



Recovering from Burnout Through Mentoring

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Abstract

Workplace stress can potentially impact numerous individuals within a workplace. Unfortunately, many employees encounter stress so frequently that it has become a normal part of their daily lives. However, not addressing continual stress often leads to burnout when combined with other internal and external forces. One potential solution to improve employee satisfaction, retention, and personal fulfillment is mentoring. Mentoring is crucial in any workplace setting, positively affecting organizations by providing guidance and support through experienced mentors and empowering employees. Mentoring is a proven approach that helps individuals achieve their career goals and enhance their autonomy. Additionally, mentoring can prevent burnout and aid mentees in recovery by offering support and advice and increasing their value. Effective mentoring can also assist individuals in identifying and addressing the causes of their burnout through fresh and diverse perspectives. Organizations are increasingly implementing mentorship programs to counteract the impact of burnout. This paper discusses the significance of intersecting mentoring and burnout with strategies to reclaim a sense of purpose for organizational stakeholders.

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Introduction

Feeling burnt out in your career? Mentorship may help. A mentor is an expert who can help a mentee with their career growth (American Psychological Association, 2012). They perform two leading roles: advising on professional development and acting as role models for support. Both roles offer valuable lessons and guidance for career advancement and achieving a work-life balance. Mentorship can also reduce the risk of burnout (Qian et al., 2014). Burnout is a widespread issue currently affecting people across various industries (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019). If left unaddressed, it can lead to exhaustion, reduced performance, and disengagement from work (Scott, 2024).

Despite a global burnout epidemic in our workforce (Dean et al., 2024), there is limited evidence on effective strategies for prevention. As evidenced in the University of Phoenix's 2025 Career Optimism Index[®] (2025), 21% of Americans feel they have less control over their professional future compared to five years ago, resulting in 51% of workers experiencing burnout, a record high for the index. However, recovering from burnout may be possible through effective mentoring. This paper will discuss the concept of mentorship and outline strategies for addressing workforce burnout.

Benefits of Mentoring Burnout

The fundamental viewpoints surrounding the state of American workers' career paths are the focus of the 2025 Career Optimism Index[®]. This foundational framework offers an exceptional perspective on burnout. Burnout affects millions worldwide, harming mental and physical health. Fortunately, mentoring provides valuable insights, constructive feedback, and emotional support, helping individuals to manage burnout and progress effectively. Studies indicate that mentorship offers numerous benefits, including psychosocial and career support,

and may contribute to a reduction in burnout (Jordan et al., 2019). According to Ryan (2023), mentoring helps individuals boost their self-confidence, improve job performance, reduce stress, and enhance overall well-being.

Boost Self-Confidence

Mentoring can help boost self-confidence during recovery from burnout. Burnout often leaves individuals feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. A mentor offers support, feedback, and advice that may aid individuals in regaining confidence. Collaborating with a mentor enables individuals to set goals and work towards outcomes related to their personal development (Ryan, 2023).

Improve Job Performance

Mentoring can improve job performance. Burnout is associated with decreased productivity, lower job satisfaction, and may result in job loss. A mentor can help identify areas for improvement, assist with strategy development, and offer feedback, which can contribute to increased effectiveness and success in the workplace (Ryan, 2023).

Reduce Stress

Burnout may result in significant stress, with negative implications for both mental and physical health. Engaging with a mentor provides a constructive setting to address concerns and evaluate potential solutions. Mentors can impart effective stress management strategies, including mindfulness practices and meditation (Ryan, 2023).

Enhance Well-Being

Mentoring has been shown to enhance well-being. It may help address burnout by promoting connections and community. Mentoring provides individuals with opportunities to

form new relationships, gain different perspectives, and receive support in both personal and professional settings (Ryan, 2023).

Identifying the Signs of Burnout

Burnout is defined by emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion due to extended periods of stress (Cavanaugh et al., 2022). It can arise from a range of factors, such as work-related stress, personal stress, and stress from daily life. For example, in a recent survey, American workers across the board saw heightened rates of burnout and, according to APA's 2021 Work and Well-being Survey of 1,501 U.S. adult workers, 79% of employees believed they had experienced some type of work-related stress in the month before the survey (Abramson, 2022).

Burnout can affect an individual's well-being, impacting both their professional and personal life, including relationships. Given the significant consequences of burnout, it is crucial to identify it early before it depletes energy and motivation, leading to overwhelming effects. As a mentor, it is not only necessary but also one's responsibility to recognize the signs of burnout and assist individuals in overcoming it. According to Smith and Reid (2025), here are some signs and indicators that suggest an individual may be experiencing burnout.

Emotional Signs and Indicators of Burnout Self-Doubt

- Feeling helpless, trapped, and overwhelmed
- Loss of motivation
- Detachment, feeling alone (Smith & Reid, 2025, p. 2)

Physical Signs and Indicators of Burnout

- Feeling tired and drained
- Change in appetite or sleep habits

- Frequent headaches or muscle pain
- Lowered immunity, frequent illnesses (Smith & Reid, 2025, p. 2)

Mental Signs and Indicators of Burnout

- Difficulty concentrating
- Procrastinating and taking longer to complete
- Outbursts and taking frustrations out on others
- Decreased output and productivity (Smith & Reid, 2025, p. 2)

Ways to Beat Burnout

Burnout is often preventable. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2025), there are certainly systemic factors beyond one's control; much of what contributes to burnout lies within the mentor's ability to influence, even if it is simply changing how they perceive their mentee's circumstances or respond to them. Burnout can also lead to decreased productivity and increased employee turnover rates (Amer et al., 2022). Therefore, proactively addressing this issue is crucial. The most effective approach to retaining employees and maintaining their engagement is to implement a comprehensive strategy that supports their emotional, physical, and mental health in the workplace. Here are four suggested strategies for creating an effective support system for combatting burnout:

Prioritize Self-Care

Restore your energy and concentration by prioritizing healthy sleep, a balanced diet, regular exercise, and social interactions.

Adjust Perspective about Work

Identify aspects of the job that are positive, such as interacting with coworkers during lunch breaks. Adjusting your mindset toward your job can contribute to a renewed sense of purpose and control.

Reassess Priorities

Burnout indicates that something significant in your life may not be functioning well. Take time to consider your hopes, goals, and dreams. Are you overlooking something that is important to you? This can be an opportunity to reassess what brings you satisfaction and to slow down, allowing yourself time to rest, reflect, and recover.

Seek Assistance From Others

When you are experiencing burnout, everything seems difficult and hopeless. However, you can manage stress better than you think by taking positive steps to restore balance in your life. One effective method is reaching out to others.

Conclusion

Burnout is a condition that does not resolve on its own. If disregarded or left unaddressed, it may lead individuals to make significant, life-altering decisions they might not have otherwise considered, such as impulsively resigning from one's position. This is why mentoring can be a useful resource offering guidance, support, and accountability to help individuals reestablish a sense of purpose and balance. Through mentoring, individuals can develop the skills and mindset necessary to recover from burnout and thrive in both their personal and professional lives.

Recovering from burnout requires a strategic approach. Mentoring offers access to resources and support to help individuals overcome burnout. By prioritizing self-care, engaging

in meaningful activities, and striking a balance between work and life, individuals can achieve their goals and emerge stronger.

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