

Key Learnings

Time to talk: How to cope with burnout in a job that triggers empathy

Thank you for joining INvolve and PVL's Roundtable on 1st February 2023.

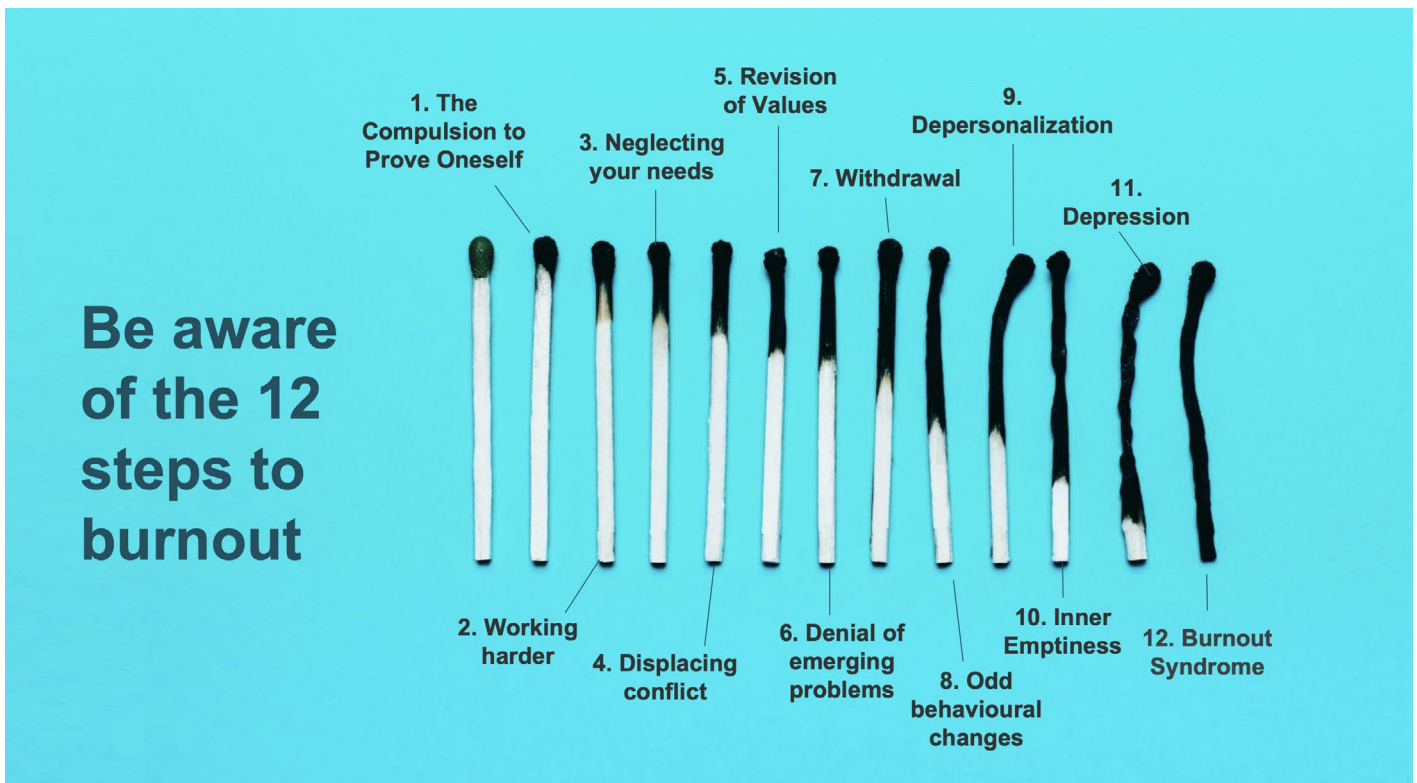
We know that HR and DEI leaders frequently lean on their empathy and ability to connect with employees in the workplace when providing key resources and support to employees where required. The work being done by HR and DEI leaders within business is critical, as is ensuring that they have the tools to navigate the challenges they may face through supporting their employee population.

