



Dealing with Professional Burnout Syndrome

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Professional Burnout is something I've had to come to terms with several times in my working life even though I was unaware of it at the time. It is, in hindsight, the reason I changed careers a couple of times, so has become a particular point of study for me.

What is it to be Burned out or to have Professional Burnout?

You can get Professional Burn Out Syndrome while you're self employed, working for others or as the employer but in this example we'll say you are an employee. The features of Burn out are the same any way you look at it.

If you started your job with great enthusiasm, you know you had the skills needed, you wanted to do it and do it well. You had ambitions of where you could take it and you had confidence that you would be able to add something valuable to the company and make it that little bit better.

But as time wore on, the honeymoon period with your job faded away and a new kind of reality set in.

The demands on your time and energy are now extraordinarily high. Long hours are the norm in this company and anyone leaving at the end of their shift when their pay stops is considered to be not pulling their weight. "Loyalty" is when you put in a whole lot more hours for no extra pay. You feel exhausted and it's starting to affect your personal life outside the working hours. You feel you're not well rewarded for the effort you put in.

You can see things that could be done to improve the running of your job or changes to processes that would streamline how every one works. But these are not listened to or acted upon. Everyone's just too busy trying to keep up with their own mammoth workload. Nothing changes. You feel unimportant and undervalued.

As others around you suffer in a similar way, the morale is plummeting. Gossip, cliques, cat fights, pettiness, competitiveness and stress become the norm. This team of people is no fun to hang out with. Those who don't perform are quickly replaced so you can't build a good deep working relationship with the members of the team. This can give you the feeling of being isolated.

To protect yourself you start to get cynical. If it's so easy to get chucked out, there's no point building bonds with others or getting too attached to this company and the work you do, right? So now, you're feeling a lack of control, leave work every day unfulfilled and wake up each morning with dread hanging over you.

Your immunity drops. Aches, pains and illness are more frequent than they were before.

The pressure to perform is high. "You're only as good as your last job" I was told quite plainly by a company executive I interviewed. Boy, that's pressure. No bad hair days allowed. If you have one you could be out on the streets and with the competition for the good jobs running high these days you could be out of work for a while so financial stress becomes a fear. This builds a feeling of insecurity.

When you went for this job it felt like a perfect match. Now it feels as well matched as a second hand shoe... On the wrong foot.

My goodness! What a depressing story. And yet, it's common amongst so many creative jobs. If what I've written sounds all too familiar, you find yourself exhausted all the time, disillusioned, lacking the spunk you had when you started the job and there's a nasty bite whenever you speak, then it's highly possible you're suffering from Professional Burnout.

In this negative state of mind, now is not necessarily the time I would suggest you quit and look for a new job. Nor quit the industry and go drive a delivery truck. If you see others around you look like they're suffering the same as you are, chances are it's more likely to be the job which is giving you burn out. Don't feel this is all your fault or that you're a whimp if you can't handle the tough environment.

There are many things you can do outside the job to help boost your immunity and cope better in this environment but there would also be value in looking for solutions in how to make your job fit you better, which in turn would be of value to the company in the long term.

You are a talent. You were hired because the company saw that talent. Now the conditions of the job need to be altered to support that talent because you are worth keeping.

How to reduce or prevent Professional Burnout in the workplace

If at all possible put together a group of employees working in the same area as you in the company who you can meet after working hours. You will have to ban gossip and complaints to keep the meeting constructive - tea and coffee rather than alcohol, plus a time limit for the duration will keep the focus better. The object of the meeting would be to look at what parts of the job are letting you all down and which is the one most important area you would like to improve. If all areas are looking rather screwy then just start with one, for an improvement in one area will begin to have affect on all areas.

Start with a list what would be good to change along with suggestions for how it could be improved. It's also really important to consider what cost to the company there is by leaving things as they are and what the bosses could be saving (ie - the bottom line) if they changed to your idea. Your boss may not be interested in simply making the office a more fun and pleasant place for you to be, but a dollar value in savings if they made the change is more likely to make them sit up.

We don't want you to look like the crew from Mutiny on the Bounty and have all your jobs in jeopardy. But by adding this information as to how the old and new ways affect management and the company's bottom line, you are showing your loyalty and interest in making it become a better company in the long run, which will hopefully make it more digestible to management.

You'll find that by working with others to look forward to a better situation, you can build some strong morale and team loyalty with it. That makes work a more pleasant place to be even if the changes are not immediate.

Ways to lower or avoid Professional Burnout outside the job

If there is stress in your personal life, there's no doubt it will affect your work. By improving as many areas as you can to give you better support, you'll become more resilient and able to handle times of stress.

Let's take a look at other parts of your life and question of what state their in...

Physical home environment

Your partner and the people you live with

Extended family

Friends and social life

Community and Neighbourhood

Hobbies

Spirituality

Leisure activities

Health and Fitness

Intellectual stimulation

(NB - Be gentle when you consider your partner (and you'll notice I haven't listed children at all). They are often reacting to you because of your own words and actions. By working to improve your own wellbeing, you'll often find relationships with your partner and children improve as a result without any extra effort.)

If you find any of these are running along smoothly, be grateful for them and enjoy them as much as you can. They each contribute to a more productive, stronger and happier you.

Are there any which need improvement? Any that are missing altogether?

As a Life Coach and Business Coach, I am often brought in to work with management on company goals, with teams to help them work better together, or to work with individuals to help improve personal stability. When you contract a Coach from outside the company, you'll find we are removed from the day to day relationships and details you are in the middle of and can look at the way things are without inside influence.

A Qualified Life Coach or Team Business Coach can help you see the big picture and support you to find solutions that may be difficult to see when only accompanied by those working with you every day.

More personally, by using a Coach to provide a good support for improving life inside and out of work, you'll see an holistic improvement in how you're feeling, your energy levels, work productivity and a decrease in stress. Professional Burnout can be averted or resolved.



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