**Burnout V. Stress**

While feeling overwhelmed, stressed and exhausted from your job may seem like something that just comes with the territory, those feelings could be a sign of burnout and shouldn’t be ignored.

In a recent statement, [the World Health Organization announced](https://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/burn-out/en/) it is updating the definition of burnout and will begin working on establishing “evidence-based guidelines on mental well-being in the workplace.”

In the newest version of the WHO’s International Classification of Diseases, burnout is defined as a syndrome thought to result from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. The WHO lists three components of burnout:

1. Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
2. Feeling mentally detached from your job, or having negative feelings towards your job
3. Reduced professional effectiveness

Previously, burnout was defined as being a “state of vital exhaustion”. This new categorization as a syndrome highlights just how serious job burnout can be and the toll it can take on you.

“When you’re suffering from burnout related to your work, mentally you may start to feel helpless, cynical, unsatisfied and detached. Physically, you can experience fatigue, high blood pressure, insomnia or sleep deprivation and frequent headaches,” [Dr. Munther Barakat](https://www.aurorahealthcare.org/doctors/munther-a-barakat-psyd), a psychologist at Aurora Behavioral Health Center, says.

“The difference between stress and burnout is that stress is characterized by feeling anxious and having a sense of urgency, while burnout causes feelings of helplessness, hopelessness and disengagement,” Dr. Barakat says. “People who are stressed can typically imagine feeling better once they can get everything under control, while people who are burned out don’t see a way out of their situation.”

He says other **signs** **of burnout** may include:

* Reduced work performance and productivity
* Difficulty concentrating
* Negative or critical attitude towards coworkers
* Self-doubt and feeling like a failure

Dr. Barakat recommends taking the following steps to **prevent burnout**:

* Make self-care a priority. Practice healthy sleeping habits, aiming to get at least seven hours of sleep every night, eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
* Focus on your life outside of your job. Do things that make you happy and foster strong relationships with friends and family.
* Eliminate problem work habits that may cause extra stress, like procrastinating or taking on too much responsibility. Learn how to better manage your time, delegate and say “no” when you need to.
* Find meaning in your job.
* Communicate with your supervisor or colleagues instead of bottling up your frustrations.
* Take a walk or participate in a quick enjoyable activity during your break time.
* Take a day off or take a vacation from work if you can.

“If these steps don’t alleviate your symptoms, don’t be afraid to seek help from a professional,” Dr. Barakat says. “They will be able to assist you in overcoming burnout and developing strategies to avoid it in the future.”