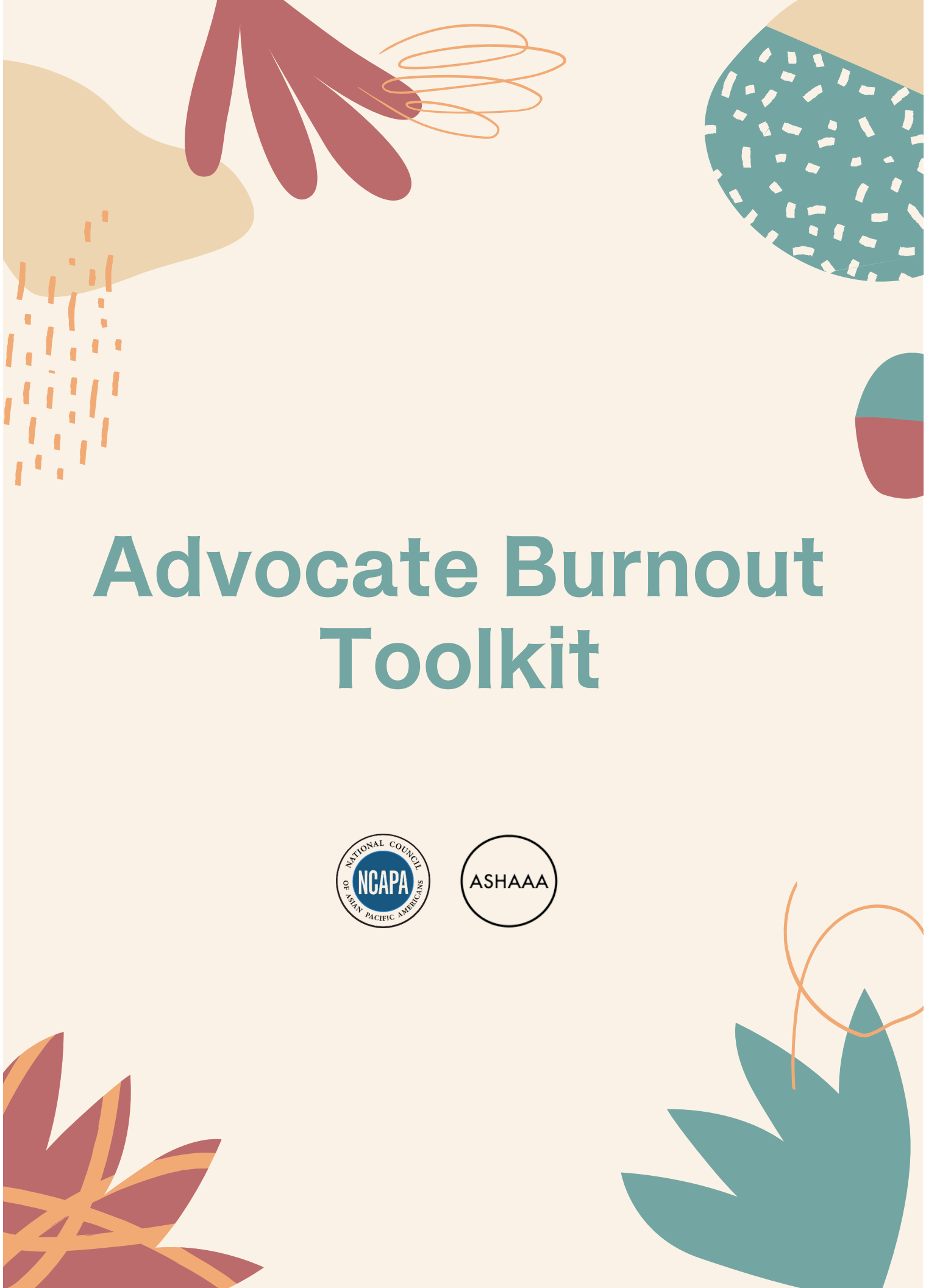


Advocate Burnout Toolkit





CONTENT:

- **What Is Burnout and How to Identify It?**
- **Using the Toolkit with Cultural Humility**
- **Easy Steps to Buffer Against Burnout**
- **Address Structural Causes of Burnout**
- **Support Employees in "Panic Mode"**



What is Burnout?

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress.

For a more elaborate definition of burnout, see the “Additional Resources” page.

How Do I Identify It?

Signs of burnout vary widely and your employees may not even know that it is happening to them. Take some time to pause and think about these questions periodically:

Do your employees appear to be...

- More tired, drained, or pessimistic compared to usual?
- Easily irritable or impatient in meetings or workspaces?
- Less satisfied from achievements?



