



# BURNOUT IS FOR WEAKLINGS



**The more we believe we are impervious to burnout, the more vulnerable we are. Why? Because we know no limits.**

by PIERRETTE DESROSIERS, M. Ps.,  
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Mark (an assumed name), 6 ft. tall, 200 lbs., in his early forties, came to my office for a consultation. He says he feels "confused, discouraged and has no energy." He cries and is afraid he will lose his farm. His doctor has prescribed antidepressants. Mark's company has been growing for 10 years. He says to me, *"I have always considered myself strong, a good businessman and a hard worker. I'm not a weak man, what's happening to me?"* He is afraid he'll hear the word "burnout" or even worse "depression". *"I'm too passionate for that."* And there lies the problem. The people at the greatest risk of burnout are usually the passionate ones.

**There are five personality profiles of candidates for a burnout (1):**

- ❖ **The workaholic**  
An unstoppable machine  
Does easy jobs in small quantities but can't go past a certain limit  
Personality: a good guy
- ❖ **The saviour**  
Superman or Superwoman: a miracle worker  
Takes on challenges that no one else can do as well as he can  
Personality: needs to be admired
- ❖ **The nitpicker**  
Thinks that everything he does is essential and that his performance makes all the difference  
Thinks that the slightest slow down on his part will lead to a disaster.  
Personality: perfectionist
- ❖ **Braveheart**  
In a job that more or less suits him  
Constantly faced with problems he can't solve  
Gets no satisfaction out of his job  
Personality: victim
- ❖ **Ambitious**  
Has an insatiable need for money, prestige and power: devotes his life to it  
Is constantly threatened by those who are richer, more prestigious or more powerful  
Personality: very career minded



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I have encountered all of these personalities in my practice. They are all convinced that they are immune from a burnout. The more we believe we are impervious to burnout, the more vulnerable we are. Why? Because we know no limits. We ignore the symptoms.

As soon as they appear, we try to camouflage them. Many agricultural entrepreneurs have confessed to me that they had always thought that people who suffer from burnouts are weaklings - until...

A burnout is not something that appears overnight. It builds up over time. The stages are:

**1. You are worried**

The first steps of the process that eventually leads to a burnout are that you feel worried about what is going on at work, but it is just work.

**2. You are troubled**

Your tasks are more and more difficult and you start to feel physical or psychological symptoms.

**3. You are obsessed**

You can't think about anything but work and strongly believe that solving the company's problems will mean a return to good health.

**4. You are exhausted**

This is the burnout stage itself. Your performance and productivity show obvious signs of deterioration.

The final stage of this exhaustion is complete apathy and often includes symptoms of depression and health problems.

If you can see yourself in this description, it would be wise to consult a professional before you cause permanent and irreversible damage to yourself... or others. Because exhaustion also affects your spouse, your family and your company.

(1) Adapted from Jacques Lafleur, 1999, *Le Burnout : questions et réponses*, Éditions logiques

Comments or suggestions? Please contact Pierrette Desrosiers.

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