

STRESS AND BURNOUT

Stress is your body's response to perceived threats. When your brain senses danger, it activates your fight, flight, freeze or fawn response, which can cause symptoms like muscle tension, racing thoughts, worry, irritability, headaches, nausea and sleep problems.

The stress cycle has three stages: *activation* (perceiving a threat), *response* (your body's stress reaction), and *recovery* (returning to a calm, regulated state). When your nervous system doesn't fully recover, your body can remain in a prolonged state of alert. Over time, this chronic stress can increase your risk of physical and mental health problems, including weakened immunity, digestive issues, anxiety, depression, and heart disease.

BURN OUT

When chronic stress is unresolved, it can lead to burn out — a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion. Burnout is characterized by three features: *emotional exhaustion* (feeling drained and depleted), *depersonalization* (becoming detached or cynical toward work or relationships), and a *reduced sense of accomplishment* (feeling ineffective or questioning whether your efforts matter).

COMPLETING THE STRESS CYCLE

Even when your stressors haven't resolved, you can still reduce your body's stress response by engaging in recovery activities. Practicing at least one recovery strategy each day can reduce the effects of chronic stress, build resilience, and lower your risk of burnout. Over time, you'll feel calmer, expand your window of tolerance and be better equipped to handle life's challenges.

- *Physical Activity*: Elevate your heart rate with a brisk walk, dancing, weight lifting, or biking.
This is one of the most effective ways to reduce your stress response and recover
- *Breathing*: Taking full, deep diaphragmatic breaths which include long exhales, box breathing, 4-7-8 technique or physiological sigh.
- *Connection*: Create a positive social interaction by casually chatting, giving a compliment, taking a lunch break with a coworker, or texting or talking with a friend.
- *Laughter*: Genuine, belly laughter from a silly video, inside joke or favorite podcast or show.
- *Affection*: A 20 second hug, petting an animal, snuggling a loved one, or giving yourself comforting touch.
- *Crying*: Watch an emotional show, listen to a song or read a poem that evokes an emotional and cathartic experience.
- *Creative Expression*: Use your imagination and express yourself through coloring, singing, writing, cooking or crafting.