



Is it burnout?

A twenty-question reflection for people who keep going.

Most burnout checklists tell you what you already know. You are exhausted. You worked that out some time ago.

This one is trying to answer a more useful question: whether what you are carrying is coming from your circumstances, from something older that taught you to keep going regardless, or from both. That distinction matters, because it changes what will actually help.

It takes about five minutes. There are no right answers and nobody sees it but you.

How to use it

For each statement, think about the last month and give yourself a number.

0 = never 1 = rarely 2 = sometimes 3 = often 4 = nearly always

Answer quickly and honestly rather than carefully. Your first response is usually the accurate one.

Part One: What is running low

1. I wake up already tired, even after a reasonable night's sleep. 0 1 2 3 4
2. By the end of the working day, there is nothing left for the people at home. 0 1 2 3 4
3. My weekends go on recovering rather than living. 0 1 2 3 4
4. My body has started making itself known, through tension, headaches, stomach trouble or getting sick more often. 0 1 2 3 4
5. I get through the day on caffeine, adrenaline, or the thought of the next break. 0 1 2 3 4

Part One total: _____ out of 20

Part Two: What has gone distant

1. Work that used to matter to me now feels like something to get through. 0 1 2 3 4
2. I am more cynical or short-tempered about my job than I used to be. 0 1 2 3 4
3. I go through the motions and hope nobody notices. 0 1 2 3 4
4. I avoid messages, calls or conversations I would once have handled easily. 0 1 2 3 4
5. I feel detached from the people I work with, including ones I genuinely like. 0 1 2 3 4

Part Two total: _____ out of 20

Part Three: What you think you are worth

1. I doubt the quality of my work in a way I did not used to. 0 1 2 3 4
2. Things that used to be straightforward now take me much longer. 0 1 2 3 4
3. I struggle to concentrate or to hold more than one thing in my head. 0 1 2 3 4
4. Nothing I achieve feels like enough to justify stopping. 0 1 2 3 4
5. I have started to wonder whether I am actually any good at this. 0 1 2 3 4

Part Three total: _____ out of 20

Part Four: The pattern underneath

This part is not about your workload. Answer it about you.

1. Slowing down makes me anxious rather than relaxed. 0 1 2 3 4
2. I feel guilty when I am not being useful to someone. 0 1 2 3 4
3. I would rather do it myself than ask for help or risk letting someone down. 0 1 2 3 4
4. I am the person other people rely on, and I am not sure who I rely on. 0 1 2 3 4
5. Being capable is a large part of how I understand my own worth. 0 1 2 3 4

Part Four total: _____ out of 20

Making sense of your answers

First, add Parts One, Two and Three together. That gives you a score out of 60.

Under 20 suggests that while things may be demanding, you are largely recovering from them. Worth keeping an eye on rather than acting on.

Between 20 and 39 suggests real strain that has been going on for a while. This is the range where people tend to tell themselves they will deal with it after the next deadline, and then the deadline after

that.

Over 40 suggests significant and sustained strain. If you scored here, the most useful thing you can do is stop treating it as something to push through and talk to someone about it, whether that is your GP, a therapist, or someone you trust.

None of these numbers is a diagnosis. They are a way of seeing the size of something you have probably been minimising.

Then look at Part Four on its own.

This is the part most burnout tools leave out, and it is often the most telling.

If your first three scores are high and Part Four is low, what you are dealing with is likely to be mostly about your circumstances. Changing the load, the support around you, or the conditions you are working in may go a long way, and rest will probably hold once you get it.

If your first three scores are high and Part Four is also high, something else is going on. The drive to keep going is not only coming from your job. It is coming from you, and it has probably been with you a lot longer than this role has.

That is not a criticism. It is usually an adaptation that made complete sense at the time, and often one that worked. But it does not have an off switch, which is why people in this position can take a genuine break and find the relief wearing off within days of getting back.

If that last part sounded familiar

You may already have noticed the gap between understanding your patterns and being able to change them. Most of the people we work with can explain exactly why they over-function. They do it anyway.

That gap is not a failure of insight or of effort. Knowing why you do something and being able to stop are two different tasks, and they respond to different kinds of work.

If you want to talk about what that might look like for you, Hannah, our Admin and Client Support Officer, offers a free 15 minute enquiry call. There is no obligation and no pressure, and if what you need is something other than us, we will say so.

We see people in Thornbury, in Daylesford, and via telehealth across Australia.

Reach out today - www.centreself.com.au; 1800 501 200, hello@centreself.com.au - we would love to hear from you.

An important note

This reflection is not a diagnostic tool and it does not replace assessment by a qualified professional. It cannot tell you whether you have burnout, depression, anxiety or anything else, and a low score does not mean nothing is wrong. If you are concerned about how you have been feeling, please speak with your GP or a mental health professional.

If you are in crisis or need to talk to someone now, Lifeline is available 24 hours a day on 13 11 14. In an emergency, call 000.

Centre Self Collective, 2026.