

BREAKOUT FROM BURN OUT

**LEARN GENTLE, EFFECTIVE,
NEUROSCIENCE-BASED WAYS TO
PREVENT AND RECOVER FROM
BURNOUT.**

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Information contained in this guide is for educational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for treatment or consultation with a medical doctor or mental health professional.

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RELIEF IS POSSIBLE

Have you ever heard someone say that, "All research is *me search*? Well, whenever I hear it, I think of my journey to overcome burnout. Throughout my adulthood, more than once, I hit walls of utter exhaustion. Although I appeared healthy on the outside and achieved success at work, too often, I felt uninspired, cynical, and very, very tired. I created a beautiful family with my husband and had funny, wonderful friends, but at times, the mere thought of spending time with people I loved gave me anxiety. Somehow, I powered through, although I often complained about feeling disconnected. Then back-to-back tragedies hit. Two significant people in my life succumbed to early, health-related deaths. From that point forward, I set myself on a path of self-discovery to feel better, more connected, and make sense of what led to my burnout so I would never experience it again.

Burnout is scary, confusing, and painful. A major part of my work is dedicated to providing education, gentle, healthy tools, and support so people can avoid it and/or recover from it to enjoy their lives and thrive with more ease.

In this guide, I share the signs and symptoms of burnout and neuroscience-based strategies to prevent it and recover from it. *Burnout is serious* and it's important for you to partner with professionals you trust to change your life and make burnout a thing of your past. You don't have to live in burn out. Take time to review the info in this guide and think of ways it may help you or someone you know. After you do that, *contact me*, and let me know your story. I wish you the best on your journey and am available if you need additional support.

Your NeuroCoach & Consultant,

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WHAT IS BURNOUT? WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes burnout as a syndrome that results from chronic stress that has not been successfully managed.



3 signs associated with burnout:

Emotional & physical exhaustion.
Keyword: EXHAUSTION

Depersonalization & depression.
Keyword: CYNICISM

Lack of feeling accomplishment & impact.
Keyword: INEFFICACY

WHAT DOES BURNOUT DO TO MY BRAIN?

OUTSIZED EMOTIONS

The part of our brain that controls emotional reactions, our amygdala, enlarges. Our ability to perceive subtle cues declines. This can lead us to respond aggressively and over-react.

EXCESSIVE STRESS HORMONE PRODUCTION

Hormones meant to be experienced in short bursts, like cortisol, are over-produced and weather our bodies over time. This suppresses our immune systems and contributes to chronic illness.

OVERACTIVE LEFT BRAIN

The left brain enlarges and makes us overly reliant on linear, literal, thinking and quick answers. Our ability to access intuition, non-verbal cues, big-picture thinking and connection with feelings is inhibited.

IMPAIRED DECISIONS

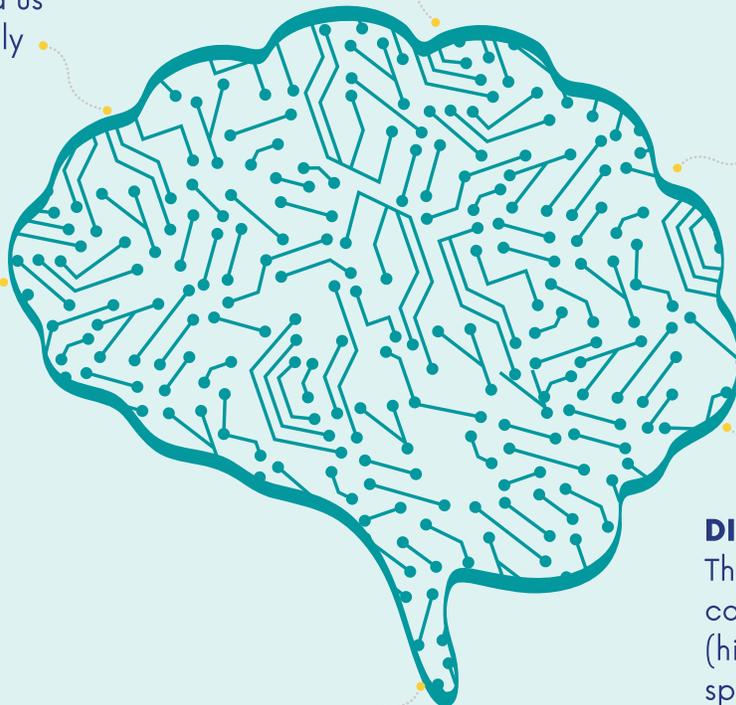
Burnout shrinks the PFC which is the part of our brain responsible for empathy, judgement, and impulse control.

