

# When Pandemics Collide: ***Burnout*** and COVID-19

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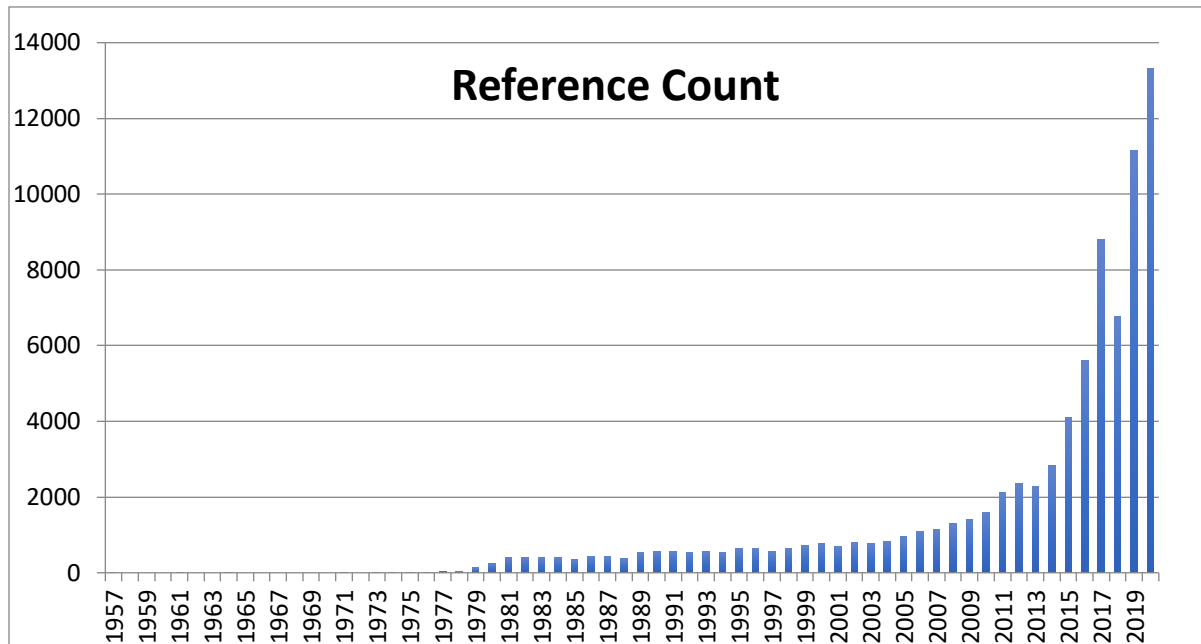
## **Burnout Etc.**

1960	<i>A <b>Burnt-Out</b> Case.</i>	Greene
1964	<i>...such investment of self...requires a time for psychological replenishment, if the teacher is not to <b>burn out</b>.</i>	Kennedy
1981	<i>Worker <b>burnout</b> epidemic in the [health care] profession, causing not only job dissatisfaction but also short-changing patients.</i>	Patrick
2003	<i><b>Burnout</b>—“an erosion of the soul.”</i>	Sibbald
2007	<i>The nurse is not for <b>burning</b>.</i>	Beech
2020	<i>The world has experienced a collective <b>burnout</b>.</i>	Low
2020	<i>COVID <b>burnout</b> takes a significant toll.</i>	Ewing
2021	<i>Looking after people’s emotional and mental well-being is no less significant than the infectious pathogen itself.</i>	Vanderklipp
2021	<i>Japan appoints a ‘minister of loneliness.’</i>	Kodama

- Estimates of the global financial costs of **burnout** and mental illness are in the **trillions**, not billions of dollars (e.g., \$6 to \$30 trillion USD by 2030).
- Each of us knows more about our own mental health and illness, and our personal experience of **burnout**, than ever before.
- With the blurring of the lines between life and employment, **burnout** is no longer a disease only experienced at work (cf. **World Health Organization [WHO 2019]** definition).
- The COVID-19 pandemic will add to the chronicity of **burnout**. There is no vaccination for burnout. It is not going away.
- Decreased stigma of being **burned-out**.
- A generational **burnout** crisis that includes— *Boomers, X, Millennials, Z.*
- Solutions must be shared and systematic.
- Circa the 2020s, one pandemic will remain.

## Global *burnout*, a worldwide pandemic before COVID-19

The *overstrain* of work referenced in 1913, today describes chronic work stress or *burnout*. The first recorded uses of the word *burn out/burnt-out* date back to at least the 1960s and the number of articles, books, interviews, videos, podcasts, webinars, briefings, and research studies grows every year.



