

BURNOUT

Burnout is a frequently used term that needs to be explored in looking at stress. Burnout occurs when an individual is in a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by a devotion to a cause, a way of life or a relationship that failed to produce the expected reward. A burnout experience usually has its roots in the area of a person's life that seemed to hold the most promise. The individuals who usually experience burnout are individuals who have pushed themselves too hard for too long. They have striven hard to reach a goal, always being counted on to do more than their share to reach the goal. They started out with great expectations and refused to compromise along the way. The people who burn out are often the leaders among us who have never been willing or able to admit that they have some limitations.

How does burnout begin? Slowly! Even though the individual may erupt suddenly, the process of burnout begins slowly and develops over a period of weeks, months, years. Burnout is seldom acute. In order to measure your burnout level, answer the following questions:

- ___ 1. Are you always worried about preserving your image?
- ___ 2. Do you feel yourself under pressure to succeed all the time?
- ___ 3. Are you unable to relax?
- ___ 4. Do you need to generate excitement again and again to keep from feeling bored?
- ___ 5. Is one area of your life much more important than all others?
- ___ 6. Are you taking yourself too seriously?
- ___ 7. Do you feel a lack of intimacy with the people around you?
- ___ 8. Are you inflexible once you have taken a stand on something?
- ___ 9. If your activities fall apart, do you fall apart because you are so closely tied with your activities?
- ___ 10. Are your goals unclear, shifting frequently?

Once you have answered the questions, ask yourself if this is the way you want to be. Is it the way you started out? When did it change? Are you in charge of your life, or has your life taken charge? Think about the answers, and then go on to the next page.

Now is a good time to consider your personal concerns and objectives for this course. This is the approach that also may be taken with a patient. You have just completed four assessments about yourself. **NOW COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:**

1. WHICH AREA(S) CONCERNS YOU IN TERMS OF STRESS-RELATED PROBLEMS?

- Physical health
- Job or career
- Home life
- Interpersonal relationships

2. For each of the areas you checked in number one, write down three or four of your specific concerns:

PHYSICAL HEALTH:

JOB OR CAREER:

HOME LIFE:

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS:

3. In what ways do you hope this course will help you to deal effectively with those concerns?

4. Identify your objectives for taking this course. Be specific and list what you want to be able to do by the time you complete this course.

If the above assessments do not give you adequate information for you to isolate times of stress or if you are aware that you have stress, but are not sure as to what was the cause of it, keep a daily stress log for two weeks. The following is a sample stress log. Make additional copies of it so that you can keep a daily stress log for one to two weeks.