

# BURNOUT PREVENTION & RECOVERY PROTOCOL

## WORKBOOK

---

*A companion workbook for the 5-lesson digital course*

---

Name:

---

Date started:

---



CREATE HEALING

# How to Use This Workbook

This workbook runs alongside the five video lessons. Each section maps to one lesson and contains the tools, worksheets, and reflection prompts referenced in the video.

Pause the video when instructed, complete the relevant section here, then return to the lesson. The tools are designed to be used in order — each one builds on the last.

| Lesson | Title                      | Workbook Pages |
|--------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1      | The Signal Audit           | Pages 3–5      |
| 2      | The Stabilization Protocol | Pages 6–8      |
| 3      | Capacity Budgeting         | Pages 9–11     |
| 4      | Cognitive Stabilization    | Pages 12–13    |
| 5      | Long-Term Immunity         | Pages 14–18    |

**A NOTE BEFORE YOU START**

Burnout is an occupational phenomenon — not a personal failing, not a lack of resilience, and not a sign that you chose the wrong path. What you’re carrying is real. This workbook is a structural tool, not a self-help exercise.

If you are in active cognitive debt — Stage 3 or 4 on the burnout progression — please consider clinical support alongside this course. This workbook is not a substitute for professional care.

## LESSON 1

# The Signal Audit

Identify your stage and name the institutional drivers that are actively running.

## Part 1A: Stage Assessment

Read each stage below. Mark the one that most accurately describes your experience over the last two to three weeks. If you're between two stages, mark both.

|                          | Stage                                | What It Typically Looks and Feels Like                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Stage 1</b><br>Hyperactivity      | Working harder to fix a problem that more work can't solve. Longer hours, increased effort, praised for commitment. Feels purposeful but unsustainable.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Stage 2</b><br>Emotional Reaction | Persistent irritability that doesn't match the situation. Anxiety before routine tasks. Low-grade fear you can't name. Beginning to question your competence.                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Stage 3</b><br>Social Degradation | Withdrawing from colleagues. Communication shorter and more transactional. Collaboration feels like a cost. Others may read this as disengagement or attitude problems.         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Stage 4</b><br>Psychosomatic      | Chronic headaches, insomnia, digestive issues, fatigue that sleep doesn't fix. Your body has entered the conversation. Recovery timeline at this stage is significantly longer. |

## My Current Stage

I am in:

What this looks like for me right now:

### REFLECTION PROMPT

*In the last two weeks, what moment felt most like I was running out of capacity? What was happening around me when it occurred?*

## Part 1B: Institutional Driver Audit

These are the five organizational conditions most likely to be creating or sustaining your burnout. Check every driver that is currently active in your environment. Be accurate, not diplomatic.

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Institutional Driver Audit</b>                                                                                                                                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Role Ambiguity</b><br>My responsibilities are unclear, constantly expanding, or I'm being held accountable for outcomes I can't actually control.                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Chronic Urgency Culture</b><br>"Urgent" is the default mode. Everything is a priority. There is no time for strategic thinking — only reactive response.                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Perceived Injustice</b><br>Workload or recognition is distributed unfairly. Saying no is treated as disloyalty, a lack of commitment, or a professional risk.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Mission Weaponization</b><br>The mission or cause is used to justify demands that no one would accept in a private sector context. The cause becomes the reason limits don't apply. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <b>Emotional Overexposure</b><br>The work requires sustained emotional investment — with clients, populations, or crises — without any structural space to decompress.                 |

### My Count

Number of drivers checked: \_\_\_\_ out of 5

#### WHAT YOUR COUNT MEANS

**1–2 drivers active:** Individual recovery strategies are likely sufficient alongside structural adjustment.

**3+ drivers active:** This is no longer an individual issue. It is an organizational risk condition. Individual coping alone will not hold.

**All 5 active:** The environment is the primary driver. See Lesson 5 and the clinical support resources at the back of this workbook.

### The Most Active Driver

Which one driver feels most alive in your situation right now?

Most active driver: \_\_\_\_\_

What it looks like specifically in my organization: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 1C: My Lesson 1 Commitments

Two sentences. Write them before moving to Lesson 2.

### COMPLETE THESE BEFORE MOVING ON

**My current stage:**

-

-

**The most active institutional driver in my environment:**

-

-

*By naming both, I am treating burnout as a structural issue — not a personal failing.*

LESSON 2

# The Stabilization Protocol

Stop the acute drain. These four steps are executed within your next three workdays. If you're starting on a weekend, begin Steps 1 and 4 now. Steps 2 and 3 start tonight.