Source: *Boudreau Burnout Bibliography* (2021)

During the COVID-19 pandemic, awareness and strength of our mental health has been both sharpened and tested. Everyone knows and is talking more about their own *burnout*, than they ever have before. Twenty-five years ago, we wrote *Global burnout: A worldwide pandemic explored by the Phase Model* (Golembiewski, Boudreau, Munzenrider, & Luo, 1996) and estimated that 4 out of 10 workers were in an advanced phase or state of *burnout*. From what has been reported both anecdotally and empirically this past year, the number of individuals experiencing *burnout* has grown significantly.

## Symptoms, Risk Factors, Consequences: The ABCs of *Burnout*

*What do we mean by burnout?*

The 100 terms and conditions in this following list have been variously associated with or described as a cause, determinant, consequence, correlate, indicator, precursor, predictor, risk factor, signal, symptom, trigger, and/or outcome of *burnout*.

Absence  
Alienated  
Anger  
Anxiety  
Battle fatigue  
Boredom  
Callousness  
Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)  
Compassion fatigue  
Confusion

## **CORONA VIRUS DISEASE**

Cynicism  
Defensiveness  
Dehumanized perceptions  
Depression  
Despair  
Detachment  
Discontent  
Discouragement  
Disempowerment  
Disenchantment  
Disillusioned  
Dissatisfaction  
Dysphoria  
Emptiness  
Exhaustion  
Fatigue (physical, chronic)  
Feeling locked in  
Forgetfulness  
Frustration  
Going around the bend  
Hardened  
Health ailments  
Hopelessness  
Helplessness  
Impatient  
Inoperative  
Intolerant  
Indifferent  
Insecure  
Irritable  
Isolated  
Jaded  
Job Loss  
*KITAAKO'KAAA' TTSOOSHI (burnout in Blackfoot)*  
*KAROSHI (death by overwork in Japanese)*  
Lethargic  
Loneliness  
*MOETSUKISHOUKUGUN (burnout syndrome in Japanese)*  
Morale (low)

Mental Illness  
Negativism  
Nervous Breakdown  
Nervous Tension  
Neutralism  
Obsolescence (fear of)  
Overreactions  
Overloaded  
Overwhelmed  
Powerlessness  
Post-traumatic stress disorder  
Pressured  
Productivity (reduced)  
Psychosocial dysfunction  
Psychiatric morbidity  
Quality of Working Life (QWL, low)  
Rejected  
Resentful  
Restless  
Retired In Place (RIP)  
Routinization  
Rundown  
Sadness  
Sarcastic  
Self-efficacy (low)  
Short-tempered  
Shell shock  
Sleep disturbances  
Social support (lack of)  
Suicidal  
Tiredness  
Tedium  
Tension  
Termination  
*TOTSUZENSHI (SUDDEN DEATH in Japanese)*  
Trapped  
Turnover  
Unappreciated  
Unenthusiastic  
Unhappy  
Unprepared  
Vulnerable  
Weary  
Wiped-out  
Withdrawn  
*Window Watchers (MADOGIWA ZOKU)*  
Worthless  
X (Generation affected by burnout)  
Yonda (African village in *A Burnt-Out Case*)  
Z (Mini Z Instrument; zero burnout)

Note: Many of these terms can be used as keywords when searching within the *Boudreau Burnout Bibliography*.

## Towards a Definition of *Burnout*

*Demands at the workplace that tax or exceed an individual's resources...*

*A type of job stress in which a pattern of strain results from a variety of work demands, especially those of an interpersonal nature...*

*A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally demanding.*

### **Measurement**

A myriad of **burnout** measures exists with the most popular being the **Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)** and its derivatives. It is estimated that between 80% and 90% of published research articles measuring **burnout** report using the **MBI**.

Any reliable and valid definition and instrument measuring **burnout** includes some acknowledgement and reference to at least the following: the depersonalization of others, the lack of personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, cynicism, cognitive impairment, depressed mood, psychological distress, and psychosomatic complaints (e.g., Moss, 2021; Schaufeli, Desart, & De Witte, 2020).

### **DSM & ICD**

In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 2013, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)* **burnout** is not listed as a diagnosis.

**Burn-out** is included in the World Health Organization's (WHO's) 11th Revision of the *International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)* as an occupational phenomenon. It is not classified as a medical condition (cf. to medical health concern).

**Burn-out** is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterised by three dimensions: 1) feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion; 2) increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job; and 3) a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment. **Burn-out** refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.

