

***This is a draft version of the workbook
and is subject to further change.
Please do not circulate beyond your
team.***



Compassionate Employers

CHAPTER 2- Burnout

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Introduction

This is a draft version of the workbook and is subject to further change.

Please do not circulate beyond your team.

Disclaimer

While great care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this publication, it is necessarily of a general nature and neither Hospice UK nor the other contributors can accept any legal responsibility for any errors or omissions that may occur.

The publisher and contributors make no representation, express or implied, with regard to the accuracy of the information contained in this publication. The views expressed in this publication may not necessarily be those of Hospice UK or the other contributors. Specific advice should be sought from professional advisers for specific situations.

Who is this workbook for?

This workbook is a reflective learning resource for frontline staff whose work may bring them into contact with grief, caring responsibilities, emotional labour, distress, death, dying or bereavement.

It is designed to support individual reflection and team conversation.

It should be used alongside, not instead of, appropriate management support, supervision, occupational health, Employee Assistance Programme, HR guidance and organisational wellbeing provision.

How to use this workbook

This resource is for reflection and learning. It is not a substitute for clinical, psychological, occupational health, HR or emergency support.

Each chapter can be used as a standalone resource, however, the proposed order of chapters is:

- Compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction
- Burnout
- Professional grief
- Stress and resilience.

Throughout each chapter there are opportunities for individual reflection and group reflection. Below is some guidance on how these activities should be facilitated:

Individual reflection guidance

- You do not need to answer any questions that feel too personal, unsafe or difficult.
- Pause at any point.
- If this content brings up distress, speak to someone you trust and access your organisation's support routes, such as your manager, supervision, occupational health, Employee Assistance Programme, HR, GP or urgent support if needed.

Group reflection guidance

- Participation is voluntary.
- No one should be expected to disclose personal trauma, bereavement, mental health experiences or private circumstances.
- Confidentiality expectations should be agreed at the start.
- Managers should not use reflective worksheets as performance management evidence.
- Teams should agree what can remain within the group and what may need to be escalated for safety or support.
- A facilitator is identified for more sensitive discussions, especially professional grief and burnout.

Our wider workplace

- Looking after ourselves matters, but wellbeing is not only an individual responsibility.
- Our workplace plays a large role in supporting our wellbeing.
- Workload, staffing, supervision, leadership, culture, psychological safety, fairness and access to support all shape whether people can stay well at work.
- *To access your organisation's support, please contact someone in your organisation for more information - such as your manager or HR team.*

About Compassionate Employers

The Compassionate Employers Programme launched in 2019 to provide organisations with the skills, knowledge, and resources needed to effectively support employees and customers through terminal illness, caring responsibilities, and bereavement.

We envision a world where all employers are equipped to advocate for and support employees and customers through significant life moments. Our programme is built around three key pillars: greater visibility, education, and connection.

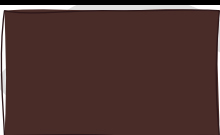
If you would like more information about Compassionate Employers, we would love to invite you to book a meeting with our team here: [Compassionate Employers Intro Chat](#)

About Hospice UK

Hospice care eases the physical and emotional pain of death and dying. Letting people focus on living, right until the end. But too many people miss out on this essential care. Hospice UK fights for hospice care for all who need it, for now and forever.

Membership of Hospice UK is open to UK organisations that provide hospice care. Anyone who works or volunteers for a Hospice UK member organisation can access our member-only services and resources. For more information on how to make the most of your Hospice UK membership, see: <https://www.hospiceuk.org/innovation-hub/membership>

Workbook key

	Lightbulb moment: An interesting fact or extra information.
	Individual reflection: An activity for you to complete (participation is optional).
	Group reflection: An activity to do with your team (participation is optional).
	Important note! Information which is important to note.
	See Glossary: Detailed definitions.
	Tool: You can use this reflection/information outside of the workbook.
	Quote/quotation: Relevant quote/quotation.
	Key term: Important definition.
	Reminder to be kind to yourself: This activity may feel challenging or emotional (participation is optional). Please do take care of yourself and take breaks as needed.

