

Team training tool

The 12 phases of burnout

Psychologist Herbert Freudenberger theorized that the burnout process can be divided into 12 phases, which are not necessarily followed sequentially. Take a look at the 12 phases below and think about whether they apply to you at this point in time. Discuss as a team if you've recognized these signs in your coworkers.



1 The compulsion to prove oneself. Often found at the beginning is excessive ambition. The desire to prove oneself in the workplace turns into compulsion.



2 Working harder. People establish high personal expectations because they have to prove themselves to others or try to fit in an organization that doesn't suit them. To meet these expectations, they tend to focus solely on work while taking on more work than they otherwise would.



3 Neglecting their needs. Since they must devote everything to work, they now have no time and energy for anything else. Friends and family, eating and sleeping start to be seen as unnecessary or unimportant, because they reduce the time and energy that can be spent on work.



4 Displacement of conflicts. They become aware that what they're doing isn't right, but they're unable to see the source of the problem. This may lead to a crisis in themselves and become threatening. The first physical symptoms appear.



5 Revision of values. While falling into a state of denial of basic physical needs, perceptions and value systems change. Work consumes all energy, leaving none for friends and hobbies. The job is the new value system and people start to become emotionally blunt.



6 Denial of emerging problems. People may become intolerant and dislike being social. They may be seen as aggressive and sarcastic. Problems may be blamed on time pressure and all the work that they have to do.



7 Withdrawal. Minimal social contact turns into isolation. Alcohol or drugs may be used as a release from obsessive working "by the book." These people often have feelings of being without hope or direction.



8 Obvious behavioral changes. Coworkers, family, friends and others in their immediate social circles can't overlook the behavioral changes in these people.



9 Depersonalization. It's possible that they no longer see themselves or others as valuable. Their view of life narrows to only seeing the moment and life turns to a series of mechanical functions.



10 Inner emptiness. They feel empty inside and may exaggerate activities such as overeating or sex to overcome these feelings.



11 Depression. Burnout may include depression. In that case, the person is exhausted, hopeless, indifferent and believes that life has no meaning.



12 Burnout syndrome. They collapse physically and emotionally and need immediate medical attention. In extreme cases suicide may occur, with it being viewed as an escape from their situation.

Freudenberger, H.J. (1974). Staff burnout. *Journal of Social Issues*, 30, 159-165

GETTY IMAGES



TEAM MEETING
IN A BOX