



## What is burnout?

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Burnout can take different forms, affecting a person physically, emotionally, and behaviorally. Some characteristics of burnout include: frequent illness; disengagement and detachment; blunted affect; feelings of frustration, helplessness, and hopelessness; and loss of motivation. At its worst, burnout can cause a person to question if life is worth living.

## What causes burnout?

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Common causes of burnout include: lack of adequate social support; taking on more than one can handle at work, school, or interpersonally with family and friends; and poor self-care.

## Symptoms

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Signs of burnout can be separated into 3 categories:

### **Physical:**

- Low energy; feeling tired and easily fatigued much of the time
  - Frequent illness
- Frequent headaches, back pain, or muscle aches and pains
  - Change in appetite or sleep habits

### **Emotional:**

- Chronic feelings of self-doubt; sense of failure
- Loss of motivation; decreased satisfaction
- Feeling defeated and alone in the world
- Feeling cynical and bitter about life

### **Behavioral:**

- Substance abuse or dependency
- Being irritable around others
- Isolating oneself from others
- Withdrawing from responsibilities
- Putting off getting things done

## **Prevention and Treatment**

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Burnout is a serious matter. It can lead to personal and professional dissatisfaction; social isolation; relationship problems; depression; substance abuse; and, in extreme cases, suicide. Therefore, it's important to learn how to prevent burnout and to seek professional attention if it occurs.

### **Prevention:**

Some ways to prevent burnout include proper self-care (e.g. adequate rest, healthy diet, exercise); setting aside time every day for relaxing, enjoyable activities; spending quality time with friends and family; practicing good time management; knowing and accepting one's limitations; and learning to say no.

### **Treatment:**

If you find yourself feeling burned out, it is a good idea to seek professional help. A licensed mental health professional may be able to assist you in making the necessary changes to overcome burnout and develop strategies to avoid it in the future. Prescription medication may also be an option, along with counseling, in dealing with difficulties associated with burnout.

Too much stress can lead to burnout. But stress and burnout are not the same.

## Stress vs. Burnout

<u>Stress</u>	<u>Burnout</u>
Over-engagement	Disengagement
Over-reactive emotions	Detached emotions
Urgency & hyperactivity	Hopelessness
Loss of energy	Loss of motivation
Anxiety	Depression
Physical toll	Emotional toll

[http://www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout\\_signs\\_symptoms.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/burnout_signs_symptoms.htm)

If you find that you are experiencing symptoms of either stress or burnout, it might be a good idea to consider talking with a mental health professional.

Midwestern University Counseling Center provides free and confidential counseling services to enrolled students. Call Carrie Torgerson at 630-515-7142 or email her at [ctorge@midwestern.edu](mailto:ctorge@midwestern.edu) to schedule an appointment.

