

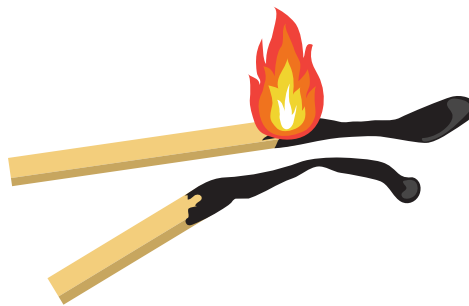
SEX WORK & BURNOUT

INFO SHEET



Burnout is a universal issue that can affect anyone, including sex workers. Sex work can include physical strain, emotional labour, and societal stigma which can make sex workers vulnerable to burnout.

Burnout isn't a sign of failure — it's your body and mind's way of asking for help. This information sheet outlines actions, like prioritising self-care or seeking support, that can make a big difference. Help and community are available and can be vital in preventing and recovering from burnout.



What is Burnout?

Burnout is a state of emotional, mental and/or physical exhaustion.

It can feel overwhelming and make everyday tasks seem impossible.

For sex workers, burnout might show up in specific ways, such as irritability or anger toward clients, feeling disconnected or disinterested in work, or struggling to balance personal life with work demands.



Signs of Burnout

Burnout affects everyone differently. It's a deeply personal experience that varies from person to person. Below are some of the most common signs of burnout among sex workers. Your experience may look completely different, and that's equally valid.

Emotional Symptoms:

- Difficulty finding joy in achievements.
- A sense of hatred or disdain towards work.
- Anxiety.
- Feeling detached or down.
- Irritability or anger, often directed toward clients.
- Teariness.
- Loss of satisfaction or pride in your work.
- Feeling more stressed about money than usual.

Physical Symptoms:

- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep.
- Persistent fatigue.
- Showing signs of stress.
- General exhaustion, even after resting.

Behavioural Symptoms:

- Avoiding clients, work or feeling unable to face commitments.
- Isolating from friends or support networks.
- Becoming uncharacteristically short or harsh with clients.
- Less firm boundaries at work.
- Feeling less motivated to do self-care or prepare for bookings.

Mental Symptoms:

- Persistent rumination or overthinking situations.
- Difficulty making decisions or concentrating (brain fog).
- Looking for someone to blame.
- Self-criticism or doubt, comparing yourself harshly to others.

Contributors to Burnout for Sex Workers

Understanding what contributes to burnout may help you recognise what you're experiencing and find ways to manage it. Everyone's experience is different, and not all of these will apply to you.

Boundary Pushers

- Clients testing or pushing boundaries, ignoring established rules.
- The emotional labour of managing client expectations, entitlement, or difficult interactions.
- Experiencing boundary violations.
- Time wasters.



Physical

- Irregular hours that disrupt sleep, eating habits or overall routine.
- Hormonal changes or fluctuations, including those related to menstruation, menopause, gender transition or medication.
- Fatigue, or physical exhaustion from demanding work including touring.
- Financial pressure leading to feeling that you have to work more or are unable to take breaks.

Sex Work-related Pressures

- High-pressure demands during busy periods, or financial stress during slow periods.
- High emotional output during work.
- Managing complex bookings.
- Administrative work including safety, screening and organising bookings.
- Feeling under-valued, stuck or bored with your work.
- Difficult clients, management or workplaces.

he details including price are all listed in my advertising. Please read before booking with

Lack of Community or Support

- Isolation due to the stigma surrounding sex work or secrecy about our jobs.
- Lacking access to peer support or a trusted network.

Stigma
Racism
Whorephobia
Transphobia
Sexism



Systemic Oppression

- Navigating racism, sexism, transphobia, whorephobia or other forms of stigma and oppression.
- Balancing the emotional toll of living a 'double life' or hiding your work from family or friends.
- Facing stigma from a society that devalues and discriminates against sex workers.
- Financial pressure leading to the feeling that you have to work more.

Preventing and Managing Burnout

Sex workers have shared some strategies with us to prevent and manage burnout. These suggestions are just options to explore, and not everything will suit your situation or be possible for you.

