



activate employee performance

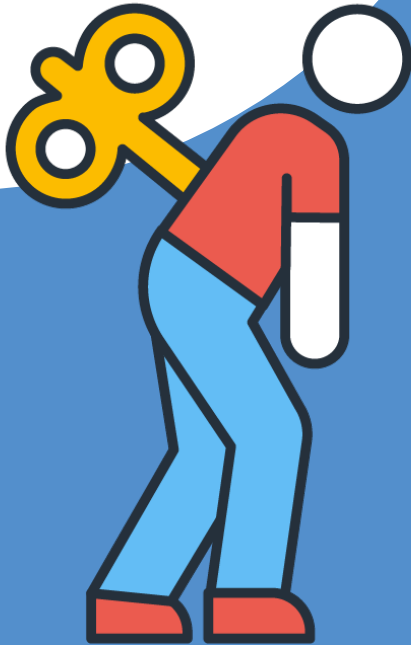
Beating Burnout

Understand what burnout in the workplace is, what causes it and know how to prevent it.



Beating Burnout

A recent survey reported that 76% of employees experience burnout on the job at least sometimes, and 28% say they are burned out “very often” or “always” at work.



This guide will inform you about burnout, how to spot it and how to help you and others prevent it, the topics covered include:

What is burnout and the impact

- 3. The definitions of burnout
- 4. The impact on your personal, professional life and physical / mental health

What can cause burnout

- 6. The potential causes in the work environment and associated personal risks

What burnout looks and feels like

- 8. Signs, symptoms & indicators of burnout
- 10. The 12 steps to burnout

How to prevent it and find support

- 11. Tools, activities and techniques to prevent burnout
- 14. Managing your energy
- 16. Top tips - setting expectations, clarification & feedback
- 18. Where to go for help and support



Definitions of burnout

Burnout can be very damaging to your personal health and it can affect you at work, no matter what job you do, the level you are and what you get paid. There are many definitions of burnout, we've picked a few out for you below.

World Health Organisation

Burnout is now classified as a medical condition by the WHO (World Health Organisation) who describe it as “occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”.

The WHO detailed three indicators of burnout:

- feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion;
- increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and
- reduced professional efficacy

Maslach (1982) defined burnout as a psychological syndrome involving emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment that occurred among various professionals who work with other people in challenging situations

Girdin, Everly and Dusek (1996) talked about burnout as a syndrome “a state of mental and/or physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress”

Maslach and Leiter (2016) together summarised burnout as a “state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long term involvement in demanding situations”

Burnout has lots of association to stress and depression, the key difference with burnout is that most of the causes of burnout are work-related and the good news is that it can be prevented.



The impact burnout can have on you and others



How it can harm your physical health

- Increased fatigue
- Headaches
- Increased likelihood of heart disease
- Increased likelihood of high blood pressure
- Increased likelihood of type 2 diabetes
- Damaged immune system
- Increased aches and pains
- Increased likelihood of respiratory issues
- Increased likelihood of death before age 45
- Causes poor sleep



How it can harm your mental health

- Depression
- Anger
- Excessive stress
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Increased likelihood for mental health needs, such as medication or hospitalisation



The impact burnout can have on you and others



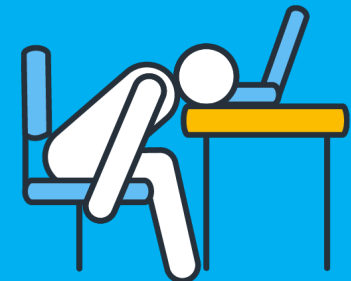
Examples of the impact on your personal life

- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Isolation from friends and family
- Irresponsibility with finances
- Anger towards family members
- Inability to fulfil personal responsibilities



Examples of the impact on your professional life

- Job dissatisfaction
- Withdrawing from colleagues and friends
- Inability to do your job well
- Increased errors and mistakes
- Inability to make decisions
- Diminished performance



What can cause burnout?

Burnout is an occupational phenomenon and there are many causes. The state of burnout does not exist instantly; it takes time and develops slowly, so a working practice that may be acceptable at the start of the year can cause burnout after a couple of months. According to a 2019 Gallup study the **top 5 causes** of burnout in the workplace are:

01

Unfair treatment at work

02

Unmanageable workload

03

Unclear communication from managers

04

Lack of manager support

05

Unreasonable time pressure



Burnout is caused by chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It tends to creep up on you so it's really important that you understand the risks associated with burnout and work with your line manager and colleagues to avoid/mitigate them.

