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Employee Burn Out

People who are struggling to cope with workplace stress may place themselves at high risk of burnout. Burnout can leave people feeling exhausted, empty, and unable to cope with the demands of life.

What is burnout?

Burnout is “A type of chronic stress which leaves people physically, mentally and emotionally drained”. The World Health Organization considers it to be “an occupational phenomenon” characterised by:

- Physical and psychological exhaustion
- Memory and concentration problems
- Emotional bursts
- Mental (and physical) detachment
- Disengagement

Burnout may be accompanied by a variety of mental and physical health symptoms as well. If left unaddressed, burnout can make it difficult for an individual to function well in their daily life.

According to a survey by a job-search website taken in July 2020, 69% of employees experienced burnout symptoms while working from home during the pandemic – up 35% from the time before the pandemic.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Burnout

- **Alienation from work-related activities:** Individuals experiencing burnout view their jobs as increasingly stressful and frustrating. They may grow cynical about their working conditions and the people they work with. They may also emotionally distance themselves and begin to feel numb about their work.
- **Physical symptoms:** Chronic stress may lead to physical symptoms, like headaches and stomach aches or intestinal issues.
- **Emotional exhaustion:** Burnout causes people to feel drained, unable to cope and tired. They often lack the energy to get their work done.
- **Reduced performance:** Burnout mainly affects everyday tasks at work—or in the home when someone’s main job involves caring for family members. Individuals with burnout feel negative about tasks. They have difficulty concentrating and often lack creativity.

It shares some similar symptoms of mental health conditions, such as depression. Individuals with depression experience negative feelings and thoughts about all aspects of life, not just at work. Depression symptoms may also include a loss of interest in things, feelings of hopelessness, cognitive and physical symptoms as well as thoughts of suicide.

Factors Influencing Work Related Burnout

1. Feeling overloaded with work.
2. Feelings of monotony in everyday duties.
3. Feelings of career stagnation.
4. Feeling fatigued and unmotivated.
5. Other personal issues intrinsic to the respondents.
6. Effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While burnout is not a diagnosable psychological disorder, that does not mean it should not be taken seriously.



Risk of Employee Burnout

- Unreasonable time pressure. Employees who say they have enough time to do their work are 70 percent less likely to experience high burnout. Individuals who are not able to gain more time are at a higher risk of burnout.
- Lack of communication and support from a manager. Manager support offers a psychological buffer against stress. Employees who feel strongly supported by their manager are 70 percent less likely to experience burnout on a regular basis.
- Lack of role clarity. Only 60 percent of workers know what is expected of them. When expectations are like moving targets, employees may become exhausted simply by trying to figure out what they are supposed to be doing.
- Unmanageable workload. When a workload feels unmanageable, even the most optimistic employees will feel hopeless. Feeling overwhelmed can quickly lead to burnout.
- Unfair treatment. Employees who feel they are treated unfairly at work are 2.3 times more likely to experience a high level of burnout. Unfair treatment may include things such as favouritism, unfair compensation, and mistreatment from a co-worker.

Prevention and Treatment

Although the term “burnout” suggests it may be a permanent condition, it is reversible. An individual who is feeling burned out may need to make some changes to their work environment.

- Approaching the human resource department about problems in the workplace or talking to a supervisor about the issues could be helpful if they are invested in creating a healthier work environment.
- In some cases, a change in position or a new job altogether may be necessary to put an end to burnout.
- Self-care strategies, like eating a healthy diet, getting plenty of exercises, and engaging in healthy sleep habits may help reduce some of the effects of a high-stress job.
- A vacation may offer you some temporary relief too, but a week away from the office will not be enough to help you beat burnout. Regularly scheduled breaks from work, along with daily renewal exercises, can be key to helping you combat burnout.
- If experiencing burnout or having difficulty in finding your way out, or suspecting a mental health condition such as depression, seek professional treatment.
- Leadership training sessions on how to prevent, identify and manage for themselves and their subordinates. It is encouraged to have separate sessions for each level of authority to ensure feedback and addressing of peculiar drivers of burnout at each level.
- Ensuring that all employees take their recommended leave days each year in the long run.
- Work-Life balance seminars for all staff.