

5 steps

TO BURNOUT RECOVERY

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There are no overnight solutions and quick-fixes for burnout. It takes a significant amount of time for burnout to build, and so it makes sense that it also takes substantial time to address the complex layered contributing issues. But, it is definitely possible to recover and create a life which feels meaningful, sustainable, joyful and content.

It's helpful to know what's ahead so that you can have realistic expectations and sustain a sense of hope even when the going feels slow.

Here, we're going to look at five of the points you'll pass through on the path to recovery. The first three usually occur in quite quick succession, as you begin the recovery process. The last two points generally occur further down the track.

Most people find that the best way to consistently move along this pathway is to have a level of support, whether that be professional or more informal. When you're exhausted and depleted, it's really hard to do it on your own. So embrace your vulnerability, reach out, and find someone you trust to support you.

1 - START

Are you right at the beginning of this process? Only just realising that you're struggling and may be burnt-out?

The acknowledgement of this struggle is really important, and not always easy to do.

In order to progress along the pathway to recovery, you will also need to be at the point where you're motivated to make some changes. Have support around you will help with that motivation.

Reach out to someone in your life who you trust, and share what you're going through. It's much easier if you don't need to do this alone.

See your GP and make sure that what you're experiencing is actually burnout, and that you're not missing another underlying illness.

Don't start big. Just identify your one next small step.

2 - SEVERITY

How you manage burnout is going to be quite different depending on whether it's mild, moderate or severe.

If your GP hasn't already assessed this in some way, then it's worth booking another appointment or going through this process with a psychologist or other therapist.

If you're experiencing the milder end of burnout then there's usually no rush to take urgent action, and it's okay to take your time taking small steps and surrounding yourself with the support you need.

If you're experiencing severe burnout, then you will likely need to take some kind of urgent action, whether that be emergency support for thoughts of self-harm, or some time off work and/or other commitments.



3 - SUPPORT

Once you've taken those initial steps, you'll need to create a system support for the medium-term as you recover. Find people who you can go to for support for a period of months, or even a year or two.

The members of this support team will be very different depending on your circumstances, and may change over time.

It's helpful to have at least one or two professionals involved who can provide objective and evidence-informed guidance.



4 - SOLUTION

Sometimes big changes are needed to reach where you want to go in life, in terms of your mental wellbeing, responsibilities, and your feeling of fun, purpose, and meaning.

It's usually advisable to wait until you've at least partially recovered before making any big decisions, especially if they are not easily reversed. While quitting your job may feel like a necessary or wise decision when you're experiencing severe burnout, you may actually feel quite differently down the track.



5 - SUSTAINABILITY

Imagine yourself this time next year, having received the support you need, and achieved a feeling of enjoyment and contentment. Work feel sustainable and meaningful, you're seeing friends, you've got another holiday coming up, and everything feels pretty good!

The temptation at this point can be to put a stop to all those things you were doing - the new habits that had evolved, the professionals you were seeing, the mentors you were catching up with... besides, they all take up time, energy, and money. Why bother if you're in a good place now?

At this point, it's important to persistent with guidance for at least a little bit longer. Otherwise, when life throws the next curve-ball at you, you might find yourself right back where you started.

Make sure you have a clear idea of what measures you need to continue with long-term, and a plan for detecting and managing relapses.



Burnout recovery make take months or years, but don't despair! Most of the improvement usually occurs within the first few months of receiving good evidence-based burnout-specific support.

There will be ups and downs along the way, so be prepared for that, and don't give up on everything you're doing. If you continue to push forward, the general trend will continue upward.