Using the Toolkit with Cultural Humility

The term Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander describe people from over 50 ethnic groups, who have vastly different cultures and experiences. There isn't a one-size-fits-all approach to improving our wellbeing. This toolkit offers one framework to think about burnout and mental health.

Your employees are experts on their lived experiences. Instead of telling them how to self-care or heal, pose suggestions and invite feedback — be collaborative!



Learning about experiences other than our own is an ongoing process. We can never know everything, but we can stay interested by learning more or keeping an open mind.

Routinely ask yourself these questions:

- What is my personal culture/identity in terms of race, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, gender, education, body type, ability/disability, and more?
- What assumptions do I make and see as "norms" because of my identity?
- How do "norms" affect my interactions with employees and decision-making?

Consider how your unique identity will influence your interpretations of the recommendations in this toolkit. For example, are you able to identify signs of burnout in employees who express their feelings differently from you? Are you more or less inclined to suggest specific self-care strategies to some employees based on common assumptions about their ethnic groups?



Easy Steps to Buffer Against Burnout:

1. **Remind** your team that they need to rest to work well.

Many advocates may feel that their wellbeing comes after that of the community and often forget that they deserve the same compassion they show others.



2. **Model** behaviors you hope to implement.

Stand up and stretch every hour, cross your arms a few times past the midline of your body— this can boost brain connectivity!

Spend 5 minutes at the beginning of each meeting to check-in — as humans. Emphasize that people can talk about things outside of work — start with yourself!



3. **Verbalize** your care for your employees.

Statements like “My door is always open” and “Your wellbeing and needs are important” can help articulate these feelings and build connection and trust.

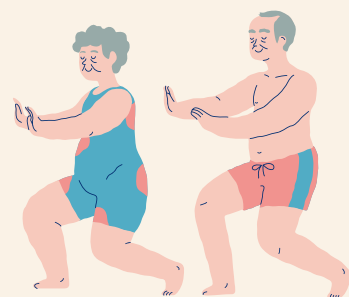
Consider sending appreciation emails!



4. **Encourage** employees to explore what's relaxing and calming for them.

Here are some personal testimonials from AAPI communities:

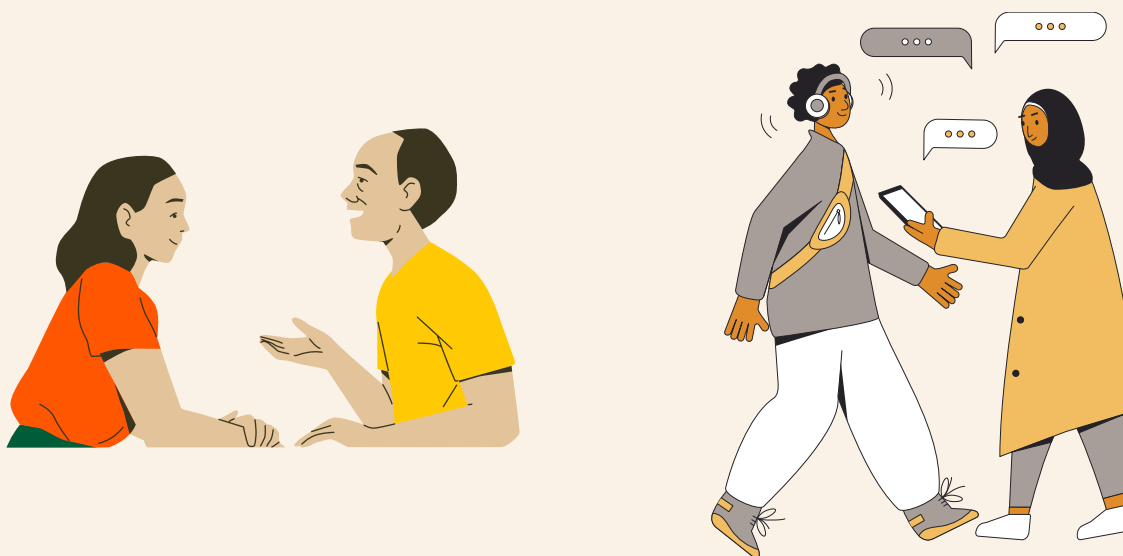
- "My self-care looks like taking care of the space around me... finally doing the dishes and doing laundry."
- "My way of dealing with stress is normally to work out... also eating Korean food."
- "I quite like work so I actually enjoy working past 5, but I know I need a mental reset so I try hard to not do anything on the weekend."
- "My mom taught me to massage these pressure points when I'm tired or stressed."
- "Sometimes chanting with my close friends really brings me back to the comfort of home."



5. **Normalize** conversations on mental health in the workplace.

Talk about how you are feeling in the present moment during check-ins (e.g., “I’m a bit stressed out by this project.”); invite others to join you in sharing their emotional experiences.

Encourage employees to seek out mental health support and services - check out our “Additional Resources” page for more information!



