

# **B.U.R.N.O.U.T.**

How You Entered The Path To Burnout, and How To Choose A  
Different Way

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**Published by Breakfast Leadership, Inc**

**113 West G St #1019**

**San Diego, CA 92101-6096**

**[www.BreakfastLeadership.com](http://www.BreakfastLeadership.com)**

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# **Introduction**

**Burnout is an epidemic. We're seeing burnout throughout our country and across the planet. We're running into situations where people are leaving their jobs or they're going out on leave for a long time because they just simply can't take it anymore.**

**Recently I posted an image on Instagram that said burnout but each letter in burnout meant something. This book goes into each letter that spells B.U.R.N.O.U.T. , with the hopes you will learn where burnout comes from, and how you can prevent it from being a part of your life.**

**This content was originally published at my site, [BreakfastLeadership.com/blog](http://BreakfastLeadership.com/blog) and shared on Medium, Thrive Global, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Links to these channels are at the end of this book.**

# Boundaries

The letter **B** in burnout stands for boundaries. A key component in dealing with your burnout is having boundaries in your life. If you lack boundaries, you're going to burnout; it's inevitable if your self-worth and your self-care get impacted when you don't have boundaries in your life.

When you hear the word boundaries a lot of people think border walls or boundaries around sports field. Personal boundaries are important. You have to take care of yourself first. We've all heard the analogy of putting on the oxygen mask first if you're an airplane. Hopefully you never experience that because it's quite traumatic for people that have seen that situation happen before.

Imagine you're on an airplane, masks drop, everyone starts freaking out, but again in that panic state you have to take care of yourself in a self-care state.

In all aspects of your life, you have to take care of yourself **FIRST**.

How do you implement boundaries in your life if you don't have them? Just like anything you have to implement them slowly and you have to see what works and what doesn't.

**Saying no is a boundary.**

**Don't overcommit yourself.**

**Don't spend so much time giving to others without making sure you take care of yourself first, because you can't serve anyone if you're empty. Unfortunately many of us find ourselves too much, and it depletes us.**

I understand why we do that. We are giving people. We want what's best for others. I am a reformed people pleaser, and those people have a goal to help others. However, when someone is not in agreement with you on your ability to give to him or her when they expect it (pre-having boundaries) there's a chance that person will be upset with you. You've changed on them, and people don't react kindly to drastic changes. Remember they're projecting onto you. They're projecting their wants and their desires, what they want and what they desire. Remember: what's an emergency to them may not be an emergency to you.

You have to look at things from a perspective of "what is best for me" to be able to help people when I can. Ultimately it boils down to you have to help

**yourself first. And if you don't do that you're not going to help anybody at least not in the way that you'd want to.**

# Unhappy

The letter U in burnout is for unhappy. When you're burned out, you're not happy with yourself. You're not happy with life. You're not happy about anything. You may be upset. You may be mad. When I had my burnout in 2009, I was distant from life. Things that you used to enjoy, things that brought you fulfillment. No longer does. You're numb. You don't sleep well. You're not eating well. You're not doing anything well. Life is just overwhelming to you, to the point where even little inconveniences seem like major catastrophes in your life.

If that's going on with you, it should be a warning sign that you need to address something about this because it's not normal. Little things shouldn't bug you. At this point in history, it seems a lot of people are on edge right now. We have so many things to be thankful for. We have access to information at levels that humanity has never experienced. On-demand EVERYTHING.

If you're unhappy with your life and you're not doing the things that bring you joy and happiness, your burnout is going to get worse and your body's going to be combating this stress and you'll start experiencing other health and mental issues.

Eventually the energy that your body needs to take care of other damage than we do to our bodies on a daily basis, won't be there to repair yourself. That's why your sleep is garbage. That's why your energy levels are low. That's why the high-octane coffee is not doing what it used to do. It's because you're burned out and you're not enjoying life and you're unhappy. And you can address this, but you have to be willing and able to do it.

# Rhythm

We're up to the letter R, which stands for rhythm.

Our lives are about harmony and rhythm and actions and things that we do. When you're burned out, you're out of rhythm. We're not in sync with how you operate through our lives. We learn traits, we build up habits, routines, and a variety of different things. What happens when you're out of rhythm, those things become more problematic or in many cases you skip them. One of the things that I often see in people that are burned out is they skip the things that they enjoy doing because they don't have time.

