

Helping your staff cope with burnout and fatigue during COVID-19



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COVID-19 is creating a lot of stress for people. And if you and your team are essential workers, you know about stress. Essential workers not only have the pressures that come with their jobs, but now they have to deal with the health risks of simply going to work.

When stress isn't kept in check, it can lead to burnout — a state of emotional, physical and mental exhaustion. And this can lead to performance issues, low productivity, absences and turnover. But there are things you can do to support your staff through this tough time and keep your business going.

What is burnout?

Burnout is a little different from stress. When people are stressed, they feel like they have “too much” to handle. Employees under stress may feel overwhelmed and work extra hard to meet the demands of their work.

But if the stress lasts a long time or is too intense, it can lead to burnout. Burnout feels like “too little” — too little energy, emotions or desire. A burnt-out employee may seem:

- Detached
- Unmotivated
- Exhausted
- Unfocused
- Uncaring

What causes burnout?^{1,2}

Burnout comes from stress that goes unchecked. Risk factors include:

- **Lifestyle** — working too much, lack of supportive relationships, poor sleep and poor self-care
- **Work circumstances** — unmanageable workload, little control over work, lack of recognition and unclear expectations
- **Personality** — perfectionism, negativity, need for control and judgment of others

Some of your staff may be used to managing their stress through activities like spending time with friends or going to the gym. For these people, COVID-19 is not only causing stress, it has also taken away their methods to cope. So what can you do?

Reversing burnout

If you recognize potential burnout in your staff, it's important to help. Talk to your employees about how they're doing. Show care and concern. And offer support. This might include:

- Making sure your workers are taking their breaks
- Managing by walking around
- Encouraging self-care and healthy habits
- Letting employees know you care
- Prioritizing work tasks
- Reminding your staff about their mental health and wellness benefits

And don't forget to role model these skills yourself. If you practice self-care and stress management, it's easier for your staff to follow suit.

You and your staff are helping us all get through this pandemic. But you still have limits. Make your mental and physical health a priority, recognize concerns and remember that you're not alone.

¹Scott, Elizabeth. [Job factors that contribute to employee burnout](#). Very Well Mind. Accessed April 2020.

²Scott, Elizabeth. [Traits and attitudes that increase burnout risk](#). Very Well Mind. Accessed April 2020.