



From burnout to balance

Reflection guide

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Overview

After participating in this session, you will be able to:

- Recognize what burnout is and what can cause it.
- Identify personal signs and symptoms that indicate action is needed to prevent burnout.
- Develop strategies to overcome burnout and create an action plan for applying them.

What is burnout?

Exhaustion from extending too much energy without sufficient time for recovery.

The World Health Organization names 3 characteristics of workplace burnout:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- Increased mental distance, cynicism, or negativity to one's job
- Reduced professional efficacy

1. Key takeaways

Use this section to record the key ideas you learn during the session and to plan for how you will implement your learning afterwards.



Main points



Learning insights



Growth areas: What areas do I need to improve on?



My action plan

2. Learning activities

Burnout self-assessment questionnaire¹

This tool can help you to check yourself for signs of burnout. For each question below, select the response that best describes your feelings over the past month:

- Not at All (0 points)
- Rarely (1 point)
- Sometimes (2 points)
- Often (3 points)
- Very Often (4 points)

1. I feel physically and/or emotionally drained.
2. I have negative thoughts about my job or find it hard to stay motivated.
3. I notice I'm easily irritated by small problems, or by my co-workers and team.
4. I feel overwhelmed by my workload and/or daily tasks.
5. I have difficulty maintaining work-life boundaries.
6. I feel disconnected from my colleagues and/or professional community.
7. I struggle to find satisfaction in my achievements at work and/or feel I am achieving less than I should.
8. I feel that organizational politics or processes frustrate my ability to produce quality work.
9. I find it challenging to focus or complete tasks efficiently.
10. I feel an uncomfortable level of pressure to succeed.

Scoring Guide:

0-10 points:	Low burnout risk - Good work-life balance
11-20 points:	Moderate burnout risk - Monitor and take preventive actions

¹ Adapted from MindTools burnout self-assessment: <https://www.mindtools.com/>

21-30 points:	High burnout risk - Consider seeking support to implement stress management strategies
31-40 points:	Severe burnout risk - Seek professional support and make immediate changes

Note: This self-assessment tool is for informational purposes only and should not replace professional medical advice.



Burnout self-assessment results

What risk level are you at? Note down 1-2 areas of key concern that the questionnaire highlighted that you want to work on improving.

Job aid: Strategies for preventing burnout at work

1: Personal strategies: Identify your areas of control & apply proactive strategies

Strategy	Examples
Time & energy management tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess and review your priorities regularly & use prioritization techniques ▪ Implement time-blocking for focused work periods ▪ Set realistic deadlines for tasks ▪ Practice the “Pomodoro technique”: Work for 25 min and then take a 5 min break. Take a longer 15-20 break after 4 x 25 min work sessions. ▪ Use task balancing techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alternate between high- and low-focus tasks ○ Break large projects into smaller chunks ○ Use the "two-minute rule": If a task will take 2 minutes or less to complete, do it immediately
Take mental & physical breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take short walks during the workday ▪ Use mindfulness or meditation apps for quick resets ▪ We sometimes feel unable to stop: Use spare moments to take a few breaths, look at nature, or talk to another person instead of checking emails, texting
Foster work-life balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish clear end of work times/routines ▪ Cultivate interests and activities outside of work that motivate and inspire you and schedule them in ▪ Keep meetings and communications within work hours
Cultivate self-awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build awareness of your own patterns of thinking and responding to emotions in ways that may fuel burn-out ▪ Consider counselling and other tools to support you in addressing patterns & behaviours that can contribute to burnout risk (such as perfectionism, self-critical thinking, avoiding conflict or difficult emotions)

Skill in focus: Time & energy management plan

Make a plan for how you can manage your time and workflow optimally.

