

Burnout

A potential result of too much stress, a lack of self care, or not taking care of our boundaries is burnout.

Burnout feels very different to stress, when we might feel under great pressure physically and mentally. However, when we are stressed we can still imagine that if we can just get everything under control, we'll feel better. We are in the fight and flight/ sympathetic part of our autonomic nervous system (ANS).

When we go beyond stress into burnout, there is a complete lack of motivation and energy. We feel flat, mentally exhausted, and stop caring about the things that were so passionately driving us. We become averse to looking at messages or answering emails. We believe there is no hope in positive change. We are in the collapse part of the Autonomic Nervous System (see [How we Tick](#)), the dorsal parasympathetic. It feels similar to situations where people have undergone a huge shock or experienced a traumatic event.

We don't always recognise we are in burnout and to make things worse, the fact we are in a shut down state can mean we isolate ourselves and don't reach out to others or ignore their reaching out to us. Sometimes we may experience a sense of failure or badness, or feel resentful or let down by others.

Burnout can also have a long term health effect on immunity and sleeping. Obviously it is best if we can pay attention to our boundaries and self care needs but sometimes it feels like a bit of a balancing act and it takes practice to find a balance that is right for us as individuals.

So it is really important that we are aware of the signals of burnout and take action to address them.

Signs and symptoms of burnout:

Physical signs and symptoms:

- feeling tired and drained most of the time,
- lowered immunity and frequent illnesses,
- frequent headaches or muscle pain,
- change in appetite or sleep habits.

Emotional signs and symptoms:

- sense of failure and self-doubt,

- feeling helpless, trapped, defeated,
- detachment, feeling alone in the world,
- loss of motivation,
- increasingly cynical and negative outlook,
- decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment.

Behavioral signs and symptoms of burnout:

- not completing tasks,
 - ignoring messages,
 - skipping meetings,
 - isolating yourself from others,
 - procrastinating,
 - using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope,
 - taking your frustrations out on others.
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