**BEFORE YOU BEGIN**

Do not wait to complete this section. The protocol is designed to be started immediately, not planned for later. Work through each step now, before Lesson 3.

## Step 1: The 20% Rule

List every active commitment you are currently carrying. Include formal responsibilities and the informal ones you have absorbed. Then identify which ones fall in the bottom 20% — things that could be delayed, delegated, or dropped without catastrophic consequence to the mission.

| Current Commitment | Could be: Delayed / Delegated / Dropped? | Remove? <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|                    | Delayed / Delegated / Dropped            | <input type="checkbox"/>         |

Items I am removing in my next available workday (at minimum one):

## Step 2: The Commitment Freeze

For seven days, commit to nothing new. When asked, use this script:

**THE SCRIPT**  
*"I'm not in a position to commit to anything new this week. I'll follow up by [date]."*

My freeze end date:

---

Anticipated requests I'll need to use this script for:

---

---

---

## Step 3: Sleep Restoration Log

Seven to eight hours of sleep is not a reward. It is a biological requirement for cognitive recovery. Track your sleep for the next seven nights.

| Night   | Bedtime | Wake Time | Hours | Quality (1-10) |
|---------|---------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Night 1 |         |           |       |                |
| Night 2 |         |           |       |                |
| Night 3 |         |           |       |                |
| Night 4 |         |           |       |                |
| Night 5 |         |           |       |                |
| Night 6 |         |           |       |                |
| Night 7 |         |           |       |                |

**SLEEP RESTORATION GOAL**  
My target sleep window: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ (7-8 hours)

### Step 4: The Decision Moratorium

Decisions made under acute overload are structurally compromised. List any major decisions currently on your plate. Then mark them: defer for 7 days, or cannot defer.

| Decision | Type                      | Action                      |
|----------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
|          | Career / Strategic / Role | Defer 7 days / Cannot defer |
|          | Career / Strategic / Role | Defer 7 days / Cannot defer |
|          | Career / Strategic / Role | Defer 7 days / Cannot defer |
|          | Career / Strategic / Role | Defer 7 days / Cannot defer |
|          | Career / Strategic / Role | Defer 7 days / Cannot defer |

**REFLECTION PROMPT**  
*What am I currently holding that I agreed to out of obligation rather than genuine capacity? What would actually happen if I let it go for two weeks?*



## LESSON 3

# Capacity Budgeting

Shift from managing time to managing capacity. The question is not whether you have time — it's whether you have the resource.

## Part 3A: The Daily Capacity Rating

Every morning, before opening your task list or calendar, rate your available capacity on this scale. Be accurate, not aspirational.

| Rating | Status                     | What It Means for Today                                                                                                                 |
|--------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 – 3  | <b>Critical Exhaustion</b> | Run the stabilization protocol again. No new decisions. Protect sleep tonight. The day is triage only.                                  |
| 4 – 6  | <b>Stabilizing</b>         | Maintain current load only. No new projects or commitments. Focus on existing obligations. Recovery blocks are non-negotiable.          |
| 7 – 9  | <b>High Capacity</b>       | Proceed with strategic work. Keep recovery blocks intact. A 7–9 is not permission to overload — it is permission to do meaningful work. |

The governing rule: your planned demand for the day must not exceed your rating.

## This Week's Daily Ratings

Fill in each morning. Use it to audit your calendar against your actual available resource.

| Day       | Rating (1–10) | Status                        | Calendar Adjustment Needed? |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Monday    |               | Critical / Stabilizing / High |                             |
| Tuesday   |               | Critical / Stabilizing / High |                             |
| Wednesday |               | Critical / Stabilizing / High |                             |
| Thursday  |               | Critical / Stabilizing / High |                             |
| Friday    |               | Critical / Stabilizing / High |                             |

## Part 3B: The Capacity Budget Planner

Assign your tasks by the capacity they require. High-capacity work goes in your peak window. Low-capacity work fills the lower end of your day. Recovery blocks are scheduled first — not last.

| Level    | Task Type                    | Examples                                                                                                               |
|----------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| High     | <b>Peak cognitive demand</b> | Complex decisions, strategic planning, difficult conversations, creative problem-solving                               |
| Medium   | <b>Operational work</b>      | Routine meetings, standard email, coordination, review tasks requiring attention but not peak output                   |
| Low      | <b>Simple execution</b>      | Data entry, filing, scheduling, reading, straightforward administrative tasks                                          |
| Recovery | <b>Active decompression</b>  | Scheduled rest, a walk without your phone, disconnected lunch, anything that allows the nervous system to downregulate |

