

10 SIGNS YOU'RE BURNING OUT AND HOW TO STOP IT

TOP OF THE WEEK



BURNOUT MANIFESTS IN YOUR BODY, SO LEARN TO PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY'S SIGNALS SO THAT YOU CAN NIP BURNOUT IN THE BUD. YOUR BODY IS ALWAYS TALKING, BUT YOU HAVE TO LISTEN.



FIGHTING BURNOUT

If you recognise many of these symptoms in yourself, don't worry. Fighting burnout is a simple matter of self-care. You need good ways to separate yourself from your work so that you can recharge and find balance. The following will help you to accomplish this:

1 DISCONNECT

Disconnecting is the most important burnout strategy on this list, because if you can't find time to remove yourself electronically from your work, then you've never really left work.

Making yourself available to your work 24/7 exposes you to a constant barrage of stressors that prevent you from refocusing and recharging. If taking the entire evening or weekend off from handling work e-mails and calls isn't realistic, try designating specific times to check in on e-mails and respond to voicemails.

For example, on weekday evenings, you may check e-mails after dinner, and on the weekend you may check your messages on Saturday afternoon while your children are playing sports. Scheduling such short blocks of time alleviates stress without sacrificing your availability.

2 PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY SIGNALS

It's easy to think that a headache is the result of dehydration, that a stomach ache is the result of something you ate, and that an aching neck is from sleeping on it wrong, but that's not always the case. Oftentimes, aches and pains are an accumulation of stress and anxiety. Burnout manifests in your

body, so learn to pay attention to your body's signals so that you can nip burnout in the bud. Your body is always talking, but you have to listen.

3 SCHEDULE RELAXATION

It's just as important to plan out your relaxation time as it is to plan out when you work. Even scheduling something as simple as "read for 30 minutes" benefits you greatly. Scheduling relaxing activities makes certain they happen as well as gives you something to look forward to.

4 STAY AWAY FROM SLEEPING PILLS

When I say sleeping pills, I mean anything you take that sedates you so that you can sleep. Whether it's alcohol, Nyquil, Benadryl, Valium, Ambien, or what have you, these substances greatly disrupt your brain's natural sleep process.

Have you ever noticed that sedatives can give you some really strange dreams? As you sleep and your brain removes harmful toxins, it cycles through an elaborate series of stages, at times shuffling through the day's memories and storing or discarding them (which causes dreams). Sedation interferes with these cycles, altering the brain's natural process.

Anything that interferes with the brain's natural sleep process has dire consequences for the quality of your sleep, and you need adequate, quality sleep to avoid burnout.

5 GET ORGANISED

Much of the stress we experience on a daily basis doesn't

stem from having too much work; it stems from being too disorganised to handle the work effectively. When you take the time to get organised, the load feels much more manageable.

6 TAKE REGULAR BREAKS DURING THE WORKDAY

Physiologically, we work best in spurts of an hour to an hour and a half, followed by 15-minute breaks. If you wait until you feel tired to take a break, it's too late—you've already missed the window of peak productivity and fatigued yourself unnecessarily in the process. Keeping to a schedule ensures that you work when you're the most productive and that you rest during times that would otherwise be unproductive.

7 LEAN ON YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

It's tempting to withdraw from other people when you're feeling stressed, but they can be powerful allies in the war against burnout. Sympathetic family and friends are capable of helping you. Spending time with people who care about you helps you to remove yourself from the stresses of work and reminds you to live a little and have fun.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

If these strategies don't work for you, then the problem might be your job. The wrong job can cause burnout in and of itself. In that case you'll have to decide what's more important: your work or your health.

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By TRAVIS BRADBERRY
editor@leaderonomics.com

EVEN THE BEST JOBS CAN LEAD TO BURNOUT. THE HARDER YOU WORK AND THE MORE MOTIVATED YOU ARE TO SUCCEED, THE EASIER IT IS TO GET IN OVER YOUR HEAD.

