

Burnout, Stress, and Leading Through Uncertainty

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In the Game Together · September 17, 2025

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Stay in the Game Together

Burnout rarely comes from one dramatic crisis. It builds up one late-night email, a tense meeting, and an impossible decision at a time.

Today, we'll look at how you can stay in the game supporting your team and yourself when the pressure doesn't let up.

Burnout: A Modern Leadership Challenge

Burnout is prolonged emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion.

It shows up as low energy, detachment, and a loss of motivation when demands keep outpacing resources.

Understanding Stress and Stressors

Stress is your body's response to change or threat.

Stressors can be physical (fatigue) or emotional (conflict, workload).

Leaders often face stress tied to decision-making, managing conflict, and maintaining team morale.

Why Managing Stress Matters

Managing your own stress protects your well-being and sets the tone for your team.

When you model healthy coping—taking breaks, setting limits, seeking support—you help everyone avoid burnout and keep performance steady.

Key Takeaways from This Session

- Recognize how your body and brain react to modern stressors
- Complete the stress cycle so stress doesn't build up
- Use simple, practical tools to help you and your team recover

Exercise 1: Identify and Sort Your Stressors

Step 1: List 3–5 current stressors (work or personal).

Step 2: Mark one category for each.

Step 3: Notice patterns. Where can you act, influence, or only respond?

Definitions & Examples

Controllable: You can directly change it.

Examples: Delegating a task, adjusting your schedule, blocking time for focused work

Influence Only: You can shape it, but not control the outcome.

Examples: Giving feedback to a team member, suggesting process improvements, supporting a child's study habits.

Uncontrollable: Outside your control; focus on your response.

Examples: Company-wide layoffs, weather delays, a family member's health diagnosis.

Stressor	Controllable	Influence Only	Uncontrollable

Exercise 2: Complete the Stress Cycle

Brainstorm the things you list to do or ones you want to try to complete the stress cycle.

- Moving your body
- Breathing
- Engaging in Positive Social Interaction
- Showing Affection
- Laughing
- Crying
- Express Yourself Creatively
- Engaging Your Imagination

Category	Possible Activities

Exercise 3: Tackling Controllable Stressors

List some of the stressors you can control from the last exercise. Write out plans to deal with them.

Stressor You Can Control	Action Plan

Supporting Your Team

- **Listen First.** Be curious—don't assume you know the root cause.
- **Yes / Not Yet / No.** Clarify priorities so your team knows what happens now, later, or not at all.
- **Communicate Often.** Share context; invite questions.
- **Create Emotional Safety.** Encourage open ideas and concerns without punishment.
- **Regular 1:1s.** Catch stress early and offer support.
- **Model Stress Management.** Let them see you take breaks, breathe, and set boundaries.

Resources

- Burnout by Emily & Amelia Nagoski
- The Burnout Workbook – practical exercises
- Podcast: Unlocking Us with the Nagoskis (Oct 14, 2020)
- Employee Assistance Programs, Therapy, or Coaching

AB COACHING

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