

A Manager's Guide to Preventing Employee Burnout



The past few years have presented significant challenges for the global workforce. From navigating new ways to work to a ceaseless barrage of headlines about social and global issues that only seem to grow more dire each day, the consequent stress has contributed to a mental health crisis.

For many workers, this has manifested as [burnout](#), a pervasive and chronic form of work-related stress that heavily impacts [productivity](#). In [Lyra's State of Workforce Mental Health Report](#), 20% of surveyed employees reported burnout in 2023.

Burnout, however, doesn't have to mean reduced productivity or inevitable turnover. While it's not possible to eliminate all stress, there are ways to reduce the risk factors for burnout and better support employee mental health. This requires a holistic strategy to create a [culture of well-being](#) as well as psychological health and safety for employees. This begins with [managers](#) empathizing with and supporting their team members, and it extends to developing an enterprise-wide supportive work culture.



Understand the risk factors for burnout

Burnout is different from other forms of stress, which can make it more difficult to recognize. While external factors can contribute to burnout, its key indicator is that it's tied to work. It worsens at work or in response to work, leaves people feeling overwhelmed, and leads to disengagement or over-engagement at work. Fortunately, burnout symptoms get better as work situations change.

There are a variety of risk factors involved in burnout, including:

- Excessive workload and/or scarce resources
- High-conflict teams and a limited sense of community
- Lack of clarity in their role, or conflicting direction
- Shifting workloads or constantly changing expectations
- Lack of recognition
- Ineffective or poor management

There are also individual factors that may make some people more susceptible to burnout, such as:

- A lack of, or unhelpful, coping strategies (e.g., avoidance)
- Perfectionism
- Excessive work engagement
- Low social support
- A lack of, or not enough, [self-care](#)



8 signs of burnout

Recognizing burnout symptoms is a critical first step toward managing burnout in the workplace. Signs fall into [three main categories](#)—exhaustion, mental distance or cynicism about work, and reduced professional efficacy (feeling unable to make the desired impact). Look out for these signs of employee burnout:

1. Exhaustion or feeling overwhelmed
2. Physical symptoms such as chronic headache or fatigue
3. Anger or irritability
4. Distancing themselves from their work
5. Nervousness or feeling uncertain
6. Low motivation
7. Sadness
8. Difficulty concentrating

Support employees and proactively prevent burnout

As a manager, you can't prevent life stressors for your employees, but you play an important role in supporting your team's mental wellness to prevent burnout at work with these strategies:



Key ways you can help:

- Demonstrate empathy
- Lead by example
- Promote casual wellness check-ins and ask employees with team members to do the same
- Remind employees of available mental health resources

1. Demonstrate empathy

Showing appreciation for employees who are working in challenging circumstances can go a long way toward helping them feel heard and understood. The following actions can signal your support:

- Show empathy for your employees in one-on-one conversations about how they're feeling about their work pace and volume
- Adjust work schedules and workload to address challenges whenever possible
- If an employee is showing signs of distress, do more listening than talking
- Stick to open-ended questions and statements like, "What's going on for you?" and "Tell me more about that"

2. Lead by example

Because they're used to demonstrating productivity and assuredness, managers may not naturally gravitate toward discussing their own challenges, but it's exactly this tactic that helps employees feel more at ease. **When you mention what's been challenging for you or how you're trying to balance work and home responsibilities, it can help employees feel like they can open up about those issues, too.** If your child is tromping noisily through the living room during a regular teleconference meeting and you can acknowledge it without needing to apologize for it, it's a sign that your team members don't need to either.

3. Promote casual wellness check-ins and ask employees with team members to do the same

The U.S. Surgeon General has declared [loneliness an epidemic](#), and it affects the workplace, too. Employees may have less face-to-face time with friends, family, and colleagues than they used to, especially if they work in a remote or hybrid environment. This can spur feelings of isolation and disconnection, which add to stress levels and raise the risk of burnout. To mitigate this, **check in casually with each team member throughout the week about how they're doing.** Even an instant message to ask how they're doing and what support you can offer can be a huge boost for someone who's struggling.

4. Remind employees of available mental health resources

The support you provide your team members can go a long way, but there will likely be times when your employees need [mental health care](#). **Emphasize that it's OK not to be OK, and that accessing mental health services can be helpful any time, and not as a "last resort" option.**

Evolve your culture for better mental health

Life at work is a critical factor in mental health, and burnout can have severe consequences for both employees and employers. Easy access to quality mental health care is only part of the equation.

Employers can have a profound impact on employee well-being and help ensure they feel engaged and supported. This requires a multi-layered approach to workforce mental health that includes adjusting management practices, organizational norms, and the ways teams work together. To truly support employees and prevent burnout long-term, there needs to be a cultural shift that promotes [psychological safety](#) for employees so they feel safe to ask for help, both at work and for their mental health needs. That's why it's important to partner with a mental health benefits solution that offers:

- Organizational health evaluations that can help pinpoint root causes affecting your employees' well-being
- Strategic advisory services that create tailored, end-to-end solutions to support employee mental health
- Learning-and-development solutions to help managers support employees
- Workshops to help increase mental health literacy and build skills in key areas like stress and resiliency

Preventive strategies both at the organizational level and at the management level can help alleviate the sense of disconnection and anxiety your employees may be experiencing and can offer the resources they need to maintain their well-being.

Learn how [organizational development tools](#) can help evolve your culture and help your workforce thrive.

[Request a demo now.](#)





About Lyra Health

Lyra Health helps leading companies improve access to effective, high-quality mental health care for their employees and their families. With Lyra's innovative digital care platform and global provider network, members receive the best care and get better faster.

Learn more about supporting the well-being of your employees and their families.

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