

How to: Be aware of and manage burnout

It's not unusual to feel tired at the end of the day, but if you are feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, emotionally drained and simply unable to meet constant demands, you may be looking at burnout. If so, you need to take your wellbeing seriously.

Burnout is different to normal stress, it's the end point of unmanaged stress. Burnout can sap our energy and reduce our productivity and leave us feeling increasingly anxious, hopeless, cynical, and resentful.

The symptoms of a burnout flow in to all aspects of your life – your home, family and social life are all affected. Burnout also affects our physical health, making us more vulnerable to illness. Due to the impact of burnout it is very important that you deal with it or seek professional help as soon as possible.

Spot the signs

How at risk are you? The biggest predictors are:

Physical	Emotional	Behavioural
Feeling tired and drained all the time	Sense of failure and self doubt	Withdrawing from responsibilities
Low immunity, frequent illness	Feeling helpless, trapped, defeated	Isolating yourself from others
Frequent headaches or muscle pain	Detachment, feeling alone in the world	Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
Change in appetite or sleep habits	Loss of motivation	Using food, drugs or alcohol to cope
	Increasingly cynical & negative outlook	Taking your frustrations out on others

Difference between stress and burnout

Stress	Burnout
Over-engagement	Disengagement
Emotions are overactive	Emotions are dulled
Produces urgency and overactivity	Produces helplessness & hopelessness
Loss of energy	Loss of motivation
Leads to anxiety disorders	Leads to depression

Preventing / Dealing with Burnout

If you feel you are at risk of burnout or you are already past the breaking point, it's important to **PAUSE** and make working on your wellbeing a priority, so you can feel happy and healthy again.

• Reach Out

- Social contact is one of the best ways to lower stress. Talking with someone who is a good listener can go a long way to calming your nervous system and reduce stress. The person doesn't have to know how to solve the problem, simply being there, listening and not judging can help
- Developing friendships, taking a break together (without your phones) or sharing issues can help buffer stress
- Be aware of the people who are having a negative impact on you and try to limit the time you spend together
- Volunteer – connect with a cause that is meaningful to you. Being with like-minded people and contributing to a purpose can greatly improve mental wellbeing

• Re-evaluate your priorities

- Look to other domains in your life and evaluate how satisfied you are. Use the **Wheel of Life worksheet (below)** to make your own assessment.
- Slow down, take time to rest, reflect and recover
- Reset your boundaries, learn to say 'No' or think 'If I say yes to this, what am I saying no to'
- Rediscover your hobbies and what you love to do
- Include relaxation in your recovery plan – check out [Campus Wellbeing](#)
- Get some sleep, it will help you to think clearly and manage your day
- Exercise, even a 10 minute walk can improve your mood for 2 hours
- Eat healthy – reduce sugar, refined carbs, coffee, energy drinks etc

Wheel of Life

Subjective well-being involves different components: life satisfaction (global judgments of one's life), satisfaction with important life domains (e.g., recreation), positive affect (experiencing pleasant emotions and moods), and low levels of negative affect (experiencing few unpleasant emotions and moods) (Diener, 2000).

An often used tool to address a person's satisfaction with important life domains is "The Wheel of Life" (Whitworth, Kimsey-House, & Sandahl, 1998; Dean, 2004). This tool requires that you first identify specific life domains (career development, relationships, leisure time, etc.) and then rate these domains on a scale of one to ten (from not at all satisfied, to completely satisfied).

Goal

The goal of this tool is to assess a person's perceived satisfaction/dissatisfaction in the different domains of life.

Instructions

Step 1

The Wheel of Life gives you a snapshot of how satisfied you are in your life. In this version of the exercise there are ten pre-defined domains on the wheel:

- Money & Finance
- Career & Work
- Health & Fitness
- Fun & Recreation
- Environment
- Community
- Family & Friends
- Partner & Love
- Growth & Learning
- Spirituality

Step 2

Rate your level of satisfaction in each of the domains using the wheel on p.2. A score of 1 indicates that you are not satisfied at all and a score of 10 means you are highly satisfied.

Step 3

After you have rated each of the domains, connect the lines to form an inner wheel. This will give you an overview of the level of satisfaction in your life.

Step 4

Think!

In what ways would you want to change the shape of the inner wheel?
Which domains draw your attention?

Wheel of Life - Template

