

CHAPTER 7

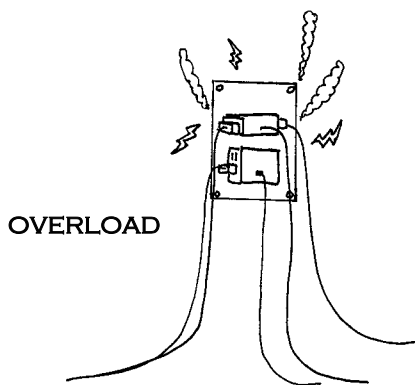
TRAINING FOR BURNOUT

Behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed
Exodus, II, 22.

We begin our careers with energetic optimism. We look up the ladder of success envisioning ourselves at the top. When the boss says jump, we ask, “How high?” Then our perception changes. The more rungs we climb, the ladder seems to get taller. The distance to the top becomes greater. Even the select few who reach the top, look around and say, “Is that all there is?” What do we look forward to on the job? Trudging to work everyday, we complain about the things we never complained about before. We feel unappreciated, overworked, underpaid and bored. We have a severe case of burnout. Therefore we need to rise from the ashes of our discontent to resurrect our initial enthusiasm.

One course of action is to temporarily leave the job and take some time off for a necessary respite. Some lucky people are able to take a long hiatus from work, a sabbatical of six months to a year; then return to their original job without suffering the consequences of absence. For example, every ten years teachers are encouraged to take a sabbatical from the classroom

at half-pay. The result is an enthusiastic return with new ideas to stimulate student learning. After a year’s absence the teacher has missed the classroom interaction, weary of having too much unstructured time; vacation gets boring if it lasts forever. Also, colleagues and students express how much they have missed the individual style and presence of a faculty member. Mutual respect is rekindled as individual talents and contributions are valued once again. The returning employee inhales this new, improved air of appreciation after having felt undervalued.



If you do not have the luxury of a hiatus with some sort of income, consider changing your career in mid-stream. Meditate daily to find guidance.

Creating the time to meditate daily will alleviate some of the stress and anxiety as well as enable you to feel as though you have been “away” on a brief sojourn for the spirit. Think about whether you have compromised your inner longings for the sake of monetary compensation and has this been at the expense of your personal fulfillment? Reinvent yourself. For instance, if you have been working on Wall Street, return to school and become a social worker. If you practiced law, become a landscape gardener and follow the laws of nature. If you worked as a plumber, study music and play in a band. Don’t consider it a pipe dream. In short, start all over again; this time a little older, wiser and more experienced. Transfer your experience from one career to another. Work with a new set of colleagues or become self-employed to realize your untapped potential. Most importantly, do not become stale or bitter. Ignite yourself with new schemes and wild ideas. Don’t limit yourself. If one scheme doesn’t work, go on to the next. Don’t give up. Redesign your ideas; connect with others to advise you or collaborate with you. There is strength in numbers.

If none of the aforementioned suggestions are viable, consider staying on the job, but refreshing your attitude. Continue your education. Visit other experts in the field and observe them. If you teach dance, take a few dance classes with someone else. Observe, study and learn. Then redefine yourself at the work place. Meet with your boss; communicate your ability to take on a leadership role. Do this by coming in prepared to initiate team projects. Have a plan for each new project you brainstormed and how you are prepared to lead it. Your boss will be receptive to your newly found vigor and probably allow you to implement your concept. As problems arise, tackle each one individually. Show leadership qualities by learning to compromise with the team. Appreciate individual contributions by nurturing personal skills. Stimulate the team, but don’t annihilate those who disagree or differ. Instead, tap into the energy of contradiction and combine the different perceptions to create a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Soon you will be heading up new projects, appreciated for successful contributions. You will have a new job without having relocated, making a drastic change in the work perception -- moving on without moving out.

If you experience burnout at the gym, because what happens in the real world manifests in the gym, then you have over-trained and over-exercised to the point of fatigue and depression. You need to pull back and relax. Take some time off. Rest your muscles allowing them to heal and grow stronger during this phase. When you return to the physical world again, change your workout program; cross train more often to avoid burnout. Sometimes it helps to choose a completely different activity or a new sport to create fun. Establish a balance between rest, diet and exercise to keep motivation high.