The working environment and others	Personal risks
Solo working	Unsure and lack clarification of about work expectations
Long hours and unrealistic deadlines	Being over engaged with work at detriment to family/friends
Poorly managed workloads	Not willing to change and adapt
Dealing with vulnerability and challenges everyday	Lack close supportive friends/family
No breaks during working hours	Taking on too much without pushing back and saying 'No'
Lack of manager's support	Poor lifestyle – poor sleep, limited exercise and unhealthy eating/drinking habits
Unclear communication from managers	Reluctance to delegate
No control of work type, volume and flow	Career driven and driven by being a high achiever
Lack of listening/awareness from line managers on changes in you	People pleaser
No culture of quality of work life v home life and respect for the need to rest, recover and recharge	Lack of feedback to line manager that you are feeling overwhelmed/struggling
	Lack of self-awareness
	Lack of clarification of your understanding of the work you have been asked to do

What burnout looks and feels like

Signs, symptoms and indicators of burnout

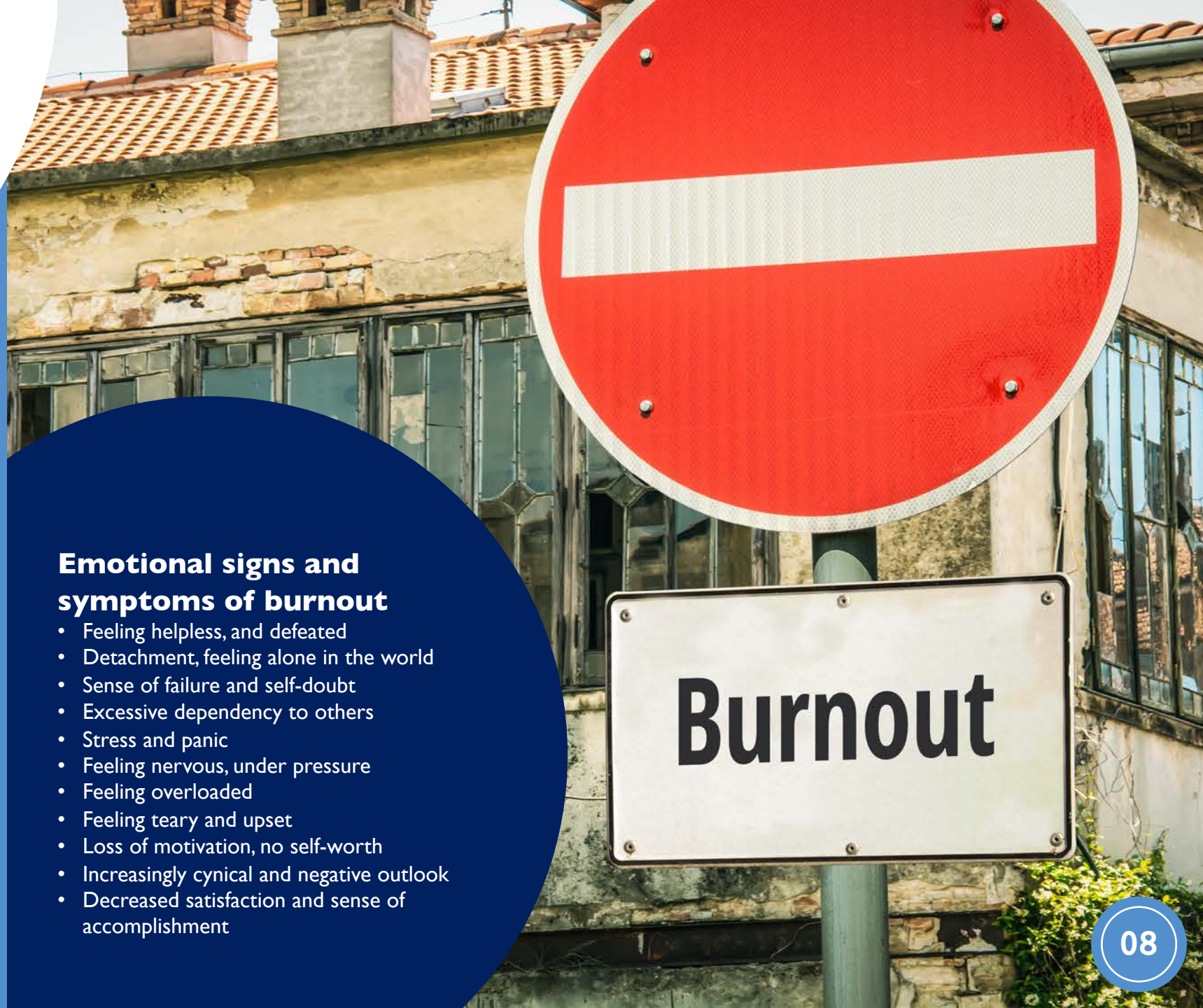
Looking out for the signs of burnout and poor mental health is very important for everyone. If you spot any of the following in yourself or a colleague, please reach out for help and begin to develop a recovery plan.

