

Executive Summary:

Parenting stress is normal and expected. However, when chronic stress and exhaustion occur that overwhelm a parent's ability to cope and function, it is called parental *burnout*. Burnout often results from a mismatch between perceived stressors and available resources and results in parents feeling physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted, as well as often detached from their children. Working parents are especially at risk to develop burnout due to the challenge of juggling multiple stressors and demands at work and at home. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated many of these stressors and limited many parental resources, thus contributing to epidemic levels of parental burnout and exhaustion. Working parents with children at home have been especially adversely affected due to the unpredictable nature of school closures, quarantine, home- and virtual-schooling, childcare availability and continued demands to perform at the same expected level in their work environments. This has resulted in many parents feeling in an uncomfortable position of either being forced to leave the workforce or jeopardizing their standing and credibility within their institutions and companies.

***Parents – and especially working parents – are struggling.
The trickle down effect of parental burnout also is adversely
affecting their children.***

This report highlights the results of a study that assessed parental burnout along with other important measures, such as parent depression/anxiety and child behavior problems, conducted with working parents who voluntarily and transparently answered our questions.

Here is what the study uncovered:

- Sixty-six percent (66%) of parents reported being burned out.
- Being female, the number of children living in the home, anxiety in the parent, having child(ren) with the diagnosis of either anxiety or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and parental concern that their child(ren) may have an undiagnosed mental health disorder were strongly associated with parental burnout.
- Burnout was strongly associated with depression, anxiety and increased alcohol consumption in parents, as well as the likelihood for parents to engage in punitive parenting practices.
- Parental burnout is associated with children's internalizing, externalizing and attention behaviors.

There are clear and strong relationships among working parent burnout and potential adverse effects on both parents and children. It is critical to quantify, spotlight and acknowledge the presence of working parent burnout as it often co-occurs with a mental health disorder, such as anxiety or depression.

This report will go more in-depth with the survey's findings. It includes tips, tools and resources that allow working parents to assess their level of burnout, develop a better understanding about how to prevent and deal with their burnout and guide their children through potential issues with anxiety, behavior problems, depression, ADHD and stressful situations. Information is also included about an opportunity to participate in a study that helps children/teens and their parents to learn mental resiliency/stress reduction techniques.

There is cause for optimism and hope: **Recognizing and intervening for parental burnout have been shown to improve both parent and child outcomes.** Most importantly, steps must be taken to prevent it. Bringing increased awareness to the issue of working parent burnout as a major public health issue will help clinicians, parents, communities, institutions and companies recognize the condition and provide preventive and targeted interventions to help parents and children to thrive and reach their optimal state of mental health and well-being.

This is what burnout sounds like from working parents during the pandemic:

“ I am expected to be a superhuman that can be a full-time employee, parent, elementary school teacher, pre-school teacher, cook, cleaner, playmate and emotional support system. But I can't do it any longer. ”

“ I feel like I am running out of gas, but I don't see a gas station in sight to let me relax and fill up my tank again. ”

“ I am just so tired. ”

“ I am alone. ”

“ I don't enjoy being with my kids anymore. I need a break. ”

“ I work 168 hours a week with no time off and no additional pay. ”

“ As a working parent, I feel like this pandemic has broken me. ”

“ Every day is a struggle. ”

“ I wake up in the morning wondering how I am going to get through the day again. ”

“ My work colleagues do not understand that I am having a hard time keeping it all together. I have to make the choice of adhering to a deadline and ignoring my kids or missing the deadline and being a good parent. And I have to make that decision every day now. Either way, I am suffering and my kids are suffering. I can't keep doing this. ”

If you have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things and/or have been feeling down, depressed or hopeless several or more than half the days in the past two weeks, please reach out to your primary care nurse practitioner/physician or employee assistance program at work as you may be suffering from depression. Someone at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (800-273-8255) is always available 24/7 if you ever need to talk with someone when feeling depressed.

Check Yourself for Working Parent Burnout

The 10-item Working Parent Burnout Scale is a tool that can be used to help both parents and clinicians determine whether a parent is experiencing burnout. This scale is free for use and should be employed more readily in the clinical setting as part of routine visits, but especially if a child or parent is being seen for a mental health condition. This scale has demonstrated validity and reliability to detect parental burnout in the working parent population.

Step one: Complete the scale

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Moderately so	Very much so
Item 1: I get/feel easily irritated with my children.					
Item 2: I feel that I am not the good parent that I used to be to my child(ren).					
Item 3: I wake up exhausted at the thought of another day with my children.					
Item 4: I find joy in parenting my children.					
Item 5: I have guilt about being a working parent, which affects how I parent my children.					
Item 6: I feel like I am in survival mode as a parent.					
Item 7: Parenting my children is stressful.					
Item 8: I lose my temper easily with my children.					
Item 9: I feel overwhelmed trying to balance my job and parenting responsibilities.					
Item 10: I am doing a good job being a parent.					

Scale Copyright, Kate Gawlik and Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk, 2021.

Step two: Score each item on the scale

For all questions except questions 4 and 10, use these point values.

Not at all = 0 points

A little = 1 point

Somewhat = 2 points

Moderately so = 3 points

Very much so = 4 points

Questions 4 and 10 use reverse scoring. Use these point values for questions 4 and 10.

Not at all = 4 points

A little = 3 points

Somewhat = 2 points

Moderately so = 1 point

Very much so = 0 points

Step three: Calculate the total score

Add all points together for a final score.

Step four: Interpret the score

0-10 Points: No or few signs of burnout

11-20 Points: Mild burnout

21-30 Points: Moderate burnout

31+ Points: Severe burnout



Kids on Up Psychotherapy

We recognize the impact of stress on caregivers, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. If you can relate to the statements in this article or have scored in the mild, moderate, or severe categories for parental burnout, please do not hesitate to reach out to Kids on Up.

Recognizing and intervening for parental burnout have been shown to improve both parent and child outcomes, and prevention is critical.

View the full article, [Pandemic Parenting: Examining the Epidemic of Working Parental Burnout and Strategies to Help, here](#)