While there has been considerable debate about what exactly **burnout** is, definitions remain elusive. Moving through the COVID-19 pandemic, there is little doubt that the need for clearer definitions and metrics to help identify, manage, treat, and prevent advanced **burnout** is gaining an even greater urgency.

## Actions (1957—2019)

From at least 1957 to 2019 (*BC, Before Covid-19*), a series of standard *individual* and *organizational* effective coping strategies, supports, solutions, interventions, and resources have been identified for helping to deal with the *burnout* condition. Among these include:

### INDIVIDUAL

Self-Assessments & Measurement  
Progressive Relaxation  
Daily Exercise & Sports  
Use of Humor  
Imagery Training  
Keeping a Stress Log  
Martial Arts, Yoga  
Reading & Hobbies  
Time Management  
Interpersonal & Group Therapy  
Healthy Diet & Lifestyle  
Networking, Community Building  
Hiring a Personal Valet/Coach  
Extracurricular Activities  
Career Planning  
Mindfulness Training

### ORGANIZATIONAL

Mentorship Programs  
Flexitime, Limiting Overtime, Vacation Days  
Job Variety & Redesign  
Fitness & Massage Facilities  
Stress Workshops  
Crisis Counseling  
Incentives & Reward Systems  
Life/Stress Coaching Programs  
Team Building  
Ceremonies  
Sabbaticals  
Social Gatherings  
Talent Management  
Succession Planning  
Role Exit Process  
Policy Development

Note: Today, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a myriad of financial, motivational, and legal realities, the available strategies to help manage *burnout* have been severely reduced.

The ultimate, long-term goal however, remains unchanged. It is one focused on a renewal process, both within the current COVID-19 pandemic timeframe, as well as in the post COVID-19 pandemic period...where each individual worker and workplace reflects and lives with...

...Vitality	Engagement	Excellence	Replenishment
Hardiness	Openness	Resilience	Trust
Dedication	Enthusiasm	Balance	Respect
Accomplishment	Creativity	Energy	Empowerment
Efficacy	Being valued	Flexibility	Satisfaction
Commitment	Wellness	Optimism	Empathy.

Each and all of these terms represent(s) the positive antithesis of *burnout*.

## Next Steps

This general *eBrief* represents our first step in reporting on the **burnout** condition while still in the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we progress through the COVID-19 pandemic period and return to a work world that will be different, we will still need to deal with a **burnout** experience and condition that has gained strength, layered as it were with the COVID-19 pandemic. It has made all of us more vulnerable.

Building on this first *eBrief*, we are planning to produce a series of specific, *eBriefs* and 1-page *eSnapshots* along with commitments to provide continuing updates and access to the *Boudreau Burnout Bibliography* (2021). The *Boudreau Burnout Bibliography* (March 2021) consists of 78,176 unique burnout references (46% of which have abstracts) from 15 previous bibliographies, 41 current data bases, and 10 providers. It includes a variety of sources such as journal, magazine, and newspaper articles, books, theses, reports and trade publications. In its *Endnote X9* format, the *Boudreau Burnout Bibliography* is searchable using different fields (e.g., by occupation [nurses, lawyers, teachers, physicians, students]; by country [Canada, Japan]).

Two *eBriefs* and three *eSnapshots* are currently under development:

- ✓ *eBrief* — **Burnout in the Academy: From Faculty to Presidents**. Based on two searches completed in 2009 and 2020 from the *Bibliography*, a total of 127 unique *academic* (mostly *faculty*) **burnout** references from 1979 to 2020 have been identified. From this search, an *eBrief* will focus on the symptoms and strategies of *faculty burnout* up to 2020 and beyond.
- ✓ *eBrief* — **Indigenous KITAAKO'KAAA'TTSOOSHI (Blackfoot) Burnout**. Based on a search of Crow (2004) and the *Boudreau Burnout Bibliography* (2021) as well as several other sources, an initial sample of unique *Indigenous Burnout* references has been identified. From this search, an *eBrief* will focus on the symptoms and strategies of *Indigenous Burnout* up to 2020 and beyond.
- ✓ *eSnapshot* — A collection of all unique **COVID-19 burnout** references and themes.
- ✓ *eSnapshot* — A detailed summary of the *Boudreau Burnout Bibliography* as a resilience tool and invaluable resource.
- ✓ *eSnapshot* — A review of available **burnout** measures and selected issues.

## Our Guiding Principle

The authors are committed to increase education and awareness of the **burnout** contagion so that it can be both understood and treated. We begin this process by providing *eBriefs* and *eSnapshots* along with access to the contents of our *Bibliography* through reference searches that best match individual, community, and organizational needs.



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