The symptoms that are said to be a result of burnout can generally also have other causes, like depression, anxiety disorders or chronic fatigue syndrome. It is important to discuss how and what you feel with others and not to conclude you have burnout straight away.

There is lots of help and support.
[Click here to visit the support page.](#)

Emotional signs and symptoms of burnout

- Feeling helpless, and defeated
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world
- Sense of failure and self-doubt
- Excessive dependency to others
- Stress and panic
- Feeling nervous, under pressure
- Feeling overloaded
- Feeling teary and upset
- Loss of motivation, no self-worth
- Increasingly cynical and negative outlook
- Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment



What burnout looks and feels like

Physical signs and symptoms of burnout

- Feeling tired and drained most of the time
- Lowered immunity, frequent illnesses
- Lack of self-care
- Lack of exercise and healthy habits/ food
- Lack of motivation to lead a healthier lifestyle
- Muscular pains and cramps
- Poor sleep habits
- Becoming sick more frequently

Behavioural signs and symptoms of burnout

- Increase in conflict and denial of
- poor performance
- Isolating from others
- Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
- Taking out your frustrations on others
- Missing work or being late for work, appointments and leaving early
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope
- Few hobbies or other interests
- Concentration and attention problems
- Inability in making decisions
- Avoidance from specific ideas

