Burnout Is Real

How Leaders Can Spot It – And Take Action

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Agenda for the morning

I. Setting Intentions and Ask the Audience
II. Defining Burnout, Its Symptoms, and Its Dangers
III. The Five Stages of Employee Burnout
IV. How Leaders Can Talk About it And Effect Change
V. Burnout Recovery Conversation Guide
VI. Questions and wrap-up
Ask the Audience

*Which element of your own wellbeing needs your time and attention?*

- Physical (exercise, sleep, nutrition)
- Emotional (good boundaries, taking time for yourself)
- Mental (resiliency, stress reduction)
- Spiritual (gratitude practice, meditation, or religious community)
WHAT IS REAL BURNOUT?

• Burnout is truly a mental health issue
• As the pandemic lingers, employee exhaustion is at historic levels: more than 70% of employees reported being burnt out

Workplace burnout is commonly defined as extreme physical and emotional exhaustion that results in feelings of extreme fatigue or frustration, causing staff to become disengaged, unmotivated, and even cynical about their work.
Burnout is more likely when employees:

- Expect too much of themselves
- Never feel that the work they are doing is good enough
- Feel inadequate or incompetent
- Feel unappreciated for their work efforts
- Lack of independence or autonomy in the workplace
- Lack of adequate staff to do the work
- *Fill in your own observations in the chat:* ________________________
So what does this mean for your workplace?

#1: Train your leaders!

Many employees will stay at their job, even after experiencing increasing levels of burnout. This means supervisors or colleagues are often the first ones to know.

Leaders and managers need to go straight to the root source of the extreme pressures.
Actual Burnout looks like:

**Physical**
- Sleep problems
- Appetite changes
- Shortness of breath
- High blood pressure
- Headaches

**Mental**
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of concentration
- Disorganization
- Pessimism
- Indecisiveness

**Emotional**
- Irritability
- Tension
- Angry outbursts
- Anxiety
- Depression
If left unaddressed, burnout can result in...

- Increased risk of accidents
- Poor physical health
- Increased turnover, perhaps with employees growing resentful and staying too long
- Sharply decreased workplace morale
- Clinical depression
- The employee becoming vocal about their grievances to the point of termination
The Five Stages of Employee Burnout
• Readily accepting additional responsibilities, especially without an increase in title or pay

• Perhaps feeling that something is off, but dismissing it

• Desire to prove oneself and go beyond their normal limits
  • A state of constant alertness
#2

Stress Onset

(“The Balancing Act”)

- Harder time focusing or staying awake
- Feelings of lethargy or anxiety about “looming work”
  - Sleep disturbances
- Escapist activities of choice
- Beginnings of forgetfulness or headaches
Chronic Stress or Constant Anxiety

- Chronic inability to concentrate
- Severe decrease in productivity and performance
- Physical symptoms often arise (illness, migraines, tightness in the chest)
- Loss of emotional moderation, often leading to sadness, resentment, or even anger
#4

True Burnout

- Feeling empty inside
- A pessimistic outlook on work and life
- Physical symptoms intensify and/or increase
- Self-doubt and cynicism
- Often people have a desire to move away from work or friends/family
**Enmeshment**

- Symptoms are so embedded that many experience a significant ongoing mental, physical or emotional problem
  - Complete neglect of personal needs
  - Obsession over problems at work or in life
  - Feelings of desperation or being “trapped”
- Will require intervention and likely medical/psychiatric care
The Lies We Tell Ourselves
(and that your employees may tell themselves)

- I am fine; everyone feels this level of stress
- I just need a good weekend or short vacation
- I can do this
- You don’t understand
- If I tell anyone, I will have failed
- I don’t need to ask for help

One solution? Be as kind to yourself as you are to other people.
How Can Leaders Acknowledge and Change This?
Start with compassion, empathy, and active listening

- Discuss their feelings and solutions with an open mind
- Listen without trying to fix
### REAL-LIFE STEPS TO EFFECT CHANGE

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<th>Actively work to <strong>mitigate overwhelming workloads</strong></th>
<th>Provide <strong>clear expectations</strong> for all employees</th>
<th>Help employees understand their <strong>value to the organization</strong> and their <strong>contributions</strong></th>
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<td>• Create a space for employees to feel comfortable talking about their workload; be <strong>proactive</strong> in assessment</td>
<td>• Also ensure that each employee <strong>understands</strong> those expectations and has the resources and skills to meet them</td>
<td>• Create a system of celebrating each staff person in a unique way; give high performers choices about their work</td>
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REAL-LIFE STEPS TO EFFECT CHANGE, CONT’D

Take mental health very seriously

- **Enforce reasonable work hours**, including asking staff to leave or log off at the end of the day; insist they take lunch breaks and PTO; support physical activity in the workday.

Set a good example!

- Employees internalize the lack of work/life balance or high-pressure environment. **Managers must lead by taking breaks** and setting their own boundaries.

Engage the employee in developing solutions

- Talk to each one of them; **distribute workloads carefully**; consider an employee survey; **empower them** to take control of their schedule and help enforce it.
What will allow you to be successful at your job and still have energy at the end of the day?

Are there current tasks on which you would like additional training?

How often would you like to receive feedback that recognizes your contribution?

What else might you need from me or the organization to support your success at work?
Contact us!

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