

Leader Guide

# FROM BURNOUT TO BREAKTHROUGH

How Leaders Can Prevent Workplace  
Exhaustion and Boost Productivity



## The business case for boosting productivity through employee wellbeing.

When it comes to employee performance, it's important to remember that happy, healthy employees are more likely to be productive and engaged in their work.

That's why supporting employee wellbeing in the workplace is so critical. When employees feel supported and cared for, they're more likely to have higher job satisfaction and feel more committed to their work, team and organization.

This translates into greater productivity, creativity, and innovation. Employees who feel well-supported are also less likely to experience exhaustion or chronic stress, which can have a negative impact on both individual and organizational performance. **Ultimately, investing in employee wellbeing is an investment in the long-term success and sustainability of your organization.**

## Results don't lie...

Harvard Business Review did a study that showed results for companies that invested in employee wellness programs: They saw a **3-to-1 return on investment (ROI) in reduced healthcare costs and increased productivity**. (Source: <https://hbr.org/2010/12/whats-the-hard-return-on-employee-wellness-programs>)

A study by the World Economic Forum found that **for every \$1 spent on employee wellness programs, companies saw a \$2.73 return on investment** due to reduced healthcare costs and increased productivity. (Source: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/01/workplace-wellness-programmes-return-on-investment/>)

As per a report by the Rand Corporation, employees who participate in wellness programs have lower healthcare costs and are more productive, **resulting in a savings of \$2.73 in healthcare costs and a \$2.73 increase in productivity for every \$1 invested in the program**. (Source: [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR200/RR254/RAND\\_RR254.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR254/RAND_RR254.pdf))

## ...neither do costs to productivity.

### CANADA'S MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS



#### ABSENTEEISM

- Costs employers \$16.6 billion annually<sup>3</sup>
- Keeps 500,000 workers away from work each week due to mental health issues<sup>4</sup>



#### STRESS

- Affects 72% of all employees, who want their employers to help<sup>5</sup>
- In their job has caused one in four workers to leave their employer<sup>6</sup>



#### DISABILITY

- Strikes one in five Canadians due to a psychological health problem or illness in any given year<sup>7</sup>
- Due to psychological health problems – the number one cause of disability – costs the economy \$20 billion per year<sup>7</sup>

#### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> 2012, 2017 Mercer Financial Database
- <sup>2</sup> 2022 The Future of Healthcare prediction
- <sup>3</sup> 2013 Conference Board of Canada
- <sup>4</sup> 2013 Mental Health Commission of Canada
- <sup>5</sup> Scand J. Work Environ Health 2016
- <sup>6</sup> Monster Canada work survey, 2017
- <sup>7</sup> 2016 Mental Health Commission of Canada

