

Gympass

Facing burnout with
empathy in the workplace



Summary

All you need to know to make
your workplace healthier

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1. What is burnout and how to identify the signs

Burnout is a condition described as the state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by extreme and prolonged stress. The symptoms start to emerge when someone feels overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to deal with their responsibilities. When there is no quick fix, feelings of apathy, detachment and lack of motivation take over. The negative impact of constant stress spills over into every area of life - including work, home and relationships, leading to mental and physical exhaustion.

Due to recent lifestyle changes resulting from COVID-19, over 69% of US employees are experiencing symptoms of burnout while working from home. A combination of factors such as reduction of time off, loss of social interactions and low transparency regarding work expectations, make it a priority to deal with burnout right away.



2. Knowing the difference between burnout and stress

While stress happens in very specific situations, when someone faces the same stressful challenge over and over, burnout is likely to be the ultimate result. That is why they are not the same thing. Stressed people can still visualise themselves getting better once they get everything under control; being burned out, on the other hand, means feeling empty and mentally exhausted, with no hope of positive change in their situations. And while it is usually easy to notice when you're under a lot of stress, it is not as simple to detect burnout when it happens.



A person is under stress when...	A person is "burned out" when...
Energy levels are low	There is a loss of motivation or hope
Acts anxiously and with hyperactivity	Acts indifferently and with cynicism
Has a sense of over engagement	Has a sense of disengagement
Overreacts to any situation	Becomes dull
First signs are visible physically	First signs are emotional

3. How burnout affects your company

Statistics prove that employee burnout is not a personal issue but rather an organisational one that affects every part of the organisation. From the moment an employee starts feeling detached to the moment the change is actively adopted, there is an estimated cost of \$125 billion to \$190 billion a year in health care, according to Harvard Business Review. Aside from this corporate chain reaction, burnout can also result in heart disease, gastrointestinal issues and mental issues aggravation such as anxiety and depression. All of these combined will lead to the following problems:



Quality of work decreases

Burnout not only leads to an employee falling behind, but it also results in disorganisation. Quality of work is often directly impacted and is usually expressed in subtle ways, such as missing meetings, forgetting to provide feedback, or misinterpreting a task. Another common consequence of burnout is a reduction in creativity. People start going through the motions at work because they have to, not because they want to. Even so, constant stress blocks the mind off to new ways of thinking, and it shows.

Employees procrastinate more

Unpleasant tasks can get pushed to the side while others that are more enjoyable become a priority. But employees who deal with burnout don't find pleasure in any available option. Tasks that used to be enjoyable and completed with enthusiasm become tedious and boring leading to potentially costly delays. Procrastinating can even extend beyond job duties influencing work absences.





Teams start facing relationship problems

When you work with other people and share the same office space with them, relationship problems can be a consequence of burnout. But nowadays, when most people are working from home, it makes it even harder to detect. In fact, remote work can often often make things worse for “burned out” employees, either because of lack of communication or not enough personal or family time to decompress. On an organisational level, other people’s feelings must be taken into account; otherwise, the relationships within a team could suffer, leading to lower revenue and reduced productivity.

Employees take more sick days

As hinted above, burnout can lead to work absences. Employees might be tempted to call in sick at work or not turn up at all. In fact, the apathy, the lack of interest and commitment are also indicators that mentally exhausted people affect the entire organisation.



Revenue is directly impacted

Low quality work and disengagement are clear signs of burnout. Needless to say that when an entire team feels stressed out, and disengaged about their roles and responsibilities, this will invariably affect your revenue eventually. Healthy employees have a better quality of life - and of course, produce better results.

4. Tips for coping with burnout in the workplace

It may be hard to avoid stressful situations, but burnout is preventable. Understanding the problem and knowing how to adequately address it may help you turn the table and build a healthier and happier workplace. As it isn't always possible to slow work down, especially during critical seasons, balancing workloads, connecting as a team outside of work, and having an open-door policy on mental health can all count as good measures to prevent employee burnout.



Make sure your employees have clear expectations

If your team's roles are not clear enough, the feeling of not belonging might lead to higher levels of anxiety. Make sure to set clear, accurate expectations with an appropriate job description so that employees understand their roles and responsibilities. To provide purpose and direction, create well-defined objectives and measures of success.

Help employees understand their value to the organisation and their contributions to its goals

Knowing "why they exist," "what the company believes in" and "how the team does things" dictates how employees experience the workplace. Genuine feedback, e-mail or public recognition of achievements are often enough to make employees feel appreciated. Do not take "Great job!" and "Thank you" for granted. Simple and constant reminders show employees you value them and what they do.



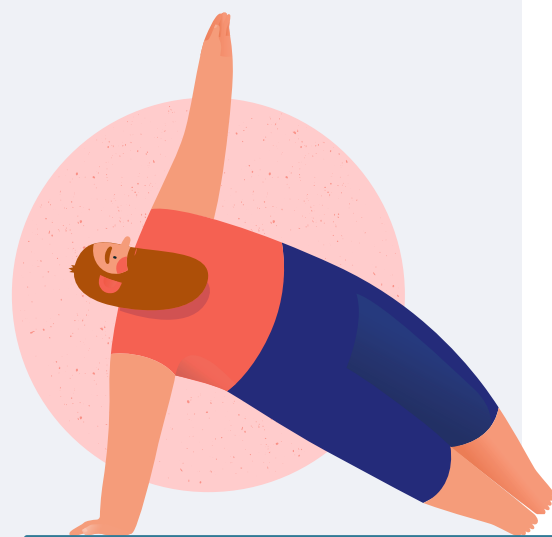


Support physical activity throughout the day

Not only is exercise good for our physical health, but it can also give us an emotional boost. A [study](#) published by the U.S. National Institutes of Health proves that cardiovascular exercise was found to increase well-being and decrease psychological distress, perceived stress, and emotional exhaustion. Resistance training was noticeably effective in improving well-being and personal accomplishment and to reduce perceived stress. So be proactive in organising online group activities, lunchtime yoga sessions, or happy-hour karaoke.

Encourage mental health support

While mental health issues are still a very personal matter, employees shouldn't have to deal with it alone. Some of the things you can do to step up as a leader are: providing counselling sessions and coaching, giving employees access to meditation apps and online mental health resources and allowing more flexibility and time off for those who need it. Besides, of course, encouraging a whole organisation to talk openly about mental health and recent learnings.



Promote a healthier diet and lifestyle combined

Burnout can also be prevented through the right nutritional choices. Eating healthy and making sure the body gets all the nutrients it needs. Start with baby steps, promote nutrition webinars and provide access to healthcare professionals to help your employees adopt a healthier lifestyle according to their needs.

Advocate for a steady good sleeping schedule

Our bodies need time to rest and reset, which is why healthy sleep habits are essential for our well-being. Also, according to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), avoiding caffeine before bedtime, establishing a relaxing bedtime ritual, and banning smartphones from the bedroom can help promote a better sleeping schedule and will directly affect your quality of life, and productivity.



Validate their feelings and concerns

When team members are feeling the effects of burnout, saying things like: “It’s not that bad”, “I’m sure it’s just temporary” or simply “It will get better”, even if meant to offer reassurance, it can feel invalidating when someone is feeling down. Instead, make sure they feel heard and supported. There’s also a world of options in online therapy and mental health apps that can help support them.

Seek help and support yourself

A good leader knows their weaknesses and strengths and leads by example, by taking care of one’s physical and mental health, even before endorsing its benefits. Actions speak for themselves.



5. Become a Gympass partner



Contact us by clicking [HERE](#).

site.gympass.com/uk/companies

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