

# Symptoms of Burnout\*

\*Adapted from material presented by R. James; *Crisis Intervention Strategies*; Thomson Books: Belmont. 2008.

*Items in italics are the most common symptoms of depression. If you experiencing 2 or more of the symptoms in italics you need to seek the advice of professional (doctor, licensed counselor, psychologist, etc.)*

## Behavioral Symptoms

- Low job performance/low job satisfaction
- Increased alcohol & drug use
- Increased absenteeism
- Increased medication use
- Increased risk taking
- Clock watching
- Increased complaints about your job
- High job turnover/leave position
- Inability to cope with minor problems
- Forgetfulness/poor concentration*
- Lack of creativity
- Loss of enjoyment
- Loss of control
- Tardiness
- Dread going to work
- Vacillating between over-involvement and detachment
- Accident prone
- Mechanistic responding
- Errors in setting healthy boundaries
- Errors in judgment and strategy
- PTSD-like symptoms – intrusive thoughts, numbing affect, sleep disturbance, nightmares and hypervigilance
- Regression
- Impatient and irritable
- Losing things
- Withdrawn
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts*
- Inability to make decisions
- Escapist behavior
- Emotional exhaustion/ numbness/loss of emotional control*

## Physical Symptoms

- Physical exhaustion/fatigue
- Insomnia, sleeping more than usual, nightmares*
- Lingering /frequent colds, flu, viral infections
- Lower resistance to illness
- Weight loss or gain*
- Shortness of breath / breathing difficulties
- Rapid heart rate
- Increased use of tobacco and/or caffeine
- Addiction to drugs and/or alcohol
- Symptoms at weak organ points: ulcers, migraines, gastrointestinal upset, facial tics, etc.
- Poor coordination
- Muscular tension
- Over and under eating*
- Hyperactivity
- Flare-ups in preexisting medical conditions: hypertension, asthma, diabetes, ulcers, etc.
- Injury from high risk behavior
- Missed menstrual cycle
- Increased premenstrual tension
- Anxiety and panic attacks*
- Dizziness
- Impaired immune system

## Attitudinal Symptoms

- Depression
- Feelings of being everything to everyone/omniscient
- Feelings of inadequacy, inferiority & incompetence
- Rigidity to change/loss of flexibility



- Loss of concern and feelings/apathy
- Cynicism/negativism
- Compulsiveness & obsessiveness
- Guilt feelings/feelings of failure
- Low morale/sense of futility*
- Loss of patience/irritable
- Inability to cope with unwanted stress
- Feelings of anger/bitterness/resentment/disgust
- Suspicion/paranoia
- Feeling of powerlessness
- Boredom
- Reduced self-concept*
- Dehumanizing those you serve/labeling
- Loss of idealism/disillusion
- Frustration
- Increased worry
- Over-confidence/taking unusually high risks
- Stagnation
- Feelings of emptiness, meaninglessness*
- Loss of charisma
- Helplessness
- Terrifying and paralyzing feelings and thoughts
- Pessimism*
- Air of righteousness
- Grandiosity
- Sick humor, particularly aimed at clients
- Distrust of management, supervisors and peers
- Hypercritical toward institution & coworkers
- Hopelessness*
- Entrapment in job & relations
- Self-criticism & perfectionism
- Rapid mood swings
- Loss of faith, meaning, purpose*
- Sense of grounding & inner balance lost
- Feelings of vulnerability to the world at large
- Survivor guilt
- Escapist mentality
- Decreased sense of morality

### Relational Symptoms

- Increased marital and family conflict
- Withdrawal from family*
- Compulsion to be all and do all at home
- Feeling drawn to people who are less secure
- No mature interactions – hidden agendas
- Keeping everyone subservient
- Reduce significant others to the status of ‘clients’
- Breaking up of long lasting relationships
- Overreacting to comments of friends
- No separation of professional and social life
- Allowing clients to abuse the privacy of home by calling or dropping by anytime
- No opportunity for or enjoyment in just being yourself
- Loneliness
- Trust issues
- Loss of ability to relate to family, friends or those you serve
- Avoid close interpersonal contact
- Inability to cope with minor interpersonal problems
- Isolation from or over bonding with staff
- Increased expression of anger and mistrust
- Increased vigilance and concern for safety for self and loved ones
- Overprotection as a parent
- Decreased interest in intimacy or sex*

### Spiritual Symptoms

- Decreased time with God and increasing distraction
- Check social media/email before time with God
- Believe the truths of the Bible but not for you
- God feels distant or absent
- Question your beliefs about God
- Base your acceptance by God on hard work, success and your faithfulness
- Difficult to confess sin or admit weakness to God and those you are accountable to

**Answer these Questions:**

1. How many warning signs do you currently see in your life? (5 or more is significant)
2. How serious are the issues? Rate the intensity of each warning sign that you ticked from 1 to 5 – with five being most serious.
3. How long has this warning been going on? Put a time beside each one you ticked.

### How are you doing?

- The more warning signs you have, the more intense they are and the longer they have been present (especially if more than a month) the more serious your situation.

What are some initial steps to take?

**Reach out** – to a doctor, counselor, someone who understands and has experienced and recovered from burnout. Someone from the Thrive team would be happy to speak with you. You can reach us at [info@thriveministries.ca](mailto:info@thriveministries.ca)

**Rest** – Sleep whenever you feel tired. Focus on doing things that replenish you (Keeping your ‘Tanks’ Filled exercise)

**Reduce** – Do only what you absolutely must. Recognize that you may not be thinking clearly enough to identify these things. You may need to take time off from your ministry responsibilities. Ruthlessly cut your responsibilities (Try our What’s on Your Plate exercise)

## A Word about Depression

- Everyone experiences unhappiness, and many people may become depressed temporarily when things don’t go as they would like.
- Depression becomes an illness, or clinical depression, when the feelings described above are severe, last for several weeks, and begin to interfere with one’s work and social life.
- The items in the Symptoms of Burnout list that are in **red print** are the most common symptoms of depression. **Anyone who is experiencing 2 or more of the symptoms in red print needs to seek the advice of professional (doctor, licensed counselor, psychologist, etc.)**
- If you are having thoughts of harming yourself or others you need to seek medical attention immediately.
- Depression is the most treatable mood disorder. Most people who suffer from depression are helped by the treatment they receive. This usually includes medication and/or psychological counseling.
- Support from family and friends can make a big difference. Tell them how you are feeling.

*The information contained in this document is not meant to replace diagnosis or treatment of burnout or depression by a qualified practitioner. We highly recommend that you seek the advice of a doctor or licensed counselor if you are experiencing symptoms of burnout or depression.*