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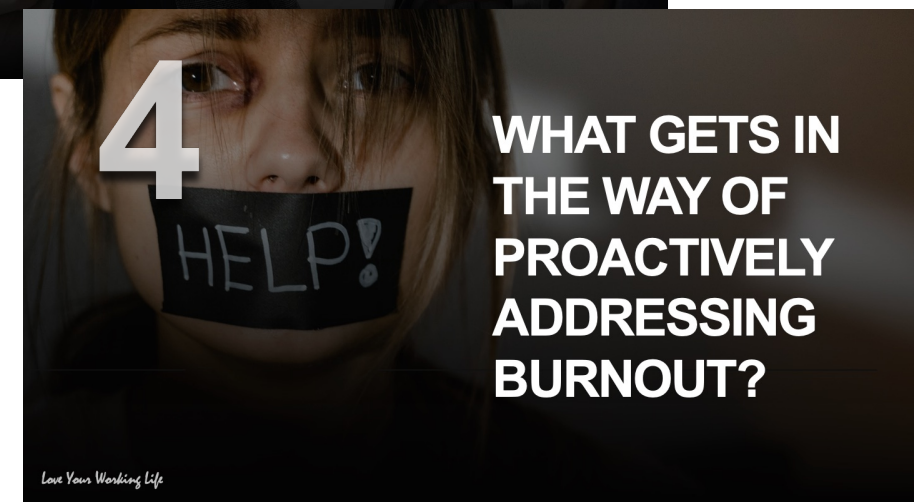
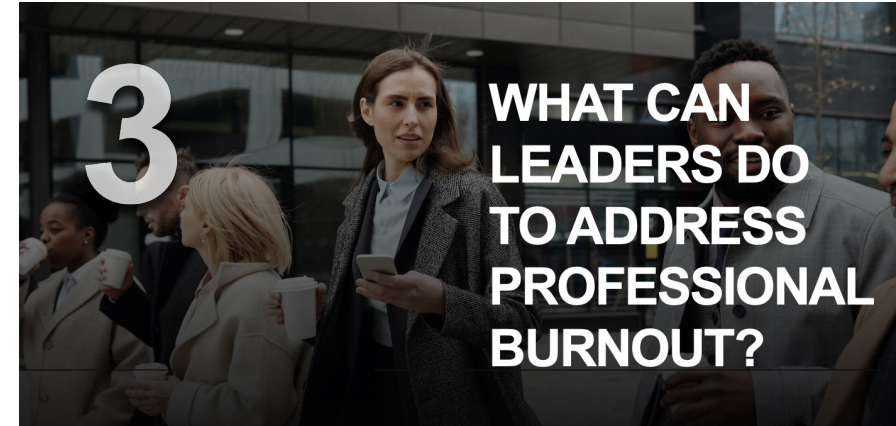
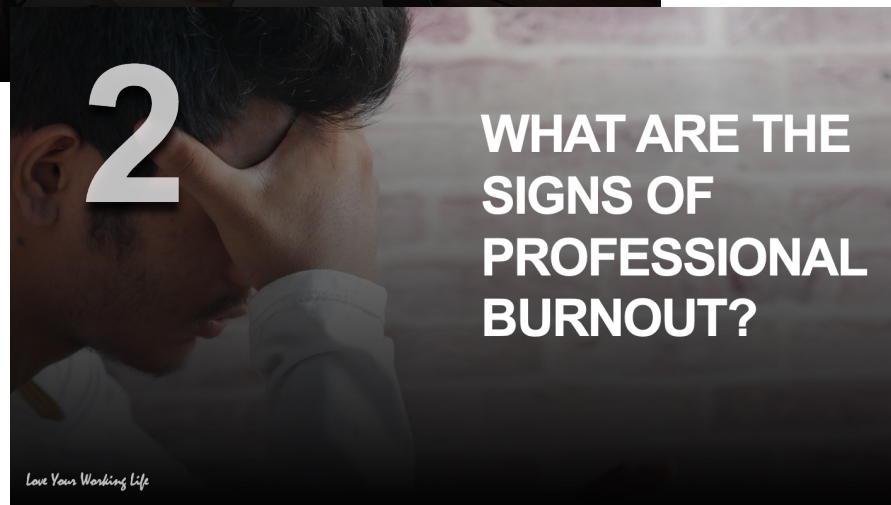
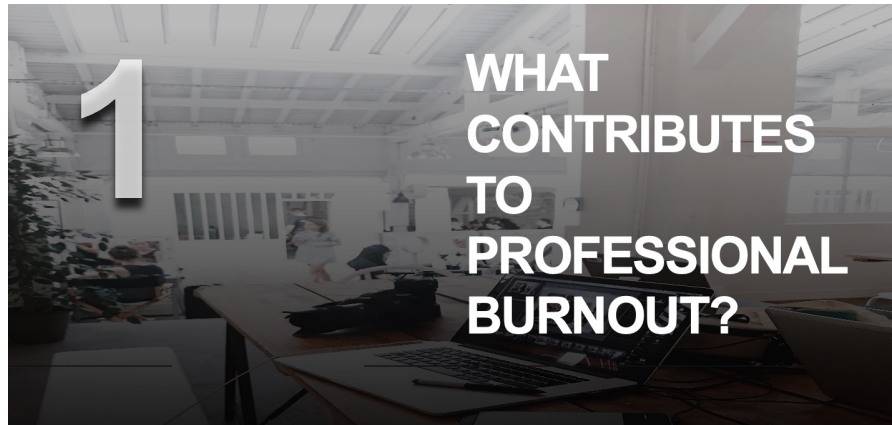
**Employee burnout leads to errors in judgement and other critical mistakes which damage a company's reputation and bottom line.**

