

Avoiding Burnout In Your Life

by Del Suggs, M.S.Ed.

Burnout: a state of mental, physical and emotional exhaustion.

When the alarm clock goes off, do you hit the snooze button and roll back over? Does your life and job remind you of the film "Groundhog Day"? At one time you were excited about your role on campus and eagerly embraced each day. Wouldn't you like to keep that enthusiasm alive-- or bring it back to life? You need to learn to recognize burnout in yourself, and some simple steps to regain the joy in your life and work.

What is burnout? What do we mean by the term burnout? It is state of mental, physical and emotional exhaustion. There are Four Stages of Burnout:

1. Physical, Mental and Emotional Exhaustion. You might be still holding it together at work, but can you relate to this: As soon as you get home, you head for the fridge, get out the Haagen-Dazs or Ben and Jerry's, turn on the tube, collapse on the sofa and you're comatose for the rest of the evening? Doing more with less, having too much responsibility but not enough authority, or juggling an unmanageable schedule is taking a toll.

2. Shame and Doubt. Do you find yourself losing confidence in your ability to do your job? Maybe you feel insecure about the future; and you're feeling

pretty lousy in the present. You may even start discounting your past accomplishments. Is your inner voice shouting, "Impostor!" instead of supporting your competence?

And then you catch yourself emitting heavy, labored sighs.

3.Cynicism and Callousness. At this point, some folks feel there's only one thing left to do: Anything not worth doing is not worth doing well. They develop an ATTITUDE. If you become sufficiently abrasive or obnoxious, people start avoiding you. But this hard exterior can eventually become a burdensome, self-defeating strategy.

4. Failure, Helplessness and Crisis. The constant demands of a job causing Burnout is like trying to race a marathon. Can anyone race 26 miles full speed, nonstop? Of course not. Even Olympic marathon runners must pace themselves. If not, the body parts will break down. And with burnout, over time, the mental apparatus also wears out.

One reason the fourth stage is so disorienting is that a person's psychological defenses have worn down. You may find yourself depressed, snapping at your loved ones, and miserable.

The Good News. The good news is that Adrenal Burnout can be the best thing that happens to a person. It is a

wake-up call, letting you know that a major part of your life is out of balance.

How do you fix it? With a process I call **Attitude Restoration**. Here are some simple steps you can take to help you get your old energy, confidence, and joy back in your job.

Attitude of gratitude. Aren't you one of the luckiest people on the Earth? Really, you are. There are people living in squalor and poverty around the world who would trade places with you in a moment. There are people out of work who would love to have your job.

So try this little exercise: List three things for which you are grateful at this moment. They might be monumental, like having survived a disease. They might be lesser, like having your car start this morning. Whatever they are, it is always good for your outlook to be grateful.

Set Personal Goals. Write them down, and remember your ultimate goal. We're all working towards a greater goal or dream.

But when you write down your goals, do this: keep it to yourself. Don't tell anyone who doesn't need to know.

Here's why this silence is important: There are plenty of

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people who talk constantly about their goals. Psychological studies have found that these people are less likely to achieve their goals. There is a psychological concept known as “social reality.” It seems that if you discuss your goal with others, your mind begins to have a premature sense of completeness. If your mind thinks you've achieved it, then it stops working towards your goal. So set your goals, just keep quiet about them.

Set a schedule. Make wise use of your time. Work on creating “to-do” lists everyday, and using them to complete your tasks. You might also want to consider the “Pomodoro Technique”. You can find it online, and learn all about it. Briefly, it's a powerful method of concentrating your work for a short period. It can be very useful in completing projects and other tasks.

Time Management. Practice “Eating That Frog.” This method of prioritization compares any dreaded task with eating a live frog. Brian Tracy suggests that you do that dreaded task first. You will get it out of the way, you won't dread it any more, and it will give you energy and confidence the rest of the day. Give it a shot!

Reward yourself. Remember why you are working. A happy and productive worker is one who understands that his or her job is not the purpose of life. Go

on holiday, use up your sick days, ask for a temporary leave-of-absence—anything that allows you to recharge your batteries outside of the workplace. No leave--No life.

Embrace a morning ritual. Are you starting your day on the wrong foot by waking up late, rushing about, and skipping out the door at the last minute? Try slowing down your morning instead. Get up earlier, enjoy a cup of coffee, read, meditate, whatever. Ease into the day.

Stay connected. Family and friends are so important in one's well-being. Regularly touch base with your family and friends by catching up for a walk, or via phone for a chat. Coffee dates, watching movies, or lunch together can spell a whole lot of difference to your emotions.

Go Out for a Drink. Or a shopping trip, or an ice cream sundae...whatever your guilty pleasure. Socializing and unwinding can do wonders to stop a path to burnout. And it's fun!

Pursue a hobby. A hobby is great thing to do because it is something you love to do and it doesn't involve your work.

Stay healthy. Make sure you eat nutritious meals and have plenty of physical activity. Exercise releases endorphins,

which are also called ‘happy hormones.’ You don't have to go to the gym. Try some simple strategies like avoiding the elevator at work, or parking at the farthest parking lot. Eat healthy and exercise. If you don't feel well, you won't work well.

Pay it forward. Some of the happiest people I know reach out to the less fortunate. Get involved with human service organizations and donate your time to help others. You'll get even more out of it than they will!

Sleep. Get 7 or 8 hours sleep each night. It is very difficult to work all day if you are not getting enough sleep. Studies show that people getting seven hours of sleep each night live longer, too.

Learn to say no. Pick what is really important and what you can do well. Delegate with a smile.

Get a new job. If all of this fails to correct your burnout, then you may be in a career situation that just isn't right for you. It's a good time for a new beginning!

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