

# Mental Health

## Mental Health - Job Burnout

### On this page

[What is meant by job burnout?](#)

[What are some general effects of job burnout?](#)

[What are some factors associated with job burnout?](#)

[How can causes of job burnout be addressed?](#)

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## What is meant by job burnout?

While job burnout is not a condition that is formally defined as a medical diagnosis, the American Psychiatric Association describes it as:

- emotional depletion – feeling frustrated, tired of going to work, finding it hard to deal with others at work
- detachment or cynicism – being less empathetic with others, detached from work, seeing work or elements of work as a source of frustration
- low personal achievement – experiencing work as unrewarding, feelings of “going through the motions”
- depersonalization – thoughts and feelings seem unreal or not belonging to oneself

The American Psychiatric Association also describes burnout as the individual’s response to a systematic problem.

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## What are some general effects of job burnout?

General effects include:

- being cynical or critical at work or always having a negative or suspicious response to work conditions
- struggling to get to work or having trouble being productive when you arrive
- being irritable or impatient with co-workers, customers or clients

- lacking energy, or feelings of apathy or hopelessness
- being tired, forgetful, or lack of attention
- lack of satisfaction from your achievements or lack of enjoyment in activities outside of work
- feeling unappreciated for your work or contributions
- disillusionment about your job, feelings of detachment, or being disconnected
- feeling the need to use food, drugs, or alcohol to feel better or to simply not feel
- that your sleep habits have changed (having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep)
- that your appetite has changed (over or under eating)
- being troubled by unexplained headaches, backaches, or other physical complaints

Burnout is often chronic – meaning that these feelings may exist for a long time.

While these effects or symptoms are common when experiencing job burnout, they can also be the result of other health conditions, such as thyroid problems, vitamin deficiency, or depression. Check with your medical or health professional and ask about appropriate treatments.

In general, feeling sad or low is a part of life and can't be avoided. When something goes wrong in your life, your mood might drop. If you feel especially sad or irritable because of a situation and have poor sleep, less interest in seeing friends, or frequent worry about the situation, you're probably experiencing low mood. Low mood will typically go away in a week or two, especially if there's an improvement in the situation that started it. When these feelings remain for longer than about two weeks, it is important to ask for help.

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## What are some factors associated with job burnout?

Various factors can contribute to job burnout, including:

- unreasonable demands
- lack of control or the ability to influence decisions that affect your job (e.g., scheduling, workload, resources)
- unclear job expectations
- poor work environment (e.g., bullying, harassment, dysfunctional workplace dynamics, etc.)
- extreme levels of activities (e.g., either very monotonous or very busy)
- a miss-match in values or job fit

- lack of support, either at work or at home
  - lack of work-life balance
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## How can causes of job burnout be addressed?

A workplace committed to the creation of an environment that promotes mental health provides its employees with protection from psychological harm while promoting healthy lifestyle habits.

As noted by the Great-West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace, many of the organizational factors described in the CSA standard Z1003-13 (R2018) "[Psychological health and safety in the workplace - Prevention, promotion, and guidance to staged implementation](#)" (available for free from the CSA Group website) are the same factors that contribute to job burnout.

The psychosocial workplace risk factors include:

- Balance
- Civility and Respect
- Clear Leadership and Expectations
- Engagement
- Growth and Development
- Involvement and Influence
- Organizational Culture
- Protection of Physical Safety
- Psychological Competencies and Demands
- Psychological Protection
- Psychological and Social Support
- Recognition and Reward
- Workload Management

Please see the following OSH Answers for more information about how to address these psychological risk factors and how to establish a comprehensive workplace health and safety program.

- [Mental Health - Psychosocial Risk Factors in the Workplace](#)
- [Mental Health - Introduction](#)

- [Mental Health – How to Address and Support](#)
  - [Mental Health – Dealing with Stress in the Workplace](#)
  - [Mental Health – Having Courageous Conversations](#)
  - [Workplace Health and Well-being - Comprehensive Workplace Health and Safety Program](#)
  - [Workplace Health and Well-being Promotion - Getting Started](#)
  - [Employee Assistance Programs](#)
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