

Red Flags of Burnout

How to deal with feeling physically and emotionally tired

If you're feeling exhausted and sluggish, and even simple tasks feel overwhelming to complete — or you find yourself so stressed out that you're quick to get angry or frustrated — you might be experiencing burnout.

You may not realize you've hit burnout until you've crossed the line between “really tired” and “too exhausted to function.” Alternatively, you might be the type of personality who likes to stay busy, and might not recognize when you're doing too much. Burnout also happens when your work-life balance gets out of sync. This has been a common occurrence in the last few years, with the rise in remote work and technology permeating our daily lives.

While frequently associated with a stressful job, burnout can affect many areas of your life and even cause health problems. Thankfully, there are ways you can cope with and even overcome this often-debilitating state of being.

Signs of burnout

Burnout looks different for everyone, although it can affect you physically, mentally and emotionally. Signs to look for include:

- Fatigue
- Feeling apathetic or dissatisfied with your work
- Headaches
- Changes to your diet or sleep patterns

What to do if you have burnout

Recognizing that you have burnout is often the first step to making a plan for recovery. There are tangible steps you can take to get back on a better path.

Care for your mental health

Seeing a therapist is often a good first step to tackling burnout. Having a safe place to talk with someone who is not a family member, or a friend, or a coworker, or a neighbour — but someone who is impartial and is trained to give clinical feedback — can be life-changing, especially during these stressful times we're living in. One of the first things a therapist might want to know is what you're dealing with on a day-to-day basis. For example, if you say you're not sleeping, eating or concentrating properly because you're so worried about a work presentation, that's a big clue something is going on.

Build breaks — and personal check-ins — into your schedule

Taking breaks can be a good solution to start tackling burnout. We have to be able to step away from the computer, or step away from whatever that source of stress is, to attend to our health and well-being. It's important that we all do a daily, maybe even hourly, check-in with ourselves, to see, 'How am I doing emotionally? How am I doing physically?'

Exercise

Finding the energy to work out provides an abundance of health benefits, including helping you deal with burnout. Regardless of how much energy you may have on a given day, if you can get some sort of physical exercise, it's always going to be a helpful coping tool. Exercise doesn't have to mean a trip to the gym. It can really be just taking a few minutes every day to get some physical exercise.

Practice mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness revolves around the idea of trying to be as emotionally present as possible. One way to do this is deep breathing. The great thing about doing deep breathing is it forces us to focus on one inhale and that one exhale. In doing that, we're focusing on this very moment. This is something else that you can do anywhere at any time. It's easy to do, and it doesn't require any equipment.

Establish a daily routine

With work-life boundaries blurred, it can be difficult to put up strict divisions between your job and personal life. But establishing a healthy daily routine for sleep, diet, and non-work time is crucial. It's important to say, 'Okay, I've put in a hard day's work. Now I need to press stop, and I need to attend to social aspects of my life, things that are just fun and relaxing.'

Start to build — and enforce — work-life boundaries

Job burnout is so common because we often have a hard time saying no. We have a difficult time maintaining necessary boundaries, especially because technology plays a significant part in the work field today. And especially now with all the virtual platforms, it takes our ability to disconnect from work and makes it all the more difficult.

Of course, job burnout can be complicated. You likely aren't in a position to quit a job, so you have to make the best of things. If you have the opportunity to communicate with your boss or someone higher up in the organization, and explain to them some of the difficulties that you're dealing with, that's ideal. Hopefully they can find some sort of schedule or some change in responsibilities or change in daily routine that could help.

Explore a hobby

If you don't necessarily feel satisfied at work, looking for something outside of work — for example, starting a hobby, volunteering or joining a club or organization — can often help.

How to avoid burnout in the future

Although it can feel overwhelming in the moment, rest assured that you can recover from burnout. It comes down to establishing a meaningful daily routine, and creating and maintaining boundaries so you can attend to your health and well-being while also attending to the responsibilities of your job or your personal life.