

Burnout

How to Stop It Before
It Stops You!

Stressed-Out ☐
Energized ☒

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Introduction

You're not imagining it. You're tired—deeply tired. The kind of tiredness that doesn't get fixed with a weekend off and catching up on sleep. The kind of tiredness that forces you to question your life circumstances and decisions.

You might be the go-to person in your family, your organization, your community, the one others rely on for strength, answers, and support. And yet, somewhere along the way, your own needs started slipping to the bottom of the list.

If this resonates with you, this eBook is for you.

Burnout doesn't announce itself with a warning. It creeps in slowly disguised as “just a busy season,” “just a little stress,” or “I'll rest after this next thing.” But eventually, it shows up in your body, your mood, your relationships—and it asks a hard question:

What happens when the strong one gets tired?

We wrote this eBook because we've been there. And because we believe you deserve to thrive, not just function. We'll guide you through the neuroscience of stress and recovery, not just to understand burnout, but to stop it before it stops you.

This is not about doing more. It's about doing differently—leading yourself with the same care and wisdom you offer to others.

Let's begin.



Leadership starts with YOU!

All of us, regardless of professional role, are leading the way to be or become the best version of ourselves, as we assist and support others in becoming the best versions of themselves. The truth is you are a leader in every aspect of your life...as a spouse/partner, parent, sibling, friend, community member, and at work! Personal wellness is crucial for leadership performance.

A maxim that we wish to promote is that Leadership Starts With YOU! Regardless of its rewards, leadership can be physically, emotionally and mentally taxing. Therefore, we've devoted this eBook to effective stress regulation and preventing personal burnout, as they are essential leadership tools.

As leaders, we often carry the invisible weight of our teams, our families, and our communities. We pride ourselves on being dependable, driven, and always "on." But beneath the surface of high performance and dedication, there can be a creeping and dangerous force that too often goes unchecked: **burnout**.

Burnout doesn't just affect our output — it erodes our health, diminishes our joy, and disconnects us from the very people and purpose that matter most. And when burnout hits those in leadership, the ripple effects can reach far and wide. That's why understanding, preventing, and managing burnout isn't just a personal responsibility, it's an essential part of effective, human-centered leadership.

Let's explore what burnout really is, what's at stake when we ignore it, and how we can show up for ourselves the way we show up for others.

How to Use This E-Book

This eBook is divided into two sections, designed to support both your understanding and your healing.

Part I: Understanding Burnout

We start by exploring what burnout really is—what it looks like, how it shows up in your body and mind, and the science behind it. You'll learn about the connection between stress and burnout, and why even high performers and strong leaders are vulnerable.

We go into the neuroscience not to overwhelm you, but to empower you. When you understand what's happening inside your brain and body, it becomes easier to have **compassion for yourself**—and to see burnout not as a personal failure, but a human response to prolonged pressure.

Part II: Sustainable Success

This is where we shift into strategies. We'll walk you through practical, evidence-based tools for managing stress, restoring balance, and building a life that supports your energy, well-being, and purpose. From daily habits to mindset shifts, this section is all about **actionable relief and long-term renewal**.

If you're already feeling overwhelmed, you're welcome to skip straight to **Part II** and come back to the rest when you're ready. We've designed this eBook to be read in **one or two sittings**, so it can support you quickly—without adding more to your plate.

A Short Note From The Authors

We wrote this eBook because we've seen—again and again—how burnout can quietly take hold, even in the most capable, caring, and successful people. And we want you to know: it's not your fault, and you're not alone.

We bring different experiences and expertise to this work, but we share a deep commitment to helping people lead lives that are both meaningful and sustainable.



I'm Dr. T., a Doctor of Education with a master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy.

For over 20 years, I've held leadership positions in higher education, provided therapy and coaching in private practice, and supported business leaders through executive coaching. I believe with all my heart that we shouldn't have to choose between professional success and personal well-being. When we integrate leadership tools with positive psychology, we don't just perform better—we feel better. And that's what I want for you.

I'm Dr. G., a licensed and Board-Certified Clinical Psychologist with expertise in neuropsychology and psychopharmacology.

I've worked in clinical settings, taught at the graduate level, and consulted with organizations across the country. I love bringing neuroscience into everyday language—because when we understand how our brains respond to stress, we gain powerful tools to navigate it. I currently serve as Chair and Distinguished Professor at The Chicago School, and I'm passionate about making mental health knowledge practical, actionable, and human.

We hope that the information shared in this eBook brings you relief, clarity, and a renewed sense of possibility.

—Teresa & Gery

PART I - Understanding Burnout

What exactly is **BURNOUT**?

Burnout is more than just feeling tired after a long day. The World Health Organization defines burnout as a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that hasn't been successfully managed. It shows up in three key ways:

Emotional exhaustion: Feeling depleted, mentally and physically.

Depersonalization or cynicism: Growing feelings of detachment, frustration, or negativity, especially toward your work or the people around you.

Reduced personal accomplishment: A sense that you're no longer effective or making a difference — even if the evidence says otherwise.

And while burnout can affect anyone, leaders are uniquely at risk. We are often expected to keep pushing, keep producing, and keep everyone else inspired, even when we ourselves are running on empty.

The high cost of burnout on leaders.

When burnout takes root, the consequences can touch every corner of our lives and the lives of those we lead.

1. Personal health declines.	2. Performance takes a hit.	3. Relationships suffer.	4. Culture and morale decline.
Chronic stress can lead to anxiety, depression, insomnia, high blood pressure, and weakened immunity. We may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as overeating, overworking, or numbing out, just to get through the day.	Despite our best efforts, burnout causes lapses in concentration, creativity, and decision-making. We're more prone to mistakes, less adaptable to change, and far less likely to innovate.	When we're burned out, we become short-tempered or emotionally unavailable, even to the people we care most about. Colleagues, partners, children, and friends may feel the impact of our withdrawal or irritability.	Burned-out leaders can unknowingly create environments of tension, mistrust, or apathy. Teams may begin to mirror your stress, leading to disengagement, poor collaboration, or high turnover.