### Today's Capacity Budget

Fill this in before you look at your calendar. Assign tasks, then check whether the plan matches your morning rating.

| Task | Capacity Level Required | Best Time to Schedule | Done?                    |
|------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
|      | High / Medium / Low     |                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|      | High / Medium / Low     |                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|      | High / Medium / Low     |                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|      | High / Medium / Low     |                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|      | High / Medium / Low     |                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|      | High / Medium / Low     |                       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

My morning rating today: \_\_\_\_ / 10 | Does my plan match this rating? Yes / No | What I'm adjusting:

### Part 3C: The Recovery Growth Rule

During recovery, increase workload by no more than 10–20% per week. Track it here.

| Week   | Estimated Current Load | Max Increase Allowed | Did I Stay Within It? |
|--------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Week 1 |                        | +10–20% max          | Yes / No              |
| Week 2 |                        | +10–20% max          | Yes / No              |
| Week 3 |                        | +10–20% max          | Yes / No              |
| Week 4 |                        | +10–20% max          | Yes / No              |

**REFLECTION PROMPT**  
*In the last month, how many times did I plan a day as if I had a 9 capacity when I actually had a 4 or 5? What was the cost of that gap?*

# Cognitive Stabilization

Identify and interrupt the thought patterns that sustain burnout after the external load begins to ease.

## Part 4A: Understanding the Burnout Spiral

Burnout produces a cognitive spiral that feels like accurate self-assessment. It isn't. It is a distortion filtered through a system running on deficit. The spiral works like this:

Exhaustion

→

Impaired Performance

→

Self-Critical Thoughts

→

Increased Distress

→

Reduced Capacity

→

(repeat)

The goal of this lesson is not to stop caring about your work. It is to separate the quality of your current output — which is being shaped by depletion — from the question of your character or competence.

## Part 4B: The Thought Replacement Table

When you notice a thought from the left column, pause. Find it in the table. Read the right column. Say the reframe out loud if that helps. You are not arguing with yourself — you are replacing a distortion with something more accurate.

| The Burnout Thought (Distortion)         | The More Accurate Read (CBT Anchor)                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>I am failing at my job.</i>           | This exhaustion is information — not a performance review. What would I say to a colleague in this exact state?     |
| <i>I can't do this anymore.</i>          | I can't do this at this load level without recovery. That's different from not being capable.                       |
| <i>If I stop, the mission fails.</i>     | My limits preserve my ability to continue. Unlimited output now guarantees a longer absence later.                  |
| <i>I've lost my passion.</i>             | Motivation loss is a temporary symptom of depletion. It is not a permanent change in who I am or what I care about. |
| <i>Everyone else is managing fine.</i>   | I have no actual data on other people's internal experience. I'm comparing my inside to their outside.              |
| <i>I should be further along by now.</i> | "Should" is not a useful measure when the comparison standard was set during a period of unsustainable output.      |

|                                                   |                             |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>My own recurring burnout thought:</b><br><hr/> | <b>My reframe:</b><br><hr/> |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|

### Part 4C: My Thought Replacement Practice

Pick one thought from the table you have experienced in the last week. Write it below and then write your own version of the reframe — not the table’s words, yours.

**MY THOUGHT REPLACEMENT**  
**The thought I’ve been having:**  


---

  


---

  


---

**The more accurate read, in my own words:**  


---

  


---

  


---

### Part 4D: A Note on Real Signals

Some of these thoughts also carry legitimate information. “I can’t do this anymore” may also mean the role, the environment, or the structural conditions genuinely are not sustainable.

The reframe does not override that signal. It separates the legitimate signal from the catastrophizing burnout adds on top of it. Use this space to note what you believe is a real signal versus what is distortion:

| This feels like a real signal about my situation | This is distortion — burnout talking, not reality |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
|                                                  |                                                   |
|                                                  |                                                   |
|                                                  |                                                   |

**REFLECTION PROMPT**  
*When my work performance drops, what story do I tell myself about what that means?  
Where did that story come from, and is it actually accurate?*

LESSON 5

# Long-Term Immunity

Build the structural environment where burnout cannot take root again. Insight without structural reinforcement leads to relapse. This lesson is about the structures.

