



Your People Are *Beyond* Burned Out

Here is how you can help right now

The New Burnout

As well-being leaders, we often talk about “burnout” in the abstract to describe declining performance and productivity in the face of an overwhelming workload or work stress. But is that a sufficient definition in the context of a global pandemic? Both the cause (workload and stress) and effect (declining performance) seem insufficient to describe the magnitude of our present circumstances.

We are well beyond traditional notions of burnout.

To help employees who are struggling to cope with the multiple stressors put upon them by COVID-19, we must start with a better, more expansive definition of burnout. Furthermore, we must broaden the scope of both the causes and effects of burnout to consider factors beyond work. Only then can we bring a holistic solution to bear on a problem that can no longer be simply discussed in the narrow context of work.

Pre 2020, Burnout could be described as declining productivity caused by overwork or stress.

Before the COVID pandemic, burnout may have been simply described as “declining productivity caused by overwork or stress.” But implied in this definition is a narrow focus on the work context. For example, likely, many people are currently becoming less productive in situations where their workload is manageable and workplace stressors are minimal. In cases such as these, work may even be a temporary escape from the primary stressors a person is experiencing.

To be clear, burnout is a much bigger problem than ever before, the causes are more varied and significant than workload and the effects are more serious than poor performance. We offer a new, more accurate definition of burnout for the pandemic era.

The new burnout – The physical or mental collapse caused by constant uncertainty, change, and stress in multiple life contexts.

The Root Cause of Burnout

There is cause, and then there is root cause. Simply put, a “cause” is something that happens over a specific period of time that leads to an effect. Stress is one cause that leads to the effect of burnout. But “root cause” is a persistent condition that allows the more obvious and observable causes to occur. It may be tempting to view COVID-19 as the root cause of our current burnout epidemic. However, when it comes to stress, any external factor that is beyond our control is insufficient to describe the persistent condition that ultimately leads to physical or mental collapse. In other words, many external factors may be causes of burnout, but the root cause is something internal (and deeply personal) to each of us.

The true root cause of burnout is a lack of resilience.

Contrary to popular belief, that doesn't mean people aren't tough enough. Instead, it means that their current life experience is not aligned with their expectations for how life should be. And they don't know how to get it there.

Resilience is your employees' most important skill.

Whether you know it or not, resilience is your employees' most important skill (especially in times like these). And whether they know it or not, they already have it. They just need to take steps to unlock that resilience. The job doesn't end there, though, because resilience is like a muscle: If you want it to be ready when you need it, you can't just work it out a few times and forget about it for a year.

Resilience is about more than protecting people from negatives such as burnout or stress. It's about helping them find positives and taking action—so they can thrive in a rapidly changing and challenging world. It's an idea we call “active resilience.” And it has the potential to change everything. Through active resilience, the focus turns to aligning one's values with the current state of their life – and the idea that their personal and professional satisfaction is directly related to that alignment. And it all boils down to taking personal responsibility for their life satisfaction, rather than becoming a victim to circumstances.



“Resilience is about more than protecting people from negatives such as burnout or stress. It's about helping them find positives and taking action—so they can thrive in a rapidly changing and challenging world.”



Your People Will Continue to Experience Burnout – Unless You Help Them Help Themselves

Building resilience isn't easy, and we won't pretend that it is. But it is something everyone can achieve (even in the face of a global pandemic). First, though, people need to admit a few hard truths:

- Happiness and well-being aren't the responsibility of the employer.
- It isn't the responsibility of a spouse, family, or friends.
- In the grand scheme of things, it's never about what's happening in the world or what anybody else does. It's about the person owning it.

For someone to be their best self even in times of change and difficulty, they must shift away from an attitude of “bad things happen to me.” They must move toward a place where they take control and ownership of what happens in their lives, and understand the impact those events have on what they value most.

Still, your organization needs to do something: In a Deloitte survey, almost 69% of respondents said their employers were not doing enough to prevent or alleviate burnout, and 21% said their company wasn't doing anything at all.¹ At Aduro, we've found the best way to prevent burnout is to give your people the knowledge and tools to do it themselves—that is, to put their lives back in alignment with what matters to them. That's what resilience is all about. And if the lack of resilience is the root cause of burnout, we need resilience now more than ever.

But it's also important to understand that most people won't engage with the knowledge and tools you provide them with unless the importance of well-being and resilience is elevated to the level of a strategic transformation initiative.

In a Deloitte survey, almost **69%** of respondents said their employers were not doing enough to prevent or alleviate burnout, and **21%** said their company wasn't doing anything at all.¹



Activating Resilience

Teaching an organization to avoid burnout by cultivating resilience has always been important, but in the current environment, it has become critical. While we know developing active resilience as a skill is a deeply personal journey, it takes an organizational focus to give most people the push they need to do the hard work for themselves. Therefore, building organizational resilience should follow a similar blueprint to activating any major culture shift such as enhancing innovation, improving product quality, or boosting customer satisfaction.

Examine these tried-and-true change management steps from Harvard Business School through the lens of cultivating resilience²:

- 1. Prepare the Organization** - Help employees recognize the need for developing resilience by:
 - Acknowledging current and future uncertainty
 - Emphasizing the role of personal accountability in controlling those things that are within our power
- 2. Craft a Vision and Plan** - Develop a holistic and realistic plan for “organizational resilience” that includes:
 - Strategic goals
 - Key performance indicators
 - Project stakeholders
 - Specific actions and initiatives
- 3. Implement the Program** - Building resilience is not a transaction or an event. Much like any other major business initiative, it requires a long-term commitment to achieving multiple milestones along the way to a successful outcome (both for organizations and individuals). Outfit your team with a holistic well-being solution that raises the pursuit of resilience to an equivalent level with other critical business initiatives. One wouldn't launch a supply chain initiative without an ERP system, right?
- 4. Embed Changes Within Company Cultures and Practices** - Once the plan has been implemented – people have been trained, provided with the necessary tools and resources appropriate for their role, and processes have been created to ensure continuous reinforcement and improvement – the company must implement processes and rewards to ensure that positive changes stick. Resilience must be sewn into the cultural fabric and defended with the same zeal as any other critical business initiative.
- 5. Review Progress and Analyze Results** - Without a doubt, the impact of organizational resilience must be tracked in terms of employee experience, productivity, and customer experience. In uncertain times, it has become acutely clear that employee experience is the keystone of performance and customer satisfaction. And employee well-being, including mental health and resilience, is the foundation of any employee experience initiative. How can customers have a great experience if employees are burnt out?

Sources:

1. <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/about-deloitte/us-about-deloitte-burnout-survey-infographic.pdf>
2. <https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/change-management-process>



Aduro is Here to Help

In times like these, we at Aduro feel an elevated sense of urgency to provide solutions to companies and people in need. Burnout is more pervasive and severe than ever, and recovery is essential for the health and prosperity of both individuals and enterprises. But as the challenges of COVID fades, the focus on a holistic approach to well-being and resilience must not fade with it. One defining characteristic of a crisis is our innate human desire and ability to not only rebuild but to innovate. So, we call on businesses and leaders to examine the role of resilience in the current environment, but also as a pillar of future innovation, prosperity, and well-being. And, as always, we are here to offer support and guidance on the path to recovery and a more resilient future.

Get started with your plan to boost employee resilience and encourage organizational innovation and employee well-being and mental health through Aduro's holistic employee well-being solution.

Learn more at adurolife.com/solutions

