

# Burnout: one more pandemic

Upper-Intermediate level

# Task 1 - Warm-up

**Look at the picture and answer the questions:**

1. How does this man feel like?
2. What is the possible reason of his current state?
3. Is he happy at his work?
4. Does he feel burnout?



# Task 2 - What is burnout?

**What is “burnout”?**

**Compare your definition with the one from Cambridge dictionary.**

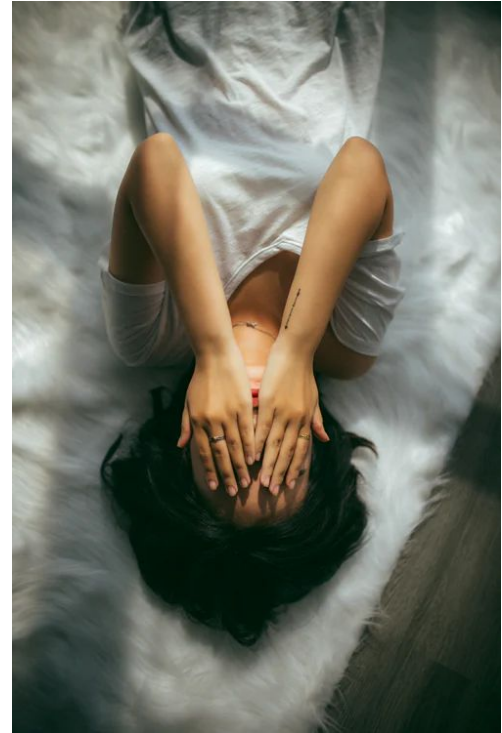
**So, ...**

***BURNOUT is....***

# Task 2 - Check your guess

## **Burnout is ...**

**extreme tiredness or a feeling of not being able to work any more, caused by working too hard.**



# Task 3 - Express your opinion

## Answer the questions:

1. Is burnout a problem of our millennial or this problem has always existed?
2. Is it possible to get burnout only at work or there could be some other reasons?
3. Have you ever felt burnout? How did you cope with it?
4. Do you know any person who suffered a lot due to burnout?



# Task 4 - Watching a video

**Watch the [video](#) (up to 03:53) and mark the sentences True or False:**

1. Burnout is recognized as a legitimate medical syndrome by United Nations.
2. Burnout is chronic stress that a person has failed to cope with successfully.
3. Lack of energy, emotional tiredness, low level of work productivity are the symptoms of burnout.
4. People, who suffer from burnout, don't ask for help because they are afraid of being fired.
5. Burnout can lead to fatigue, irritability, sleep deprivation, loss of concentration, desire to quit.
6. Burnout can become the reason for substance abuse and a high level of suicide.

# Task 5 - Speaking

**Watch the [video](#) again and answer the questions:**

1. Do you agree with the speaker that burnout is a real chronic disease or this fact is exaggerated?
2. What are the symptoms of workplace burnout? Do you have any of them?
3. Why are people afraid to talk about burnout?
4. What consequences does the speaker enumerate and do you have any of them?
5. How is burnout compared with obesity and smoking cigarettes in this video?
6. How serious is burnout among doctors?
7. Do you agree with the speaker that it's a real problem and it's high time we dealt with it?  
Why/Why not?

# Task 6 - Reading

**Read the article and say if you find yourself in similar situations**

## **Lack of Recognition**

Everyone likes to hear that they are doing a good job. Positive feedback can improve your mood, confidence and overall performance. Proper employee recognition is more than just positive feedback, however. In addition to tangible incentives like salary increases, benefits and increased input, it involves ensuring that employees understand that their achievements and successes will

create a path for career advancement and professional growth. No one likes to think that they work in a void, performing actions that have little to no impact. The feeling that their work and effort amounts to little is one of the strong causes of employee burnout and has led many to leave their jobs. Company leaders need to acknowledge the effort of every single employee and celebrate each achievement and success along the way.



