

The Eight General Signals of Burnout

The term stress and burnout are often used interchangeably. Check the list below and see if you find yourself or people in your life described.

1. **Communicating Less** - A person with this signal might say less at work or at home. They may become dismayed when the phone rings. Rather than talk with family or friends at mealtime, they will appear distracted and silent.
2. **Feeling less Energy** – This can show up in different ways. The most common description is feeling as though a person’s gears are turning; however there is sawdust in the gears.
3. **Experiencing Lower Productivity** – The person with lower productivity usually notices it long before any one else. They might go home at night and ask themselves “What did I accomplish today?” They will be hard pressed to find an answer.
4. **Late more often for Work or Appointments** – It’s a logical flow to see less energy leads to being late more often.
5. **Sleep Disturbances** – This takes different forms. The person may have trouble going to sleep because their thoughts are racing. Or they may want to sleep all the time yet never feel rested. Or they may fall easily to sleep and wake up at 3am and be unable to fall back to sleep.
6. **Appetite Disturbance** – This also can take different forms. Unplanned weight loss or unplanned weight gain over a few weeks are a signal. A person with an appetite disturbance may want to eat all the time, often foods they never had an interest in.
7. **Preoccupied with Health and Body** - It is good to be conscientious about exercise and good eating. But people experiencing stress and burnout often become highly focused on their physical selves. They will think and talk about their bodily functions and sensations much of the time.
8. **Decreased Wants** – This is a very important signal. The person loses interest in the world. Here is a quick experiment-

Picture an interviewer handing two people each a note pad with this request: “Write down everything you want to do, re-do, read, reorganize, discuss, see, visit, clean out or buy.”

- *The person managing their stress will easily fill up the pad with plenty of ideas.*
- *The person feeling overstressed or burned out will stare at the pad, write a few lines, sigh and feel burdened by the task.*

Learning to recognize Stress and Burnout and the influence it has on ourselves and those we care for can make the difference in how soon we ask for help and return to wellness.