

How to measure burnout in an organization

The best way of measuring burnout is to use a standardised, scientifically proven questionnaire. Most recommendable is the Maslach burnout inventory MBI (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996)¹. It uses 3 dimensions: exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement. But, burnout can be measured even shorter, using only a single item. As Rohland, Kruse & Rohrer (2004) show in their article, an evaluation based on someone own's definition of burnout is sufficiently valid:

Question

Please, classify your level of burnout!

Answers

1. I enjoy my work. I have no symptoms of burnout.
2. Occasionally I am under stress, and I don't always have as much energy as I once did, but I don't feel burned out.
3. I am definitely burning out and have one or more symptoms of burnout, such as physical and emotional exhaustion.
4. The symptoms of burnout that I'm experiencing won't go away. I think about frustration at work a lot.
5. I feel completely burned out and often wonder if I can go on. I am at the point where I may need some changes or may need to seek some sort of help.

Interpretation

People, who choose answers 3 or 4 are in danger of burnout. Who prefers answer 5 can be seen as someone with serious burnout symptoms. In both cases, a more detailed test should be used for clarification¹.

Literature

Maslach, C., Jackson, S.E., & Leiter, M.P. (1996). Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual (3rd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Rohland, B. M., Kruse, G. R., & Rohrer, J. E. (2004). Validation of a single – item measure of burnout against the Maslach Burnout Inventory among physicians. *Stress and Health* 20, pp. 75–79. DOI: 10.1002/smi.1002

¹ For all items a self-test see <http://medicalstaff.fraserhealth.ca/getattachment/Member-Wellness-and-Engagement/Strips/Member-Wellness-and-Engagement/Burnout-Rating-Scales/CPD-Burnout-self-rating-MBI-April-13-2017.pdf.aspx/>