

Burnout Prevention and Recovery

Modern life offers great technological advances and opportunities but also carries high degrees of stress. Cramming more activities into shorter time spans has become the norm and many people feel stressed out and overwhelmed by their lives. However, there is a point when constant stress can lead to a severe case of burnout. Burnout can be hard to detect in the beginning stages because of its similarity to stress.

Burnout is an assault on the spirit that progresses gradually. It is a sense of fatigue or emotional frustration that does not lessen with rest or taking time away from work. Burnout also involves high levels of disillusionment or cynicism about life or the situation at hand. Although burnout is a serious condition, it can be controlled and alleviated with proper attention.

The following symptoms and factors will help explain the mysterious nature of burnout. The information will also clarify how specific issues contribute to this condition. It is important to remember that almost everyone will experience some of the following factors at some point. The danger of burnout is when several factors occur consistently and repeatedly over a long period of time.

Symptoms of Burnout

- Exhaustion
- Chronic fatigue
- Questioning abilities
- Dreading work
- Boredom
- Excessive pessimism
- Decline in performance
- Lack of involvement with spouse or children
- Irritability
- Tardiness to work
- Numbness
- Distracted easily
- Feeling hopeless
- Broken, depleted spirit
- Apathy
- Lack of enthusiasm
- Fantasizing about a new job
- Avoiding paying attention to personal life
- Always in a hurry without enough time to do what is needed
- Feeling restless, fidgety, or impatient
- Constant need for stimulation and excitement

Causes of Burnout

- Constant chaos, strife, problems, discord, or disagreement
- Lack of purpose, plans, or goals
- Too many shoulds, oughts, and ifs
- Unrealistic expectations
- Lack of understanding of limitations
- Not exercising self-control or lack of internal control
- Lack of balance
- Too much focus on others' issues, needs, or expectations
- People in life who are like leeches (constantly taking but not giving in return)
- Lack of responsibility
- Excessive responsibility
- Being spread too thin
- Not using talents or creativity
- Lack of resources
- Lack of self-knowledge
- Lack of integrity or unethical behavior
- Inability to admit failure or that wrong decisions were made

- Not revising goals or action plans
- Failure to look at things realistically
- Lack of gratification
- Idealized viewpoints
- Trying to know everything
- Having unusually high expectations
- Using work as a social substitute
- Lack of boundaries or unclear boundaries
- Taking on more work than is possible to do
- Working longer hours
- Being over-involved
- Clash of opinions with management
- Bureaucracy
- Inefficient supervision
- Excessive need to be appreciated or admired
- Unresolved family issues
- Lack of healthy self-esteem
- Lack of validation
- Unrealistic workloads
- Lack of support staff
- Inconsistent administrators
- Insufficient, unattractive office space

Prevention and Recovery

- Stop complaining! Take time to vent, figure out what to do, and then carry out your decision.
- Mind your own business. It sounds harsh but it is about setting appropriate limits and boundaries.
- Take inventory. If something is not working, then decide how it can be fixed. Take stock of personal gifts, talents, etc.
- Balance your life. Pay attention to mind, body, and spirit. Look at all the areas in your life (professional, social, mental, emotional, financial, and physical).
- Figure out how to work within set parameters so that situations work for you. If your health, well-being, values, etc are challenged, then make a plan to leave the situation if it can't be changed.
- Let go of unnecessary or draining activities.
- Identify resources and use them appropriately.
- Just say no!
- Learn stress management and incorporate rest and relaxation into your life.
- Talk to a counselor, personal growth coach, or minister for support or join a support group.
- Go to the doctor for a check up. If depression or anxiety is present, there are medicines that can help alleviate symptoms.
- Incorporate exercise into your schedule.
- Play and have fun! Take time to develop a social life.
- Remember that you are special and unique but you are not superman or wonder woman.

Burnout symptoms can be mildly annoying or severely overwhelming. The more severe the case the more attention it needs. Sometimes a few changes will alleviate the problem and life will return to normal. In other situations there is severe emotional damage that can lead to job loss, broken relationships, illness, or financial difficulties. A little awareness combined with creative planning and a positive attitude can help control burnout.