

Do You Feel Burned Out?



Sometimes life can become overwhelming. After a person has experienced a long series of difficult life experiences, they reach the stage where they feel like they just can't take it anymore. They feel tired during the day and stimulants like coffee, caffeinated beverages and energy drinks don't help. They may also experience difficulty concentrating, remembering things and thinking clearly, something we commonly call brain fog.

In addition they are more easily upset emotionally. They may feel irritable and snap at loved ones, or they may burst into tears over little things. This may be accompanied by feeling chronically nervous or anxious. They may even become depressed.

What compounds the problem of these unproductive days is disturbed sleep. They may fall asleep from exhaustion only to wake up some hours later unable to go back to sleep. They then lie awake obsessing over their problems. They may also wake up repeatedly at night, suffer from disturbing dreams or even nightmares, then wake up still feeling tired.

If this sounds like you, or someone you know, this issue of *Sunshine Sharing* was written for you. It will explain what's happening when a person feels like this and, more importantly, what to do to rebuild that person's energy, drive and enthusiasm for life.

Welcome to the World of Burnout

People have called this chronically stressed state by many names. Old school Western doctors called it enervation. Modern medicine commonly calls it chronic fatigue syndrome or systemic exertion intolerance disease (SEID). Another popular name for it is Adrenal Fatigue Syndrome (AFS) or simply adrenal exhaustion. We are just going to call it *burnout*. Whatever you want to call it, burnout destroys a person's enjoyment in life. It also makes them more prone to infections, as well as many chronic and degenerative illness.

We can understand how chronic stress can cause burnout by reviewing the work of Dr. Hans Selye, a pioneer in researching the effects of stress. Dr. Selye's work suggests that there are three phases or stages of the stress reaction—the alarm phase, the resistance phase and the exhaustion phase. It's these second and third phases of stress we are referring to when we talk about burnout.

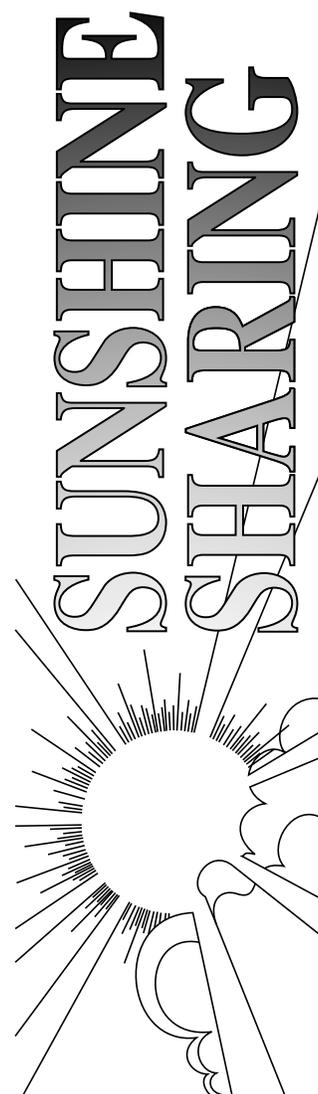
Phase One: The Alarm Phase

Everyone has experienced the alarm phase of stress. It happens when someone or something startles you, there are instantaneous and involuntary changes that take place in your body. These changes are commonly known as the fight-or-flight response, although there are actually three responses to this initial state of stress—fight, flight or freeze.

In the alarm phase, there is an instant heightening of sympathetic nervous system activity, which causes a flood of epinephrine to be released in the body. Epinephrine increases heart rate and blood pressure, shunts blood away from the skin to the muscles, inhibits digestive functions and otherwise prepares the body to take action in the



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Your guide to better health the natural way.

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Important Notice

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The Three Phases of Stress

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face of danger. It's a protective mechanism to help you overcome whatever situation you might be facing.

At the same time, under the influence of the hypothalamus and pituitary gland, the adrenals increase secretion of cortisol. Cortisol inhibits immune responses and inflammation. If the perceived danger passes quickly, the body rapidly enters the recovery phase, which we'll discuss later. If not, your body enters stage two of the stress reaction.



Phase Two: Resistance

Many times, the things that are triggering the stress response are ongoing such as relationship or financial problems. This causes the body to repeatedly go into the alarm phase with no adequate recovery time. The body is trying to get back to a normal, more relaxed state, but is unable to do so.

In the resistance phase, a person feels tired, but is having trouble making time for proper sleep or relaxation. Their sleep may begin to become disturbed and they may feel slightly ill, but have no clear disease. Their ability to concentrate and think clearly begins to be impaired. They also become more emotionally sensitive.

All of these symptoms are messages that the body needs down time, a break from the challenges and difficulties to experience some rest and relaxation (R&R). If this doesn't happen, and they continue to push themselves, they will enter the third stage of the stress reaction, exhaustion.

