

College Burnout: Symptoms and Ways to Overcome

College burnout is frequently observed among students resulting from prolonged stress, anxiety, and the desire to excel academically. According to World Health Organization [1], burnout appears as a consequence of chronic stress in the workplace and has not been effectively managed. Three characteristics identify it:

- 1) exhaustion or energy depletion;
- 2) mental distance from one's job or negative feelings towards it;
- 3) reduced professional effectiveness.

Academic burnout can appear in various forms, such as student emotional and physical exhaustion, detachment from academic work, and decreased academic performance.

Burnout Among College Students: Data From Recent Surveys

Student mental health and well-being have been scrutinized thanks to recent studies:

- The *American College Health Association* conducted a survey [2] of over 54,000 undergraduates and found that 76.6% suffered from psychological distress (moderate to serious), and over 53% reported feeling lonely.
- According to a survey by the *American Psychological Association* [3], young adults between 18 and 23 (Gen Z) report higher stress levels than other generations. The average stress level for this group is 6.1 out of 10.4, compared to 5.6 for millennials (adults of 24-41), 5.2 for Gen X (42-55), 4.0 for boomers (ages 56-74), and 3.3 for adults aged 75+.
- The *Chronicle of Higher Education* delivered a report [4] which found that 32% of students feel unable to discuss mental health issues impacting their coursework.
- The *National Alliance on Mental Illness* [5] revealed that 64% of students who dropped out said the essential reason for their decision was mental health issues.

These findings highlight the importance of addressing mental health concerns and supporting students.

Most Obvious Burnout Symptoms

Academic burnout can have significant impacts on both mental and physical health. Long periods of anxiety, stress, and pressure to succeed can lead to burnout, manifesting differently. Detecting academic burnout can be challenging, but several symptoms are worth noticing.

Behavioral Level

The essential indicators include irritability, loss of interest, decreased motivation, and social withdrawal [6]. Symptoms of college burnout may also include emotional and physical exhaustion, spells of panic, and increased negative feelings, e.g., depression and anxiety [7].

Physical Level

Burnout can also lead to physical symptoms, including headaches, nausea, fatigue, sleep disturbances, chest pains, and gastrointestinal problems [8].

Academic Performance Level

Academic performance indicators include decreased attendance, incomplete coursework, and disinterest in academic work.

The burnout consequences can impact a student's overall academic performance, leading to lower grades or, in the worst scenario, dropping out. It can also negatively affect mental health, including mood disorders resulting in self-harm, substance abuse, or suicidal ideation [9] in severe cases. Recognizing the signs of burnout and seeking professional help for an accurate diagnosis is crucial.

Basic Strategies for Preventing Burnout

Self-Care Practices

It encompasses physical aspects (adequate sleep, healthy eating, and regular exercise), mental (meditation, mindfulness, and relaxing hobbies), and emotional well-being (social interactions and therapy).

Stress Management

It involves techniques like deep breathing, yoga, and progressive muscle relaxation to decrease stress. Using the rule of "Three Good Things" [3] may be effective: reflecting on good things happening daily helps increase emotional resilience.

Time Management

Students feel overwhelmed by coursework and deadlines. Using calendars or planners to schedule projects and breaking larger assignments into smaller tasks may be effective. It's essential to have the flexibility to take a break and relax.

Professional Support

Seeking support from family, teachers, or mental health professionals is vital in preventing academic burnout. Talking to a therapist allows coping with academic pressure. Additionally, peer support or study groups evoke a sense of community and reduce feelings of isolation or loneliness [4].

How to Get Reliable and Quality Help?

If someone is experiencing burnout symptoms, it's crucial to address them promptly and seek professional help at organizations and mental health support groups, such as:

- *American Association of Suicidology* [10] prevents suicide;
- *Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance* [11] helps people with mood disorders;
- *Anxiety and Depression Association of America* [12] focuses on overcoming PTSD, OCD, and depression;
- *Mental Health America* [13] covers the needs of mental illness patients.

Additionally, students can visit mental health websites, such as Active Mind's Mental Health Resources [14], ACHA's Mental Health Resources [15], Behavior Online [16], Brain & Behavior Research Foundation [17], and others.

This text serves as an informational resource exclusively. Please note that we're not a medical organization and cannot provide medical advice. In a life-threatening emergency, please seek medical assistance or call 911.

References

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