

“BURNOUT”

Definition: “the cessation of operation usually of a jet or rocket engine.”

Question: Are you a “jet engine” in life that has ceased to operate?

Signs of Burnout

The three main characteristics of occupational burnout are:

- Depleted energy and exhaustion
- Negative feelings, cynicism, and a desire to distance oneself from work
- Feeling unable to continue to be professional and effective

If you are experiencing burnout, you may have gotten to the point where you feel a *lack of empathy* for others and have personal thoughts like, “*I just don’t care anymore.*” You may feel as though *nothing you do really matters*, and that you are *unable to accomplish anything*.

Physical Symptoms of Burnout

Burnout and feeling like you “can’t do this anymore” can have physical manifestations as well. You may experience headaches, stomachaches, muscle soreness, and altered sleep and eating patterns. Soothing oneself to cope with burnout can lead to the abuse of internet stimulation, food, sex, drugs, or alcohol.

Burnout vs. Other Mental Health Issues

You can experience burnout whether or not you struggle with other mental health conditions. But it’s important to distinguish between feelings of burnout and mental health conditions like Depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It’s vital that you get a proper diagnosis and treatment.

Both burnout and depression can include feelings of exhaustion, depletion, detachment, sadness, and feeling unable to complete tasks. But while burnout can be treated by actions like taking time off of work, switching jobs, or practicing self-care, those things aren’t adequate for treating depression.

If you are experiencing symptoms of sadness, hopelessness, very low self-esteem, suicidal ideation, or suspect you might be battling depression, contact a mental health professional. If you are having suicidal thoughts, contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 for support and assistance from a trained counselor. If you or a loved one are in immediate danger, call 911.

Identifying the Causes

Burnout is often related to work or caregiving roles, but it can happen to anyone who is experiencing a build-up of stress or finds themselves in situations where their resources seem limited or depleted, and especially if they are not getting adequate outside support.

The most common causes of burnout include:

- Overwhelming tasks and responsibilities
- Lack of support at work or in a caregiving role
- Not feeling listened to, heard, or understood
- Taking on too many responsibilities at once
- Not practicing self-care, or not having the time or ability to do so
- Feeling a lack of control over decisions
- Believing your role is absolutely critical to the well-being of others or the organization

How to Cope with Thinking & Feeling This Way

If you are in a place where you are saying to yourself, “I can’t do this anymore,” please don’t believe that you are “less than” or inadequate in any way. Often, when someone has reached this point, it’s

because there is too much on their plate. The truth is, there's only so much one person can handle. So, the first thing you can do if you have reached a breaking point is to *assess your life responsibilities* and see if there is anything that can be changed.

Ask yourself questions like:

- "Is this the right job for me? Could it be time for me to look for a different kind of job?"
- "Is there anything I can take off of my plate and delegate to others?"
- "Is there anyone I can call on to help me with my responsibilities?"
- "Are there commitments in my life that I can eliminate or postpone for now as I try to manage my other responsibilities?"
- "Do I have the 'should' disease (toxic use of words like 'have to, got to, need to, must')?"
- "Has my drive for success become my own worst enemy?"
- "What can I do to achieve more work/life balance?"
- "Am I allowing myself to take a weekly Sabbath rest and long, restful vacations?"
- "Am I actively working to reduce and prevent ongoing stress?"

In addition to trying to change your life circumstances so they are more manageable, there are well-proven self-care techniques you can consider adopting to help you manage your feelings, reduce your stress, and increase your energy so you don't continue to feel bogged down and burned out.

Consider:

1. Just Breathe: Two or three times a day, practice relaxing, deep breathing in a private setting. For how to do this, search "Diaphragmatic Breathing" at: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/> .
2. Scripture meditation: Combine deep breathing breaks with Scripture meditation (suggestion: Philippians 4:4-9 is a great place to start) – this is God's solution!
3. Be anxious for nothing: Combine *breathing*, *meditation*, and *prayer* asking to receive peace from the Prince of Peace (John 14:27). NOTE: just these three combined actions can become a new habit that will change your life!
4. Exercise: Both cardiovascular exercise and resistance training are effective methods of managing stress and burnout. Also, learn how to stretch your body throughout the day.
5. Maintain strong boundaries: Make a point not to be "on" at all times; unplug from your work during breaks, in the evening and weekends, and learn to say "NO" much more often.
6. Build a support system: Invest in close friendships and relationships with colleagues whom you can share with safely and confidentially. You are not an island.
7. Consider getting a Coach who specializes in burnout and can help you move through this difficult time and come out feeling even stronger and more resilient.
8. Get out into nature to walk and talk with God and enjoy his creation.
9. Work and live at 80% of your usual pace – no one but you will notice, and you'll live longer.
10. Recommit to the Great Commandment (love God, love yourself, and love others) because it's possible that you've been living like other things matter more.

Dr. Russ Rainey specializes in helping ministry professionals recover from burnout. He knows how old habits can be broken and how new habits can be formed. We are creatures of habit, so we all have a lot to learn (and more to practice) regarding the psychology and the theology of change. Just ask for help. 972-854-1127 or RaineyRuss123@gmail.com.

(Original article at www.verywellmind.com)

Additional content and edits by Russ Rainey, Ph.D., www.NewDirectionChristianCoaching.com)