



Balanced Living – December 2018

In this issue:

Seven Ways to Beat the Burnout Blues1

Holiday Entertaining on a Sensible Budget..... 2

How to Reduce Kids' Holiday Stress..... 4

Seven Ways to Beat the Burnout Blues



Have you ever wondered why some people leave jobs after two or three years and others stay for 15 or 20? Burnout may not be the only reason people leave their jobs, but it often is a factor.

You may be experiencing burnout if you feel bored, fatigued, apathetic, impatient, and constantly irritated with your co-workers.

Don't panic, there's hope. Some of the secrets to long-term job happiness are revealed below in the words of people who have avoided burnout.

Change positions within your company

"I avoided burnout by changing positions every two to four years. During my 27-year career, I worked in sales, market research, technical management, operations, and product management. The changes kept me interested and excited about my work," says Jan Powell, from Dallas, Texas, who worked for 27 years at Xerox.

Find like-minded people

"To avoid burnout, the most useful tool I have found is to identify like-minded people with whom I can share humor, have fun, and vent frustrations when needed. These must be people who share a similar sense of humor as yourself and people you trust implicitly," says Bobbe White, from Quincy, Illinois, who has worked as a business development officer at a community bank for 21 years.

Seek out short-term projects

"I have avoided burnout because, in addition to my normal routine job, I seek out short-term projects, working with different teams each time," says Jaswant Kaur, a nine-year employee of the Samling Group of Companies.

"These projects could be on cost-cutting efforts, improving quality efforts, charitable causes, or other social functions for the company," says the Samling employee, who lives in Kuching, Malaysia.

Get more education

"I was previously with a technology company for more than 13 years and became burned out since I wasn't able to go anywhere within the company," says Teresa Johnson, from Southlake, Texas. "I went back to school and received a B.B.A. in management and an M.S. in human resources and training.

"The company paid for my schooling and knew when I started the master's program that I'd leave after graduation if no opportunities arose. That happened, and I left within 30 days after graduating. They felt it was worth it to keep me working at the company for the time I was in school," she says.

Keep on learning

"I worked at Sears for nearly 10 years many years ago. The number one thing I've learned through many years of employment is that it's important to continue to learn new things," says Melinda L. Surbough, from Dallas, Texas, who is now the managing editor of Today's Dallas Woman magazine.

Have pride in your job

"I work in a busy medical office. Having pride and confidence in my job and doing work that I enjoy are very important to me," says Lucretia Rolland, a receptionist at The Dermatology Center in Irving, Texas. "These, combined with appreciation and caring from management, have kept me in my job for more than 17 years."

Don't wait

If you start to experience burnout, don't wait until it affects your work and don't start looking for a new job. Instead, try making positive changes in your present job. Talk to your supervisor and discuss changes that could reenergize you.

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Holiday Entertaining on a Sensible Budget

What better way to ring in the holidays than by hosting some of your favorite people to socialize, celebrate and relieve some holiday stress?

When the holiday spirit moves you to entertain, don't fight it, but don't go overboard, either! Party costs can add up fast, leaving the host on the hook for a heaping helping of holiday debt.

But don't let that dampen your drive to party. With resourcefulness and some savvy social planning, it's easy to host a truly memorable holiday event that won't result in a pile of bills you'd just as soon forget. After all, as June Schroeder, CFP® at Liberty Financial Group in Elm Grove, Wis., points out, "The holidays aren't about spending money; they're about spending time with people you care about."

Here, courtesy of the Financial Planning Association, are some ideas for balancing the party spirit with wise wallet management.