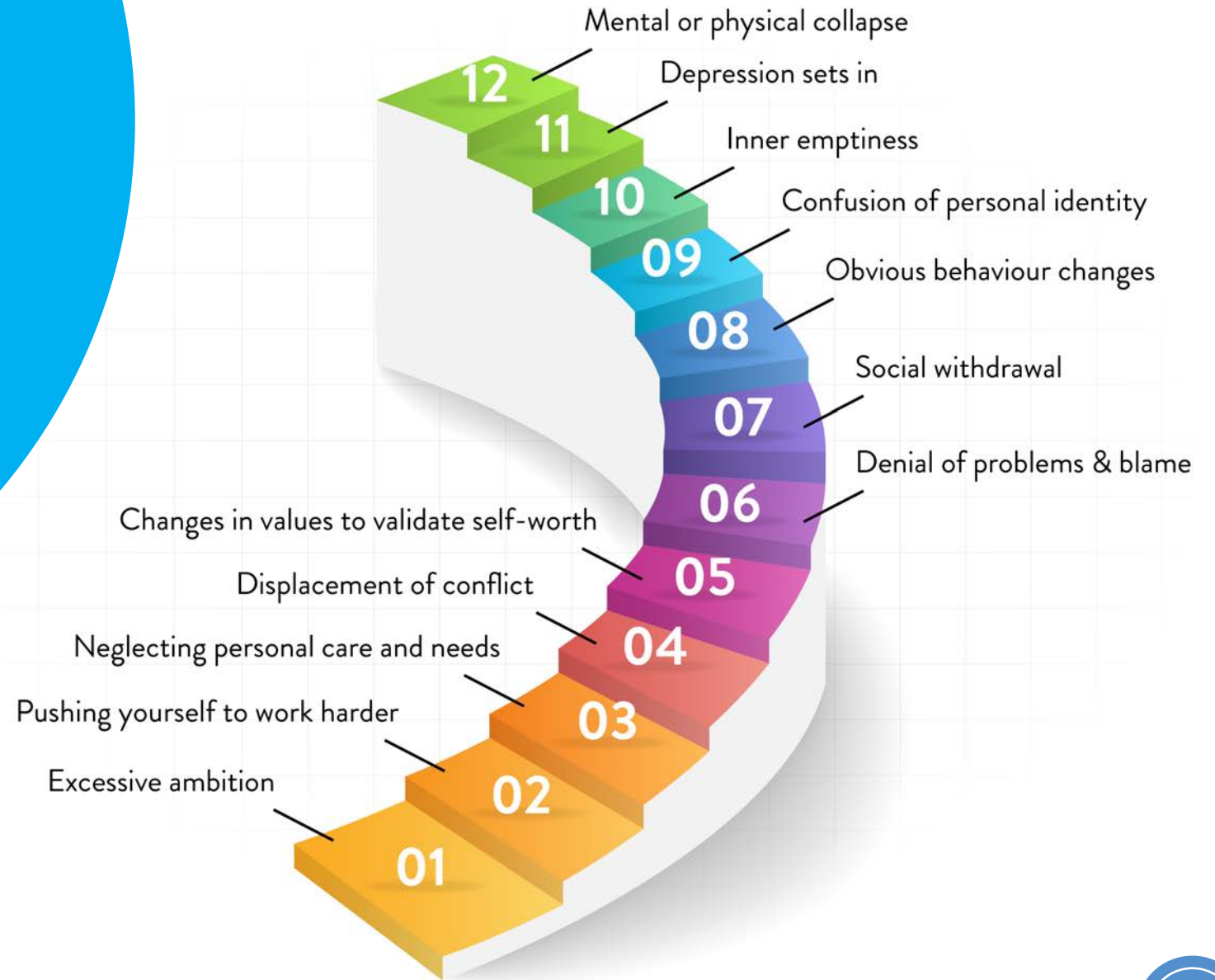
Balanced



Burnout

The 12 steps to burnout

Psychologists Herbert Freudenberger and Gail North suggested there are 12 steps to burnout. The diagram (right) summarises what many believe are the signs of burnout and it explains how burnout can creep up on many of us. Lots of the steps can happen at the same time and in some cases out of order.



How to prevent burnout

Research has linked burnout to many negative physical and mental health outcomes, including coronary artery disease, hypertension, sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety and increased alcohol and drug use.

Is the job right for you?

The relationship with your line manager and the working environment are the biggest contributors to burnout, so changes to your job, team, or line manager are often required to address all the underlying issues.

It can be hard to have a dialogue with work but if you feel at any point that you are at a risk of burnout, find a colleague, someone in HR who can help you have these important conversations.

Take back control

What aspects of your situation at work are truly fixed, and which you can change? When you are in a regular routine, you can skip through life, your brain, although complex, prefers a simple existence and loves to focus on one thing at a time.

It's important now and again to take a step back and check in to how complicated our working lives might have become – unintentionally you can find yourself in a world of work, feeling overwhelmed and then feeling prolonged stress.

Developing a plan to help you prevent burnout

As with anything to do with improving your health, you will need to review your current routines, try new ones, practice them and see what works best for you. Make sure you don't give up and if you can, find a buddy, colleague or a friend who will help support you.

To stay in control, we need to be aware of what we can and can't control.



