

**fhi360**

THE SCIENCE OF IMPROVING LIVES

# Addressing Burnout: Resource Toolkit

Staff Learning Exchange

December 2022

# Addressing Burnout: Staff Learning Exchange

## RESOURCE TOOLKIT

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### BACKGROUND

In 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) classified [burnout](#) as an occupational phenomenon. WHO defines burnout as a syndrome resulting from “chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.” It is characterized by feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job; and reduced professional efficacy. WHO emphasizes that burnout refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life. COVID-19 worsened burnout for many because the pandemic placed unprecedented pressure on employees. Despite generally widespread recognition of increased levels of burnout, [several studies](#) reveal that addressing it remains a leadership challenge.

With this backdrop, coupled with the recognition that people are FHI 360’s most valuable asset, the organization launched an internal Staff Learning Exchange (SLE) in 2022 to explore how FHI 360 could address burnout among both our staff and some of the populations with whom we work (for example, frontline health care workers in low-resource settings). The purpose of the SLE was to promote knowledge exchange focused on learning with and from each other. The SLE, comprised of employees representing a broad swath of the organization, discussed how FHI 360 operations and approaches to our technical and programmatic work might be contributing to burnout. The initiative paid particular attention to systems-based, as opposed to individualized efforts, at the team and organization levels.

This toolkit, a product of the SLE’s knowledge exchange, is a collection of articles, books, podcasts and other resources that may be helpful as staff seek to understand, diagnose and manage burnout at a personal level and within teams. The toolkit provides links to and excerpts from resources about burnout. It is also meant to be a living document.

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## ARTICLES

### **“Addressing employee burnout: Are you solving the right problem?” (McKinsey Health Institute)**

“Employers have invested unprecedented resources in employee mental health and well-being. With burnout at all-time highs, leaders wonder if they can make a difference. Our research suggests they can.” [Read more](#)

### **“Belgium is the latest country to join the four-day workweek” (Forbes)**

“To enhance the quality of the lives of Belgium workers, the European country previously announced that thousands of federal civil servants will no longer have to answer calls or emails from their bosses outside of working hours. Around 65,000 government workers earned ‘the right to disconnect,’ in hopes of leading a better work-life balance.” [Read more](#)

### **“Bosses too reliant on non-parents?” (LinkedIn)**

“Working parents — particularly moms with young children — are taking on so much during the pandemic, but that may mean childless colleagues are picking up larger shares of the work burden. Over time, [BBC Worklife](#) and The New York Times report resentments could [boil over](#) unless managers are mindful of workloads and take everyone's work-life balance into consideration. This divide between working parents and those who don't have kids isn't going away: Data show the share of those without kids is growing in the U.S. and U.K.” [Read more](#)

### **“Burn-out an ‘occupational phenomenon’: International Classification of Diseases” (WHO)**

“Burn-out is included in the 11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as an occupational phenomenon. It is **not** classified as a medical condition. ... ‘Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterized by three dimensions ...’” [Read more](#)

### **“Do companies lean harder on non-parents?” (BBC)**

“Working parents are juggling a lot. But when non-parents have to work harder to compensate, tensions can arise. ... Leo Ramirez’s passion job is editing Grubby Cat, a cat-care website. But his main job is very different: coordinating inspections for a crane company in Florida, US. It’s there that he sometimes feels frustrated as a 47-year-old employee without children.” [Read more](#)

### **“Does your boss care about you? Here's what most workers say” (CNN)**

“For several months at the beginning of the pandemic, American workers felt genuinely cared for by their bosses, [according to a new survey released Friday by Gallup](#), an international polling organization. By April 2020, only a month into the nationwide lockdown, 49% of workers felt warm and fuzzy about how they were being treated by their employers, nearly double the typical 25% who felt that way before the pandemic.” [Read more](#)

### “Employee Burnout: The Biggest Myth” (Gallup)

“Do you know what really causes job burnout? It's not just overtime. According to Gallup's recent report, *Employee Burnout: Causes and Cures*, 76% of employees experience burnout on the job at least sometimes, and 28% say they are burned out ‘very often’ or ‘always’ at work.” [Read more](#)

### “Helping Remote Workers Avoid Loneliness and Burnout” (Harvard Business Review)

“It’s a weekday and Jeff, the director of technology at Economical Insurance, kisses his daughter and waves goodbye as she enters the doors of her public school. Then, he either turns the car around and returns home for a day of remote work, or he continues on to his office, where his hours are flexible — he just needs to keep his boss in the loop.” [Read more](#)

