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BURN OUT

Do you have too much on your plate? Is someone demanding your time and energy everywhere you turn? Do you feel overworked, unappreciated, and overwhelmed? Are you more disappointed, cynical and negative? Do you feel guilty and ashamed? Does everything seem to go wrong, no matter how hard you try? Do you feel apathetic about your work? Do you have difficulty concentrating? Do you feel like no one cares and have no interest in socializing? Do you feel stagnated? Are you unable to have fun? Do you feel overstressed and have difficulty sleeping? Are you physically tired and emotionally exhausted? Do you feel like running away? Do you feel powerless and unable to cope? If you said yes to several of these questions you are probably burned out, or very close to it. Anyone can suffer from burnout. Burnout is emotional exhaustion. People get burned out in their jobs, school, parenting, and marriage. Burnout occurs in children, adolescents, and adults. It's a big problem today. Burnout is a state of fatigue and frustration brought on by a devotion to a cause, a way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward (Freudenberger, 1980). The onset is slow. Early symptoms include a feeling of emotional and physical exhaustion; a sense of alienation, cynicism, impatience, negativism and feelings of detachment to the point that the individual begins to resent work involved and the people who are a part of that work (Worterklaerungen, 2003).



have difficulty saying no or delegating responsibilities. They typically have unrealistic goals and expectations. Pastors and Church Staff are highly susceptible to burnout. Stress, long hours, and increasing demands, coupled with a strong devotion to help people, can lead to burnout. A third of all local church pastors consider resigning. Many eventually resign because of discouragement, professional failure, and loss of purpose. Parents burn out too. They try to do too much. These super parents hold jobs, run households, raise children of all ages, cart their kids to numerous activities, volunteer to

organize, coach, and lead their children's programs. They are constantly on the road! Mommy burnout occurs when mothers take on too many activities and roles that leave them fatigued, wearied, discouraged and irritated. Sometimes they become depressed. There is Teenage burnout. Adolescents drive themselves hard to keep 4.0 + G.P.A.'s, participate in long lists of activities (band, sports, drama, choir, etc.), hold jobs, and socialize. In Child burnout, kids run from one event to the next, their days so jam-packed and fast-paced that they never recuperate. They are always on the go. These children are driven to succeed just like their parents and teenage siblings.

CONSEQUENCES

Stress and burnout are major factors in the development of both physical and psychological illness. Worn out and run down people predispose themselves to various illnesses. They also run the risk of engaging in self-destructive behaviors like alcohol and substance abuse to escape or "cope" with their hectic lives. Their work and overall responsibilities suffer. Quality, efficiency, reliability, and enthusiasm decline along with their performance. It's a downward spiral. They get fired or quit their jobs. Outbursts of anger and aggression can occur. Burnout negatively impacts relationships. Marriage and family relationships become more conflicted, distant, and unhealthy. Father and mother absence escalates. The children act out. Apathy, detachment, and depression often occur.

TYPES

Burnout affects people differently and can be difficult to diagnose. Don't look only for specific symptoms. The key is to recognize that something is different and that the change is negative. People in the ministry, public service, and healthcare, careers are especially prone to burnout. This includes, clergy, church staff, doctors, nurses, counselors, teachers, and sales people. There are several types of burnout. Work-related burnout usually occurs in top performers. They are pulled in many different directions and try to accomplish everything on their own. They usually

SYMPTOMS

- feeling overworked and unappreciated
- feeling stagnated
- general apathy, especially related to work
- lack of sense of fulfillment
- not looking forward to coming to work
- feeling discouraged
- feeling that nothing is working out
- hopelessness
- sense of failure in everything you try
- helplessness
- disillusionment on the job or with home life
- feeling irritable
- feelings of detachment about work and people
- cynicism
- emotional and physical exhaustion
- impatience
- overstressed, difficulty sleeping
- negativism
- frequent illnesses, general fatigue
- low spirit
- catch more colds, stay sick longer
- inability to have fun
- inability to concentrate
- continuous state of depression
- daydreaming or fantasizing during the day
- acting very defensively
- sense of alienation
- desiring to run away
- lack of interest in socializing
- feeling like no one cares

(Messina and Messina 1999-2003)

Burnout can lead to physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual crises. Those burned out can lose sight of their goals, mission, and purpose in life. They can even weaken their faith in God and negatively impact their relationship and walk with Christ. This leaves them vulnerable to the world's sinful pull and susceptible to all kinds of trouble.