That's why preventing burnout is not just about self-care; it's about leadership care. It's about modeling what sustainable, authentic leadership looks like.

How to identify the signs of burnout.

Sometimes burnout sneaks up on us. Other times, we know it's there but choose to push through. Either way, the earlier we notice the signs, the better we can respond. Here are a few signals we should never ignore:

- **Physical and mental fatigue** that doesn't improve with rest.
- **Sleep difficulties**, either insomnia or oversleeping.
- **Increased irritability** or emotional outbursts.
- **Withdrawing from people** or avoiding difficult conversations.
- **Feeling numb, detached, or joyless** even during positive experiences.
- **A constant sense of being "behind"** or overwhelmed.
- **Loss of motivation** or passion for work that once felt meaningful.

If several of these resonate with you, it may be time to step back and ask: What do I need to restore my energy, my focus, and my purpose?

Understanding stress: the good, the bad, and everything in between

Burnout doesn't happen overnight. It's the result of prolonged, unrelieved stress—especially when that stress feels out of our control. We all recognize that stress is part of being human. But not all stress is created equal. In fact, some stress can energize us, sharpen our focus, and propel us into meaningful action. But when stress becomes chronic, unmanaged, or misaligned with our values, it sets the stage for burnout. Understanding the different types of stress is the first step in learning how to work with it, rather than be ruled by it—so we can protect our leadership energy and stay connected to what matters most.

So, what exactly is stress?



Stress is our body's natural response to a perceived challenge or threat. It's an internal alert system designed to help us survive, solve problems, and stay alert in critical moments. But when stress goes unchecked—or when we don't understand the different forms it can take—it can impact our health, decision-making, and well-being.

Let's break it down:

1. Eustress: the positive kind of stress

Yes, there is such a thing as “good stress.” Eustress is the type of stress that motivates and energizes us. It often shows up when we're about to do something meaningful or exciting, like starting a new job, preparing for a big presentation, or training for a marathon.

Eustress helps us stay focused, alert, and resilient. It pushes us out of our comfort zone without overwhelming us. In fact, a healthy dose of eustress can enhance our performance and lead to personal growth.

Think of eustress as the kind of pressure that helps you rise to the occasion—not buckle under it.



2. Acute stress: short-term and situational

Acute stress is the immediate reaction we experience in response to a sudden challenge or unexpected event, like getting stuck in traffic before an important meeting, or receiving surprising news.

It's typically short-lived and resolves quickly once the situation passes. While it can feel intense in the moment, acute stress isn't usually harmful unless it occurs too frequently or is paired with little recovery time.

When managed well, acute stress can heighten awareness and decision-making in time-sensitive situations.



3. Chronic stress: the kind that wears us down

Chronic stress is the persistent, ongoing kind of stress that results from long-term pressures, whether it's work overload, unresolved personal challenges, financial hardship, or caregiving fatigue, among others.

Unlike acute stress, chronic stress doesn't have a clear end point. It can become a background hum in our lives, subtly draining our energy, mood, and immune system over time.

Unchecked chronic stress is linked to burnout, anxiety, and physical health issues. That's why it's so important to recognize it early and take steps to interrupt the cycle through intentional rest, support, and personal wellness practices.



4. Distress: when stress turns harmful

Distress is what most people think of when they hear the word "stress." It's the negative side of stress, the kind that overwhelms us, impairs performance, and takes a toll on our mental and physical health.

Distress can be triggered by either acute or chronic stressors, especially when we feel out of control or unsupported. It often results in tension, irritability, poor sleep, and reduced coping capacity, as well as other factors that impact our daily living.

Distress signals it's time to pause, seek help, and re-center ourselves.

Types of Stress

Eustress

Acute Stress

Chronic Stress

Distress



The Burnout Cycle: How Burnout Happens

Therefore, let's discuss the Burnout Cycle so that you can identify and prevent its occurrence. The Burnout Cycle is a warning sign of excessive stress. Then we'll discuss what you can do to lower your stress levels, and overall health. So, let's dive in deeper into the burnout cycle.

1. Stage 1 is characterized by Overcommitment & People-Pleasing

- ☞ Here's how it all starts: you find yourself saying yes to every request, thinking it will prove your dedication or strengthen relationships.
- ☞ You also take on more than you can realistically handle, assuming "I'll find a way."
- ☞ And...You ignore early signs of stress because pushing through is seen as the norm and because too often we tend to simply normalize stress.

2. In Stage 2 – You feel the impact of Increased Workloads & Pressure

- ☞ The extra commitments start piling up, leading to longer hours and constant availability.
- ☞ Tasks that once felt manageable now feel overwhelming.
- ☞ And...You start sacrificing breaks, meals, and personal time to “keep up.” Sounds familiar?

3. In Stage 3 – you start experiencing Exhaustion & Resentment

- ☞ Fatigue sets in—mentally, emotionally, and physically.
- ☞ What once motivated you now feels draining.
- ☞ You feel resentment toward work, colleagues, or leadership, but you fear speaking up.

4. in Stage 4 your Performance & Well-Being starts declining at a faster pace

- ☞ Productivity drops because exhaustion affects focus and decision-making.
- ☞ Stress-related health issues emerge (like headaches, insomnia, anxiety).
- ☞ And You find yourself disengaged—mentally checking out from work and personal life.

