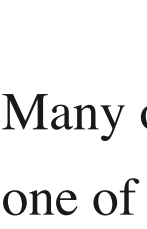


Burnout - Part 1

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<https://www.forbes.com/sites/edwardsegal/2021/02/17/leaders-and-employees-are-burning-out-at-record-rates-new-survey/?sh=2d68a1b16499>



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Many of you will be familiar with The Australian Principal Occupational Health and Wellbeing Survey. This survey is one of the most comprehensive longitudinal data sets of school leader and wellbeing in the world and it analyses variation in occupational health, safety and wellbeing in school leaders. It first commenced in 2011 and fortunately data has been captured annually from each survey.

While the findings of the 2021 survey demonstrated that Australian school leaders exhibited many strengths, the rates of psychological ill-health of principals/school leaders remain a concern.

Although school leaders continue to turn up for the job and demonstrate their commitment to their students, staff, their school and the wider school community, they are more at risk of **burnout** than ever before. Since the annual survey commenced in 2011, burnout and cognitive stress has not been as high as 2021. As a school leader, I was always interested in the ever-changing nature of the role and the potential impact it could have on wellbeing. In my current role working with school leaders, I have become more curious about **burnout** and the impact it can have on the individual.

This two-part article is not about highlighting the higher levels of stress among school leaders, but rather it looks at burnout, its impact and how to beat it.

What is Burnout?

Simply stated, burnout is the state of mind that comes with long-term, unresolved stress that can negatively affect your work and your life. It can affect anyone, at any time in their lives and the symptoms of this ‘emotional exhaustion syndrome’ differ from person to person.

German-born US Psychologist and Psychotherapist Herbert Freudenberger is widely considered as the founding-father of the concept burnout. In the 1970s Freudenberger described a 12-stage model of burnout. This 12-stage model was later simplified to a 5-Stage version and most of the literature on burnout refers to burnout in five stages.

Five Stages of Burnout

1. Honeymoon Phase

Common Symptoms

- sustained and increased energy levels
- going beyond your limits to prove yourself at work
- dismissing problems and stressors

The **Honeymoon phase** is especially relevant when people commence in a new role or when they participate in new job tasks and initiatives. While there are no signs of burnout and your enthusiasm, commitment, productivity and job satisfaction inspire you to be creative, optimistic and full of energy, you should take cognisance of any early warning signs of poor mental health and implement consistent wellbeing strategies into your working routine.

2. Stress Onset

Common Symptoms

- Niggling feelings of anxiety
- Irritability and other stress indicators
- General neglect of self-care

When you gradually start noticing that some days are more stressful than others and you may be neglecting your general self-care duties to keep up with your stressful workload and schedule, you may be in the **Stress Onset** phase of burnout. You may even brush the stress off as the normality of the role, however, it is important to be aware of where your stress is at. You need to effectively manage your **stress container**.

3. Chronic Stress

Common Symptoms

- Bouts of anger or aggressive behaviour
- Missed work deadlines due to lower productivity levels and higher procrastination levels
- Increased food/alcohol/caffeine consumption as a form of avoidance

You transition into the stage of **Chronic Stress** through frequent experiences of high-stress levels. It is possible that, as a consequence, your performance is impacted and you start feeling out of control and powerless, resulting in procrastination and sometimes a sense of incompetence and failure. Your stress may show its face more often, perhaps with increased levels of irritability or aggressive behaviour. In some cases, you may find yourself getting ill more frequently.

4. Burnout

Common Symptoms

- Complete neglect of personal needs
- Chronic headaches and other physical symptoms deteriorate
- Social isolation and increase in escapist activities
- Feelings of emptiness and a complete lack of motivation

Neglecting previous stages and symptoms can result in this stage – actual **Burnout** and inevitably the consequence may be critical exhaustion levels making it difficult to cope with the demands of work. It is in this **Burnout** phase where your results are mostly impacted, and your employer may notice your change in health, behaviour and performance. Your developed sense of self-doubt, in conjunction with a generally negative outlook on your job and life may be obvious.

5. Habitual Burnout

Common Symptoms

- Chronic low mood and anxiety
- Chronic mental and physical fatigue
- Complete social isolation/avoidance

Sadly, Habitual Burnout, the last phase of burnout, occurs when you fail to recover from burnout and the symptoms become an integral part of your life, possibly affecting your career, relationships and health. If you reach this stage, you may require external support to assist you to overcome the burnout symptoms and turn on the recovery path.

