

Think You Have Burnout?

It is the end of the semester, and you might be feeling tired. More than tired, you are feeling exhausted. You might even say you are burned out. While exhaustion is part of it, burnout has three core attributes (Maslach).

1. Feeling exhausted and as though you have no energy to do good work.
2. Feeling cynical and having negative attitudes toward your work. You might also experience a sense of disassociation from that work and the people around you.
3. Feeling ineffective, as though you're accomplishing significantly less than usual and can't muster the fortitude to be productive.

But wait, there's more than merely having a definition to which you might relate. You need to discover the source of your burnout: chronic stress. Maslach's research has found that chronic stress at work usually comes from six primary sources:

1. Workload: Sustainability of the amount of work you have.
2. Values: Whether you connect with your work on a deeper level.
3. Reward: Financial compensation, benefits, and social recognition for your competition.
4. Control: The autonomy you have over where, when, and how you do your work.
5. Fairness: The feeling that you are treated equitably relative to your colleagues.
6. Community: Professional relationships that boost engagement.

Two other sources also contribute to stress: unclear expectations and dysfunctional workplace dynamics. If you're unsure what's expected of you at work, it can be difficult to meet those expectations and feel like you're doing a good job. And, if you work in a toxic or negative environment, staying motivated and engaged in your work can be difficult. (Bard).

The more chronic stress you have, no matter where it's coming from, the closer you get to burning out. Check what source may be the primary reason by rating each source from one to 10; the total sum will provide insight into how close you are to burnout. (Bailey).

Also, note any specific source that had a high score and think of strategies that can help you reduce your stress. Being mindful helps to keep chronic stress under control so you can avoid burnout and be productive and engaged. This self-assessment is another addition to your resilience skills.

BONUS: If you would like to explore the topic of burnout further, attend a special session on May 15 to learn about a Summer Book Club on the Burnout Cure. After reading the book on your own, attend a session during August Professional Week to engage in reflective discussions and activities to identify your sources of burnout and develop strategies for self-care and renewal.

References:

Bailey, Chris (2023): A Two-Minute Burnout Checkup, Harvard Business Review, April 2023.

Bard (2023).

Mastach, Christin (2022): *The Burnout Challenge: Managing People's Relationships with Their Jobs*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.