



## 5 Tips to Avoiding Burnout and Handling Stress

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Studies reveal that over 75 percent of adults are stressed out beyond healthy levels and on the verge of burn-out. They have high-blood pressure, a weakened immune system, or other stress related illnesses. Their leading cause of stress: excessive work.

People work so many hours that they lose their work-life balance, get less sleep than they need, run themselves down, and chronically feel behind on their commitments. They lose their mental edge, operate at a sub-optimal level, and make mistakes they wouldn't otherwise make. In some cases people spend more time making up for their poor performance than the time they put into their performance to begin with. Many people live their life on a "treadmill of busyness as usual".

Counter-intuitively, the biggest issue with not having enough time has nothing to do with getting more work done. If you are like most people, you find ways to get your work done. The casualty of not having enough time is not having sufficient time left for strategic interests. It is not having time to learn, develop your skills, or develop the skills of your team. It is not having time to spend time with your family. It is not having reflection time to think and innovate. It is not having time to build social relationships and business partnerships.

Decide what is most important and put your focus there. You can only do what time allows. As long as you are working productively on the most important activities to the best of your ability, you can't do any more. Continue to seek help from others and delegate where you can. Look for ways to improve your productivity and skills. But as long as you give the current day with your current priorities your best effort, you are doing the best you can. Don't be anxious or stressed by what you aren't getting to if you are already doing all you can. It is of no consequence. Accept that you will have competing priorities and you can only give the time and effort you have to give. No more, no less.

Here are five key principles to follow in helping to avoid burnout and handle your stress:

- Take your work one day at a time. If you do the best you can, you are doing all you can. The rest has to wait until tomorrow. Don't compete with the reality that there is only 24 hours in a day.
- Be thankful for what you do have. Look at the glass as half full rather than half empty. It could always be worse. You could have two broken legs, be without a job, and have the bank foreclosing on your house.
- Continuously seek improvements. Seek ways to be more productive. Look for opportunities to delegate. Say "no" to unimportant requests. Or say "yes, if ..." to put conditions on a "yes" that needs reasonable limits.
- Don't tie your mood, attitude, and confidence to the opinions of others. Rise above your circumstances. Decide your own mood and make it a good one. You may have to live with the actions of others, but others don't have to dictate your attitude.
- Appreciate adversity. Adversity is where learning, patience, appreciation, and character come from. If you can get to the point where you "delight in your suffering", your stress might even turn into something you can enjoy.

Follow these principles to make your day the best day you can. Then smile and appreciate it will be okay.

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Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* ([www.activatingyourambition.com](http://www.activatingyourambition.com)), and president of Alpine Link Corporation ([www.alpinelink.com](http://www.alpinelink.com)), a consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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