WEAKENED RIGHT BRAIN

When the right brain is weak, we feel out of touch with bodily sensory perceptions, full language comprehension, and our ability to process emotions decreases.

DIFFICULTY LEARNING

The parts of our brain that control memory (hippocampus) and attention spans (PFC) are weakened. This makes it more difficult to learn. The connectivity between different parts of our brain weakens and leads to decreased creativity, working memory, and problem-solving abilities.



HOW CAN I PREVENT BURNOUT?

To prevent burnout, it's helpful to beware of the early signs and stages that lead to burnout. Healthline identified twelve. They are:



EXCESSIVE DRIVE/AMBITION

This is common for people starting a new job or undertaking a novel task. Too much ambition can lead to burnout when it's not balanced with adequate rest, healthy nutrition, and emotional support.



PUSHING YOURSELF TO WORK HARDER

Ambition pushes us to work harder, but we must remember to take a step back and enjoy the fruits of our labor. Build rest and recovery time into your schedule.

NEGLECTING YOUR OWN NEEDS

Sacrificing self-care like sleep, exercise, and eating well leads to burnout. Always prioritize your health and incorporate it into your success plan.



EARLY STAGES OF BURNOUT CONTINUED...



DISPLACEMENT OF CONFLICT

This looks like blaming your partner, the demands of your job, colleagues, or anything for your troubles instead of acknowledging that you're pushing yourself to the max. It can be tricky to identify in ourselves without self-awareness, so make time for mindfulness and self-reflection to keep this at bay.

NO TIME FOR NONWORK-RELATED NEEDS

Take note if you begin to withdraw from family and friends. When social invitations and activities that used to feel fun and comfortable start to feel burdensome, instead of enjoyable, that's a red flag.



DENIAL

As impatience with those around you mounts, instead of taking responsibility for your behaviors, you blame others, and judge them as incompetent, lazy, or overbearing. We lack of empathy for ourselves and others, and become highly critical.

WITHDRAWAL

You begin to withdraw from family and friends and don't extend or accept invitations to spend time together.





BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

On the road to burnout, you may become more aggressive and snap at loved ones for no reason.



DEPERSONALIZATION

You feel detached from your life and your ability to control your life. You may find yourself saying that you feel disconnected, yet can't find a logical way to explain why.



INNER EMPTINESS OR ANXIETY

Feeling empty or anxious, you may turn to thrill seeking behaviors to cope, like substance use, gambling, or overeating. Or, you may cope by working even more.

DEPRESSION

Life loses its meaning and you begin to feel hopeless. This can sound like asking, "What's the point of this fill in the blank?" Things that were once very important to you, like your marriage, career, or a hobby that you once found great joy and solace in, feel pointless.



MENTAL OR PHYSICAL COLLAPSE

This can impact your ability to cope. Mental health or medical attention may be necessary.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M ALREADY BURNED OUT?

Seek professional help!

Do not try to fix it alone. It can take up to three years to recover from burnout and reluctance to seek help creates unhealthy cycles. Hire a therapist, coach, and/or trusted medical practitioner to help you identify your stressors and make profound shifts in your mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

On the road to recovery...

- Set realistic expectations.
- Understand that the help you receive will need to feel effortless because you are already so overwhelmed.
- Set a low bar and start with 1-3 minutes of gentle, healing activities a day.
- Prioritize water, food, and rest.
- Do nothing as often as possible.
- Remember, burnout is best tackled by making lifestyle changes. Your life, work, and relationships may look very different before and after burnout.

Tips to Reduce Stress & Avoid Burnout

Here are tips I provide to my coaching clients and during workshops. They help your brain decrease stress levels and increase your ability to experience relaxation, bonding, pleasure, and peace.

1

Breathe - Oxygen is a major fuel source for the brain and increasing oxygen to the brain by breathing deeply and slowly calms anxiety, fear, and anger. Neuroscientist Jill Bolte Taylor says a feeling lasts about 90 seconds and then it passes. Experiment with breathing deeply and slowly to feel calm. Breathe in for 5 counts and out for 7. Fill up your chest on the inhale and extend your belly on the exhale.