5. The stage that you need to prevent with real intention is stage 5 – because this is when you could start feeling Full Burnout & Breakdown

- ☞ In this stage You hit a breaking point—physically, emotionally, or both.
- ☞ You lose motivation, creativity, and confidence.
- ☞ Leading to stage 6 – which is typically when many professionals quit, switch careers, or disengage completely at work and even worse, at home.

Your Body Under Chronic Stress

We've all heard of the “fight or flight” response—our body's quick reaction to immediate danger. Whether it's slamming the brakes to avoid an accident or reacting to a loud noise, this response is handled by the brain's neuronal system, which kicks in within milliseconds. It's fast, automatic, and designed to keep us safe from short-term threats.

But what happens when the stress doesn't go away?

When pressure lingers for days, weeks, or even months—whether from work demands, relationship tension, or financial worries—our bodies shift into a different system of response. This is where the HPA Axis (short for Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis) comes into play. Instead of quick nerve signals, the adrenal glands—located just above the kidneys—release hormones like cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine to keep us on high alert.

This system is incredibly useful—for a while. It helps us stay focused, energized, and able to cope during difficult times. But when the stress becomes chronic, this constant state of activation starts doing more harm than good. It's as if the body's emergency system gets stuck in the “on” position, slowly wearing us down from the inside out.

Chronic stress has been linked to a range of physical maladies—including cardiovascular, neurological, gastrointestinal, and immunological problems. It also contributes to mental health complications, such as attention and memory difficulties, generalized anxiety, disrupted sleep and sexual functioning, low mood or depression, and in severe cases, even psychosis.

In other words, **chronic stress doesn't just wear you down—it breaks you down**, quietly but powerfully affecting nearly every system in your body and mind.

This is your wake-up call.

The same leadership skills you use to support others—awareness, responsibility, decision-making, and compassion—can be used to care for yourself.

So this is your invitation: **Lead yourself and prioritize your well-being.**

In the next section of this eBook, we will explore actionable strategies to do just that.

PART II – Sustainable Success

8-Dimensions of Personal Wellness

Let's proceed to discuss how stress and burnout impact our health and well-being. There's no question that medical science brings the power the natural sciences and modern technology to the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Human life expectancy increased dramatically following the advent of clean water systems, antibiotics and the development of vaccines.

However, for the majority of us today, it's not medical advances that have the greatest impact on increasing our life expectancy. Rather, personal lifestyle factors (e.g., smoking, obesity, stress, nutrition, blood pressure, alcohol and other substance abuse) have a greater impact on morbidity and mortality than biological, environmental, or access to healthcare factors. As a result, the top 10 causes of mortality in the US are positively correlated with lifestyle choices that adversely impact a person's epigenetic predisposition to manifest a given disease or illness.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>

Below are the top 10 causes of mortality in the US (2023):

Heart disease: 702,880

Cancer: 608,371

Accidents (unintentional injuries): 227,039

COVID-19: 186,552

Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases): 165,393

Chronic lower respiratory diseases: 147,382

Alzheimer's disease: 120,122

Diabetes: 101,209

Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome, and nephrosis: 57,937

Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis: 54,803

Total = 2,371,688



It follows then that personal wellness is not just a personal matter for leaders, but a critical component of their ability to perform effectively, lead with clarity and empathy, and inspire their followers, or those whom they lead, including self, family, and colleagues/co-workers. Therefore, organizations do well to foster a culture of leadership wellness. According to the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), organizations that promote leadership development as part of their culture, more readily accomplish the following:

1. **Improved bottom-line financial performance**
2. **Attract and retain talent**
3. **Drive strategy execution, and**
4. **Increase success in navigating change.**

So what constitutes personal wellness? Wellness can be defined as “the quality or state of being healthy in body and mind, especially as the result of deliberate effort.” Note that the emphasis is on “**deliberate effort**,” being a process and not something that is achieved and forgotten. Therefore, it is through this **deliberate ongoing committed effort** to our personal wellness that we are able to sustain a healthy state of being.

The healthier we are in body and mind, the stronger we feel, which helps us to be better prepared to manage the on-going challenges we face in life -- what we kindly refer to as **the natural imbalance of life**. From a human nature perspective, promoting well-being is not only the right thing to do, but the necessary thing to do in optimizing our satisfaction and fulfillment with both our personal and professional lives. **Remember...complete health is not defined as the absence of illness; it also includes achieving a positive state of well-being.**

At Love Your Work and Life, we espouse a personal wellness model that is comprised of the following eight dimensions of wellness. Note that one dimension involves our physical wellness; three dimensions refer to psychological wellness; and four dimensions refer to social wellness.



The dimensions of our personal wellness are defined as:

Physical Wellness – the way that you take care of your body, mind and overall health, to ensure your continued strength and vitality.

Intellectual Wellness – your commitment to engaging in stimulating and creative activities that facilitate your dedication to lifelong learning with a focus on the activities that best respond to your life interests.

Emotional Wellness – being mindful of your feelings and thoughts, taking action to change the things you can modulate, and monitoring your self-esteem and attitudes in promoting a positive and optimistic life outlook.

