



the **association** of
charitable organisations









BURNOUT IN THE CHARITY SECTOR

Merrifield Consultants





Connecting people, creating communities



AGENDA FOR THIS SESSION

-  Introduction - Why are we talking about this?
-  What is burnout?
-  A personal experience
-  Survey of the sector and the results
-  Tools and ideas to combat burnout
-  Questions and answers

WHY ARE WE TALKING ABOUT THIS?

-  The pressure on charities has never been higher
-  Organisations are being asked to maintain and increase their output, with the same resources or less
-  People are leaving the sector after COVID
-  It's a leading reason for someone finding a new role



ASSUMPTION -

What the average person knows about burnout

CAUSES

- Work related stress
- Non work related stress

SYMPTOMS

- Feeling constantly tired or drained
- Emotional exhaustion, lack of motivation
- Difficulty concentrating or showing interest, or reduced performance
- Increased cynicism about work or other responsibilities

ASSUMPTION -

What the average person knows about burnout





CONSEQUENCES

- Burnout can lead to physical and mental health issues
- It can negatively impact personal relationships and overall life satisfaction

SOLUTIONS

- Rest, holidays, or taking time off as primary remedies for burnout
- Using self-care strategies like exercising, mindfulness, or seeking professional help (e.g., therapy)

WHAT CAN YOU GAIN FROM THE SESSION?

-  A deeper understanding of what burnout is?
-  Increased awareness of its impact in the sector
-  A justifiable reason to be more consciously aware of it in your organisations
-  Tools to help you and your teams prevent burnout, and treat it.



WHAT IS BURNOUT?

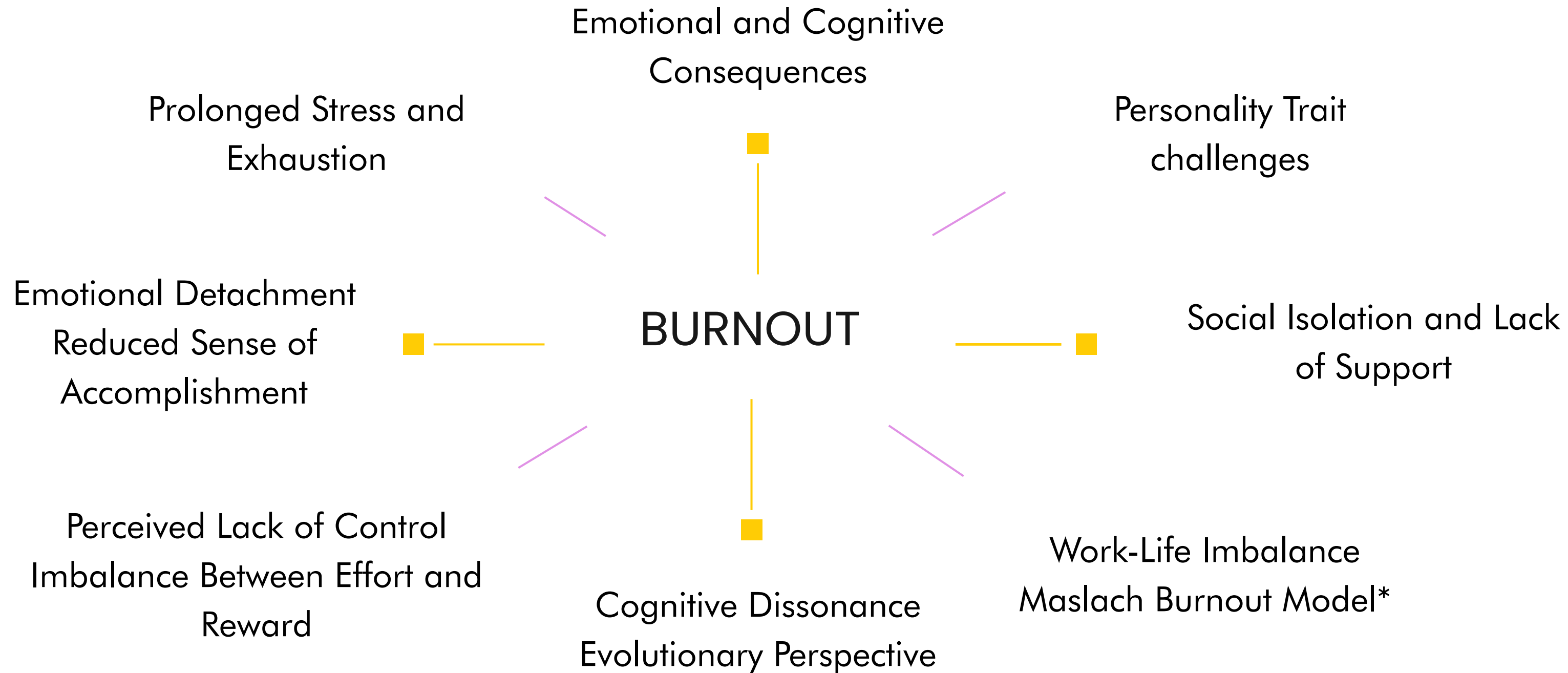
World Health Organisation - 2019

“Burn-out is a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. It is characterised by three dimensions:

- Feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
- Increased mental distance from one’s job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one’s job
- Reduced professional efficacy. Burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be applied to describe experiences in other areas of life.”



