

BURNOUT

Toolkit for Organizations

Use research-based,
best practices to
recognize and manage
employee burnout.

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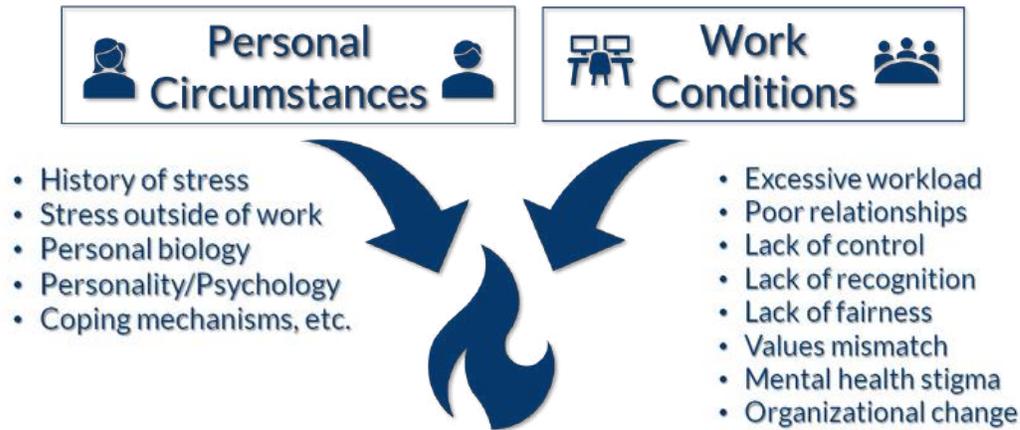
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PERSONAL STRESSORS THAT FUEL BURNOUT



Two main sources of stress will fuel burnout: who we are and where we work.



PERSONAL STRESSORS THAT FUEL BURNOUT



History of Stress

If we have a history of stress and trauma, especially in early childhood, we can be more sensitive to stress as adults.



Stress Outside of Work

No one at work may be aware that we are struggling with stress at home or in personal relationships. But we internalize this stress and bring it to work with us.



Personal Biology

Our sensitivity to stress is amped up by certain biological factors, like the way stress hormones and brain chemicals do their thing in our bodies and brains.



Psychology/Personality

Personality traits like pessimism (e.g., "the glass is half empty") can amplify our sensitivity to stress and increase our risk of anxiety, depression, and burnout.



Coping Mechanisms

Unhealthy coping strategies will fuel stress and burnout, like perfectionism ("Everything has to be perfect, or I'll tear my hair out"), avoidance ("If I ignore it, it'll go away"), and/or escapism into drugs, alcohol, food, etc.



PERSONAL STRATEGIES TO DEFUSE BURNOUT



Be self-aware.

Know the symptoms of stress and burnout and how they impact you and your work.



Practice self-care.

This includes eating right, getting a healthy amount of sun exposure and exercise, and getting annual health checks.



Maintain work-life balance.

Evaluate workload and priorities. Course-correct as needed. Set healthy boundaries.



Relax.

Feed your soul with a favorite hobby, music, books, movies, podcasts, and/or exercise. Research shows that those who indulge in creative, recreational activities have better mental health than those who don't.*



Stay connected.

Social support protects us against burnout.** So strengthen relationships with friends and family. Use your peer network for collegial support.



Address burnout factors at their source.

Address sources of workplace stress like poor communication, conflict, workflow inefficiencies, etc. Focus on what you can control. As far as possible, let go of what you can't control.



Think differently.

"Everything must be perfect." "No one can do this as well as I can, so I might as well do it myself." Be aware of how your own thoughts, or perceptions are feeding your stress. Reframe **stress-inducing thoughts** to **stress-reducing thoughts**, e.g., "Sometimes 'good enough' is better than perfection."

*Mansfield, L., Daykin, N., & Kay, T. (2020). Leisure and wellbeing. *Leisure Studies*, 39(1), 1-10.

