



# A BURNOUT JOURNEY

MEANING, SIGNS,  
REFLECTION,  
PREVENTION, &  
RECOVERY

From definition to recovery, understanding burnout is key to managing mental health not only in the workplace, but in our daily lives as well. Read through for helpful guidance and clarity about the impact mental awareness and wellness has on professionals.



## **PART 1**

### **What is burnout?**

- Work-life balance and self-care awareness



## **PART 2**

### **Red flags**

- Identifying problem areas



## **PART 3**

### **Questions for clarity**

- Are stressful professional settings getting the best of you?



## **PART 4**

### **Practices for prevention**

- Promoting a positive work environment



## **PART 5**

### **Overcoming Burnout**

- Relief and recovery



# BURNOUT IN THE WORKFORCE

Let's face it, burnout is not new and people have been experiencing it for years now. Professionals have especially been feeling the weight of burnout when in a system that values work hours, results, and performance over wellness, growth, and self-care. This, of course, is not to say that work and professional responsibilities should be demonized or shamed, but there's a reason why "work-life balance" has become a major trend over the last year.

After the initial shock of the pandemic, and the shift in mindset that followed, people have become hyper-aware of the role that wellness needs to play in their everyday lives, and even more so at work.

For the future of work, this has been a root cause of an astounding amount of people leaving their jobs or switching careers since early 2021 in search of a balanced work-life. Burnout is still at an all-time high and it's important for professionals and companies alike to take a closer look at the next steps towards health and balance in professional settings.





# PART 1

WHAT IS BURNOUT?



## Understanding what it means to be "burned out"

As mentioned before, burnout is not exclusive to the workplace. In fact, there's some debate out there on whether burnout is work-related at all or just an overall accumulation of overwhelming struggles.

However, now that the line between work and life has become blurred by a large portion of professionals working from home, there are areas of our working lives that are under the microscope. With the spotlight on the workforce, the World Health Organization defines burnout as an occupational phenomenon "resulting in chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."

It's safe to say that burnout is a consequence of exhaustion, whether it be mental, physical, or emotional. And since we spend most of our time at work, it's understandable that typical burnout triggers are easily found in workplace environments. Such as:

- ① **Feeling overwhelmed and undervalued.**
- ① **Lacking time to disengage and recover from stress.**
- ① **Suffering from attention overload and constant changes.**
- ① **Lacking healthy social connections (remote or otherwise).**
- ① **Feeling unable to meet goals or expectations despite effort.**

**Another burnout trigger for professionals is being spread too thin, which is sadly often found in personality types such as the hard worker, the perfectionist, or the high performer.** Although we tend to champion or idolize high-performing employees, when not provided with a balanced work environment we run the risk of burning them out.





# PART 2

## RED FLAGS



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## Why might red flags in the workplace be hard to recognize?

Physical signs of burnout include fatigue, exhaustion, stress, foggy mind, a weakened immune system, and more. However, spotting these or other behavioral signs of burnout isn't something that comes easy when we're so focused on workplace responsibilities and performance. Analyzing red flags could mean digging deeper into how day-to-day feelings and actions are managed while working at the office or from home.



A big concern related to burnout is that it's not always identified until it's too late. **Burnout symptoms can sometimes overlap with other mental health issues, like anxiety and depression, and can even be confused or dismissed as becoming lazy.** Which can put burned-out people at risk of either not asking or getting help because it lessens the need for it.



**DISGUISED  
BY LAZINESS**

When someone is burnt out, there's a decrease in passion and motivation. Suddenly feeling like laying around and doing nothing because there is no motivation, meaning, or joy in one's work or hobbies is a sign of burnout. Especially if the person feels guilty or frustrated about their lack of liveliness.

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What happens at work doesn't magically go away when the workday is over and can often build up if not addressed or managed. **One of the classic signs of burnout is a decline in productivity and creativity.** When engaged employees slowly begin to fall behind it's probably time for them to get some rest, not more work.



**FLAT TIRES  
AT WORK**

The problem is that sometimes either their teams, boss, or even themselves will add pressure instead of releasing it. And this may be because they believe they are just being lazy or unable to fulfill their job, despite their previous and excellent track record.





