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What to do when you feel burned out

Burnout can happen to anyone, especially in our always-connected world. This form of exhaustion doesn't strike overnight. Burnout typically sneaks up on you, and once it does, it can affect you physically, mentally and emotionally. Unfortunately, the condition can be difficult to overcome. Know the signs, and take action to beat the burnout before it beats you.

Signs you're burning out

If you're exhausted due to your job, you're not alone. According to a 2017 study, more than 50 percent of American workers feel overwhelmed and overworked.

Warning signs you're reaching the burnout point include:

- Dreading going to work
- Feeling worn out/suffering low energy levels
- Increased impatience, irritability or loss of temper
- Inability to concentrate
- Negative attitude
- Apathy toward work
- Changes in sleep or appetite

- Headaches or other physical ailments
- Lack of interest in a social life

Burnout can lead to serious issues, including exhaustion, illness, and a poor work-life balance. And ignoring burnout can result in legitimate health problems such as insomnia, fatigue, depression, substance abuse, diabetes, heart disease or stroke. Not to mention, a greater potential for poor performance on the job. Before your health and your personal and professional relationships suffer, take steps to combat the burnout.

Take action now

Recognizing you're experiencing burnout is important, but it won't go away on its own, so here's what to do about it.

1. Request time off.

Take a brief break, and give yourself a chance to decompress. Put in for vacation time, remove yourself from your work environment, and give yourself the opportunity to reset. Don't forget to unplug electronically! (Once you've taken a breather, you can work on long-term solutions with a clear head.)

2. Reduce unnecessary stress.

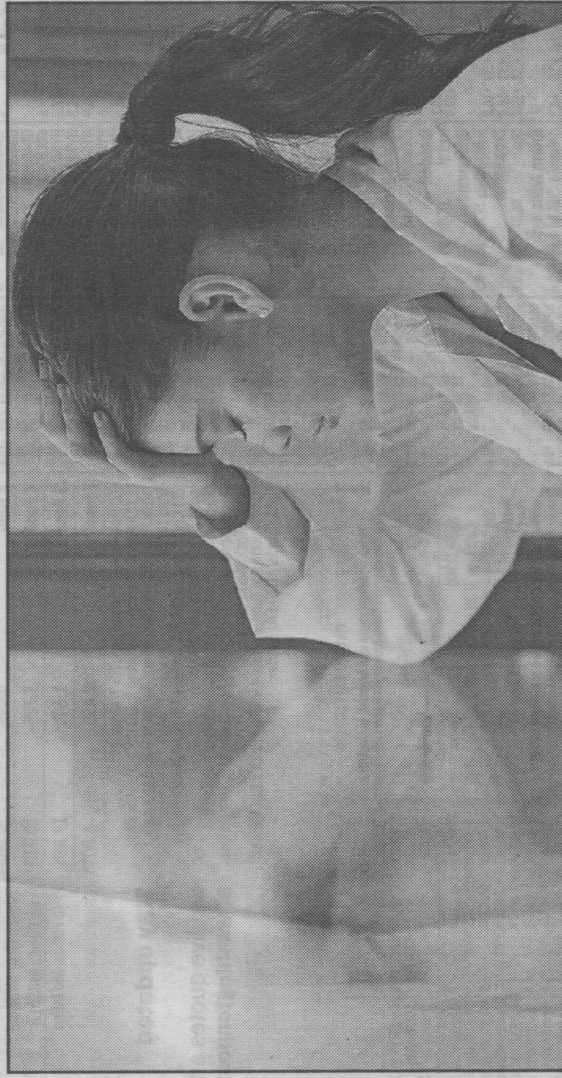
Are there any toxic conditions or people in the workplace that wear you out? If so, strive to eliminate those sources of stress ASAP. Stay out of office politics that doesn't involve you, avoid gossip, and distance yourself from dysfunction. These common features of office life suck up your energy, and the negativity leads to stress—stress you do not need. (While you're at it, do a little redesign of your personal workspace to create some pleasant vibes.)

3. Talk to your boss.

If work conditions are creating your stress, see if your boss is willing to make some adjustments or accommodations. An overwhelming schedule or workload, unreasonable expectations, or a shortage of the necessary resources to do your job can sometimes be remedied by a simple conversation.

4. Ask for a new project.

For some people, a change in routine, along with a new and positive challenge to focus on, can do wonders to mitigate job burnout. It mixes up



those mundane days, and—additional plus—it's an exciting opportunity for professional growth.

5. Pursue personal development.

Do something fun and/or relaxing, and learn something new (that's not necessarily related to your job). Take a painting or pottery class, a poetry or creative writing workshop, try an acting or improv seminar, or sign up for a specialized exercise activity, such as dance or yoga. Look into volunteering your time to a worthwhile cause. Both learning something new and helping others have positive health and mental benefits that go a long way toward combating burnout and depression.

6. Take care of yourself.

This means having a healthy diet, sleeping well, and exercising. If you aren't getting enough sleep, change your habits. Cut out the electronics before bedtime, don't eat rich foods at night, and establish a routine. If you think there's a medical reason behind your sleep issues, see your doctor. You could have sleep apnea or another condition preventing you from getting enough quality rest.

If you can effectively change the things you can control, and your problem is solved, great! But what do you do when there are conditions you can't change?

When the situation is beyond your control

If you've pinpointed areas you can change, have taken the steps to do so, and your feelings of burnout haven't diminished, it could be time to take more drastic action. Sometimes there are aspects of a work environment and/or job itself that are simply beyond your control. If conditions exist that keep you in a perpetual cycle of burnout (i.e. your employer constantly makes unreasonable demands or you're in a toxic work environment), take steps to find a new role at a different company—one that's a better fit for your health and your sanity.

This special advertising section was prepared by independent writer Leigh Goessl. The production of this section did not involve the news or editorial staff of The Washington Post.