PSYCHOLOGY OF BURNOUT



PSYCHOLOGY IMPACT OF BURNOUT

Mental Health Issues

Burnout can lead to anxiety, depression, a feeling of hopelessness and imposter syndrome.

Physical Health Issues

Chronic stress from burnout can lead to physical ailments such as headaches, digestive problems, or cardiovascular issues.

PSYCHOLOGY IMPACT OF BURNOUT

Mental Health Issues

Burnout can lead to anxiety, depression, a feeling of hopelessness and imposter syndrome.

Physical Health Issues

Chronic stress from burnout can lead to physical ailments such as headaches, digestive problems, or cardiovascular issues.

In summary and to make it more simple...

Burnout is a complex interplay of emotional, cognitive, and environmental factors. It often requires addressing both the external causes (e.g., workload, lack of control) and internal responses (e.g., emotional resilience, coping strategies) to prevent and recover from it.

AN EXPERIENCE OF BURNOUT



PROFILE

- In my thirties
- Working roughly 50 - 55 hours per week (out of choice)
- Head of a recruitment business
- Sporting background
- Very positive, optimistic and enthusiastic individual
- Loves the outdoors
- Thoroughly enjoy my job and the sector I work in



WHAT I SAW IN MYSELF AND OTHERS

WHAT I THOUGHT PEOPLE WANTED FROM ME:

- Stoicism
- Resilience
- Hard working/Smart working
- Long hours
- Lead by example leadership
- Make sure everyone else is 100%
- Problem solve everything
- Prove to everyone you deserve the job
- Cannot afford a bad day

THE IMPACTS OF THIS:

- Reluctance to open up when I was struggling
- Push forward at the risk of performance
- Always asking myself “how can I do more?”
- Feeling shattered at the end of everyday
- Worrying about making mistakes
- Being available whenever I was needed
- Taking on others issues
- Doubting my ability if things became challenging
- Get up and go again, no mistakes mentality

But when I interviewed people...



