

# CHECKLIST FOR BURNOUT CARE

## PHYSICAL HEALTH

**1**

**SAFETY:** Are you living in a safe, healthy environment (*given Covid, etc.*)?

- Are you and your housemates (if any) taking all recommended precautions regarding Covid?
- Are your relationships with housemates safe and healthy? I have worked with many clients who are dealing with [substance abuse](#), physical abuse or emotional abuse, either personally or with a housemate? This sad scenario is all too common with burnout.
- If children are present, are they safe and healthy? Do you have the support you need (spouse, significant other, family member) to manage both children and your job?

**2**

**SLEEP:** Do you wake up exhausted or refreshed?

- Consistent sleep is essential for daily recovery from stress. Waking up exhausted, whether from insomnia, or restless sleep, is not sustainable, both physically and mentally.
- Have you had a sleep study or been diagnosed with sleep apnea?
- Disciplined sleep habits, particularly closing down work related electronics well before a consistent sleep time, are critical. (*See the [CDC's recommendations](#).*)

**3**

**DIET:** Especially hydration

- Exhausted, anxious people who are consumed by their work tend to eat mainly for energy and comfort. They often feel they don't have time for well-balanced meals.
- It's obvious (sorry) but good nutrition is necessary to refuel our stressed bodies -- and bad nutrition (especially high fat, sugar and salty foods) tend to compound long-term exhaustion -- even if we experience a short-term energy boost.
- Again, we all know this, but [proper hydration](#) (64 ounces+ each day) is necessary to maintain electrolytes, both for daily recovery and ongoing performance at work and home.

**4**

**WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD A PHYSICAL?**

- With Covid, it can be difficult -- sometimes impossible -- to see your doctor for an [annual physical](#) and regular medications checks. Yet this is the first step we recommend to our burnout clients.
- This is especially important if you take medications, particularly those for anxiety and/or depression, that should be reviewed and potentially adjusted in the current circumstances.

**5**

**EXERCISE** (Sorry, but you knew this was coming.)

- You know all the reasons why. But the combination of cardio and resistance (weight) training does wonders to relieve our minds and bodies of stress and increase stamina for the challenges of these trying times.
- If it's been a while, start with [brisk walking](#) 30-45 minutes a day.
- If you have a routine you've ignored, ease back into it.
- It's impossible to overstate the benefits of exercise with stress, anxiety and burnout.
- Finally, we recommend practicing proven skills to improve and maintain your psychological health

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### IF YOU HAVE A HISTORY OF ANXIETY AND/OR DEPRESSION (predating Covid).

- Covid, etc., is already monumentally challenging. The most challenging episode in most people's lives to date. But if you have a history of anxiety or depression, it can sometimes be overwhelming
- **So, here's a quick triage:**
  1. See your doctor about currently prescribed medications. (See #4)
  2. Connect (or reconnect) with a therapist. Statistically, the combination of therapy and proper medication is [more effective](#) than either alone.

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### RECOVERY: Daily, even hourly, on-the-spot recovery from stress is key.

- Again, the hallmark of work-related burnout is the accumulation of unrelieved stress over time without complete recovery. Research proves that the most effective prevention technique is "[mini-recovery](#)" throughout the day to 1) accept reality instead of fighting it or running from it (see #8 below) and 2) detach from and relieve stress in real time.
- The combination of physical (see #5 above) and psychological mini-recoveries works best.
- Without frequent and complete recovery throughout the day, stress will "pile up" causing burnout if not relieved.

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### ACCEPTANCE: Not giving in. Not giving up. Just accepting the reality of your life situation as it really is – right now.

- For high-performance executives, whose stock-in-trade is overcoming difficult challenges, "acceptance" can have a very negative connotation. Too often it is misinterpreted as giving in or giving up.
- Acceptance, termed "[radical acceptance](#)" by Marsha Linehan, founder of DBT, is a very different concept.
- As humans we are "wired" to fight or flight in the face of a crisis. To either struggle or avoid. Research proves both strategies ultimately result in more anxiety and more stress.
- Acceptance means to fully but peacefully engage with things as they are. The facts, not the nightmares we make up or wishful thinking. And without the secondary stress of judging the situation or personalizing it, which causes additional anxiety. Instead of struggling or avoiding, practice F.O.C.U.S. (see below).

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### F.O.C.U.S.

- **F:** Focus 100% on what you *can* control. "Worry is a misuse of the imagination." Dan Zanda
- **O:** One thing at a time. Multi-tasking is a [myth](#). The human brain can only hold one thought at a time. Any attempt to do more than one thing at a time breeds anxiety.
- **C:** Commit to not complain or spread fear. The main person listening to you is YOU!
- **U:** Understand that 7.2 billion people have the same worries you have (320 million Americans alone.)
- **S:** Serve others.

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### VALUES

- One of the main attributes of burnout is the frightening feeling of being at the mercy of circumstances outside your control.
- But we can always control our behavior. And we can always behave according to our values.
- By values, we mean how you want to show up in your own life, how you want to treat others, and what you want to stand for and be remembered for in your life.
- The first step is to identify (or re-identify) your values. This Acceptance & Commitment Therapy [exercise](#) is very helpful.