Use a variety of exercises to free your imprisoned imagination; begin by dusting off your high school yearbook and reading the caption under your picture. Note how young and innocent you looked. Note the lack of character and the smooth unlined forehead indicating there was very little thinking going on. Do you still have the same dreams and goals? I should

hope not. Realize how far you have come and breathe a sigh of relief that you are no longer in high school with adolescent insecurities.

Next try to analyze what exactly you are dissatisfied with at the work place, at home, or at the gym, by making a list. Then write another list of what you wish you could do. Redefine your goals by writing them down. Once you concretely render a thought into words, it assumes a life of its own. It is your Godlike quality to make things happen. You create your reality.

Peer into the mirror. Do you look the part of the new role you are going to play? Get into shape through exercise and diet. Go shopping. Dress for success. When you put on the costume, you internalize the new role you will play.

Announce your plans to all your close friends who will help you accomplish your goals by reminding you of the song in your heart, not letting you back down. They will prod you, and at the same time hold your hand during the initial fearful stages of the unknown. However, once you have begun to activate your plan, you will become immersed in it and there will be no stopping you.

Become a child again in your enthusiasm, but with the wisdom of a schooled, profound adult. Now that's an unbeatable combination!

MIND/BODY PRESCRIPTIONS:

TRANSFORM BURNOUT INTO SPARKS

- ◆ Go wading or swimming in the ocean, the sea of life. This is a symbolic purification of your new self.
- ◆ Rest to establish an active phase of healing. Cut yourself some slack; everyone needs a break.
- ◆ If your motivation is low, check for seasonal triggers like the reduction of light in fall and winter and get into the light.
- ◆ Change your daily routine and break the pattern. Innovation stimulates and energizes both mind and body.
- ◆ Experience your environment with fresh sights, sounds, tastes, smells and textures. For example, see the various shades of green in nature.
- ◆ Learn something new every day.
- ◆ Change the message on your voice mail periodically.
- ◆ Change your interpretation of a situation or your opinion about a person.

MEDITATION:

Sit with palms facing up. Close your eyes and begin your breathing practice. Picture yourself wandering in a rain forest. Raindrops delicately cascade down dark green leaves. Stroll through a natural passageway that the lush foliage has created for you. How do you feel when the trees shake their wet leaves overhead? Continue to stroll slowly as though time is unlimited. Inhale the damp natural fragrances. Exhale your fiery breath. Repeat this breathing process three times. As you inhale, quietly say, "I am refreshed." And as you exhale say, "I release the staleness." You continue to explore your surroundings until you arrive at a pond, a quiet place. Sit and contemplate for a moment. Pick up a small smooth stone and throw it into the pond the way you did as a child. The sound the stone makes in the water is the only sound heard. See the ripples in the water. Notice how the ripples spread out gradually one at a time and then disappear into one larger body of water. Notice the effect you can have on your world when you make one small change. Take a moment to sit at the pond's edge and continue to peer into the water. See your cool reflection. When you are ready, remove your shoes and socks and dip your toes. You no longer feel burned out. Begin to return to your surroundings. Come back to your body and slowly open your eyes; you have a refreshed outlook on life.

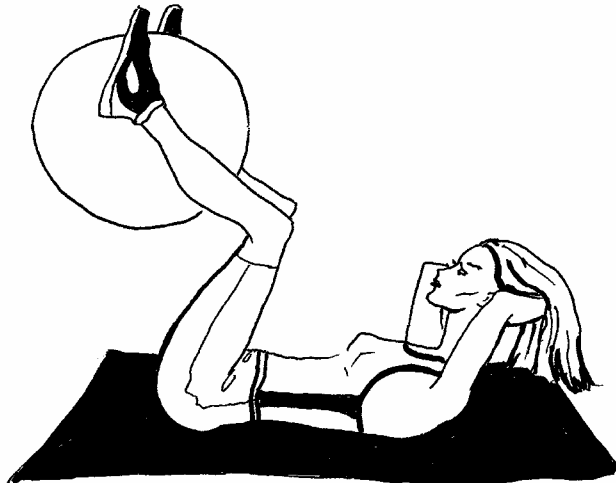
EXERCISES FOR BURNOUT:

