



CITY OF MADISON

Identifying and Preventing Burnout

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Burnout is when you hit the point of complete exhaustion, on emotional, physical, and mental levels. If you are experiencing burnout, you may find it difficult to engage in activities that you would normally find meaningful. You may lose interest in the things that are important to you or feel increasingly hopeless. ([Signs You Might be Experiencing Burnout and How to Regain Balance in your Life](#) – Queensland Government).



Here's a helpful video to learn more about burnout:

[3 Signs That You've Hit Clinical Burnout and Should Seek Help \(youtube.com\)](#)

With Laurie Santos

Three core attributes of burnout include ([A Two-Minute Burnout Checkup - HBR](#)):

- Feeling exhausted and no energy to do good work.
- Feeling cynical and experiencing negative attitudes towards projects.
- Feeling ineffective as if you are accomplishing little and don't have the energy to be productive.

What is the Difference Between Burnout and Stress?

Burnout is defined as an **extended** period of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion brought on by prolonged or repeated stress. ([Burnout – Psychology Today](#))

Stress	VS	Burnout
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal reaction to situational pressures and demands. • You still believe you can get things under control and have hope. • Can be both positive and negative. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of exhaustion caused by excessive and chronic stress. • A gradual process and it creeps in slowly. It's more than severe stress. • Leads to fatigue, lack of motivation, inability to meet deadlines, and feeling ineffective.

Table derived from [Do You Know the Differences Between Stress and Burnout? - Rapid AI.](#)

Consider these six factors of burnout and if you are experiencing them: ([6 Causes of Burnout, and How to Avoid Them - HBR](#))

1. **Workload:** you're bogged down with an endless to-do list and can never catch up.
2. **Values:** Our work does not align with your values and does not feel meaningful to you.
3. **Rewards:** There is little reward to your work, whether in terms of finances, prestige, or positive feedback.
4. **Control:** or rather, lack thereof. You feel like you have no say in setting or influencing duties, processes, or deadlines.
5. **Fairness:** Your work environment is hostile or unjust.

6. **Community:** There's a lack of support and camaraderie from colleagues.

There is a helpful [2-Minute Burnout Checkup](#) you can complete.

Tips and Strategies for Managing and Reducing Burnout

Burnout often involves things in the workplace that you can't control. But there are ways to control how you cope with the stress. ([Job Burnout: How to Spot it and Take Action – Mayo Clinic](#)). These include...



Chunking: "Chunking" is the practice of organizing various pieces of information into more manageable or relevant chunks. Doing so will make tasks and ideas clearer and simpler to remember for yourself and others. Try to only group up to seven items together, as any more becomes harder to remember. ([Chunking – Mind Tools](#)).



Set clear on expectations for the day: When setting self-expectations, being realistic is essential. You might set yourself up for failure if you aren't being realistic. Giving yourself time and compassion allows you to achieve your goals and meet your expectations without burning out. ([Self-Expectations: 7 Suggestions for Setting Realistic Expectations - PsychCentral](#)).



Examine your workflows: Start by evaluating existing workflows to identify bottlenecks and inefficiencies. Involve others who are directly involved in these processes to gain insights and feedback on potential improvements. ([How to Perform a Workflow Analysis for Maximum Efficiency - The Manual](#)).

Consider how you are responding to stress and use the 4A Stress Model: Stress is a part of everyday life. Practicing these four steps can help to provide balance for a healthier, happier lifestyle. ([The 4 A's of Stress Relief – Mayo Clinic](#)).

The 4 A's of Stress Management



Figure 2 [Adapted from The 4 A's of Stress Relief - Mayo Clinic](#)

- **Avoid:** Create distance between you and something that causes stress. If something at work repeatedly irritates you, create physical distance between you and the source of that irritation. It is OK to say "no" when it's necessary.
- **Alter:** Change how you think about the situation.
- **Accept:** Forgive yourself or others. It is an important element of accepting stressful situations, and moving on is easier than sitting around stressing about uncontrollable situations.
- **Adapt:** Don't strive for perfection. Instead make reasonable substitutes throughout your daily life. Change your perspective.



Seek Support: Ask co-workers, friends or loved ones for support. Talking to others might help you cope. Feeling like you belong protects against burnout. The [Employee Assistance Program](#) also offers several helpful resources. ([Job Burnout: How to Spot it and Take Action – Mayo Clinic](#)).



Try a Relaxing Activity: Look for activities that can help with stress. Examples are yoga, meditation, or tai chi. Something as simple as taking some deep breaths a few times a day can help relieve tension. Maybe taking up a hobby you enjoy in your free time is another way to disengage with what is causing your burnout and help rekindle lost interests. ([Job Burnout: How to Spot it and Take Action – Mayo Clinic](#)).



Get Some Exercise: Regular physical activity can help you cope with stress. It also can take your mind off work. Even taking small breaks at your desk and doing some simple [desk stretches](#) can help. ([Job Burnout: How to Spot it and Take Action – Mayo Clinic](#)).



Get Some Sleep: Sleep restores well-being and helps protect your health. ([Job Burnout: How to Spot it and Take Action – Mayo Clinic](#)).



Practice Mindfulness: Mindfulness is being aware of what's going on inside you and around you without judging or reacting. This practice can help you deal with what's happening on the job. ([Job Burnout: How to Spot it and Take Action – Mayo Clinic](#)).

Additional Resources to Check Out

- [What's Fueling Burnout in Your Organization? \(hbr.org\)](#) – A robust article discussing the ways complex organizational complexity and extended collaboration can add to stress, and the actions an organization can take to help prevent burnout.
- [A Two-Minute Burnout Checkup \(hbr.org\)](#) – A 2-minute checklist that helps pinpoint the areas in your life that may be contributing to your level of burnout. A great resource to use with a supervisor to explore ways to help.
- [Talking About Burnout Is Still Taboo at Work \(hbr.org\)](#) – Burnout can be hard to talk about with others and may sometimes contain a stigma attached to it. This article suggests ways to begin having this conversation and how it is okay to talk about stressors at work.
- [How to Manage Stress at Work \(verywellmind.com\)](#) – Helpful tips to help deal with and tackle stress to prevent from getting to a point of burnout.
- [Taming Complexity \(hbr.org\)](#) – As we grow processes and procedures, we can also grow the complexity these as well. The article looks at examining your workflows and look at ways to simplify and standardize them.
- [Mindfulness Exercises](#) – Tips from the Mayo Clinic on what is Mindfulness and how to practice it.
- [Stretches you can do at your desk](#) – A collection of stretching videos that you can practice at work.

Looking to Learn More about Burnout?

If you feel you may need additional support, please reach out to the Employee Assistance Program at EAP@cityofmadison.com.