

Stress, Burnout and Coping Strategies

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Stress is an unavoidable reality of life. But stress isn't always a bad thing. It's a natural, physical response that can trigger our fight-or-flight response. Stress can increase our awareness in difficult or dangerous situations, allowing us to act quickly in the moment. Without it, humans wouldn't have survived this long. Stress is your body's response to any demand, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). At a particular point in our career, we all encounter stress or burnout, which is associated with the corporate world. The term 'stress' is defined as a person's response to a disturbing factor in the environment, leading to physical, psychological or behavioural divergence for organisational participants. It is an important part of work life, which encompasses the interaction of individual and the environment. The factors from the environment which causes stress are called 'stressors'. The intensity of stress is not same for all individuals, i.e. some get highly stressed as they overreact to stressors while some have the stamina to cope with stressors. In general, stress is seemed as negative, but it has a positive dimension also. When stress is positive, it is known as 'eustress' which is often viewed as a motivator. Eustress provides an opportunity to an individual to gain something. The stress is said to be negative when, it is related to a heart ailment, marital breakdown, drug abuse, alcoholism, etc.

Stress and burnout are two different conditions; stress refers to a mental or emotional state, caused by adverse conditions. On the contrary, Burnout is a condition; which results from prolonged exposure to stress. Many things can trigger stress and can be positive or negative. Stress, by and large, involves *too much*: too many pressures that demand too much of you physically and psychologically. Stressed people can still imagine, though, that if they can just get everything under control, they'll feel better. Symptoms of stressed person are as: characterized by over engagement, Produces urgency and hyperactivity. Burnout may be the result of unrelenting stress, but it isn't the same as too much stress. Being burned out means feeling empty, devoid of motivation, and beyond caring.

People experiencing burnout often don't see any hope of positive change in their situations. If excessive stress is like drowning in responsibilities, burnout is being all dried up. And while you're usually aware of being under a lot of stress, you don't always notice burnout when it happens. Characterized by disengagement, Produces helplessness and hopelessness, May make life seem not worth living etc. are some frequent signs of burnout. Burnout refers to a mental, emotional, or physical condition, of chronic exhaustion occurs due to prolonged stress. It is a state of mind caused by excessive exposure to intense emotional stress, displayed through emotional exhaustion and negative attitudes. An individual who is burnout is hypertensive, faces mental depression and is cynical about everything. It is when you feel overwhelmed and unable to fulfill demands constantly.

There are three stages of burnout, i.e. emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and feeling of ineffectiveness and lack of personal accomplishment. The additive impact of these three stages is a host of negative attitudinal and behavioural consequences. Burnout often stems from job. But anyone who feels overworked and undervalued is at risk for burnout from the hardworking office worker who hasn't had a vacation in years, to the frazzled stay-at-home mom struggling to care for kids, housework, and an aging parent. Lifestyle and personality traits can also contribute to burnout. What you do in your downtime and how you look at the world can play just as big of a role in causing burnout as work or home demands

When you experience stress, your whole nervous system reacts and specific hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) are released into your blood stream. These hormones speed up heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, and metabolism. This can be a good thing - stress can help you get through tough situations. Changes in your body as a result of stress can increase your ability to feel: alert, energized, switched on, more resourceful. In the long term though, the extra pressure that is put on your body from stress can have some pretty negative impacts on both your physical health and emotional wellbeing. Eventually, too much stress on your body over a long period of time can lead to you burning out, a state of complete mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion. Essentially, when you've reached the point of burnout, you can really feel like you've had the life sucked out of you. Your ability to care, to make an effort, and to find motivation no longer exists.

Everyone responds to stress differently and identifying what stresses you out can be easier said than done. Some stress is unavoidable and the best you can do is to manage it. Some things are within your

control. For example, if you know that grocery shopping on Sunday evening stresses you out because the lines are always long and everyone's picked through the best produce before you get there, change your schedule and shop on another night. Here are some strategies that can help reduce workplace stressors and prevent burnout include:

- Providing clear expectations for all employees and obtaining confirmation that each employee understands those expectations,
- Making sure that employees have the necessary resources to meet expectations,
- Providing ongoing training to employees to maintain competency,
- Helping employees understand their value to the organization and their contributions to the organization's goals,
- Enforcing reasonable work hours, including, if necessary, sending employees home at the end of the workday,
- Helping assess workload for those who feel pressured to remain working beyond normal business hours
- Setting reasonable and realistic expectations. Organizations should be clear as to which activities require the highest standards and when it is okay to lower the bar and still meet business needs,
- Encouraging social support and respect within and among work teams,
- Supporting physical activity throughout the workday,
- Strongly encouraging the taking of breaks away from the work environment,
- Be realistic and know your limits and be firm with them. You'll be healthier and happier for it,
- Try not to get overwhelmed, Number the items in order of importance and complete them one at a time,
- Involve other people to reduce the amount of stress you deal with,
- Be active, it helps combat the negative effects of stress on your body and is good for your mental health. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America (ADAA), exercise and other physical activities can help relieve stress by releasing endorphins, which are natural painkillers, into your brain.
- Be an optimist, when you're worried or feel your stress level rising, try to surround yourself with positive thoughts and experiences.

There are two new approaches to the prevention of burnout that focus on the interaction between personal and situational factors. The first approach, based on the Maslach multidimensional model, focuses on the

exact opposite of burnout: increasing engagement with work by creating a better "fit" between the individual and the job. The second approach draws from the decision-making literature and reframes burnout in terms of how perceptions of the risk of burnout may lead to suboptimal choices that actually increase the likelihood of burning out. These new approaches provide a more direct strategy for preventing burnout than typical unidimensional "stress" models because these new approaches (1) specify criteria for evaluating outcomes and (2) focus attention on the relationship between the person and the situation rather than one or the other in isolation.

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