Self-care and Healthy Routines

- Prioritising sleep, balanced meals and gentle body movement like stretching or walking.
- Including stress-reducing activities in your routine, like journaling, yoga or spending time outside.
- Taking short breaks during work hours to recharge, eat or rest.
- Scheduling holidays or time off from work in advance, even if it's just a single day, to rest and reset.
- Engaging in hobbies, music, art or other activities that bring you happiness.
- Setting aside time to care for your mental health in whatever way works for you, whether that's therapy or other formal mental health support, meditation, gratitude, affirmations or just taking a quiet moment for yourself.
- Personal grooming or pampering.



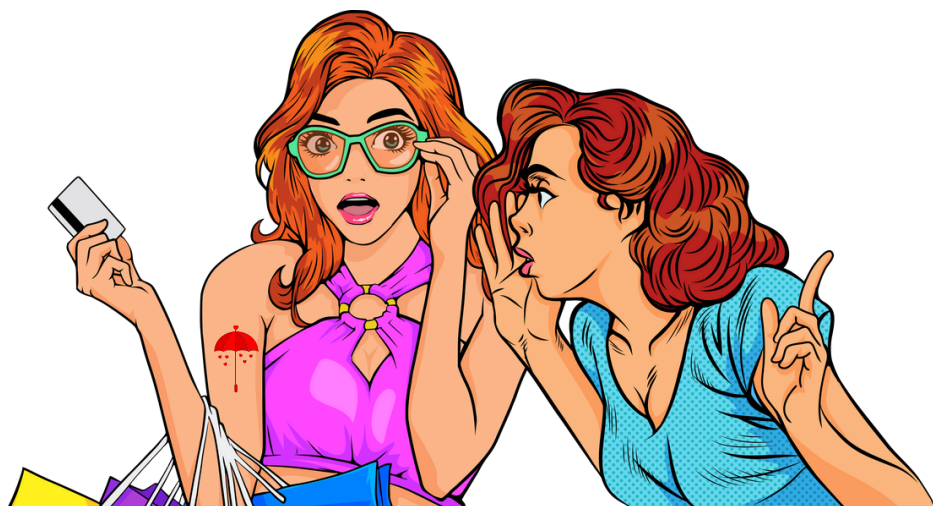
Boundaries

- Defining clear working hours that feel sustainable for you.
- Saying no to work or clients that feel unsafe, uncomfortable or draining.
- Limiting emotional labour by keeping clear boundaries between your work and personal life.
- Screening clients to reduce time wasters. Some sex workers find that taking deposits helps with this.



Becoming Involved in the Sex Worker Community

- Non-sex workers rarely understand our jobs. Our work gives us a lot of unique knowledge that you cannot learn anywhere else. Peers who understand the unique nature of sex work are vital for support, advice and connection.
- Connecting with other sex workers to share experiences, advice, stories or just solidarity.
- Seeking out opportunities for in-person events, online catch-ups or forums with other sex workers.
- Joining peer groups, or becoming a member of your local sex worker organisation.
- Building relationships with people who understand your work.
- Reaching out for help when managing burnout feels overwhelming.



Trying Different Ways to Work

- Trying out different types of work that feel more manageable. This could be a second work persona, online work or just focusing on regulars for a while.
- Experimenting with your marketing to attract different clients.
- Trying out creative projects.
- Considering creating a savings plan to allow for breaks when needed.

Disclaimer: The information provided in this sheet is for general informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice or instruction.

GET IN TOUCH



Respect Inc offices are sex worker only drop-in spaces, designed **by sex workers for sex workers**. You can drop in for:

- One-on-one peer support, information and advocacy.
- To use the phone, internet or printer.
- Social events, networking and making connections with other sex workers.
- Training, skills sharing and workshops.
- Safer sex products at discounted prices, or freebies to get you through.
- Relax and chill out. We have tea, coffee and time for a chat.


Respect Inc spaces are confidential and non-judgmental. There are private spaces available if, for any reason, you would like more privacy while you are here.

Brisbane/Meanjin

 Monday – Thursday: 12–5pm

 Level 1, 76 Wickham St,
Fortitude Valley

 07 3835 1111

 0424 657 064

Cairns/Gimuy

 Tuesday – Thursday: 12–4pm

 7/24 Florence St, Cairns City

 07 4051 5009

 0413 571 394

Gold Coast/Yugambah & Kombumerri Land

 Tuesday – Friday: 12–4pm

 Level 1, 3 Davenport St, Southport

 07 5564 0929

 0401 969 223

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