

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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WTW-81250/12/2022

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