

## **Burnout and Stress – As an Employee what to look out for\***

This Guide is on our website but we thought it worth repeating here.

Employee burnout whether Senior Executives and Managers, Professionals, Office Workers or those working remotely or home workers, are all potentially subject to burnout and stress. Doctor's, Nurses, and, Frontline workers are equally recognised as suffering burnout caused by the pandemic. The World Health Organisation ("WHO") in 2019 officially determined that burnout was a diagnosable condition. Because burnout can have a negative impact on the health of an employee, prevention is always better than cure and if an employee feels they are suffering from burnout or stress, medical advice should always be obtained first.

So, what is Burnout?

The WHO defines burnout as resulting from:

1. Feeling of energy depletion or exhaustion.
2. Increased mental distance from your job or feeling of negativism or cynicism relating to your job.
3. Reduced professional efficiency.

But what exactly is Burnout?

Burnout is the result of prolonged work-related stress. It is a mixture of exhaustion, cynicism and ineffectiveness. Tell-tale signs would include feeling emotionally drained, helpless, or overwhelmed.

As an employee if you (or a loved one) are suffering from burnout you are most likely emotionally and physically exhausted. Your performance takes a dive. There may be health problems.

What Burnout is not.

Burnout is not simply exhaustion.

The Five Steps to Burnout:

1. Engaged as an employee you are energetic, involved and, effective.
2. Overextended – you are tired and overworked, but still productive.

3. Disengaged – you are cynical, but productive.
4. Ineffective – you are less productive, but potentially you still care.
5. Burnout – you are exhausted, cynical, and, less effective.

These are transitional. An employee does not move from being engaged to Burnout. There are three intermediate steps.

What causes Burnout.

There are six characteristics which contribute to burnout:

1. Workload, this is excessive work demands or too much of the wrong kind of work.
2. Control, that you have no authority to do what is needed to reach your work goals, or at a minimum that you believe that you do not have the authority to do what is needed to reach those goals or do not believe that you have the support to meet those goals.
3. Reward, there is inadequate rewards in terms of money, recognition or job satisfaction.
4. Isolation, this is isolation from the job or the business or frequent conflict with co-workers.
5. Fairness, seeing pay inequality, favouritism or disrespect.
6. Values, unethical work or conflicting work goals.

Burnout can come from a combination of any of these.

Burnout symptoms.

There are a significant number of burnout symptoms and these include: -

- Fatigue.
- Insomnia.
- Memory loss.
- Feeling of hopelessness.
- Nervousness.
- Headaches.
- Irritability.
- Change in appetite.
- Trouble concentrating.

- Cynicism.
- Depression.
- Increased illness.
- Loss of energy.
- Impatient.
- Being critical.
- Feeling persecuted.
- Hopelessness.
- Negative attitude.
- Excessive use of sarcasm.
- Being disillusioned with work.
- Loss of job satisfaction.
- Self-medication.
- Dread of work.
- Missing deadlines.
- Habitual complaining.
- Missing work goals.

It can of course be a combination of some or all of these.

Who is at risk of Burnout?

Anyone with high work demands and limited resources can burnout.

In Ireland an employee who suffers burnout due to workplace stress has an actionable claim for any personal injury whether physical or psychological as a result of same.

If you believe that you have suffered burnout, then in those circumstances you may well need to get legal advice. If so, we are here to help. However, our first concern is always for your health and therefore it is important firstly to get appropriate medical advice. Your first port of call is your GP. To the extent that we can help, we are here to help.

**\*Before acting or refraining from acting on anything in this guide, legal advice should be sought from a solicitor.**

**\*In contentious cases a solicitor may not charge fees or expenses as a proportion or percentage of any award or settlement.**