

A Manager's Guide to Preventing Employee Burnout in 2021

Over the past year, COVID-19, racial injustice, and political upheaval have disrupted every conception of what's considered "normal life." As with any big disruption, these events can increase everyday stress and the risk of work-related burnout. Even with an [upcoming vaccine](#) and an end to the pandemic in sight, your employees are likely still grappling with plenty of stress. Managers have an important role to play. They need to maintain productivity and keep their teams on track, while accounting for team members' mental and physical wellness. As a manager, you can't prevent life stressors for your employees—but you can support your team's mental wellness with these strategies:

Key ways you can help:

- Demonstrate empathy
- Lead by example
- Promote casual wellness check-ins, and ask employees with direct reports to do the same
- Remind employees of available mental health resources



1. Demonstrate empathy

Often, **showing appreciation for employees who are working in challenging circumstances can go a long way toward helping them feel heard and understood.** The following actions can signal your support:

- Show empathy for your employees in one-on-one conversations about how they're feeling about their work pace and volume
- Offer flexibility whenever possible
- If an employee is showing signs of distress, do more listening than talking
- Stick to open-ended questions and statements like, "What's going on for you?" and "Tell me more about that."

2. Lead by example

Because they're used to demonstrating productivity and assuredness, managers may not naturally gravitate toward discussing their own challenges, but it's exactly this tactic that helps employees feel more at ease.

When you mention what's been challenging for you, or how you're trying to balance work and home responsibilities, it can help employees feel like they can open up about those issues, too. If your child is tromping noisily through the living room during a regular teleconference meeting and you can acknowledge it without needing to apologize for it, it's a sign that they don't need to, either.

3. Promote casual wellness check-ins, and ask employees with direct reports to do the same

Remote work can mean fewer opportunities for the type of casual social interactions that happen every day in a physical workplace. This can spur feelings of isolation and disconnection, which add to stress levels and raise the risk of burnout. To mitigate this, **check in casually with each team member throughout the week about how they're doing.** Even an instant message to ask how they're doing and what support you can offer, can be a huge boost for someone who's struggling.

4. Remind employees of available mental health resources

The support you provide your team members can go a long way, but there will likely be times when your employees need mental health care. **Emphasize that it's okay not to be okay, and that accessing mental health services can be helpful any time, and not as a "last resort" option.**

Research has shown that coaching can be highly effective in reducing stress among employees. Coaches help clients develop evidence-based skills to help them overcome obstacles they're facing. They also provide a fresh perspective to help their clients reframe their thinking and address problems more effectively.

Looking ahead to more time worrying about the spread of COVID-19 and how that will impact their lives can feel stressful for many employees. **But that doesn't mean it's unmanageable.** Lyra Clinical Director of Partnerships, Joe Grasso, PhD, says, "Now is the time for all of us to show ourselves compassion and for everyone who is a manager or people leader to show grace, empathy, appreciation, and flexibility. That's how we get closer to countering burnout in the future." Preventive strategies like those mentioned here can help alleviate the sense of disconnection and anxiety your employees may be experiencing, and give them the resources they need to maintain their well-being.