

Job Burnout: How To Spot It and Take Action

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Job burnout is a special type of work-related stress — a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity.

"Burnout" isn't a medical diagnosis. Some experts think that other conditions, such as depression, are behind burnout. Researchers point out that individual factors, such as personality traits and family life, influence who experiences job burnout.

Whatever the cause, job burnout can affect your physical and mental health. Consider how to know if you've got job burnout and what you can do about it.

Job burnout symptoms

Ask yourself:

- Have you become cynical or critical at work?
- Do you drag yourself to work and have trouble getting started?
- Have you become irritable or impatient with co-workers, customers or clients?
- Do you lack the energy to be consistently productive?
- Do you find it hard to concentrate?
- Do you lack satisfaction from your achievements?
- Do you feel disillusioned about your job?
- Are you using food, drugs or alcohol to feel better or to simply not feel?
- Have your sleep habits changed?
- Are you troubled by unexplained headaches, stomach or bowel problems, or other physical complaints?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you might be experiencing job burnout. Consider talking to a doctor or a mental health provider because these symptoms can also be related to health conditions, such as depression.

Possible causes of job burnout

Job burnout can result from various factors, including:

- **Lack of control.** An inability to influence decisions that affect your job — such as your schedule, assignments or workload — could lead to job burnout. So could a lack of the resources you need to do your work.
- **Unclear job expectations.** If you're unclear about the degree of authority you have or what your supervisor or others expect from you, you're not likely to feel comfortable at work.
- **Dysfunctional workplace dynamics.** Perhaps you work with an office bully, or you feel undermined by colleagues or your boss micromanages your work. This can contribute to job stress.
- **Extremes of activity.** When a job is monotonous or chaotic, you need constant energy to remain focused — which can lead to fatigue and job burnout.
- **Lack of social support.** If you feel isolated at work and in your personal life, you might feel more stressed.
- **Work-life imbalance.** If your work takes up so much of your time and effort that you don't have the energy to spend time with your family and friends, you might burn out quickly.

Job burnout risk factors

The following factors may contribute to job burnout:

- You have a heavy workload and work long hours
- You struggle with work-life balance
- You work in a helping profession, such as health care
- You feel you have little or no control over your work



