



How to Recognize & Minimize Burnout in Uncertain Times

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Objectives

- Define burnout
- Explore the stages of burnout
- Explore steps to minimize burnout



Defining Burnout

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

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 is physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress.



With news changing all the time, “information is constant: whether it’s about the pandemic itself, whether it’s about things you should be doing, schedules for your kids, how to work best from home – it’s just a lot of information”, says Janna Koretz, a Boston-based psychologist who **helps clients with high-powered jobs navigate burnout.**

In other words, the Covid-19 pandemic is forcing us to rapidly grapple with difficult decisions in an unsettlingly new context.

“Normally, we’re not thinking about **the ethical implications of ordering delivery or whether to offer to get groceries for your elderly neighbour,**” says Elizabeth Yuko, a New York-based journalist and Fordham University adjunct professor in bioethics, the field that studies ethical implications in healthcare, medicine and other areas of life science. “It’s this psychological stress most of us aren’t used to. We’ve never experienced anything like this in modern times.”

In a crisis like this, burnout can emerge because of something different – what experts call ‘decision fatigue’



Stages of Burnout-Stage 1

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.

You may begin to experience predicted stresses of the job.

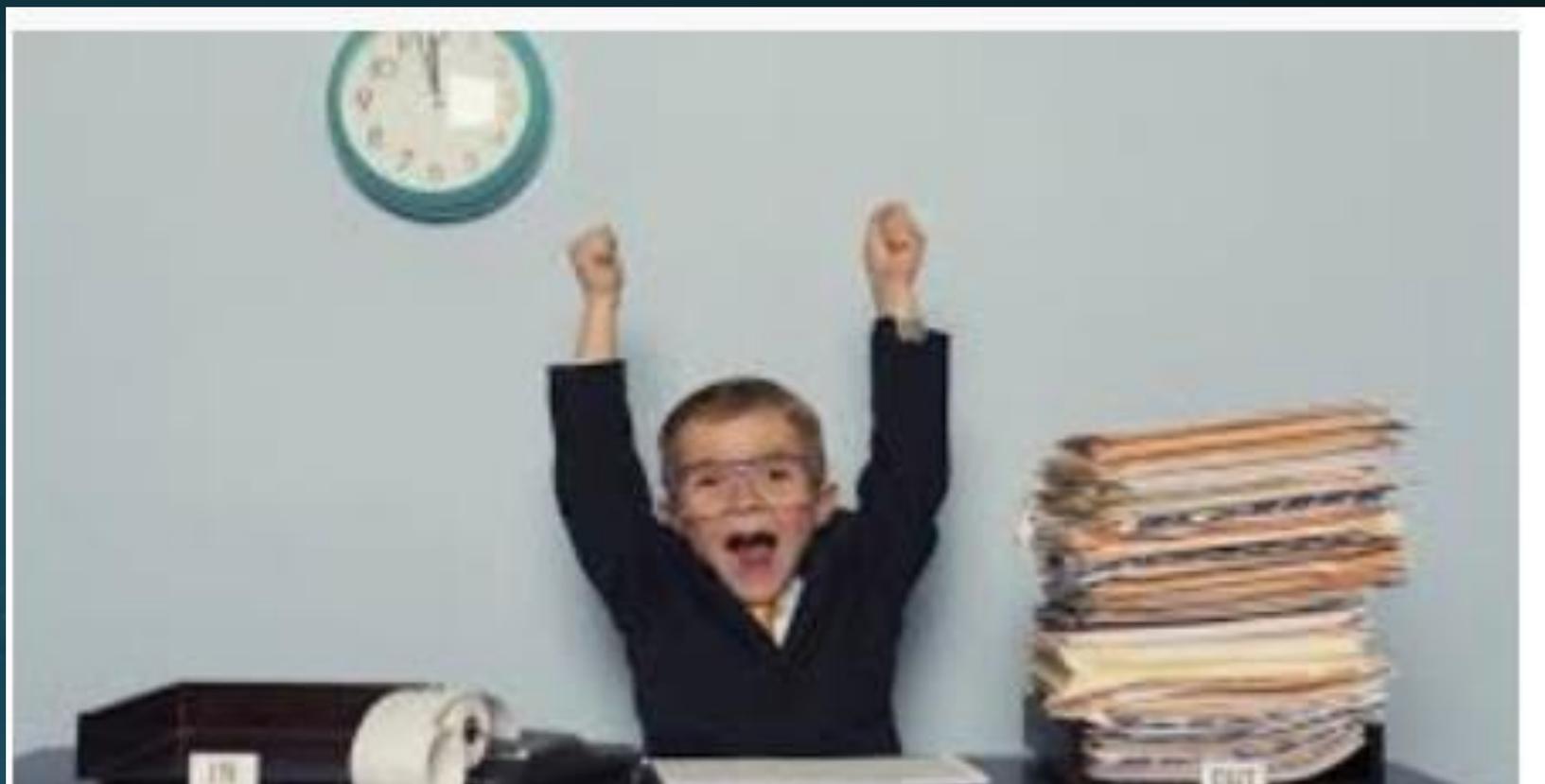
It's important to start implementing positive coping strategies, such as taking practical steps in your job, or prioritizing your mental health.