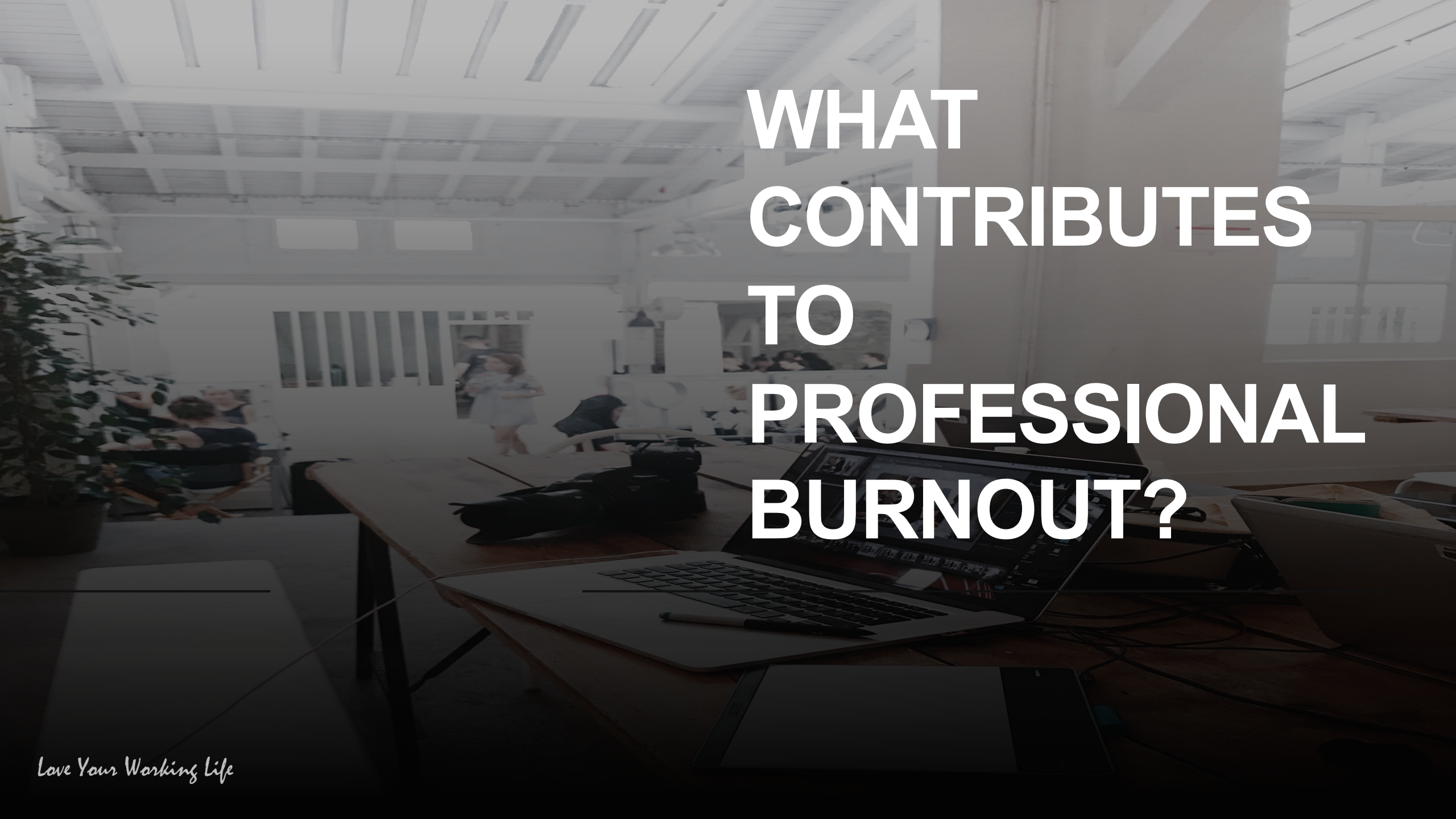
**Add to that the cost of employee absence, long-term sick leave and turnover and it's **crucial for leaders at all levels to address rising burnout in their workforces.****

**CARLEEN HICKS**

*Love Your Working Life*

## In this guide:



A blurred office scene with people working at desks and a laptop in the foreground. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT?

