

# Preventing Burnout

## Signs, Symptoms, Causes, and Coping Strategies



Are you feeling...

- Fearful and out of control?
- Can't wind down and relax?
- Feel irritable, agitated and tense?
- Can't get to sleep or stay asleep?
- Feel weak and low?
- Are you exhausted and burnt out?

If constant stress has you feeling disillusioned, helpless, and completely worn out, you may be suffering from burnout. When you're burned out, problems seem insurmountable, everything looks bleak, and it's difficult to muster up the energy to care—let alone do something about your situation.

The unhappiness and detachment burnout causes can threaten your job, your relationships, and your health. But burnout can be healed. If you recognize the signs and symptoms of burnout in its early stages, simple stress management strategies may be enough to solve the problem. In the later stages of burnout, recovery may take more time and effort, but you can still regain your balance by reassessing your priorities, making time for yourself, and seeking support.

### What is burnout?

Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed and unable to meet constant demands. As the stress continues, you begin to lose the interest or motivation that led you to take on a certain role in the first place.

Burnout reduces your productivity and saps your energy, leaving you feeling increasingly helpless, hopeless, cynical, and resentful. Eventually, you may feel like you have nothing more to give.

Most of us have days when we feel bored, overloaded, or unappreciated; when the dozen balls we keep in the air aren't noticed, let alone rewarded; when dragging ourselves out of bed requires the determination of Hercules. If you feel like this most of the time, however, you may be flirting with burnout.

### **You may be on the road to burnout if:**

- *Every* day is a bad day.
- Caring about your work or home life seems like a total waste of energy.
- You're exhausted all the time.
- The majority of your day is spent on tasks you find either mind-numbingly dull or overwhelming.
- You feel like nothing you do makes a difference or is appreciated.

The negative effects of burnout spill over into every area of life – including your home and social life. Burnout can also cause long-term changes to your body that make you vulnerable to illnesses like colds and flu. Because of its many consequences, it's important to deal with burnout right away.

There are three stages of Burnout...

- Stressed and wired
- Wired and tired
- Adrenal Exhaustion

### **Dealing with Burnout: The "Three R" Approach**

- **Recognize** – Watch for the warning signs of burnout
- **Reverse** – Undo the damage by managing stress and seeking support
- **Resilience** – Build your resilience to stress by taking care of your physical and emotional health

## **The difference between stress and burnout**

Burnout may be the result of unrelenting stress, but it isn't the same as too much stress. Stress, by and large, involves *too much*: too many pressures that demand too much of you physically and psychologically. Stressed people can still imagine, though, that if they can just get everything under control, they'll feel better.

Burnout, on the other hand, is about *not enough*. Being burned out means feeling empty, devoid of motivation, and beyond caring. People experiencing burnout often don't see any hope of positive change in their situations. If excessive stress is like drowning in responsibilities, burnout is being all dried up. One other difference between stress and burnout: While you're usually aware of being under a lot of stress, you don't always notice burnout when it happens.

### **Stress**

Characterized by over-engagement  
Emotions are over-reactive  
Produces urgency and hyperactivity  
Loss of energy  
Leads to anxiety disorders  
Primary damage is physical  
May kill you prematurely

### **Burnout**

Characterized by disengagement  
Emotions are blunted  
Produces helplessness and hopelessness  
Loss of motivation, ideals, and hope  
Leads to detachment and depression  
Primary damage is emotional  
May make life seem not worth living

## **Causes of burnout**

There are many causes of burnout. In many cases, burnout stems from the job. But anyone who feels overworked and undervalued is at risk for burnout – from the hardworking office worker who hasn't had a vacation or a raise in two years to the frazzled stay-at-home mom struggling with the heavy responsibility of taking care of three kids, the housework, and her aging father.

But burnout is not caused solely by stressful work or too many responsibilities. Other factors contribute to burnout, including your lifestyle and certain personality traits. What you do in your downtime and how you look at the world can play just as big of a role in causing burnout as work or home demands.

### **Work-related causes of burnout**

- Feeling like you have little or no control over your work.
- Lack of recognition or rewards for good work.
- Unclear or overly demanding job expectations.
- Doing work that's monotonous or unchallenging.
- Working in a chaotic or high-pressure environment

### **Poor nutrition and burnout**

- Combination of hectic lifestyle and poor nutrition
- Diets low in nutrients
- Diets high in refined sugar
- Processed food which contain:

### **Toxicity in food**

- Artificial flavourings
- Artificial colourings
- Preservatives

- Artificial sweeteners
- Pesticides
- Heavy Metals
- Artificial hormones

### **Lifestyle causes of burnout**

- Working too much, without enough time for relaxing and socializing
- Being expected to be too many things to too many people.
- Taking on too many responsibilities, without enough help from others
- Not getting enough sleep
- Lack of close, supportive relationships

### **Personality traits can contribute to burnout**

- Perfectionistic tendencies; nothing is ever good enough
- Pessimistic view of yourself and the world
- The need to be in control; reluctance to delegate to others
- High-achieving, Type A personality



**Caregiver Burnout**

Caring for a sick family member or disabled child can cause burnout, especially if the situation is chronic and you have little support. But there is help available!

### **Warning signs and symptoms of burnout**

Burnout is a gradual process that occurs over an extended period of time. It doesn't happen overnight, but it can creep up on you if you're not paying attention to the warning signals. The signs and symptoms of burnout are subtle at first, but they get worse and worse as time goes on.

Think of the early symptoms of burnout as warning signs or red flags that something is wrong that needs to be addressed. If you pay attention to these early warning signs, you can prevent a major breakdown. If you ignore them, you'll eventually burn out.

