

## Keep the Flame Burning and avoid BURNOUT!

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Wikipedia defines burnout as “a psychological term that refers to long-term exhaustion and diminished interest in work.” It results from prolonged stress, being overwhelmed and an inability to meet constant demands. Burnout causes one to feel unhappy, detached, helpless and completely worn out and with burnout comes the lack of motivation and energy to care about the situation, let alone problem solve a way to get back to health. Burnout affects work, relationships and health and must be addressed as soon as possible.

There are several things in life that may increase your risk for burnout. For example:

### • PERSONALITY:

- Perfectionism – nothing is ever good enough;
- Negative view of yourself and the world;
- A need to micro-manage and be in control;
- Type A high achieving personality.

### • LIFESTYLE:

- Lack of work-life balance;
- Being expected to be too many things to too many people;
- Taking on too much without enough help;
- Lack of close supportive relationships.

### • WORK:

- Feeling a lack of control at work;
- Lack of recognition;
- Unclear or overly demanding job expectations;
- Boredom or lack of challenging work;
- Unpredictable work environment;
- High pressure work environment.

If you can relate to some of the above characteristics, YOU may be at an increased risk for burnout. It is important to recognize what you have control over and make changes to avoid the slippery downward slope. Consider the following ways that you can make changes in your life starting today.

### 1. *Adjust your expectations of yourself:*

Aim to maintain a positive professional attitude, but give yourself a break. Recognize that you are the best/most perfect person at being you. You don't need to be perfect. When you are green you are growing; when you are ripe, you rot!

### 2. *Quit comparing yourself:*

We have a tendency to compare our own worst to others' bests. How is this fair? Don't allow your only standard for evaluation of self-esteem be your job. And remember you will surely have low-self esteem if you constantly measure yourself against someone else's standards. Develop your own realistic standards (see #1) and measure yourself against those!

### 3. *Develop hobbies and interests outside of work:*

Don't just identify with work, this creates a high risk for burnout. Find things you enjoy and schedule time to do them. What do you do well? Who do you enjoy being around? What non-work related skills would you like to work on?

### 4. *Take Breaks:*

Take time to recharge during the day. Have a healthy snack. Take a walk to help you re-energize, connect with nature and enjoy the physical benefits of exercise. Make lunch plans with a co-worker. Establishing positive relationships at work will make you happier and help you live longer. Spend 10 minutes of quiet time every day. Try driving home without the radio, music or talking on the phone. Meditate—it strengthens the ability to remain cool in hot situations and quiets emotional noise, which calms the body and the mind reducing the stress response. What other ideas can you come up with?



5. *Self awareness:* Take a good look in the mirror. Examine your values. When values are clear, decisions are easy. Does what you are doing fit with your values? What triggers your burnout? Do you find yourself holding on to resentment? If so, deal with this issue, don't let it fester, this will surely lead to burnout.

6. *Realize it is Okay to Say No:* First understand that saying no is not selfish. It is a sign of professional and emotional maturity. If you have too much on your plate you can't do a good job at anything. Don't over promise and under deliver. The instant gratification of saying yes will quickly be offset by the stress of trying to fit it all in. Learn to say “no” to the good and “yes” to the best!

7. *Quit worrying:* Take life one day at a time. Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Stay in the present and enjoy the moment you are in. We often miss the “good” moments when worrying about the future and what may not even be!

8. *Ask for help and know your resources:* Don't let the fear of being judged stop you from asking for help when needed. Who can you count on? What resources are available in your community? The NSTU has a variety of resources to help you in times of need. For example, The Early Intervention Program for Teachers, NSTU Counselling Services, Member Services and the Manulife Resilience Employee and Family Assistance Program (1-877-955-6788). Call us if you need help. That's what we are here for!

If you feel that every day is a bad day, if you feel exhausted all the time, if you feel overworked and undervalued, you may be on the road to burnout. Don't wait for a better time to take care of yourself, NOW is the time to act. After all—“yesterday is history and tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift and that is why it's called the present.”

### REFERENCES:

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<https://www.openforum.com/articles/ten-tips-to-avoid-burnout/>

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The Early Intervention Program (EIP) invites  
NSTU members to sign up for our Wellness  
email list at [Be\\_Well@nstu.ca](mailto:Be_Well@nstu.ca)

Please contact Erin at [ekeefe@staff.nstu.ca](mailto:ekeefe@staff.nstu.ca)  
and provide your NSTU email address.  
This list provides information about the EIP and  
other wellness topics.

[From *The Teacher*, January/February 2014, Volume 52 Number 4, page 8 © NSTU 2014]