

BURNOUT

Most of us have days when we feel overloaded, exhausted, unaccomplished or unappreciated. However, if these feelings persist, you are likely on the road to burnout if not already experiencing a full blown case.

Burnout is generally defined as: *Emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion brought on by excessive and prolonged stress.* It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

While burnout is most commonly associated with the workplace, anyone who feels overworked and undervalued is at risk for burnout- from the hardworking employee who hasn't taken a vacation in years to the stay-at-home mom juggling childcare, housework and aging parents.

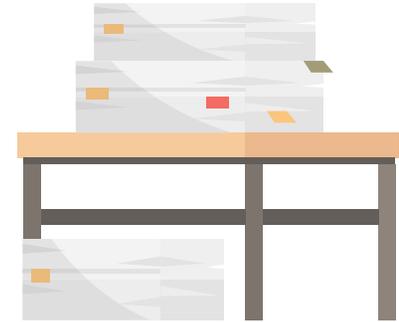
The cornerstone of burnout is perpetual exhaustion. In a state of burnout, you have little left to give. Some of the common causes of burnout are discussed below.



1

Workload

A workload that matches your capacity allows you to manage and complete tasks with opportunities for rest and recovery. When you are chronically overloaded, you do not have opportunities to balance your work output with necessary recovery periods, which will drive you to burn out.



2



Perceived lack of control

Lack of autonomy and perpetual uncertainty will steadily wear you down. Facing shifting priorities or a lack of clearly defined expectations forces you to remain constantly "on", which is unsustainable.

3

Lack of Community

Feeling unsupported by those around you only exacerbates stress and overwhelm. Unfortunately, burnout can be contagious. When someone around you is burnt out, they too are lacking support and don't have the capacity to provide it to others.



4



Fairness

It becomes tiresome to work against what you perceive as an unfair or inequitable treatment. These conditions can wear you down or cause you to disengage completely.

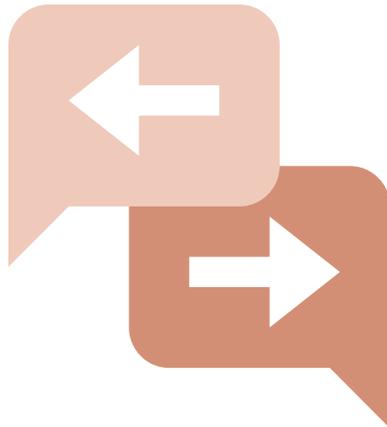
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Reward

When the intrinsic or extrinsic rewards for your work do not align with the amount of time and effort you are putting into it, the work can seem increasingly overbearing and cause you to lose motivation.



6



Values mismatch

Our values guide and ground our everyday life. When your work is not in alignment with your values, the motivation to work hard or persevere will steadily decline.

Tips for Combating Burnout



Look to others

Given the source of your burnout, communicate (to your boss, a significant other, friends, etc.) the support you need and collaborate on solutions. Opening up to other (trusted) individuals also allows you to relieve some of the mental and emotional burden of what you're facing.

Our relationships have a significant impact on our personal energy, which means your circle is a powerful tool to combat burnout. Making time for the people in your life who energize you and minimizing time around negative or draining people is key.



Learn to say no

It can be tempting to say yes to every opportunity that comes your way. After all, our society tends to reward people who are dependable and eager to please. The problem is, when you don't set boundaries your eagerness to please will come at the expense of your wellbeing. At that point, you lose the ability to show up for yourself and others.

A good rule of thumb is to take 24 hours (if possible) before making a major commitment. Take that time to think the commitment through. Consider this: If you were sick, you'd have no problem saying no. It's okay to prioritize your mental health in the same way.

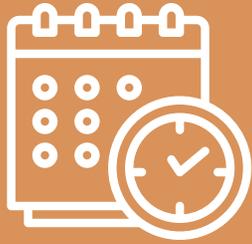


Support your mood

Blood sugar fluctuations can trigger the release of cortisol (stress hormone) and energy crashes. Intense sugar cravings and afternoon energy slumps may indicate that you need to balance your blood sugar, in which case proteins and healthy fats are your go-to.

Exercise can prompt dopamine release which provides a low-dose jolt to the brain's reward centers. If burnout has left you too exhausted to exercise, the solution is not forgoing physical activity. Opt for rejuvenating activities such as yoga or a brief walk, which will deliver the same benefit.

Tips for Combating Burnout Cont'.



Schedule downtime and take breaks

Burnout isn't the result of being busy or challenged. Rather, its the result of being constantly busy and over challenged with no opportunity to regroup, reflect or recover.

Integrate regular downtime into your day, even if its just 30 minutes. This allows your body time to activate its relaxation response and wind down its stress response. Also, try to schedule breaks between busy periods or big projects. This allows for deeper recoveries necessary to combat burnout.



Develop a wind-down routine

Loss of sleep perpetuates and exacerbates the exhaustion of burnout. It also results in elevated cortisol levels which can affect your resilience to stress in the long term. Develop a wind down routine that prompts your body to prepare for sleep and obtain the rest it needs.

Your wind down routine should include a cut-off time for electronics usage, since the blue light emitted from electronic screens suppresses melatonin production. This makes it more difficult to fall asleep and impacts your sleep quality.



Reframe your work

Try and find the ways in which your work aligns with your personal values.

Our values motivate us intrinsically and are what propels us forward in life, especially under difficult circumstances. Try and find even the simplest of ways to leverage this in your work (i.e. reminding yourself how your role allows you to be creative, authentic, helpful to others etc.).

Reflect:

- Do you recognized any of the causes/ conditions of burnout in your life?
- Who can you reach out to for support and what would that support look like?
- Which of the above tips and tools can you leverage to address the sources of burnout in your life or prevent future burnout in your life?