# Burnout is a common problem **for many employees & leaders**; there are several preventable causes that contribute to it.

One of the most significant factors is excessive workload or a lack of control over the work. When individuals feel they have to work long hours, or feel like they can't keep up with the demands of their job, they may become overwhelmed and exhausted.

Another contributing factor causing professional burnout is a lack of support or recognition from management or colleagues. Individuals who feel undervalued, unappreciated or exploited may lose motivation and become disengaged from their work, team or the organization.

Workplace culture and the style of communication it supports can also contribute to burnout. Toxic, highly competitive or inconsistent work environments, with poor leadership communication and unchecked negativity all increase stress levels and contribute to professional exhaustion and burnout.

**Overall, burnout is a complex issue that can have many causes. It's important for employers to proactively recognize which aspects your workplace contributes and address these factors to create a healthy and productive working environment.**

- New survey research shows more than a third of all Canadians report being burnt out (2022).
- Many working Canadians feel they're not receiving enough support from their employer, with only a third of survey respondents indicating their company is committed to a low stress environment.
- *"We're troubled about the many respondents who singled out the lack of psychological supports at work,"* said Michael Cooper, Vice-President, Mental Health Research Canada.

Source: [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#)



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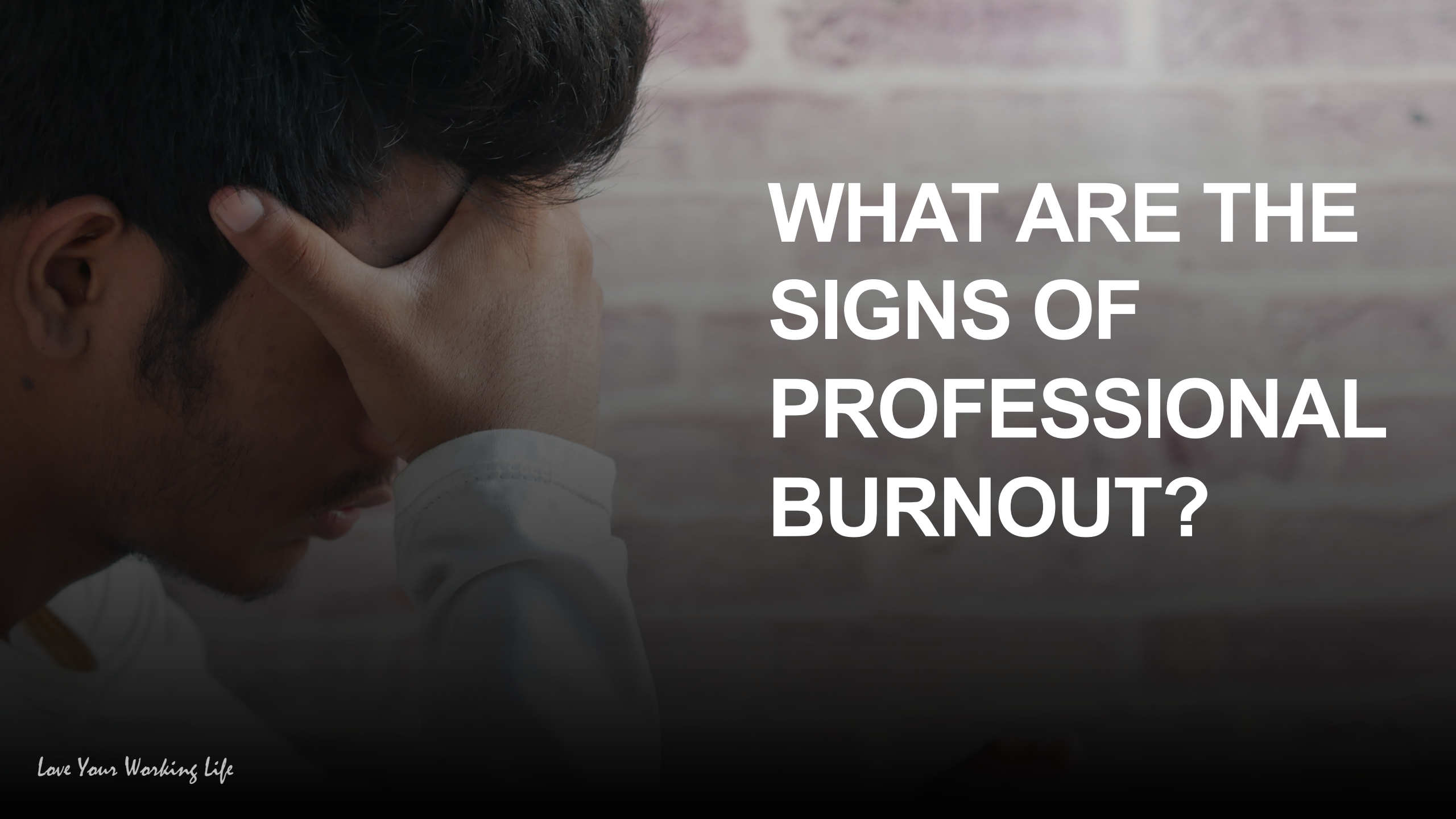
Professional burnout isn't solely an **individual** problem; it's also an **organizational** problem.

