

PSYCHOLOGICAL BURNOUT DURING THE PANDEMIC & HOW TO IDENTIFY THEM

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Are you exhausted to a point that even replying to your friend's texts seems like chore? Does it feel like even your favourite hobbies don't interest you anymore? This article may be able to explain why you feel the way you do.

The textbook defines burnout as the state of emotional, psychological and physical exhaustion caused due to prolonged or repeated stress. With the pandemic on its second wave and most of us being restricted to the walls of our house for months, frustration and exhaustion is rather bound to happen. Many people have lost their loved ones and some have lost their source of income. Parties, get-togethers, libraries or any form of mental relief have come to a complete stop. People are being deprived of being to live their passions out in the world. Humans are social animals and the extreme exhaustion is a direct result of this deprivation. All work and no play, is as pointless and unsatisfying as all play and no work.

Another reason that the pandemic contributes to burnout are the feelings of uncertainty that

Keeping in mind that burnout is not immediate and instead a gradual process that builds with stress; here are some of the clear signs of burnout-

1. Lack of enthusiasm and energy to perform the simplest of tasks;
2. Feelings of negativity towards your work;
3. Inability to sustain concentration on a particular task or chore;
4. Feelings of detachment from close ones;
5. Either not able to sleep at all or sleeping for too long.
6. Feeling like 'you don't want to do anything'.

Burnout also need not be a "stage" that one encounters; sometimes one can experience a burnout at the end of the day or on a weekend or it can happen after coming across some bad news. Unfortunately, the pandemic has its frequent share of bad news and disastrous mishappens that is bound to increase the chances of individuals experiencing a burnout.

It is important to understand that the pandemic is not going to end anytime soon. Hence it is our responsibility to adapt to this lifestyle; so that it does not take a toll on us in the long run. One way to prevent ourselves from being exhausted is by making it a habit to gain enough input. In a famous article by Nicolas Cole, he states that burnout is the result of a lack of input. According to him, during this challenging time, it is essential to separate each output activity with small input activities.

For example, after a zoom meeting, take some time for yourself and reflect. Here. the zoom meeting is your output and the reflection time is the input that helps you recharge. The lack of this input is one of

the main reasons that most of us get exhausted during these unprecedented times. We excessively exert ourselves whether it is for school, college or work, without pausing for some “input” time.

Another essential habit, especially during the current situation is practising self-care behaviours. Prioritize sleep and avoid staying up late as much as possible. Monitor your junk food consumption and make sure to have a balance. When one is exhausted, it can be hard to find motivation to take care of one’s mental and physical health. This why it is important to keep a list of things that one needs, in order to replenish themselves not just physically, but also emotionally, mentally and socially. Such a list will help us to schedule our days and give it more structure. Completing the tasks on the list will reinforce positive feelings and drive us to accomplish more.

It is equally important to not invalidate your burnout during this time; PRB (Pandemic-related burnout) is a unique form of burnout with significantly distinct causes and effects. One of the reasons that sets PRB apart from other forms of burnout is the fact that it is difficult to recognize. This is because several symptoms of PRB such as heightened anxiety, lack of motivation, etc have been normalized during the pandemic. The normalization can be seen as the result of a large population being affected by the burnout. Most of the individuals have accepted these feelings as something that ‘have’ to adjust to, and is demanded to do so by the circumstance.

Lastly, make it a point to celebrate even the smallest of victories. If anything causes you unnecessary stress or anxiety, keep your distance from it. There is no shame in saying ‘no’ once in a while and prioritizing your well-being. Catch up with your family and friends whenever possible. The negative effects of social media are nothing new, and spending hours on such apps can result in addiction. Like any other form of addiction, it will interfere with your daily life in several harmful ways. The unrealistic expectations advertised by influencers, whether is that of body or other achievements can cause distress and anxiety in individuals. Therefore, monitor your social media usage and take breaks whenever necessary.

We all want the pandemic to end, but for as long as it lasts it is our duty to take care of ourselves and nourish our mind as well as our body. If at any point in time you feel like you are unable to do so, ask for help. Similarly, if you see others struggling, help them out. Be clear about what you want to carry forward once we all emerge from this situation. Let us ‘live’ through this pandemic without letting our mental health deteriorate.

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