

Executive Burnout and How to Combat It



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I work with executives who are on the brink of burnout, some who have burned out as well as those who have not. The imperative to understand that we MUST address the burnout rate and fix it is of critical importance, as is finding new ways of thinking that help us deal with the ever-constant world of change, challenges, competition, and priorities. Burying our heads in the sand will not help. I help clients develop a new perspective and a new kind of focus that creates less stress and better results. perspective and develop a new kind of focus and collaboration that lessens the reality of burnout or other stress-related problems. If you are interested in winning the race against stress, please reach out. irene@justcoachit.com *Delighted to host this guest post by Adrian Johanssen*

Burnout has become common amongst executives in all industries. One recent study found around 60% of business leaders have reported experiences associated with it at the end of each day. Is it any wonder so many leaders are living with symptoms of this condition? Executive roles are frequently high-stress and require professionals to shoulder responsibility for the company's successes and failures. This can also be exacerbated by the lifestyles of high achievers.

However, it's vital to recognize burnout isn't an inevitability. Indeed, it is vital for your continued physical, mental, and emotional well-being to mitigate the potential for it to arise. It's not always easy to combat burnout, but it's in everyone's best interest that you do so.

We're going to take a closer look at executive burnout and some of the steps you can take to avoid it.

Understand the Symptoms

Part of the problem is it can be easy to overlook the early warning signs. Indeed, some of the symptoms may have become so much a part of the background of your working life that you don't consider them problematic at first. There is also a toxic corporate culture of equating exhaustion as an indicator of commitment and hard work. When people look at burnout as a c-suite feature rather than a glitch, it's difficult to fight it. To combat burnout effectively, you need to be able to recognize it.

Start with the basics. Learn what the common symptoms of burnout look like and how they are part of the executive lifestyle. These are likely to include exhaustion, a higher degree of cynicism than usual, and perhaps a dip in your efficiency. Burnout may also include aspects of other conditions like depression and anxiety. Alongside these elements, also review how your behavior may suggest burnout. This can be difficult to be objective about, so it's worth

gaining input from your friends, family, and peers. Listen to them, they have useful insights.

This leads us to another key aspect of being able to recognize burnout – you need to start talking about it. Be open with your colleagues and other leaders in the industry about the elements you may experience and encourage them to share their own. Firstly, this highlights the various symptoms others may not be aware of. It's also an invitation to note symptoms of burnout in each other and work to mitigate them. Perhaps most importantly, it creates an honest and stigma-free dialogue in the C-suite that makes it easier for everyone to be happier and more successful.

Set Boundaries

A tendency to push yourself too far is likely to be among the primary causes of executive burnout. This can be rooted in various areas. You may have a certain amount of external pressure to perform. Your personal expectations may also be higher than are healthy. The combination of influencers can see you crossing the borderline of healthy commitment and hurtling into burnout. To combat this, you need to set boundaries.

Be clear about these in your mind first. It's difficult to maintain boundaries if you don't have clarity on what they are. A good place to start is reviewing the contributors to burnout. If your tendency to work long hours is problematic, set hard rules for when you finish all work. Be clear on when you will accept and reply to non-emergency business emails. This includes clearly defining what qualifies as an emergency.

Setting boundaries is the easy part. It's communicating them and maintaining them that is challenging. Discuss your boundaries with all relevant parties. This is likely to include colleagues and potentially supply partners. Explain

why you're setting these boundaries and how you intend to keep to them. This can prevent others from pushing you to overstep those boundaries and sets an expectation for you to start saying no. This can take some practice, but it's a step toward a happier and more productive life.

Shift Your Perspective

Executive burnout doesn't just come from pushing yourself physically too hard, too often. You can find symptoms arising as a result of your psychological or emotional approach to your position. While it's not as simple as applying the mythical panacea of positive thinking, mindset can be a component of addressing burnout. As such, it's worth considering how achieving different perspectives can help.

Think about what might contribute to or drive your tendency to feel run down. One of the common roots of this is the feeling of being stuck in a career rut. You might even have imposter syndrome in which you don't feel you have the skills to innovate effectively. As such, taking time to learn some new skills can be a good way to address this. Many mid-career professionals have taken to following an executive master of business administration (EMBA) program. This type, of course, allows you to leverage your leadership experience while developing fresh abilities. Importantly, you'll have opportunities to network with tutors and peers in a way that can unlock new opportunities and help you to think differently about your career.

This type of mindset adjustment doesn't just come from learning, though. To some extent, it's about finding ways to be newly inspired in your role. Feeling like you're just going through the motions each day is likely to exacerbate the other symptoms of burnout. Consider what you found interesting about your executive position. Assess what elements excited you in the beginning and why they may not be present now. It may be

the case you need to look for new people and experiences to surround yourself with so you can reignite the spark.

Conclusion

Burnout is a reality for a growing number of executives. This affects your mental and physical health and could derail your career. Consider your relationship with the symptoms of burnout so you can better recognize and address them. Set and maintain strict boundaries to avoid negative behavior patterns. You may also find looking at your career from a new perspective can inspire positive change. There are no easy steps to combat burnout, but it is in the interest of your success and wellbeing that you commit to overcoming it.



Author Bio:

Adrian Johansen is a writer and consultant in the Pacific Northwest. She loves sharing knowledge with others and learning along the way! You can find more of her writing at [**Medium**](#)

P.S. If you are interested in learning more about our stress-busting service and programs, do not hesitate to reach out to book a complimentary meeting.
irene@justcoachit.com

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