1. Time blocking & task balancing: i.e. Blocking time for focused work, alternating types of tasks etc.

I will implement time blocking & task balancing into my workday/week as follows:

2. Planning for mental and physical breaks: i.e. Scheduling in activity breaks

I will plan for mental and physical breaks as follows:

3. Cultivating work-life balance: i.e. Boundaries, personal activities

I will invest in work-life balance as follows:

4. Building self-awareness to address unhealthy habits

I will invest in addressing unhealthy habits as follows:

2: Workplace advocacy: Identify your areas of influence & apply proactive strategies

Strategy	Examples
Workload management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Maintain a detailed list of projects and commitments▪ Discuss realistic timelines and resource needs▪ Ask for help in prioritizing when facing competing demands▪ Say no/request support when you are at capacity

<p>Boundary setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clarify expectations about after-hours availability ▪ Discuss and agree on reasonable response times for different types of requests ▪ Ask questions to others to help clarify timelines and priority levels, especially when everything is communicated as urgent
<p>Talk to your leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proactively and regularly: Periodic check-ins on workload, status updates, troubleshooting challenges early, etc. ▪ Share concerns when your indicators of stress or burnout change – don't wait to identify how you are feeling and ask for support ▪ Give constructive feedback: Tools or resources needed to improve workflow; feedback on how the organization is living its values

Practice: Communicating boundaries

1. What would you communicate to carve out a boundary where you need it?
2. What would you say to your leader to have a conversation about a workplace situation that is creating burnout risk?
3. What support would you request in order to maintain healthy work boundaries?

Situation	What you could say...
You receive an urgent request by email when you already have an urgent deadline.	
You are almost finished a large, intensive project and your leader is already talking to you about the next big project coming your way.	
Your workload has increased, but you keep taking things on to be a team player. Now you are starting to note early indicators of burnout.	

3. Ongoing learning resources

Job aid: Communicating effectively to set boundaries and prevent burnout

Situation	Possible phrases
Responding to constant urgency	<p>"I've noticed that many of our projects are labeled as urgent. Could we discuss prioritizing these tasks to ensure we're focusing on the most critical items?"</p> <p>"I'm concerned that the constant urgency might affect the quality of our work. Can we review our deadlines and see if there's room for more realistic timelines?"</p> <p>"To maintain the quality of my work, I need to focus on one urgent task at a time. Which project should take priority right now?"</p>
Communicating with your leader about common burnout risk issues	<p>"I'd like to schedule a meeting to discuss our current workload and how we can manage it more effectively. When would be a good time for you?"</p> <p>"I've observed a pattern in our work that I believe is impacting our team's productivity. Could we have a conversation about potential solutions?"</p> <p>"I'm committed to our team's success, but I'm finding our current pace unsustainable. Can we discuss strategies to balance our workload?"</p> <p>"I've been tracking our project timelines, and I've noticed that we often underestimate the time needed. Could we reassess our planning process?"</p> <p>"I'm struggling to maintain a healthy work-life balance with our current demands. Can we discuss ways to manage this more effectively?"</p>
Requesting support:	<p>"To handle these urgent tasks effectively, I would benefit from additional resources. Could we explore options for temporary assistance or task redistribution?"</p> <p>"I believe some additional training in time management could help me navigate these challenges better. Is there a possibility of attending a workshop on this topic?"</p>

	<p>"To meet these tight deadlines consistently, I think our team could benefit from project management software. Would you support implementing such a tool?"</p>
<p>Setting clear boundaries:</p>	<p>"I'm available for urgent matters until 6 PM on weekdays. After that, I'll respond to any issues first thing the next morning."</p> <p>"To ensure I can give my full attention to high-priority tasks, I'll be blocking out two hours each day for focused work. During this time, I'll be unavailable for meetings or immediate responses."</p> <p>"I'm committed to delivering high-quality work, which means I need to decline taking on additional projects at this time. Can we review my current workload and prioritize tasks?"</p> <p>"I have family responsibilities that require me to leave work on time. Can we set up some time tomorrow to discuss this matter?"</p>