

Understanding and coping with burnout in HIGH-ACHIEVERS

It is essential to understand how to deal with burnout. Students should be encouraged to discuss their workload and emotions of failure honestly with parents and educators.

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The term "burnout" was coined to describe reactions to stress in the workplace and other occupational sectors. When applied to an academic context, this idea implies that work, such as studying, necessitates that people, in this case students, be under academic stress and the pressure to perform. This can become chronic when students consistently feel a disparity between their limitations and expectations related to success.

As young individuals — particularly students — begin to outperform at a young age, they are motivated to excel in academics, sports, the arts, and other areas. Parents, educators, and even the media have an unhealthy preoccupation with prodigies. This encourages

students to do more than they should at a young age, which can develop into a complex about maintaining their competitive nature by pushing themselves past their limits.

The fear of not achieving sufficient success, missing out on opportunities, and maintaining the reputation established early in their academic lives burdens children significantly. As students transition from high school to university, they have already

devoted a disproportionate amount of time and energy to their primary years of schooling. The pursuit of gaining admission to prestigious colleges and sustaining exceptional grades compels high-achieving students to overload themselves with advanced courses and extracurricular activities. This investment often leads to elevated rates of mental health issues, including anxiety and depression, by the time college applications are due.

The desire to surpass everyone, engaging in multiple activities simultaneously including academic, extracurricular, and social, can lead to exhaustion in students, ultimately resulting in burnout. Manifesting in various ways, burnout may cause students to lose motivation, experience fatigue despite adequate sleep, lack confidence in their abilities, procrastinate more than usual, face frequent headaches and irritability, strain relationships, miss out on relaxation time, and ponder "what next?" when the competition to outperform everyone is no longer present.

Burnout at an early

stage can alter a person's outlook on life. Students may feel as if they have nothing more to contribute as they lose motivation and interest in activities that they once enjoyed or looked forward to. This bleakness may cause students to reconsider their goals, and the question "Is it really worth it?" may arise.

The pressure to succeed at a young age may jeopardise the development of critical coping mechanisms and resilience. Furthermore, the pressure to maintain high levels of accomplishment may persist, limiting an individual's capacity to attain a healthy work-life balance later in life.

It is essential to understand how to deal with burnout. Students should be encouraged to discuss their workload and emotions of failure honestly with parents and educators.

Transparency about your schedule from the beginning is crucial. If burnout strikes, start with your physical well-being — replace screen time with sufficient sleep, cut out fast food, and reintroduce regular exercise. Opening up about distress can be challenging, as there's a fear of being judged as inadequate or lazy. However, battling burnout alone can make the recovery more difficult.

If your loved ones aren't available to talk to, a therapist can provide expert guidance on causes, coping mechanisms, and life issues contributing to burnout. Setting boundaries and paying attention to your needs significantly aid in recovering from burnout. The key is to keep things real, prioritise self-care, and stay true to your limits.

While having aspirations and a strong desire to succeed are admirable, it's important to understand the possible risks of overcommitting at a young age. Due to the progressive nature of burnout, its effects become apparent over time and significantly impair day-to-day functioning. Being fatigued isn't the only aspect of burnout. It's a complex problem that calls for a multifaceted solution.

References:

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ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

Why you deserve to spend your vacations with no guilt

ZABIN TAZRIN NASHITA

Breaks are a rare and precious delicacy for students, even more so for university goers. Oftentimes, the promise of an imminent semester break is the only thing that keeps us going during the mountainous course load, with rapidly approaching deadlines that hang over our heads. Despite the anticipation, we oftentimes find ourselves unable to savour the ever-elusive semester break when it finally decides to show itself.

That Netflix show that you felt was a masterpiece in the first episode? Now that you're finally free to pick it back up, it's actually kind of boring. The trip you and your friends planned so scrupulously doesn't seem to be happening for some reason. Even the Instagram algorithm doesn't understand you anymore. Still, you can't seem to stop watching the pseudo-romantic moments between Gopi Bahu and Ahemji as you hum along with the lalalala.

A part of you thinks you've been working really hard and deserve a break. Then again, your classmate is already on Coursera developing the latest trendy skill. The high achiever in your class has somehow gotten hold of next semester's study materials and is now halfway through the syllabus. Not to mention, you're in that purgatory of adulthood where some of your friends have not yet figured out how to make a cash deposit, but the rest are getting married every time a break rolls around.

Your ideal vacation does not look anything like this. You were to wake up early, eat a healthy breakfast, and do something useful. All this determination is nowhere to be found when the fateful holiday morning arrives, and your bed is the comfiest it's ever been. You wake up at an ungodly hour and decide that maybe tomorrow is the day you'll finally do it right.

A lot of us fall into this cycle. However, constantly berating yourself for not spending your break "properly" can be counterproductive. While it is great to learn something new, travel, or embrace matrimony if that's your calling, it's also important to give yourself some time to recuperate after weeks of nonstop academics and extracurricular activities. A couple of off days will help you get more done in the long run as it allows you to shed off fatigue.

You shouldn't feel the need to be productive or engaged in activity 24/7 during a break. If you want to sleep in, do it without guilt because you won't get many chances after the break. Scrolling social media mindlessly is not a complete waste either, as long as you don't stress about it.

This is not to say that you shouldn't invest in self-improvement. In fact, the best way to be productive during a break is to allow yourself some

breathing room. If you beat yourself up for spending too much time on your phone or in bed, you're not enjoying either activity. Still, you're doing them anyway. The unpleasantness and self-criticism can bar you from achieving the rest of your goals, by making you think of them as an obligation rather than a voluntary activity.

The key here is to balance productivity and relaxation. Who says you can't learn programming and watch silly cat memes at the same time? Instead of forcing yourself to read an extremely dense and complicated classic, you can always opt for something more enjoyable to help get back in the habit of reading. Go through a part of a tutorial instead of the whole thing.

Watch a romcom instead of that sombre Tarkovsky film that requires all your attention. Take a walk outside, if not at the hill tracts.

The purpose of a break is to recharge. In order to spend your vacation successfully, all you need to do is to ensure that you don't return to your daily life feeling even more drained than before.

