

How To Burn Brightly Without Burning Out

by Lou Stoops

I've spent a great deal of time over the years helping people develop healthy expectations. Those who learn this important secret, fair well when stressors are present. Those who fail to learn are often overwhelmed by the stressors and eventually burnout.

Burnout occurs when over time our realities and expectations don't mesh. Burnout is an anger of sorts; an anger that life is not working out the way we thought it would and that we are powerless to make a difference. When people feel this way, they often burnout.

There are some clear conditions or causes for burnout in our personal and professional lives.

Here are the top ten:

- Feel driven.
- Failing to pace ourselves.
- Trying to do it all ourselves.
- Excessive contact with people's problems.
- Majoring on the minors.
- Unrealistic expectations.
- Developing too many routines.
- An inappropriate view of the priorities in our lives.
- Poor physical condition
- Continuous rejection.

In my consultations with clients, I recommend five important principles of resilience against the stressors of life that can serve to aid in not only surviving, but in prevailing as well!

They are as follows:

Know Yourself

We burnout when we lose touch with ourselves.

There are three distinctives to who you are: your personality, your purpose and your passion.

What personality style do you operate out of? The ancients viewed personality from a four-fold perspective. There are Choleric - decision-makers who are fearless and like change; there are Sanguines - they enjoy others, like fun and change, and like the choleric, enjoy the spotlight. There are the Melancholies - they are sensitive and appreciate beauty and order. They are detail oriented and are caring. There are the Phlegmatics - they are the easiest to get along with of all the styles. They often defer to others in decisions. They are pleasant and enjoy a no-conflict environment.

These four styles are obvious and we each have one style that's predominate. Discover which style is yours.

Understanding purpose can seem complex but it nevertheless is of utmost importance in navigating the turbulent waters of life.

Also, your passion is powerful in keeping you on track and helping you resist the pressures of day-to-day wear and tear.

Knowing yourself has great benefits in stress management and anger control.

Be Kind

Be kind to yourself and to others. Many different aspects are involved in this principle. Being kind to



yourself entails learning to pace your activities so as not to deplete your physical and emotional reservoir. Far too many of us go full speed until we get to the point where we can go no more. Know when to slow down.

I encourage people to practice the pendulum principle. When you're engaged intensely in work, be sure you schedule "down time" to relax and recoup. Swing back and forth, work, rest. The pendulum swing allows you to refresh and stay productive. People who burnout tend to do things in the extreme. This approach invites trouble.

Being kind to yourself involves one very important aspect: forgiveness. Learn to be forgiving. Forgive others, unforeseen circumstances and hardest of all, yourself. Don't make excuses!

Forgiveness makes you better, freeing you from being bitter.

Be responsive rather than reactive.

When we're reactive we do things with little thought of consequences. We do what we feel instead of what might be best.

Our culture is overrun with appeals to feelings. People make many debt-producing purchases because they react emotionally without thinking through the results.

Being responsive enables us to freely decide the paths we walk. It empowers us. Understand something here; people that burnout often arrive at this abyss as a result of a sense of being powerless. They get entangled in many tasks, often because they've failed to think things through. They don't bring themselves to say "no" to those things that ultimately serve to overwhelm them. They become controlled by circumstances and other people's agenda. They're heading for burnout.

Build healthy relationships.

We burn brightly when we are surrounded by loving, affirming people. To enjoy those kind of relationships, we must commit to being loving and affirming ourselves.

It's the people in our life that make living sweet!

Learn to laugh.

How valuable is laughter? Well, Abraham Lincoln understood all too well this principle. He said, "With the fearful strain that is on me night and day, if I did not laugh I should die."

The value of laughter to overall well being is becoming clearer to those in the medical community. Laughter has physical and emotional benefits. The bottom-line in regard to burnout is simple: He who laughs, lasts!

Burning brightly requires a choice. If you decide to take steps to apply the principles I've shared, you'll find yourself becoming more resilient. To ignore them is to take unnecessary risks. Remember, those around you need to see you glow, not flicker out.