

# Workplace Wellness Programmes

Evidence-based Mental Health Solutions  
for Modern Teams

**Fettle**  
THERAPY FOR ALL



# The Employers Handbook for Burnout.

As our lifestyles and jobs grow busier and busier, it, unfortunately, comes as no surprise that burnout is an increasingly common occurrence in the workplace.<sup>1</sup> So common that the World Health Organisation (WHO) has expanded its definition in its 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD)<sup>2</sup>. Burnout is now officially an 'occupational phenomenon'. Therefore, the need for evidence-based interventions around mental wellbeing in the workplace is crucial.

## Burnout in a nutshell:

Job burnout is a unique type of work-related stress — a state of emotional or physical exhaustion coupled with a loss of personal identity and a diminished sense of accomplishment<sup>3</sup>. Burnout is not a medical diagnosis. Many psychological experts believe that other mental health conditions, such as depression, can lead to burnout. Researchers have noted that individual factors, such as personal history, family life, and personality traits, influence who experiences workplace burnout.<sup>4</sup> Whatever the cause, job burnout can affect the wellbeing, productivity, retention, and the success of teams.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kelly, J. (2022). *Indeed, Study Shows That Worker Burnout Is at Frighteningly High Levels: Here Is What You Need to Do Now*. Forbes. Retrieved January 4, 2022, from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2021/04/05/indeed-study-shows-that-worker-burnout-is-at-frighteningly-high-levels-here-is-what-you-need-to-do-now/?sh=70897d8f23bb>.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation. (2022). *Burnout an "occupational phenomenon."* *International Classification of Diseases*. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>.

<sup>3</sup> Medzo-M'engone, J., 2021. Job demands and psychological wellbeing among Gabonese civil servants: The mediating role of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Workplace Behavioural Health*, 36(4), pp.335-350.

<sup>4</sup> Rossi, A. M., Perrewé, P. L., & Sauter, S. L. (2006). *Stress and Quality of Working Life: Current Perspectives in Occupational Health*. Information Age Publishing.

<sup>5</sup> Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2003). Wellbeing in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes: A review of the Gallup studies. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived* (pp. 205–224).

Prevention is the best form of intervention. As an employer, you can improve your employees' mental, physical, and emotional wellbeing by mitigating the risks early on<sup>6</sup>. Here are the signs and symptoms of employee burnout.

## Job burnout symptoms

Ask yourself, have I noticed any of my employees:

- Becoming critical or cynical in the workplace?
- Lacking the energy to be productive regularly?
- Becoming impatient and frustrated with customers, clients, or colleagues?
- Having trouble starting and finishing tasks assigned to them?
- Expressing they have difficulty sleeping or looking tired throughout the day?
- Missing work due to illness or saying they have physical complaints (such as headaches or stomach problems)?
- Lacking the zest, satisfaction, or enthusiasm for their role they once had?
- Noticed changes in their diet (e.g., snacking continuously throughout the day or drinking excessive amounts of coffee)?<sup>7</sup>

If you answered yes to any of these questions, your employees could be experiencing job burnout.

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<sup>6</sup> Greenwood, K., & Krol, N. (2021, August 31). *Eight ways managers can support employees' mental health*. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://hbr.org/2020/08/8-ways-managers-can-support-employees-mental-health>

<sup>7</sup> Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. (2021, June 5). *Know the signs of Job Burnout*. Mayo Clinic. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>

# Potential causes of job burnout

Job burnout can develop from a range of factors, including:

- **Unclear job expectations.** If employees are unclear about their degree of authority or what their managers and teammates expect from them, this can lead to them feeling uncomfortable at work.
- **Lack of control.** When employees are unable to influence decisions surrounding their roles — such as workload, schedule, or projects, this can lead to job burnout. Moreover, lacking the adequate resources to do their job effectively can promote burnout too.
- **Hostile workplace dynamics.** Micromanagement, bullying, and conflict in teams increase workplace stress and play a crucial role in burnout.
- **Extremes of activity.** When a role is overly repetitive or chaotic, employees require constant energy to remain focused, which contributes to burnout and workplace stress.
- **Lack of social supports.** If employees feel isolated in the workplace or at home, this can increase their stress levels.
- **Work-life imbalance.** If employees are working too much overtime and lack the energy to spend with their loved ones outside of work, they are vulnerable to burnout.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Saunders, E. G. (2021, August 27). *Six causes of burnout and how to avoid them*. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://hbr.org/2019/07/6-causes-of-burnout-and-how-to-avoid-them>.

<sup>9</sup> Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. (2021, June 5). *Know the signs of Job Burnout*. Mayo Clinic. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>.

# Consequences of workplace burnout

Ignoring or overlooking job burnout could have significant consequences for your team, including:

- Team fatigue
- Health issues in workers (type 2 diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure)
- Low morale within the organisation
- Conflict between co-workers
- Alcohol or substance misuse issues in the workplace
- Decreased productivity
- High turnover of staff

## Taking Care of Burnout: 5 Simple Steps for Employers

### 1) Early intervention

Check-in with staff regularly and ask how they are doing. If a staff member discloses that their wellbeing is affected, encourage the employee to seek help early.<sup>10</sup> Offer support where possible and allow the staff member time for rest and restoration, including 'down time' between busy work cycles. By providing low-cost, easy access to qualified mental health professionals struggling employees can engage with gold standard evidence-based approaches like third-wave mindfulness Cognitive Behavioural Therapies (Acceptance & Commitment Therapy, Compassion Focused Therapy & Dialectical

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<sup>10</sup> Holland, M. L., Brock, S. E., Oren, T., & Eckhardt, M. van. (2022). *Burnout and Trauma-Related Employment Stress: Acceptance and commitment strategies in the helping professions*. Springer.

