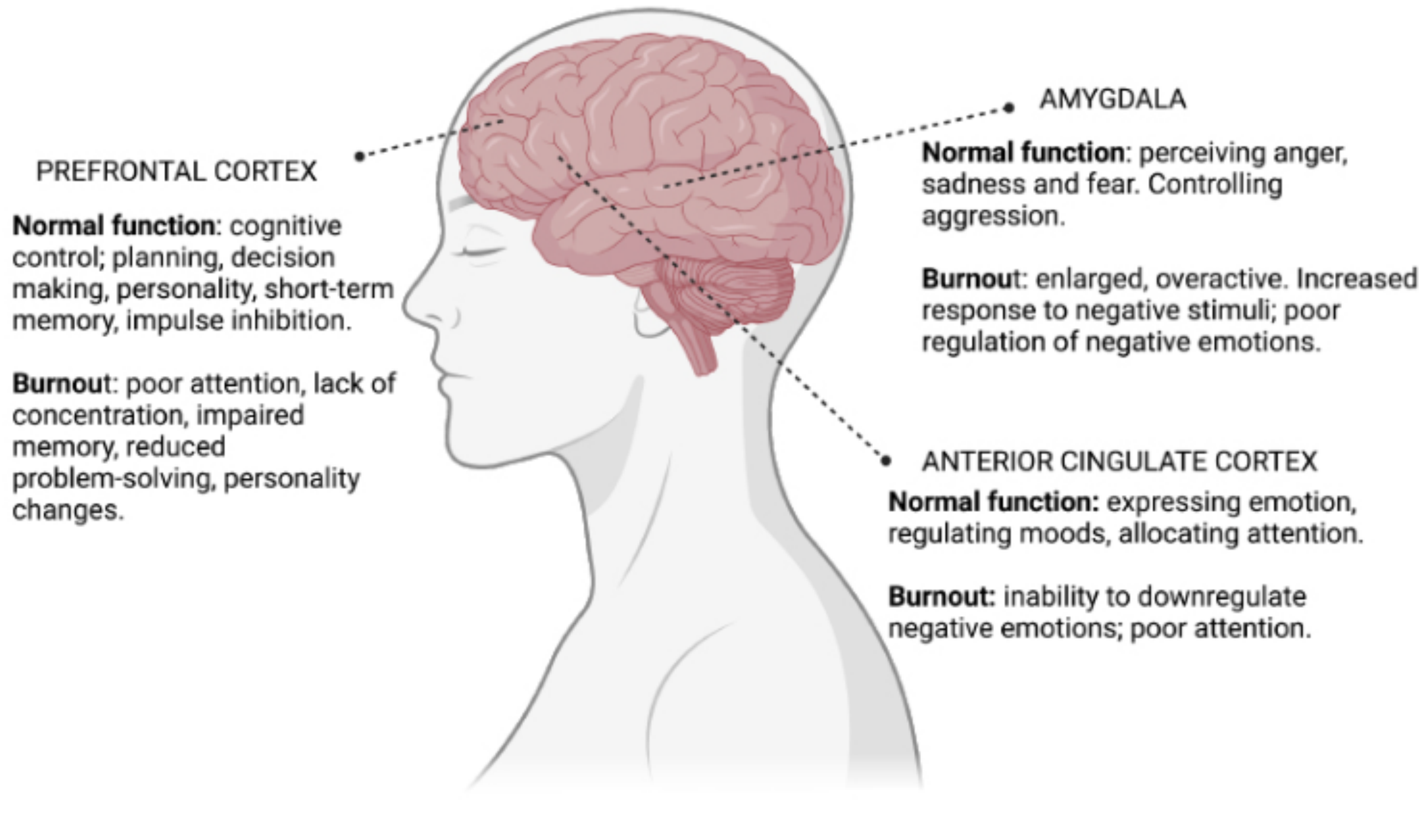



## Burnout - Part 2

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<https://purehealthhub.com/the-brain-and-burnout/>



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## Burnout – Part 2

Burnout – Part I defined burnout and discussed the five stages of burnout from the Honeymoon Phase to Habitual Burnout. Common symptoms of each stage, from niggling feelings of anxiety to complete social isolation, are real and the mounting scientific evidence highlights the significant toll that burnout can have well beyond our professional lives. Part I discussed the symptoms that impair people’s personal and social functioning, however cutting-edge techniques and research now demonstrate how burnout can overwhelm a person’s cognitive skills and neuroendocrine systems, eventually leading to distinctive changes in the anatomy and functioning of the brain. Understanding this research can be advantageous but having knowledge of what strategies to implement to prevent and combat burnout can certainly restore the joy in leadership and assist in reversing the lasting impact that burnout can have on the functioning and structure of the brain.

