



BURNOUT

WHAT IS BURNOUT?

Burnout is a sense of “physical and emotional exhaustion as a result of prolonged stress and frustration” (B. Hudnall Stamm, 2009). Put simply, it is the result of continued effort without results.

WHO IS AT RISK?

The short answer is “Everyone”. As people, we are programmed to want to feel useful: to succeed. That said, we know that burnout is dependent on a person’s subjective experience of the situation and two people with the same job can have very different perceptions. The two best indicators that someone will experience burnout are their perceived levels of

1. **Autonomy** –whether or not they feel that they have input into their course of action; and
2. **Efficacy**— how much they believe their actions will influence the outcome of a situation

Employees with high rates of autonomy and efficacy report good job satisfaction and demonstrate behaviours of resiliency, while those with low perceived autonomy and efficacy tend to develop unhealthy work behaviours or “check out”

WHAT DOES BURNOUT LOOK LIKE?

People tend to go to one of two extremes:

Checking out: This is when a person disengages from the task at hand, accepting little to no responsibility and distancing themselves from the task and the team (preventing any future feelings of efficacy).

Doubling down: These people assume an over-inflated sense of responsibility, subscribing to a belief that they can accomplish the task by working infinitely harder and longer (a vicious cycle that perpetuates the feelings of burnout because their effort doesn’t correlate with a sense of accomplishment).

In both cases burnout picks up momentum, aided by feelings of failure and plummeting job satisfaction. While rest can ease the symptoms of burnout, it is often more of a stopgap than a solution.

Do you think you’re experiencing Burnout?

Check out the Professional Quality of Life Scale, a free and voluntary self-assessment tool for people in helping professions to learn more about your rates of compassion satisfaction, burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

www.proqol.org



HOW CAN I PREVENT BURNOUT?

Since burnout is driven by feelings that your efforts make no difference, the first step to preventing (or recovering from) burnout is to evaluate the following:

1. WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

- A. Is this really within your scope of influence?
- B. Do you have the resources (time, human, financial, etc.) needed to accomplish this?

Sometimes we need to make our peace with the fact that a job well done does not always look like a 100% success rate. For example, it's unrealistic to expect that you can continue to provide the same services you did with half of the employees. In cases like this, we need to set realistic goals and be transparent with them to the people under us as well as the leaders we report to.

A Note for Leaders: As the person ultimately responsible for the goals and standards of your team, you are also responsible to assess if those expectations are contributing to burnout. Like anything in healthcare, prevention is much faster and more cost-effective than treatment

2. ARE YOU EXPERIENCING ROLE OVERLOAD?

Role overload happens when a job changes, expands or develops far beyond the one that we signed up for. While Role Overload isn't inherently negative, our own expectations about our performance need to evolve with the job. For example, you can't expect to have the same time and attention to devote to your work if you are also parenting and trying to help with online learning while schools are closed.

Other Stuff that Works

- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction
- Regular discussion upward and downward to establish and adjust expectations
- Setting personal boundaries (and sticking to them) to prevent "Doubling Down" behaviour
- Reaching out to Employee Wellness or EAP for confidential support