of work."*

WAVE 2 · 2026

*"My evenings can now belong to me rather than being taken up by documentation."*

### SOMETHING WE DID NOT ASK ABOUT

In both surveys, therapists independently mentioned that reading their Upheal notes was helping them understand their own clinical practice better, noticing their techniques, patterns, and interventions. We did not ask about this. It came up anyway. Twice.

# Back to why you became a therapist.

Upheal was built on one premise: that mental health therapists deserve better balance between the administrative demands of clinical practice and the work they actually trained for. Documentation is the heaviest of those demands. This survey was designed to test whether we are delivering on that premise.

**The answer, across 996 therapists in two independent surveys, is consistent.** When documentation is handled, therapists are more present, less burned out, and more likely to stay. That is the foundation a sustainable practice is built on.

For practices evaluating AI-enabled clinical platforms: Upheal is the AI-native EHR built specifically for therapists: notes in under 60 seconds, automated scheduling, HIPAA-compliant telehealth, billing, compliance checking, and an AI assistant that handles practice tasks through natural conversation. Built AI-native from the ground up, not added to a legacy system. Insurance billing arrives summer 2026.

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70,000+ providers

800+ organizations

SOC2 Type II certified

HIPAA compliant

Trustpilot 4.6/5

[upheal.io](https://upheal.io)

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The Upheal Provider Experience Survey was conducted in two waves. Wave 1: July 25 to August 7, 2025 (n=441). Wave 2: April 2 to April 29, 2026 (n=555). Both were anonymous, in-product surveys of active Upheal users. All findings are self-reported and reflect experiences with Upheal's AI documentation features. Respondents represent 49 US states and 23 countries, 90% US-based. 97% are on a paid plan. Wellbeing findings reflect the combined sample of 996 respondents.