
Are you Burnt Out or simply
stressed?

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How do you now if you are stressed or heading for burnout?

As far as I see it, the term Burnout is over-used these days to describe symptoms of stress. But Burnout is a serious condition that requires its own mantle of honor in the dictionary of severe ailments.

Stress and Burnout are not the same thing. But how can you be certain which slippery slope you're on?

Here I outline the different factors and signs of each.

When you say you're 'stressed', most of the time it's due to workload pressures or excessive expectations from others, including family, colleagues or even friends.

The term Stress was coined in 1946 by Hungarian psychologist, Dr. Hans Selye to describe the increasing feelings of overwhelm he saw in his patients. He stole the term from the construction industry where it means the amount of load a bridge (for instance) could take before it cracked - a perfect metaphor for our psychological state.

Stress

When we feel stressed Cortisol, Adrenalin and Noradrenalin are pumped in to our bloodstream giving us excessive energy and access to speed. These hormones also speed up heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure and metabolism.

As a natural built-in reaction, this stress response can help you get through tough times so can be considered a good thing.

Too much stress however leaves you

- Feeling overwhelmed,
- Speaking and moving quickly
- With overactive emotions
- Feeling restless and unable to sit for too long
- And over time can lead to depression.

With an increase in inflammatory cells, you may start feeling more frequent aches and pains.

With heightened cortisol levels, other hormones become depleted. With lowered Melatonin, and Serotonin, we start losing sleep, waking each day with a lowered sense of calm.

And the villi in our gut starts to break down, letting small particles of food in to our blood stream, not only causing us Stomach issues but also bringing an onslaught of new allergies.

Burnout

Chronic stress is the ongoing onslaught of stressors that we feel are intrusive to us or opposed to our own value system. Chronic stress, with no sign of reprieve or rest can lead to Burnout, which is a state of complete mental, physical and emotional exhaustion.

Some of the signs of Burnout include:

- Feeling easily agitated and irritable
- Non-existent libido
- Mentally exhausted
- Socially withdrawn
- Extra sensitive to nominally sad situations
- Emotionally empty, unable to laugh
- Losing motivation in work, parenting or general life tasks

In essence, when you reach Burnout, no words can describe the level of detachment and exhaustion you feel. Usually it is the overachievers and high performers who reach this unenviable goal, as to change the direction of impending burnout, honesty and a willingness to ask for help is imperative. High performers are the first to feel the judgment of others, making them the last people to speak up about their level of stress.

Stress can creep up on us and impact our daily lives. Burnout however comes crashing in violently and leaves us withering in a shell of skin devoid of any attributes that make us human, like joy, laughter, love, happiness, energy and motivation.

If you or someone you know is suffering through Burnout, it really is time to speak out and realize that you need help and support in order to break free. Burnout is not an easy path to return from, you'll need all the help you can get.