



Burnout in Professional Life: The Definition, the Factors and How to Avoid It

Burnout can be defined as feelings of overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the job, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. It can affect people at any age but we often see any patients in their early 40's. Many men and women reach their early 40's and experience burnout. The factors that can affect burnout include long working hours, high demands from jobs that no longer are intellectually challenging, a lack of boundaries between work and home life with remote working.

In addition a poor diet, sedentary lifestyle, work and home stress, financial pressures, caring roles for young children and elderly parents can all ramp up the stressors to increase the pressures on family units in this decade of their professional lives. After years of productive and challenging work many professionals reach the peak of their careers only to reflect of time wasted at work and a lack of work life balance. Regret, guilt, and feelings that you are not good enough can be common, and it is not uncommon to have a professional "wobble" where you feel that you might not be good enough for your senior role or that younger, smarter, fitter and more organised colleagues without the burden of your home life might be better in your job than you. This is a time when seeking professional help can be really beneficial, to explore these feelings and to get some guidance on how to manage them. Talking therapies such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) or Counselling can allow you the space to explore your thoughts and feelings around work and home will see through your facade and expose your inadequacies. Of course in the majority of cases it simply is not true, but that does not matter because it might be just how you feel, and that it what counts.

Burnout can be a result of long term stress, which is why it is important to seek help if you are struggling at work or in your personal life. Unmanaged burnout may lead to health problems including heart disease, high blood pressure and mental health issues such as depression. It can also trigger other forms of addiction such as work addiction, internet addiction and even gambling.

So what can we do to avoid burnout?

There are a few key things that you can do:

- Set boundaries between work and home life, switch off your phone and laptop when you are not at work, try to have regular breaks during the day, take time for yourself each week to do something that you enjoy.
- Make sure you eat a healthy diet and get enough exercise, both of which can help to reduce stress levels.
- Take care of your physical health by eating well and exercising regularly.
- Set boundaries between work and home life, including taking regular breaks away from screens.
- Make time for yourself to do things you enjoy outside of work.
- Talk to someone if you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed, whether that is a friend, family member or colleague.
- Be mindful of the signs and symptoms of burnout and seek help if you think you might be experiencing it.

Seeking professional help for example counselling, can be hard to consider but can really help. Coaching can also be really beneficial to help you manage stress and achieve work life balance.

So there we have it, burnout in professional life. It is something that can affect us all at any age, but with a few simple steps we can reduce the chances of it happening to us. Prevention is always better than cure!