

Dealing with Burnout

In one of my recent e-newsletters I wrote about avoiding burnout. I have been asked to give some suggestions for what to do if you have already 'burnt out'.

Here are some ideas

1. Work out what caused the burnout in the first place – is it still going on? If so, then you need to establish what you can do to change either the situation or your response to it.
2. If you feel stuck in your current situation consider getting some coaching to help you develop a strategy to move forward.
3. Research suggests that people who are 'burnt out' have lowered levels of the stress hormone cortisol – it is as if their adrenal glands have become exhausted by producing too much cortisol in response to the prolonged stress of the situation. It would therefore seem wise to put in place some strategies to help your body recuperate. These include:
 - Getting enough sleep – this is more important than you might think! Sleep seems to be important for a host of important activities including immune functioning, learning and hormone secretion. Lack of sleep is associated with an increased risk of obesity, depression, heart disease and diabetes. Humans seem to function best when they have a good sleep routine – i.e. going to bed and getting up at the same time, and having a regular wind down routine just before bed (parents of babies will be familiar with this – it is actually true for grown ups too!). If it is possible, a short early afternoon siesta is probably a good idea – it is associated with longer life.
 - Starting a graded exercise program ('graded' is the key word here – you will stress your body even more if you suddenly embark on a heavy exercise program, just start by doing 10 minutes a day of gentle exercise and then gradually build up).
 - Regularly relax – meditation, gentle yoga and muscle relaxation will all calm your mind and body. There is increasing evidence that meditation is good for us.
 - Learn how to manage your thoughts – anxious or angry thoughts create 'fight' and 'flight' responses in your body which may further stress your adrenal gland. A good psychologist can help you with this. Or if you are into biblio-therapy two good resources are:
 - Learned Optimism by Seligman Martin: (1990) Random House, Australia
 - The Resilience Factor by Karen Reivich, & Andrew Shatte (2002) Broadway Book

Rachel Collis

RJC Consulting (Australia) Pty Ltd

www.rjc-consulting.com.au

Rachel Collis is available for workshops, keynote speeches, team facilitation and individual coaching