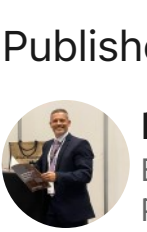
Part 2 of this article will look at some of the research on burnout impact as well as some wellbeing strategies you can implement to combat burnout.

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As a school leader, I was always interested in the ever-changing nature of the role and the potential impact it could have on wellbeing. In my current role, working with school leaders, I have become more curious about BURNOUT and the impact it can have on people. In this article, I have summarised the five stages of burnout.
With all the research currently being conducted and shared, I wonder what the state of school leader wellbeing and burnout will be in the near future.
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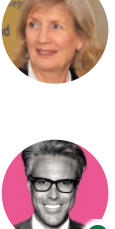
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Adriano Di Prato (He/Him) • 1st
Founding Director at a School for tomorrow.
Thank you for sharing this [Brendan Fraser](#), Burnout is real for many school leaders. It is crucial to identify the signs early before it can severely impact one's mental health. Systems and individuals need to make personal and collective wellness a priority.

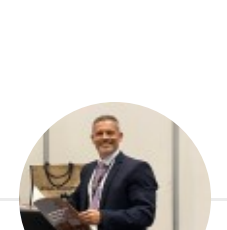
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Vithika Rahul • 2nd
senior faculty Psychology at DPS RK PURAM
Absolutely valid and relatable. Yes burnout is one of the most prevalent problem encountered by the employee and the fact that it is identified at the time when it starts affecting the physiological and psychological well-being. Would be grateful if you could share ways to resolve and help others to cope up with such situations

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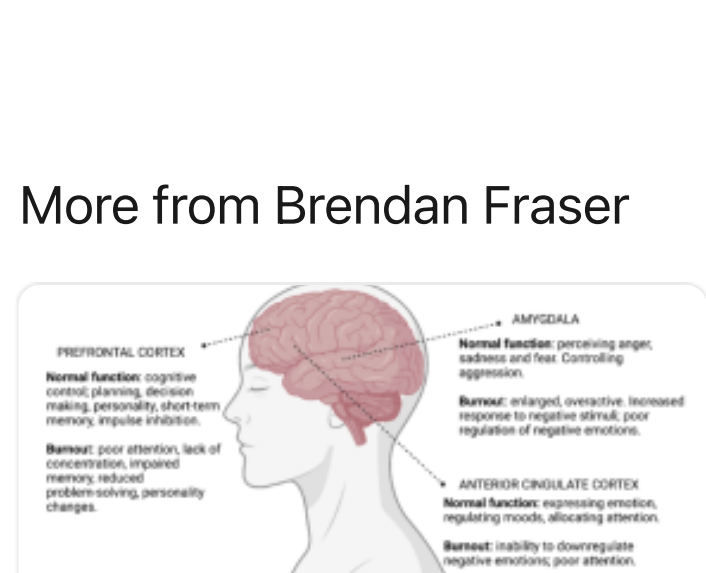
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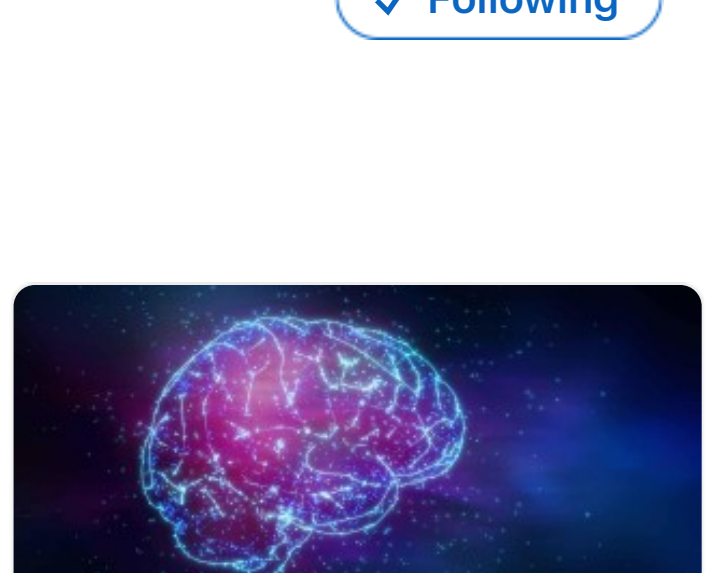
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