



HOW TO BEAT THE BURNOUT BLUES

Feeling overextended at work? Burnout is a growing problem among office workers. It results from an accumulative overload of occupational stress and causes adversarial mental or physical health conditions. When a person's adaptive capabilities are overextended, repeatedly, burnout can occur. Researcher Evangelia Demerouti, who authored an article in the European Journal of Clinical Investigation identifies burnout as "intensive physical, affective and cognitive strain that is a long term consequence of adverse working conditions."

These working conditions include some or a combination of the following:

- Excessive workload or pace (time pressures)
- Low work autonomy
- Lack of job security
- Continuous external disturbances, such as noise or overcrowding
- A toxic work environment, including problematic relationships, disrespect or outright bullying
- Lack of job meaningfulness
- Role ambiguity



TAKE ACTION AND TRY JOB CRAFTING

Workload is a big factor in burnout. When employees are confronted with high job demands combined with inadequate job resources, they are at particular risk of developing burnout. It can affect their health and well-being. But there is a way to get back on track.

Research indicates that workers can make a difference by taking matters into their own hands. They can take action in a bottom-up way, rather than waiting for a top-down or driven-by-management initiative to avoid or reduce burnout and to remain healthy and motivated.

You may also be able to try job crafting. You may be able to take steps to alter specific tasks – including the type or number of activities you perform – or even changing up the people you interact with at work.

TAKE TIME TO RECOVER

Recovery from work is an essential daily strategy that individuals can apply to diminish their burnout levels. “Recovery occurs when the stressor [the workplace] is no longer present,” says Demerouti. “It refers to the process during which an individual’s functioning returns to its prestressor level, where fatigue is reduced, and status of physiological and psychological performance readiness is restored.”

Sounds easy, right? Under optimal circumstances, your stress levels return to normal after work hours, and recovery is completed before the next working period starts. However, employees at the highest risk of burnout are those willing – or who feel pressured – to work even when they are at home, to avoid the backlog that may come with their feelings of exhaustion. Or they stay late at the office regularly. In that case, there is no adequate time to recover. It is important to resist working after hours – and that means employees also need to stop thinking about work and disengage themselves mentally from that role. One recommended strategy for doing this is to engage in relaxing, low-effort activities that require minimum effort.

BE POSITIVE

Social activities are an excellent way to achieve detachment from work, but only if you leave work stressors out of the conversation. Talking to family, colleagues or friends about positive emotions has been found to have a beneficial impact on vitality at the end of the day. However, talking about negative issues can lead to higher levels of exhaustion. It can also contribute to work-family conflict.

MAKE TIME FOR EXERCISE

Enhancing physical well-being through exercise, and rest, and focusing on one’s health, is also a great way to beat burnout. A study by Gerber, Markus et al. looked at 12 male participants scoring high on the MBI emotional exhaustion and depersonalization subscales found that increased exercise reduced overall perceived stress as well as symptoms of burnout and depression.

EAT WELL

Our diet can affect our mental health and wellbeing. Eating a balanced diet and cutting out excessive sugars and caffeine can have an enormous positive effect. Some ways to improve healthy eating include eating a healthy breakfast (for example Greek yoghurt with unsweetened muesli or ground flaxseed, scrambled eggs and tomato), eating throughout the day (3 small meals and 2 snacks), and drinking lots of water.

BE MINDFUL OR SPIRITUAL

Take an inspirational perspective, focusing on spirituality, prayer, meditation or even structured attendance at religious services.

LAUGH

Humour can help you to appraise and restructure stressful situations, particularly if it is self-enhancing humour – allowing yourself to be amused by the incongruences of life and by having a genuine, humorous outlook, even in times of stress.

It is also good to make others laugh. Affiliative humour, when you endeavour amuse others, can facilitate relationships and reduce interpersonal tensions.

NURTURE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

Nurturing professional relationships can include discussions about difficulties you experience on the job, which others may share. This emphasizes the important role of teamwork and collegiality in the workplace.

SEEK HELP

Ask a manager or a colleague for advice, and be up front about your needs, whether it is more responsibility or fewer demands.

REFERENCES

European Journal of Clinical Investigation, November 2015, Evangelia Demerouti

Human Performance Management Group, Department of Industrial Engineering & Innovation Sciences, Eindhoven University of Technology, Eindhoven, the Netherlands

Occupational Stress: A Review on Conceptualisations, Causes and Cure

Akanji Babatunde Doctoral Researcher, University of Wales, United Kingdom, Royal Hill, London, United Kingdom, SE10 8RD

Economic Insights - Trends & Challenges is the property of Petroleum - Gas University of Ploiesti

How to Unplug from Work, by Daniel Bortz, Money.com, Time Inc, 2015

The View, “There is no right way to unplug from Work,” by Susanna Schrobsdorff. Time Inc., 2017

Gerber, Markus et al. “Aerobic exercise training and burnout: a pilot study with male participants suffering from burnout” BMC research notes vol. 6 78. 4 Mar. 2013, doi:10.1186/1756-0500-6-78

© Public Services Health and Safety Association