



# Introduction

**Most of us get stressed at work at some point. Burnout occurs as a result of sustained stress that never subsides. This is due to prolonged periods of intensity and excessive demands on energy, strength and resources.**

Herbert Freudenberger coined the term in the 1970s. He recognised that professions which involve a strong sense of morality or purpose, and

# How might burnout affect FE teaching?

## Physical and emotional impact

Education Support's report 'Supporting Staff Wellbeing in Higher Education' found that **emotional exhaustion and burnout in the FE sector was high, impacting over 60% of colleagues**. FE staff reported physical symptoms such as feeling fatigued and suffering from frequent headaches to emotional impacts, experiencing self-doubt or a lack of creativity.

## Pre-emptive performance

A constant pressure to improve, along with the demands still lingering from the COVID pandemic will also affect staff working in FE settings in different ways. In the above report, **62% of further education staff reported regularly working over 40 hours a week and 21% working more than 50 hours per week**.

## Staff retention issues

Education Support's 'Teacher Wellbeing Index 2022' found that **FE Staff were the highest percentage (61%) that had actively sought to change or leave their current job**. The reality is when staff reach burnout and don't receive the support they need, leaving their role may feel like the only option available to them. But with the right support and spotting signs early, it is possible to turn things around and keep valuable staff members in their roles. However, we know leaders have some of the highest levels of stress in the workforce and they need to balance their wellbeing alongside the needs of staff. Put simply, it is not possible to help others effectively while leaders are struggling themselves.

# Warning signs

## For Individual

Eva Szigethy (2014) proposed that there were three stages of burnout and that it is important to identify when you are experiencing signs from stage one as these are easier to recover from than the more severe symptoms in stage two and three.

### Recognise the signs:

#### Stage one (sporadic)

- Mental fatigue at the end of the day
- Feeling unappreciated
- Feeling of dread
- Feeling detached
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## Set healthy boundaries

If you suspect you are experiencing or heading into burnout, it might be time to consider your boundaries at work. Remember, setting realistic boundaries at





with your own priorities is okay.

### Talking to colleagues about their mental health in FE

settings' if you are concerned about a colleague who might be suffering from symptoms of burnout.

### Tips for setting boundaries in FE settings might look like:

#### Setting reminders

Very practically, an alarm on your phone will help you remember to take a break or stop working at

**Questions to ask yourself when establishing your boundaries:**

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1

### Move

Run, swim, dance (whatever you enjoy – the aim is NOT to train for the Olympics!). In their book, **Burnout: solve your stress cycle**, the Nagoskis note that movement is 'your first line of attack in the battle against burnout'. 20-30 minutes a day is ideal, but anything is better than nothing!

2

### Social interaction

Talking to colleagues can help boost our mood and reassure us that the world is a safe place to live. Laughing together—and even just reminiscing about the times you've laughed together – increases relationship satisfaction

3

### Connect with others

A twenty second hug with someone you hold dear has been shown to lower stress levels as much as exercise. And it doesn't have to be physical affection – simply speaking to someone with whom you share a special connection can make a huge difference to how you feel

4

### Breathe

Deep, slow breaths can help regulate the stress response. For a simple, practical exercise you can try

- breathe in to a slow count of five
- hold that breathe for five
- exhale for a slow count of ten
- pause for another count of five

5

### Sleep

It can be difficult to sleep when we are feeling stressed. But getting a full, uninterrupted night sleep wherever possible can be a great tool in the fight against stress

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### Cry or share how you're feeling

There is no shame in crying! Crying may not change the situation that caused the stress, but allowing yourself to cry after a stressful event is proven to help by releasing feel good hormones. It can help you relieve physical as well as emotional difficulties

7

### Get creative

Engaging in a creative activity you enjoy today – wherever it be music, art or sport has been shown to lead to more energy, excitement, and enthusiasm tomorrow.





## Getting support when you need it

Good working relationships are important when identifying and supporting those with burnout. If you notice that you, or a colleague, are starting to feel any of the symptoms of burnout remember it is important to reach out for support:

- **FE staff can call the Education Support helpline** open **24/7** for immediate, confidential emotional support on: **08000 562 561**
- **It can also help to reach out to family and friends** to go through the **early burnout prevention tips** and put practices in place to intervene
- **Managers or occupational health** will be able to work with you to see what help is available i.e. flexible working might be suitable for a time. It might help to make plan or write down what you want to say before any meetings
- **Go to your GP – you can ask for an emergency appointment**
- **If you need immediate support** and are experiencing a mental health crisis there are also short-term crisis services available such as walk-in **Samaritan** branches
- **For a colleague in crisis - call 999** or they can go to **A&E**.

## Most important thing to do

The most important step in recovering from burnout is to give yourself enough time and allow yourself to be human.

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