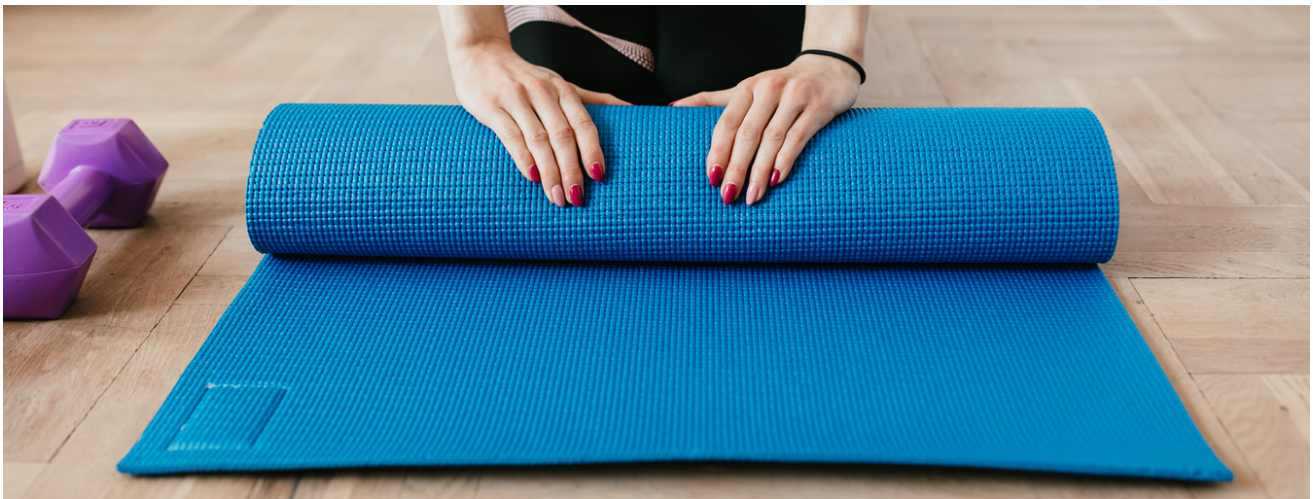
Spiritual Wellness – your purpose and meaning in life, integrated to and lived by your spiritual and core values.

Social Wellness – how you relate to yourself and others, including the community at large, while enjoying healthy relationships that strengthen your sense of belonging.

Occupational Wellness – enjoying fulfilling work related activities that nurture your skills and talents, including your gifts.

Financial Wellness – your knowledge of understanding of how to best manage your money and finances to ensure that you can comply with your present and future financial responsibilities and security.

Environmental Wellness – the interactions between the environment, community and yourself, caring for each of these responsibly.



Achieving personal wellness means something different to everyone. However, it is important to recognize and be mindful of how all these areas in our lives impact our overall state of being. The beauty of this model is that as we work in strengthening our personal dimensions of wellness that we identify as needing improvement, the stronger dimensions support this process and helps us carry on.

The 8-Dimensions of Personal Wellness are not cumulative, meaning that we should be building one upon the other until we achieve a state of perfect wellness. Rather, they are integrative, working with each other to realize the best version of ourselves in a given point in time during our lives. As we work to enhance the various dimensions, we will probably recognize that some are stronger than others, and taking action to reinforce these dimensions will serve to continue improving our overall sense of wellness and physical health. In addition, it's important to recognize that our wellness dimensions shift from time to time in terms of strength. Life evolves, things change, and so do the state of our dimensions of wellness at different points in our lives.



Healthy Ways to Cope With Stress & Prevent Burnout

Exercise

Let's turn our attention to Physical or Biological Wellness. In brief, Physical (Biological) Wellness refers to overall physical health, diet and appetite, sexual behavior, sleep, and substance use.

As a neuroscientist, I (Gery) regularly give lectures to doctoral and postdoctoral students on subjects related to neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, and clinical patient evaluation. Here is a key takeaway: The most important thing you can do to improve and preserve your cognitive and physical health is exercise. Moreover, exercise is also an excellent way to lower our stress levels. This is primarily because as a species, we're intended to be hunters and gatherers. We're made to be walking, running, climbing and swimming to hunt for food. In particular, bipedalism allowed our ancestors to go for longer distances when hunting for animals. Combining a high protein diet from hunting with the gathering of edible plants provided the nutrition needed to fuel human brain development and higher cognitive functioning.

It may be of interest for you to know that in a study of more than 7,000 middle-aged and older adults in the U.K, David Raichlen and Gene Alexander found that participants who engaged in greater moderate to vigorous physical activity had larger hippocampus volumes. Why is this important? The hippocampus (plural hippocampi) are structures deep within the temporal lobe of the brain that are of critical importance for the conversion of short term to long term memories, and hence, learning and other higher cognitive functioning.

<https://news.arizona.edu/news/ua-research-brains-evolved-need-exercise>

A protein called brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) that is produced in the body and brain is thought to be at the root of this hippocampal growth. In fact, BDNF is responsible for new nerve cell (neuronal) growth and is a neuroprotective factor, something thought impossible only about 30 years ago. Similarly, while the Alzheimer's population is growing due to the aging baby boom generation, the number of new cases per capita (i.e., incidence) is actually decreasing. In large scale studies in the US (e.g., Framingham Heart Study), United Kingdom, France, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, and Nigeria, researchers found that the incidence per capita of adults with dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease, declined by nearly 25 percent. The single greatest factor thought to be of significance was better vascular health (i.e., better cardiovascular functioning). The important thing to realize is that exercise is linked to the production and release of BDNF in the brain. Moreover, decreased levels of BDNF are associated with neurodegenerative diseases involving neuronal loss, such as Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, multiple sclerosis and diabetes mellitus.



In working with our clients, a very common problem they face has to do with exposure to stressful situations and how to best manage stress. We'd like to mention that stress is a good thing, however, there must be a balance to ensure our optimal functioning. If we didn't feel stress, we probably wouldn't feel the necessity of getting up in the morning and getting your rear in gear for the day. There is an optimal level of stress that makes us enthused about our work and motivates us in the completion of key tasks. At the same time, too much stress adversely impacts our job performance and frequently leads to health-related difficulties reflected in the process of fragmentation and burnout.