Get this checklist of the 5 top ways organizations can proactively address employee & leader burnout here: <https://www.loveyourworkinglife.com/breakthrough-burnout-resource-request.html>

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A man in a white shirt is shown in profile, covering his face with his hand, suggesting stress or burnout. The background is a blurred wall with some faint markings.

# WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT?

# **Burnout is a condition that results from prolonged or excessive stress; it can manifest in various ways at work.**

Some common signs and symptoms leaders may observe (in themselves or their staff) include feeling exhausted and drained (even after a weekend or vacation), lack of motivation and interest in work, difficulty making routine decisions or concentrating, new or increased irritability or impatience with coworkers/clients or cynicism about work.

Individuals may also experience decreased satisfaction and/or sense of accomplishment, changes in appetite, sleep patterns, or mood. Physical symptoms like headaches, stomach problems, or muscle tension, all of which is not easily visible to others at work. However, these signs and symptoms may result in increased absenteeism or tardiness, which leaders can see.

If your employees are experiencing any of these symptoms, it's important to approach the topic with sensitivity. Suggestions to alleviate stress and exhaustion include prioritizing self-care and reducing work hours to prevent burnout from getting worse. Mention the importance of speaking with a health care professional, like a doctor or therapist, for the support of both mental and physical health. Leverage your group insurance benefits and the employee and family assistance plan if your organization provides them.

- Because burnout can be chronic in nature, affecting both health and performance, PREVENTION strategies are considered the most effective approach for addressing it.
- The negative effects of burnout can increase significantly before you recognize the problem. Unaddressed burnout can increase an individual's chance of developing clinical depression or other serious health conditions that take them out of the workplace.
- Burnout is both a terrible condition and difficult to recover from. Don't wait until it impacts your high performers, or your bottom line, before learning how to prevent it.

Source: [Workplace Strategies for Mental Health](#)

# A burnout risk checklist for leaders.

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*Burnout has a collective impact on a workforce. When one person who's instrumental to a team (or operations) has to step away from work to restore their health, it has a knock-on effect.*

*Burnout can spread, affecting not only the individual experiencing it but also their colleagues and adjacent teams. This can lead to decreased morale, reduced teamwork, and lower productivity across the organization.*

*CEDES is an acronym to help leaders identify the 5 signs, and proactively support employee wellbeing before it impacts team productivity (the CEDE signs may show up in any order).*

## CEDES

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**Cognitive Impairment:** chronic stress can lead to problems with memory, attention, and decision-making.

