

5 ways to manage burnout and care for your mental health



Burnout is a state of mental and physical exhaustion due to prolonged stress. Burnout was first talked about in relation to stress in the workplace. Now, the conversation on burnout has also expanded into caregiving, parenting, relationships and identity.

So how do you manage burnout? Or how do you reduce the likelihood of burnout happening in the first place? First, it's important to keep in mind that there may be cultural or systemic issues happening that can play a part in feeling burned out. While you can't control those larger issues, one thing is in your control—taking care of yourself. Here are some ways to get started.



1. Practice self-care

Self-care can be whatever you want or need it to be. It's about doing things to care for yourself, so you have the energy and desire to embrace all your life has to offer.

Self-care ideas:

- **Get good, restful sleep.** Most adults need seven to nine hours of sleep a night. If you're struggling to fall or stay asleep, try limiting your screen time before bed. Also, aim to go to bed at the same time each night. Have a cup of herbal tea or read a book to tell your brain it's time to wind down. Also, try to limit caffeine after noon so that it doesn't impact your sleep.
- **Exercise regularly.** Exercise is good for your mental and physical health. It increases serotonin levels, which helps to improve your mood and energy. Choose something you enjoy, like running around with your kids, playing fetch with your dog, lifting weights or practicing yoga. Aim to move at least 30 minutes a day, but know that even small amounts of exercise can help.

- **Eat well and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water are key to improving your energy and focus. One change to try: enjoy a serving of fruit or vegetables at each meal.
- **Be mindful.** The benefits of mindfulness include less stress and improved focus. It can also help lower blood pressure and improve symptoms of anxiety and depression. Mindfulness can be as simple as eating, listening and moving more intentionally. Or try meditating for five to 10 minutes each day.
- **Practice gratitude.** One way to build a positive mindset is to remind yourself of the people and things you're grateful for. Try writing down three to five things each day that you're grateful for right before you go to bed.
- **Create a "no" list.** It's more than OK to set healthy boundaries for things that no longer serve you. That could look like not checking your email past a certain time. Or choosing not to go to an event you feel you have to attend.



2. Focus on what you can control

We long for security and stability. But uncertainty is all around us. When something outside of our control happens, many of us turn to worrying. Worry can be misleading, though. We may think that if we can worry over a problem long enough, we'll be able to control the outcome. Instead, it can simply cause more stress and anxiety.

When you catch yourself worrying about something that hasn't happened yet, bring yourself back to the present moment. Focus on what you can actually control.



3. Stay connected

Our social bonds can help reduce stress and flood our systems with oxytocin. Oxytocin is the "bonding hormone" that can make us feel secure and supported. Connect with loved ones through phone calls, walks, shared meals and weekend adventures.



4. Use social media carefully

Social media can help us feel more connected. But there can be a downside. If there are accounts you follow that stress you out or make you feel bad, unfollow them. Or hide their posts from your newsfeeds. You can always follow them again when life is less stressful.



5. Limit the amount of news you view

It's helpful to stay informed. But non-stop news can be overwhelming. Protect yourself from information overload. Set a daily time limit on the amount of news you read and watch.

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