

Reignite Your Passion and Avoid Burnout

At the start of a new job, we tend to feel passionate about the work, eager to dive into each day, and find gratification in contributing to the agency's mission. Over time, however, things can change – whether the workload increases, and we become overwhelmed and stressed, or we find that we're no longer challenged by or interested in the work, which in turn leads to disengagement and boredom. In either case, the result is burnout, which is a state of physical and emotional exhaustion that can negatively affect stress levels, productivity, and overall well-being.

Are you burned out?

While anyone can experience burnout, Mayo Clinic indicates that you might be at a higher risk of burnout if you lack balance between your work and personal life, have a high workload or frequently work overtime, have little or no control over your work, or your job is monotonous. To get a feel for whether you might be at risk, ask yourself the following:

- Do you drag yourself to the office and have trouble getting started?
- Have you become irritable or impatient with teammates or customers?
- Do you find it difficult to concentrate?
- Do you lack the energy to be consistently productive?
- Have you become critical at work?
- Do you feel bitter or cynical about your job?
- Do you lack satisfaction from your accomplishments?
- Are you using food, drugs, or alcohol to feel better or to not feel at all?
- Have your sleep habits changed?
- Are you experiencing unexplained physical ailments, such as headaches or stomach problems?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you could be prone to burnout. For a more in-depth assessment of your burnout status, take this self-test: [MindTools.com - Burnout Self-Test](https://www.mindtools.com/newtests/burnout-self-test/)

How to rekindle what inspires you

Challenge yourself at work

Monotony is one of the burnout risk factors because doing the same thing day after day can lead to boredom. Keep things interesting by taking on new or different tasks. Volunteer to lead a project that interests you or that involves an opportunity to use your unique skillset. If permissible, you may even consider swapping some responsibilities with a coworker – you never know who else might also be itching for a change-up to their routine.

Reestablish expectations

When things get overwhelming or you can't keep your head above water, let your supervisor know. Discuss expectations and work to either adjust them or establish an acceptable middle ground. You can then further define expectations by working together to prioritize your tasks which may alleviate some of the stress.

Get unstuck

If you're satisfied with the work but still feel like something is squelching your enthusiasm, the culprit could be the whole daily routine of it all. Stir things up with an adjustment to your work schedule. If possible, consider alternating your hours on certain days to free up extra time in the morning or afternoon to take an exercise class or have some alone time. Or get a change of scenery by working from an alternate location from time-to-time, conducting team meetings outside, or occasionally working from home if it's allowed.

Revisit the reason

As employees, we sometimes lose sight of *why* we're doing what we do. We lose connection with the purpose and how our work contributes to the agency's overall mission. Think back to why your job interested you in the first place. Is the spark still there? Does the mission still align with your personal values and professional goals?

Comparing that initial passion to the present can help you gain perspective and determine whether it's possible to reconnect with your work or whether it's time to move on.

Seek support

Everyone gets bored or burned out at times, so don't assume you're alone. Look to your coworkers, friends, or loved ones for coping support and guidance. Your employee assistance program is also a great resource that is available 24/7 to help.

Much of the information in this newsletter was compiled from sources like [Mayo Clinic](#) and [Psychology Today](#), and your EAP can provide more resources and information on how to spark more motivation and rekindle what inspires you. The EAP is a voluntary and confidential employee benefit available to federal employees at no cost.

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