

# Preventing burnout



The past few years have presented significant challenges for the workforce. For many workers both chronic and pervasive work-related stress manifests as burnout. Burnout often causes decreased productivity and increased turnover. While a challenge, burnout is not inevitable – there are ways to reduce risk factors for burnout and better support employee mental health.

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## Risk factors

While external factors can contribute to burnout, key indicators show burnout is primarily tied to work. Contributing factors relating to job function and culture include:

- Ineffective or poor management
- Excessive workload or inequitable distribution of work
- Lack of role clarity and/or recognition
- Scarcity of resources and under-staffed teams
- Undefined and/or constantly shifting expectations
- High conflict teams and a low sense of community

There are also individual factors such as:

- Perfectionism
- Low social support
- Low or lacking self-care
- Excessive work engagement

## Signs of burnout

Recognizing symptoms is paramount to managing burnout in the workplace. Be on the lookout for these signs:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Nervousness or feeling uncertain
- Anger, irritability, sadness
- Chronic headache or fatigue
- Distancing from work
- Exhaustion, feeling overwhelmed, or low motivation

### Leading methods to assist

While we are unable to eliminate or prevent stressors for employees steps can be taken to support mental wellness and prevent burnout.

- Remind employees of available mental health resources
  - Accessing mental health services must not be viewed as a “last resort” option only
- Encourage and promote casual wellness check-ins
  - Check in with colleagues regularly to ask about how they’re doing
  - Blend in-person, telephone/video calls, and text message communication
- Demonstrate empathy
- One-on-one conversations about how they’re feeling
- Adjust work schedules and workload to address challenges if possible
- If signs of distress are apparent, listen non-judgmentally and speak less
- Use open ended questions to solicit responses
- Lead by example

Burnout can have severe consequences for employees and employers. Leaders must display genuine empathy and support for teammates paired with a company-wide supportive work culture. To prevent burnout long-term, there needs to be a culture that promotes psychological safety for employees, so they feel safe to seek assistance.

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