

# THE NEW FACE OF *Employee Burnout*

## HOW IT'S CHANGED—AND HOW TO FIGHT IT

Burnout—the demotivation and physical symptoms that accompany extended stress—is nothing new. According to a Gallup study, daily employee stress worldwide reached a record high in 2020: 43 percent. Here's a closer look at how the events of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to employee burnout, with strategies to help your employees overcome them.

### Daily Negative Emotions

48%  
WORRY

57%  
STRESS

22%  
ANGER

26%  
SADNESS

In the U.S. and Canada, 2020 saw a dramatic increase in people who reported feeling negative emotions for most of each day. No matter the source of these feelings, the physiological effect is the same over time: high levels of the stress hormone cortisol lead to headaches, muscle tension, and exhaustion. It's a situation that demoralizes employees and damages productivity.

### Isolation

After an extended period of remote work, many employees miss the natural interactions of an in-person office. In an interview with the New York Times, NASA astronaut Christina Koch described returning from months of isolation on the International Space Station in February 2020—only to go immediately into lockdown. *"I had to shift my thinking from 'It's a marathon, not a sprint' to 'It's an ultramarathon, not a marathon,'"* she said.



### Connecting from Orbit

Christina's advice for staying connected works just as well on Earth. While her friends ran a half-marathon, she ran 13.1 miles on a space treadmill and streamed it. *"Staying relevant means you don't just communicate occasionally by email, you do things that almost feel like you're close."* Setting up times for your team to talk as humans—even if many members are still virtual—goes a long way toward alleviating loneliness.

### The Calendar's Spillover

The shift to entirely remote teams added new pressure to the existing "always-on" culture common in the U.S. *Without signals like a commute or an empty desk, many employees found working hours spilling over into their personal lives.* With virtual meetings filling every hour of the day, it became hard to even find time for a bathroom break.



### Focused Time is Quality Time

As your teams schedule their interactions, encourage them to schedule focused time: time to focus on individual work, time to come together to focus on a project, and time to focus on life outside of work. One Gallup survey found that *employees who say they often or always have enough time to do all of their work are 70 percent less likely to experience burnout.* It also helps to leave five minutes free at the end of a meeting so employees have time to focus on their...business.

### A New Mental Health Landscape

From June 2019 to March 2020, 11 percent of people surveyed by the U.S. Census Bureau reported symptoms of anxiety or depression. *By December 2020, that number jumped to more than 42 percent.* Whether their job is stressful or not, your employees are likely coming to work pre-stressed.



### A Better Future

Instead of worrying whether their remote work is up to par for months before an annual review, *having regular performance conversations can help reassure employees, setting up their career path as a pillar of stability in a turbulent world.*

Burnout is pervasive and all-consuming. But with a holistic approach that helps employees connect with each other, focus on their work, and trust your organization, your employees will enjoy their quality of life in spite of less-than-ideal circumstances.

### About the Research

Data pulled from multiple Gallup panel studies and world polls surveying 24,522 respondents/employees and canvassing 160+ countries, respectively. Read more in [Gallup's Perspective on Employee Burnout: Causes and Cures](#) and [State of the Global Workforce 2021](#). See Christina Koch's full interview [here](#).

### About BambooHR

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