

## **Stress is the Fuel of Burnout.**

### **Signs & Solutions for Burnout**

**By Renie Cavallari**

The RCI Institute, Aspire's research, collaborative thinking and innovation development arm, studied over 100 active, "in the trenches" leaders and explored the signals of burnout as well as ways to decrease and re-energize people who are on the burnout treadmill.

### **Minimizing the Burn...**

Everyone is faced with doing more with less. You might have a full-time job and now you have somehow become an underqualified, home-schooling teacher responsible for getting your child through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. You now work from home and used to cook 2 meals a day and now it is 3. Or maybe your company, like so many, has downsized and though you are grateful for your job, you are wearing more hats than you thought imaginable just 12 months ago.

You tell yourself to slow up and breathe ten times a day and it just doesn't seem to work. You are exhausted. Sugar and caffeine are your day-to-day survival solutions that get you going and pushing you through the day followed by an evening cocktail, or two, so you can bring yourself down from your endless fight and flight routine of craziness.

All of these realities combined with the challenges of contracting COVID-19, social distancing, disconnection with others, financial stress and the general chaotic pace called everyday living, easily adds up. Welcome to burnout.

### **Signs of Burnout:**

1. You find yourself more impatient than patient with others. Your annoyance level is easily trigger compared to your normal energy.
2. You just don't feel motivated to do what you know you have to do. You're just over it and exhausted.
3. You don't sleep well. Your negative self-talk, [HeadTrash](#), seems to never stop. You find yourself seeing what is wrong more often than what is right.
4. Physical signs are showing and can include headaches, muscle pain and intestinal and stomach issues.
5. You find yourself making foolish mistakes, the details seem to get by you and your work product "just isn't what it should be". You blame and shame others for your mistakes.

Procrastination is in play and your normal sense of urgency is lacking. You are disinterested in your work and maybe even the company.

6. You feel that you have run out of time for anything. You are working 12 plus hours a day and never seem to make progress. If someone wastes your time you are not amused! No one appreciates what you do, and you are pretty sure no one works as hard as you.
7. You feel unappreciated, undervalued or taken for granted. You suspect that your colleagues are talking about you behind your back and when the boss does give you a pat on the back, you feel it's patronizing and not sincere.

Burnout is not the same as not being happy in a job, having a bad day or even a bad week. If you hate your job it will always be work and it will not bring you pleasure. You will never make enough money or find satisfaction in the exchange of your time. If you hate your job, you need to make a change. That's different than burnout. It's actually easier than burnout recovery.

Worse yet, burnout causes shame. When others try to help or offer support, you can't have it. You don't want it. You see them as part of the problem, and this only isolates you which makes you feel worse.

Unfortunately, burnout isn't someone else's responsibility, it is yours. No one gives you burnout. You give it to yourself. *Sorry!*

If you have burnout you can change your habits to re-energize and re-engage. Burnout recovery does take time and commitment. You didn't get burned out in a week so you will need some time to recover from burnout.

## How to Ease out of Burnout:

1. **Own it.** Once you acknowledge burnout you can start to move out of it.
2. **TPM™.** Think. Prepare. Move. Are you spending enough time thinking and preparing so when you take action it is smart, productive and efficient? Track your time against your deliverables. Tracking your time gives you insights into time drains and people who are time stealers.  
Look for more effective ways and watch being overly efficient. Mistakes cost you time and make you frustrated. Neither is helpful.
3. **All you have is time.** Chaos feels out of control and makes us less productive at a time when we need to be optimally productive. It is hard for anyone to sustain long periods of chaos. Drill into your time usage and how you manage your time. Block time based on what matters most and first.
4. **Where's your head.** How is your mind set? The more frustrated you feel the more gratitude you need to draw on. Gratitude shifts your mind set from feeling overwhelmed and disappointed to appreciative and more at peace.
5. **What are you doing for yourself each day?** Give yourself an hour a day to do what you want whether it is work out, meditate, journal, watch Netflix or go for a walk around the block. When you don't give yourself time you are ripping yourself off and this creates a silent resentment that will eventually infuriate you.
6. **Take a break.** It doesn't have to be weeks. Stop stock piling your vacation time for that big vacation. Vacation will not eliminate burnout. It will give you a breather but be aware if you come back and re-engage with the same burnout inducing habits and mind set you will forget your vacation ever happened.
7. **Take a look around.** Cut out things you can control that drain you including people, social media, the news, etc. If it doesn't bring you positive energy you are fueling your burnout and exhaustion.
8. **Sleep more. Drink more.** As in water. Humans can't live without sleep and water. Hydration is critical to both physical and mental health. Set a routine to ensure you are getting the sleep you need. Go to bed at a set time. Wake up at a set time. Track your water intake.
9. **Bit size pieces.** Stop and rethink your plans. Think about planning as sprints that last 120 days vs. big annual plans and huge goals. It will keep you focused on small milestones which will feed your energy. All big goals come one day, one victory at a time.

10. **Every morning reset.** Be present in today's priorities. Ineffective focus just causes more ineffective results and that serves no one especially your stress level. Stress is the fuel of burnout.
11. **Who you hang with matters.** Surround yourself with people who inspire you and celebrate your wins along the way. They are your people. Negative people suck your energy like giant vampires. They make life less fun. Stop trying to fix them. They need to fix themselves.
12. **Create communication boundaries.** The brain needs to step away and relax. Have an email and work communication stop time. Don't check your emails after or before a certain time each day.
13. **Choose your Mindset.** No one controls your [HeadTrash](#) but you. Learn how to manage and release your negative thoughts. Start your day with inspiration not negativity. Choose a word each day that sets your intention and impact for the day. Write it down. Revisit it throughout the day.
14. **Take care of your body.** Sugar is not your friend. It actually slows you down and messes with your gut, blood and focus. Find your kind of exercise, a walk, hike, bike ride, yoga class, workout. What is in motion is moving. Learn how to breathe. Without air... you no longer have to worry about burnout.
15. **Think about your legacy.** Focusing on your legacy helps you remember what is most important in your life. It takes you out of the little things that are stressing you out and allows you to reflect on what you have. Gratitude is a quiet regenerator of the mind.

Burnout is as much emotional as it is physical. Your mind, body and soul need rejuvenation and if you don't give it, they will find a way to slow you down as they wait for no one.

**Burnout is a silent killer of the human spirit.**

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#### About the Author

First and foremost, Renie Cavallari is a mother, sister, daughter, friend and explorer. She is also CEO and Chief Instigator of [Aspire](#), a global culture and training company and the Founder and Lead Explorer of [RCI Institute](#), an active research and People Technology™ lab focused on awakening human potential through its unconventional approach to research, collaboration, and innovation. Cavallari is an award-winning international strategist and leadership expert. Known as an organizational anthropologist and innovative change agent, she is recognized as one of the world's leading authorities on shifting human

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