Yes, you do.

You've got 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year unless it's a leap year. You get a bonus day. Don't work that day. Pro-tip take a vacation day. Use that day as a day of reflection. Enjoy yourself. Do whatever you want.

When you're not in rhythm, everything becomes harder, even to the point of getting out of bed or going to the gym or meeting up with people that you normally meet or being prepared for meetings.

Being prepared for dinner, being prepared to help your kids with homework, being prepared for anything when you're out of rhythm, it's as if you're not quite on the same road that you should be on your own. You're driving on the shoulder and everything's coming up. You're running over things. You're hearing clunks in your car. Everything is a mess. And it's because you're not taking care of yourself.



If you're not in alignment, again, your body is going to be trying to compensate for the problems that you're dealing with. When that happens, you'll have a situation where the energy that you need to repair the damage that we do to our bodies on a daily basis won't be there, because it's too busy addressing your out of rhythm situation.

The key is to get back into rhythm. The key is to get back to your true self or your True North. To do that, you need to get to grips with the fact that there's something wrong. You're out of alignment. There's something going on that has led you to this burned out state. It doesn't cure itself. Even taking a couple weeks vacation to get away from everything, you should want a life that you don't have to take a vacation to get away from your life.

When you get back from vacation, guess what? You have two weeks of work that you didn't get to do, on top of your normal workload. That's why you hear people grumbling all the time about going back to work. It's because their workloads are not manageable. And that's a systemic problem across businesses all over the globe. We're being asked to do too much and oftentimes we don't have enough resources to do it. That's the reality of things. The key is to find alignment with what you can do and specialize in the things that only you can do. And that's a hard conversation with your employers. That's a hard conversation with your family, your friends, your partner, your kids, everybody.

The key is you can only do so much. You're not going to be able to get everything done. Spoiler alert: We won't. There's no shortage of work, which is a good thing, which means there's things for us to do. The key is to be able to get an alignment and get into a rhythm of being able to do the things that we need to do.

# Neglect

Next up in the burnout acronym is the letter N for neglect. You're neglecting your self-care. Reminder: burnout doesn't happen overnight, it takes time. When we enter that burnout arena, one of the first things that happens is we start neglecting our self-care.

What do I mean by self-care? You hear that phrase a lot. Many people may not understand what it means. Self-care means making sure that you're taking care of yourself, both physically, mentally, spiritually and any other descriptor that you can come up with. You need to take care of yourself. You need to eat well, that doesn't mean that you're skipping the brown bag fast food lunches every day, but you should eat better than maybe you are. When I had my burn out, my nutrition plan was ordering something through a speaker, driving around the corner, paying for it and get getting handed a brown paper bag. And that was my three meals a day because I was working crazy hours and not sitting down and eating. I was basically consuming fast food for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Obviously, that takes a toll and gets you on cholesterol medications and potentially stents in your left anterior descending artery. Not that I know anything about that. #CardiacKid.

When you neglect yourself from a food standpoint that impacts your energy level, because, again, your body needs to break down what you're consuming. When you're eating foods that aren't really beneficial for you, your body is fighting that and trying to figure out where do I sort this? It's kind of like taking a bag of garbage and recycling and all of that stuff and throwing it all in and you throw it down the chute. Please don't do that :)

Someone will have to sort through all of that material and determine if it's recycling, it's compost, its trash. Your body has to do that with everything that we consume, not only from food standpoint, but also from an information standpoint. So if you are parked in front of the TV watching the nightly news or reading posts on all the doom and gloom of the world, guess what? That's going to impact your approach of life. That's going to impact what you're consuming and it's going to impact you how you live your life.

If you focus on negative things, you're inviting that to be a normal part of your life. What you consume makes you. I'm not saying to ignore what's going on in the world, but have the mindset of this event/situation is something that's happening in the world, but not happening directly to me.

When there's "doom and gloom" in the world, ask yourself if you as an individual can do something about it? If you can't. Don't worry about it. Is it impacting you directly? No? Don't worry about it. Focus your time and energy of being able to do the things you can do to make your world better. Change comes within. And if you want to change the world, change yourself. Because if you change yourself and you're a better person, then your impact on the world is going to be better, which means it's going to impact the world. This is something you need to repeat every day. Wash, rinse, and repeat.