- **START WITH A PLAN:** Before you go off and hire a brass ensemble, a high-end caterer and one of Santa's elves for your event, decide on an amount you can afford to spend on the party. This will dictate the shape the event ultimately takes: venue, guest list, food and drink, etc., explains Schroeder. Keep in mind, too, that the holidays will likely leave you with other additional financial burdens.
- **STEER CLEAR OF CREDIT CARDS:** Cover party expenses with cash or a debit card whenever possible so you won't face a ballooned credit card balance come the New Year.
- **CUT THE CATERER AND GET COOKING.** You don't have to be a gourmet cook to come up with crowd-pleasing and cost-effective chow for your guests. Additionally, you can always ask a friend or relative with culinary skills to help in the kitchen.
- **PARTY POT-LUCK STYLE.** Instead of doing all the cooking yourself or hiring a caterer, give people a chance to tap into their own holiday spirit by asking them to bring something to eat or drink to the party.
- **DIAL DOWN DINNER:** It wouldn't be a party without food. Instead of feeding everyone dinner, build your event around eats that won't devour your budget, like desserts, appetizers or lunch. Consider an open house with snacks instead of a sit-down meal. "Less formal can be more fun anyway," said Schroeder.
- **DO-IT-YOURSELF DECORATING:** Collect pine boughs, pinecones and other "found" items to make your own festive holiday decorations. Don't forget the mistletoe!
- **PARTY FAVORS TO SAVOR:** Planning to provide people with something to take home? Try homemade baked goods or simple holiday ornaments.

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How to Reduce Kids' Holiday Stress

While the holidays and festivals celebrated between late November and early January are traditionally thought of as times of family togetherness, gift-giving, and general merriment, they also can be a tough time for children.

As a parent, you can take steps to make the holidays less stressful for your children -- and yourself.

"The first thing for parents to do is to talk between themselves about any expectations of or plans for the holiday before they talk to their kids about it," says Kenneth Gorfinkle, Ph.D., Assistant Clinical Professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University in New York. "They really need to think about what Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa means to them, from cultural, religious, and family points of view."

Other questions parents should ask each other include:

- What does the holiday really mean to us?
- What kinds of memories do we want to create for our children?
- What past memories would we like to recreate (or avoid) for our children?

Once these questions are answered, ideas can be presented to the children. Instead of making an autocratic decision, parents should be ready to respond to their children's suggestions and anxieties through negotiation, especially if the children are older. "The wishes and feelings of children need to be respected," says Dr. Gorfinkle. "It can make a huge difference in how kids feel. They'll play along much better, even if they don't get their way."

Once a decision has been made on how to mark the holiday -- a trip somewhere, a festive family dinner, a spiritual or religious activity, or a cultural event -- parents can set realistic parameters for their children. In turn, this creates a correspondence between the child's expectations and what really happens, which can minimize the possibility of disappointment.

One significant step a family can take is to involve children in holiday preparations. Rather than being passive participants, they will feel invested in the plans. For example, show them how to bake cookies and prepare for the dinner. Ask them to help pick out and wrap a gift for another family member. If you're going on a trip, give them maps and have them learn about where they are going. This kind of involvement can help ease the anxieties that are brought about by changes in routine.

Of course, gift-giving is for many a central holiday feature. Again, to ensure that children's expectations are reasonable, it is a good idea to discuss ahead of time what is realistic.

For example, children can be asked if they want eight little Hanukkah presents, or one or two big ones. Parents can also ask their children if they prefer receiving all their gifts at one time rather than spread out over several days. In addition, it's OK to discuss with children (in terms they will understand) what kind of budget is available for buying presents.

Parents should communicate to people outside the immediate family what guidelines exist for giving presents to their children.

"Parents have an obligation to lay out what is and is not OK. Friends and family have no idea about any limits you impose unless you tell them," warns Dr. Gorfinkle. "Fortunately, they usually appreciate being told about such guidelines. It also helps to let others know what your children's interests are."

Once the holiday arrives, it is important to be mentally prepared for last-minute changes. Inclement weather, sudden illness, and unpredictable human behavior (the last can be triggered by the emotional swirl of the holidays) can ruin the best-laid plans.

Cautions Dr. Gorfinkle: "Expecting the holidays to be exactly as pictured opens a person to automatic disappointment. Staying flexible means a smoother transition to changes." In the end, the holidays will be memorable for more than the things that went wrong.

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