

How to combat burnout

It's OK not to be OK

BY KATLYN LAWSON, LAC

THE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE BEEN challenging, to say the least. Politics, pandemics, inflation and so many other things — situations most of us never expected to ever happen, let alone in our lifetime. Children and parents bounced between online and in-person work, holiday vacations seem so far away — if we are lucky enough to get them — and life has seemed to fall into a mundane routine of daily responsibilities. This does not even account for the excessive heat we face daily. Burnout is starting to take its toll on so many.

Research shows there are three major indicators of burnout: overwhelming exhaustion, cynicism and detachment, and a sense of lack of accomplishment. Loss of energy, withdrawal from family and friends, irritability, lack of motivation and mental health struggles such as depression all fall into these three dimensions. These symptoms have a negative impact on our work, family, friends and most importantly on ourselves.

So how do we combat burnout and avoid the negative impacts these symptoms have on our daily lives? We need to prioritize self-care. Find the things that bring you joy and do them regularly.

This looks different for everyone as self-care is not a cookie-cutter experience. Some people enjoy painting while others enjoy cleaning. Some might enjoy a long shower while others take a spontaneous road trip. Our energy and mood are like our bank accounts. If we are always withdrawing from the account and never depositing, we will end up in the negative and burnout will quickly ensue. So, find what deposits into your bank account and do that often.

Find coping skills that work for you. Again, there are no cookie-cutter coping skills. So often we think of coping skills as deep breathing and other grounding techniques. However, coping skills are a lot like self-care in that anything that helps you cope with stress and emotions can be an effective coping skill




for you. Music, art, exercise and simply being alone are just a few that often are not thought of when considering coping skills.

There are many stressors in life and too often our default is to avoid dealing with the stress and push through. Unfortunately, not processing emotions can cause burnout later down the line. Effective coping skills help us to process those emotions and work through them rather than avoiding them and bottling them up to be our future self's problem.

Finally, create clear boundaries in the areas in your life that disrupt your peace. Burnout is often caused by taking on more than we can handle. Maybe that means saying you're just not emotionally capable of being a shoulder to cry on right now or maybe it looks like not taking on that extra project for work. Saying "no" to things can be difficult. We need to know our limits and accept that certain things might make a bigger withdrawal from our energy bank account than we can afford currently.

Boundaries are not just with other people. Often, we need to hold boundaries with ourselves as well. Too often we find ourselves

saying, "I just want to help." Create your boundaries and remind yourself that now is not the time, but later you might have enough in the bank account to spend some energy helping in a different way.

Burnout can cause many negative symptoms that impact our daily lives. It is important to be gentle with ourselves. We do this by filling our emotional bank accounts, using coping skills to process the stress instead of avoiding it and creating boundaries. If that is not enough, do not be afraid to seek help from social support or from professionals. Burnout can be difficult to manage, but you are not alone, and it is okay to not be okay! 



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