

STRESS MANAGEMENT

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Work Related Stress and Burnout: Interview with Dr. Gabriela Cora

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Stress at work could have detrimental effects on your health and well-being. LoveToKnow contacted Gabriela Cora, MD, MBA for an exclusive interview on what burnout means, how people get to that point, how to recover, and what to do to avoid it.

About Gabriela Cora, MD, MBA

Dr. Cora is a leadership and wellbeing expert, who is also a medical doctor, board certified psychiatrist with an MBA. She is the author of *ExecutiveHealth.com's Leading Under Pressure, Strategies to Avoid Burnout, Increase Energy, and Improve Your Well-Being.*

Understanding Work-Related Stress and Burnout

Signs of Work-Related Burnout

LoveToKnow (LTK): What are the initial signs of burnout?

Dr. Gabriela Cora (GC): Initial signs of burnout include:

- Feeling tired all the time
- Lack of energy
- Lack of enjoyment
- Mental and physical exhaustion
- Lack of sleep because they carry the stress they experience during the day to their sleep, making it an even more difficult negative cycle.

LTK: What does it mean to be burned out?

GC: We refer to burnout as the state in which our system has become overwhelmed and exhausted, unable to bounce back after constant stress.

LTK: What are some other signs of burnout?

GC: Many people refer to burnout when they are actually ill. While early signs include physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion, burnout includes full-blown depression, anxiety, headaches, pain, or aggravation of chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, or asthma.

How It Happens

LTK: How does [work-related stress](#) contribute to burnout?

GC: Increasing and unrelenting stress contributes to burnout. We have opportunities to bounce back after occasional stressful events. However, if there is no relief, our system may give in, thus leading to burnout.

Burnout Recovery and Avoidance

LTK: How does someone recover from burnout?

GC: Burnout doesn't happen overnight. It may take weeks or months - or years - to fully recover from burnout. In medicine - and in psychiatry - we say it may take the same amount of time that it took to burnout to fully recover.

Aside from time, we need to analyze why burnout occurred. To recover, we need to re-establish healthy lifestyle strategies as well as healthy organizational skills that we may apply to our lives and to our workplace.



Gabriela Cora, MD, MBA



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LoveToKnow interviews Eli Bay, the founder of the Relaxation Response Institute.

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LTK: How do people, who are in jobs that have a high rate of burnout, avoid it?

GC: People should learn to manage high levels of stress to avoid burnout altogether. Maximizing their organizational skills at work, enhancing collaborative opportunities, and focusing on priorities will help as well as following healthy lifestyle strategies regarding nutrition, exercise, and sleep.

Consequences of Work-Related Chronic Stress

LTK: What are the consequences of people working while experiencing burnout?

GC: People will not be able to work while experiencing burnout for long. Their level of performance and productivity will slowly decrease and they will eventually become sufficiently impaired enough that they won't be able to work at all.

LTK: How does it affect people's health?

GC: Burnout is closely related to illness. While burnout is a more acceptable word, many people are dealing with disease and illness triggered by tremendous amounts of stress.

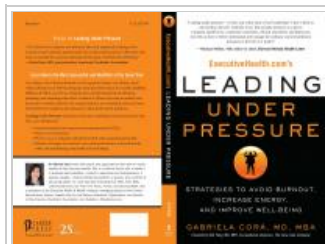
LTK: What are the long term effects of experiencing work-related chronic stress?

GC: The long-term effects of unremitting stress include impaired performance, diminished productivity, decreased health and well-being.

Benefits of Leading a Lower Stressed Lifestyle

LTK: What are the health benefits of not being so stressed that you're at risk for burnout?

GC: A bit of stress is beneficial and enhances performance and productivity and even health. Too much stress that is out of control will lead to illness and disease. Finding a good balance of being busy at work and yet managing efforts when too much is on our plate is of essence for our longstanding well-being.



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Helping Burnout Victims

LTK: How can someone help a friend or employee that seems to be headed in the direction of burnout?

GC: We can help our boss, [employee](#), family, and friends by pointing out the impact and toll that stress is taking in their lives, the early signs of burnout, and suggesting they seek guidance as early as possible.

LTK: What can an employer do to help employees?

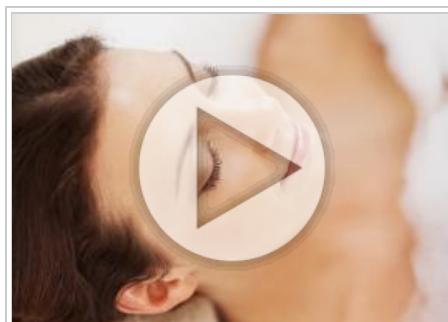
GC: Employers should learn to manage their own levels of stress and help their employees identify and manage theirs. The process starts at the top: if the employer disregards the importance of having a healthy workforce, they will miss the impact that burnout will have in their company's performance and productivity.

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