

“COULD I HAVE BURNOUT?”

HOW TO RECOGNIZE IT; HOW TO TREAT IT

We’ve all done it: grumbled and groaned when the alarm clock announced a Monday morning that arrived way too soon. And that’s perfectly normal! Even people who love their work have days when they struggle to get out of bed. But if that feeling happens every day — and if it’s accompanied with feelings of bone-deep dread or exhaustion — you may not just need a strong cup of coffee. You may need to look closely at your health to determine if you are suffering from burnout.

SIGNS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING BURNOUT

- You are increasingly cynical or critical about your responsibilities.
- You feel unmotivated.
- You no longer put in effort; you’re just going through the motions.
- You constantly long for the weekend, even early in the week.
- You feel overwhelmingly tired for no obvious reason.
- You don’t get any satisfaction from your achievements.
- You find yourself coping in unhealthy ways, such as by compulsively overeating or drinking.



“WHAT IS BURNOUT?”

Burnout is your brain and body’s response to work-related chronic stress. It’s characterized by three key symptoms:

- Exhaustion
- Feeling negative, cynical, resentful or distanced from your work
- Feeling like you are ineffective or not accomplishing anything

“IS BURNOUT ONLY BROUGHT ON BY YOUR JOB?”

Burnout is traditionally associated with stress in your career. But it can be brought on by any high-stakes, high-stress responsibility or relationship that takes work to maintain. This can include:

- Parenting, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Romantic partner relationships
- Non-professional caregiving for someone with a health condition

These types of non-career-related burnout are less well-known, often causing those who are suffering to feel ashamed and as if they are to blame for their challenges.

“ARE BURNOUT AND DEPRESSION THE SAME THING?”

Burnout can feel similar to depression, and both can be brought on by too much stress. However, with depression, negative feelings are turned inward and directed at the self. (Ex.: “*Nobody cares about me.*” “*My life will never get better.*”) With burnout, negative feelings are turned outward and directed at one’s work. (Ex. “*I’m done with my big project, but I can’t bring myself to care.*” “*I feel fine, but I want to call in sick . . . again.*”)

“HOW DO I TREAT BURNOUT AND PREVENT IT FROM COMING BACK?”

Fortunately, there are things you can do at work and home to banish burnout and keep a recurrence at bay.

At work

- ▶ **Talk to your leader.**
Ask them for help with the things causing you the most stress. They may be able to help you prioritize your work and take non-essential duties off your plate.
- ▶ **Let go of perfectionism.**
Don't let “perfect” be the enemy of “good.” Sometimes, “good enough” is all that is needed.
- ▶ **Take breaks.**
Mental breaks (like taking a quiet moment to close your eyes and breathe deeply) and physical breaks (like stepping outside to take a brisk walk) can wake you up and reset your mood.
- ▶ **Say “no.”**
If you are a people pleaser, your colleagues may not recognize when you are feeling overwhelmed by their requests. It's okay to kindly but assertively let your team know when you are at capacity.

At home

- ▶ **Take care of your health.**
It may sound cliché, but healthy habits can repair your tired brain and make you more resilient in the face of stress. Get enough sleep, stay hydrated, eat healthy foods and exercise daily.
- ▶ **Unplug from work (and the internet).**
When work hours are over, try to set aside the stresses of the day. Also, put down your phone, and avoid news stories that are emotionally charged or upsetting to you.
- ▶ **Connect with people you enjoy.**
Hanging out and laughing with loved ones can help you put your thoughts and feelings into perspective.
- ▶ **Use your time off.**
An annual vacation (or staycation) is good for your mental health. Plus, on the hard days, it gives you something to look forward to.

“WHAT OTHER RESOURCES DO I HAVE TO MANAGE BURNOUT?”

If you're struggling with burnout, stress, depression, anxiety, or any other mental health concern, you have broad access to care when you use your State of Iowa health plan, administered by Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield®. Visit [Wellmark.com/finder](https://www.wellmark.com/finder) to search for mental health providers in your network, or use [Doctor On Demand®](#) to schedule a virtual mental health visit.

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