Burnout

'Resources can act as a buffer against job demands, but if job demands outweigh the resources available, this can lead to stress and eventually burnout'

Ravalier, McVicar and Boichat¹

Why this matters

In the current world we live in, burnout often feels like it is only one precarious step away. In juggling work and home, we are not alone in wanting to shout, "I just can't do it all anymore!"

Burnout is something that anyone in any organisation can face, yet we know that in working or volunteering in hospice settings, we are facing stressors which put us at risk of burnout.

Some of these pressures may be:

- limited resources
- emotional labour
- increasing demands.

These factors can make it feel really hard to put our needs first.



What we will cover

This chapter is a space to reflect, make notes, and think about ways in which we can look after ourselves and each other. We will cover:

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Important note! If this content brings up distress, speak to someone you trust and access your organisation's support routes or urgent support if needed.

Definition: what is burnout?

Burnout is a term we have heard a lot about over the last few years. It means different things to different people.



Individual reflection: What does burnout mean to you? What does it look like?

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The term we are using here is based on the explanation given by the World Health Organization.

Key term

Burnout describes an experience of physical and emotional exhaustion including feeling overwhelmed and powerless at work.

It is often caused by **unsupported chronic workplace stress**² leading to low work satisfaction³.



Burnout is different from compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress³. See Glossary for further definitions.

Spotting the signs

Everyone is different. What burnout looks like and feels like can vary from person to person.

However, there are often three areas where we may experience burnout symptoms.



1.Exhaustion

Complete physical, psychological and emotional exhaustion²:

- Feeling depleted and having no energy
- More emotional, irritable and upset
- Withdrawn and distant
- More prone to sickness
- Aches, pains and difficulties sleeping.

2.Mental distance from work

Feelings of negativity towards work²:

- Feeling more cynical, 'worst case scenario' thinking
- Feeling our work is no longer meaningful
- Small tasks/problems feeling overwhelming
- Feeling unfulfilled and underappreciated
- Low morale and feeling hopeless or bitter about our work.

3.Feeling unsuccessful at work

We cannot recognise our professional accomplishments²:

- Because we are exhausted, we become more prone to making mistakes
- Not taking breaks and working longer hours to try to compensate
- Wanting to quit
- Difficulties completing tasks
- Feeling like we are failing/are a failure.

Symptoms identified in World Health Organization², Taranu et al.⁴, Shanafelt et al.⁵, NHS Newcastle upon Tyne⁶,

What causes burnout

When we are in the midst of burnout it can feel like it is all our fault.

However, burnout is often **caused** by a mixture of personal and organisational factors; the **relationship between us and our job** as shown below.

Concept adapted from Maslach⁷

Workload overload When there is too much work for the time and resources available, we are stretched thin. It becomes chronic when there is no time to rest and recover.	Lack of control When we feel we have no influence over our work it can be restrictive. Lack of control prevents us from problem-solving or having input into the aims and objectives we have to meet.
Insufficient reward When we don't feel recognised by our workplace for what we do. We can feel unappreciated and devalued.	Breakdown of community When workplace relationships collapse, peer support is lost. Chronic conflict can breed frustration and hostility.
Absence of fairness Systems that are unjust (e.g. unbalanced workload, biased pay progression or not listening to all parties in decision making) damage respect in the workplace.	Values conflict When we feel the requirements of our work do not align with our values, we can feel constrained. It can occur when we feel stuck between conflicting organisational values (e.g. mission statements vs actual team practice/culture).

Pause and reflect

Do some of those challenges sound familiar? Consider if any of these areas are impacting your workplace and how it could be mitigated.

Be kind to yourself in this reflection. You do not need to answer any questions that feel too personal, unsafe or difficult.



Individual reflection: Which/if any area is impacting your workplace?

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Individual reflection: What challenges are you/your team facing?

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Individual reflection: What realistic solutions might help?

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Tool: If it feels safe for you to do so, you can use this reflection to identify areas of risk for burnout. This can aid discussions about support and next steps with your manager.

Practical tool: self-compassion

When things feel difficult, when our resources are stretched and our capacity is low, we can be really hard on ourselves.

This is a reminder to check in with that critical voice and take a moment for you.

Key term

Self-compassion is giving ourselves warmth, care and understanding despite our failings or challenges⁸.

