

AVOID THE HOLIDAY BURNOUT

Many people who report that they feel burned out have simply taken on too many responsibilities, either because of pressure from others or because of their own expectations. An overloaded holiday schedule combined with the demands of entertaining, gift shopping, decorating, and other holiday traditions can evoke panic in even the most organized people.



Feeling burnout can affect not only your work, but also your relationships and your health. Burnout is defined as a state of chronic stress, leading to exhaustion, detachment, and feeling of ineffectiveness. It is beyond what you may know as ‘regular tiredness’. It is important to know what burnout is and its symptoms so you can spot them quickly and take steps to intervene. Take time to identify the things that cause you stress during the holidays and develop a new plan for handling them this year. Understanding the symptoms of burnout gives you the ability to take care of yourself before things get worse.

Whether you recognize the warning signs of impending burnout or you’re already past the breaking point, trying to push through the exhaustion and continuing as you have been will only cause further emotional and physical damage. Now is the time to pause and change direction by learning how you can help yourself overcome burnout and feel healthy and positive again.

TAKE AN INVENTORY. Make a list of all the situations that cause you to feel stressed, anxious, worried, frustrated, and helpless. Next to each item on the inventory, write down at least one way to modify that situation to reduce its stress, and then begin implementing them in your routine. Don't get frustrated if you don't see immediate changes. Burnout doesn't happen overnight, so it's unrealistic to expect it to go away overnight. Consistent implementation of positive changes in your routine is the best way to see improvement.

SPEND TIME DOING SOMETHING THAT BRINGS YOU JOY EVERY DAY. That may mean texting your kids or walking the dog. Remember what is important in your life and make that your priority. Taking the time to do things that we love is important –not only for our short-term happiness, but also for our mental and emotional well-being.

TREAT SAYING ‘NO’ AS A SKILL. Get into the right frame of mind by recognizing the importance of turning things down occasionally. You’ve said yes to everything and taken on too much. But if you never say no, what is your yes worth? Saying no to people, particularly if you generally say yes, can stop people in their tracks and you may even find they take the refusal as a personal rejection. Get on top of that by being clear. Learning to set healthy personal and professional boundaries puts you on a road to better health and wellbeing and can help decrease the chances of burnout.

PRACTICE SELF-CARE. Self-care can take many forms and can easily fit into your holiday schedule. Whether it is going for a quick walk after dinner or meditating in between shopping trips, small acts can go a long way to ensure a healthy body and a healthy mind during a busy and often hectic time of the year.

Burnout does offer a hidden silver lining. It can be a positive force for change, giving you a perfect chance to reassess nearly everything about your life and your work. Take time to **think about what you really want in your life** – your goals, priorities, hopes, and dreams. If you feel you are struggling to overcome symptoms of burnout, call your EAP to be connected with a counselor that can help you reassess your personal values and goals.

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