

# 21070      How to avoid the new burnout

By Bryan Lufkin, BBC News, November 2020

Burnout: the term for chronic overwork has become ubiquitous in recent times. With millions of people now in lockdown as Covid-19 sweeps the globe, burnout is still very much with us – but it looks a little different right now.

Many have lost jobs, while those lucky enough to keep them have to do so while working in the confines of home, some simultaneously balancing family needs, like childcare. Now, we face new dilemmas we've never dealt with before: How do I maintain my fitness indoors? Can I hug my kids?

On top of this, social media tells us to be creative, to finish that project: write that book, build that armoire, learn a new language. Make sure *your* quarantine doesn't go to waste.

In short, we are exhausted in a new way – what experts call 'decision fatigue'. The news is changing all the time and information is constant. People are still trying to understand how to exist in this new world, how to structure their day or prioritise tasks, especially when your home, once your sanctuary, can now also be your office, your school and your quasi-prison.

Experiencing some emotional exhaustion and anxiety is to be expected, the experts agree. The problem is that many of our usual coping mechanisms, such as going to the gym or taking an art class, have disappeared.

So, what can help? Experts say people need to find activities that work for them, whether it's meditation, solitary walks or watching Netflix. Our activities need to be very individualized, familiar ones which you know make you happy and take the stress off. They shouldn't exhaust you.

Further advice urges us to keep the big picture in mind, to see the current period as a season which will pass. There are a lot of scary points between point A and point B, but we need to remember that point B exists. Every day we are restricted, through a curfew, a lockdown or quarantine, brings us closer to that point B.

Experts point out that usually, burnout is caused by unrealistic expectations, either from our employer or from ourselves. What is positive in the pandemic is that it has improved everybody's ability to manage, cope and be flexible. So when we go back to our normal lives, things are going to be easier because we've done something that's very challenging. Even staying in our houses and apartments doing nothing is doing something positive.

**405 words**