## Part 5A: The Three Permanent Rules

These are operating principles, not aspirational guidelines. They have real consequences when violated.

| Rule   | The Principle                                                      | What This Looks Like in Practice                                                                                                                       |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rule A | Never operate continuously at maximum output.                      | For every high-load sprint, define the endpoint and recovery block before the sprint begins — not after.                                               |
| Rule B | Numbness and detachment are recovery signals, not character flaws. | When you notice you've stopped caring, check your capacity rating. Respond with an immediate reduction in stressors — not a motivational intervention. |
| Rule C | Increase workload by no more than 10–20% per week during recovery. | The feeling of “better” arrives before full recovery is complete. The guardrail exists because of that gap.                                            |

Which rule do I most need to focus on right now?

What honoring this rule looks like for me specifically:

## Part 5B: The Low-Chaos Environment Checklist

Burnout thrives in ambiguity. Check what is currently in place in your environment. Unchecked items are the gaps to address.

| <input type="checkbox"/> | Role Clarity                                                                 |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I have a clear, written understanding of what I am actually accountable for. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I know what falls outside my role — and have communicated that.              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Expectations from leadership are clear and not constantly shifting.          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I am not being held accountable for outcomes I cannot control.               |

| <input type="checkbox"/> | Protected Recovery Time                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I have at least one genuine recovery block scheduled per day.<br>Disconnected, low-stimulation rest — not checking your phone on the couch. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My recovery blocks are on my calendar and defended like any other commitment.                                                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I have a default answer of “no” when asked to fill recovery time.                                                                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I do not regularly sacrifice sleep to manage workload.                                                                                      |

| <input type="checkbox"/> | End-of-Day Transition Ritual                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I have a consistent set of actions that marks the end of my work day.<br>The content matters less than the consistency. It is a signal. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Work does not regularly bleed into personal time through devices or mental rehearsal.                                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My transition ritual is brief, repeatable, and works even on hard days.                                                                 |

| <input type="checkbox"/> | Quarterly Renegotiation Practice                                                         |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I have a scheduled quarterly check-in to realign my role and load with current capacity. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | My manager knows my actual bandwidth — not just my availability.                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I have a process for raising unsustainable demands before they become a crisis.          |

## My Gap Analysis

The unchecked items above are your structural gaps. List the three highest-priority gaps here:

Gap 1:

---

Gap 2:

---

Gap 3:

---



## Part 5C: Design Your Transition Ritual

A transition ritual marks the boundary between work and personal time. It signals to your nervous system that the active processing can stop. Design yours here.

### MY END-OF-DAY TRANSITION RITUAL

**What time it begins:**

---

**The three consistent actions (in order):**

1.

2.

3.

**How I'll know it's working:**

Part 5D: My 30-Day Recovery Roadmap

This is Phase One of recovery — stability before rebuilding. Real recovery from significant burnout typically takes three to twelve months. Use this roadmap to structure the first four weeks.

| Week   | Focus     | Actions                                                                                                | My Commitment |
|--------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Week 1 | Stabilize | Complete capacity audit and emergency load reduction. Begin daily 1–10 rating.                         |               |
| Week 2 | Compress  | Consolidate meetings. Batch high-stakes decisions. End or delegate one recurring commitment.           |               |
| Week 3 | Clarify   | Renegotiate role expectations. Name the most active institutional driver. Address what’s controllable. |               |
| Week 4 | Sustain   | Install guardrails: end-of-day ritual, recovery blocks on calendar, commitment review process.         |               |

My Single Structural Change This Week

One change. Specific, calendar-level or role-level. With a date.

**MY COMMITMENT**

**The structural change:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**What specifically I’m doing:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**It will be done by:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**REFLECTION PROMPT**

*If I were advising a close colleague who was in my exact situation, what structural change would I tell them to make first? What is stopping me from taking that advice for myself?*

## Resources & Next Steps

### IF YOU ARE IN ACTIVE COGNITIVE DEBT

If you are in Stage 3 or 4 burnout, these tools are most effective when used alongside clinical support. A therapist who works with occupational stress can help you move through this material more effectively than self-guided tools alone can at a 3 on the capacity scale.

That is not a failure of this course or a reflection on your capability. It is a matter of appropriate support for the severity of the condition.

### Extra Support Pathways

The following vetted pathways are available for those who need extra support:

| Pathway                           | Details                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Supported Clinical Pathway</b> | Confidential therapy support for those in active cognitive debt. <a href="#">Online Therapy</a>     |
| <b>Strategic Reset Retreat</b>    | For leaders needing space to restore long-term judgment. <a href="#">Executive Burnout Retreats</a> |

---

## Protect the Mission by Protecting Capacity

*Create Healing • Educational content only — not a substitute for professional clinical care.*



CREATE HEALING