Address Structural Causes of Burnout

- To the extent possible, explain to your employees why they are given certain roles and/or allow them to choose their tasks to encourage a sense of control and agency.
- Be mindful of the workload assigned to your employees. If you notice anyone taking on too much, encourage them to prioritize the tasks that are truly urgent and important.
- Build breaks into the schedule — end meetings early, have designated lunch breaks, etc.



- Give employees a voice in the decision-making process. For example, suggestion boxes for supervisors increase accountability and help employees communicate desired changes.
- Once or twice a month, hold informal office hours during lunch break. Invite people to just walk in and talk about anything. (Prepare a few conversation starters yourself!)
- Empower your employees by providing safe spaces to discuss shared identity-based concerns.
- It takes time for people to get used to new practices and open up, so patience is key. Make a point to provide these opportunities so they are seen and normalized.



Support Employees in "Panic Mode"

To support people in visible, intense distress (e.g., rapid and shallow breathing, shaking, turning red or pale, excessive perspiration):

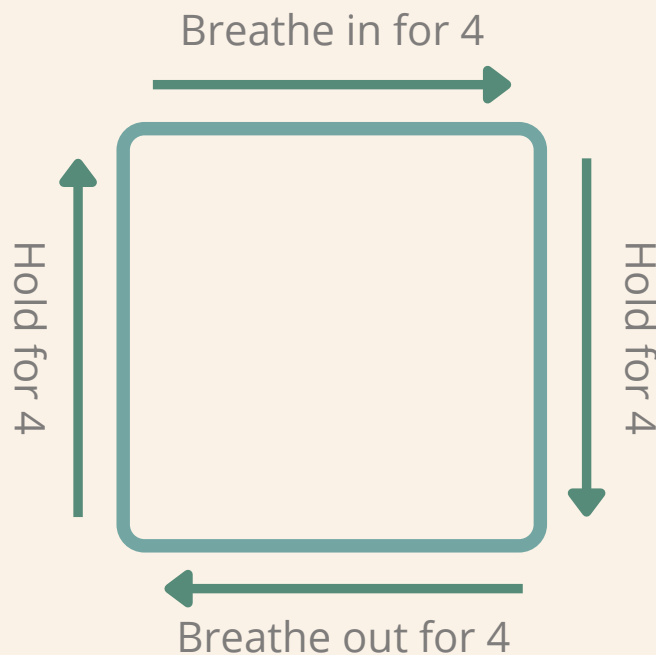
The #1 thing is to remain calm and bring them back to the present!

First, rule out potential physical causes of distress (e.g., dehydration, low blood sugar, sleep deprivation). Then, try these exercises:

- Keep frozen oranges in the freezer. Ask them to take one, press it against their skin (e.g., inner forearm, sides of the neck, upper face), smell it, or peel it.



- Help the person to stay in the physical environment: point to any object (e.g., a pen, a laptop) and ask the person to describe it out loud (e.g., shape, color, texture, smell, sound).
- Try a breathing exercise like the one pictured below, holding each step for 4 seconds.



- Repeat until the person feels better and try to do it calmly with them — your calmness could rub off on them!



DISCLAIMER :

We have synthesized evidence from a range of sources (e.g., peer-reviewed journals, personal testimonials) culminating in an attempt to provide culturally sensitive advice on burnout. We recognize that culturally sensitive care is vital and still developing within the mental health field, and have sought to meet this standard to the best of our ability. We also acknowledge that there are many recommendations when it comes to addressing burnout, and we were not able to cover everything within this card deck. We cannot guarantee the quality of the references provided and the advice provided should be used at one's own discretion.

For more resources, please visit ashaaa.org or email team@ashaaa.org.



Additional Resources

What is Burnout?

1. *Burn-out an “occupational phenomenon”*: *International Classification of Diseases*. (n.d.) World Health Organization. Retrieved January 17, 2022, from <https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>
2. Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care. (2020, June 18). *Depression: What is burnout?*. National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK279286/>

Easy Steps to Buffer Against Burnout

1. Greenstein, L. (2017, October 11). *9 Ways to Fight Mental Health Stigma*. National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI). www.nami.org/blogs/nami-blog/october-2017/9-ways-to-fight-mental-health-stigma/
2. ASHAAA Team. (n.d.) *Mental Health Resources*. A Safe Haven for Asians and Asian Americans (ASHAAA). <https://www.ashaaa.org/mental-health-resources/>
3. Boyes, A. (2020, August 30). *4 Ways to Destigmatize Mental Health at Work*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/aliceboyes/2020/08/31/4-ways-to-destigmatize-mental-health-at-work/>

Support Employees in “Panic Mode”

