

Burnout: When Pushing Through Stops Working

Burnout isn't just being tired or stressed. It's what happens when ongoing pressure outpaces our resources and recovery. Over time, the body and brain can shift into survival mode, leaving us emotionally drained, disconnected, and less effective, even at things we once cared deeply about. Burnout can affect students, caregivers, employees, volunteers, anyone. It's not a personal failure; it's a human response to prolonged strain without enough support.

Why Burnout Happens

Burnout usually develops gradually when demands exceed our ability to rest, recover, or feel supported. Role overload, too much to do with too little time, control, or recognition, can slowly erode energy and motivation.

Constant connectivity, deadlines, uncertainty, and emotional labour can keep the body in a prolonged stress response, making it harder to fully switch off. When rest starts to feel like something we have to earn rather than something we need, burnout has room to grow.

Who Is Most Affected

Burnout doesn't discriminate, but some people are more vulnerable. Highly driven, perfectionistic, or people-pleasing individuals often place intense pressure on themselves. Those who feel responsible for others' wellbeing may consistently put their own needs last.

Difficulty setting boundaries and environments that reward overwork can increase risk, especially when self-worth is tied to productivity or achievement. Caring deeply is a strength, but without balance and support, it can become overwhelming.



**"BURNOUT IS NOT A
WEAKNESS. IT'S A
WARNING SIGNAL."**

Burnout at work is widespread in Canada. In a survey of more than 5,000 Canadian employees, about 39% reported feeling burned out in 2025, suggesting nearly four in ten workers are feeling the effects of sustained stress and heavy workloads.

For Bell Let's Talk Day, we're focusing on why burnout happens, who may be more vulnerable, how to spot the early signs, and how to start recovering.





Early Signs To Watch For

Burnout often shows up before we recognize it. Early signs can include:

- Feeling depleted or exhausted, even after rest
- Increased irritability, cynicism, or emotional numbness
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Loss of motivation or joy
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, tension, or digestive issues
- Pulling away from people, work, or responsibilities

Catching burnout early matters. The sooner it's named, the easier it is to address.

Tips for Recovering from Burnout

Recovering from burnout isn't about pushing harder or "fixing yourself." It's about restoring resources and capacity, while reducing ongoing stress and strain. Helpful steps can include:

- Naming what's happening to yourself, or someone you trust, to reduce self-blame and open the door to support
- Reducing role overload where possible, even temporarily, by setting boundaries or asking for help
- Prioritizing activities that restore you, including mental breaks from stress and time for things you enjoy
- Reconnecting with purpose, meaning, curiosity, and small moments of joy or connection
- Practising supportive self-care: restorative sleep, nourishing food, hydration, movement, and time in sun and nature
- Seeking professional support through your EFAP. A therapist can help you address external pressures and internal beliefs that may be making things worse

Healing from burnout takes time, and progress is often not linear. If you're struggling, reach out to your EFAP for support. FSEAP offers counselling to help you build strategies for coping and reducing burnout.