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**Exhaustion:** feeling drained and depleted, lacking energy, and feeling like there is nothing left to give.

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**Disengagement:** developing a negative and detached attitude towards others, cynicism towards work or organization.

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**Emotional Reactivity:** becoming easily irritable or impatient; may have a shorter temper than usual.

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**Secondary Impact:** CEDE risks can lead to worsening physical and psychological health, resulting in medical leave.



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**If you're like most leaders, you may struggle with deeply personal conversations at work.**

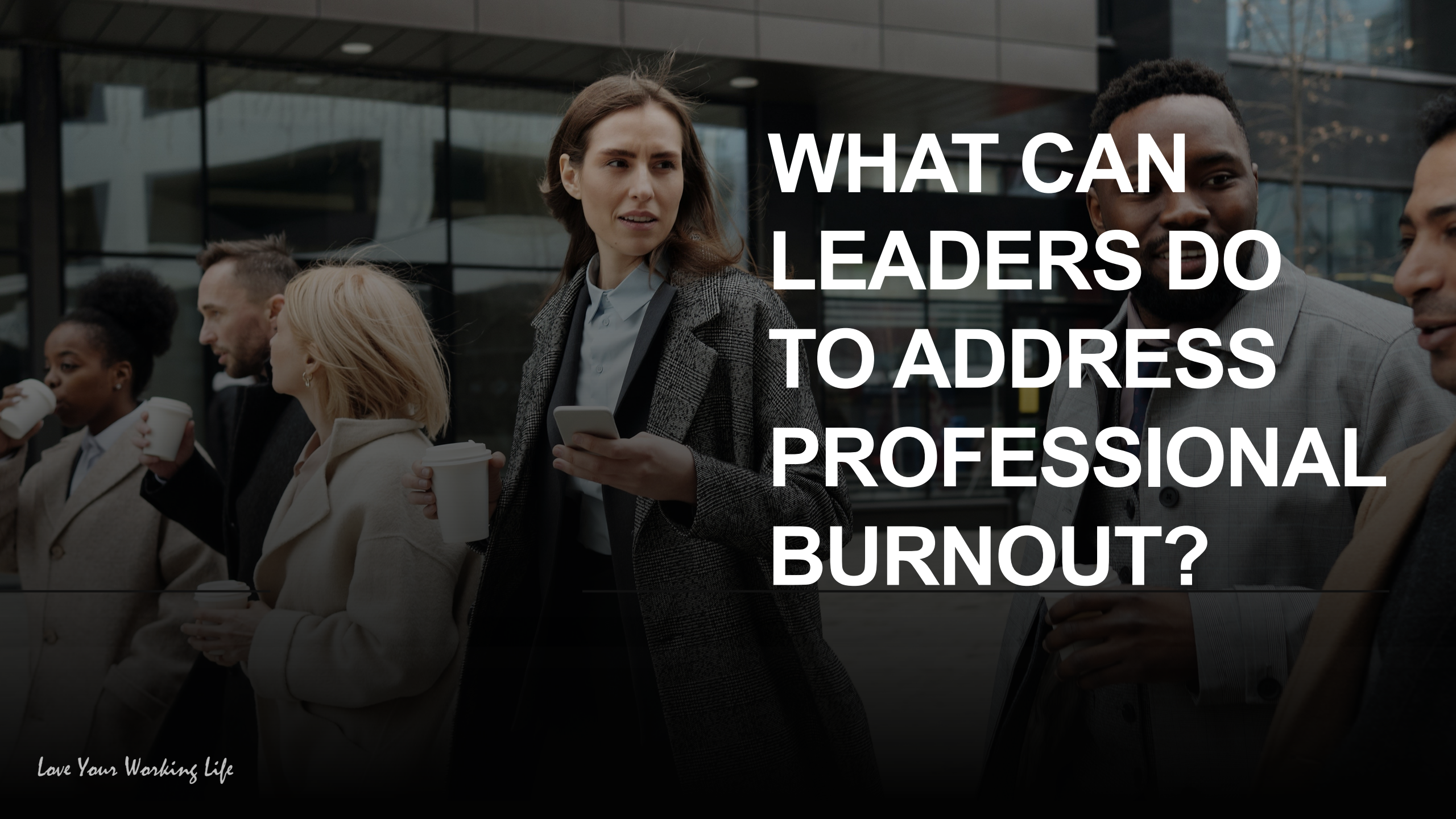
**It's a tough balancing act to know how to create psychological safety without becoming an individuals' "work therapist".**

