

Stage Assessment | 90-Day Protocol | Return-to-Work Scripts

# Burnout Recovery 90-Day Plan

*Stabilize, Rebuild, Return. A Three-Phase Protocol.*

---

**By GrabGuides**

[grabguides.com](https://grabguides.com)

All rights reserved. For personal use only.

# Table of Contents

---

1.	The Three-Dimension Burnout Assessment . . . . .	3
2.	Phase 1 - Stabilize (Days 1-30) . . . . .	6
3.	Phase 2 - Rebuild (Days 31-60) . . . . .	10
4.	Phase 3 - Return (Days 61-90) . . . . .	14
5.	Return-to-Work Conversation Scripts . . . . .	17
6.	Relapse Prevention and 6-Month Check-in . . . . .	20

## Before You Start

- This plan assumes medical burnout, not clinical depression. Confirm with a clinician.
- If you can take any paid or unpaid leave, this plan benefits enormously from Week 1 off.
- Share this plan with one trusted person: partner, therapist, friend, or manager.
- Cancel anything cancellable for the next 30 days. You will not miss it.

Burnout is not laziness, and it is not solved by a vacation. It is a specific three-dimensional syndrome: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and reduced sense of accomplishment (Maslach, Schaufeli, Leiter). Each dimension needs its own intervention. This plan runs 90 days across three phases: stabilize the body, rebuild the self, and return to sustainable work.

**3**

Burnout Dimensions

**90**

Days of Structured Recovery

**6 mo**

Typical Full Restoration Window



## Chapter 1: The Three-Dimension Assessment

The Maslach Burnout Inventory measures three dimensions. You are going to self-assess each on a 1-10 scale today, and again at day 30, 60, and 90. Movement in each dimension tells you which phase is working and which needs more time.

### Dimension 1: Emotional Exhaustion

Feeling emotionally drained from work. Used up at the end of the day. Fatigued waking up and facing another day. Score yourself 1 (never) to 10 (daily, severe).

### Dimension 2: Depersonalization / Cynicism

Treating colleagues, clients, or patients as objects. Becoming callous. Not caring what happens. Feeling emotionally hardened. Score 1 to 10.

### Dimension 3: Reduced Personal Accomplishment

Sense that you are not accomplishing worthwhile things. Not effective. Not making a difference. Score 1 (still feel effective) to 10 (feel useless).

Dimension	Day 0	Day 30	Day 60	Day 90
Emotional Exhaustion	___	___	___	___
Depersonalization	___	___	___	___
Reduced Accomplishment	___	___	___	___
Total (out of 30)	___	___	___	___

**[NOTE] What the numbers mean**

Total under 10: sub-clinical stress, this plan is preventive. 10-18: moderate burnout, follow the plan strictly. 19-25: severe burnout, add professional support (therapy, medical leave). 26+: urgent; consult a physician before starting any protocol.



## Chapter 2: Phase 1 - Stabilize (Days 1-30)

Phase 1 has one goal: stop the bleed. No growth, no ambition, no rebuilding. You are a patient in recovery. The three interventions are basic routines, sleep repair, and minimum viable work.

### Basic routines

#### Daily non-negotiables (Phase 1)

- Wake within a 60-minute window every day, including weekends
- Three meals at roughly fixed times; skip nothing, diet nothing
- One 20-minute walk daily, outdoors, no podcasts (silence or music)
- Lights out by 11pm, bedroom for sleep only
- One human contact per day that is not work (text counts)

### Sleep repair

Burnout destroys sleep before it destroys anything else, and sleep must be repaired first. Use the 3-2-1 rule: 3 hours before bed, no more work. 2 hours before bed, no more food. 1 hour before bed, no more screens. If sleep is still broken at day 14, ask a physician about short-term sleep support.

### Minimum viable work

Define the smallest list of work responsibilities that keeps you not-fired. Cancel, decline, or delegate everything else for 30 days. Set an auto-responder that replies within 48 hours, not 4. Meetings shrink from 60 to 25 minutes.

Non-essential projects pause. If your job cannot survive this, the plan is medical leave, not this PDF.

**Example: Sample Week 1 schedule (Phase 1)**

Wake 7:00 | 20 min walk | breakfast 8:00

Core work block 9:00 to 12:00 (three top tasks only)

Lunch 12:00, away from desk, 45 minutes

Shallow work 13:00 to 15:30 (email, admin, low-stakes)

Stop 15:30. No evening work. No weekend work.

Dinner 18:30 | wind-down 21:00 | lights out 22:30



## Chapter 3: Phase 2 - Rebuild (Days 31-60)

Phase 2 addresses the depersonalization and reduced-accomplishment dimensions. You are not adding more work. You are reconnecting to values and installing boundary scripts so the next phase of work does not re-burn you.