BURNOUT IN THE CHARITY SECTOR SURVEY

130+ Respondents In Various Organisations & Levels



ORGANISATION SIZE



SMALLER CHARITIES

85%

Felt burnout strategies
could be improved

MEDIUM CHARITIES

91%

Felt burnout strategies
could be improved

LARGE CHARITIES

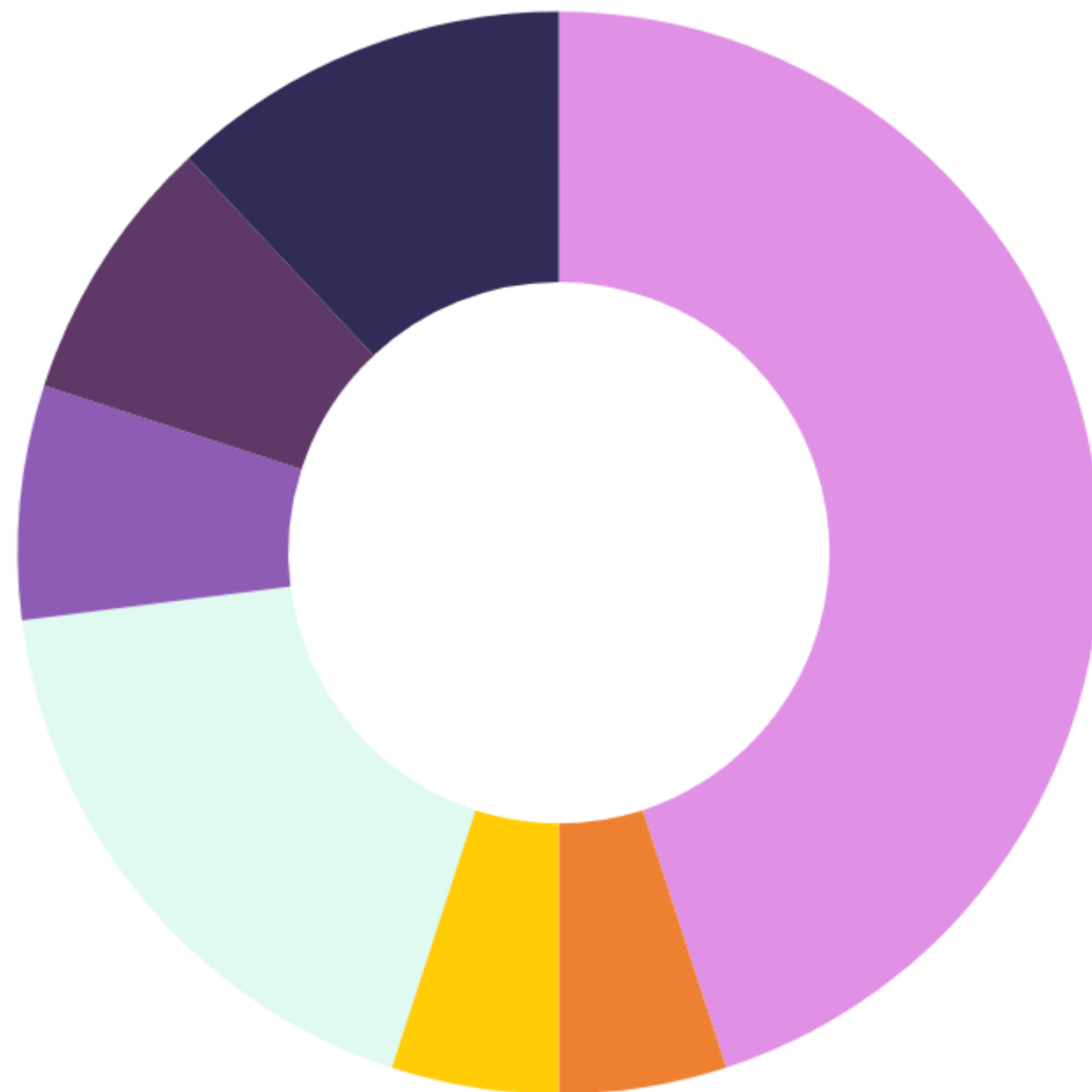
10%

Felt burnout strategies
could be improved

Merrifield Consultants surveyed 130+ clients and candidates took part.



DEMOGRAPHICS



- Executive Leadership - 45%
- Marketing & Communications - 5%
- Finance - 5%
- Fundraising / Development - 18%
- Grant Giving - 7%
- Support / Admin - 8%
- Other - 12%

SURVEY RESPONSES

75%

Experienced burnout personally or had colleagues experience burnout.

25%

Hadn't experienced burnout or were unsure if they had.

What do you think were the top contributing factors of burnout?



SURVEY RESPONSES

75%

Experienced burnout personally or had colleagues experience burnout.

25%

Hadn't experienced burnout or were unsure if they had.

What do you think were the top contributing factors of burnout?

1. HIGH WORKLOAD

2. LACK OF SUPPORT FROM MANAGEMENT

3. EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION FROM WORK CULTURE



TOP SIGNS OF BURNOUT IN THE SECTOR

24% INCREASED ABSENTEESIM

22% EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION FROM WORK CULTURE

22% PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

19% DECREASED PRODUCTIVTIY OR QUALITY OF WORK

18% REDUCED COLLABORATION OR COMMUNICATION





PREVENTION STRATEGIES

12% Only 12% of respondents feel current strategies for burnout are effective.

What strategies had been implemented to prevent burnout?

REGULAR MENTAL HEALTH
CHECK INS

FLEXIBLE WORKING
HOURS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON
STRESS MANAGEMENT

ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH
RESOURCES OR COUNSELLING

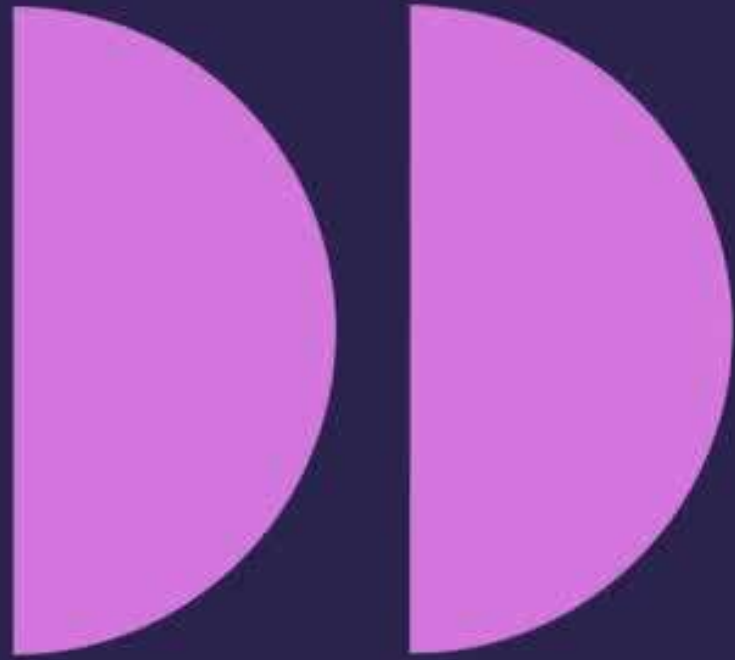
TEAM BUILDING
ACTIVITIES

CLEAR COMMUNICATION OF
EXPECTATIONS



How are you combatting burnout concerns?