You're neglecting yourself with what you're eating, what you're consuming and what you're not doing: the things that bring you joy and happiness and fulfillment. Neglecting yourself is going to increase your likelihood of either burning out or be staying in a burned out state for much longer than you want to. It's crucial for you to take care of yourself. You have to be the best version of yourself in order to impact others.

After you stop neglecting yourself and focus on your self-care, you can't let guilt and worrying about what other people think because you're taking care of yourself. They're going to project onto you what they think, or they're going to

say. “You're being selfish or you don't care anymore”. Or “why are you taking this position that's being rude” to whatever you say or do. That's them projecting onto you their beliefs, their thoughts and feelings. Be like Captain America, use that shield and block that because don't take their projections on to you.

What you need to do is make sure that you're focusing on yourself first, because if you are the best version of you, you're going to be giving them a version that they have never seen before and you're going to have a huge ripple effect on them and everything else you do. You have to take care of yourself first.

There is a book called Disease to Please. I highly recommend that you read this book, and I highly recommend you read that book on an annual basis.. You can serve people. You don't need to please them. Serve them. It's a big difference.

Next up on the BURNOUT acronym is O.

# Offside

I'm a huge sports fan. I wasn't very good at it playing, however. I played basketball and baseball as a kid, but my asthma and body size as a youth was a barrier (self-imposed) to pursue a career in sports.

I could have made changes. I could have taken better care of myself as a child. I could have chosen to be a little bit more athletic and practice. Yes, A.I., I said practice. We're talking about practice.

When you're burned out in the game of life. You're offside. You're out of bounds. You're not doing the things that you need to do, because you're too busy fighting this burned out state. Your body is in a constant state of flux, pedal to the floor constantly, which has your body's using all its energy to repair the damage that burnout causes.

When you're off sides or out of bounds, you're not in the game. You're not doing the things that you want to do because you're too damn tired to do it, because your body is using all of its energy to fight the damage that you're doing to yourself with the burnout.

**Burnout is a choice.**

OK, I know that may not be popular to say that, but you chose to be burned out. The path you chose created the situation. You say, well, I'm working too many hours. My boss is a jerk. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. All true. I don't know your boss, but I'm guessing what you're saying is true. You haven't given me a reason to say that it's not, but don't forget you chose to work there.

**Jobs are still plentiful. Now, that may change. We do have economic ups and downs in life. So take that into consideration. But in this world of opportunities, there are things you can do. Yes, I know there's other factors. You may have a mortgage payment that requires you to earn a certain level of income. Again, a choice. No one signed that lease agreement or that mortgage document for you. You did.**

**You chose that. You choose where you live. You chose what you eat. You chose your partner. You chose your job. You chose the car you drive. You choose the clothes you wear.**

**You chose to subscribe to Netflix. Instead of going to a gym, you are choosing these things, your choice, and your life. You do what you want. However, your choice is to have an impact on your life. What you choose today impacts your life down the road.**

**Your choices create these situations. If you're burned out, it's a choice. You chose to be out of bounds with your life. You can also choose to get back into the game, and that's crucial. And my hope for you is that you are making that choice.**

**Next up in the BURNOUT series will be the letter U.**

# Upheaval

Burnout can create a scenario where your life is completely upside down, and create upheaval all of your life. When I had my burnout in 2009, my life was upside down and an upheaval took place. For those of you that are not familiar, over a period of time over 369 days, I had a heart attack that should have killed me. I lost my job during an economic recession. The family vehicle was repossessed. Finally our home was foreclosed. All in a year. I don't want anybody to go through that. It was not fun for my family or myself to experience those losses. But we did. And as I said in an earlier post, burnout is a choice.

I chose that path. The decisions and choices I made led up to those 369 days of worst-case scenarios. No one wants to lose his or her health. No one wants to lose his or her job. Having their family car towed away is not a pleasant sight. And going up to your house and opening up a screen door and seeing the biggest padlock in your life with a foreclosure sign on the door is not pleasant. It wasn't fun, but I'll tell you what, I'm thankful for all of those things because it woke me up.

