



FREE GUIDE · CLARE E KENNY

Tackling burnout

Practical tools for you and your
organisation



Burnout is one of the biggest challenges in today's workplaces.

I've seen it (and experienced it) first-hand, working with organisations of all sizes to address the cultural and systemic drivers that leave people drained and disconnected.

It's often your most engaged, high-performing employees who are at greatest risk. That's why prevention is essential to sustaining performance.

The good news? Burnout isn't inevitable. With the right awareness, practices, and culture, it can be prevented and reduced.

This guide shares practical steps you can take personally, and strategies organisations can apply to create healthier, more resilient workplaces.

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Tackling burnout personally

Five practical ways to protect your energy and recover.

01 Recognise the warning signs

Burnout rarely happens overnight. It creeps up slowly.

Common signs include:

- Persistent tiredness or poor sleep
- Irritability or lack of motivation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling emotionally flat
- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy

REFLECT

Write down your “early warning signs”

For me it’s when I can’t step away from work and drop things like exercise that make me feel better. What are yours?

02 Challenge unhelpful mindsets

Many of us hold beliefs that fuel burnout. For example:

- “I’ll rest when I’m done.”
- “If I slow down, I’ll fall behind.”
- “I have to be strong and handle it all.”

These beliefs keep us stuck in overwork. The truth is, rest is productive! Sleep improves focus, creativity, and decision-making. Play and joy restore our motivation. Connection protects us against stress.

REFRAME

At the end of the day list what you’ve achieved, not what’s left to do, then say “That’s more than enough for today”.

Tackling burnout personally

Five practical ways to protect your energy and recover.

03 Move stress out of your body

Stress is physiological. If it isn't released, it stays stuck in your body. Release it through movement, breathing, laughter, crying, creativity, or connection.

Effective ways to discharge stress include:

- Exercise or movement
- Breathing practices
- Emotional release
- Connection
- Creativity

CHOOSE

Choose 1-2 small daily practices to embed.

I take deep breaths while the kettle boils, or send a quick check-in to a friend. You could also try 5 minutes of movement between calls.

04 Set micro-boundaries

Small, daily boundaries build up to big changes. Logging off on time, switching off certain notifications, blocking focus time, protecting your lunch hour, saying no - all are part of setting boundaries.

If you struggle saying no, try:

- "I can't do this today, but I can next week."
- "I need to protect some focus time - let's pick this up tomorrow."

CONSIDER

Resentment of requests, meetings or tasks can signal a crossed boundary.

What's making you feel resentful?

What boundary might have been crossed?

Build burnout buffers

05

There are natural buffers that help us to protect against burnout:

- 7-9 hours of sleep
- Balanced food and energy
- Regular movement/activity
- Natural sunlight
- Human connection

Prioritise

Pick a burnout buffer you want to strengthen this week. How will you do it?

Tackling burnout organisationally

Five strategies to reduce risk across your team and organisation

Burnout isn't just personal, systems and culture drive exhaustion too. Organisations and leaders play a vital role in prevention. Research shows that high workloads, poor management practices, unclear roles, and lack of psychological safety are some of the biggest causes of burnout. That means real prevention must happen at the organisational level.



01 Solve root causes, not symptoms

Wellbeing perks like fruit bowls or apps can be nice, but they don't prevent burnout. The real drivers are issues such as excessive workload, poor management, unclear roles, and lack of psychological safety.

Real prevention means tackling the sources of pressure directly: streamline processes, rebalance workloads, and challenge harmful “always on” norms.

CASE STUDY

An organisation notices rising stress and introduces mindfulness training. It helps in the moment, but unrealistic deadlines and constant reactivity remain. Stress stays high because the root cause (workload) hasn't been addressed.

Tackling burnout organisationally

02 Address demands and enablers (separately!)

The McKinsey Health Institute shows that demands (like workload, time pressure, role conflict, and toxic norms) are what increase burnout risk. Enablers (like psychological safety, autonomy, growth, and support) build overall health and performance.

The two are distinct. You can have strong enablers and still face high burnout if demands aren't reduced. Too often, organisations focus only on enablers - but to truly prevent burnout, you must also address demands.

REFLECT

Ask yourself: Are we reducing demands, or just adding enablers? Even with great wellbeing programmes, burnout risk stays high if workload, toxic culture, and pressure don't change.

03 Develop leaders as role models

The way managers handle pressure, set boundaries, and respond to challenges sends a powerful signal: This is how we do things here.

If leaders are always “on” or visibly burning out, their teams will follow. When leaders model balance and self-care, they give others permission to do the same - and performance improves as a result.

TAKE ACTION

Build leadership capability in emotional intelligence, self-regulation & psychological safety.

Include healthy leadership behaviours in performance reviews and promotions.

Encourage leaders to model healthy practices openly (logging off, taking holidays, admitting mistakes, protecting boundaries).

Tackling burnout organisationally

04 Support the whole person

Burnout isn't only driven by work. Pressures like parenting, financial strain, and health challenges inevitably affect how people show up each day. Supporting people holistically is one of the strongest buffers against burnout.

TAKE ACTION

Offer genuine flexibility so people can manage their life alongside work.

Provide access to coaching, mentoring, or financial wellbeing resources.

Promote Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) clearly and without stigma, people won't use support that they don't feel safe accessing.

05 Make wellbeing culture, not a campaign

One-off initiatives (Wellbeing Week/free snacks) are a nice bonus, but they won't stop burnout if the culture rewards overwork. True prevention happens when wellbeing is built into the process, not treated as an add-on.

For example: Leaving on time, taking holidays and switching off after hours. Recognising and rewarding sustainable performance, not just long hours. Tracking wellbeing metrics alongside business results to keep them on the agenda.

CASE STUDY

Leaders stopped celebrating late-night emails as 'dedication' and instead recognised teams who delivered quality work within working hours. The result? Less pressure, more trust, and better performance.

Key takeaways

- 01** Burnout is not just stress.
It's caused by chronic, unmanaged workplace pressures - showing up as exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced effectiveness.

- 02** Personal strategies matter - but they're not enough.
Completing the stress cycle, setting micro-boundaries, and building "burnout buffers" help protect individual energy, but they can't offset unhealthy systems.

- 03** Organisations must address demands directly.
Burnout risk comes from excessive workload, time pressure, role conflict, and harmful work norms. Tackling these root causes is essential.

- 04** Enablers drive holistic health, not burnout prevention.
Psychological safety, autonomy, and growth improve wellbeing and performance - but unless demands are reduced, even healthy, engaged employees can still burn out.

- 05** Burnout prevention is a shared responsibility.
Individuals can build resilience, but leaders and organisations must create cultures where sustainable performance - not overwork - is the norm.