This roundtable focused on the all too real risk of burnout, that can be triggered by a job, and responsibilities, that are rooted in empathy and connection. We focused on the 12 stages of burnout, the importance of self-awareness and self-management when dealing with burnout as well as the consequences on oneself as a result of burnout.

The 12 Stages of Burnout

Petra began the session by providing a breakdown of burnout, focusing on what this looks like to an individual and what the '12 Stages of Burnout' are. Using the diagram the group discussed where they often fall on the scale, and how they are able to recognise when they have reached the point of burnout.

As HR and DEI professionals, the group then discussed the importance of self-care and investing in themselves both as people who are often the first touchpoints for their employees and as those who are most likely to take on the emotional weight of challenges faced by others in the business. These challenges can range from ensuring company diversity targets are met to dealing with grievances and complaints, with an understanding that the risk for burnout is elevated for those who directly manage people and do so from an inclusion perspective.



Without adequate support, and the ability to recognise burnout the consequences, as Petra explained, can vary from people quitting their jobs to suffering in silence. Petra summarised burnout as:

1. Emotional exhaustion
2. Depletion of energy
3. Feeling that nothing is progressing

Self-awareness and self-management

Keshav discussed the crucial relationship between self-awareness and self-management in being able to mitigate for burnout.

He discussed that self-awareness is key, because an individual can't change something intangible that can't be identified on a personal level. Getting specific with language when it comes to self-reflection is key, as vague language only creates vague and non-specific responses in return and this won't help to solve burnout or course correct if burnout is at risk.

This can be done by deciding what 'burnout' means on an individual level and to judge burnout as acute, rather than chronic.

Keshav also discussed the importance of community to provide support with burnout and that importance on being able to lean on support as burnout can't always be solved by an individual.

Self-management depends entirely on an individuals ability to discern their own needs, and is critical for HR and DEI professionals to be able to leverage and use as part of their daily roles. Attendees were then split into breakout rooms to discuss and share their best practice for self-management when they have either been risk or have been burn out.

Best practice for self-management

Both breakout groups were able to create a practical list of self-management tools to provide support for burnout risk.

These strategies included:

- 1. Scheduling time for movement or creativity.** Especially with hybrid/remote working set ups, ensuring that movement was incorporated into the day is important, and some even suggested formalising this by adding time in calendars that other team members might see. Role modelling the importance of breaks allows other people with confidence to take necessary breaks too when they need it.
- 2. Burnout on a cultural level.** Some discussed that burnout looks different in different parts of the world, and in some cultures it can be lauded as seen as a result of hard work. Therefore, perhaps organisations should work to demystify the stigma that means some employees consistently find themselves struggling to manage their burnout.
- 3. Team wellbeing charter.** Some in the group suggested the importance of creating a company-wide charter, or set of commitments to ensure that conversations around burnout and wellbeing more broadly are centralised and formalised. This helps to destigmatise and open up meaningful conversations about burnout on a continuous basis.
- 4. Using tech.** Some in the group suggested using apps or browser extensions that lock you out of work pages for 4-5 mins thereby forcing people to step away from their desk intentionally. Whether this is to incorporate movement, or remembering to hydrate, it provides people with a routine and therefore the ability to take a break.
- 5. Space vs solutions.** One of the teams determined the importance of asking team members who have challenges whether they want solutions or just the space to vent, as this can provide them with control in how their situation is managed, but HR and DEI leaders too so they know how much to invest in practical action at each given instance.

While the importance of DEI within business looks set to increase over the next few years, personal wellbeing and the importance of recognising signs of burnout is key to ensure our health remains a priority.

HR and DEI leaders can also be setting an example for others within the business, driving policies for and creating space to discuss burnout which will only de-stigmatise the subject and help to ensure everyone is looking after their mental health.

INvolve: the inclusion people

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INvolve is a consultancy and global network championing diversity, equity, and inclusion in business. Through the delivery of trainings, events, programs, thought-leadership and advisory solutions, INvolve helps firms drive cultural change and create inclusive workplaces where any individual can succeed.



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If you would like more information on managing burnout, improving wellbeing from a strategic and implementation perspective, book a call with Petra **here** to share ideas.