True Relaxation

So now we know about stress and the burnout cycle. The question then is, “How do we best cope with stress?” As mentioned, physical exercise is a key to stress modulation. On average, experts suggest that you should engage in vigorous exercise four days a week for about 45 minutes per workout. With older individuals, it’s also important to engage in some form of resistance training to retain musculoskeletal health. You can consider swimming, resistance (weight) training, yoga, martial arts (e.g., Tai Chi Chuan), and dancing.

Yogi Berra said, **“Baseball is 90 percent mental. The other half is physical”** And so, it’s just as important to cultivate the proper mental attitude (you can see why he was known for his great sense of humor).

When most people talk about “relaxation,” they’re often referring to kicking back, having a beer, wine or cocktail, putting their feet-up and “just chilling.” However, this is not the same as “brain relaxation.” Brain relaxation is tough because it involves lowering our brain waves from a “beta” or thinking state to an “alpha” or low brain wave frequency rate, while remaining awake. In essence, the goal is to quiet the mind and all the “chatter,” in our heads. Therefore, we need to lower the number of thoughts we experience when practicing meditation.

Research indicates that meditation is one of the best ways to reduce anxiety and stress. Since the 1960s, there have been well over 1,000 research publications on meditation, carried out at over 120 universities and research institutions in the United States. Increasingly, meditation is being found to be one of the best ways to reduce anxiety and stress.. The benefits of meditation also include reduced mental rumination, improved working memory, better attention, reduced emotional reactivity, greater cognitive flexibility, and increased relationship satisfaction.

Physiologically, meditation has been shown to have many beneficial effects on health, given that the practice suppresses stress hormones (i.e., norepinephrine, epinephrine, and cortisol), which play an important role in a host of ailments including hypertension, depression, infertility, hot flashes in menopause and insomnia. Meditation has also been shown to have beneficial effects for the brain as well (i.e., increased release of nitric oxide, a neurotransmitter that helps to repair nerve cells in the brain). These brain effects go well beyond the benefits of stress reduction. For example, Dr. Sara Lazar and her colleagues at Harvard University have found that meditation can produce experience-based structural alterations in the brain. They also report having found evidence that meditation may delay atrophy commonly associated with advanced aging in specific areas of the brain associated with attention, learning and memory, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and even compassion, among others.

You might not realize it, but chronic stress can actually affect you at the cellular level—down to your DNA. At the ends of each of our chromosomes are protective caps called telomeres. Think of them like the plastic tips on shoelaces—they keep our genetic material from fraying. When we're under constant stress, these telomeres wear down faster. And the shorter they get, the more our cells struggle to repair and renew themselves—something scientists link to faster aging and a higher risk of disease.

The good news? Research—including a groundbreaking study from UC Davis—shows that practices like meditation and stress reduction can actually boost telomerase, the enzyme that helps rebuild and maintain telomeres. In other words, the way we care for ourselves can influence how we age—not just on the outside, but deep within our biology.

The takeaway: You have more power than you think. Your daily habits—how you breathe, rest, and respond to stress—can shape your health from the inside out.

For more information about the medical benefits of meditation, follow the links below to the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (National Institutes of Health), and the Benson-Henry Institute for Mind Body Medicine at Harvard University's Massachusetts General Hospital.

<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/>
<https://bensonhenryinstitute.org/>

The Practice of Zen Meditation

In the section that follows, the practice of Zen meditation will be discussed. At first, meditation may seem difficult because there are a lot of steps, but if you read these and reread these after you practice meditating a few times, they'll become second nature.

Meditation is also tough in that you're teaching your mind to lower your thoughts with the goal of thinking about nothing. The Japanese have a proverb which states, "Mind like water." An application of this concept is that if you look into a pond of water, you can clearly see your reflection. However, if you drop a pebble into the pond, your reflection will be distorted by the ripples which form. In the same manner, one must cleanse the mind of thoughts in order to perceive clearly.

Lastly, please bear in mind that the practice of meditation itself, is not religious in nature. Anyone of any faith can practice meditation. The 3 essential elements of meditation are: a) breathing, b) posture, and c) concentration.



The steps which follow are for seated meditation, but meditation can be practiced anywhere, even while walking.

1. **Choose a quiet place.**
2. **Be sure that you are rested and have had enough sleep.**
3. **Avoid meditation when you have overeaten or when you have been drinking.**
4. **Make sure your body is clean.**
5. **Sit with your legs crossed, lowering your knees as much as possible. If you like you can place the left foot on top of the right thigh. (If very flexible, you can also place the right foot on the left thigh as well. Remember, however, you should be comfortable.)**
6. **Place both hands together on your lap (left over right), with the palms facing up, forming a circle so that your thumbs barely touch.**
7. **Stretch the upper half of your body upwards and place a little tension in the abdomen. Lower and relax your shoulders.**
8. **Draw your hips back and concentrate on a spot about 1 inch below your navel.**
9. **Relax the solar plexus.**



10. **Pull in your chin and straighten your neck.**
11. **Place the tip of your tongue to the roof of your mouth, just touching the front teeth.**
12. **Place your teeth and lips together naturally.**
13. **Half close your eyes (in seated practice focus your eyes on a point, such as a candle, about 1 meter away; if standing, 2 meters away).**
14. **Your position should be such that your forehead and navel are in a straight line.**
15. **Inhale through the nose and draw the breath to your abdomen. Slowly exhale the breath you have taken in through your mouth, barely parting your lips. Repeat this 2 or 3 times (short breaths at first), gradually increasing the inhalation/exhalation cycle, but be sure that you are comfortable.**
16. **When breathing try to do so as silently as possible.**
17. **Avoid moving your eyes, legs or your hands.**
18. **Figuratively concentrate your mind at the point 1 inch below your navel.**
19. **Clear your mind of all thoughts. When you find yourself thinking of something, simply relax and refocus your concentration.**
20. **Your position, your breathing and your spiritual concentration are the things that will lead you to a state of impassivity.**

That's all there is to it. Be sure that your exhalation is at least as long as your inhalation. Begin with 10 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening. Eventually, you may increase the time to a longer period if you wish. The rest is simply practice. Meditation is a practice that can improve your overall brain health and may be associated with neuroprotective factors in the aging process. Given this information, it certainly makes sense to give meditation a shot to improve your life. May the Om be with you!