**There is a way to do this so everyone gets what they need. Find a checklist and more here:**

**<https://www.loveyourworkinglife.com/break-through-burnout-resource-request.html>**

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A group of business professionals in an office lobby. In the center, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a grey blazer over a light blue shirt, looks stressed and is holding a smartphone. To her left, a blonde woman in a white coat is talking to a man in a dark suit. In the background, a woman with dark hair is drinking from a white coffee cup. To the right, a man in a grey suit is looking towards the camera. The background shows a modern office building with large windows.

# WHAT CAN LEADERS DO TO ADDRESS PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT?

# Professional burnout is not solely an individual problem. It's up to Leaders & organizations to proactively take action.

Leaders need to create a positive work environment that encourages open communication and provides support to employees. Ensuring employees aren't over-committing and are clear on priorities and expectations goes a long way. So does regularly opening up the topic of workload for discussion, creating psychological safety for employees to proactively discuss barriers to wellness at work.

Leaders also need to lead by example and ensure they are taking care of their own mental health. Doing this for themselves means they're more able to prioritize work-life sustainability for their employees by setting realistic goals and supporting flexible working arrangements. Organizations who provide access to resources for mental health support, such as counseling or therapy, reduce the barriers associated with asking for help.

Leaders need to escalate workplace wellness issues that are outside employee control, exploring/addressing ways to support employee wellbeing AND overall organizational health. Organizations need consistent processes to proactively identify and address systemic factors and organizational practices (including culture) that sabotage, rather than support employee wellbeing.

- While having self-serve mental health resources and offering time off is beneficial, it's often REACTIVE.
- Proactivity to address burnout means organizations challenge the ongoing belief that mental health (including burnout) is an individual problem separate from organizational practices and culture.
- According to a survey conducted by Deloitte, in 2020, 77% of employees experienced burnout at their current job, with 64% saying their organization was not doing enough to prevent or alleviate burnout. (Source: Deloitte, "Burnout: A Workplace Crisis," 2021)



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Organizations need to take steps to ensure their culture, working arrangements and working practices are capable of **supporting, not sabotaging**, employee wellbeing.

Leaders play an instrumental part.

Find out how to start the conversation where you work here:

<https://www.loveyourworkinglife.com/break-through-burnout-resource-request.html>

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**WHAT GETS IN  
THE WAY OF  
PROACTIVELY  
ADDRESSING  
BURNOUT?**



# There is a stigma attached to being seen as “demanding”, or “weak”, unable to perform to organizational expectations.

The answer for most professionals who are exhausted or chronically stressed is to try and make it work, hoping the circumstance is temporary or will fix itself. This is especially prevalent if conversations or inquiries around wellness needs are ignored, ridiculed or punished (by leaders or ambiently through organizational culture and the need to keep “fitting in” or risk being laid-off).

Because systemic factors are outside of individual employee control they can only be addressed by the organization. This is possible when leaders are willing to see there’s an ongoing problem AND the organization knows how employee health and wellness corresponds to sustained organizational health and productivity.

As a leader you play a role in breaking the silence in your organization. The first systemic factor that needs to be addressed in breaking through burnout and removing barriers to peak performance is **psychological safety**. When individuals feel safe bringing forward concerns with operational practices there is an opportunity to resolve them for the betterment of both employee and organizational health.