ADDRESSING BURNOUT



I think it comes down to actually understanding what each person does and the time it takes - then making the workload fair. Also understanding the reason why we are not retaining employees and taking action on it.



SHARING EXPERIENCES



50%

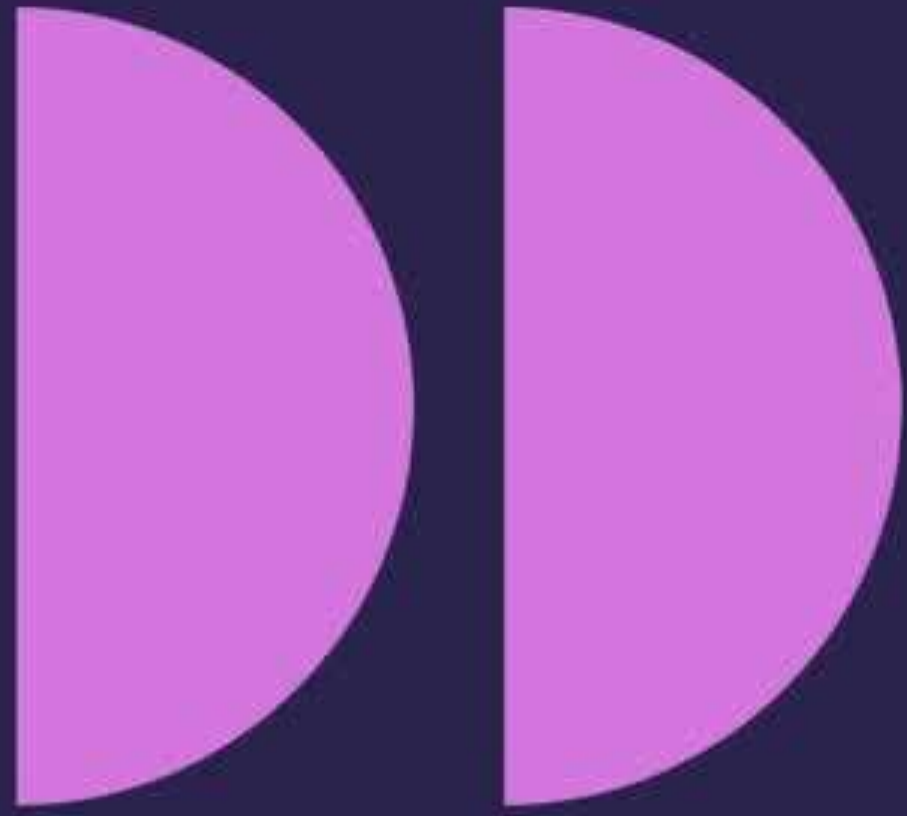
Respondents who wanted to discuss burnout in the charity sector in a follow up interview.



60%

Respondents who wanted to share more about their experience with burnout in the charity sector...





I've had enough and I am retraining to move into the financial sector so that I can build a better life for me and my growing family.

THE IMPACT OF NOT GETTING THIS RIGHT



High Staff Turnover

- Impact on operations
- Recruitment costs

Poor Public Perception

- Reputational damage
- Decreased donor trust

Decreased Employee Productivity

- Reduced efficiency
- Lower service quality

Financial Strain

- Decreased funding opportunities
- Increased legal risks

Increased Absenteeism

- Higher sick leave
- Operational gaps

Loss of Innovation and Growth

- Stagnation
- Missed opportunities

Reduced Employee Well-being

- Mental health deterioration
- Negative workplace culture

Compromised Service Delivery

- Vulnerable populations affected

OPERATIONAL AND STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS



MORE CREATIVE SOLUTIONS



WHAT CHANGES I MADE TO OVERCOME BURNOUT

- Started to delegate a little more
- Co-created the running club once a week
- Changed my eating habits
- I tell people when I have projects to focus on
- Started leaving work earlier
- I take a walk at lunch when in the office
- I've taken on challenge events for that focus
- Discovered in myself, that it's okay to have a limit to your patience

...and then six months ago...



WHAT CHANGES I MADE TO OVERCOME BURNOUT

- Started to delegate a little more
- Co-created the running club once a week
- Changed my eating habits
- I tell people when I have projects to focus on
- Started leaving work earlier
- I take a walk at lunch when in the office
- I've taken on challenge events for that focus
- Discovered in myself, that it's okay to have a limit to your patience

...and then six months ago...





THANK YOU

Any questions?