Practical strategies for managing and overcoming burnout.

Recovery from burnout doesn't happen overnight, and prevention isn't about perfection. But there are steps we can take — today — to reclaim our energy, reset our minds, and lead with more humanity and presence.

1. Normalize rest and recovery.

Taking breaks isn't a weakness, it's a leadership imperative. Let's schedule buffer time between meetings, commit to unplugged weekends, and prioritize sleep the way we do strategic planning. Rested leaders make better decisions and create safer, saner cultures.

Here are some actionable strategies:

Start by scheduling time for recovery.

Build actual breaks into your calendar — not just placeholders, but non-negotiable space to breathe between meetings, reflect between tasks, and mentally reset throughout the day. Just 10 minutes of quiet between back-to-back meetings can help you shift gears and show up more grounded and focused.

Take microbreaks during the workday.

Step away from your screen, stretch, walk outside, breathe deeply, or drink a glass of water without multitasking. Even short breaks — five minutes every hour — can reduce mental fatigue and improve overall productivity. These pauses act as mini-resets for your nervous system and your attention span.

Unplug with intention.

Designate certain times — such as evenings or weekends — as tech-free zones. Use that time to reconnect with family, nature, movement, or hobbies. Protecting your non-work time helps your mind detach and recharge, and it signals to others that balance is not only allowed, but encouraged.

Use simple tools to relieve stress and reset focus.

During the workday, try a few of these quick, proven strategies:

- Box breathing: Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4. Repeat 3–5 times.
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding: Engage your senses to come back to the present. Name 5 things you see, 4 you can touch, 3 you can hear, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste.
- Mindful transitions: Take 60 seconds before your next meeting or task to set an intention and let go of what came before.
- Gratitude pause: Write down one thing that's going well or one person you're grateful for.

The truth is, no one else is going to build our rest into our schedule. **We must choose it — and model it.**

By normalizing rest and recovery in our own lives, we empower others to do the same. We create cultures that value well-being as much as performance. And we remind ourselves that sustainable success isn't about doing more — it's about doing what matters most, with clarity and care.

**“Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes... including you.”
— Anne Lamott**

2. Set (and honor) boundaries.

Burnout often thrives in boundaryless work lives. We can start small: limiting work emails after hours, taking a full lunch break, or saying no to non-essential commitments. When we model boundaries, we empower others to do the same.

3. Reconnect with purpose.

Sometimes burnout stems from being too busy to remember why we do what we do. Let's carve out space for reflection. What impact am I here to make? Who am I serving? What parts of my work brings me energy or joy, and how can I do more of that?

4. Strengthen supportive relationships.

Isolation fuels burnout. Connection heals it. Let's nurture relationships with peers, mentors, friends, and family who remind us we're not alone. Whether through honest conversations, coaching, or collaboration, support makes all the difference.

5. Move our bodies and calm our minds.

Physical activity helps release stress, improve mood, and regulate our nervous systems. Whether it's a brisk walk, yoga, dancing, or deep breathing, movement matters. Mindfulness practices like meditation or journaling can also help us process emotions and find clarity.

6. Ask for help — and accept it.

High-achievers often struggle to ask for support. But real strength lies in recognizing your limits. Whether through professional coaching, therapy, or delegating tasks, you don't have to carry everything alone.

7. Cultivate joy and gratitude.

Burnout dulls our sense of wonder. We can reignite it by intentionally noticing the good...a team win, a laugh with a loved one, a moment of quiet. Gratitude expands our perspective and helps us stay grounded, even during hard seasons.

Always remember that burnout doesn't mean we've failed. It means we're human. And being human is at the heart of being a great leader. And how we lead ourselves is just as important as how we lead others. That includes honoring our energy, protecting our mental health, and creating lives — and workplaces — where well-being is a shared value, not an afterthought.



Other Great Ways To Cope With Stress

Tying it all together, healthy physical wellness involves a sort of Yin – Yang effect, whereby one attends to physical health (Yang) and to mental health (Yin), and whereby physical health invariably affects mental health and vice versa. Here are some things that you can do to promote your physical (and emotional) health:

1- Join a group exercise club. This can be in the form of bicycling, dance, jogging, swimming, yoga, martial arts, etc. The chief thing is that you need to get your heart rate up (i.e., you need to sweat) in a routine that incorporates aerobic activity. To know the target heart rate for your age, go to:

<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/target-heart-rates>

2- Get to know your numbers. Obtain your latest lab results and compare your results (i.e., lab values) over time. In general, look for any changes in your electrolytes, liver function tests, lipid profile (i.e. cholesterol and triglycerides), complete blood count, and thyroid function tests.

3- Spend time doing mindfulness exercises. In general, when we engage in mindfulness, we are speaking of activities that require our full attention in the here in now. Examples of mindfulness activities include, exercises such as jogging, tai chi chuan, yoga, and activities such as meditation, poetry writing, playing a musical instrument, calligraphy, or even gardening. The core feature of these activities is that they help to lower “stress” hormonal levels.



4- Get it on! Sexual behavior contributes to our overall physical health, well-being and happiness. With couples who receive conjugal therapy, it is not uncommon to find decreased sexual activity sometimes extending over months and years. To improve your sexual life, talk to your partner and explore each other's desires, wants, and wishes. So get your partner's freak flag up and have some fun!

