



# Preventing and reversing burnout

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**Stress** describes the feeling at the end of the day when you feel drained but know you will still be able to recover.

**Burnout** describes feeling drained and you are NOT able to recover before you next need to be at work.

Many of us work in professions that ask us to serve others first and take care of our own families or lives later. So many are overly conscientious, caring and want to do well, even if it means delaying taking care of our own personal needs. This can lead to habits and mindsets that result in burnout for you or your team members at some point.

We're also bombarded by many additional stressors all around us. Taking responsibility for everything, or working harder, is not the solution.

Burnout may come with a variety of symptoms. These can include:

- **Physical and emotional exhaustion.** You are emotionally drained, feel worn out by work and not able to recover in your non-working hours.
- **Depersonalization.** A shift in attitude. You may feel yourself becoming uncaring, negative or cynical toward customers or coworkers.
- **A reduced sense of personal accomplishment.** You see yourself as doing less than you really are. You might see your work as meaningless or pointless.

## What can be done about burnout?

There is a well-known concept in popular psychology of the *emotional bank account* which is a great metaphor here. Burnout would be akin to going bankrupt, when withdrawals exceed deposits. To protect against burnout,

deposits need to match or exceed withdrawals. This takes some discipline, time and focus. As with most investments, it can take a while to see the benefits. But stick with it. You can set a positive example for your team.

## Ways to increase deposits

- **Find a mentor.** Is there another leader in your organization who can help you magnify your strengths and shore up your weaknesses? Ask for guidance. Learning and growing are natural remedies for burnout.
- **If your job allows, use your work hours flexibly.** Go for a mid-day walk. Have lunch with a coworker. Get some exercise on your break.
- **Practice mindfulness.** Pay attention to how you're doing and feeling as you go about your day.
- **Exercise regularly.** It's a natural mood-booster.
- **Try something new.** Break the routine once in a while. It can help give you a new perspective.

## Ways to reduce withdrawals

- **Stop over-functioning.** In many cases, burnout happens because someone is doing their own job and someone else's. Delegate when appropriate. If your team is understaffed, see if you've got the budget to hire more people.
- **Check your work/life balance.** Getting this right doesn't happen automatically. It's up to you to pay attention and set clear boundaries.
- **Seek advice.** Ask others how they bounced back from burnout.

People who are prone to burnout may feel guilty for putting themselves first sometimes. But remember: You matter, too! With a little extra care for yourself and your needs, you can keep burnout at bay. When you're in a good place, you're that much more available to help your team — at work and in life.