



# Life Lines

Improving your quality of life, one step at a time

## Issue #7: Taking Care of Yourself

Does it feel like the days you bounced out of bed ready to face life's challenges are gone? You used to juggle family, career, and social responsibilities with ease. You did it all. Now you're just trying to get through the day. You're burned out.

Burnout has been defined as the consequence of severe stress and high ideals, and from working too hard, too much, and for too long. Years of long hours and extreme workloads, together with the constant emotional demands of the job and pressures to excel, can take their toll on a person's physical, emotional, and mental health. One day that overachiever realizes he or she is disillusioned, exhausted, and fed up with everything. They're burned out.

### Symptoms of burnout

#### Physical signs and symptoms

- Feeling tired and drained most of the time
- Lowered immunity, getting sick a lot
- Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches
- Change in appetite or sleep habits

#### Emotional signs and symptoms

- Self-doubt, feeling as if you've failed
- Feeling helpless, trapped and defeated
- Detachment, feeling alone in the world
- Loss of motivation
- Becoming increasingly cynical and negative
- Having less satisfaction and pride in your work

#### Behavioural signs and symptoms

- Withdrawing from responsibilities
- Isolating yourself from others
- Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done
- Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
- Taking out your frustrations on others
- Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early



### Are you at risk of job burnout?

You may be more likely to experience job burnout if:

- You identify so strongly with work that you lack a reasonable balance between your work life and your personal life;
- You try to be everything to everyone;
- You work in a helping profession, such as health care, counselling, or teaching;
- You feel you have little or no control over your work; and/or
- You feel that some aspects of your job have become monotonous.

### Preventing burnout

When what you're doing is no longer fuelling your passion and/or commitment to your career, it's time to seriously assess your situation. Evaluate how you can change your current situation to re-ignite your enthusiasm.

- **Discuss your options with your manager and HR.**  
What are the options for professional development within your company? Is there a way to explore careers in other departments? Perhaps your manager can help in giving you new challenges or changing expectations?
- **What gives you joy outside the workplace?**  
If you love to sing or play an instrument, join a choir or band. Always fancied acting? Join the local theatre group. Pursue your interests by taking courses, getting involved in the community, and meeting people with similar interests.

- **Volunteer.**

Helping others is a great way to get a better perspective on life. Whether it's helping at a nursing home, or getting involved at the animal shelter, there are many ways that your talents, interests, and experience can make a positive difference in the lives of others.

- **Make a bucket list.**

Having and pursuing personal goals, no matter how trivial they may seem, can reignite your enthusiasm, and that can spill over into all areas of your life. Start planning to make some lifelong dreams a reality.

- **Take some time for yourself.**

When was the last time you took a vacation? Sometimes a week relaxing in the sun or experiencing a new country and culture not only recharges your batteries but also provides new perspectives. Even taking some time to explore your local community can help you to renew your energy.

- **Seek support.**

If you think you may be experiencing burnout, don't ignore your symptoms. See your family doctor to rule out any underlying physical issues. Reach out to friends, loved ones, or co-workers.

Support and collaboration may help you cope with job stress and feelings of burnout. For more information, contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program.

 Send us your questions, comments, and suggestions — [lifelines@homewoodhealth.com](mailto:lifelines@homewoodhealth.com)

For more information, to arrange a counselling session, or to access any of your EFAP services, please contact a Client Services Representative. We are ready to speak with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in English or French. All calls are completely confidential.

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