



Burnout

Amanda Daly, *Libero International*

27 January 2023

The phrase “burnout” has become more and more common in the West. The term was coined by the American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger during the 1970s and was originally used to describe the consequences of ‘high ideals and severe stress’ experienced by those in “*helping*” professions. Currently, there are many definitions of *burnout*, most hailing from the United States and Europe. While they differ, the base concept remains the same: *physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress*.

Wanting to open a dialogue about *burnout*, Dr. Glenn Miles led a GLC call around the subject in early 2022. He invited members on the call to answer questions about their own definitions of and remedies for *burnout*. This discussion led to further interest and *Libero International* analyzed these responses for word trends and patterns, presenting them to GLC members on a Coffee Corner call.

As shown in Fig. 1, the majority of words relate to a negative association with emotional or physical states. One way to conceptualize these results is noting the phenomenon as moving from a state of *having* (passion, energy, strength) to a state of *not having* (apathy, exhaustion, inability).

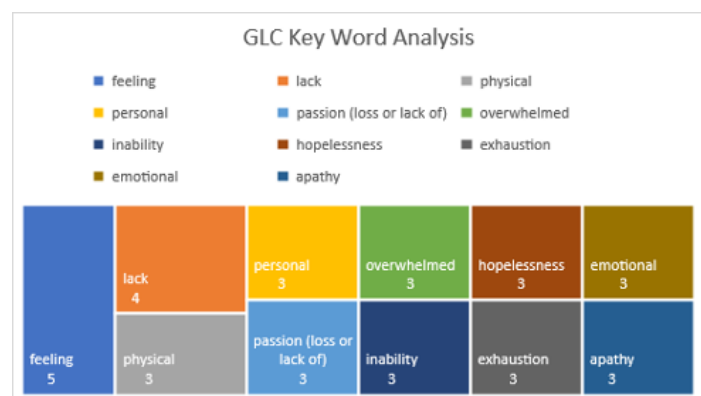


Figure 1

Libero International also caught up with Grace Lange, Managing Partner of the *Burnout Prevention Project*, now *You Flourish*. This women-led consulting company based in the U.S. focuses on empowering women in business to stop *burnout* before it starts.

...the base concept remains the same: *physical or mental collapse caused by overwork or stress.*

An area where *burnout* plays a significant role in the business sector is around employee satisfaction and turnover rates. The ‘culture’ of a company, Grace said, can make or break a business, with ‘culture’ referring to expectations, how people treat each other, and even how they treat themselves.

She noted that when people are expected to prioritize their job over the things most important to them, it can cause significant problems, with some employees even being criticized or penalized. Contributing factors like insufficient support and training, or lack of compassion from managers only exacerbate the issue. Eventually, the excitement and energy an employee brought to their workplace is lost.

Cultures like these often produce high turnover rates, low customer satisfaction due to poor customer service, and other issues which can become extremely costly. This can lead to downsizing and budget cuts, which sends already low employee satisfaction numbers plummeting as the company destabilizes.



So, what does all this have to do with the anti-trafficking community, GLC, and NGOs? Many of the same patterns can be seen in the non-profit sphere, possibly at even higher and more severe rates. From NGOs to the business sector, people are struggling to stay afloat.

Take some time this week to think of your work/life balance. Below are some of the activities and policies GLC members shared to prevent *burnout*. You can also take a look the [Top 10 Tips to Prevent Your Burnout](#) guide that Grace Lange at *You Flourish* thoughtfully shared with us:

GLC Member Responses on Burnout Prevention:

- Cap on hours worked per week
- “Brain dump” of thoughts, anxieties, ideas
- Boundaries

- Reasonable goal setting
- Open and honest communications
- Learning to say “no”
- Trauma informed care
- Yoga
- Retreats (personal and staff)
- Therapy
- Exercise
- Being outside
- Spending time with loved ones
- Sabbath
- Sabbaticals

Additional Articles on Burnout:

- [Stop Framing Wellness Programs Around Self-Care](#)
- [10 Ways to Definitely Burn Out as a Nonprofit Employee](#)
- [Avoiding Burnout and Preserving Movement Leadership](#)
- [3 Leading Causes of Nonprofit Burnout and What You Can Do To Prevent Them](#)
- [Handbook on Prevention of Burn-out and Control](#)