Battling Workplace Burnout

DIAGNOSING AND TREATING SOME OF THE OFFICE SYMPTOMS THAT ARE STRESSING WORKERS | BY JANICE LITVIN

WE TEND TO THINK OF BURNOUT — DEFINED by the Mayo Clinic as a "state of physical or emotional exhaustion that involves a sense of reduced accomplishment and loss of personal identity" — as an individual's problem. It's easy to imagine a meeting planner working on one too many events or a hotel salesperson handling one too many contracts crashing from the stress.

But the office itself can be a major contributing factor. As a matter of fact, the World Health Organization declared burnout an occupational illness back in 2019, even before the pandemic and its perfect storm of health, job and family stressors set in.

Diagnosis

It is incumbent upon companies to ensure that the workplace does not facilitate a burnout culture. So what part is your organization playing in this problem? What policies are causing stress for your team?

Here are some areas to ponder:

› Is the staff on call every weekend, even when they are not working on a mission-critical project?
› Do employees have well-defined duties?
› Do they have control over their work?
› Are workers adequately supported by the organization?
› Do employees feel acknowledged and appreciated for their hard work on a regular basis?
› Do department members regularly meet one-on-one or in small groups to discuss their experiences and ensure everyone has what they need to do an excellent job?
› Does management take the time to get to know employees, talk about their dreams and aspirations, their interests outside of work?

Treatment

If you're in a position to adjust the culture of your department, follow some of these strategies.

› **Know your own limits** – physically, mentally and emotionally. We often say yes to requests and then resent it later.
› **Create clear job descriptions.** Define and discuss priorities and deadlines to help people avoid being stretched too thin by nonessential tasks.
› **Set expectations for team members early and often.** Stay in touch with them to make sure everyone is on task and not overwhelmed.

Caring for your workers as well as helping them care for themselves are two critical components of creating a workplace that thrives. MC

Janice Litvin, author of Banish Burnout Toolkit will speak at Northstar Meetings Group's Destination West event in Denver May 11-13. Register at bit.ly/NMGdestwest.

SITUATIONAL ADJUSTMENT

An easy way to change to your behavior is to S-T-O-P:
» STOP
» TAKE A BREATH
» OBSERVE
» PROCEED

Stop gets you to pay attention to your thoughts or behavior. A calming breath engages the parasympathetic nervous system. Observing gets you to acknowledge rationally that you might be overreacting. And proceeding allows you to make a choice to continue, or to decide to change your state of mind and behavior.

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