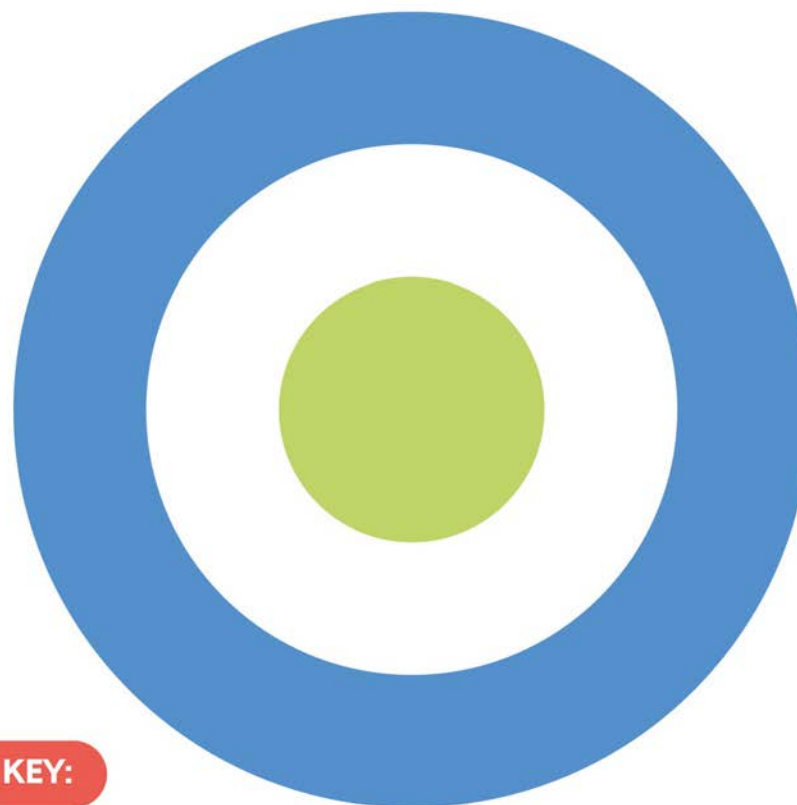
Activity

Take 5 minutes and make a note of what is causing you to struggle at work. In the circles below, make a note of what you can and can't control and then discuss them with your line manager, friend or work colleague. Helping your brain to think through what is in your control will make it easier for you to make changes if needed.



circle of influence

In the box, write down the issue/problem which has annoyed you/upset you



KEY:



= Could not control



= Could influence



= Could control

Self-care

Looking after your own health and wellbeing can power up your confidence and self-esteem so you will feel more enabled to make any necessary changes at work.

Encourage everyone in your team and your line manager to complete it too.

Create your own activity plan like the one on the right and fill it in. If you use an online calendar at work, book in time for your self-care.

Activity	Time in my plan next week	Actions I can take to build into my weekly routine
A great sleep routine resulting in 8 hours of quality sleep each day		
Daily exercise and relaxation routine		
Time spent socialising		
Time spent away from your place of work – this also applies if you work from home		
Time outside, ideally surrounded by nature such as a park, countryside		
Clear finish and start times for work		
Time to buy, prepare and enjoy healthy food/snacks		
Other		

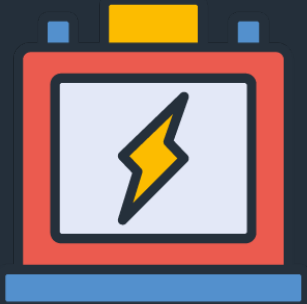
Managing your energy

How are you feeling?

Take a few minutes and reflect on your energy levels at work and after you have finished your working day. Burnout can creep up on you, so it's good to be mindful of your mental and physical energy levels.

Exhaustion is a key problem and can cause burnout, ask yourself which tasks, including critical ones, you could delegate to free up meaningful time and energy for other important work.

- Are there ways to reshape your job in order to gain more control or to focus on the most fulfilling tasks?
- If cynicism and negative energy is a major issue, can you protect yourself from the work and team members that frustrate you?
- Could you build in more time with positive, supportive relationships at work as opposed to the ones that drain you?
- If you're feeling ineffective, what assistance or development might you help and where would do go for help?
- If you have lack of positive energy, who can help you showcase your work to those that matter?



Managing your energy

Physical energy

Find a type of exercise that you enjoy, many people find that volunteering or exercising to help a charity gives them the kick start needed.

The NHS has lots of free videos and exercise routines that can help you get started.

Physical exercise

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise>

Walking groups

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health>

Meeting others

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing>

Mental energy

Seek times in the day to totally calm your mind and relax it. The NHS has lots of free videos and exercise routines that can help you get started.

Mindfulness

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness/>

Bedtime meditation

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/bedtime-meditation/>

Any information sourced from the NHS website is licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0 and, where possible, for more information please visit their website Open Government Licence.

Physical activity
is really important
to help prevent
burnout.

Set expectations and seek clarification & feedback

Most of us work to an incredibly high standard and it's important that we are always clear with what is expected of us. If you are in doubt, seek clarification and always ask for feedback.

Once you get into the habit of doing this, you can use the information to decide if you feel a sense of purpose and what is being asked of you is what you want.



Tips when asking for clarification

Ask for more information

It's best that you are not vague when asking for further clarification. You should openly admit that you need more information to properly understand what the information/request you have been given.

Summarise what you have understood and what you haven't

If the conversation is a long and complex one, you should briefly specify the parts that you understood and what you didn't.

When you are in a state of burnout it is helpful to make notes as you listen to the instructions/requests/information and use your notes to help you clarify what you do and don't understand.

