



# How to Avoid Burnout

IN EIGHT SIMPLE, BUT NOT-SO EASY, STEPS

# Address what's going on inside



1

- We've all heard 'denial is a river in Egypt'. So, when you're ready to stop feeling overwhelmed, and take charge of your life again, the first step is to take an honest look inside. Do you feel peace? A sense of purpose and accomplishment? If the answer is "NO!" and instead you feel out-of-control, like you're running in circles all day, each day, but only treading water; then admit it. Say it out loud if you can. It's OK. Don't try to hide it from yourself. Honesty is the best place to start.

# Don't justify



2

- There's no partner, boss, kids, spouse, or mother-in-law voices allowed inside your head. So, don't be defensive. Be brave. Don't make excuses for yourself, or how you got here, or why you've chosen to stay here. Throw out all the reasons and decisions and circumstances that got you here. It doesn't really matter. Overwhelmed is where you are. (And most of us have been there. In fact, most of us have second homes there). Let go of the blame – both for yourself, and for others.

# Keep your emotions in check



3

- Pull yourself together, and then lock away your emotions. I know you're tired. But your fear, anger, sadness, frustration, failed expectations, and hurt feelings can't improve the situation. They only make it worse. Much worse. You have to let go of the emotions to move out of the vicious cycle. Start to deal with just the facts. Your emotions will eventually fall in line. And, until they do, you must disregard them.

# Stop playing the victim



4

- Take responsibility for where you are. While there may be circumstances beyond your control, your choices in response to them, have led you here. This is not your boss's fault. This is not because of the kids. You have avoided confrontation and let your boundaries fall apart. And it has gone on too long. And now you're stuck. Admit that you did this. Which means of course, that you can change it.

# It's not a binary question



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- You have options. Don't fall for a fool's question of 1) either things stay like they are or, 2) you lose your job/the kids won't get to play sports/you won't have any money, etc. (insert your specific catastrophe here). There are *always* more than 2 options. Look for them. Figure out multiple ways things could be different, and write them down. Could you delegate some tasks? Could some things wait a few months? Are all the activities necessary? Can you hire some help? Can someone else cover some of the work travel? Is there a carpool? Can a friend help out? Can you trade your skill for someone else's skill, that you desperately need?

# Have 'THE' conversation



6

- I know this is the hardest part for most people. But, it has to be done for you step back from the brink of insanity. Seriously. So, keep it short (less than 5 minutes, or just a one paragraph email). Be factual. No emotion or blame whatsoever. Tell whoever it is that has come to expect you to be superhuman on an ongoing basis, that you're human. Briefly state that in order to get some balance back in your life, you are readjusting your time and priorities, and they will experience some changes in the near future. You may need to first have the conversation with yourself. So that you believe it. And give yourself permission to make the changes. Then have that same conversation with your partner or your kids or your board.

# Take charge of your time



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- Now that you have graciously given a head's-up that things are going to be different. **MAKE THE CHANGE.** Make a list of your priorities, and ensure your time is aligned to them. Walk out of the office when you planned to. Don't volunteer to take on a new project. In fact, tell the boss/church/committee that you are overcommitted and need their understanding as you step down from one. Stop planning the renovation. Hire a trainer or arrange to meet a friend, so that your work-outs actually do happen. Tell the kids that if they want to do rowing at 04:30am, that you are willing to drive them two mornings a week, and they'll need to arrange transportation for the other three. Book lunch with a friend (and keep the appointment). Schedule a date in your partner's calendar and buy nonrefundable tickets.

Make sure that you are planning, and keeping, time for yourself. Whether it's to work-out, build friendships, explore the arts, or enjoy nature. Put it in your calendar, and **DO IT.**



# Firm up those boundaries



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- To keep from slipping back into the old habits, you need two things.
  1. Have some 'bumper' statements ready to deflect others' requests, and your own inner drive, to take on more than you should. If it helps, write them down. Say things like, "I'm really trying to do a better job with work-life balance. Will you help me by not asking me to take on things that will create more imbalance?" And don't give in. Remember how trapped you felt, and stick to your resolution.
  2. Your activities must be aligned to your new priorities. Don't slip. Get the sleep that you need. Keep booking those coffee catch-up's with friends. Don't cancel what you've set up, that provide you balance. Keep them. You're worth it.

We all have choices. Let's use them to live life fully!

For more information, contact [heidiunplugged@gmail.com](mailto:heidiunplugged@gmail.com)