The theory is that if we create good coping strategies at this stage, we can continue in the honeymoon phase indefinitely.



Symptoms of Burnout-Stage 1

- 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





Stages of Burnout-Stage 2

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 declining, as well as notice common stress symptoms affecting you physically, mentally, or emotionally.

Symptoms of Burnout-Stage 2

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
- Anxiety
- Avoidance of decision making
- Change in appetite or diet
- Fatigue
- Forgetfulness
- General neglect of personal needs
- Grinding your teeth at night
- Headaches

Do you know the signs of stress?



Agitation



Hopelessness



Self-neglect



Personality
Change



Withdrawal



Stages of Burnout-Stage 3

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.



Symptoms of Burnout-Stage 3

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
- 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





Stages of Burnout-Stage 4

4. BURNOUT

Entering stage four of burnout is where symptoms become critical.

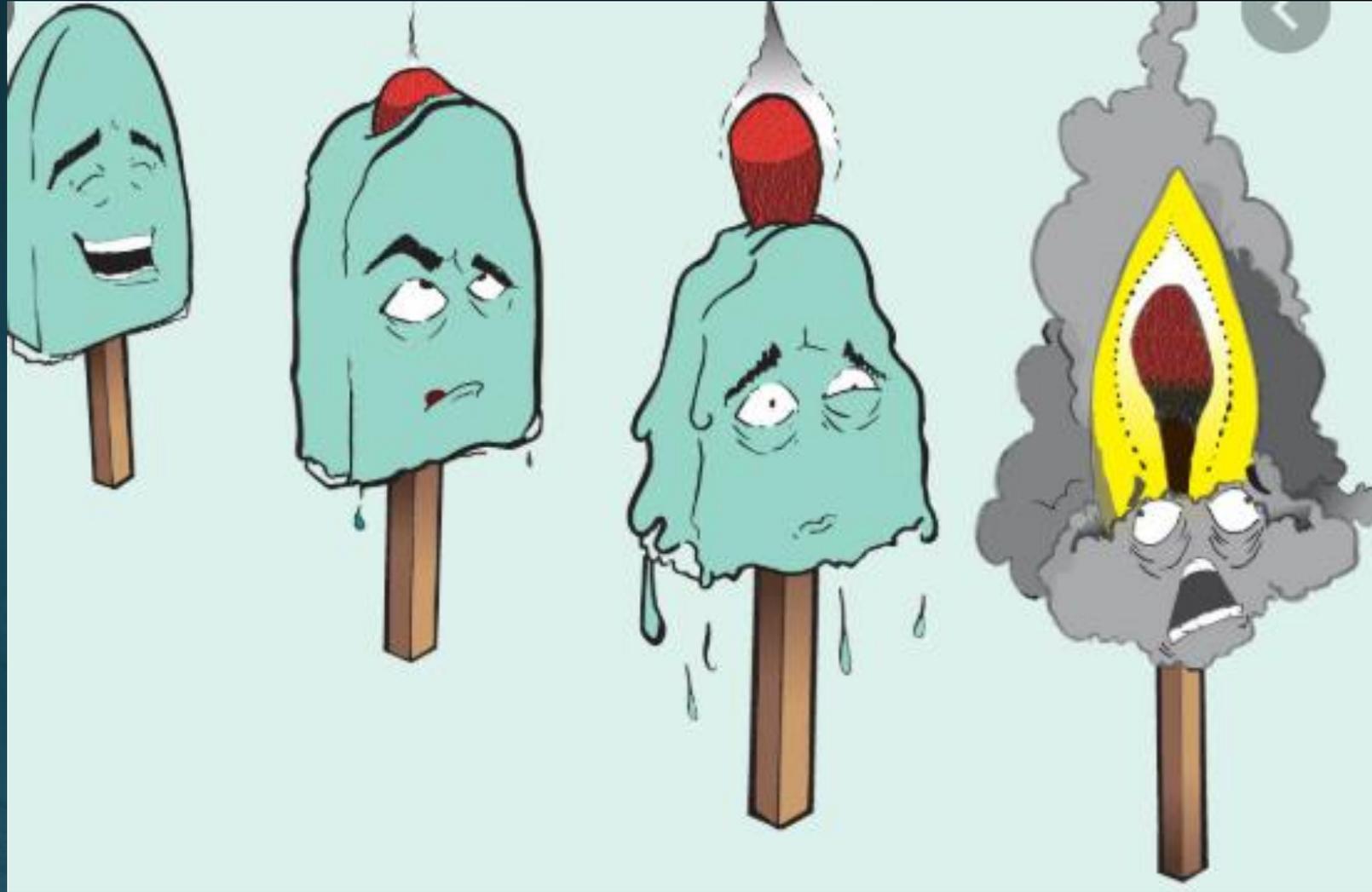
When burnout is talked about more generally, this is the stage that is often referred to.

