

YOU'RE OUT!

“Worn Out” and “stressed out” are phrases often heard in our work-a-day world. But I want to talk about “burnout.” If either of the phrases characterize us, we need to recognize, regardless what we call it, that we are “out”! And if we are “out” of it we need help.

What brings about “burnout”? A friend of mine sent me this Work Philosophy that MIT put out with tongue in cheek. Does it sound like it was written for your job?

1. Work until physical pain forces you to stop. Then take Tylenol.
2. If you feel something is dragging you down, suppress these thoughts. This is a weakness. Drink more coffee.
3. Always attempt to do everything. After all, you are Superman. Get some more criptite.
4. Never say “no” to anything. It shows weakness...Never put off until tomorrow what you can do at midnight.
5. Delegating is a sign of weakness. If you want it done right, do it yourself.
6. Stop thinking about your own problems. You're the head honcho. You can't have problems.
7. A balanced life is a myth. Don't be a fool: the only thing that matters is work. All play and no work makes ... I forgot. Now my mind is going.
8. Your body serves your mind, your mind serves the Institution. Push the mind and the body will follow. Drink Mountain Dew.”

If you have operated on the above philosophy, you probably are not around to read this – you've already “checked out”! However, there is another cause of burnout. Emile Calliet, the French mystic and professor of Philosophy, spoke often about the condition we commonly refer to as burnout. He described it as “a leakage of spiritual power.”

He told his students this condition was caused not by external pressure, but by internal deterioration. I know this has been the case in my life. I have noticed that external pressure is not nearly as overwhelming when I am where I should be spiritually. However, during those times when I have drifted from fellowship with God, the smallest inconvenience can immobilize me. The time I spend in prayer and worship is my protection from spiritual leakage. It gives me strength to face challenges I could never face on my own. What's more, it serves to remind me to rely on God throughout the day, instead of trying foolishly to face the challenges before—both big and little—on my own.

The Psalmist must have recognized this as well, when he wrote: “I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth.” (Psalm 121:1-2) We don't have to handle things on our own. The harder we try to do it ourselves, the faster we burn out. And it's so unnecessary. God is willing to be our source of strength.

In our hurried and harried world, we see “burn outs” all around us. A couple of years ago, an issue of 'Sports Illustrated' featured on its cover three prominent men in the world of sports—all of them highly successful coaches: the manager of the Atlanta Braves; the football coach for the University of Michigan; and the head coach of the Seattle Seahawks. The feature article

told how, in a period of less than two weeks, each of these men experienced a mighty fall. One was arrested for beating his wife; one was arrested for driving while intoxicated; and one was arrested for disorderly conduct in a restaurant. The amazing thing about all of this is that each of these men was still moving forward in his respective career, and each of them had a bright future.

This kind of behavior simply wasn't consistent with the type of leadership skill they had demonstrated. So why were they willing to risk everything with this out-of-control behavior? Maybe it's because success gives us the delusion that nothing can hurt us. Maybe (and most likely) it's because "burnout" and career pressure had caused these talented men to reach a breaking point.

In the midst of the stress and "burnout" that we all seem to face from time-to-time, we need to keep in mind the promise Jesus gave his followers: "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30)

Even Jesus took time off! "And He said to them, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat." (Mark 6:31) If we don't come apart once in a while and rest, we will come apart!

Remember this, whether you wear out, rust out, drop out, strike out or burn out – YOU'RE OUT!

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