



BALANCEDYOU



Burnout Discussion Guide

How To Use This Guide:

- Share this sheet with your team to review before the meeting
- In your team gathering use the following questions to guide discussion:
 - What did you learn about burnout that you didn't know before?
 - What signs of burnout are you seeing in yourself? In others?
 - On a scale from 1-5 where 1 is not at all and 5 is a lot how would you rate your burnout? How would you rate the burnout of the team?
 - Do we need to make changes?
 - What kind of changes can we make?
- Use the action plan grid to create a burnout prevention action plan.

What is Burnout

Burnout describes a severe stress condition that leads to severe physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion. Much worse than ordinary fatigue, burnout makes it challenging for people to cope with stress and handle day-to-day responsibilities. People experiencing burnout often feel like they have nothing left to give and may dread getting out of bed each morning. They may even adopt a pessimistic outlook toward life and feel hopeless. Burnout doesn't go away on its own and, if left untreated, it can lead to serious physical and psychological illnesses like depression, heart disease, and diabetes.

Symptoms

- **Exhaustion.** Feeling physically and emotionally depleted. Physical symptoms may include headaches, stomachaches, and appetite or sleeping changes.
- **Isolation.** People with burnout tend to feel overwhelmed. As a result, they may stop socializing and confiding in friends, family members, and co-workers.
- **Escape fantasies.** Dissatisfied with the never-ending demands of their jobs, people with burnout may fantasize about running away or going on a solo-vacation. In extreme cases, they may turn to drugs, alcohol, or food as a way to numb their emotional pain.
- **Irritability.** Burnout can cause people to lose their cool with friends, co-workers, and family members more easily. Coping with normal stressors like preparing for

a work meeting, driving kids to school, and tending to household tasks also may start to feel insurmountable, especially when things don't go as planned.

- **Frequent illnesses.** Burnout, like other long-term stress, can lower your immune system, making you more susceptible to colds, the flu, and insomnia. Burnout can also lead to mental health concerns like depression and anxiety.

How to Prevent

Stress may be unavoidable, but burnout is preventable. Following these steps may help you thwart stress from getting the best of you:

- **Exercise:** Not only is exercise good for our physical health, but it can also give us an emotional boost. Stretched for time? You don't need to spend hours at the gym to reap these benefits. [Mini-workouts](#) and short walks are convenient ways to make exercise a daily habit.
- **Eat a balanced diet:** Eating a healthy diet filled with omega-3 fatty acids [can be](#) a natural antidepressant. Adding [foods rich in omega-3s](#) like flaxseed oil, walnuts, and fish may help give your mood a boost.
- **Practice good sleep habits:** Our bodies need time to rest and reset, which is why healthy sleep habits are essential for our well-being. According to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), avoiding caffeine before bedtime, establishing a relaxing bedtime ritual, and banning smartphones from the bedroom can help promote sound sleep hygiene.
- **Ask for help:** During stressful times, it's important to reach out for help. If asking for assistance feels difficult, consider developing a self-care "check-in" with close friends and family members so that you can take care of each other during trying times.

How to Help Others

How can you help someone experiencing burnout? While you can't take away someone's stress, offering support can help lighten their emotional load.

- **Listen**
- Before jumping into "fixing" mode, offer to listen to your friend or family member's difficulties.
- Having someone to talk to can make a world of difference. Often people need someone to witness their stress and suffering, and listening can go a long way.
- **Validate feelings and concerns:** When friends and family members are feeling the effects of burnout, saying *It doesn't sound that bad* or *I'm sure things will get better* — while meant to offer reassurance — can feel invalidating if someone is really feeling low and hopeless. Instead, offer validation by saying, "You've been working so hard, I can understand why you feel depleted."
- **Offer specific types of help:** Individuals who are burnt out are often too tired to think of ways that others can help them. Instead of asking, "How can I help?" offer to drop off a meal, pick up dry cleaning, or do a load of laundry.
- **Kind gestures:** Sending flowers, a thoughtful text message, or a written card can remind friends and family members that they're not alone.
- Because they're often working long hours, people with burnout can feel lonely and underappreciated. But small gestures of kindness can be nurturing.

- **Research resources:** If friends or family members need additional support, like childcare, a house cleaner, or a psychotherapist, offer to research and crowdsource for specific resources to help ease the stress.

Discussion Questions

- What signs of burnout are you noticing in yourself?
- How can we help ourselves?
- How can we help each other?

Burnout Prevention Action Plan

Level of Burnout	What we will do to prevent burnout	How frequently will we check back in to see how we are doing with burnout so we can make adjustments?
<i>Rate your team 1-5 on burnout with 1 meaning feeling great and 5 meaning really burned out</i>	<i>List strategies at the individual and team level that will help prevent burnout</i>	<i>Check back on a regular cadence and do another team burnout rating to see how things are going. Make adjustments if levels are high.</i>