



# Burnout recovery:

## A quick guide to help on your journey

Remember the three Rs on your path to burnout recovery:

### ➤ Re-organize

your goal hierarchy to see  
why you do what you do

### ➤ Re-frame

the way you approach  
vs. avoid your goals

### ➤ Re-balance

the types of “want-to”  
vs. “have-to” goals

Each of the Rs can improve specific aspects of burnout: exhaustion recovery (**re-organize**), cynicism recovery (**re-frame**) and inefficacy recovery (**re-balance**).

## Step 1

**Exhaustion recovery** (re-organize your goals efficiently to provide a clear indication of where to focus your energy)

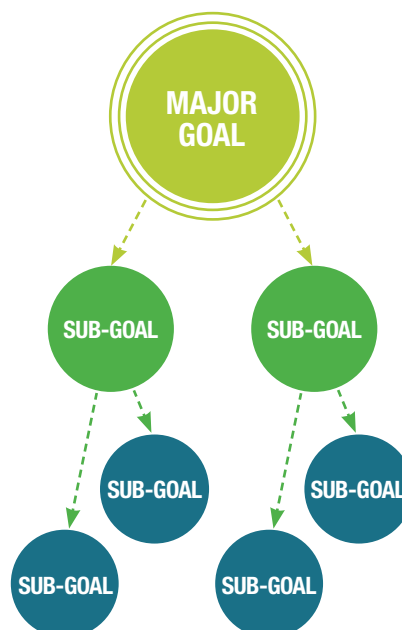
Exhaustion is often the first manifestation of “burnout,” defined as the depletion of physical and emotional resources. This leads to feelings of worry, dissatisfaction and ultimately dreading daily activities. This occurs because our brains are biased toward giving a larger weight to negative events than positive ones. Negative aspects of our daily work are strongly related to emotional exhaustion while positive ones don’t necessarily protect us against it.

**Solution:** Minimize emotional exhaustion by eliminating unnecessary / ambiguous / negative tasks that hinder progress using a goal hierarchy.

As you move down the goal hierarchy, an excellent collaborative exercise for you or your team, get specific about the tasks needed to attain the major goal.

**Major goal:** Broad, longer-term focus

**Sub-goals:** Various, specific actions closer in time



Once your goal hierarchy is constructed:

### Find inefficiencies

Is there a faster path to your major goal? Any steps you can take out? Inefficient paths can increase uncertainty and anxiety which increases the chance of failure.

### Pinpoint all unnecessary steps

Ensure the line running from your sub goals to the major goal is as direct as possible.

### Determine perceived attainability of major goal, each sub-goal

How likely are you to complete that task / achieve that goal?

## Step 2

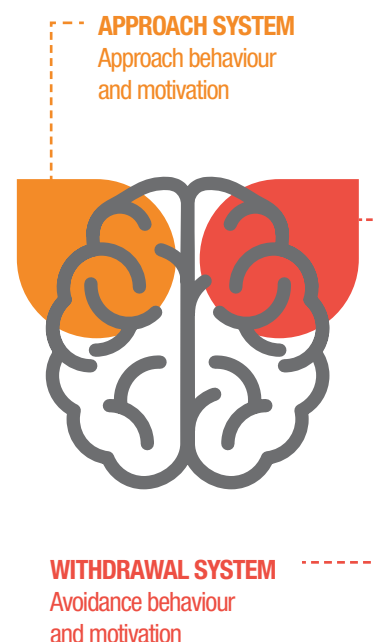
### Cynicism recovery (re-frame your mindset in relation to approach vs. avoidance goals)

Reaching the point of cynicism involves becoming more concerned with avoiding negative outcomes rather than achieving positive outcomes. We start to distance ourselves from stressors in order to cope, which leads to disengagement and feelings of doubt. We can start feeling pessimistic, isolated, detached or unmotivated. The world around us becomes traps of possible punishments rather than opportunities of positive reward.

Recovering from cynicism involves shifting our brain from the “withdrawal system” that promotes avoidance to the “approach system” which promotes positive outcomes. There is value in both systems, but cynicism takes over when avoidance-behaviour starts to dominate daily life.

**Solution:** Go back to your goal hierarchy and re-frame your goals.

Avoidance goals are generally more difficult and we see them as more unlikely to attain. Setting approach-oriented goals increases the activation of the part of our brain affiliated with motivation and growth and reduces activity in the part of our brain affiliated with fear and anxiety.



IDENTIFY AVOIDANCE-FOCUSED GOALS

RE-FRAME INTO APPROACH-FOCUSED GOALS

## Step 3

### Inefficacy recovery (re-balance ‘want-to’ vs. ‘have-to’ goals to increase motivation, feelings of competency)

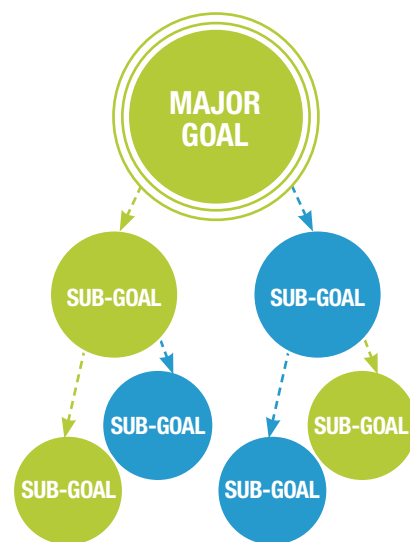
Inefficacy is really about feeling inadequate. We start believing that we’re unable to complete our work. Our sense of accomplishment lowers and we start believing we’re incapable of staying focused on what needs to be done. By balancing ‘want-to’ vs. ‘have-to’ tasks each day, we increase the chance of maintaining self-control and focus. Improved daily self-control increases feelings of self-efficacy.

**Solution:**

- 1) Return to your goal hierarchy. Start at the bottom and rank each task as ‘want-to’ vs. ‘have-to.’
- 2) If many more ‘have-to’ tasks, create small list of ‘want-to’ tasks to create a healthy balance of each.
- 3) Within each day, try to structure your calendar to alternate between ‘want-to’ vs. ‘have-to’ tasks.

These shifts will help you get you back on track by adding value and productivity to your day. You will be operating with greater efficiency in the tasks you do because you will be successfully exercising your self-control.

Source: [psychologycompass.com/blog/burnout-recovery-guide/](https://psychologycompass.com/blog/burnout-recovery-guide/)



● = WANT TO

● = HAVE TO

#### EXAMPLES:

- Go for a walk
- Lunch with a friend
- Scroll on my phone
- Do a workout

#### EXAMPLES:

- Have a shower
- Study for exam
- Go to work
- Submit project