2

Drink water - The brain is made of 70-80% water and staying hydrated increases our focus and lowers stress signals. Water delivers nutrients to the brain and removes harmful toxins. Imagine it flowing like a river through your brain transporting molecules across cells to communicate with each other so you can move, create, and think. Can you commit to drinking 1/2 of your body weight in ounces per day?

3

Rest - Commit to shut down for 1/3 of the day as we are designed to do. Did you know that 6 or fewer hours of sleep per day for 2 weeks equates to .1 blood alcohol levels. This is legally drunk in the U.S. How many of us go to work in these drunk states? An extra 20 minutes of sleep per day (or a sleep proxy like meditation) makes you more alert, improves performance levels and boosts your mood.

4

Exercise - Increases dopamine (pleasure enhancing) and serotonin (mood boosting) levels in our brains. Running is associated with boosting endorphins which decrease physical pain symptoms and lead to euphoria or the "runners high". Try incorporating walking meetings into your day to boost productivity and creative thinking.

Tips to Reduce Stress & Avoid Burnout

Decrease stress levels and increase relaxation, bonding, pleasure, and peace.

5

Play soft music - Doing so throughout the day can increase dopamine (pleasure sensor) levels and provides the ability for our brains to predict repeating patterns which activates our reward circuitry. This is very satisfying and calming for our brains.

6

Eat - How often do you skip meals or delay eating to finish a task and end up eating something fast and unhealthy to make up the difference? Doing so is extremely taxing for the brain and contributes to increased stress and foul moods. Stick to scheduled breaks to eat meals that include protein (dopamine = pleasure) with a little fat (glucose = brain fuel) and minimal carbs (mood boosters). Too much sugar, carbs, and caffeine can cause a crash, so avoid them at work.

7

Get fresh air and sunlight - Both help produce serotonin which is a mood-boosting hormone. Incorporating mindfulness into your time outdoors can disrupt the transfer of negative information between the left and right hemispheres and allow you time to regulate your emotions and think of solutions.

8

Practice empathy - Empathy creates oxytocin, our bonding hormone, enhances your immune system, changes the way our nervous system responds to distress, and reduces the effects of stress. Be empathetic with yourself and express empathy towards others for healthy, productive results.

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Acknowledge negative emotions and label feelings - Studies show that when we clearly identify our feelings, we reduce stress and counterbalance our emotional responses by neutralizing fear impulses in our brains. Do so in a journal or with a trusted, empathetic friend or colleague.

10

If you must compete, compete with yourself only - We think of *ourselves* using the same brain networks we use to think about *others*. When competition is creating stress or discomfort between you and someone else, consider focusing on improving yourself only. For example, beating your own personal best will activate reward circuitry and increase your dopamine levels providing a sense of pleasure gained from competing with others.

11

Be conscious of ways you form connections with others - Sharing something bad about others can produce a dopamine (pleasure) hit. People create a habit of doing this to produce a pleasurable affect at the risk of building trust. Remember, trust is about creating relationships from an oxytocin (bonding) drip rather than a dopamine (pleasure) hit. Trust leads to less stress in your body and the workplace.

12

Have fun - Novelty and playful activities boost dopamine and activate pleasure centers in our brains. Incorporate fun into your workday on a solo basis or include others.

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13

Practice rituals - Create a daily routine that you commit to and traditions your practice with others whenever you come together. It can be something as basic as setting meeting expectations at the start of every meeting. Doing so increases dopamine levels and calms our brain's amygdala which likes predictability.

14

Practice Mindfulness - 5 to 15 minutes a day creates significant improvements in your physical, emotional and mental well-being. Also, try introducing and practicing collective mindfulness with your team. Research emotional resonance exercises and incorporate them into your meetings for stress-relieving, bonding results.

15

Touch yourself - Do Qigong finger holds, tapping, acupressure, and self-massage on yourself. Touch increases oxytocin (bonding sensors) and reduces our brain's threat responses.

Bonus
Tip!

Reduce Zoom Fatigue - On Zoom, our brains are challenged because we see faces that are the "wrong size" which sends us into fight, flight, freeze mode. To combat this, create depth by placing large images behind you to create a more natural sense of scale. Also, brains feel threatened when we cannot see someone's hands. Show them as often as possible. Doing so will also create a sense of connection. Also, take as many breaks as possible, opt for phone calls, or no meetings at all if you can complete tasks via email, instant messaging, or other means.