

# Planner Burnout

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# Introductions



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# Planning Outpost



*Planning Outpost*

Planning Outpost, LLC is a woman-owned land use and municipal consulting firm specializing in serving local governments. Our services include but are not limited to the following:

- Drafting General Plans, Small and Specific Area Plans, city-wide strategic plans.
- Implementation tools such as Updating Codes, Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance revisions.
- Fee Studies/ Cost of Service
- Business Process Improvements
- Public engagement services from engagement plan development, leading processes to reporting out success metrics.

# Key Objectives



1. Define planner burnout and identify what are the signs of burnout.
2. Discuss tools and techniques to cope with stress and healthy coping approaches/mechanisms.
3. Review and discuss two professional planner case studies and identify tools and techniques used in each study.

# Burnout Definitions and Signs



1. Dr. Herbert Freudenberger, 1974
  - First coined burn-out.
  - “State of mental and physical exhaustion caused by one's professional life”
2. Ravi Chandra, M.D., D.F.A.P.A., 2023
  - “We are embedded in systems not designed to care for us, and then we’re expected to “self-care,”—which asks us to put up with and adjust to toxicity. At best, we can be, as Martin Luther King said, “creatively maladjusted.”
3. Christina Maslach, PhD, 1981
  - “Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people-work’ of some kind.”
  - Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), 1981
    - Three Dimensions/Indicators of Burnout
      - Emotional Exhaustion
      - Depersonalization (negative attitudes towards residents or coworkers, loss of ideals, or detachment)
      - Reduced Efficacy (reduced sense of personal accomplishment, and commitment in your profession)

- I. Freudenberger HJ (Winter 1974). "Staff Burn-Out". *Journal of Social Issues*. 30 (1): 159–165.
- II. Ravi Chandra, M.D., D.F.A.P.A., June 6, 2023, “11 Tools to Cope With Burnout and Overwhelm.”, *Psychology Today*. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-pacific-heart/202306/11-tools-to-cope-with-burnout-and-overwhelm#:~:text=Three%20components%20of%20burnout%20are,silence%2C%20and%20asking%20for%20help.>
- III. Maslach, Christina (1981). “The measurement of experienced burnout.” *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, Vol. 2, 99-113
- IV. Maslach, Christina and Leiter, Michael (March 19, 2021). “How to Measure Burnout Accurately and Ethically.” *Harvard Business Review*, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2021/03/how-to-measure-burnout-accurately-and-ethically>

# Burnout Tools and Techniques



## 1. Self-Care–

- Drink water, not coffee
- Sleep more/eat healthy/workout 4-6 days a week
- Diversify your time/Participate in activities outside of work
- Set boundaries at work (prioritize the work with your boss, say no)
- Delegate & resist being over-responsible
- Practice mindfulness/Meditation
- Take more mental health days
- \*\*\*Celebrate the small wins\*\*\*
- Quit

## 2. Maslach’s Six Drivers of Burnout Risks

- Workload
- Fairness
- Control, or lack of
- Community
- Rewards
- Values

## 3. Assessing the mismatch between the job & the person

- What options close the gaps and better align you in these core areas?
- What would *job engagement* look like? Possible with minor adjustments?
- -OR- Start making **big** decisions and extensive professional changes

- I. Christina Maslach, PhD “Why We’re Burned Out and What to Do About It.” <https://www.apa.org/news/podcasts/speaking-of-psychology/burnout>
- II. Ellen Hendriksen, PhD “7 Ways to Recover from Burnout”, Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/how-to-be-yourself/202105/7-ways-to-recover-from-burnout>
- III. Kelly E Green PhD, LP, April 8, 2024, “Ditching ‘Self-Care’ for a Healthier, More Fulfilling Life”, Psychology Today. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/addiction-and-relationships/202403/ditching-self-care-for-a-healthier-more-fulfilling-life>



# Case Study 1.0

## Josh



**Case Study 1** – Josh is a senior planner with four years of experience in his city. He works for a mid-size city where there have been an increase in subdivision and multi-family proposals and increased development interest in the county especially within their annexation area. His boss relies on him a lot and comes sees him everyday at 8:00 a.m. to talk about the days work or the newly elected councilmember updates. Josh attends multiple night meetings for planning commission, council, and neighborhood/HOA meetings. He is also lead for updating his city’s new subdivision ordinance, accessory dwelling unit policy, and is on several working groups for development in the annexation areas. He is also responsible for training a new front line counter planner the city just hired to help him with his workload.

Recently, Josh has been quiet and doesn’t engage in the department meetings. His staff reports have been turned in either at the last-minute and after the internal deadlines. Josh has not been training the new planner and has been heard saying “no one helped me when I was in the position.” When people ask him for project status via email, he typically doesn’t respond unless the person copies his boss.

***Can you identify which burnout dimension(s) Josh is experiencing? What do you think Josh and/or his Boss should be doing to address his behavior?***

# Case Study 2.0

## Monique



**Case Study 2** - Monique has been a land planner for 15 years. For the last three years, she has been the Community Development Director for a small city that has very limited support staff. She has just left a meeting with her rather unsupportive City Manager, where she feels even more discouraged. The applicants don't think the City moves fast enough in their processes, the residents hate the project, even though it is anticipated to bring some substantial economic benefit to the community in diversifying its tax base, and Council's in-fighting is causing low morale for the organization. This stress is on top of the recently enacted new state legislation that puts even more onerous on small towns with greater reporting requirements, city zoning ordinance changes and updates to elements of the City's General Plan that are coming due soon.

Monique is spending a lot of time at work and missing commitments with her family. Even with the extra hours she puts in at the office, it's not productive time in accomplishing work. When Monique does get home, she finds that she can't stop thinking about work.

***Can you identify which burnout dimension(s) Monique is experiencing? What tools or techniques can Monique use to help alleviate her current situation?***



# Recap What We Learned



1. Objective 1.0 - Defined and discussed burnout, identified the three dimensions of burnout, and identified some signs.
2. Objective 2.0 - Reviewed tools and techniques to cope with stress and burnout.
3. Objective 3.0 - Reviewed and discussed two planning professional case studies.

***Why this Topic?***

# Questions?



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