



## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO AVOID BURNOUT



*The consequences of burnout can be severe and impact not just on you and your career but on your team and organisation as well. It can also affect your personal life, your wellbeing and your relationships with friends and family. When feelings of burnout start to occur, many people focus on short-term solutions and, while this can certainly help, the relief is often only temporary!*

*In the Covid-19 world we are having to deal with a lot of new and stressful situations. As we start to return to parts of our old lives, pre-lockdown problems will return and the new situation we find ourselves in bring additional issues.*

*So how can we avoid burnout in the longer-term? Here are our Top Tips which of course will need to be used in a way to comply with the current Covid restrictions!*

- 1. Avoid Negative People** - Spending time with negative-minded people will drag down your mood and outlook. If you have to work with a negative person, try to limit the amount of time you spend together.
- 2. Be More Sociable** - At lunchtime or on breaks, try talking to your colleagues rather than directing your attention to your smart phone. Having strong ties in the workplace can help relieve stress, improve your job performance, or just get you through a rough day.
- 3. Exercise Regularly** - Even though it may be the last thing you feel like doing, exercise is a great antidote to stress and burnout and also helps to boost your mood.

As well as alleviating stress and creating a sense of wellbeing, you will experience increased energy and productivity. Exercise also helps to promote restful sleep but it must be done several hours before you go to bed as it stimulates the body to secrete the stress hormone cortisol, which helps activate the alerting mechanism in the brain.

**4. Take Time Off** - If burnout seems inevitable, try to take a complete break from work. Use up your leave or ask for a temporary leave-of-absence just to get away from the situation. It's more likely to be a temporary 'fix' but use the time to recharge your batteries and put a more long-term recovery plan in place.

**5. Set Boundaries** - Don't overextend yourself and learn how to say "no" to requests on your time. Saying "no" allows you to say "yes" to the things you want to do.

**6. Get Away From Technology** - Schedule a time each day when you put away your laptop turn off your phone and stop checking your email.

**7. Be Creative** - Creativity is a great antidote to burnout. Choose something that has nothing to do with work or what is causing your stress.

**8. Relax** - Techniques such as yoga, meditation, mindfulness and deep breathing help activate the body's relaxation response, the complete opposite to the stress response.

**9. Sleep Well** - Feeling tired can exacerbate burnout by causing you to think irrationally. Make your bedroom a quiet, dark, and cool environment which is well ventilated with a comfortable mattress and pillows. Computers, TVs and work materials should be kept out of the room and try to ease the transition to sleep time with relaxing activities such as taking a bath, reading a book or practicing relaxation exercises.

**10. Eat A Healthy Diet** - What you put in your body can have a huge impact on your mood and energy levels throughout the day. Try to minimise sugar and refined carbs and reduce your intake of foods that adversely affect mood, such as caffeine, trans fats, and foods with chemical preservatives or hormones. Eating more Omega-3 fatty acids helps boost mood (the best sources are oily fish seaweed, flaxseed, and walnuts). Nicotine and alcohol should be avoided, as they are powerful stimulants that can lead to higher levels of anxiety.

**11. Ask for help** - Don't be afraid to ask for help. If you're stressed it can help to talk to someone about how you're feeling or to your line manager about your workload if you're struggling. Opening up can be the hardest step, but it will make you feel better.

**12. Escalate problems** – If resources are short then it's crucial to involve your line manager. In terms of managing workload, you can discuss why you might be doing too much and work out solutions. In addition, you can talk about creating a work

environment that allows you to perform to your best without creating any needless stress.

**13. Stop being a perfectionist** - Perfectionism can have both positive and negative effects but constantly striving for perfection can be highly stressful, and trigger burnout.

**14. Don't try to be a hero** - Don't push yourself too hard and dismiss your mental wellbeing for the sake of your work. If you need to take time off, do so without guilt and talk to your line manager if you need to make some adjustments to look after your mental health.

**15. Avoid being on your own too much** - When you're on the road to burnout, you can feel helpless but one of the most effective ways to alleviate this is to reach out to others. Social contact is nature's antidote to stress and talking face-to-face with a good listener is one of the best ways to calm your nervous system and relieve stress.

**16. Audit your Life** – Most people never give themselves the opportunity to step back and see where they are in their life. A life audit is an exercise in self-reflection, allowing us to really look at every single area of our lives, taking stock of things like our goals and distractions, and assessing our overall fulfilment.

*When looking at ways to deal with burnout, we need to focus on strategies that will have a deeper impact, create lasting change and build a culture where we as individuals can take decisions about our own stress levels.*



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