Behavioural Therapy), which will improve their mental health and wellbeing<sup>11</sup>. Fettle provides on-site and online therapy for organisations. To find out more, visit our website [www.fettle.ie](http://www.fettle.ie).

## 2) Build team resilience

By giving employees opportunities to practice resilience, mindfulness, and stress management skills in the workplace, you will decrease the risk of team burnout<sup>12</sup>. There are lots of creative ways you can do this!

*Here are a couple of ideas to get you started*

- a) Organise a brief 3-minute meditation session for your colleagues before kicking off a meeting
- b) Organise a healthy potluck for lunchtime (this will improve team bonding also!)
- c) Run group yoga class before the workday begins
- d) Organise team huddles where workers can share their wellbeing strategies to learn and grow from one another

Alternatively, you can provide workplace wellbeing training for teams, which will increase their awareness of mental health by giving them the tools to nurture their wellbeing inside and outside of work.<sup>13</sup> Fettle delivers a suite of evidence-based workplace wellbeing programmes to combat burnout. You can download our workplace pack at: [www.fettle.ie](http://www.fettle.ie)

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<sup>11</sup> Kahl, Kai & Winter, Lotta & Schweiger, Ulrich. (2012). The third wave of cognitive behavioural therapies: what is new and what is effective? *Current opinion in psychiatry*. 25, 522-8.

<sup>12</sup> Fernandez, R. (2021, September 17). *Five ways to boost your resilience at work*. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://hbr.org/2016/06/627-building-resilience-ic-5-ways-to-build-your-personal-resilience-at-work>.

<sup>13</sup> Sarkar, M & Fletcher, D. (2017). In *Managing for resilience: A practical guide for employee wellbeing and organizational performance*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

### 3) Enable employees to fulfil their purpose

Lack of control and power within the workplace can be frustrating, especially to ambitious employees who wish to do more to address social issues. With frantic work schedules, employees find it challenging to engage in activities that tend to their charitable side. This is especially true for millennials and Gen Z's, whose proportion in the workforce is growing daily. By hosting charity events, fundraisers and promoting random acts of kindness in the workplace, you will increase team morale, job satisfaction, connection, and motivation.<sup>14</sup>

#### ***Here are a few simple ideas to get you started!***

a) Host an interdepartmental sports afternoon: Take an hour out of the work afternoon to test your colleagues' physical endurance with an afternoon of sports. Get your departments to compete in an egg and spoon race, tug-of-war, or rounders, with all entrance proceeds going to charity.

b) Community clean-up: Bring workplace volunteers outside to clean up the street and recycle any rubbish found at lunchtime. The fresh air and good deed will boost employees' mood, improve the area and the neighbours will appreciate it too! You can order free cleaning equipment and other resources from your local county council.

c) A charity raffle: Nothing motivates people to act on behalf of a worthy cause, quite like the promise of a prize. Sell raffle tickets for the chance to win and watch your colleagues jump at the opportunity to win.

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<sup>14</sup> Singh, N. (2018, June 17). *The magic of altruism in the workplace*. LinkedIn. Retrieved January 5, 2022, from [www.linkedin.com/pulse/magic-altruism-workplace-nikita-singh](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/magic-altruism-workplace-nikita-singh).

## 4) Provide healthy conversations in the workplace

Healthy communication between leaders and teams plays an essential role in mitigating the effects of job burnout.<sup>15</sup> No workplace is better than one where employees can trust their employer enough to have honest conversations about what is stressing them out and suggest potential solutions. If employees feel that their managers do not actively listen to them, it will not be long before they feel unheard, invalidated, and insignificant.

Managers must strive to understand and support employees who report issues to them. If employers offer to help employees in demanding situations, this will influence the loyalty and commitment that the team will show towards their role.

## 5) Develop effective job resources for teams

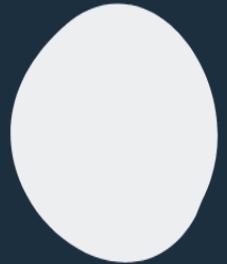
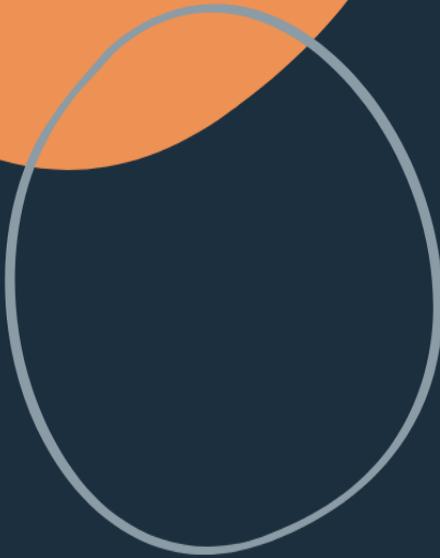
This includes creating continuous promotion, training, and learning and development opportunities for employees to access. By giving teams the chance to grow and prosper, you will improve workplace engagement, satisfaction and retain key players in your organisation.<sup>16</sup>

In the wake of COVID-19, it has never been more critical for business and HR leaders to focus on the wellbeing of their teams head-on. Enterprise-ready, Fettle offers proven wellbeing programs that lead to healthier and happier organisations from the inside out. To find out more visit: [www.fettle.ie](http://www.fettle.ie).

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<sup>15</sup> Ray, S. L., Wong, C., White, D., & Heaslip, K. (2013). Compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, work-life conditions, and burnout among frontline mental health care professionals. *Traumatology, 19*(4), 255–267. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534765612471144>

<sup>16</sup> Bakker, A. B., & de Vries, J. D. (2020). Job demands-resources theory and self-regulation: new explanations and remedies for job burnout. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping, 34*(1), 1–21.



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