

Managing Stress and Burnout

Stress is a normal part of life. Burnout occurs when stress becomes prolonged and overwhelms a person's ability to cope. This leaflet provides general information about stress and burnout, and practical strategies to support recovery.

Understanding Stress

Stress is the body's response to demand or challenge.

Short-term stress can:

- Improve focus
- Increase motivation

Chronic stress can:

- Exhaust physical and emotional resources
 - Worsen mental health symptoms
 - Reduce coping capacity
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What Is Burnout?

Burnout is a state of **emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion** related to prolonged stress.

It may involve:

- Persistent fatigue
- Reduced motivation
- Emotional detachment or numbness
- Reduced sense of effectiveness
- Increased irritability

Burnout develops gradually and often goes unrecognised at first.

Common Contributors to Burnout

Burnout may be influenced by:

- Ongoing work pressures
- High responsibility with limited control
- Lack of recovery time
- Poor sleep
- Chronic stress outside work

Burnout is not a personal failure.

How Stress and Burnout Affect Mental Health

Prolonged stress can:

- Worsen anxiety and low mood
- Impair concentration and memory
- Disrupt sleep
- Increase physical symptoms

Burnout can overlap with depression and anxiety.

Early Warning Signs

Early signs may include:

- Constant tiredness
- Reduced enjoyment
- Feeling overwhelmed by routine tasks
- Difficulty switching off
- Increased irritability

Recognising these signs early allows for intervention.

Recovery Requires Change

Recovery from burnout usually requires:

- Reducing ongoing stressors
- Increasing opportunities for rest and recovery
- Reviewing expectations and workload

Rest alone is often not enough if stressors remain unchanged.

Practical Strategies

Helpful steps may include:

- Reviewing workload and responsibilities
- Setting clearer boundaries
- Prioritising sleep and routine
- Building regular breaks into the day
- Gradually reintroducing restorative activities

Changes are often gradual and staged.

Work and Burnout

Burnout may temporarily affect work capacity.

Helpful approaches include:

- Temporary reduction in hours or duties
- Gradual return-to-work plans
- Clear communication about limits

Work capacity often improves as recovery progresses.

Support and Treatment

Support may include:

- Psychological support
- Review of mental health treatment
- Workplace adjustments
- Medication where appropriate

Treatment plans are individualised.

Preventing Relapse

Reducing the risk of relapse may involve:

- Ongoing monitoring of stress levels
- Maintaining boundaries

- Early response to warning signs

Burnout recovery often includes learning new patterns of coping.

When to Seek Help

Professional support is recommended if:

- Stress feels unmanageable
- Burnout symptoms persist
- Daily functioning is affected

Early support can shorten recovery time.

Summary

Stress and burnout are common and understandable responses to prolonged demand. With appropriate support and gradual change, recovery is achievable.