Phase Three: Exhaustion

In exhaustion, the body has become so drained and depleted from the lack of R&R that it loses its strength to continue. Without down time, the body can enter a state of constant alarm, where the person always feels on alert. This creates a chronic feeling of fear, anxiety and/or nervousness. It's like the internal switch that turns on the fight-or-flight reaction is stuck in the on position and won't turn off. This state of hyper vigilance makes it nearly impossible to relax and get the rest the body needs.



In this stage of stress, the person is chronically tired during the day, but unable to relax and get a good night's sleep. This vicious cycle of tired, unproductive days followed by nights of interrupted, unrefreshing sleep is very hazardous to a person's health.

The elevated sympathetic nervous system activity inhibits proper digestion of food and can cause all kind of digestive disturbances—gas, bloating, a hiatal hernia, constipation and diarrhea. Blood pressure and heart rate will also elevate, which increases the risk of heart disease.

The chronic demand for cortisol from the adrenal glands can result in either higher or lower levels of cortisol. When cortisol levels are higher, the body's ability to fight infection is reduced, which makes one more susceptible to catching colds or other infections. High cortisol can also damage the nervous system, particularly the hippocampus section of the brain. This causes your thinking and memory to become impaired. High cortisol can also burn up muscle tissue and increase fat deposition, making it difficult to maintain a healthy ratio of lean muscle mass to fat.

When low, the body's ability to regulate immune processes is impaired, which can result in autoimmune reactions like rheumatoid arthritis. Also when cortisol levels are low, the body has a difficult time regulating inflammation. The increased inflammation in the body contributes to heart disease, brain and nervous system disorders and many other chronic and degenerative diseases.

Stress Recovery

All stages of stress require a recovery period before the body can return to its normal equilibrium. After the alarm phase, a person typically needs a few minutes to a few hours to recover. It depends on how scared they were. Recovery typically involves having to stop, take a few deep breaths and allow the body to "shake off" the stress. This is because the body needs to discharge the high energy state of the alarm before it can relax again. Shaking off the stress typically involves involuntary trembling, expressing anger, laughing or crying.

Distress Remedy can decrease the recovery time after a stressful event. It helps a person more rapidly return to a calm and balanced state, which makes it an excellent remedy to keep in any first aid kit. It can also help with recovery from later stages of stress.

Recovery in the Resistance Phase

When the stress is ongoing and we've entered the resistance phase, we need to make a more deliberate effort in helping the body cope with the ongoing difficult circumstances. The temptation is to keep pushing ourselves, when what the body is telling us is we need to deliberately *make* time for stress recovery.

There's a story about the woodcutter who was becoming less and less productive every day, even though he was working harder and harder. The problem was that he wasn't stopping to take time to sharpen his saw. This is a perfect analogy for what is happening to a person in the resistance phase of stress—they are pushing harder to try to overcome the challenges they are experiencing, when they need to pause and take time to sharpen their saw by planning for sleep and R&R.

Get a Good Night's Sleep

The average person needs 7-9 hours of sleep each day and they must have this, or more, to recover from chronic stress. To promote better sleep, set a regular bedtime and do not watch TV, use a computer, smart phone or tablet for at least one hour before bed. The body produces the sleep hormone melatonin under the influence of darkness and staring at a source of light inhibits your ability to go to sleep. It also helps to completely darken your room

or to wear eye masks to block out the light. You can help restore your body's sleep rhythm by taking **Melatonin Extra** for a few days.

If your sleep is disturbed by bad dreams or frequent waking, a good remedy to consider is **Nervous Fatigue Formula**. This Chinese formula is for a loss of "heart yin," a state of depleted fire. Classical indications for this formula match the previously described symptoms for burnout. Nervous Fatigue Formula improves sleep, while increasing energy during the day. It also helps reduce anxiety, boost immune responses, protect the liver from chemicals and increase concentration and sex drive.

Plan Time for Relaxation

In addition to sleep, it's also important to set aside some time to do things that help you relax. For instance, schedule a massage or a trip to the spa. You can also listen to relaxing music. Avoid movies and TV shows that depict violence and music that is loud and stimulating. Also avoid extreme sports, thrilling amusement park rides and other activities that get epinephrine (adrenaline) pumping.



One great way to relax is to take an Epsom Salt bath with your favorite essential oils. Put one to two cups of Epsom Salts into a warm bath and add about 10-20 drops of a relaxing essential oil mixed with a teaspoonful of **Sunshine Concentrate** (so it mixes with the bath water). Great oils to use include **lavender**, **rose**, **ylang ylang** and **jasmine**. You can even light some candles. Soak for at least 15-20 minutes.

Feed the Nerves

The nutritional reserves of the body are taxed when the body is under a lot of stress. Unfortunately, it is often more difficult to eat right when we are stressed. Many of us turn to comfort foods, like sweets, pastries, fried foods, chips, ice cream and chocolate during these periods. These foods are high in calories and low in the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients the body really needs.