### The values worksheet

Pick three work values from the list that still matter to you. Burnout often strips meaning from work; values work reinstalls it piece by piece.

- Craft: doing the work well for its own sake
- Service: the work helps specific people you can name
- Growth: the work teaches you something each quarter
- Autonomy: you control how and when the work happens
- Security: the work provides stability for you and yours
- Recognition: the work earns visible credit
- Impact: the work moves a larger thing you care about
- Creativity: the work produces something new

Circle three. For each, write one sentence on how your current role touches that value. If zero of your three values are served by your current role, Phase 3 (return) becomes a job-change conversation, not a return-to-work conversation.

## Boundary scripts (Phase 2)

Situation	Script
After-hours request	I will get to this on Monday morning. Thanks for your patience.
Scope creep	That is outside what we agreed. Want to swap it for X, or push X?
New project offer	I am at capacity. I can revisit in 4 weeks.
Unscheduled call	I am in focus time until 3. Can we book 15 minutes tomorrow?
Weekend ping	(No reply. Reply Monday 9am.)

### [TIP] The first time you use a script

Expect the world not to end. Most boundary scripts are met with 'sure, no problem' because people ask for things and then forget them. The boundary was always in your head.



## Chapter 4: Phase 3 - Return (Days 61-90)

Phase 3 returns you to sustainable full engagement with work. Sustainable is the operative word. You are installing a work structure you could run for 5 years, not 5 weeks. If the old structure burned you out, the new one is measurably different.

### The sustainable work structure

#### Phase 3 Work Structure

- Deep work blocks (2 x 90 min per day, calendar-locked)
- A single weekly review meeting with yourself, 45 minutes, Friday
- A capped number of meetings per day (3 max) and per week (12 max)
- One full off-day per week with no Slack and no email
- A quarterly 3-day break pre-booked in the calendar for the next 12 months

### The return-to-work conversation

If you took formal leave, you now re-enter with a conversation. The conversation has three parts: what changed for you, what you need from the role going forward, and what the first 30 days look like. Use the scripts in the next chapter.

### Example: Sample 3-month scorecard

Day 0 MBI: EE 8, DP 7, RPA 8 (total 23 - severe)

Day 30 MBI: EE 6, DP 6, RPA 7 (total 19 - severe)

Day 60 MBI: EE 4, DP 4, RPA 5 (total 13 - moderate)

Day 90 MBI: EE 3, DP 3, RPA 3 (total 9 - sub-clinical)

Key changes: sleep, boundary scripts, one value-aligned project

## Chapter 5: Return-to-Work Conversation Scripts

Whether you took medical leave or quietly ran the plan on your own, the return conversation sets the next 90 days. These scripts are for manager, HR, and team.

### Manager conversation (30 minutes)

"Thanks for making time. I want to walk you through three things: what happened, what I am doing about it, and what I need in the first 30 days. I had a burnout episode. I have been running a recovery plan for 90 days. Returning, I can do [scope X], and I need two changes: [change 1, e.g., deep work blocks protected], and [change 2, e.g., capped meetings]. Can we agree on a 30-day check-in?"

### HR conversation (if formal)

"I am returning from a medical leave for burnout. My physician cleared me with the following accommodations: [list]. I would like to put these in writing for a 90-day period and then review. Can you walk me through the process?"

### Team conversation (10 minutes, stand-up)

"Quick update from me: I have been out for recovery and I am back on [date]. My working hours are 9 to 5, and I do not answer Slack after 6. For anything urgent in the evenings, text [name]. Thanks, I am glad to be back."

#### **[NOTE] You do not owe anyone the full diagnosis**

'A medical issue that is now resolved' is a complete answer. In the US, ADA (and most EU-country equivalents) protect you from having to disclose specifics. Use the level of detail you are comfortable with.

## Chapter 6: Relapse Prevention and 6-Month Check-in

Burnout relapses the same way it arrived: slowly, and then all at once. Prevention is a 20-minute monthly review and a 60-minute quarterly one.

### Relapse Prevention Checklist

- Re-score the MBI (three dimensions) on the first of each month
- If any dimension rises 2+ points in a month, trigger a Phase 1 reset week
- Hold the quarterly 3-day break in your calendar without guilt
- Re-read your values worksheet each quarter; update one sentence
- Schedule a 6-month therapist or coach check-in even if you feel fine

### **Important Disclaimer**

This guide is educational. Burnout can coexist with depression, anxiety, and other medical conditions that require professional treatment. Please work with a physician, therapist, or occupational health clinician alongside this plan.

# Thank you.

If this helped, we have more.

**Burnout Recovery 90-Day Plan - \$25**

[grabguides.com/products/burnout-recovery-90-day-plan](https://grabguides.com/products/burnout-recovery-90-day-plan)

*Browse the full library at [grabguides.com](https://grabguides.com)*