

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Newsletter Article

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“In today's fast-paced professional landscape, the line between ‘productive’ and ‘depleted’ has become increasingly thin. Workplace burnout is more than just a bad week or a need for a vacation; it is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged exposure to high-pressure environments and unmanaged stress. When the demands of the job consistently outweigh the resources available to meet them, even the most dedicated employees can find their motivation replaced by cynicism and fatigue. Recognizing burnout early is crucial—not just for individual health, but for the collective success of the organization.”

Veronica Sacoman, MSW, LICSW
Senior Clinical Account Executive | FCH EAP

From Burnout to Belonging

Adapted from Ryan C. Warner, Ph.D. Psychology Today

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Burnout Recently Hit a 10-Year High in the United States.

A report from Glassdoor revealing a 32% year over year increase in employee discussions of burnout from Q1 2024 to Q1 2025. This growth also represents a 50% increase over the period immediately before the start of the pandemic.

While Many Factors Contribute to Workplace Burnout, One of the Most Commonly Cited is a Lack of Recognition.

Employees who feel undervalued and overlooked for their contributions often experience disengagement, stress, and diminished well-being. Helping employees feel appreciated can address one of the root causes of burnout.

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Why Workplace Appreciation Matters.

When employees lack that sense of belonging, engagement drops, and job stress can escalate, eventually contributing to burnout. In fact, research reports show that burned-out employees are three times as likely to search for another job, while mental and emotional exhaustion harms creativity, problem-solving, and overall company culture. Beyond work, burnout can increase anger, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and even risk of substance misuse.

Conversely, employees who feel appreciated and experience a strong sense of belonging are far less likely to burn out. But appreciation alone isn't enough. Studies indicate that organizational culture and a "climate for learning"—openness to growth, supportive leadership, and inclusive team dynamics—also play a critical role. Johnson notes: "Belonging and a positive workplace culture build resilience, lower stress, and create the kind of momentum you can't manufacture with perks."

How Employers Can Create a Culture of Appreciation.

Although systemic pressures contribute to burnout, employees can still be intentional in how they support themselves and one another—but research consistently shows that the most powerful buffer is a workplace where people genuinely feel they belong. Yet many organizations miss the mark: a Harvard Business Review analysis found that nearly half of employees feel only "somewhat valued," and more than 1 in 10 don't feel valued at all. That gap has real consequences for morale, retention, and long-term performance.

Shifting this reality requires leaders to treat appreciation as a core part of organizational culture—not an afterthought. Evidence from organizational psychology shows that recognition (e.g., both formal and informal) improve motivation, decrease burnout risk, and strengthen social connection. The key is consistency.

Putting Appreciation Into Practice.

- Build appreciation into how your team operates—not just what it celebrates: Normalize quick acknowledgments in everyday workflows (standups, handoffs, project debriefs). When recognition is embedded in routines, it becomes part of the culture rather than an event. As Johnson puts it, "Too many companies treat appreciation like a once-a-year fireworks show. Fun, sure—but it doesn't fix the day-to-day. Real belonging is built in the small, consistent moments."
- Make gratitude a shared responsibility, not a top-down gesture: Create simple channels where peers can recognize each other—an appreciation board, a shared Slack tag, or a rotating "spotlight" moment during meetings. When everyone participates, belonging deepens.

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- Let your values guide what gets recognized: Don't only reward output—highlight behaviors that reflect the culture you're trying to build: collaboration, initiative, inclusivity, thoughtful problem-solving. Over time, recognition becomes a way to reinforce norms.
- Create psychological “access points” for people to speak up: A culture of appreciation requires safety. Short anonymous check-ins, open office hours, or a “What's one thing that made your work harder this month?” prompt helps leaders respond before issues become resentment or burnout.
- Celebrate progress, not perfection: Employees feel valued when the organization notices growth, not just flawless results. Calling out effort and learning encourages a healthier culture—one where people take risks, ask for help, and feel seen even on tough days.

The Bottom Line.

Workplace appreciation is a critical factor in mitigating burnout. When employees feel their contributions are genuinely valued and recognized, they experience higher engagement, stronger well-being, and greater loyalty. For organizations looking to reduce burnout, investing in a culture of consistent, meaningful recognition isn't just a “nice-to-have”—it's a protective factor that strengthens both individuals and the organization as a whole.

Call us at 800-777-4114.

Your Clinical Account Executive is your front-line support when dealing with tough HR situations. Consult with us about referring employees to the EAP. When in doubt, encourage employees to call the EAP directly. Our team can discuss their needs and review the EAP services available to them.

If you or someone you know needs the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, call or text 988 or use the chat function online at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org).