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## How to avoid burnout during the Covid-19 crisis

### Record-holding athlete and financial literacy expert Frank Conway from [Moneywhizz](#) outlines how to avoid burnout and reinvent yourself in five easy steps.

With the sudden and sharp onset of Covid-19, our lives have been upended. Family life and work life have been blended creating a series of pressures many have never consider let alone planned for.

Convenience that we once took for granted is gone. Schedules that we lived by have vanished and certainty are now on hold as we create a new set of rules for a world that is bent on rejecting them.

This is a time where the immense demands on our lives can lead to stress, anxiety and indeed, burnout.

Burnout is often associated with emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress. It occurs when people feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, and unable to meet constant demands.

Attendees at MoneyWhizz Financial Wellbeing seminars often describe feeling physically sick, chronically fatigued, depressed and unsure of their own identity. Often they expressed a desire to just “give up or stay in bed.”

The good news is that even well before the onset of Covid-19, leading employers were doing more to support their staff. This was done through various Financial Wellbeing events, including those provided by MoneyWhizz.

From my own days as an athlete, I have always recognised the fear of failure! It’s very real and it can be very damaging. In my early days, my coach, Zbigniew Orywal, a Polish Olympian and coach to several Olympic champions and World Champions was a master at the art of avoiding burnout. He applied methodologies in running that have applications in work as well as life in general.

When it comes to general burnout, how can you create a better way of living? How can you lift yourself from the bottomless pit of a burnout?

As with most life-changing events, hitting rock bottom is an almost universal catalyst for reinvention. In running, an athlete needs to hit that wall of failure before they are willing to look at new ways of training and competing. The same applies to everyday life.

## **1. Burnout shows you the areas of your life you have been neglecting.**

Many of us feel that we need to keep up appearances. Being busy! Doing more and more and pushing through the 'pain' because it will all be worth it in the end. It is a condition that we are pushed into from a very early age. In fact, we may feel we have no option but to move faster and faster in order to "keep up" with the world.

We neglect our minds, bodies and even sleep. We become locked into an endless cycle, setting the scene for falling behind. To escape the burnout treadmill, it is essential to start by learning to respect yourself and setting some boundaries for your long-term wellbeing.

## **2. Burnout exposes you have become too dependent on routine ... instead of purpose.**

Routine is necessary but it can also be addictive. It is not uncommon for some people to live for the comfort of predictive routines. In fact, in athletics, athletes that are not performing at their peak can often continue training in a certain way without stopping and making changes even though they are not getting the type of results they should be for the effort they are putting in.

It becomes a cycle of diminishing returns which is why the athlete begins to burnout. That same routine-first approach is applied in everyday life and leads to the very same result. What people fail to understand or plan for is the constant cycle of change and adjusting their lives for this.

## **3. Burnout-creep happens over time so learn to spot the signs**

Burnout can be a slow process which is why it can be hard to act against until it is too late and then, it arrives with a bang! It is the result of a long and sustained drain on your energy, physical and mental.

But there are triggers that one can use to identify the early signs of burnout; one becomes less patient, more reactionary and even prone to angry outbursts.

This is where one can begin to make a list of possible triggers; it may be a very short fuse when children argue, reaction to work deadlines, or even simple things like paying a household bill. The trick is to keep a looking for the signs and make a note. Keep a lookout for increased frequency of reactions to triggers.

## **4. Burnout shows you have not been following you heart.**

There is a saying sometimes used in athletics; "your heart is your best coach". Simply, it means that if athletes over-train, it shows first of all in their heart's recovery rate. An athlete nearing burnout will have little or no rate of heart rate recovery.

The same is true in our day-to-day lives. That “inner critic” can push you when you need to rest, harass you when you need down-time and question you when you need to take a breather. Burnout exposes that you have been living your life through the lens of the inner critic and not your real self.

## **5. Burnout can be an opportunity for a new start**

While it may seem terrifying, burnout is also an opportunity to burn away a lifestyle that is no longer serving your life. Use it to start afresh, set new priorities and ways to create a balance in your life.

The Covid-19 emergency will place a lot of stress on the lives of a majority of people. But it is a terrible event that does present us with an opportunity to learn and improve. Experiencing burnout is normal.

It is a wake-up call to reinvent, to start again and learn to live a more fulfilling life. In the long-term, your financial and physical well-being will be all the better!



*Frank Conway collaborates with Bank of Ireland on [Financial Wellbeing](#) and promoting financial literacy. He is a qualified financial adviser, founder of [MoneyWhizz](#) and chair of the Price Monitoring Group at the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. He is also the current holder of several Irish national middle-distance records.*