It includes self-kindness, a feeling of common humanity and mindfulness⁹.



Individual reflection: What one kind thing can you do for yourself today?

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Prevention and support

Looking after ourselves matters, but wellbeing is not only an individual responsibility. Our workplace plays a large role in supporting our wellbeing.

Workload, staffing, supervision, leadership, culture, psychological safety, fairness and access to support all shape whether we can stay well at work.

To access your organisation's support, contact someone in your organisation for more information - such as your manager or HR.



Individual reflection: Sometimes when we are struggling, we may not know who to speak to in our organisation.

Make a note of what support is available to you in your hospice:

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Important note! Personal strategies are helpful but are not always enough. If we are experiencing or at risk of burnout, it is important we get the right support.

Speak to someone you trust and access your organisation's support routes, such as your manager, supervision, occupational health, Employee Assistance Programme, HR, GP or urgent support if needed.

Worksheet: team conversation

Mitigating the risks of burnout: team and organisation strategies

Our wellbeing is shaped by our workplace and unsupportive workplaces are a huge risk factor for burnout in a workforce, breeding cynicism, overwork and distress in its workers¹⁰.

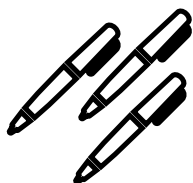
As teams, we need to work together to support each other and work towards advocating for organisational and cultural changes that can mitigate risks of burnout⁵.

Important note!

Group reflection guidance

To facilitate this activity safely ensure that:

- Participation is voluntary.
- No one is expected to disclose personal trauma, bereavement, mental health experiences or private circumstances.
- Confidentiality expectations are agreed at the start.
- Managers do not use reflective worksheets as performance management evidence.
- Teams agree what can remain within the group and what may need to be escalated for safety or support.
- A facilitator is identified for more sensitive discussions.



Group reflection: As a team, add further examples of supportive group strategies mitigating the six key risk factors:

Work Overload, Lack of Control, Insufficient Reward, Breakdown of Community, Absence of Fairness, Values Conflict⁷.

Celebrate successes no matter how small (maybe a slot in the team meeting)

Problem solve work quantity and 'pinch points'

As a team, go through organisational policies and available wellbeing services

Set up structured peer support groups. Talk to managers about prioritising attendance of this support

Analyse structures which are rigid - discuss and implement areas where flexibility can support

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Worksheet: individual reflection

Discussing burnout with our manager: discussion guide

These conversations can feel daunting but remember you do not need to share more than you are comfortable with¹¹.

However, when everyone is working together and is open to different perspectives and solutions, you can find ways of better supporting your wellbeing.

This conversation guide aims to support you when having conversations with your manager about the risks of burnout you may be experiencing. By making notes ahead of time, you can feel prepared in the conversation.

Important note!

Individual reflection guidance

- You do not need to answer any questions that feel too personal, unsafe or difficult.
- Pause at any point.
- If this content brings up distress, speak to someone you trust and access your organisation's support routes, such as your manager, supervision, occupational health, Employee Assistance Programme, HR, GP or urgent support if needed.

Be kind to yourself. These questions can feel challenging so take your time and take breaks as needed.

1. About you

- **Confidentiality:** at the start of the discussion make expectations around confidentiality clear.
- **Impact:** what is the impact that the current situation is having on you and the risk/experience of burnout?
- **Contributing factors:** what personal and professional factors are contributing to how you are feeling (e.g. financial worries, bereavement, mental health, physical health)? How are they impacting you and your work?
- **Further guidance:** what further personal guidance would you find helpful to support the contributing factors? For example, medical advice, financial advice, mental health support.

While you may not feel comfortable in sharing specific details, context can help your manager in understanding the impact on your personal and professional life and understand where they can take action.



Individual reflection: Make a note on each point to help you stay on track in the conversation. This can include any questions you may want to ask.

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Topic areas for this worksheet have been adapted from Maslach⁷ and Mental Health UK¹¹

2. Workload

- **Specific tasks:** What specific tasks do you have and what are the challenges you are encountering?
- **Potential solutions:** Do you have any ideas as to how your workload can be reprioritised?
- **Job description:** Review your job description. Often our work changes over time without it changing our role formally.

