

# The Impact of Burnout and Ways to Overcome It



Working with children and/or youth and committing time and energy to creating and implementing programming for them can be both physically and psychologically exhausting. Emotional labour, physically demanding work, and overextending oneself can all play a role in the experience of burnout for educators and those working in a school setting.

## What is Burnout?

According to **Psychology Today**, “Burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and often physical exhaustion brought on by prolonged or repeated stress.” In the work you do, burnout can occur not only from the physical stress and exhaustion that you might experience but also from the stress of the responsibility you may have from working with children and/or youth.

### **If you’re beginning to notice these signs, you might be experiencing burnout:**

- Fatigue and sleep issues.
- Repeated periods of forgetfulness and intense trouble concentrating.
- Appetite and weight issues.
- Depression and anxiety.

## How Burnout Impacts Mental Health:

Being exhausted from overextending yourself at work can have severe negative implications for your mental health and wellbeing. As noted by **Psychological Science**, many of the symptoms of burnout overlap with the hallmarks of depression, including extreme fatigue, loss of passion, and intensifying cynicism and negativity. If you are starting to notice these signs and are associating them with being depressed, they could be side effects or symptoms of burnout.

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## What Can I Do To Combat Burnout?

Burnout can be an extremely difficult thing to catch, manage, and overcome. In the work you do, it can be difficult to know when it is becoming imperative that you practice self-care to avoid the signs of burnout. However, taking a proactive stance to combating burnout will help you to perform better at your job and be more present for the children and/or youth you work with.

## Here are some suggestions for things you can do if you feel like you're beginning to experience burnout:

### 1. Make a List of Activities you Enjoy

These activities could be anything, including doodling, reading the newspaper or a novel, doing a puzzle, building something, or even taking brief naps. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to relaxation, so you may have to get creative! The items on your list should not feel like a chore. Think of something that gives you a break and leaves you feeling rested and energized.

### 2. Make a List of all the Things that Get in the Way

It is easy to tell yourself every excuse in the book when it comes to doing something to take care of yourself. There is always going to be something to tackle on the to-do list or some issue that prevents you from doing the things you want. So, why not write down all of the issues and then brainstorm some solutions to work around them? Doing so will help you to avoid the common pitfalls that prevent you from prioritizing your own wellness.

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## 3. Share your Plan with Others

Sharing your plan with friends or family is a great way to make yourself accountable. For example, if you decide that you want to set aside 30 minutes a day to read a book that you've always wanted to read, those around you can encourage you or check in with you to ensure you are sticking to your plan.

## 4. Make your Plan Visible

Seeing our plans in written form can give us a clear and tangible reminder that we need to take care of ourselves. Try writing your plan on a piece of paper and put it on your nightstand, or stick it on your fridge. You could even write it in your calendar, or set alarms so that recreational activities are scheduled into your day.

## 5. Revise your Plan

You might discover that something you thought you would enjoy does not actually bring you a whole lot of relaxation. Or, it might be the case that something that once worked for you is no longer fulfilling in the same way. That is okay! Creating and recreating your wellness plan is a process of trial and error as you grow, and doing so will help you to learn more about yourself.

**Taking care of yourself is the best way to overcome burnout at work. Balance is so important in our lives, and taking these small steps can make a huge difference for yourself and the children and/or youth you work with!**