### “‘How people fall apart’: Yale faculty discuss the impact of burnout on the brain” (Yale Daily News)

“Burnout can make one feel helpless, incompetent, emotionally exhausted, isolated, and cynical. Yale faculty provided insight into the neurobiological basis behind symptoms of burnout — and what can be done to reverse it. Professor of neuroscience and psychology Amy Arnsten’s decades of research on the effects of stress on the brain were inspired by seeing ‘how people fall apart,’ she said. When her father was very ill, Arnsten witnessed the process by which people who are normally ‘very rational’ can suddenly become ‘emotional tornadoes.’” [Read more](#)

### “How to Defeat Work-from-Home Burnout and Zoom Fatigue” (Training)

“As we transition from the pandemic into (hopefully) post-pandemic life, many companies have adopted hybrid models. That means workers coming in part-time only, while others remain fully remote. So, the same issues of [work-from-home burnout](#) and [Zoom fatigue](#) that posed problems during the pandemic will remain salient for the foreseeable future.” [Read more](#)

### “How to Eliminate Burnout and Retain Top Talent” (Gallup)

“... Perhaps it's no wonder that many employees are reconsidering their relationship to their career and work -- finding a new employer or career or leaving the workforce completely. According to Gallup's *State of the Global Workplace: 2021 Report*, American workers saw their stress levels soar during the events of 2020.” [Read more](#)

### **“Is Your Burnout From Too Much Work or Too Little Impact?” (Harvard Business Review)**

“If you haven't felt it personally, you've probably heard the news: Workers are working more hours, they're exhausted, burned out, and they're resigning in droves. I've been there myself. I was working at Oracle Corporation as a vice president for years in a challenging, fulfilling job when I suddenly found myself with a case of burnout.” [Read more](#)

### **“It's the End of the World As We Know It. And We're Still At Work.” (Elle)**

“Before she woke up drenched in sweat on the floor, Andrea thought the Zoom call was going great. What she remembers next are snippets of sensation: the coldness of the hardwood on her face as she willed herself to stand up, the nagging sense that she needed to get back to work. Never mind that it was past 3 a.m. or that she had, apparently, passed out in the middle of an eleventh-hour production meeting.” [Read more](#)

### **“Manager Burnout Is Only Getting Worse” (Gallup)**

“Managers report more stress and burnout and worse physical wellbeing and work-life balance than the people they manage, Gallup has found in recent years. And based on surveys conducted in 2020 and 2021, manager burnout is only getting worse. Gallup tracked self-reported burnout at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 and again throughout 2021. While the percentage of managers who report being burned out 'very often' or 'always' was slightly higher than that of individual contributors in 2020, the gap widened considerably in 2021.” [Read more](#)

### **“Parents Got More Time Off. Then the Backlash Started.” (The New York Times)**

“When the coronavirus closed schools and child care centers and turned American parenthood into a multitasking nightmare, many tech companies rushed to help their employees. They used their comfortable profit margins to extend workers new [benefits](#), including extra time off for parents to help them care for their children. It wasn't long before employees without children started to ask: What about us?” [Read more](#)

### **“Preventing Busyness from Becoming Burnout” (Harvard Business Review)**

“‘I'm so busy.' This is a common refrain among knowledge workers, and for the most part, companies have left it up to individuals to come up with a solution. But research from ideas42,

a behavioral science nonprofit, finds that it's virtually impossible for people to break out of their 'busyness tunnel' without structural changes within an organization. That's because we're wired to complete the easiest task on the vine and rewarded professionally for our near-constant availability. To prevent burnout, and improve work-life stress, companies should consider three new mental models for employees: send regular social signals that working 24/7 is not expected or rewarded; build in deliberate slack time for getting big projects done; and making everyone's workloads more transparent." [Read more](#)

### **"PTO alone can't fix pandemic stress — how to better support employees and battle burnout" (Employee Benefit News)**

"Time off from work may not be the sole solution to stress caused by work. To grapple with burnout among employees, an increasing number of companies are offering additional PTO or even providing [company-wide shutdowns](#). But time off is just one part of a more complicated equation and solution, says Cheryl Johnson, chief human resources officer at Paylocity." [Read more](#)

### **"Rethinking Your Approach to the Employee Experience" (Harvard Business Review)**

"Human resources leaders commonly assume that for a company to stand out as a great place to work, it must deliver competitive perks—everything from skills training to pet insurance to foosball. New research finds that this view is outdated: Engagement and retention don't correlate with benefits awards. Employees have begun looking beyond material offerings and assessing how they feel about the company they work for—and that requires a different approach." [Read more](#)