CAUSES

Burnout occurs when people try to reach **Unrealistic Goals**. They deplete their energy and lose touch with themselves and others. They start out with good intentions but get carried away. Their expectations for what they can accomplish are very high. **Role Conflict** also contributes to burnout (Worterklaerungen, 2003). This happens when people try to do everything well without setting priorities. **Role Ambiguity** occurs when an individual doesn't know what is expected of them. They end up feeling like they haven't accomplished anything worthwhile. In **Role Overload**, the person can't say no and takes on more responsibility than they can handle. **External Factors** like stress, disorganization, stressful people at work or home cause burnout. Their lives are controlled by supervisors, customers, or family members. **Internal Factors** include a person's intense motivation to always do their best, and reaction to certain negative stressful people and events. **Chronic Responsibility Syndrome** leads to stress, burnout and depression (Business Journal 1998). This occurs when a person believes they are responsible for everything because they alone are the only ones who can do it. Our **Work-Obsessed, Success-Driven Society** pushes people toward burnout. Striving for the next dollar, higher grade, recognition, or status exacts a mighty toll on people. **Unrealistic Expectations** about motherhood create "mommy burnout." Many believe that mothers should meet all their family's needs, take care of everything, never get angry, not take time off, and always be loving and nurturing (Henniker, 2001). Similar thinking leads to burnout in church staff. Societal, peer, and parental pressure contribute to burnout in children and teenagers. Most of the time, however, burnout in teenagers is self-induced. They place incredible demands on themselves to succeed.

SOLUTIONS

Take practical steps for handling, overcoming, and preventing burnout. Recognize the symptoms of burnout. Identify the cause. Look at the areas you perceive as no improvement. The areas at the top of your list are probable causes. Make changes in yourself and your environment. Reach out to friends and talk with others in situations like yours. Ask someone you respect for possible solutions. Realize the limitations of your family, job, and yourself. Maintain discipline in daily responsibilities. Take time outs during the day. Put more variety in both your job and home life. Take short

vacations or trips at least two times a year. Change the little things that bother you and let go of those things you cannot change. Organize your time so you can focus on crucial tasks. Don't try to cover up burnout, admit that it is a real problem. Differentiate between stressful aspects of your home and work that you can and cannot change. Incorporate time management in your life. Set priorities for yourself and discuss them with your boss and family. Write down your long and short-term goals that are realistic. Don't neglect your health. Keep good eating, sleeping, and exercising habits. Rest. Exercise. Take time to relax each day. Laugh. Put God first, family second, and work third. Don't ignore God, your family, friends, or yourself. Learn to recognize when you are driving yourself too hard and when you are depleting your resources. You can do three things if you have chronic responsibility syndrome. First, say no. You don't have to please everyone.



Delegate and train. Don't try to do it all by yourself. Take time off without finishing your projects, let someone else complete the tasks. Be proactive, anticipate potential stressors and act in advance to prevent them. Mothers, when you are faced with too much work, simplify and prioritize tasks and find some balance between responsibilities and rest (Takett, 2001). Delay some tasks, delegate as much as you can to your husband and older children. Teach your children to help out at an early age. Set boundaries. Take care of yourself. Don't forget to take naps, eat well, and exercise.

Rely on God's strength rather than your own. Don't look to the world's standards on how you should live your life. Look to Christ and let His power and wisdom run your life. Christians are primarily called to be available to God, to know Him and worship Him, not to serve people or meet their demands (Croucher, 1990). Those in the ministry need to keep a balance between work and family. God's major purpose is our growth and development, whether we "succeed" in the world's terms or not. Make God's vision for your life, your vision. God's vision for you is that you make His Kingdom your top priority. Let God's love guide you in your relationships and responsibilities with your spouse, children, friends, colleagues, and fellow believers. Keep God at the center of your life. Seek His guidance in making daily decisions. Organize your life to reflect God's vision for you. You don't have to prove who you are through your work. Jesus accepts you just the way you are. You don't have to become somebody through your work. God already made you somebody. Bring your burdens to Jesus and exchange them for His. He will give

you refreshment, joy, and freedom. Once you have mastered burnout you can help your children do the same.



BALANCED LIVING

Evaluate your lifestyle. Take a close look at yourself. Are you living the abundant life Jesus promised? Does Christ's love compel you? Are you energized and empowered by Him. When you are living for the Lord in His strength, you live! Biblical living means living for God. It means having your priorities right and boundaries firm. A strong relationship with Christ and balanced Biblical life provides the intensity, focus, and strength you need, because you live for Him. Your life is all about Him. No straining, stressing, or burning out. Take care of yourself. Be available for God, family, and friends. Be proactive and productive, live a Christ-controlled life. Train up your children to live balanced lives too. Lead by example. Help them prioritize their lives. Jesus never burned out. He was laser-focused, driven, yet never in a hurry! He rested, prayed, and spent time with the Father. He had great velocity without burnout. He pressed on and prevailed. We can too. Draw your strength to live this life from God! Do it His way and for His Glory!

F.Y.I.

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