



# BTAC BULLETIN

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE | THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT | LAW ENFORCEMENT & COUNTERINTELLIGENCE | CYBERSECURITY | EMPLOYEE LABOR RELATIONS

## BURNOUT

### PERSONAL BOUNDARIES & MALADAPTIVE RESPONSES



77% of US workers have experienced burnout in their current job<sup>1</sup>.

We often confuse burnout with stress. While stress arises from pressure and demands, burnout is a resulting condition wherein unmitigated stress over time causes a person to become depleted, struggle to be productive, make errors, and possibly develop cynicism or job dissatisfaction<sup>1,2</sup>. Burnout can occur when we are repeatedly tasked beyond our ability to perform or when we do not have strong boundaries between work-life and home-life. The emotions associated with burnout present conditions for insider risks to develop. Organizational responses may exacerbate the chances an employee experiencing burnout becomes an insider threat. Maladaptive organizational responses may include inattention to employees' experiences, failure to understand factors leading to burnout, or failure to act once leadership is aware an employee is showing signs of burnout. When this happens, an employee may believe the organization doesn't care or value them, setting the stage for grievances to develop, leading to increasing problematic behaviors, emotional instability, repeated interpersonal conflicts, acting out, and rule violations.

### WHAT DOES BURNOUT LOOK LIKE?<sup>1,2,4</sup>

- Absentmindedness, forgetfulness
- Declining work output/performance
- Cynicism or negativity
- Acting out or interpersonal conflicts
- Substance misuse
- Emotional instability, depression
- Tardiness/Unscheduled absences
- Incivility in the workplace
- Poorer decision making

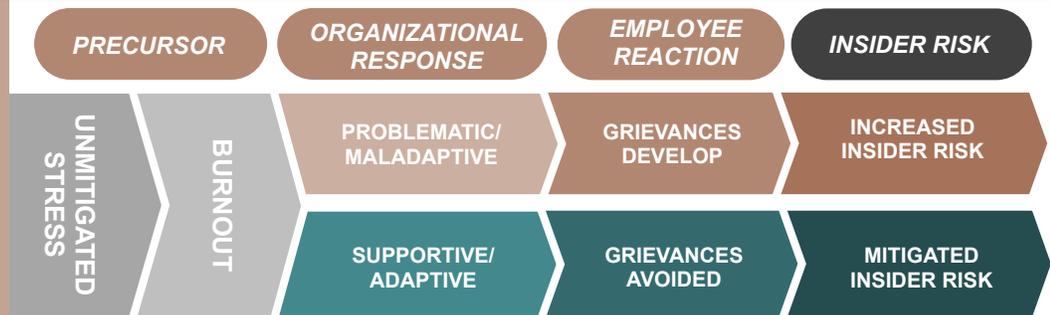
*Leaders are responsible for modeling boundary-setting behaviors!*

### WHAT CAUSES BURNOUT?<sup>1,2,4</sup>

- Unrelenting stress/"hustle" culture with insufficient recovery/down-time
- Insufficient resources to complete work
- Perceived lack of control
- Micromanagement
- Perceived inequities in rewards
- Lack of appreciation
- Lack of supportive relationships



Research has found that **40%** of employees under the age of 28 believe burnout is inevitable<sup>3</sup>



PRECURSOR

ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE

EMPLOYEE REACTION

INSIDER RISK

UNMITIGATED STRESS

BURNOUT

PROBLEMATIC/MALADAPTIVE

GRIEVANCES DEVELOP

INCREASED INSIDER RISK

SUPPORTIVE/ADAPTIVE

GRIEVANCES AVOIDED

MITIGATED INSIDER RISK

### HEALTHY EMPLOYEE RESPONSES

1. Set clear boundaries that allow recuperation
  - Avoid after-hours emails or texts
  - Take vacations and holidays
2. Prioritize work in terms of urgency and importance
3. If there are too many urgent and important tasks to be completed in the available time, speak to your manager to reassign work or revise the timeline
4. Work to develop at least one trusted and supportive workplace relationship
5. Physical self care (i.e., exercise, mindfulness)
6. Engage an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) —utilize online support modules or available counseling to identify action plans to remediate burnout
7. Pursue personally meaningful work

### SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES

1. Know and respect employees' boundaries
2. Encourage and support flex time, vacation, and holidays
3. Monitor workloads and simultaneous tasking
4. Monitor behavior for indicators of possible burnout
5. Acknowledge and reward hard work
6. When assigning work in teams, seek to identify if people have preferred tasks that they find meaningful and strive to assign work accordingly to reduce burnout
7. Encourage employees to seek assistance prioritizing or reassigning tasks
8. Encourage peer-to-peer mentoring
9. Ensure employees are regularly reminded of available resources (i.e., EAP, Behavioral Health, Wellness Programs)



1. Wiens, K. (2024). [How burnout became normal—and how to push back against it](#). Harvard Business Review. 2. Mayo Clinic (2023, November) [Job burnout: How to spot it and take action](#). The Mayo Clinic 3. Fisher, J. (n.d.). [Workplace Burnout Survey](#) Deloitte. 4. Mayo Clinic (2023, April) [Breaking down burnout in the workplace](#)