THE prevalence of burnout is increasing as technology further blurs the line between work and home. New research from the American Psychological Association and the National Opinion Research Centre at the University of Chicago reported the following:

- 48% of Americans experienced increased stress over the past five years
- 31% of employed adults have difficulty managing their work and family responsibilities
- 53% say work leaves them "over-tired and overwhelmed"

A Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll found that "burnout from my current job" was one of the top reasons that people quit.

Burnout can get the better of you, even when you have great passion for your work. Arianna Huffington experienced this first-hand when she almost lost an eye from burnout. She was so tired at work that she passed out, hitting her face on her desk. She broke her cheek bone and had to get four stitches on her eye.

"I wish I could go back and tell myself that not only is there no trade-off between living a well-rounded life and high performance, performance is actually improved when our lives include time for renewal, wisdom, wonder and giving. That would have saved me a lot of unnecessary stress, burnout and exhaustion." —Arianna Huffington

Burnout often results from a misalignment of input and output; you get burnt out when you feel like you're putting more into your work than you're getting out of it. Sometimes this happens when a job isn't rewarding, but more often than not, it's because you aren't taking care of yourself. Before you can treat and even prevent burnout, you need to recognise the warning signs so that you'll know when it's time to take action. Here they are, in no particular order:

1 HEALTH PROBLEMS

Burnout has a massive, negative impact upon your physical and mental health. Whether you're experiencing back pain, depression, heart disease,

obesity, or you're just getting sick a lot, you need to consider the role your work is playing in this. You'll know when burnout is affecting your health, and you'll just have to decide whether your approach to work is worth the consequences.

2 COGNITIVE DIFFICULTIES

Research shows that stress hammers the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for executive function. Executive function impacts your memory, decision-making abilities, emotional control, and focus. When you notice that you're making silly mistakes, forgetting important things, having outbursts of emotion, or making poor decisions, you're likely burning out.

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3 DIFFICULTY WITH WORK AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Stress bleeds over into everything you do, particularly how you interact with people. Even when you feel that you're keeping your stress under control at work, it can rear

its ugly head at home. Often it's your relationships that suffer. Stress makes many people more likely to snap at others, lose their cool, and get involved in silly, unnecessary conflicts. Others are

more inclined to withdraw and avoid people they care about.

4 TAKING YOUR WORK HOME WITH YOU

You know that sickening feeling when you're lying in bed thinking about all the work that you didn't get done and hoping that you didn't miss something important? When you can't stop thinking about work when you're at home, it's a strong sign that you're burning out.

5 FATIGUE

Burnout often leads to exhaustion because of the toll stress takes on your mind and body. The hallmarks of burnout fatigue are waking up with no energy after a good night's sleep, drinking large amounts of caffeine to get you through the day, or having trouble staying awake at work.

6 NEGATIVITY

Burnout can turn you very negative, even when you're usually a positive person. If you find yourself focusing on the downside of situations, judging others and feeling cynical, it's clear that negativity has taken hold, and it's time for you to do something about it.

7 DECREASED SATISFACTION

Burnout almost always leads to a nagging sense of dissatisfaction. Projects and people that used to get you excited no longer do so. This dip in satisfaction makes work very difficult, because no matter what you're putting

into your job, you don't feel like you're getting much out of it.

8 LOSING YOUR MOTIVATION

We begin jobs in a honeymoon phase, seeing everything through rose-tinted glasses. When you're in this phase, motivation comes naturally. In a burnout state, you struggle to find the motivation to get the job done. You may complete tasks, and even complete them well, but the motivation that used to drive you is gone. Instead of doing work for the sake of the work itself, your motivation stems from fear—of missing deadlines, letting people down, or getting fired.

9 PERFORMANCE ISSUES

People who burn out are often high achievers, so when their performance begins to slip, others don't always notice. It's crucial to monitor your slippage. How were you performing a month ago? Six months ago? A year ago? If you see a dip in your performance, it's time to determine if burnout is behind it.

10 POOR SELF-CARE

Life is a constant struggle against the things that feel good momentarily but aren't good for you. When you experience burnout, your self-control wanes and you find yourself succumbing to temptations more easily. This is largely due to the way that stress compromises your decision-making and self-control and also partially due to lower levels of confidence and motivation.



Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, and the co-founder of the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. To read more articles from Travis, log on to www.leaderonomics.com.