Many people are asleep at the wheel when they make these choices that lead to their burnout and they think, OK, this is where I am. And they don't give themselves permission to change that. You chose burnout. You can choose a different path your life. You can do what you want. You should choose not to be burned out, Yes, there are external factors, but you put yourself in those situations.

I'm not about to tell you that you should believe this instead of that or change your faith or anything like that. That's not that's not what this is about. Your life is in upheaval and you made choices that created this situation. Did you choose to be burned out? I say that burnout is a choice, and that's the outcome of your choices.

**Would you say, “*You know what I want to do? Next year, I think I'm going to burnout.*”?**

**Nobody does that. But the choices you make can lead to it. So you have to make better choices and you can get out of burnout. I talk to a lot of people and they say, oh, I've had burnout a couple times. And my first reaction to that is it once is enough. Why twice? They obviously applied some Band-Aid approaches to deal with their burnout, which didn't eliminate it, but basically they numbed the pain but it was still there festering and then it flared up again and then they dealt with it again. Unless they did some deep-rooted work to figure out why they burned out in the first place, Spoiler alert, it's gonna come back.**

**When I work with people is to identify the root causes of why they burned out so we can transform their lives to prevent it from happening again.**

**Burnout once in your life is definitely enough. I don't want another 369 Days ever again. I don't want anybody to go through that. And it's preventable. But the key is you have to choose that.**

**So is your life in upheaval or are you offside as mentioned in an earlier section? Are you in balance? Are you living the life you choose to live?**

**The final letter in the BURNOUT acronym is the letter T.**



# Time

One of the biggest challenges that people face is that they say that they don't have enough time. Last time I checked, everyone gets the same amount of time every day. It's how we choose to spend our time. The key is really to know how you choose to spend your time.

Too often we say we don't have time to do this or this or that. We don't have time to make our own food. That's why we ordered fast food. We don't have time to exercise, although we'll spend six hours on our iPhones or Android devices or five hours watching Netflix. I'm not asking you to work out for five hours or go to the gym for that long, carve out 15 to 20 minutes. If you're not going to the gym at all, literally carve out five minutes. Go to the gym. Go in there for five minutes and then leave. I guarantee you will feel weird leaving after 5 minutes. You're going to ask yourself why am I leaving? I might as well stay a little bit longer.

I'm a big fan of energy. I'm a big fan of matching your workload to your energy. I have resources at [BreakfastLeadership.com](http://BreakfastLeadership.com) on how to track how your energy and your workloads, so they can match up better. I tend to be a morning person, so I tend to have my mornings scheduled with tasks, and in the afternoons scheduled follow-ups and other things. Sometimes it bleeds over and I have to do tasks in the afternoon or follow-ups in the morning. If you can somehow structure your days to be a little bit more consistent, your body will get into a rhythm. And we've already talked about rhythm how routines will help you use your time better.

I think that's what we really want to see here, is to help you get back to spending our time the way we want to, so we feel that we're in a little bit more control than we were before.

As I've said throughout this book, it's important for you to be able to address your burnout. If any of these posts resonate with you, and you feel you are burned out, reach out to me. Let's work together to transform your life and get you past burnout once and for all.

Go to <https://www.breakfastleadership.com/hire-us> and schedule a free, no obligation call.

**Be well!**

# Bio

Michael Levitt has spoken Internationally over the past decade, across many sectors. In his keynote presentations, Michael teaches some of the most important things he's ever learned about burnout.

Michael Levitt is the CEO of Breakfast Leadership, and works with individuals to reduce stress and prevent burnout, so that they can focus on what matters Most. Michael is a Certified NLP/CBT Therapist. Michael is the host of the Breakfast Leadership Podcast, ranked in the top 200 Business and Marketing Podcasts on iTunes, and author of 369 Days: How To Survive A Year of Worst-Case Scenarios

Michael is also recognized as a top 20 Global Thought Leader on Culture, by Thinkers360, and is the co-founder of Pre-Emptive Strike Consulting (PreEmptiveStrikeConsulting.com), and co-author of Pre-Emptive Strike Leadership, a top 10 new release on Amazon.com, and debuted # 1 in Canada on Amazon.ca under Financial Risk Management category.

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