

Early Warning Signs of Burnout Checklist

Burnout rarely happens overnight. It usually begins with small warning signs that are easy to ignore. Tick any that you have noticed over the last month.

Physical Signs

- Feeling tired even after a full night's sleep
- Waking up already exhausted
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Frequent headaches
- Increased muscle tension or aches
- Digestive issues
- More frequent illnesses or infections
- Changes in appetite
- Increased reliance on caffeine, sugar or stimulants
- Feeling physically drained by everyday tasks

Emotional Signs

- Feeling overwhelmed by small problems
- Increased irritability or impatience
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Anxiety or excessive worrying
- Feeling tearful more often
- Loss of motivation
- Feeling trapped or stuck
- Reduced enjoyment in activities you once enjoyed
- Feeling disconnected from others
- A sense that you are running on empty

Mental Signs

- Difficulty concentrating
- Forgetfulness
- Struggling to make decisions
- Racing thoughts
- Constantly thinking about work or responsibilities
- Reduced creativity
- Feeling mentally exhausted
- Difficulty switching off

Behavioural Signs

- Withdrawing from friends or family
- Avoiding tasks
- Procrastination
- Working longer hours but achieving less
- Neglecting self-care
- Increased use of alcohol, food, social media or other distractions
- Feeling guilty when resting
- Cancelling plans because you have no energy

Your Score

0–10 ticks: Mild signs of stress – continue prioritising recovery.

11–20 ticks: Moderate stress load – take action now to prevent progression.

21+ ticks: Significant burnout risk – recovery and support should become a priority.

Two Simple Countermeasures

1. The One-Minute Exhale Reset

- Breathe in gently through your nose for a count of 4
- Breathe out slowly through your nose or mouth for a count of 6–8
- Repeat for one minute

A longer exhale helps activate the body's calming nervous system and can reduce stress levels within minutes.

2. The Daily Recovery Question

At the end of each day ask yourself:

What did I do today that genuinely helped me recover?

If the answer is 'nothing,' choose one small recovery activity before bed:

- Gentle walk
- Stretching
- Reading
- Bath
- Early night
- Time outdoors
- Breathing practice
- Talking to someone supportive

Recovery is not a reward for finishing everything. Recovery is what allows you to continue.

Personal Reflection

The three warning signs I most commonly experience are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The first thing I will do when I notice these signs is:
