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Adrenal Fatigue

A word about burnout

Are you burnt out?

When we go through prolonged periods of stress and trauma, we can often feel completely exhausted. Our bodies have been in constant fight or flight mode for long periods of time. This is a primal reaction our bodies use to cope with stress and danger.

Back in the day when we were chasing our food and having to fight off predators, this fight or flight response was needed. Our body releases high amounts of adrenaline and cortisol to either stay and fight, or give us the energy to run away. In this day and age, that response is often not needed, so there is nowhere for the cortisol and adrenaline to be used up and kicked out of the body.

What happens is that the stress we are under causes high energy behaviour, which leads to overstimulating of the hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) that fuel this high energy. Eventually these hormones run low, and you slow down while trying to speed up. This can lead to adrenal fatigue, also known as burnout.

What leads to burnout?

Burnout is a common consequence of a lack of work-life balance and is common in certain jobs such as the medical industry and mental health field. But other things can also lead to burnout such as;

- Feeling overworked and devalued – this can also happen in the case of stay at home parents and carers
- Your lifestyle (burning the candle at both ends)
- Personality traits (lack of effective coping skills)
- Not enough time for relaxing, socialising or having fun
- Taking life too seriously
- Ongoing stressful situations in your personal or work life
- Lack of self care and fun during stressful times
- Lack of close, supportive relationships
- Taking on too many responsibilities without enough help or support from others
- Not getting enough sleep

- Being a perfectionist
- Having a pessimistic view of the world
- The need to be in control – lack of willingness to delegate to others
- High achiever

Symptoms of burnout

Have a look through the common signs and symptoms below – and note that these are often very similar to symptoms of depression. In fact, a Doctor may wrongly diagnose someone with depression when they are burnt out (this has happened to me in the past, and the only reason I knew they were wrong was because I had experienced depression in the past and I knew this wasn't it).

- Lack of work life balance
- No energy or desire to hang out with your friends
- Feeling disillusioned
- Neglecting your health
- Multiple, chronic stressors over time have left you feeling drained and exhausted
- No longer performing at your best
- Frequent headaches
- Sense of failure and self doubt
- Lack of confidence and self esteem
- Withdrawing from responsibilities, isolating yourself
- Procrastinating and taking longer to get things done
- Using food, drugs or alcohol to cope
- Calling in sick to work or going in late and leaving early
- You're more clumsy than usual, having accidents and making mistakes
- You feel like you're 'losing it'
- No longer interested in things that used to interest you
- Regularly getting unwell due to lowered immunity
- Sleep disturbances – trouble falling asleep, waking often and finding it hard to get out of bed
- Exhaustion – you feel tired all the time emotionally, mentally and physically
- Lack of motivation – you don't feel enthusiastic about anything anymore
- Irritable, grumpy, frustrated, cynical and other negative emotions
- You're more pessimistic than you used to be
- Aches and pains
- You're surviving on coffee and other stimulants, but they never really wake you up
- You look in the mirror and think you look like a shell of your former self – dull eyes, dull skin and dark circles under your eyes
- You've either put on weight through comfort eating, or more than likely lost weight as you don't have an appetite
- The smallest of tasks feel like climbing Mount Everest
- It's difficult to muster up the energy to care, let alone do something about your situation
- Every day is a bad day

- It feels like nothing you do makes a difference or is appreciated
- You feel empty
- Blunted emotions
- You feel helpless and hopeless
- May make life seem not worth living
- It's hard to read a shampoo bottle let alone a book
- Cognitive problems – when we are stressed out our brain is hardwired to focus on the negative thing that we perceive as a threat. As a result, we may find our short term memory is lacking, we find it harder to pay attention or concentrate, find it harder to problem solve and make decisions.

Things that will help

If you think you might be burnt out – here's what you can do to help yourself recover from it. It's important to note that if your burnout has been confused with depression, and you're treating it with antidepressants and/or counselling, then you may be overlooking the behavioural changes you need to make in order to restore your depleted physical and hormonal reserves.

Left unchecked, burnout can be lethal. So if you're feeling anywhere between lightly toasted and totally charred, here's what you can do about it.

- Become a grazer – stress can cause us to not even think about eating, which in turn creates stress on the body. Snack on decent food that will nourish you – nuts, fruits, veggies
- Take daily supplements like omega 3 fish oil, pharmacy grade vitamin c powder in water (and drink at least 3 litres of water a day), multivitamins and minerals, a greens supplement like Vital Greens – these will all help reduce inflammation in the body
- Catch up on your sleep (aim for 8 hours a night, 10 if you're totally burnt out, with naps in the day if needed) and try to make it as high quality as you can to rejuvenate your body – if you need to then wear ear plugs, an eye mask or keep the room dark, use lavender oil to relax you, stop using any electronic devices like your laptop, phone and TV a couple of hours before bed, have a nice relaxing bath, do some stretching or yoga, meditate
- Start saying 'no' to anything that doesn't serve you
- Seek social support to manage stress
- Focus on changing your mindset through personal development, and reframe how you are looking at your current situation
- Try to find some value in what you do, even the most mundane of tasks
- Create some balance in your life
- Take time off work, or time out
- Reevaluate your priorities
- Nourish your creative side – get involved in new hobbies, create some art, write, read
- Learn how to reduce stress in the moment
- Treat yourself and your wellbeing with the priority you deserve
- Do an audit of everything you do in an average day and aim to reduce those activities that stress you out (or at least take a break from them), and plug more fun activities into your life
- Practice peace – this will look differently to different people. Try meditating (even just

2-5 minutes of focusing on your breathing helps, you don't need to go the full hog with a 60 minute meditation if this isn't your cup of tea), lay still for 5-10 minutes and repeat peaceful words to yourself like 'peace, relax, calm, love, forgive,' say things to yourself like "I am alright in this moment" or "I don't know how it will get better, but I know that it can and will."

- Gentle exercise during the day such as walking or yoga, 3-4 times a week. If you're burnt out but love doing loads of exercise you won't be doing your body any favours – reduce the amount you exercise until you've recovered
- Check out this playlist of [10 TED Talks for when you're feeling totally burnt out.](#)

Try out some of the things above, and commit to prioritising feeling better. I've been burnt out a few times in the past, but when I've taken a step back and realised what was happening, and taken the much needed steps to recovery, it usually only took me a couple of weeks to get back in track.

Here's to a healthy future,

Coach Carly xx