## **ON AUTOPILOT OR OUT OF CONTROL?**

Feeling emotionally depleted or numb is a big part of being burned out. **One of the main symptoms experienced among those suffering from burnout is that they feel detached from themselves or disconnected from their lives.** Other people describe it as an emotional void that is related to the lack of motivation previously mentioned.

On the other hand, others experience a rush of uncontrollable feelings in between those periods of numbness. Any situation could be triggering, especially if it's related to the original cause of burnout. While on this rollercoaster of emotions, it's important to try and stay grounded, understanding, and compassionate.

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## **FEELING FAR FAR AWAY**

Another sign of burnout is when people voluntarily isolate themselves. This could have been a far more obvious sign before the pandemic accelerated remote scenarios, and some people got so used to the isolation that being withdrawn from everyone else is not as obvious anymore.

**People experiencing burnout may feel like talking with others leaves them completely drained.** Ironically, the more we shut people out, the easier it is to feel depleted. We have to remember that we need people in our lives. That is meaningful relationships beyond large party groups or shallow friendships. Having someone we trust to air out our feelings and concerns can help us get back on track and regain control of our lives.







# PART 3

## QUESTIONS FOR CLARITY



A BURNOUT JOURNEY

## What does a stressful professional setting look like?

Here are four questions that can be asked to help identify work environments that can be improved upon in favor of workplace health and happiness.



### 1 Are you constantly exhausted or sleep-deprived?

Experiencing burnout can feel like you're completely drained of energy. And that's because it gets exhausting just going through the motions of typical workdays.

If you feel like your batteries run out every day and it keeps you from getting sleep at night, analyze if it's because your mind is consumed by your work environment.

Meetings blocking out schedules, approaching time-sensitive deadlines, disorganized project management, and even attempting to avoid difficult coworkers or supervisors can hinder the **quality of your work** and the **quality of your life**.

### 2 Is your mental or physical health being compromised?

Stress is your body's natural reaction to challenging situations or feelings of being under pressure. However, when you can't lower your stress levels or it becomes your default mode at work, your physical and mental health becomes at risk.

If you begin feeling "off," or not quite like yourself, try taking time for a wellness check to see if there's a lack of balance in the personal and professional areas of your life.

Prolonged stress doesn't only lead to burnout, but **can manifest physically** through intense headaches, stomach problems, muscle tension, **and mentally** through added anxiety, messed-up concentration, and even depression.



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Did you used to love your job, but feel enjoyment wavering?

If you've stopped enjoying your job, even when the work done is something you genuinely feel passionate about, then maybe it's time for a pause. Reflecting on what's been working and what isn't when it comes to productivity and performance helps professionals narrow in on overlooked problems.

Whether your dissatisfaction stems from added responsibilities, who you are working with, or a stressful work environment in itself, it's up to you to not only recognize but also take measures in resolving issues before calling it quits.

**Map out your professional goals and priorities** to see if they still align with your current position and role or if instead, a toxic work environment is turning your passion into something you dread.

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Have problems at home increased?

A toxic work environment is awful, and the worst part is, it can find its way into your personal life. Especially for those whose work has taken up physical space in their home.

Stress caused by work-related negativity and frustration can start getting in between you and your family or friends. Having a double dose of negative environments and interactions can wear you out even more.

An unmanaged work overload can make you irritable, and if conversations with family and friends only revolve around work problems, your **quality time with your significant others will eventually wear out.**





## **WORKPLACE WELLNESS IS NOT A ONE-PERSON JOB!**

Before moving to the recovery stages of burnout, there's something we need to settle: **There is not one person solely responsible for creating and maintaining a healthy work environment.**

One's attitude and the way we choose to conduct our work life and interactions have both a positive and negative impact on the people and environment around us, but there's more to it than just that.

Making sure professionals have a nurturing work environment and positive employee experiences is a shared responsibility between organizations and their teams.





# PART 4

## PRACTICES FOR PREVENTION



## Easing the journey back to balance

While getting out of burnout starts with whoever is experiencing it, companies and organizational leaders also have an opportunity to get involved and promote balance. For instance, how about pairing performance reviews with self-care updates?

If you are a company leader, caring for your employees should be explicit, evident in each strategy, and frequently reinforced as part of your company's culture. Maybe you already offer an amazing benefits package with quality healthcare and PTO, but you can demonstrate your care double-fold just by encouraging your teams to actually use them.