### **Physical signs and symptoms of burnout**

- Feeling tired and drained most of the time
- Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches

- Lowered immunity, feeling sick a lot
- Change in appetite or sleep habits

### **Emotional signs and symptoms of burnout**

- Sense of failure and self-doubt
- Feeling helpless, trapped, and defeated
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world
- Loss of motivation
- Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment

### **Behavioural signs and symptoms of burnout**

- Withdrawing from responsibilities
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
- Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
- Taking out your frustrations on others
- Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early

## **Preventing burnout**

If you recognize the warning signs of impending burnout in yourself, remember that it will only get worse if you leave it alone. But if you take steps to get your life back into balance, you can prevent burnout from becoming a full-blown breakdown.

### **Burnout prevention tips**

- **Start the day with a relaxing ritual.** Rather jumping out of bed as soon as you wake up, spend at least fifteen minutes meditating, writing in your journal, doing gentle stretches, or reading something that inspires you.
- **Adopt healthy eating, exercising, and sleeping habits.** When you eat right, engage in regular physical activity, and get plenty of rest, you have the energy and resilience to deal with life's hassles and demands.
- **Set boundaries.** Don't overextend yourself. Learn how to say "no" to requests on your time. If you find this difficult, remind yourself that saying "no" allows you to say "yes" to the things that you truly want to do.
- **Take a daily break from technology.** Set a time each day when you completely disconnect. Put away your laptop, turn off your phone, and stop checking email.
- **Nourish your creative side.** Creativity is a powerful antidote to burnout. Try something new, start a fun project, or resume a favorite hobby. Choose activities that have nothing to do with work.
- **Learn how to manage stress.** When you're on the road to burnout, you may feel helpless. But you have a lot more control over stress than you may think. Learning how to manage stress can help you regain your balance.

## **Recovering from burnout**

Sometimes it's too late to prevent burnout – you're already past the breaking point. If that's the case, it's important to take your burnout very seriously. Trying to push through the exhaustion and continue as you have been will only cause further emotional and physical damage.

While the tips for preventing burnout are still helpful at this stage, recovery requires additional steps.

### **Burnout recovery strategy #1: Slow down**

When you've reached the end stage of burnout, adjusting your attitude or looking after your health isn't going to solve the problem. You need to force yourself to slow down or take a break. Cut back whatever commitments and activities you can. Give yourself time to rest, reflect, and heal.

### **Burnout recovery strategy #2: Get support**

When you're burned out, the natural tendency is to protect what little energy you have left by isolating yourself. But your friends and family are more important than ever during difficult times. Turn to your loved ones for support. Simply sharing your feelings with another person can relieve some of the burden.

### **Burnout recovery strategy #3: Re-evaluate your goals and priorities**

Burnout is an undeniable sign that something important in your life is not working. Take time to think about your hopes, goals, and dreams. Are you neglecting something that is truly important to you? Burnout can be an opportunity to rediscover what really makes you happy and to change course accordingly.

### **Recovering from burnout: Acknowledge your losses**

Burnout brings with it many losses, which can often go unrecognized. Unrecognized losses trap a lot of your energy. It takes a tremendous amount of emotional control to keep yourself from feeling the pain of these losses. When you recognize these losses and allow yourself to grieve them, you release that trapped energy and open yourself to healing.

- Loss of the idealism or dream with which you entered your career
- Loss of the role or identity that originally came with your job
- Loss of physical and emotional energy
- Loss of friends, fun, and sense of community
- Loss of esteem, self-worth, and sense of control and mastery
- Loss of joy, meaning and purpose that make work – and life – worthwhile

## **Coping with job burnout**

The most effective way to combat job burnout is to quit doing what you're doing and do something else, whether that means changing jobs or changing careers. But if that isn't an option for you, there are still things you can do to improve your situation, or at least your state of mind.



### Dealing with Job Stress

In order to avoid job burnout, it's important to reduce and manage stress at work. Start by identifying what factors are stressful. Then you can take steps to deal with the problem, either by changing your work environment or changing the way you deal with the stressor.

- **Actively address problems.** Take a proactive approach – rather than a passive one – to issues in your workplace. You'll feel less helpless if you assert yourself and express your needs. If you don't have the authority or resources to solve the problem, talk to a superior.
- **Clarify your job description.** Ask your boss for an updated description of your job duties and responsibilities. Point out things you're expected to do that are not part of your job description and gain a little leverage by showing that you've been putting in work over and above the parameters of your job.
- **Ask for new duties.** If you've been doing the exact same work for a long time, ask to try something new: a different grade level, a different sales territory, a different machine.
- **Take time off.** If burnout seems inevitable, take a complete break from work. Go on vacation, use up your sick days, ask for a temporary leave-of-absence—anything to remove yourself from the situation. Use the time away to recharge your batteries and take perspective.

Because Adrenal Burnout is something which is caused by chronic stress, and is inclined to creep up on us slowly and with few obvious symptoms, by the time we recognise we have it, there will be many physiological consequences which will already have taken their toll on us. All these imbalances and malfunctions need to be addressed by a professional who understands the physiology of the situation, and who can diagnose the root cause.

Clinical Kinesiology Diagnosis, as carried out in this practice, is designed to find your root cause. It will reveal the underlying toxicity, and lack of nutrients at the physical level, which can then be effectively addressed.

We will also address your emotional self, your lifestyle and nutrition.

Adrenal Burnout Syndrome is serious. It must not be taken lightly. You are on the verge of complete collapse and serious ill health if you ignore it. Take action NOW. It can be cured with some professional intervention and care.