

BURNOUT RECOVERY: CREATING YOUR UNIQUE FORMULA

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We have been taught a fallacy when it comes to burnout. Actually, there are a couple; the first is that burnout is only connected to your work environment and only the removal of that environment can end burnout. Second is that if you create a strong wellness plan, you can avoid feelings of burnout. We experience burn events (activities or interactions that cause feelings of fatigue, that overwhelm, or are emotionally draining) every day. Some of these we can name and identify before they happen, and others are unexpected. We can avoid some of them, and while we may not have complete control over our work environment, we can learn how to react differently. We can strive to integrate our career into our lives.

One of the most important pieces to integrating your career into your life is to not have your career be your only passion in life. You should enjoy your work, but it should not be the only enjoyment you have in your day. Having a hobby, relationship, activity, ritual, or practice that can take priority of your time is important to give you a break from the work activities that take the bulk of your daily energy.

As we experience burnout, it is important to establish strong recovery practices. There are a few things to keep in mind for your own recovery practices. First, these do not have to take a considerable amount of time. Consider your routines throughout the day, is there something that you can add that can help you toward recentering yourself? Second, add play to your day. Play includes activities that are inviting,

bring joy, and reduce stress. Play can be a mid-day dance party, singing in your car, or playing a puzzle game on your phone. Third, create your comfort list. Your comfort list includes items or activities that bring you comfort and calm. Just as we comfort small children when they are upset, we also need to comfort ourselves when we are stressed and overwhelmed. Finally, you want to spend some self-reflection time creating your recovery formulas. Here are a few examples from my own burnout recovery journey.

Daily Recovery

Introverting + Music + No Interruptions = Recovery

For daily recovery, I need to have some time alone, music, and no phone notifications. At times, this may also include a physical activity of some kind, but not always. I find these recovery moments in the shower, during my drive to and from work, or during a workout. I need introverted time because, as a highly empathetic person, I need time to recover and sort my own feelings out from the emotions that I have taken on from others throughout the day.

Weekly Recovery

*Fitness + People + No Interruptions = Recovery
or People + Cocktail + Laughs = Recovery*

There are two things that I need at least on a weekly basis to hit my wellness stride, even better when I can achieve this more than once a week. I do need other humans for recovery; I gain energy from being around positive beings, laughing with others, by learning from others, and laughing at myself. Throughout the years, group fitness has

shown up in a number of different ways, from dance class, to Pure Barre, to aerial yoga, to most recently paddleboard yoga. My second formula recently has been a happy hour group over zoom. Pre-COVID, it was going out with friends or my partner. Laughter is probably the most important part of this formula and you need fun humans to achieve that. I am fortunate to have so many kind, funny, and honest humans in my life.

Occasional Recovery

Water + Sun + Nature = Recovery

This formula can be hard to achieve every day or every week for me, but I try to fit this in whenever I can. When I lived in Savannah, one of my favorite recovery practices was to pack up my car with all my beach necessities and head out to set up my spot at Tybee by 9 a.m. I would have the beach to myself for at least an hour, and by 3 p.m. when the crowds really started forming, I was ready to head home to shower and make dinner. These days offered a complete reset for me. Now I reach this formula by going paddleboarding in the river or lake or planning a trip where I can spend time on a beach or by a pool. With the pandemic, my backyard hammock serves as a substitute when I am not able to get to an actual waterfront. I always attempt to read while rocking back and forth but instead end up taking a nap, feeling more at peace when I wake up.

As you consider your own formulas, keep a few things in mind. The end result should be a feeling of relaxation or rejuvenation. It should include things that bring you joy or comfort. And finally, it should be unique to you and your needs. If you do not find cooking or baking to be relaxing and instead it brings you stress, it should not be a part of your recovery formula.

While we may not be able to avoid burnout, we can learn to approach it differently. We can identify, prepare, and recover.

Dr. Kate Steiner, is a Burnout Recovery Coach and founder of LIFT Wellness Consulting. She supports her clients from burnout to recovery by developing a self-reflective plan that identifies and prepares for burn events by addressing all areas of wellness. Holding a Master of Counseling and a Ph.D. in counselor education and supervision, her practice is grounded in the research-based Steiner Self-Reflective Sustainability and Wellness (SSRSW) model, published in the Oracle Research Journal. She has been a researcher in wellness and burnout for over 15 years and just recently left FSL after 17 years. Dr. Steiner is the author of "Burnout: A Guide for Every Professional to Identify, Prepare, and Recover their Joy." Her mission is to end the burnout cycle for professionals, so they are living happier, healthier lives.