There are plenty of ways in which upper management can improve on their healthy and happy work environment and boost job satisfaction, which in turn keeps teams and peers from feeling burned out. Happy and well-balanced employees make a successful company.

**Help your company, superiors, and peers maintain workplace happiness and professional balance by suggesting and promoting healthy practices, expectations, and boundaries.**

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## How professionals and managers can deal with warning signs of burnout in the workplace:

Great transformative changes can begin with even the smallest actions. Here are five fun and easy practices that can be tested out to help nurture a healthy work environment and help prevent burnout.



### **EMBRACE HUMOR**

There are employees who feel like their paychecks might suffer if it looks like they are having fun and enjoying their time at work. While it's true that having a "class clown" or company jokester could disrupt a productive environment, humor can also improve employees' and peers' team dynamics, help defuse workplace tension, and reduce a good deal of stress.





## INTRODUCE FLEXIBILITY

Since the pandemic, many scheduling practices were questioned as the world adapted to a digital and remote work environment. Employees working from home and even those back at the office can benefit from time blocks to simply disconnect and regain energy after a long strategy session. For highly committed teams, a little flexibility won't hurt.

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## ACKNOWLEDGE OTHERS' WORTH

A lack of recognition and job fulfillment in a high-performing environment leads to burnout. And that's not just the case for productivity and results. How about giving a shoutout to a team member that solved a reoccurring problem, or something as simple as saying, "Thanks for your work today." Recognizing a team member for their great attitude or teamwork, will make them more likely to keep up that effort and maybe even do the same for others.

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## SUGGEST PLAYTIME

Pick a game for the team to play or an activity that encourages interaction beyond work-related chit-chat. Maybe staff and employees could benefit from an hour at the end of the week to hang out, have fun, and recharge their creativity. Playful engagement helps promote and strengthen soft skills like communication, planning, and problem-solving among your team.

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## CONNECT WITH YOUR TEAM

Are peers, co-workers, and employees less than thrilled when you announce an upcoming review or meeting? It's never bad to have sessions for feedback, but you can also use meetings to learn more about individuals that make up your teams and give them a space to voice their ideas and concerns. This time and space is essential for letting renewing their energy and motivation, and getting to know one another.





# PART 5

## OVERCOMING BURNOUT





## The road to burnout recovery

If you already feel burned out, take control of the wheel so that you can start your journey back to wellness and avoid triggering other physical or mental health issues. Though getting help and feeling supported is great, you have the final say. You can decide whether you stick with burnout or leave it behind.

**One of the simplest but most effective things you can do to relieve burnout is practice self-care.** Take a mental health day, keep a gratitude journal, practice mindfulness every morning, dive back into your hobbies, use your paid time off, etc. These small actions make a huge statement. According to researchers, Yu Tse Heng and Kira Schabram, self-care is a big part of combating burnout, stating:

“We found that engaging in self-care activities (such as a 10-minute meditation session, cooking a nice meal, or even taking a nap) correlated strongly with reduced levels of reported burnout the following day.”

[Harvard Business Review, 2021](#)

To sum up, **show up for yourself and replenish your sense of self-worth**, which doesn't have to be tied to one's job. Finding a way to nourish and satisfy your goals and purpose on a daily basis, whether from work or home, helps quench exhaustion.

Don't forget about the human factor:

- Express your feelings and concerns to your loved ones.
- Go to HR or your leader at work and ask for help.
- Seek professional help through therapy.
- And, whatever you choose, do not isolate yourself!





# LEAVE BURNOUT BEHIND

No matter your environment or whether your burnout is stemming from personal or professional roots, it's ultimately up to you to take steps toward recovery. After getting some insight into what could be done to reduce stress and promote a healthy/productive work environment, find out if these solutions also align with your company's interest and commitment to employee wellness. After all, this isn't a journey that needs to be traveled alone.

If all else fails and you feel like your back is against a wall when trying to manage burnout, it's ok to start looking for a job elsewhere. And when that time comes, for whatever the reason may be, our teams at gpac are ready to help.

Visit [gpac's homepage](#) to view career opportunities, talk to a recruiter for advice, and gain access to our [Knowledge Center](#) for growing professionals and job seekers.