

The expanded burnout checklist: 50 tips for burnout recovery



Get a shorter, prioritized list of 10 tips [here](#).

Tips related to work

1. If you are overwhelmed by workload, draw up a list of everything you have to do, and commit to delegating, stopping or asking for help with 20% of the items.
2. Insert a 5 minute buffer between meetings, to prevent back-to-back meeting walls go for a walk or do 3 deep breaths in this time. Learn how to break through [non-stop "call walls."](#)
3. Gradually cut back on the time you spend working. Start working 30 minutes less each day for 1-2 weeks, then work 60 minutes less for 1-2 weeks, and keep going until you arrive at 40 or a manageable number of hours.

4. Set firm work-nonwork boundary times and make them 100% non-negotiable. Use do not disturb mode, calendar blocks, after-work events with friends, or other means to enforce this.
5. In any situation where you feel a sudden spike in stress or anxiety, before reacting, practice PQ reps (from the [Positive Intelligence](#) program) or take 3 deep breaths to create a brief break between a stressful situation and your reaction. This can help you to react from an executive thinking state, rather than a survival state, and mitigate the continuation of patterns of burnout reactions (e.g. saying yes to anything that is asked of you, or causing damage to relationships with an angry or exasperated response)
6. Decline any meeting invites that are optional and which it is not 100% necessary to join.
7. Be honest with your colleagues and manager about being burned out, and ask for help to navigate it, together rather than alone.
8. If you work from home, don't work from your bedroom. Work from another room in the house or go to a location outside of your home to work, to prevent your bedroom from being associated with work stress (and causing sleep issues).
9. Refrain from volunteering for stretch projects and give yourself permission to reduce your normal workload during your recovery period. Work with your manager to create some space if need be, or re-assign tasks during this time; but specifically work to reduce the tasks for work you find less rewarding.
 - a. Burnout is partially about not feeling sufficient reward, so focus your efforts on tasks that are more rewarding to reduce your workload, while allowing yourself to continue being engaged in work you find rewarding.
10. Train yourself to not be afraid to ask for help, clarify unclear expectations (rather than assuming), respectfully say no to new work, and to negotiate/re-allocate tasks to make your workload more manageable.
11. Improve your [delegation skills](#) or learn to say no, compromise on workload, or share workload with colleagues.
12. Ensure that you stop working and take your full lunch break each day. Implement micro breaks throughout the day (e.g. for every 1-2 hours of work, take a 5-10 minute walk).
13. If you are a manager, be sure to avoid these [key manager mistakes](#).
14. Educate your [managers and organizational leaders](#) on what responsibilities they share in supporting your burnout recovery journey.
15. Work with your manager or mentor to evolve your job description or role to more closely align your skillset with work that is more rewarding and aligned with your [personal values](#).
16. If your work is no longer rewarding, if your workplace is toxic, and/or if there is no path to reducing the workload to manageable levels, then it is probably time to look for new options. Look for a new role within the organization (unless the whole organization is toxic), look for a new or even similar role at a different organization, or seek work in an entirely new industry. If you do switch jobs, take time off between to recuperate before working again.

Tips related to mental/emotional/physical recovery

17. [Getting less than 7 hours of sleep per night can cause measurable impairments in the brain and body](#): Secure 7-9 hours of actual sleep per night. Add more time accordingly if you need more time to fall asleep. *If you are having trouble sleeping*:
 - a. Don't eat 2 hours before bed
 - b. Avoid alcohol
 - c. Don't drink caffeine after 2 pm
 - d. Try a nightly sleep preparation routine by practicing stretching, breathwork, yoga, meditation or journaling 1 hour before bed
 - e. Get sunlight in your eyes, without glass interference for 10-30 minutes as soon as possible after waking up (go for a walk)
 - f. Try supplements such as Ashwagandha, magnesium, CBD, or L-theanine (avoid melatonin if you are already sleepy)
 - g. Wake up within the same 2 hour time span and every day (e.g. 7am-9am)
 - h. Experiment with power naps to mitigate damage from < 6 hours of sleep
18. Plan your options for getting rest and unplugging from work, such as:
 - a. Taking a vacation or time off (and **do not** open Slack/email/Teams/etc. to try to stay in the loop)
 - b. Set firm work-nonwork boundary times and make them 100% non-negotiable. Use do not disturb mode, calendar blocks, after-work events with friends, or other means to enforce these boundaries
 - c. Gradually cut back on the time you spend working. Start working 30 minutes less each day for 1-2 weeks, then work 60 minutes less for 1-2 weeks, and keep going until you arrive at 40 or a manageable number of hours
 - d. Plan or book events to occupy your time such as a movie, show, concert, ballet, opera, or game, class, exhibition, or meetup
19. If you are struggling with not thinking about work outside of work, pick up an activity that enables you to unplug, like:
 - a. Read or listen to books or podcasts (particularly fiction)
 - b. Watch movies or TV
 - c. Call or facetime friends/family/acquaintances
 - d. Take up sports or physical movement practices
20. Social interactions are [essential to human health and wellbeing](#); **withdrawal** is stage 7 of the [12 stages of burnout](#), and so decreased social interactions are both a cause and consequence of burnout. Prioritize seeing people (in person) who matter to you each week – even if it's just watching TV, going for a walk, or having a meal together.
 - a. If that's too difficult, then commit to having a short conversation with a store clerk or someone else whom you cross paths with during the day
 - b. Time with animals [increases the feel-good neurotransmitter/hormone oxytocin and reduces stress hormones](#), just like time with other humans, so also consider fostering a dog or cat
21. Ensure you have a meaningful hobby or creative pursuit that is not work-related (e.g. painting, sketching, writing, DIY crafts, making music, cooking, sports), and commit to

