

# Burnout Symptoms

Unrelenting stress that is not addressed can result in physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms that indicate you may be at risk for burnout. Burnout can rob you of your right to enjoy life and feel good about who you are and what you do.

## Physical

- Low energy/exhaustion
- Insomnia or oversleeping
- Muscle tension
- Decrease/increase in appetite
- Headaches
- Decreased sexual drive
- Undefined feeling of illness
- Frequent colds
- Rapid pulse, heart palpitations, elevated blood pressure
- Digestive disorders
- Rashes/itching
- Frequent urination
- Shakiness and trembling

## Emotional/Mental

- Feeling of loss of control
- Loss of meaning
- Feeling inadequate/incompetent
- Forgetful
- Resistant to suggestions
- Feeling trapped
- Difficulty concentrating
- Boredom
- Feeling work doesn't fit in with personal values
- Loss of sense of humor
- In denial
- Detached
- Sad
- Fearful/anxious
- Frustrated
- Overwhelmed

## Behavioral

- Accident prone
- Increased use of sick days
- Increased use of medication, alcohol, and other drugs
- Sighing
- Irritable/angry
- Tearful
- Withdrawn
- Cynical
- Working hard but not being as productive
- Changes in relationships
- Unresponsive

---

## Where Does Burnout Come From?

Debilitating stress is the nation's fastest growing occupational disease. Three major sources of employee stress have been documented. If steps aren't taken, these situations can lead to burnout.

### Personal

- Caregiving without respite
- Lack of social support
- Health issues
- Financial problems
- Disruptive or unhealthy relationships
- Boredom
- Lack of coping mechanisms
- Values/attitudes/beliefs
- Ineffective habits

### Environmental

- Noise, light, temperature, humidity
- Technostress/information overload
- Lack of proper equipment
- Job hazards/risks
- Ergonomic issues
- Overcrowding

### Organizational

- Too much to do/too little to do
- Role ambiguity
- Too much responsibility
- Lack of training
- Accountability
- Overqualified/underqualified
- Uncertain future
- Management style
- Company culture
- Constant change
- Few opportunities for growth, creativity, making contribution

## Are You at Risk?

The following risk factors for burnout are adapted from the book, Break the Stress Cycle by Judith Sachs. If you are experiencing some of these, you may want to contact your Employee Assistance Program. There are effective ways to overcome burnout.

- Your perception of stress shifts. What used to be exciting and challenging is now overwhelming and overbearing.
- You no longer have the facility of handling problems as you did in the past.
- You are not as interested in working with others and sharing.
- You don't experience pleasure and fulfillment from your job or personal-life responsibilities.
- You become obsessed with frustrations about your work.
- You have a pervasive sense of pessimism and self-doubting.
- You believe that your job or personal problems will never end, and you feel trapped.
- You have begun to experience stress-related physical and emotional disorders.

## What Drains You?

In her book, Take Time for Your Life, Cheryl Richardson talks about the importance of knowing where your energy goes and if it is draining or sustaining you. The following checklist will help you identify those areas that deplete your energy. Please put a check next to the items that are true for you. Feel free to add to the list.

### ■ RELATIONSHIPS

- There are people in my life who continuously drain my energy.
- I have phone calls, e-mail, and letters that I need to respond to.
- I lack quality friendships in my life.
- I feel a void in my life created by the lack of a romantic partner.
- There is a relationship that I need to end.
- There is a phone call that I dread making, and it causes me stress and anxiety.
- I miss being a part of a loving and supportive community.

### ■ ENVIRONMENT

- My car is in need of cleaning and/or repair.
- My wardrobe needs updating and/or alterations.
- I'm not happy living in my current geographic location.
- I have appliances that need repair or upgrading.
- My home is not decorated in a way that nurtures me.
- My closets and/or basement/garage/ are cluttered and need cleaning and organizing.

### ■ MIND, BODY, SPIRIT

- I eat food that is not good for me.
- It's been too long since I've been to the dentist/doctor.
- I do not get the sleep I need to feel fully rested.
- I'd like to exercise regularly but never find the time.
- I have a health concern for which I've avoided getting help.
- There are books I'd love to read but never find the time.
- I lack a spiritual or religious component in my life.

