



SUPER EXCITED

Somehow “super excited” has made it into our vernacular. I am not super excited about people being super excited. Every time I hear the phrase, it zaps my nervous system just the teeniest little bit. In my world, excitement is great, but super excitement can lead to burnout. Burnout is the complete physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion stemming from caring too much for too long.

The Stages of Burnout

Stage 1: Excitement/Unbridled Optimism

You get a new project, face a new challenge. You are super excited. This unbridled optimism is accompanied by an adrenaline drip that could take you to the top of K2. You are in the state of flow. Your skills are up to the test. You lose track of time. You are so engrossed that you don’t eat, sleep, or leave your workspace.

Stage 2: Pushing Through/Anxiety

The initial glow of the challenge has worn off and you realize how much work rests ahead. But you push through. You don’t stop to eat, sleep, or move. You haven’t connected with friends or loved ones for a while. “I am super excited” becomes “I am crazy busy”.

Stage 3: Frustration/Fatigue

You are starting to show some wear around the edges. You’re tired and cranky. You may have the beginnings of a serious antioxidant deficiency from the lack of produce in your diet. It is all too much. “I am crazy busy” becomes a chorus of “where was I?”.

Stage 4: Physical Symptoms/Procrastination/Apathy

You are worn out. You feel lousy. It’s tough to get out of bed. The work is going nowhere. “Where was I?” becomes “I don’t care”.

I usually see people when they have reached Stage 4. They remember fondly the excitement and unbridled optimism of Stage 1 and just can’t seem to will themselves back from “I don’t care” to “I am super excited”. Is this a lack of resolve? A lack of grit? No, it’s a lack of capacity. Stress accumulates. If it isn’t exhausted regularly, it leads to burnout.

Characteristic to all four stages of burnout is the neglect of self-care. Where movement, natural food, sleep, and connection were once a regular part of our days, they now require intention. Stress is a physical reaction to perceived danger. It needs a physical response to relieve it. You need to vent the stress physically so that you are well enough to get back in the game.

The stress response is automatic. It is designed to save our lives by marshaling the hormonal cascade intended to end in fleeing, fighting, or freezing. The response is identical in all of us, but the cause and the capacity is unique to the individual. It's not the work. It's you. What are you doing to vent your stress?



Here is what I am doing to vent my stress:

- *I get at least 10,000 steps every day.*
- *I drink at least eight glasses of water per day.*
- *I make sure to eat one huge salad.*
- *If I don't have a salad, I have a very antioxidant-rich smoothie.*
- *I get at least seven hours of sleep each night.*
- *I work out hard three days a week.*
- *I play golf at least once a week.*
- *I meet my friends virtually or at a social distance once a week.*
- *I have a weekly telephone call with each of my sons.*
- *I read between three and five books each week. I only remember the nonfiction. The fiction is strictly for fun.*
- *I do the NY Times crossword every morning, and I especially look forward to Sunday's.*
- *I take my PTO.*
- *I leave my phone accessible but not too close.*
- *I nap when I can.*
- *I am easily amused.*
- *I have a dog who thinks I am wonderful.*

Take your pick but select at least one and at most three. It takes a while. One action practiced consistently is better than overdoing it on Monday and giving up by Wednesday.



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 20+ years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

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