Some of the research on burnout indicates that the part of the brain responsible for cognitive functioning – the **prefrontal cortex**, thins more rapidly in people who experience burnout. This reduction in volume of the prefrontal cortex may result in problems with memory, attention, and executive cognitive functions such as decision-making. If your brain is in overload, parts of it that control memory and attention span are weakened, making it more difficult to learn new things and retain old ones.

The **amygdala** is the part of the brain that controls emotional reactions (our fight-or-flight response). Research suggests that people who experience burnout have a larger amygdala. An overactive amygdala can disturb the balance in the brain reducing connections between the amygdala and other areas of the brain, lessening your ability to regulate fears and emotions.

As much as the **prefrontal cortex** and the **amygdala** are affected by burnout, burnout also leads to turmoil within the regulation of the body's **neuroendocrine system**. Another consequence of burnout, according to some studies, is the inability of the body to produce higher levels of cortisol – our stress response hormone – in response to stimuli. Unfortunately, there is a link between chronic low levels of cortisol and stress, and trauma. This can induce consistent, low-grade inflammation throughout the body. Interestingly, there are some studies suggesting that chronic stress is as bad for the body as smoking, and that burnout is a significant risk for conditions such as heart disease.

If you are experiencing burnout, don't think it will go away overnight. It's important to be patient and take things one day at a time. While accepting that overcoming burnout may take a while, acknowledging that you are burned out, resetting your priorities, evaluating your options, seeking out support and practicing self-care, will contribute to you combatting burnout and reversing the negative effects of chronic stress and burnout. Once burnout is recognised and attended to, you may reignite your energy, passion and positivity and rediscover yourself.

### Overcoming Burnout

By acknowledging that you are burned out, you give yourself a reason to make needed changes in your lifestyle and perspective. This is the first step to addressing the emotional and physical symptoms of burnout.

Take the time to re-evaluate your priorities. This could be done by constructing a list of all the important things in your life – from work to family to health to education to leisure to religion to community involvement to financial goals.

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### 3 Evaluate your options

- Reducing your hours
- Taking a leave of absence
- Gaining more control over your schedule
- Clarifying your job expectations
- Moving to a different role within your company/school

There is nothing wrong with asking for help when you need it. Whether you use your employee assistance program to gain free or low-cost confidential counselling or talk to your partner or trusted friend, having support structures in place will provide you with opportunities to discuss important issues. This may assist in providing opportunities for change,

### 5. Practice self-care


Neglecting yourself will only make you less effective and will increase your stress rather than reduce it. Other self-care practices include having rest and sleep, good nutrition, regular exercise and making time for the people and hobbies you love. Prioritising healthy habits and activities will assist you to feel rejuvenated, focussed and positive.

Guarding yourself against burnout isn't selfish. It allows you to offer the best version of yourself as a leader to all those you lead. While many leaders experience burnout in their careers, having the knowledge of what you can do to prevent burnout rather than having to deal with the symptoms of burnout, will assist you to reduce the chance of exhaustion as well as the feeling of inefficacy. Finally, while it's easier said than done, making a conscious effort to reduce issues, challenges and stress, it's crucial that you always visit both your "why" and your "purpose".

- <https://www.psychologicalscience.org/observer/burnout-and-the-brain>
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Burnout: Further research into the impact of burnout on a person's cognitive skills and neuroendocrine system leading to distinctive changes in the anatomy and functioning of the brain, is alarming. However, there are measures you can take to either prevent burnout or reverse its impact. What measures have you put in place to prevent burnout? What are your thoughts on some of the research in this article?

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