- It's important for employers to create a culture where employees feel comfortable discussing their work-life sustainability needs; where they are supported in achieving a healthy balance between their work and personal lives.
- This includes being open to discussing ways your workplace may impact employee wellbeing, and exploring how to overcome wellness barriers at work.
- It's a worthwhile investment: The World Health Organization estimated that stress-related illnesses and burnout cost businesses \$300 billion annually. (Source: World Health Organization, "Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases," 2019)

# Why employees don't bring concerns to management.

*There are a variety of reasons why employees may not feel comfortable discussing their wellbeing needs with their leader. These 5 most cited reasons can be pro-actively addressed to prevent employee exhaustion and burnout.*

*Creating a supportive and accommodating work environment that values work-life integrity has a positive impact on employee wellbeing, productivity, and job satisfaction, boosting performance.*

*Burnout can be chronic in nature, that's why **prevention strategies** are the most effective approach for organizations to address it.*



Fear of negative consequences.



Lack of trust.



Organization's culture & expectations.



Lack of awareness regarding support.



Stigma in prioritizing work/life balance.





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**Leadership makes the difference between proactively addressing burnout and letting it effect productivity. It's about addressing the barriers.**

**Want to overcome these common barriers to addressing burnout? Learn more here: <https://www.loveyourworkinglife.com/break-through-burnout-resource-request.html>**

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# MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT & TRAINING FOR LEADERS IS NO LONGER “NICE” TO HAVE, IT’S NEED TO HAVE TO BE MORE PROACTIVE... **BECAUSE YOU’RE AN EMPLOYEE TOO.**

Unaddressed manager and executive burnout is also putting productivity at risk. *Burnout within the management sub-segment of the workforce can be seen as potentially more threatening, because this group is directly responsible for leading teams of others.* (Source: HR Morning, Manager Burnout: 16 Harrowing Statistic from 2021)

“According to 2020 and 2021 survey data from Gallup, ‘manager burnout is only getting worse.’ ”

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## KNOW THE STATS:

- 66% of leaders suffer from burnout.
- 76% are overwhelmed.
- 59% feel overworked and/or are working longer hours.
- 72% feel increased pressure to deliver.
- 84% internalize fault for high employee burnout.

Source:

<https://www.hrmorning.com/articles/manager-burnout/>



A photograph of three women in a meeting. On the left, a woman with curly blonde hair is smiling and looking towards the center. In the middle, a woman with dark hair and glasses is looking down at a document. On the right, an older woman with short white hair and glasses is smiling and looking towards the center. They are all wearing light-colored tops. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or meeting room.

# PROFESSIONAL BURNOUT IS 100% PREVENTABLE

## **SOMETHING YOU CAN DO TODAY:**

### **Working Life Wellbeing Assessment**

If you, or someone you work with, is concerned about burnout, take this free 5 minute assessment:

<https://www.loveyourworkinglife.com/working-life-wellbeing-assessment.html>

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Working  
Life*

# YOU CAN BREAKTHROUGH EMPLOYEE BURNOUT.

*We provide simple, customizable interventions that support organizational AND employee health:*

- Coaching services to support individuals in preventing/recovering from professional burnout.
- Leadership development programs to build leadership awareness, increasing employee wellness, job satisfaction and performance.
- Workshops to provide group learning opportunities that explore organizational culture and practices, addressing barriers to wellness & productivity at work.

**Let us help you find ways to prevent workplace exhaustion and boost workforce productivity.**

## **NEED FUNDING FOR TRAINING?**

The Canada-Ontario Job Grant provides direct financial support to employers who wish to purchase training for their employees. Find out more here:

<https://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/cojg.htm>

# For More Information:

Please book a complimentary 30 minute consultation to see how best our services can support your organization.

You can book on-line at:

<https://calendly.com/coachingwithcarleen/breakthroughburnout30min>

Carleen is an Integral Master Coach with a BA from the University of Manitoba. She's been coaching leaders and emerging leaders for the past 10 years.

**Carleen Hicks**

Prior to founding Love Your Working Life she was a Human Resource professional holding various leadership roles in corporations and non-profit organizations.