1. Mayo Clinic Staff. (n.d.) *Panic attacks and panic disorder*. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/panic-attacks/symptoms-causes/syc-20376021/>
2. Raypole, C. (2019, May 24). *30 Grounding Techniques to Quiet Distressing Thoughts*. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques/>

Finding Mental Health Professionals

1. BIPOC-focused: <https://www.innopsych.com/>; <https://www.inclusivetherapists.com/>
2. Allows users to specify therapist identity: <https://zencare.co/>
3. Allows users to specify identity group (e.g., ethnicity, sexuality, faith) served: www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists

More Mental Health Resources

1. Anxiety Canada <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
2. Berkeley Boot Camps. (n.d.). *Mental Health Resources to Prevent Creative and Professional Burnout*. <https://bootcamp.berkeley.edu/blog/mental-health-resources-to-help-prevent-creative-and-professional-burnout/>

References

Academic Sources

- Adriaenssens, J., De Gucht, V., & Maes, S. (2015). Causes and consequences of occupational stress in emergency nurses, a longitudinal study. *Journal of Nursing Management*, 23(3), 346–358.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jonm.12138>
- Bandali, A. Z. (2020). Who cares? A lack of self-care for women in the non-profit/non-governmental sector. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(2), 236–250.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12362>
- Du, T. (n.d.).
- Gorski, P. C. (2015). Relieving Burnout and the “Martyr Syndrome” Among Social Justice Education Activists: The Implications and Effects of Mindfulness. *The Urban Review*, 47(4), 696–716.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-015-0330-0>
- Gorski, P. C. (2019). Fighting racism, battling burnout: Causes of activist burnout in US racial justice activists. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(5), 667–687.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2018.1439981>
- Kim, T. K., Solomon, P., & Jang, C. (2012). Organizational Justice and Social Workers’ Intentions to Leave Agency Positions. *Social Work Research*, 36(1), 31–39.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/svs001>
- Newton, C., & Teo, S. (2014). Identification and Occupational Stress: A Stress-Buffering Perspective: Identification and Occupational Stress. *Human Resource Management*, 53(1), 89–113. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21598>
- Olcoń, K., & Gulbas, L. E. (2021). “Their needs are higher than what I can do”: Moral distress in providers working with Latino immigrant families. *Qualitative Social Work*, 20(4), 967–983.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325020919804>
- Ora, H., Wada, M., Salat, D., & Kansaku, K. (2016). Arm crossing updates brain functional connectivity of the left posterior parietal cortex. *Scientific Reports*, 6(1), 28105.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/srep28105>

Semmer, N. K., Jacobshagen, N., Meier, L. L., Elfering, A., Beehr, T. A., Kälin, W., & Tschan, F. (2015). Illegitimate tasks as a source of work stress. *Work & Stress*, 29(1), 32–56.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2014.1003996>

Top, M., & Tekingunduz, S. (2018). The Effect of Organizational Justice and Trust on Job Stress in Hospital Organizations. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 50(5), 558–566.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/jnu.12419>

Viehl, C., Dispenza, F., McCullough, R., & Guvensel, K. (2017). Burnout among sexual minority mental health practitioners: Investigating correlates and predictors. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(3), 354–361. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000236>

Non-academic Sources

Black Lives Matter. (n.d.). *Healing Action Toolkit*.

https://blacklivesmatter.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/BLM_HealinginAction-1-1.pdf?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=ZC7GN9tpkR1I9KjIgdWxkpgpsknOuDdcV2DXEpTI6S8-1636686025-0-gaNycGzNB6U

ITA Group. (n.d.). *Burning at Both Ends: Employee Burnout Warning Signs (and How to Avoid Them)*. ITA Group. Retrieved November 19, 2021, from

<https://www.itagroup.com/insights/employee-burnout-warning-signs>

Know the signs of job burnout. (n.d.). Mayo Clinic. Retrieved November 19, 2021, from

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/burnout/art-20046642>

Koopman, D. (2015, November 16). *Science Shows How Crossing Your Arms And Legs Can Hugely Change Your Brain*. Lifehack.

<https://www.lifehack.org/331914/how-crossing-your-arms-and-legs-can-change-your-brain>

McIlrath, B. (2021, June 16). *Crossing Your Arms and Your Legs Can Change Life, Study Reveals*. Consumer Health Digest.

<https://www.consumerhealthdigest.com/brain-health/crossing-arms-and-legs-can-change-life.html>

Silva, C. (2020, August 10). Black Activist Burnout: 'You Can't Do This Work If You're Running On Empty'. *National Public Radio*.

<https://www.npr.org/2020/08/10/896695759/black-activist-burnout-you-can-t-do-this-work-if-you-re-running-on-empty>

Stinson, A. (2018, June 1). *Box breathing: How to do it, benefits, and tips*. Medical News Today.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/321805>