Continuing as normal is often not possible, and it's key that you seek intervention

Symptoms of Burnout-Stage 4

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





Stages of Burnout-Stage 5

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.

Stages of Burnout-Stage 5

Common symptoms include:

- Chronic sadness
- Depression
- Burnout syndrome
- Chronic mental fatigue
- Chronic physical fatigue

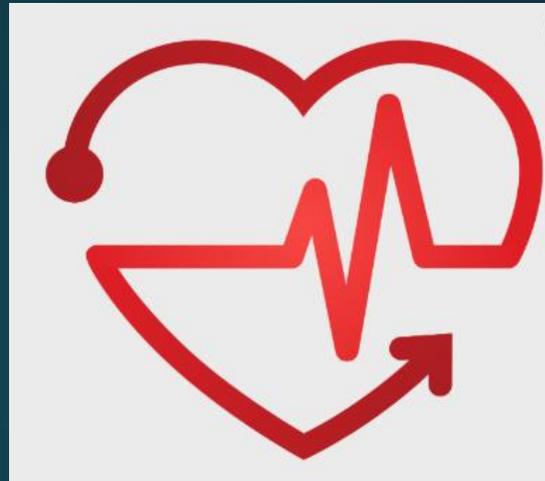


There is little to nothing left to give.

Toward Health

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, a positive course of action is to **proactively take up self-care and build your mental resilience.**



Toward Health-Start With a Healthy Baseline

- Eat Healthy
- Stretch/Move
- Breathe
- Laugh





Toward Health-Boundaries

- Answering the occasional email after work isn't likely to destroy your work-life balance/fit.
- Beware: Sending after-hours messages can become an unsustainable habit and can build unreasonable expectations.
- Organize your calendar so you have a set number of hours when you'll be working-- and a set number when you won't.
- Color-code it and make it public so others know when you're off-limits.
- Letting work seep into your off-hours not only takes away from time you should be spending on yourself, it can also reduce the quality of work you're doing.
- **If you want to be happier and more productive, set boundaries and stick to them.**



Toward Health-Recharge

Take time to savor things that you enjoy. Take time for you.

- Connect with positive others socially at work and outside of work.
Choose people to connect with who are positive and who provide you a sense of connectedness.
- Pursue a hobby. Do something that builds you up. Knitting, reading, listening to music.
- Be creative: draw, paint, write poetry, journal, create a new recipe, sing, dance, but recapture lost creativity.
- Enjoy nature. Get outside, take in the sights and sounds of the outside world. Walk, read outside, eat outside, get the vitamin D from the sun, listen to the birds, water...
- Volunteer.
- Make others laugh!



Experiencing some emotional exhaustion and anxiety is to be expected, the experts agree. The problem is that many of our usual coping mechanisms have vanished

“People feeling anxious about writing their next novel, or learning how to play the guitar, or learning French – I’ve gotten questions about that a lot; people saying, ‘I feel like a failure, I finally have this time,’” says Yuko. It’s unrealistic to expect to perform above and beyond right now, even with an abundance of time at home. “This is probably the biggest shift in all of our lives in terms of day-to-day operations,” she says.

Take care to stay sane before panicking about the progress of your masterpiece-in-progress – or lack thereof.



Toward Health-Self Care

Take time for unwinding-where you can.

- Get enough sleep.
- Take a nap.
- Take a vacation day.
- Take a vacation period.
- FORGET balance, find harmony.
- Schedule free time. Doing nothing is the opposite of what causes burnout.
- Practice grounding strategies throughout the day.

- You are worth it. Not you as a employee, you as a parent, you as a friend, you as a spouse, you as daughter or son, just for being you.

Final Thought



No matter how much you love your career and no matter how committed you are to your career, your career will depend on your health and wellness.

Without our health, mental and physical, we can't thrive.



THANK YOU!

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