### **"The disconnect disconnect" (Deloitte)**

"Despite evidence that time off can help workers avoid burnout and perform at their highest levels, most workers have not been taking enough of it. It may be time for organizations to fix a disconnect between their time-off policies and culture around using it." [Read more](#)

### **"What Leaders Need to Know Before Trying a 4-Day Work Week" (Harvard Business Review)**

"... in a recent study about New Zealand's move to the four-day workweek, researchers Helen Delaney and Catherine Casey found that not only was work intensified following the change, but so too were managerial pressures around performance measurement, monitoring, and productivity. Indeed, several well-regarded studies into the four-day workweek are promoted



in the [media](#) on the basis that productivity should not fall (or indeed, should increase) if the change is managed well.” [Read more](#)

### **“Women @ Work 2022: A Global Outlook” (Deloitte)**

“... the responses of 5,000 women in the workplace across 10 countries make clear that the pandemic continues to take a heavy toll on women. Burnout, for example, has reached alarmingly high levels. At the same time, many women have made career and life decisions driven by their experiences during the pandemic. For some, this has meant seeking new, more flexible working patterns; for others, it has meant leaving their employers or the workforce entirely. ... Almost half of women feel burned out, and burnout is the top reason why women want to leave their jobs. At a time when employers need to focus on retaining women, failure to address burnout is not an option. Since burnout is such a significant issue for women at work, failure to address it will undermine organizations’ gender-equality ambitions.”

[Read more](#)

### **“Your Body Knows You’re Burned Out” (The New York Times)**

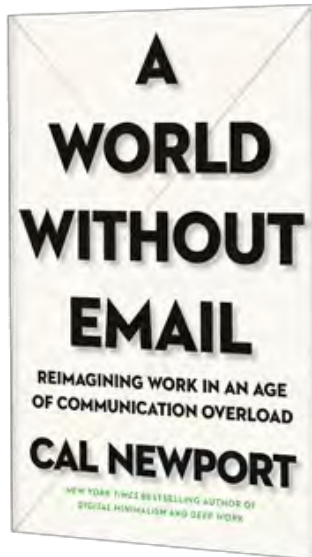
“Dr. Jessi Gold, a psychiatrist at Washington University in St. Louis, knows she’s edging toward burnout when she wakes up, feels instantly angry at her email inbox and doesn’t want to get out of bed. It’s perhaps not surprising that a mental health professional who is trying to stem the rising tide of burnout could burn out sometimes, too. After all, the phenomenon has practically become ubiquitous in our culture. In a 2021 [survey](#) of 1,500 U.S. workers, more than half said they were feeling burned out as a result of their job demands, and a whopping 4.3 million Americans [quit](#) their jobs in December in what has come to be known as the ‘[great resignation](#).’” [Read more](#)

### **“Your Late-Night Emails Are Hurting Your Team” (Harvard Business Review)**

“Being ‘always on’ hurts results. When employees are constantly monitoring their email after work hours — because they are afraid of missing something from you [their supervisor], or because they are addicted to their devices — they are missing out on essential down time that brains need. Disconnecting from their devices allows employees to recharge their creativity and motivation, so company leaders should set clear and healthy expectations about communication outside of work hours. A company policy could, for example, discourage email after 10pm and on weekends. Leaders should also examine their attitudes toward an always-on work environment and avoid making the (incorrect) assumption that more work equals more success. Long work hours actually decrease productivity and engagement.” [Read more](#)

## BOOKS

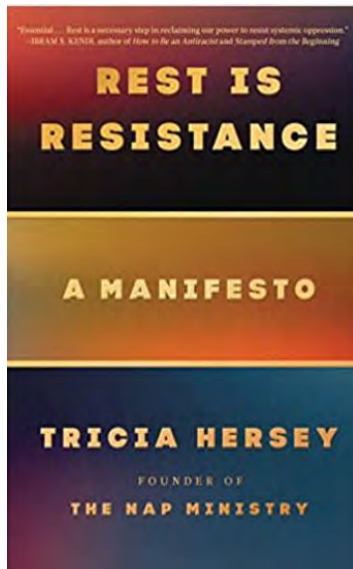
### *A World Without Email: Reimagining Work in an Age of Communication Overload*



“Modern knowledge workers communicate constantly. Their days are defined by a relentless barrage of incoming messages and back-and-forth digital conversations--a state of constant, anxious chatter in which nobody can disconnect, and so nobody has the cognitive bandwidth to perform substantive work. There was a time when tools like email felt cutting edge, but a thorough review of current evidence reveals that the ‘hyperactive hive mind’ workflow they helped create has become a productivity disaster, reducing profitability and perhaps even slowing overall economic growth. Equally worrisome, it makes us miserable. Humans are simply not wired for constant digital communication. ... *A World Without Email* will convince you that the time has come for bold changes, and will walk you through exactly how to make them happen.

