

A Manager's Guide to Preventing Employee Burnout



The past few years have presented significant challenges for the global workforce. From navigating new ways to work amid a pandemic to a ceaseless barrage of headlines about social and global issues that only seem to grow direr each day, the consequent stress has created a mental health crisis.

For many workers, this has manifested as burnout, a pervasive and chronic form of work-related stress that heavily impacts productivity. Unfortunately, burnout only seems to be increasing each year. In Lyra's 2022 [State of Workforce Mental Health report](#), 32 percent of surveyed employees reported burnout in 2021, compared to 29 percent in 2020. This can translate into resignations, with another survey finding that 40 percent of respondents left their jobs because of burnout.

Burnout, however, doesn't have to mean reduced productivity or inevitable turnover. While it's not possible to eliminate all stress, there are ways to reduce the risk factors for burnout and better support employee mental health. This requires a holistic strategy to create a culture of well-being and psychological safety for employees. This begins with managers empathizing with and supporting their team members, and extends to developing an enterprise-wide supportive work culture.



Understand the risk factors for burnout

Burnout is different from other forms of stress, which can sometimes make it more difficult to recognize. While external factors can contribute to burnout, its key indicator is that it's tied to work. It worsens at work or in response to work, leaves people feeling overwhelmed, and leads to disengagement or over-engagement at work. Fortunately, burnout symptoms get better as work situations change.

There are a variety of risk factors involved in burnout. Some of them are related to job factors such as job function and culture. These include:

- Excessive workload and/or scarce resources
- High-conflict teams and a limited sense of community
- Lack of clarity in their role or conflicting direction
- Under-resourced teams
- Shifting workloads or constantly changing expectations
- Lack of recognition
- Ineffective or poor management

There are also individual factors that may make some people more susceptible to burnout such as:

- A lack of, or unhelpful, coping strategies (e.g., avoidance)
- Perfectionism
- Excessive work engagement
- Low social support
- A lack of, or not enough, self-care



8 signs of burnout:

Recognizing burnout symptoms is a critical first step toward managing burnout in the workplace. Work burnout signs fall into three main categories—exhaustion, mental distance or cynicism about work, and reduced professional efficacy (feeling unable to make the desired impact). Look out for these signs of employee burnout:

1. Exhaustion or feeling overwhelmed
2. Physical symptoms such as chronic headache or fatigue
3. Anger or irritability
4. Distancing themselves from their work
5. Nervousness or feeling uncertain
6. Low motivation
7. Sadness
8. Difficulty concentrating

Support employees and proactively prevent burnout

As a manager, you can't prevent life stressors for your employees—but you play an important role in supporting your team's mental wellness to prevent burnout at work with these strategies:



Key ways you can help:

- Demonstrate empathy
- Lead by example
- Promote casual wellness check-ins and ask employees with team members to do the same
- Remind employees of available mental health resources

1. Demonstrate empathy

Showing appreciation for employees who are working in challenging circumstances can go a long way toward helping them feel heard and understood. The following actions can signal your support:

- Show empathy for your employees in one-on-one conversations about how they're feeling about their work pace and volume.
- Adjust work schedules and workload to address challenges whenever possible
- If an employee is showing signs of distress, do more listening than talking
- Stick to open-ended questions and statements like, "What's going on for you?" and "Tell me more about that"

2. Lead by example

Because they're used to demonstrating productivity and assuredness, managers may not naturally gravitate toward discussing their own challenges, but it's exactly this tactic that helps employees feel more at ease. When you mention what's been challenging for you, or how you're trying to balance work and home responsibilities, it can help employees feel like they can open up about those issues, too. If your child is tromping noisily through the living room during a regular teleconference meeting and you can acknowledge it without needing to apologize for it, it's a sign that your team members don't need to either.

3. Promote casual wellness check-ins and ask employees with team members to do the same

Ongoing and changing COVID restrictions and remote or hybrid work for many employees means less face-to-face time with friends, family, and colleagues. This can spur feelings of isolation and disconnection, which add to stress levels and raise the risk of burnout. To mitigate this, check in casually with each team member throughout the week about how they're doing. Even an instant message to ask how they're doing and what support you can offer can be a huge boost for someone who's struggling.

4. Remind employees of available mental health resources

The support you provide your team members can go a long way, but there will likely be times when your employees need mental health care. Emphasize that it's OK not to be OK, and that accessing mental health services can be helpful any time, and not as a "last resort" option.

Evolve your culture for better mental health

Burnout can have severe consequences for both employees and employers. Ensuring employees feel engaged and supported

requires a large, multi-layered approach to workforce mental health and well-being. Easy access to quality mental health care is only part of the equation. To truly support employees and prevent burnout long-term, there also needs to be a cultural shift that promotes psychological safety for employees so they feel safe to ask for help, both at work and for their mental health needs. That's why it's important to partner with a mental health benefits partner that offers:

- Strategic advisory services on supporting mental health across the entire organization
- Learning and development solutions to help managers better support employees
- Workshops to help increase mental health literacy and build skills in key areas like stress and resiliency

Preventive strategies both at the organizational level and at the management level can help alleviate the sense of disconnection and anxiety your employees may be experiencing, and offer the resources they need to maintain their well-being.



Ready for employee mental health care benefits?
[Request a demo now.](#)



About Lyra Health

[Lyra Health](#) helps leading companies improve access to effective, high-quality mental health care for their employees and their families. With Lyra's innovative digital care platform and global provider network, members receive the best care and get better faster.