■ **WORK**

- My work is stressful and leaves me exhausted and unfulfilled at the end of the day.
- My office is disorganized, my desk is a mess, and I have trouble finding what I need.
- I'm avoiding a confrontation or conflict with a co-worker.
- I tolerate bad behavior from a boss or coworker.
- I am not computer literate, and it gets in the way of my productivity.
- I know I need to delegate specific tasks, but I'm unable to let go of control.
- With e-mail and voicemail, I'm on information overload.

■ **MONEY**

- I pay my bills late.
- I spend more than I earn.
- I don't have a plan for my financial future.
- My credit rating is not what I'd like it to be.
- I do not have a regular savings plan.
- I do not have adequate insurance coverage.
- I have debt that needs to be paid off.

Others:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
-

# What Fuels You?

Listed below are items that contribute to high-quality, non-burnout living. Check off those that are already in your life. Think about ways you can have more positive experiences.

## ■ RELATIONSHIPS

- I regularly enjoy the company of special friends; we laugh and have fun together.
- I share my life with a soul mate.
- I have a “blood” family or “chosen” family that loves and supports me.
- I get immense pleasure from spending time with children.
- I have a pet that brings me joy and provides me with unconditional love.
- I am part of a loving and supportive community.

## ■ ENVIRONMENT

- I have a special heart-warming place in my home just for me.
- I listen to my favorite music regularly.
- I love my sense of style and feel good in the clothes I wear.
- I’ve gotten rid of the “stuff” in my home that I no longer need.
- I keep fresh flowers/plants in my home and office.
- My home is neat, clean, and well organized.
- I create beauty around me.

## ■ MIND, BODY, AND SPIRIT

- I exercise regularly.
- I have reduced caffeine in my diet.
- I don’t rely on alcohol and other drugs to “medicate” me (unless authorized by my physician).
- I have a way to relax that eliminates stress and keeps me feeling centered.
- I eat healthy and nutritious food.
- Each day I read something inspirational to keep my attitude positive.
- I set aside regular time for solitude and silence.
- I have a spiritual practice that connects me with my inner wisdom.

■ **WORK**

- I have a positive relationship with my supervisor.
- My commute is relatively stress-free.
- I have a mentor who guides and encourages me.
- I take lunch breaks.
- I have colleagues who inspire and respect me.
- I take mental health/personal days when I need them.
- I enjoy my work.
- I feel energized at the end of most work days.
- I have opportunities to contribute and add value to the organization.

■ **MONEY**

- I always carry enough cash with me.
- I am fully insured and protected.
- I save money consistently.
- My taxes are paid and up-to-date.
- I've made smart investments that earn me top dollar.
- I enjoy being generous and easily share my wealth.
- I pay my credit cards in full each month.

Others:

- 
- 
- 
-

# Setting SMART Goals

*Any goal requires leaving the comfort zone.*

Specific	Be precise about what you are going to achieve. Include a quantitative target.
Measurable	There is at least one clear way to test whether the stated target has been met.
Attainable	There is a likelihood of success - but that does not mean easy or simple.
Relevant	The goal or target being set is something you can actually impact upon or change, and it is important to the beneficiaries.
Timebound	The exact date or timeframe within which the objective will be achieved.

If you have no goals for today, tomorrow, next week or next year, you are wasting away in the comfort zone. Goals create automatic conflict with the comfort zone. A goal is about something that is not. A goal defines something that you would like to have that is currently not available to you. Any goal requires leaving the comfort zone. Goals require that we get off of life's couch.

How many of us set long-term goals and seek to achieve them?

Goals that move us are almost always written down. A goal that is not written is merely a wish. Goals that are written down, and then shared with another, move us even more. Long-term goals defined by intermediate steps that are written and then also shared, will almost always catapult us out of our comfort zone and into the kind of activity that leads to real happiness.

## Recipe for Limit Setting

**How To Say "NO":** Pause. Ask For Time

**Recipe:**

- 2 positive statements
- 1 limit statement
- 1 positive statement to close  
or
- 1 alternative to keep options open

## Setting Limits and Delegating Exercise

**SAY:** "I have too much on my plate."

**FOLLOW WITH:** "I would like to get the following tasks off my plate...."

---

---