Learn more [here](#).

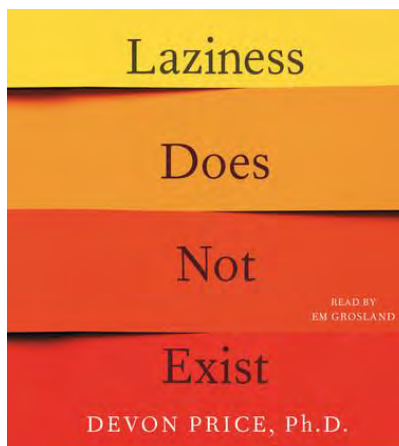
## Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto



“In this book, Tricia Hersey, aka The Nap Bishop, encourages us to connect to the liberating power of rest, daydreaming, and naps as a foundation for healing and justice. What would it be like to live in a well-rested world? Far too many of us have claimed productivity as the cornerstone of success. Brainwashed by capitalism, we subject our bodies and minds to work at an unrealistic, damaging, and machine-level pace — feeding into the same engine that enslaved millions into brutal labor for its own relentless benefit. In *Rest Is Resistance*, Tricia Hersey ... casts an illuminating light on our troubled relationship with rest and how to imagine and dream our way to a future where rest is exalted. Our worth does not reside in how much we produce, especially not for a system that exploits and dehumanizes us. Rest, in its simplest form, becomes an act of resistance and a reclaiming of power because it asserts our most basic humanity. We are enough. The systems cannot have us.”

Learn more [here](#).

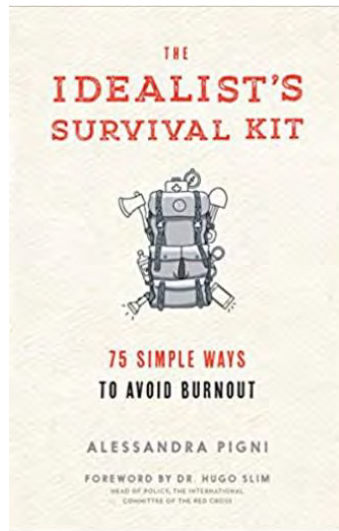
## Laziness Does Not Exist



“*Laziness Does Not Exist* explores the psychological underpinnings of the ‘laziness lie’ [which claims we are not working or learning hard enough], including its origins from the Puritans and how it has continued to proliferate as digital work tools have blurred the boundaries between work and life. Using in-depth research, Price explains that people today do far more work than nearly any other humans in history yet most of us often still feel we are not doing enough.”

Learn more [here](#).

## ***The Idealist's Survival Kit—75 Simple Ways to Avoid Burnout***



“75 brief self-care reflections that will aid workers, activists, and volunteers prevent burnout, renew their sense of purpose, and achieve fulfillment ... Heal from over-exhaustion, prevent burnout, and regain your motivation with these short readings from a psychologist who has spent many years in the field working in conflict and disaster areas. Gathered from Alessandra Pigni’s interaction with humanitarian professionals and backed up by cutting-edge research, these concrete tools offer new perspectives and inspiration to anyone whose work is focused on helping others.”

Learn more [here](#).

## **TOOLS AND APPS**

### **Burnout self-test: Checking yourself for burnout**

“Burnout occurs when passionate, committed people become deeply disillusioned with a job or career from which they have previously derived much of their identity and meaning. It comes as the things that inspire passion and enthusiasm are stripped away, and tedious or unpleasant things crowd in. This tool can help you check yourself for burnout. It helps you look at the way you feel about your job and your experiences at work, so that you can get a feel for whether you are at risk of burnout.” [Access the tool](#)

### **Stress Less Week® toolkit - Workplace**

“ACTIVE MINDS’ STRESS LESS WEEK TOOLKIT® is designed to provide education about stress and anxiety and build communities that are supportive of mental health. Stress Less Week spreads the message that speaking up about one’s struggles is a sign of strength and promoting self-care is a priority. Stress Less Week can be any week that makes sense in your year. As a national organization, Active Minds runs this program once in the spring and once in the fall. Inside this toolkit you’ll find education, tips, and resources designed to help you better understand and mitigate your stress while helping to shape a positive mental health culture at your workplace.” [Access the tool](#)

