



Avoiding the Slow Burn...

SPF3: You are what you think. It may be possible that burnout can emanate from your own ideas about what you think is going on rather than from what is actually happening around you. Obviously, changing the way you think isn't always easy. Still, trying to approach the activities and tasks you must do at work as having value or challenging, rather than viewing them as a pain in the neck and a waste of time may be a good place to start.

Also consider this – is your present work situation really that bad? It's likely that for the most part, work is relatively straightforward and clear-cut compared to the complicated nature of life in general. At work, there are certain things to get done in a set time. And truth be told, you probably get most, if not all of them done. Honestly ask yourself what you would be doing if you were not at work. Sure, you may come up with a list of exciting or relaxing activities you think would be more enjoyable, but are you really at a stage in your life to do all of them right now?

The bottom line is that taking everything into account, work really isn't all that bad. You may never write the Great American Novel, but you do need to remember that with the completion of every activity or task, your contribution is making a difference.

SPF4: You can't always be perfect. For some, the biggest pressures they face in their job are those that they bring on themselves. Often, this includes the pressure to be perfect each and every time. The goal of perfectionism can be one of the biggest roadblocks to maintaining a healthy perspective on your time and your work. This *does not* mean that the old saying, "good enough for government work" should be your motto. It does, however, mean that at some point, every task or activity must come to a close if you are to have enough time to complete other tasks and activities assigned to you. Unfortunately, second-guessing is a game with many players and very few winners. Know when to say enough is enough and be willing to move on.

SPF5: Give yourself a break. Many supervisors and managers believe that only "employees" take breaks and that they take them because Fair Labor Standard rules require it. Regardless of what any "rule" says, the fact is that the more hours you work, the less effective and efficient you become. To maintain peak performance – and your sanity – take a break during the day, even if it is only 15 minutes. Look for ways to reduce work stress by exercising, reading, or whatever else works for you. If need be, "pencil in" time for these activities on your regular work schedule, just like meetings for your job.

SPF6: Focus on priorities. Confusion, frustration and burnout can happen to anyone who does not have a clear picture of what they need and want to do in life. If you are getting dizzy spinning around and bouncing

back and forth trying to decide what you need to do next, consider setting aside some time to write a personal goal statement for both home and work. Plan to revisit your statement at least twice a year to address any changing priorities and remind yourself of what you most want to accomplish.

SPF7: Learn and improve. If you feel your inability to get ahead, or at least survive at work is causing you a great deal of anxiety or frustration, pinpoint the skills you need and then figure out how to get them. If you have passed on opportunities to go to training in the past and now feel "tied" to your chair, watch for other chances to learn and take them when they present themselves. Your action to do so may show others that you are willing to do what it takes to move ahead. In the mean time, the fact that you are trying can go a long way toward relieving your own feelings of helplessness.

SPF8: Start your own business on company time. Many people have the dream of one day owning and operating their own successful business. If that is your dream, why not start your business today without leaving the office, or risking your personal fortune! To do it, just think of your job and your team as a company – your company – with you as its sole owner. Ask yourself, what can you do to improve your team's success ratio? What strengths can you help other team members develop? How can you get your team more involved in improving the quality of the products and services "your company" provides? How can you push the boundaries of your job and that of your teams to include new and exciting responsibilities? Sound crazy? Actually, it isn't. Exploring the answers to these questions is a great way to bring new life and energy into your job and your team. It may also be just the jump-start you need to get back in the game!

SPF9: Move on. This is often the first reaction. However, in practical terms, it should always be the last. Don't immediately toss aside your job and the career you've earned and worked so hard for over the years in favor of the unknown just because you think the "grass is greener" somewhere else. It seldom is.

Through whatever feelings of job burnout you may be experiencing now, or possibly in the future, remember that you are your own best defense against it. As author Stephen Covey states in his book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, "The single most powerful investment we can ever make in life is the investment in ourselves – the only instrument we have with which to deal with life and to contribute."

[Click here](#) to return to the Front Page