

Burn-Out

By Paul Penner

'Burnt-out' or near 'break down'?

You have probably heard someone say "So and so had a nervous breakdown". Or worse yet... wondered if you are due to have one!? Many times in my clinical practice I have heard people express a fear that they 'might be getting close to a nervous breakdown' or being 'burnt out'. It is an opportunity for me to teach the difference and help them make decisions on how to manage their situation more effectively.

A nervous breakdown and being burnt-out have some overlap, but are different. A nervous breakdown has more to do with managing emotional distress, while being burnt out has more to do with managing physiological stress.

Often enough when a person is moving toward a nervous breakdown (or maybe already has one) there has been a longstanding pattern of emotional distress, which has been continually stuffed rather than resolved. There is an energy drain when emotions (ie. frustrations, disappointments, worries or fading hope) remain unresolved and suppressed. As the negative emotions and emotional conflicts are accumulating without being defused... it takes energy to continue pushing these emotions under.

At some point the pressure to manage unresolved emotions exceeds the resources available to control them; then, often only a little trigger will unleash an avalanche of pent up emotions. Tears just keep coming. And they can come at the most undesirable moments. When the ability to control one's emotional release is lost, it often evokes intense fear. What's happening to me!? In the absence of grief reaction, one could assess the uncontrolled crying coupled with the panic of lost control (and the fear of never getting it back) as symptoms of a nervous breakdown and/or post-traumatic stress reaction.

More on 'Burn-out'

Last Communique I promised some answers. Well, here goes. But, first I need to set up the question again. I finished off the last article discussing the symptoms of adrenal fatigue in its various stages and I suggested it was better to catch this problem earlier rather than later. Well that only makes sense. Right!? Balanced living will protect us from burn-out and being known well by others can keep us from a nervous breakdown.

Life's journey can be long and hard. Having a friend (this friend can be Jesus in others) to walk with us will lighten the load. You've probably heard it said that sharing our joys multiplies them and sharing our sorrows divides them. Well, there's a lot of wisdom in those thoughts. Bearing things alone allows them to be uncomforted by the caring of another person. Debriefing

life experiences that are distressing (or rewarding) and being understood are powerful ways of defusing stress. This needs to be a regular part of our life - as regular as eating meals. I have my wife and a few good friends that I can count on to care about the details of my life. Without them I would have to manage on my own. And that wouldn't be good. A lot of emotions wouldn't easily get defused.

When it comes to rebuilding after a nervous breakdown it is really important to understand the dynamics of how the tensions developed and were managed non-constructively. Like I said in the last newsletter, the trauma associated with a nervous breakdown and/or traumatic stress reaction needs to be debriefed (ie. talked about) and given accurate meaning in order to help facilitate normalization of the body's response to trauma and diminish post trauma reaction (ie. triggers which evoke similar fear because they bear some association with the original traumatic experience which has not been resolved). Accurate meaning allows the fear of the symptoms of fear to dissipate. Inaccurate meaning perpetuates reaction to fear and strengthens trigger associations. This is not what one wants.

Regarding adrenal fatigue - What does one do? Well, a few things done in concert are important and helpful. Firstly, managing lifestyle to reduce stressors is very important. There will need to be some changes in managing demands on one's life. The ones, which can't be eliminated, require a damage control response – ie. exercise, adequate sleep (more than normal and on a regular basis for someone who is burnt out), healthy diet, deep breathing exercises, meditation, etc. And finally, a restorative component involving nutritional supplementation to counteract, where the body has become deficient, is needed. An adrenal restoration formula from a health food store or pharmacy is the good way to go. It will have an assortment of what the body needs in order to regenerate fatigued adrenals.

So what are we saying... reduce stressors, manage remaining stress and replenish exhausted adrenals through an adrenal supplementation formula. From what I have read, it could take about a year to get back to normal following extreme adrenal fatigue or burn out. Taking medication might contribute to the management of symptoms but is not intended to replenish the body and so don't expect energy from prescription drugs where they aren't intended to correct deficiencies. Inform yourself of what you need and then inform yourself on how to meet that need and then submit to the process. It took time to get run down and it will take time to get back up to speed.