



Essentially Peace

HEALING AT THE ROOT

From burning brightly to burning out

Usually, the first sign of burnout is reduced productivity. The nerves weaken and one becomes more agitated, worries more easily, and is unable to concentrate as well.

You could compare the stages of Burnout-syndrome to the life of a matchstick. You strike the match and it burns bright and strong but after a while the flame gets smaller and smaller until, eventually, it expires. All that remains is a burnt out piece of wood that is very brittle and delicate.

In his book "The Burnout Syndrome" the German psychologist Matthias Burisch describes the 7 phases of burnout as follows:

1. Warning symptoms in the early stages of burnout

The first phase of burnout begins with the relentless pursuit of success

- Expending excessive amounts of energy. Hyperactivity, voluntary unpaid overtime, denial of personal needs
- Exhaustion, lack of energy, lack of sleep, "never enough time"
- Consumption of alcohol and caffeine can increase and be used as a coping strategy

2. Reduced dedication

- To clients: Loss of positive emotions, greater distance towards clients
- To others in general: Loss of empathy. Cynicism.
- To work: disillusionment, disgust, weariness, absences
- Increased sense of entitlement. Feeling you deserve more, feeling that you're undervalued or exploited. Resentment.

3. Emotional reactions

- Depression. Feelings of guilt, failure, not being "good enough", self-pity
- Aggression. Making accusations, blaming others, acting moody and/or irritable and impatient in your interactions with others

4. Deterioration of:

- Cognitive function: disorganisation, indecisiveness, lack of concentration
- Motivation: minimal effort, decreased initiative and productivity
- Creativity: decreased flexibility and imagination
- The capability to differentiate: rigid black and white thinking, resistance to change of any kind

5. The flattening of:

- Emotional life, feeling indifferent
- Social life: Loneliness. Avoidance of conflicts. Withdrawal from friends and informal social contacts
- Spiritual life: general lack of interest, no desire to take time to engage in uplifting activities you once enjoyed such as gardening, hiking, reading

6. Symptoms

Almost any physical symptom may indicate burnout since, when the body loses the ability to self-regulate, the first signs manifest at its weakest point. This varies greatly from person to person. If someone is prone to developing allergies, burnout might show up as eczema or hay fever at first. Most frequently, however, the initial symptoms of burnout include:

Sleep disorders, headaches and back aches, dizziness, weekend immune system constant pressure in the chest, palpitations, difficulty breathing, tinnitus, skin irritation/eczema, hay fever/allergies, high blood pressure, sexual dysfunction, digestive problems, nervousness, perceived loss of control

7. Despair and total exhaustion

Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness to the point of strong suicidal tendencies. Inner emptiness. Feelings useless. Panic attacks can occur. Complete exhaustion physically, emotionally, spiritually

Depression is the most common result of burnout

According to modern medicine, burnout occurs when someone has been engaged with something for too long, too exclusively, and too intensely, without paying attention to other areas of life and without taking the time to rest and relax. Inevitably, by doing this, a person experiences an increasing level of stress, which accumulates over time.

If people are driven by fears, deadlines and meetings and constantly forced to confront obstacles and unpleasant events, they burn out from the cumulative tension that these factors cause. When this cumulative stress makes someone feel that he/she can't or probably won't achieve his/her goals, depression manifests itself in the form of anxiety, hopelessness, despair, and a lack of pleasure in life.

In turn, these feelings make things worse: if you are depressed, you behave and interact with people differently, thereby causing others to treat you differently as well. This can become a vicious cycle.

(Source: Swiss Harmony)

Videos about chronic stress

- **Stress is killing you, by Dr. Joe Dispenza** (international lecturer, researcher, corporate consultant and author)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfdvbZFXbNA>

- **The fight or flight response explained in 3 min.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtRrxNTnyh8>

- **The burnout gamble - Personal experience of a recovering overachiever** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtRrxNTnyh8>