5- Join a cooking club! As mentioned, appetite is an important aspect of health. By joining a cooking club you can get those tastebuds going. Moreover, in many households, the kitchen is a place for social gathering and the heart of the family. It may also be the easiest route to your partner's heart!

6- Get some sleep! Sleep is a cornerstone of physical and mental restoration. Often high-achievers may feel as though they don't need seven hours of sleep. Twenty years ago, most health practitioners would probably have agreed. From a research perspective, although much was known about sleep architecture (i.e., brainwave patterns that cycle through sleep), we really didn't know about the importance of sleep. Today, sleep is regarded as an important component of wellness. Treat it like any other strategic priority by creating a bedtime routine, reducing screen time before bed, and allowing your body and mind to fully rest. Leaders who are well-rested make sharper decisions, handle stress more effectively, and create emotionally safer spaces for others.

Access this link for some great sleep resources: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/scienceofsleep>.

And since the topic of stress management is quite expansive, making it hard to cover everything in this guide, here is a list of additional stress management strategies that you can consider implementing for yourself, encourage family members to participate in, and promote among team members. In time, with deliberate practice, you and those around you, will reap the benefits of implementing these strategies.



Identify Sources of Stress

Relaxation Techniques

- Muscle Relaxation
- Breathing Exercises
- Mental Imagery

Sleep

Meditation

Mindfulness

Emotional Intelligence

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation



Take a break from the stressor

Exercise

Connect with Others

Manage Your Time Better

Cultivate your Dimensions of Wellness

Seek Help

- Colleagues/Staff
- Coaching
- Therapy



Create an Action Plan



☀️ Time to circle back to the 8 Dimensions of Personal Wellness and examine how to enhance and strengthen them through this activity. Let's get started.

Use the graphic below to get a snapshot of how satisfied you are with your dimensions of personal wellness. The graphic shows the 8 dimensions of wellness previously introduced and described, in pie format. The first step is to give yourself a rating that reflects the **current** "state" of each of your dimensions of wellness. For each of the eight dimensions that impacts your personal wellness, place a dot in the middle of each segment on the shaded circle that reflects your level of satisfaction, with 1 representing not satisfied at all, and 10 representing total satisfaction.

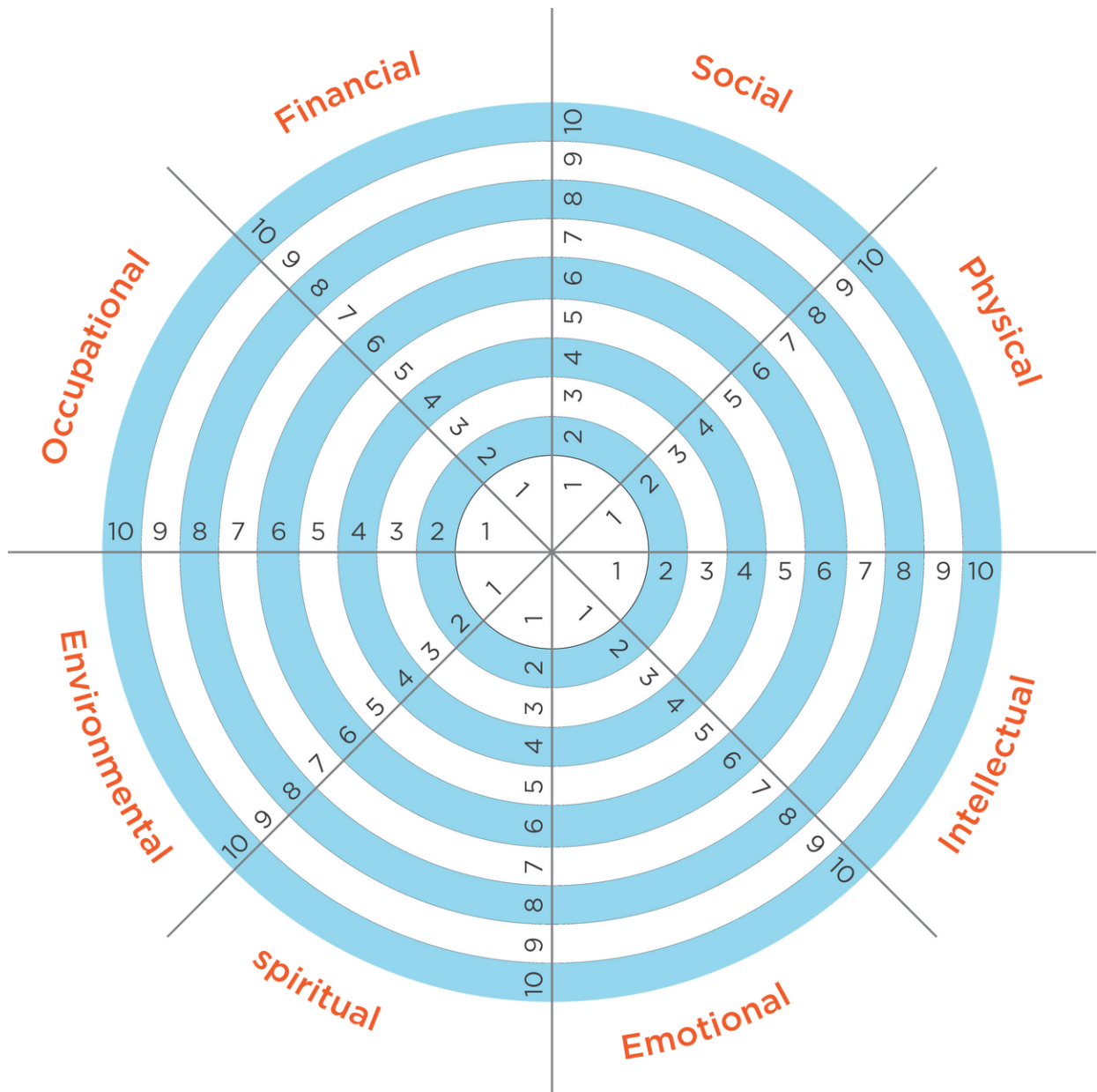
It is important to note that this is a subjective analysis that requires your deepest sense of honesty in evaluating where you find yourself in terms of level of satisfaction with each dimension of wellness. There are no right or wrong answers in this exercise; rather, what will make it most helpful to you is to ensure that you give your most honest consideration to how satisfied you are with each individual dimension of wellness to the best of your ability. And remember, the intention here is to assess your **current** level of satisfaction, not your past level or the future level that you desire to achieve.

