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Stress, overload and burnout

STRESS, OVERLOAD, AND BURNOUT

How can you recognise the differences, support recovery, and what role does POBOS play?

The terms stress, overload and burnout are sometimes used interchangeably, but they refer to different experiences. Although they can be related, they are not necessarily consecutive stages of a single process. Understanding the differences can help us recognise warning signs and take appropriate action.

Stress: a normal response

Stress is a natural response of the body and mind to challenges, changes, or situations that require effort. In moderation, stress can even be positive. It helps us stay alert, concentrate, and perform.

Stress can become problematic when it continues for a prolonged period without sufficient opportunities for recovery.

Overload: the balance Is disturbed

Overload can occur when demands consistently exceed the resources available to meet them. In other words, more energy is required than a person is able to replenish.

People experiencing overload may still be able to carry out their usual activities, but doing so can require increasing effort. Fatigue may build up, recovery may take longer and their sense of control may decrease. Symptoms can already be present even if they are still managing their day-to-day responsibilities.

Overload can be an important warning sign. Taking action early — through rest, support or adjustments to work and personal circumstances — can help restore a healthier balance.

Burnout: long-term exhaustion

Burnout is associated with chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It can involve profound exhaustion, increased mental distance from work and a reduced sense of professional effectiveness.

People experiencing burnout may find it increasingly difficult to meet the demands of their work. Exhaustion can be persistent, everyday tasks may require considerable effort and recovery can take time.

Burnout generally develops over time rather than appearing suddenly. Recognising and addressing ongoing work-related stress can help reduce the risk.

The Importance of Early Recognition

Recognising signs of stress and overload early creates opportunities to prevent further difficulties. It is therefore important to reflect regularly on the balance between demands, available resources and opportunities for recovery.

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At POBOS, we place great importance on prevention and the early identification of psychosocial risks. That is why we offer the POBOS Burnout Scan to help employees reflect on their current energy levels, stress and possible signs of overload.

The results can serve as a valuable starting point for seeking support at an early stage, taking preventive measures and avoiding further exhaustion. The burnout questionnaire is intended solely as a screening tool and not as a diagnostic test. A formal diagnosis requires further assessment by a doctor or clinical psychologist. The score therefore only provides an indication of the possible presence of burnout or the risk of developing it.

Recovery from burnout

Recovery from burnout takes time and often involves rest, appropriate support and a gradual rebuilding of energy and confidence. An important first step is to acknowledge the difficulties and address the factors contributing to exhaustion.

Support from a psychologist, alongside a doctor or other healthcare professional where appropriate, can help people understand the factors contributing to burnout and develop healthier ways of managing stress. Adequate sleep, regular physical activity, balanced nutrition and social support can also play an important part in recovery.

The goal of treatment is not only to reduce symptoms but also to restore the balance between demands and personal capacity so that future overload can be prevented. Recovery looks different for everyone, but with the right support, a return to healthy and balanced functioning is possible.

POBOS Is here to help

POBOS offers employees professional support with stress, overload, burnout and other psychosocial difficulties. Our psychologists listen attentively, help people understand their circumstances and work with them to strengthen their wellbeing and resilience.

There is no need to wait until difficulties become severe before seeking help. Even early signs of stress, a challenging situation at work or concerns about mental wellbeing can be good reasons to talk to someone. An early conversation may help prevent problems from becoming more serious.

For more information about our services or the support available,
please contact POBOS.