### **Burnout self-test Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)**

"The MBI is the most commonly used tool to self-assess whether you might be at risk of burnout. To determine the risk of burnout, the MBI explores three components: exhaustion, depersonalisation and personal achievement. While this tool may be useful, it must not be used as a clinical diagnostic technique, regardless of the results. The objective is simply to make you aware that anyone may be at risk of burnout." [Access the tool](#)

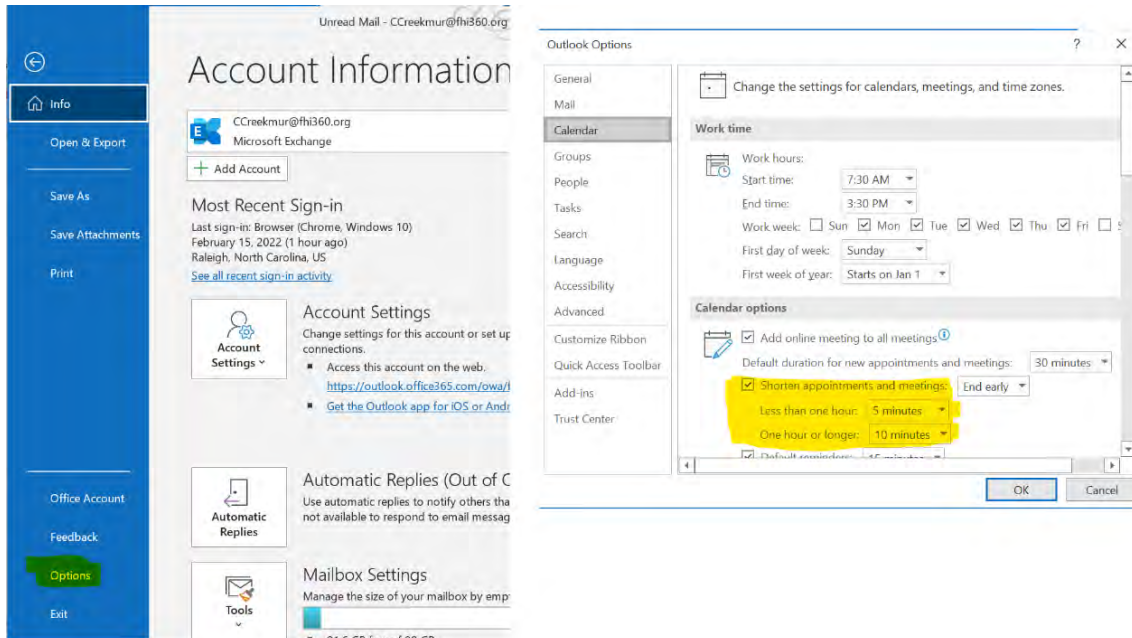
### **The Fifth Window App**

"Fifth Window prioritizes the well-being of nurses, clinicians, and healthcare organizations with evidence-based wellness tools and a supportive community space to reduce work-related burnout, and promote a culture of wellness and resiliency." [Access the tool](#)

## TIPS AND TRICKS

### Email and meetings management

Users can set Outlook to end meetings 5 minutes early, by default. This setting is in Outlook's Options > Calendar > Calendar Options. Here is a screenshot showing how to get there from your Outlook app.



## TRAININGS AND PODCASTS

The courses below are drawn from LinkedIn Learning.

### [How to Beat Burnout, Exhaustion, and Stress](#) (LinkedIn Learning)

“Burnout is often assumed to be the consequence of overwork. But this is only partially true—exhaustion is merely one facet of burnout. In this audio-only course, learn about the factors that cause these overwhelming feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency; how you can prevent burnout from happening; and what you can do to recover from it.”

### [Avoiding burnout](#) (LinkedIn Learning)

“Prolonged periods of stress—related to your work, your home life, or your health—can lead to burnout. Burnout reduces our productivity and saps our energy, leaving us overwhelmed by everyday tasks and feeling increasingly cynical and resentful.”

**[Managing Burnout at Work with These Simple Strategies](#) (LinkedIn Learning)**

“Are you juggling your professional and family life, taking up slack for absent colleagues, and worrying about your job security? It’s a lot, and if you’re not careful, burnout can take hold. In this audio-only course adapted from the *Modern Mentor* podcast, Rachel Cooke teaches you how to protect yourself from workplace burnout and feelings of being overwhelmed, no matter your personal circumstances.”