To speed recovery avoid sugar and all refined carbohydrates. Focus the diet on vegetables and high quality proteins, and don't forget to consume some good fats like butter, coconut oil, avocados or nuts. It can also help to take something like **Nutri-Calm** or **Balanced B Complex**. Nutri-Calm contains B-complex vitamins, vitamin C, herbs and other substances to both calm and feed the nervous system. As a result, it can help a person feel more calm and energized at the same time.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about chronic fatigue, adrenal fatigue, stress and burnout contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

The Comprehensive Guide to Nature's Sunshine Products, 6th edition by Steven Horne and Kimberly Balas

Central Nervous System Disruptions and Adrenal Fatigue Syndrome by Michael Lam and Justin Lam

Natural Health, Natural Medicine by Andrew Weil

Engage in Moderate Exercise

Physical activity is helpful for reducing stress, but the best activities are ones that are relaxing, such as walking, swimming, tai chi or yoga. These activities help to discharge the energy of stress without being overly stressful themselves. Extreme sports or highly competitive activities, on the other hand, can increase feelings of stress and may result in a feeling of extreme fatigue after engaging in them. This is particularly likely to happen when a person starts to enter the exhaustion phase. The key is to keep the activity pleasant and relaxing.

Use Adaptogens to Modulate Stress

The class of herbs known as adaptogens can be very helpful in coping with chronic stress. These herbs help to restore balance to the body's biochemistry, normalizing the stress responses. Nervous Fatigue Formula has adaptogenic properties, but there are other options to consider.

One is **Eleuthero root**, the first adaptogen identified. It can improve sleep, energy, mental concentration and performance. Where the immune system is compromised from chronic stress, **AdaptaMax** may be a good option. It not only helps reduce stress responses, it also boosts immune function.

Adaptogens can help, but don't make the mistake of using them like stimulants to keep pushing yourself. Instead, use them as tools to help you relax and get the sleep you need to really recover.

Recovering From the Exhaustion Phase

When a person reaches the exhaustion stage, the alarm state has become their biochemical norm and it requires more effort to



get the body to enter the recovery phase. When people enter this phase, modern medicine has little to offer besides sleeping pills or drugs for anxiety or depression. Not only do these symptomatic treatments fail to help to reset of the body's biochemical balance, they actually tend to throw the system even more out of balance.

Recovering from burnout requires doing everything we've already discussed for a longer period of time. It takes a few days or even weeks of recovery to restore balance during the resistance phase, but recovery from the exhaustion phase typically takes several months at least. People often inhibit their recovery by starting to push themselves again as soon as they start to feel a little better. Don't make this mistake. Stick with the program of self-care for at least a month or two past the time you start to feel better.

It's especially important to learn how to let go of things and focus on recovery. Practicing meditation to help calm the mind can be very helpful. Much of our stress comes from an inability to live life in the present. We dwell too much on the past and worry too much about the future. Learning to take life one moment at a time, while trusting a Higher Power will take care of the rest really helps to reduce feelings of stress, even when there are a lot of difficult things happening in life.

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Feeling Tired, Stressed, Overwhelmed?

Sometimes the stress of life starts to take its toll on our energy and our health and we start to feel burned out. Our drive, enthusiasm, joy and ambition are gone. We're stressed, tired and overwhelmed. This issue of Sunshine Sharing discusses what happens that makes us feel burned out, and what we can do to recover our energy and enthusiasm for life.



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Bodywork, such as massage therapy, Rolfing, chiropractic care or any other technique that helps one to release tension from the muscles is also extremely helpful.

Completely avoiding caffeine and all other stimulants is essential to making a full recovery from burnout. It's also smart to avoid all refined sugars and simple carbohydrates. Eating lots of vegetables, especially green vegetables will also help.

Supplements for Burnout

Adrenal Support is often helpful for people who are burned out, especially if they have also been diagnosed with PTSD. It helps to rebuild and rest the adrenal glands. It can be taken instead of or in addition to Nervous Fatigue Formula. If body temperature is low and there are other signs of low thyroid, take both Adrenal Support and **Thyroid Support**, one of each twice daily.

Magnesium helps the nerves relax, but also aids energy production. When a person is tired, has tense muscles and little things are getting on their nerves, they are probably deficient in magnesium. Start with two **Magnesium Complex** (400 mg.) each day, one in the morning and one in the evening. If this isn't enough to help you feel more relaxed, then gradually increase the dose. Most people can easily tolerate four to six capsules (800-1200 mg.) per day. If your bowels become loose you are taking too much—cut back to a lower amount.

There are a few other nutrients to consider, too. **Pantothenic acid** can often help to replenish exhausted adrenal glands and nerves. People with burnout may also be deficient in **vitamin B12**. Supplementation may help, but often B12 shots prescribed by a holistically minded physician work better.