## **Unrealistic Deadlines**

Deadlines are important. When working towards large goals, it helps to set timelines and plan to have certain tasks completed by certain points of time. It helps people to stay focused and motivated, while making it more clear how to best manage their time for maximum efficiency. Deadlines can easily become a problem, however, when they are unrealistic or flat-out impossible to achieve. A SHRM survey found that deadlines are in fact the number one cause of stress in the workplace.

When companies are setting their goals for the year, quarter or even just the week, it is vitally important to involve employees from every level of the company in the process. Setting proper deadlines requires breaking each project into manageable tasks and steps, and getting honest feedback from workers regarding the amount of time they will need to properly complete each assignment. Unilaterally imposing deadlines will lead to resentment from workers and increase the likelihood of employee burnout.

## Toxic Workplaces

Workplaces should be supportive, collaborative and — above all else — respectful. When relationships between co-workers sour, it leads to a toxic workplace and is one of the major causes of employee burnout. People have different personality types, and sometimes these personalities don't mesh perfectly. Employees will not become lifelong best friends with every person they work with, and this should not be expected. What should be expected, is that colleagues treat

each other with basic respect and courtesy at all times, even when they have different personality types.

The characteristics of a toxic workplace can include gossip, bullying, and — in the worst cases — harassment. If an employee feels that they are being pushed around, taken for granted, made fun of or verbally attacked, it places an incredible amount of stress and anxiety on workers, not to mention just being wrong. Every business needs strong HR policies and procedures in place in order to prevent and address toxic behaviour in the workplace.

## **Pressure from Managers**

A successful company needs strong leaders to achieve these results, and a bad boss can just as easily doom a business to stagnation. A good boss will realize that they lead a team of diverse individuals with unique perspectives, skills and abilities, and that allowing them the freedom to work in the way that best suits them will lead to the best results. Bad bosses try to dictate their employees' every move, don't listen to feedback, don't adjust for different work personalities and don't offer support.

Bad bosses are surprisingly common with 49% of employees reporting that they have left their jobs because of a bad boss. With unfair expectations and a lack of trust, it leads to workers feeling a lot of pressure to meet unfair expectations, without expecting any positive support or even acknowledgement. A bad boss can be a strong factor in employee burnout, as workers try desperately to please someone who could literally decide the future of their career.

## **Improper Work-Life Balance**

A proper work-life balance is important to maintaining mental, emotional and even physical well-being. When personal and professional lives become out of balance, it is one of the major causes of employee burnout. Having the resources and support to pursue both professional and personal goals is growing more and more important with each generation of employees. A 2020 survey found that 68% of Canadian employees say work-life balance is very important to them, while the same amount

state that their employers are not fulfilling this need.

The struggle for proper work-life balance has grown even more challenging due to the side-effects of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. One of the best methods for achieving a work-life balance is to have a clear separation between work time and personal time. The inability to maintain a proper work-life balance is a major cause of employee burnout, and when there is barely any separation from work and life it greatly increases the likelihood that serious feelings of burnout will occur.

# Task 7 - Speaking

## Discuss the questions.

1. Do you agree with the causes of burnout mentioned in this article?
2. Do you or your colleagues face these problems at the workplace?
3. Is there an anti-burnout policy in your company?
4. How many employees quit your company because of burnout?
5. Does your boss praise you for your achievements?
6. How often do you have deadlines?
7. Are you happy with your work-life balance? What do you do to achieve it?



# Task 8 - Project work

**Imagine that you are a psychologist and one of your friends asks you for a piece of advice on how to cope with burnout. Write a list of tips that can help your friend overcome burnout.**



# Keys

## Task 4

1.F, 2.T, 3.T, 4.F, 5.T, 6.T

## Task 5

### Possible answers:

1. -----
2. Emotional exhaustion; energy depletion; reduced work productivity.
3. They don't want to be seen as weak.
4. Fatigue, irritability, problems with sleep, brain fog, forgetfulness, dreaming of retiring, wondering why you took up that job.
5. Burnout causes loneliness, that is more dangerous than smoking or obesity and decreases life span.
6. It is commonly spread among doctors who even can commit suicide because of burnout.