

- Job stress / Burnout (Psychology)

WHAT TO DO ABOUT WORK BURNOUT

It's a state of vital exhaustion that may feel like energy depletion, lack of motivation or losing your fire—and high performers are more prone to it

Philippine Daily Inquirer · 13 Sep 2022 · A1 · By Sheila Tan @Inq_Lifestyle —CONTRIBUTED The author is an executive coach and organization consultant; email coachsheila.tan@gmail.com.

You used to look forward to work. Just imagining how you'll accomplish things excited you. Getting promoted was all you cared about, and nothing could stop you.

But that's in the distant past. Now you seem to have lost your drive. There was a time you'd kill for your boss' approval; now you couldn't care less. You're probably suffering from burnout.

Burnout is included in the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Classification of Disease (ICD) and defined as a state of vital exhaustion. It is considered an occupational hazard.

It may feel like energy depletion, lack of motivation or losing your fire. To others, it may look like you're not fit for your role, you're a negative person, or you're not competent enough. No one is spared from it. People across ages, positions and social status could experience burnout. High performers are more prone to it than others.

Physical and mental exhaustion

In meta-coaching, we define the ideal working experience to be where one's highest meanings and one's performance converge. This is when one is able to live their highest purpose while being their best selves. This is the flow state where self-actualizers live (Q4 in chart). When people have great ideas but are not able to act on it, they're called dreamers. It may be from lack of confidence, skill or opportunity, and can turn into frustration (Q1).

When we don't have robust meaning in life and don't do work that excites us, this leads to boredom (Q2) where the underdeveloped live. They have a lot of untapped potential and just make do with the life they have.

When people work endlessly on things that don't align with their meaning, they live in Q3, and this often leads to burnout. It could be from overworking to the point that they sacrifice their well-being. The physical exhaustion leads to mental exhaustion, or vice versa.

Many people start with so much drive and meaning and they get so deep into the how that they eventually forget their whys.

There are some cases when people think they want something—like a position or a certain salary grade—that comes from an unhealthy space. An unhealthy space could be from insecurity, such as when they think they have to get to a certain post to have worth as a person or they want to prove to someone who bullied them that they are more than what they were judged for.

When it comes to these survival and fight mode tendencies, when we work on ourselves and realize we are worthy and valuable despite social and corporate standards, the motivation to keep toiling goes away.

Perceived threats

One client started getting coached because she wanted to be promoted to GM level, and she wanted to work on her opportunities to get there in the fastest possible time. As we went through our coaching sessions, we discovered that she was operating from the assumption that her worth is equivalent to her position. She didn't have a good relationship with her emotions, and most negative ones were interpreted as threats. She took this to mean that she needed to be ahead of the pack so she'll be out of danger.

We worked on her self-esteem, being okay with not being perfect and creating a life she wants to live. When the time came that she was offered the GM role, she said no to it. She said she just wants to lay low. She didn't want to exert so much energy impressing people anymore because she's more than her identity at work. When we started to have coaching conversations on her purpose in life, she said she wanted to impact people.

Her burnout from years and years of being in fight mode blinded her from the opportunity to create impact she's been wanting, which was right under her nose. She may still want the same thing, but a different motivation is what will fuel the drive now.

If you are feeling burned out, recognizing it while it's at a low level makes it a lot more manageable. You can just click pause, let your body relax and do things you enjoy to rejuvenate the mind. This could do the trick, and you'll come back to work refreshed and energized.

If you are on the far end of the spectrum, ask yourself what you want your life to be about, what hopes and dreams will make it worth living. See if your current workplace could be a space for you to live it. If not, seek where you can actualize your best self while making your dreams a reality.

To prevent burnout, take care of your mind and body. Create healthy boundaries between work and the rest of your life. What happens outside of the workplace fuels who you are in the workplace.