

# **Exhaustion, Burnout, Fatigue or Depression?**

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Sometimes people confuse depression with exhaustion, burnout, or fatigue. You can experience a change in energy level, and it could be temporary or an established pattern. Temporary changes in energy level can be one indicator of depression, but you would have to be experiencing more symptoms in order to be diagnosed as depressed. Your level of energy may drop temporarily from some external event, such as your cat becoming ill, and you feel sad about it. You may “bounce back” without sustaining the mood. If you are experiencing prolonged physical fatigue, you may be suffering primarily from dietary insufficiency, heavy exercise, an external crisis, or a negative physiological condition. Feeling depressed may be a secondary effect of such causes.

Depression is one of over sixty symptoms of the syndrome termed “burnout.” You are “burning out” when your capability of functioning is significantly below what is normal for you over a period of time. The most common symptoms are job-related stress, having lots of unfinished business and “loose ends,” worry about personal finances, and impatience. Your motivation may get lost, your energy level may drop, and you may lose interest in what is normally interesting to you. As a result, you may be taking away the activities in your life that sustain you. You may be experiencing some aspects of depression, but you may be primarily suffering from the burnout syndrome. If you are experiencing these symptoms for prolonged period of time, however, you may be suffering from mood disorder, and you may need some form of treatment.

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