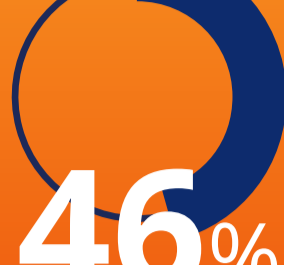


HR Burnout: 5 Tips for Managing Stress



2/3

of full-time workers, including those in HR, deal with burnout at some point while at work.¹



46%

of HR leaders say employee burnout is responsible for up to half of their annual workforce turnover.²



1 in 5

employees report both high engagement and high burnout.³



Burnout Defined

A long overdue decision by the World Health Organization in 2019 categorized burnout as a syndrome that results from **“chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.”** It is characterized by:

- ▶ Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- ▶ Increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job
- ▶ Reduced professional efficacy⁴

Why it Matters to HR

In good times and bad, HR is on the front lines.



A strong economy imposes pressure for talent attraction and retention that can last years.



Each year during annual enrollment, HR heroics are common but often unsustainable.



When national crises strike (e.g., a pandemic, natural disaster, etc.), HR professionals become first responders.

Stressors like these can cause burnout in HR professionals, impacting their entire organization. Before HR can take care of the employees they serve, they must first take care of themselves. HR teams can help themselves and each other by keeping an eye out for signs and symptoms of burnout.



Red Flags

Professional burnout is all about the workplace. **Be mindful of any recent developments regarding workload, deadlines, work location and other influential factors.** If you notice any of the changes below in yourself or others, it may be time to address possible burnout.



- ▶ Low engagement
- ▶ Irritability
- ▶ Worry
- ▶ Social withdrawal
- ▶ Demoralization
- ▶ Perpetuation of a negative workplace culture
- ▶ Frequent absences or sicknesses



Focus on the Workplace

As you evaluate whether you or a team member is on the verge of burnout, the American Medical Association reminds us that the condition is **“limited to work environments and should not be applied to other areas of a person’s life.”**

Therefore, first rule out underlying anxiety and other disorders.

Five Tips for Alleviating Burnout

Whether you’re experiencing burnout yourself or notice it in others, there are steps one can take to reduce its effects or eliminate it altogether. Some can be done by the individual while others are best facilitated by a manager.



Switch things up. Fortunately for HR, the wide variety of responsibilities within teams provides fertile ground for cross-training. Would your payroll specialist benefit from leading a new retention initiative? Is it time for your hiring manager to dip their foot in the benefits consulting pool? Does your engagement coordinator need to engage in something else, like workplace wellness?



Prioritize self-care. Research makes a strong case for maintaining physical health as a method of reducing burnout.⁵ As Businessolver Wellness Administrator Tracey Orman explains, good quality sleep, staying active and getting outside play an important role in maintaining the physical fitness required to effectively manage stress.⁶



Communicate. In times of stress, the same principles of empathetic employee communication should be applied within your HR team. Doing so opens the door for further discussion where needed.



Give back. Philanthropy not only renews one’s sense of purpose, it can also improve physical health associated with stress. In fact, one study found that those who volunteer at least 200 hours per year reduce their risk of hypertension by 40%.⁷



Work smarter, not harder. Benefits pros can experience burnout due to burdensome administrative tasks. Manual data entry, fixing vendor files, processing dependent verifications, etc., can make it seem like you’re spinning your wheels. Outsourcing even a few of your administrative tasks, especially those that can be automated, can help your team focus on more strategic (and more personally rewarding) endeavors.

Learn more

Read **Empathy + Benefits: The Key Combination for Supporting Employee Mental Health** to learn about the role HR plays in helping themselves and others.



¹Employee Burnout, Part 1: The 5 Main Causes, Gallup, 2018.

²Employee Engagement Series, Kronos, 2017.

³Highly Engaged but Burned Out: Intra-Individual Profiles in the US Workforce, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, 2018.

⁴Burn-out an “occupational phenomenon”, International Classification of Diseases, World Health Organization, 2019.

⁵Systematic review of the association between physical activity and burnout, Journal of Occupational Health, 2017.

⁶Stress Management Using Activity during COVID-19, Navigating the New Normal, Businessolver, 2020.

⁷Seven Scientific Benefits of Helping Others, Mental Floss, Accessed May, 2020.