

# Avoiding Burnout

*Definition: Physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress.*

## What is burnout?\*

Burnout is the loss of meaning in one's work, coupled with mental, emotional, or physical exhaustion as the result of long-term, unresolved stress. Burnout can affect anyone, however there is a growing number of entrepreneurs, business owners, and freelancers who are reporting symptoms of burnout - up to 60% in the UK.

## General symptoms of burnout include:

Lower resistance to illness	Pessimistic outlook on work or life	Physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion
Time away from work	Demotivation and detachment from your work	Depleted energy levels
Detachment in personal relationships	Lower productivity	

## The 5 stages of burnout

Burnout can affect anyone, at any time in their lives. However, burnout is most common in people between the ages of 25 and 44. As with any illness, symptoms of burnout change from person to person, however these five stages are commonly observed:

### 1. HONEYMOON PHASE

When we undertake a new task, we often start by experiencing high job satisfaction, commitment, energy, and creativity. This is especially true of a new job role, or the beginnings of a business venture.

In this first phase of burnout, you may begin to experience predicted stresses of the job, so it's important to start implementing positive coping strategies, such as taking practical steps in your job, or prioritizing your mental health. The theory is that if we create good coping strategies at this stage, we can continue in the honeymoon phase indefinitely.

#### Common symptoms include:

Job satisfaction	Readily accepting responsibility	Sustained energy levels
Unbridled optimism	Commitment to the job at hand	Compulsion to prove oneself
Free-flowing creativity	High productivity levels	

### 2. ONSET OF STRESS

The second stage of burnout begins with an awareness of some days being more difficult than others. You may find your optimism waning, as well as notice common stress symptoms affecting you physically, mentally, or emotionally.

#### Common symptoms include:

High blood pressure	Inability to focus	Irritability
Job dissatisfaction	Lack of sleep or reduced sleep quality	Lack of social interaction
Lower productivity	Unusual heart rhythms	Anxiety
Avoidance of decision making	Change in appetite or diet	Fatigue
Forgetfulness	General neglect of personal needs	Grinding your teeth at night
Headaches	Heart palpitations	

### 3. CHRONIC STRESS

The third stage of burnout is chronic stress. This is a marked change in your stress levels, going from motivation, to experiencing stress on an incredibly frequent basis. You may also experience more intense symptoms than those of stage two.

**Common symptoms include:**

Lack of hobbies	Missed work deadlines and/or targets	Persistent tiredness in the mornings
Physical illness	Procrastination at work and at home	Repeated lateness for work
Resentfulness	Social withdrawal from friends and/or family	Uptake of escapist activities
Anger or aggressive behavior	Apathy	Chronic exhaustion
Cynical attitude	Decreased sexual desire	Denial of problems at work or at home
Feeling threatened or panicked	Feeling pressured or out of control	Increased alcohol/drug consumption
Increased caffeine consumption		

**4. BURNOUT**

Entering stage four of burnout is where symptoms become critical. When burnout is talked about more generally, this is the stage that is often referred to. Continuing as normal is often not possible, and it's key that you seek intervention (for clinical issues, please refer to [our partner Thrive Your Life](#)).

**Common symptoms include:**

Development of an escapist mentality	Feeling empty inside	Obsession over problems at work or in life
Pessimistic outlook on work and life	Physical symptoms intensify and/or increase	Self-doubt
Social isolation	Behavioral changes	Chronic headaches
Chronic stomach or bowel problems	Complete neglect of personal needs	Continuation or increase in escapist activities
Desire to "drop out" of society	Desire to move away from work or friends/family	

**5. HABITUAL BURNOUT**

The final stage of burnout is habitual burnout. This means that the symptoms of burnout are so embedded in your life that you are likely to experience a significant physical or emotional problem, as opposed to occasionally experiencing stress or burnout.

**Common symptoms include:**

Chronic sadness	Depression	Burnout syndrome
Chronic mental fatigue	Chronic physical fatigue	

---

**How to prevent burnout from affecting you**

While burnout can cause issues at work, at home, and in life, it is always possible to take action and move towards Stage 1. Even if you are not experiencing stress or burnout now, the wisest course of action is to proactively take up self-care and build your mental resilience. Suggestions for preventing or coming back from burnout:

Establish boundaries for work, tell your boss, and stick to them!	Find some "me" time	Look at your nutrition (fuel and sensitivities)
Turn off your phone at bedtime (do not disturb)	Find time to wind up and down each day (Relaxation Radio)	Look into holistic/functional medicine remedies that may work for you
Herbal teas	Vitamin therapy	Hydration therapy
Meditation/Mindfulness		

