

# RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF BURNOUT

## What is burnout?

Burnout is best described as a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion, which is often defined by excessive and prolonged periods of stress. Whilst burnout won't happen to us overnight, the extremities of burnout can creep up on you. As it approaches the one-year milestone since the COVID-19 pandemic began and many of us began working from home, some of us may find that we are more susceptible to burnout.

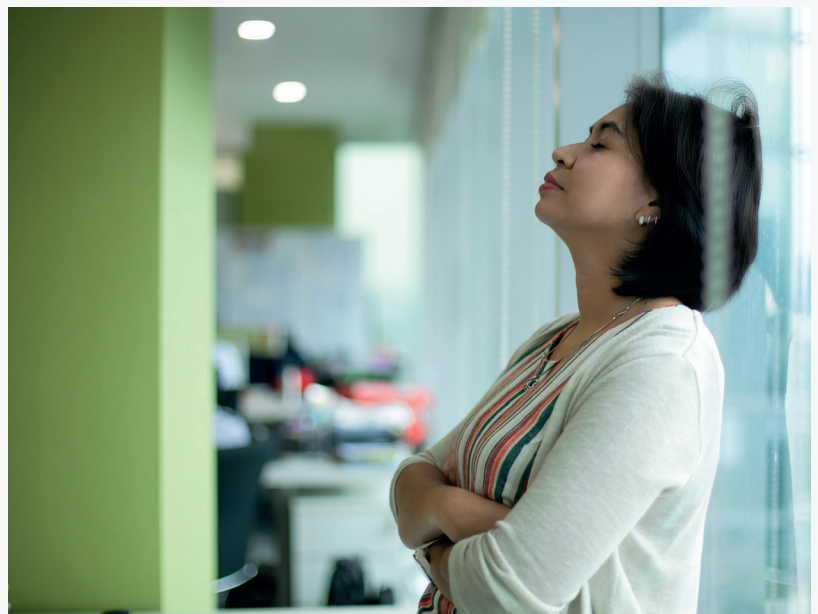
Think about your role in a busy professional practice – over the past year you will have navigated the unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic, been on hand to help with any challenges and stresses your clients have faced and worked through the blurred distinction between your work and home life. It's hardly surprising that you may be feeling worn out.

Whilst it isn't always easy to acknowledge how you are feeling, especially with an extremely busy workload, we talk about how you can recognise signs of burnout and some practical tips on how to combat this.

## How can I recognise signs of burnout?

Burnout can display itself in both physical and emotional symptoms. A clear sign of burnout is feeling emotionally or physically depleted, in which you have little to no energy and feel drained. Physical symptoms of burnout may include headaches, stomach aches, or a change in appetite. Emotional symptoms may also include feeling tearful or overwhelmed or overly irritable. Although not always an indication of burnout, some questions you can ask yourself include:

- Do you lack energy to be productive?
- Have your sleeping habits changed?
- Have you become irritable or impatient when dealing with others?
- Do you feel a lack of control, or feel overwhelmed over your work life / workload?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate?



# How can I deal with burnout?

## 1. Reinforce positive habits

Although in times of stress and burnout, creating positive habits may feel like the last thing you want to do, practical strategies like eating healthily, making time for exercise, and getting enough sleep are crucial. Studies have shown that a good nights sleep can improve concentration and productivity, boosts your immune system and improve memory.



## 2. Set boundaries

Don't overextend yourself and remember you are entitled to say "no" or push back on unrealistic deadlines. Whilst you will always want to provide your clients with excellent client service, your best can only be possible if you are feeling healthy, energised and well. With the blurred distinction between work and personal time, ensure that you set boundaries – allowing yourself time off from work to recharge and relax. This could be achieved by turning off your work phone between 6pm – 8am, putting your laptop away each night, or dedicating a space in your home which is your workplace.



## 3. Self-care is a necessity, not a luxury

Make sure you find time to put yourself first. Self-care is sometimes introduced once someone has reached crisis point to slow down, but it should be approached as something you incorporate into your day to day life. Self-care can present itself in many ways dependent on your interests. Whether you listen to a podcast, read a book, or go for a walk, self-care isn't indulgent – it's essential for physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing.



## 4. Reach out to others and seek support

Whilst you may work solo and not have the formal support of a team around you, there are still ways in which you can seek support. Can you connect with like-minded people who work in your industry? You may be able to connect with someone from a professional association or group, who understands, can talk through and perhaps help with solutions to the demands currently on you.