Speaking about your specific workload with your manager can help them to problem-solve areas or support you in reprioritising tasks.

Individual reflection: Make a note on each point to help you stay on track in the conversation. This can include a list of your tasks and the challenges you are experiencing.

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3. Control

- **Autonomy:** Are there areas where you want to take the lead? Do you have ideas about how you can have more autonomy in your work?
- **Wider picture:** Do you have a full understanding of your workplace's wider picture? Can you ask your manager for clarity on this and where your work fits?

If we feel like our work is out of our control it can impact on how valued we feel. Equally we may have identified tasks where we know we can take the initiative and want to take that step.

Individual reflection: Are there any areas where you would like more autonomy?

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4. Community

- **One to one support:** Do you have regular check-ins with your manager? Can you ask for this? Can what you discuss in this meeting be reviewed at a later date?
- **Team support:** Do you know what wellbeing support your organisation offers? Do you have access to supervision/group reflection? How can your manager support you in prioritising the accessing of that support?

Team support is vital in us coping well at work, however, group support sessions and supervision often fall to the bottom of the to-do list. There may be further wellbeing support options such as an Employee Assistance Programme (Employee Assistance Programme) to which you may have access.

Individual reflection: Is there any specific support that you would find helpful?

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5. Fairness

- **Rights and policies:** Are you familiar with your organisational policies e.g. Inclusion and Diversity, Complaints Procedures, Sickness Absence? Do you know where these are located?

If you feel you are not being treated fairly, it is important you fully understand your rights. Your HR team can help you in understanding your organisation's policies.

Knowing the policies can help support you in knowing what adjustments you may be able to access.

Individual reflection: From looking at your organisation's policies, what (if any) adjustments would you find helpful? Do you have any questions about the policies?

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6. Values

- **Team values:** Do you have a set of values for your team? How do they fit with your work values? How are values upheld in your team?
- **Team cultures:** Have you noticed any attitudes/behaviours that are impacting team dynamics? How are these dynamics impacting you?

Culture can be something that feels challenging to talk about let alone change. However, by having these conversations our managers can be more aware of workplace dynamics.

Remain open-minded when communicating any challenges with your manager.

Individual reflection: Do you have any observations about team dynamics? If so, how can you communicate in balanced and open ways?

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7. Reward

- **Positive feedback:** How is good work or good practice recognised in your organisation? Is positive feedback given, if so in what way?
- **Celebrations:** Do you share and celebrate successes in your team? Do you have any ideas how this can be improved?

Often, we don't have conversations about how we like to receive feedback. However, this can be instrumental in whether we feel our work is recognised.

Individual reflection: How do you like to receive feedback? How can you share these preferences with your manager?

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Glossary

People use different language to describe the same and/or similar experiences. Some of the terms mentioned in this chapter also relate to other terms which can be confusing.

Below are some further clarifications which may be of help.

- **Burnout** is the experience of physical and emotional exhaustion often caused by high work demands and limited support, contributing to low work satisfaction³.

Symptoms include feeling overwhelmed, powerless at work and a decreased sense of personal accomplishment. *Initially coined by Freudenberg in the 1970s¹², burnout has been defined by the World Health Organization² as a term specific to the workplace context.*

- **Compassion Fatigue** is a state of significant emotional, mental or physical exhaustion experienced as a result of prolonged exposure to the emotional stress involved in caretaking¹³.

It looks like cognitive, emotional, behavioural changes and leads to a reduced capacity to be empathetic. *Coined by Carla Joinson (1992) as a form of fatigue experienced by healthcare workers¹⁴.*

Secondary traumatic stress is the negative impact of indirect exposure to, witnessing or supporting in a traumatic incident¹³. It can occur from a single event or over time. *It was coined by Figley as 'the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person'¹⁵.*

- **Self-awareness** is our awareness of our internal state (emotions, cognitions, physiological responses), which drive our behaviours (beliefs, values and motivations) and an awareness of how we impact and influence others¹⁶.
- **Self-compassion** is giving ourselves the warmth, care and understanding despite our failings or challenges⁸. *Neff and Davidson included in the definition three elements: self-kindness, a feeling of common humanity and mindfulness⁹.*

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