Once you have identified your level of satisfaction for each dimension of wellness, proceed to draw lines to connect the dots, resulting in a diagram. The diagram will most likely not be a perfect circle; in fact, this would be highly unlikely because we, as humans, tend to struggle at any one point in time, with various of our dimensions of well-being. Hence, a perfect state of balance, with all dimensions flowing fluidly through the same levels of satisfaction is not typically what we experience in life.

The point here is to have a visual representation of where you "feel" that you find yourself in each of the dimensions, so that you can be intentional with actions to enhance those that require strengthening, while also continuing to nurture those in which you are stronger. And remember, as previously shared, your dimensions of personal wellness are not cumulative but rather integrative in nature. Therefore, when one or more of your wellness dimensions are less strong than the others, those that are stronger help you carry through when you are managing life challenges. This is the reason why you should strive to achieve the strongest state of well-being possible in each dimension.

Our 8-Dimensions of Personal Wellbeing

WRITE
TO US



The second step is to think, reflect, and consider how to nurture each dimension of wellness to the best of your ability. For each dimension of personal well-being, identify three (3) or more activities that you can do to enhance and reinforce it. We encourage you to do this for all the dimensions, including those in which you feel stronger.

Here's what this step can look like. The important thing is to make it your own and include activities and actions that you know you can stick to:

Physical Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples

Calendar time to go to the gym/for a walk/for a jog/to a yoga class _____ days per week, starting on _____.

Choose a bedtime and routine that allows me to sleep _____ hours per day, starting on _____.

Intellectual Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples

Identify top thought leaders in my professional field, and commit to read one chapter per day (one book at a time) of their best-selling book beginning on _____.

Read _____ books per month/year in topics of interest to me.

Emotional Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples:

Manage stress by practicing deep breathing exercises _____ times per day.

Set aside _____ minutes each morning and evening, _____ days per week to journal (about what you wish to journal about), beginning on _____.

Spiritual Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples:

Engage in daily mindfulness/meditation in the morning at _____am and in the afternoons/evenings at _____pm beginning on _____ for _____ minutes.

Reserve _____ minutes each morning and evening, _____ days per week, to practice gratitude and/or prayer, beginning on _____.

Social Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples:

Invite _____ family/friends for dinner once/2 times per month beginning on _____.

Plan a family/friends vacation _____ per year and confirm/book them by _____.

Join a book club/civic group by _____ and attend monthly gatherings beginning on _____.

Occupational Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples:

Re-tool or acquire a new skill relevant to your career goals by signing up for online courses on _____, and complete one course every quarter/every six months.

Join one/two professional association(s) to network with and learn from colleagues and mentors by _____ and attend monthly/bi-monthly meetings.

Environmental Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples:

Spend time in nature by going for a hike, walk in a park, camp, swim, or do other outdoor activities _____ times per week, beginning on _____.

Complete one/two home improvement projects in my home every month/two month(s), beginning on _____, so that I and my family can enjoy a restful and loving home environment.

Financial Wellness

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Examples:

Create a monthly budget of income/revenues and expenses by _____ and forecast the next 6/12 months. Repeat every year.

Pay my credit card debt by making additional payments to principal in the amount of _____, starting on _____.

Meet with a certified professional planner/advisor to forecast the amount of funds needed for retirement and create a solid financial plan by _____.

We also encourage you to take time to listen to the opinions/wishes/aspirations of your loved ones regarding these activities. Even better yet, invite your loved ones to complete this activity independently of each other, and then gather around to share what, why and how you have decided to engage in, to strengthen your overall well-being. We can almost guarantee that taking this additional step with those closest to you results in deepening and strengthening your relationships.

Life changes, and so do your needs and demands, and those of your family. So adjust accordingly. And remember, your personal wellness requires deliberate ongoing committed effort in order to sustain a healthy state of being.

A closing thought: even making small changes in your daily habits can result in significant improvements to your wellness and quality of life, which in turn, impact your success in all areas of life – Self, family & community, and career. And this is **The Big Win!**

We hope that you have enjoyed reading this guide. Here's to your health and well-being, and to the health and well-being of the lives whom you touch, serve and lead.

To your happiness and success,

Teresa & Gery

Ready to turn small shifts into big wins?

If you want to learn more about how leadership is transformed through your and/or your team's personal wellness, or how leadership self-skills can transform your life, our Big Win Coaching Program is designed to support you in reclaiming clarity and energy while building the emotional freedom to lead a life that reflects your values.

FOR MORE INSIGHTS AND PERSONALIZED GUIDANCE:

VISIT US

LOVEYOURWORKANDLIFE.COM/BIG-WIN-COACHING/

OR CONTACT US DIRECTLY AT
[**INFO@LOVEYOUROWRKANDLIFE.COM**](mailto:INFO@LOVEYOUROWRKANDLIFE.COM)