

ENCOURAGEMENT
UNDERSTANDING HOPE
INSPIRATION RELAXATION
CARE **STRESS**
HAPPINESS SPECIALIST
FREEDOM PLEASURE RELIEF
CONFIDENCE EXHILARATION
ACCOMPLISHMENT
STIMULATING LIGHTENING
COMFORT CLEAN REVITALISING
OPTIMISM PLEASURE
WHOLENESS SOOTHING
QUALITY CARE PROTECTION
SUPPORT WELLBEING VIGOR
HAPPINESS VITALITY REST
GUIDANCE TRUST HELP
DEVELOPMENT NOURISHING
HOPE HEALTH LOVE
REFRESHING STIMULATING
HEALING AND RELAXATION
SANCTUARY ENERGY
STRENGTH EDUCATION SAFE
ASSIST MAINTAIN AID
CARE PRIORY

Taking the strain out of stress

Throughout your life, you'll suffer from stress. How you cope and respond will affect your mental and physical health. This leaflet outlines the causes and symptoms of stress, and how you can reduce its effects.

Why do we need some stress?

Stress is part of everyday life. Situations and your ambitions create stress, but it brings out your best and keeps you alert. However, too much stress can drive you to 'burnout'.

What is burnout?

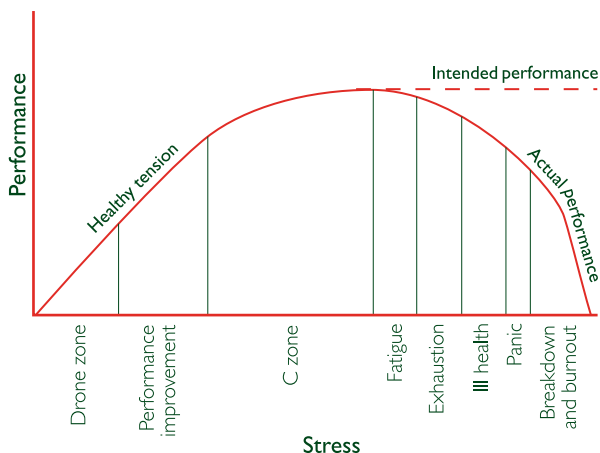
Burnout is a condition that develops when you work too hard for too long in a high-pressure environment. You become physically and emotionally exhausted.

Who does burnout affect?

Burnout can affect anyone at any age, and not just high-powered executives. However, over-conscientious perfectionists are most likely to suffer burnout. They are highly competitive and impatient. They've got high expectations of themselves and of others, but cannot share out work and responsibility. They're used to being in control, and are unlikely to ask for help when things go wrong.

When does stress affect our performance?

The 'human function curve' shows how stress affects our performance and can lead to burnout.



Zones of the human function curve from drone zone to burnout.

SOOTHING RELAXATION REVITALISING ENERGY HOPE HEALING AND SANCTUARY PEACE

The drone zone

With little to challenge you, you'll be uncommitted, sluggish and bored.

Performance improving

With some stress, your performance and job satisfaction will improve.

The 'C' zone

In this ideal state, you'll be full of energy, totally focused and find work effortless. You'll be cool, calm and collected.

The fatigue zone

If you allow stress to build up unchecked, your performance will begin to decline sharply. You may become irritable and overuse caffeine and alcohol, causing insomnia (difficulty sleeping) and aggression. Without rest, tiredness can lead to exhaustion.

The exhaustion zone

Your performance will continue to decline, and you'll become more aggressive and resentful. Often, you will use alcohol to tackle your insomnia.

The ill-health zone

Your physical health will suffer, leading to mental-health problems.

The panic zone

You'll now believe that things are out of control. You'll feel unorganised and nervous, and may even experience panic attacks. Any extra pressure can now lead to breakdown and burnout.

Breakdown and burnout

You may now be reluctant to go to work, feel constantly tired due to insomnia and agitation. It can cause clinical depression, which brings with it the risk of suicide. Road accidents, marital breakdown, alcoholism and drug addiction are common.

"The 'old me' used to thrive under pressure. I took short lunch hours and worked a lot of overtime. Now I feel a general nervousness, and if anybody upsets me I'm likely to erupt like a volcano. My self-confidence has been shattered, and I've lost all my interest and enthusiasm. I only feel resentment and despair."

What are the signs of burnout?

Symptoms of burnout include:

- insomnia leading to tiredness;
- irritability or outbursts of anger;
- depression;
- having too much caffeine or alcohol;
- low productivity accompanied by feelings of low achievement, regular absence and a high sickness rate;
- being accident-prone;
- being cynical and defensive, and finding fault, and
- headaches, backache, indigestion, weight loss or gain, shortness of breath, regular or lingering colds.

What are the physical signs of burnout?

Too much stress and burnout can lead to:

- ulcers;
- irritable bowel syndrome;
- high blood pressure;
- angina, heart attacks and strokes;
- migraines;
- drug and alcohol addiction;
- asthma, and
- diabetes.

How is stress and burnout treated?

The effects of stress will vary between individuals. For example, you could be suffering from depression or drug addiction, so you may need a short course of medication. You may be offered therapy to help you change your attitudes and behaviour, and to help you develop a lifestyle and strategies for coping better with stress. You should try to avoid stressful people and situations, and you may even need a period away from work.

Self help

There are several ways in which you can reduce the effects of stress.

- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink. Men should not drink more than 21 units a week, and women no more than 14 units, with two alcohol-free days. One unit equals one small glass of wine, one pub measure of spirits or half a pint of beer.
- Reduce your caffeine intake. Caffeine causes anxiety, restlessness, irritability, palpitations and headaches. As little as 150 milligrams of caffeine a day (about two cups of coffee) can create these symptoms.

**COMFORT CLEAN REVITALISING
OPTIMISM PLEASURE**

- Get enough sleep. Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants, so avoid them within six hours of bedtime. Instead, drink a hot milky drink before bedtime. In the evening, avoid fatty foods and instead eat meals that are rich in protein and carbohydrate. If you worry at bedtime, write down your problems and possible solutions after your evening meal. It will help you relax and put things into perspective.
- Exercising for over 20 minutes, three days a week, reduces the levels of adrenaline released by stress, and encourages deep sleep. (However, avoid strenuous physical exercise within two hours of bedtime.)
- Meditation is good for your health. It recharges your tired brain, lowers blood pressure, heart rate and cholesterol, and reduces anxiety. Try yoga, progressive muscular relaxation, the Alexander technique, autogenic training or listening to gentle music. Try meditation for 20 minutes, twice a day.
- Short breaks are better than long holidays, helping you avoid pressure building up before you go and a mountain of work to come back to.
- Pets can be calming, and give you unconditional love and affection.
- Get enough sleep. Sleeping pills are unnecessary if you can change your lifestyle.
- If you're ill, don't ignore it. Go and see your doctor or take time off work.
- Avoid conflicts with other people.
- Learn to accept what you cannot change. To ignore this only leads to unhappiness and bitterness.
- Plan ahead to avoid too much pressure building up.
- Walk away from stressful situations.
- Spend time with people who are rewarding rather than critical and judgmental.
- Practice controlled breathing using the lower part of your lungs. On the first breath in and out count one, and repeat until you reach the 10th breath in and out, then count back down. Repeating this technique for several minutes will help you relax and free your mind of any worries.
- Finally, remember that a balanced life is the best way to overcome burnout.

Recommended reading

'Stress management' by Kevin Gournay

Finding help

Contacting your GP is often the easiest way to get help and further treatment. He or she may offer you counselling or dietary advice, or refer you to a specialist for further assessment. This may lead to outpatient treatment or, if more serious, day or inpatient treatment. As a day or inpatient, you might be offered massage, aromatherapy and reflexology.

If you're worried about talking to your GP, you can:

- consider writing down your concerns and questions;
- take a friend or family member with you;
- see another doctor in the practice; or
- join a new GP practice.

The type of professional support offered will depend on the services that are available in your area and the arrangements that your primary care trust (PCT) have with other health authorities or private providers. Treatment for stress is also available privately through the Priory Group.

If you feel that you or a close relative are affected by stress and would like help or more information, you can ask your GP or contact any of the following organisations.

International Stress Management Association UK

01179 697 284
(www.isma.org.uk)

Depression Alliance

0845 123 23 20
(www.depressionalliance.org)

NHS Direct (England and Wales)

0845 4647
(www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

NHS 24 (Scotland)

08454 242424
(www.nhs24.com)

The Samaritans

08457 90 90 90
(www.samaritans.co.uk)

Priory

0845 4 PRIORY
0845 4 774679
(www.priorygroup.com)

If you are interested in receiving treatment from us, your GP will be able to refer you.

If you or your relative have private medical insurance, your insurer will probably insist that your GP refers you to us.

RELAXATION SUPPORT CO
STIMULATING VIGOR EXH

**COMFORT REVITALISING
INSPIRATION CLEAN
ENCOURAGEMENT
FREEDOM PLEASURE RELIEF**

Why should I choose Priory?

Our service

At Priory, our committed and professional staff provide the highest standards of care, understanding and service for everyone. This service brings hope and confidence, allowing our patients to take control of their lives within a safe and secure environment.

Expertise and innovation

Through our close links with the public and private sectors, we've developed the expertise and innovation to offer consistent and successful treatment. And, as Europe's leading independent provider of specialist mental health, neuro-rehabilitation and special education services, we bring experience and an excellent reputation.

This document has been edited by
Dr Christopher Mayer MBBCh FRCPsych, with the help of
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Crystal Mark applies to wording only.



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The Priory Hospital Bristol

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Phone: 0117 952 5255 Fax: 0117 952 5552

The Priory Hospital Chelmsford

Stump Lane, Springfield Green, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 7SJ
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The Priory Hospital Glasgow

38-40 Mansionhouse Road, Glasgow, G41 3DW
Phone: 0141 636 6116 Fax: 0141 636 5151

The Priory Hospital Hayes Grove

Prestons Road, Hayes, Bromley, Kent, BR2 7AS
Phone: 020 8462 7722 Fax: 020 8462 5028

The Priory Hospital North London

Grovelands House, The Bourne, Southgate, London, N14 6RA
Phone: 020 8882 8191 Fax: 020 8447 8138

The Priory Clinic Nottingham

Ransom Road, Nottingham, NG3 5GS
Phone: 0115 9693 388 Fax: 0115 9693 381

The Priory Hospital Preston

Rosemary Lane, Bartle, Preston, Lancashire, PR4 0HB
Phone: 01772 691 122 Fax: 01772 691 246

The Priory Hospital Roehampton

Priory Lane, Roehampton, London, SW15 5JJ
Phone: 020 8876 8261 Fax: 020 8392 2632

The Priory Hospital Southampton

Hythe Road, Marchwood, Southampton, SO40 4WU
Phone: 023 8084 0044 Fax: 023 8020 7554

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The Priory Hospital Woking

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