

# Job burnout

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 4 Jun 2019 · B4 · RAUL J. PALABRICA

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently confirmed the existence of a problem in the workplace that is often ignored or otherwise talked about in whispers: job burnout.



WHO describes it as "a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed."

Although not classified as a medical condition, job burnout has been included in WHO's 11th Revision of International Classification of Diseases as an occupational phenomenon. The symptoms of burnout are: (a) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; (b) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and (c) reduced professional efficacy.

Simply stated, burnout has set in when a person does not look forward to reporting for work, treats his or her job as a drudgery, or does only the minimum requirements of his or her assigned tasks.

According to WHO, if the effects of job burnout are not timely addressed, the employee concerned may suffer from, among others, alcohol or substance abuse, heart disease, high blood pressure and Type 2 diabetes.

These findings do not come as a surprise considering the manner business is conducted at present, i.e. seven days a week, 24 hours a day, the stiff competition in the market and the employees' intense drive for professional or financial advancement.

Smart phones, e-mail and text messages have torn down the wall that once delineated private time from office hours, or an employee's persona as an individual with a life of his or

her own and as a cog in the machine that puts food on the table or provides the money that sustains his or her chosen lifestyle.

The traditional work schedule, e.g. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., five days a week, has been subtly replaced by a work environment that, thanks to modern technology, no longer recognizes fixed working hours.

Today, work does not stop at the end of official work hours or at the office's exit door; it follows the employees wherever they go at any time of the day or night, even during the most private moments of their lives.

The fear of missing an important e-mail or being left out of the decision-making loop has made it obligatory (as it may result to job loss) for some employees to look at their gizmos

before resting for the night and shortly after waking up in the morning. And if kept on standby mode during the night, there goes restful sleep.

The same routine is reprised on weekends, holidays and on times when the employee is supposed to be on private time with his or her family, loved ones and friends.

All these result in sleep and rest deprivation.

In addition to being on call 24/7, employees who occupy the upper rungs of the corporate hierarchy have to be constantly on guard for colleagues who want to take over their jobs or get promoted at their expense.

There are no permanent friends or enemies in the work place when success in backstabbing may result in higher positions of responsibility or additional perks and privileges. Corporate politics can be very stressful. When an employee or officer has to work hard to meet the demands of his or her job and at the same time avoid becoming a victim of internal intrigues, the toll on his or her health from these pressures could have serious consequences.

In the effort to do a good job or be considered for promotion, it is not unusual for employees to sacrifice their health to accomplish either objective.

It has been said that the young use their health to gain wealth; when they get old, they use their wealth to regain their health. The money they earned pays for maintenance medicines or medical procedures to cure the ills of a stressful work life.

According to medical journals, job burnout can be avoided by, among others, engaging in relaxing activities, getting some exercise and sleeping for seven to eight hours.

If symptoms persist, as the saying goes, see your doctor.