Don't blame someone else if you don't understand

It is generally more helpful if you don't blame the person giving you information for your lack of understanding. It's nobody's fault but for both of your wellbeing it's important to both clarify what you understand from the information you have been given. By not sounding accusatory you are more likely to get the clarification you are after.

Be specific in your request

It's important that you make it clear where you need clarification. This way you can both focus on providing/receiving clearer explanations now and in the future.

Thank the speaker

You should thank the person offering the clarification, as a sign of appreciation for them taking the time to explain the information they gave you. They are more likely to happily clarify information in the future.



Set expectations and seek clarification & feedback

Tips on flexibility

Flexibility

When we start to feel burnout, we can find it is slowly getting harder to do tasks. To prevent burnout, we need to build flexibility into our mind and our ways of working.

Review your work, can you introduce flexibility into your thinking?

- Set specific times to read emails, messages, reports and try not to do this out of core hours
- Be more active at work – do calls/meetings walking or standing to increase energy levels
- Do the most difficult tasks at the start of the day when you mentally more energised
- Avoid meetings at the end of the day when you need to start calming your mind to relax after work
- Talk to your manager about your strengths and do work that maximises your brilliance
- Talk every day to a colleague about your work and how you are feeling – you will be helping them too

Having a positive, energised, flexible mind means you need to build in relaxation and small breaks into your working day, don't forget a great nights' sleep too. When you are mentally energised you will be more flexible in your approach to work.

Make a note of 5 actions you can do to introduce more flexibility into your thinking and work.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Seek support

We would urge you to build a social network of support whether you have identified signs of burnout or are reading this toolkit to help others.



There is always someone there to help you and building a positive network of colleagues at work will help you create healthy routines at work and help you challenge the environment you work within. The following is a small selection of help and support available in the UK. These organisations can help you find qualified professionals who can diagnose mental health conditions and offer ongoing support for those in recovery from burnout.

- **MIND** - A starting point for anybody suffering from mental health problems - www.mind.org.uk
- **MENTAL HEALTH** - This UK's leading mental health research, policy and service improvement charity www.mentalhealth.org.uk
- **SAMARITANS** - 24-hour support by phone, text or email for anybody that needs somebody to talk to www.samaritans.org
- **NHS CHOICES** - All of your health and wellbeing questions answered online with good support resources available: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/improve-mental-wellbeing.aspx
- **GP** - To find a local GP, click here - <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-GP>
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL THERAPIES** - You can refer yourself directly to a psychological therapies service (IAPT) without seeing your GP. (England only) by clicking here <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-psychological-therapies-service>
- **CALM** - The Campaign Against Living Miserably is leading a movement against suicide. Phone: 0800 58 58 58 (helpline, 5pm - 12pm, 7 days a week) www.thecalmzone.net
- **THE SILVER LINE** - The Silver Line is the only free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year Need help? Call us ANYTIME on 0800 4 70 80 90 www.thesilverline.org.uk
- **THE SWITCHBOARD** - Switchboard provides a one-stop listening service for LGBT+ people on the phone, by email and through instant messaging 0300 330 0630 – Open 10:00 – 22:00 every day <https://switchboard.lgbt>
- **ZERO SUICIDE ALLIANCE** - This online training takes around 20 minutes and will lead you through the skills you might need to help someone who may be considering suicide, tackling stigma and promoting open communication. <https://www.zerosuicidealliance.com/training>

When the slightest sign of burnout is identified, please do reach out at work/home for help straight away. If the problem continues it is vital that you/those you are helping should not hesitate to seek professional help.

Support at Havebury



- 24/7 telephone access to GP services; all GPs are registered with the General Medical Council
- Employee assistance programme; advice and counselling provided, with structured counselling of up to six sessions available either face-to-face or over the phone
- Expert health information; on treatments and conditions, lifestyle management and travel information
- Lifestyle benefits and discounts; variety of discounts including gym memberships, sports equipment and family days out
- Health evaluation tools; including discounted health screening from Nuffield, the Denplan dental health check and online risk assessments for the whole family

Call: 0800 975 3347
simplyhealth.co.uk/login



Confidentiality & sources

Sources

Gallup data

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What is burnout

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Definitions

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4 steps to prevent burnout - <https://hbr.org/2016/11/beating-burnout>

Confidentiality & sources

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