**Yu, H., & Gui, L. (2021). Compassion fatigue, burnout and compassion satisfaction among emergency nurses: A path analysis. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*.





WORK STRESSORS THAT FUEL BURNOUT

Here are some common sources of workplace stress known to fuel burnout:



Work Overload

The World Health Organization recently reported that three quarters of a million people die each year from illnesses directly attributable to working long hours.*



Poor Relationships

Poor relationships and poor communication can lead to other stressful situations like poor collaboration, poor teamwork, and growing distrust.



Perceived Lack of Control

Feeling that we lack autonomy and are being micromanaged can be particularly de-motivating and stressful.



Lack of Recognition

We all like to know that our contributions are recognized and valued. Proper recognition includes but should not be limited to fair compensation and benefits.



Lack of Fairness

This can include unfair pay, increased paperwork or workloads, lack of support systems for dealing with burnout, and organizational changes that bring short-term benefits but long-term losses to the organization.



Values Mismatch

This happens when our job tasks come into conflict with our personal values, like loyalty, trust, respect, compassion, teamwork, balance, etc.



Mental Health Stigma

When mental health issues are ignored, they cannot be resolved. And eventually, poor productivity will impact the organization's financial bottom line.



Organizational Change

Research studies show that employees can experience stress before, during, and after organizational change.* This may include feelings of uncertainty, unclear roles, poor communication, or lack of input into organizational decisions.

*<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412021002208>

**Smollan, R. K. (2015). Causes of stress before, during and after organizational change: a qualitative study. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*



ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES TO DEFUSE BURNOUT



Reduce workload and job demands.

Address staffing & scheduling issues:

- Develop algorithms & benchmarks for staffing models
- Address role ambiguity/role conflict

Encourage time & priorities management

- Provide resources to learn time management strategies
- Coach/mentor on boundaries

Prioritize breaks

- Build break times into the workday
- Encourage use of vacation time

Improve workflow efficiency

- Address workflow inefficiencies using proven organizational development models

Cultivate supportive leadership.

Leadership & Modeling

- Cultivate psychological safety for staff to express concerns
- Leaders must model well-being practices and support policies that protect the well-being of the workforce

Recognition and Reward

- Use customized approaches to recognize and reward staff for their unique contributions

Finding meaning & purpose

- Offer programs to boost meaning and job satisfaction

Growth Opportunities

- Create well-defined career trajectories
- Offer professional development opportunities
- Provide personalized coaching

Encourage social support and community.

- Offer mentorship & peer support programs
- Plan retreats & social get-togethers
- Form wellness committees in depts, units, etc.
- Offer themed seminars to build resilience and community
- Prioritize open, transparent, and regular communication

Increase control and flexibility.

- Encourage quality over quantity of work hours
- Increase control over schedules
- Optimize autonomy & participation in decision-making - especially during change
- Encourage two-way dialog for quality improvement

Create a culture of well-being.

Encourage appropriate work-home barriers

- Establish policies regarding email, text, etc. outside of work hours

Encourage and support self-care

- Offer comprehensive training for preventative self-care (physical, mental, and social wellness)
- Offer resources for physical wellness: free or discounted healthy meals and water, free or discounted exercise classes & challenges
- Offer resources for mental wellness: mindfulness, positive psychology, self-awareness, growth mindset, self-compassion
- Offer resources for mental health challenges: stress management, stress relief (e.g., massage therapy, relaxation therapies), mental health counseling, crisis counseling



Want to learn more?



Pamela Coburn-Litvak, PhD ACC HLC

Pamela Coburn-Litvak is a neuroscientist, author, speaker, and ICF-certified executive coach. Drawing on 25 years of research and teaching the effects of stress on mental health, Pam helps leaders and executives manage their work stress in terms of time and priorities management, communication, conflict resolution, employee engagement, and change management.

Pam works in multiple industries and holds specialty certification in healthcare leadership. Her coaching, training, and advising programs help organizations prevent burnout and promote a culture of well-being.

Learn more about Pam's services at:



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