- devoting several hours per week to this activity, to ensure you have a non-work source of reward in life. You can change the task but don't change the time commitment.
22. Go for a walk in a park or garden each day.
 23. Supplying your body with healthy dietary inputs is [key to maintaining a healthy mind in addition to body](#). Avoid processed foods and preservatives and eat veggies and fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, healthy fats, fermented foods; if that's too difficult, then use supplements like [Athletic Greens/AG1](#) until it is possible to improve your dietary intake (note: this guide has no affiliate relationship with Athletic Greens).
 24. Drink 6-8 glasses of water per day.
 25. Ensure that you complete your [body's stress cycle](#) each day using one of the following cues:
 - a. Deep breathing exercises, yoga, or stretching
 - b. In-person social interactions
 - c. Singing/humming (in the shower, car, or at karaoke) or dancing (in a class or on your own)
 - d. Laughing (watch a comedy or stand-up comedy) or crying (sad movie)
 26. Exercise or move your body for 10-30 minutes, 3-4 days a week.
 27. Take baths, try aromatherapy, or light incense.
 28. Try CBD, L-theanine, ashwagandha, or magnesium to reduce anxiety symptoms.
 29. Try cacao, vitamin D, turmeric, probiotics, and foods high in omegas-3 fatty acids to reduce depression symptoms.
 30. Seek out intimate touch or hugs from other people.
 31. Meet new people or spend time interacting with strangers in safe, comfortable ways (e.g. talking to the barista or store clerk).
 32. Maintain an organized home/room to prevent additional mental clutter.
 33. Journal and explore what you want from life – or what you **don't** want from life.
 34. Try practicing meditation.
 35. Explore religion, spirituality, or mindfulness.
 36. Explore these [self-discovery prompts](#).
 37. Dream up a life bucket list.
 38. Design your [life purpose statement](#) and define your [personal values](#).
 39. Fill in an [Ikigai diagram](#).
 40. Travel to new places and expand your horizons.
 41. Learn a new skill or try a DIY project.
 42. Call an old friend or family member that you haven't talked to in a while.
 43. [Pick up nonwork creative outlets](#) (e.g. write, sing, dance, make music, sketch, paint, sculpt, take photos, cook, etc.).
 44. Rejuvenate your sense of inspiration at home by redesigning your home/room.
 45. Try a 30-day challenge where you write one sentence about what you are grateful for every day.
 46. Go to a coffee shop, library, park, or other place where you are surrounded by people and people watch for a couple hours.
 47. Write a letter to yourself in the future and express what you are longing for.

48. Write down what work boundaries you have been afraid to set, and why.
49. Reflect on what ways you have been judging yourself, and in what ways you do not give yourself permission to be you – in all the nuances this entails.
50. Explore the internalized mental patterns which are influencing your susceptibility to burn out. Find and work with a therapist or [coach](#), and in the meantime consider the following prompts:
 - a. Where did the need to prove myself and work harder come from?
 - b. What inner insecurities is work helping me avoid/escape/cover up?
 - c. What else in life besides work do I enjoy?
 - d. What decisions would I make if I were free from fear/shame?
 - e. Where am I feeling compelled to work, without being asked to?
 - f. What will I think 10 years from now?
 - g. What would happen if I were to work less?
 - h. What is the cost of not resolving my burnout?

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