

Self-care during challenging times

The importance of balance

Work-life balance is key to feeling fulfilled both at work and in your personal life. It is very important to maintain good mental health. For most, finding this balance is really hard, especially during times of change. We are often playing a juggling act, trying to balance the demands in our own personal lives and at work.

Activity:

Pause for a moment and think back to the past week. What have you been juggling?

- Is there anything you planned to do, but didn't get around to?
- What have you been spending your time doing?
- What has brought you the most joy?
- What has been difficult?
- How have you felt?

You may have thought back to feeling overwhelmed because you've had a lot more parcels to deliver than usual, or remembered that you didn't get around to the daily walk you promised yourself.

Alternatively, you may have had a lot more time to spend with your friends and family and are now feeling positive about the week ahead.

These thoughts, feelings and experiences can be divided into "demands" and "resources".

Resources vs Demands

Resources are the things that make us feel good, help us achieve our goals and lead to personal growth (e.g., good team support, working in ways that best suit you).

Demands are the things that take up our mental or physical energy, and can come at a cost when sustained for the long-term. (e.g., work related pressures, emotional demands, from feeling constantly worried or stressed).

Demands will always exist, and this is good for maintaining good wellbeing. They keep us engaged and motivated.

The problem arises when our demands outweigh our resources, and this can have negative impacts on our mental health in the long-term.

How do I know if I'm taking on too much?

You are your own expert. Think about what's on your plate at the moment and how you're feeling about it. Are you enjoying your work, or lacking general energy and drive? Are you motivated to keep working hard on your activities, or are you constantly feeling exhausted?



Understanding BURNOUT

Ann has been delivering parcels for 10 years. For the most part, she has loved her job, describing it as “a time to meet new people and bring joy to the community”. Recently, Ann has noticed a change.

“I don’t understand why so many people are posting parcels! Can’t someone else deliver these? This is really stressful. Can’t I just take a day off?”

Ann is exhausted, bitter, and feels like she needs a break; she is likely to be experiencing burnout.

Burnout is when we feel negatively towards our work.

It’s a normal experience many people face, especially during change or challenging times. When we experience burnout, our resources and demands are likely to be out of balance. Increasing your resources can help.

While we cannot always change what demands we experience (e.g., the number of customers to serve), we can do a number of things to help when we start to feel like Ann, or just want to increase our healthy habits.

TIP 1 Identify the mismatch

Reflect on what is bothering you the most. Acknowledging what this is, is important.

TIP 2 Take regular breaks

Let your mind and body rest. When is it most practical for you to focus on **you**: before/after work, or during a short break? Take some time to practice mindfulness or read a book, and always prioritise a healthy diet and exercise.

TIP 3 Delegate

Communication is key; if you don’t ask, you’ll never know. Check in with your family to see if they can lighten your load at home. Chat with your colleagues to see if anything can be done to assist you at work during a challenging time.

TIP 4 Reach out

Sometimes we need to reach out to more formal advice or support. Consult your GP, manager, or a fellow team member.

For professional support/advice:

Australia Post’s WAP
1300 687 327

BeyondBlue
1300 224 636

Suicide Call Back Service
1300 659 487



Increasing my **resource** bucket

Increasing your resources can help to balance out the challenges you might be experiencing and maintain good mental health.

At work

- 1 Build positive relationships with colleagues.
- 2 Talk to others – they probably feel the same way!
- 3 Seek answers – reduce ambiguity by asking questions.
- 4 Speak up if it’s too much and ask for help if you need it.

At home

- 1 Connect with family and friends.
- 2 Make time for the things you enjoy - and do them!
- 3 Maintain a healthy routine – sleep, exercise and a healthy diet.