

The burnout checklist: 10 prioritized tips for burnout recovery



Get an expanded list of 50 tips [here](#).

1. [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. Try aromatherapy
 - b. Don't eat 2 hours before bed
 - c. Avoid alcohol
 - d. Don't drink caffeine after 2 pm
 - e. Try a nightly sleep preparation routine by practicing stretching, [breathwork](#), yoga, meditation or journaling 1 hour before bed

- f. Get sunlight in your eyes, without glass interference for 10-30 minutes as soon as possible after waking up (go for a walk)
 - g. Try supplements such as Ashwagandha, magnesium, CBD, or L-theanine (avoid melatonin if you are already sleepy)
 - h. Wake up within the same 2 hour time span and every day (e.g. 7am-9am)
 - i. Experiment with power naps to mitigate damage from < 6 hours of sleep
2. Plan your options for getting rest and unplugging from work, such as:
 - a. Take a vacation or time off (and **do not** open Slack/email/Teams/etc. in order to try to stay in the loop while on vacation. This re-exposes your body to stressors and re-activates your body's stress response system, which drastically reduces the quality of your time off)
 - 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
3. 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. Clean/redesign your home
 - e. Take up sports or physical movement practices
4. 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
5. 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)
6. If you are overwhelmed by your workload, draw up a list of everything you have to do, and commit to delegating/stopping/asking for help with 20% of the items.

7. 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).
8. 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.
9. 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)
10. Explore the internalized mental patterns which are influencing your susceptibility to burn out. 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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