OBJECTIVE: HAVE A BALL AND CHANGE IT UP

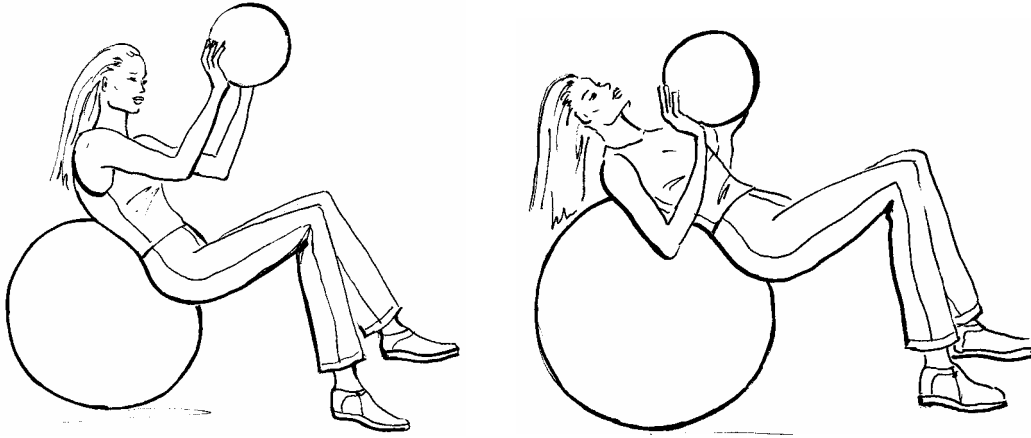
- ◆ *Choose an activity that you enjoy. Go on a hike, play a sport in a league, or take lessons to learn a new sport.*
- ◆ *Take a spinning class in the gym. Although the bicycle is stationary, you perceive that you are on an adventure and your body's pulse and rhythm respond to your changing perceptions.*
- ◆ *Re-examine initial goals to see if they were too broad or unrealistic.*
- ◆ *Re-evaluate the motivating force of your work-out: Lean body? Endurance? Definition?*

MEDICINE BALL

Try playing catch with a friend using a medicine ball. Find a weight that is appropriate for you beginning with 3 lbs, progressing to 12. Push off the chest to work your pectorals and triceps. Throw quickly and catch quickly. Slightly vary your trajectory. This will force you to maintain focus. Begin with 12 repetitions for 3 sets, increasing to 25 for 3 sets.

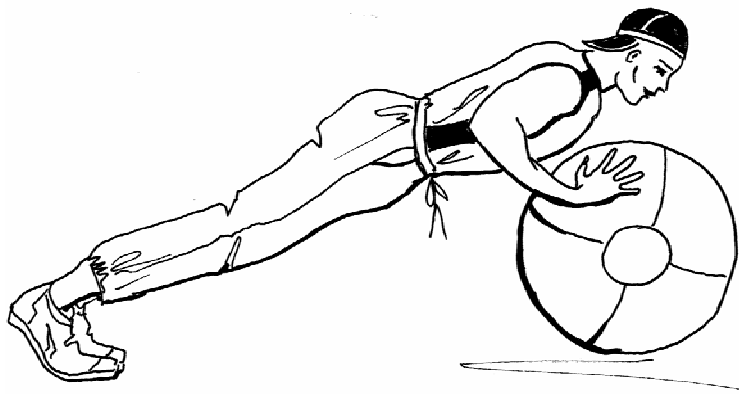
**TARGETS ABDOMINALS**

Lie on your back and place a stability ball between your ankles. First keep your upper body on the ground as you lift your legs with knees bent to a 90 degree angle and lower the ball without touching the floor. Be sure to keep your abdominals in tightly as your lower back is pressed into the floor. Do 3 sets of 8-12 repetitions. In a more advanced move, lightly support your head with your hands and lift off the shoulders. Crunch up as you lift the ball towards you. Then lower the ball towards the floor, as you maintain your upper body position. Repeat for 8-12 repetitions per set, increasing to 3 sets of 25.



TARGETS ABDOMINALS, CHEST, TRICEPS AND BALANCE

Lie down on a stability ball to support your lower and middle back. Your legs are bent in front of you. Holding a medicine ball (begin with a lighter weight of 3 lbs working up to 9 lbs when the exercise gets easier) with shoulders raised off the stability ball, throw the ball to your partner and catch it. Then while holding the medicine ball, stretch back down on the stability ball to stretch out your abdominals and do a sit up off the stability ball. Keep your abdominals in tightly and maintain balance. Aim for 25 repetitions.

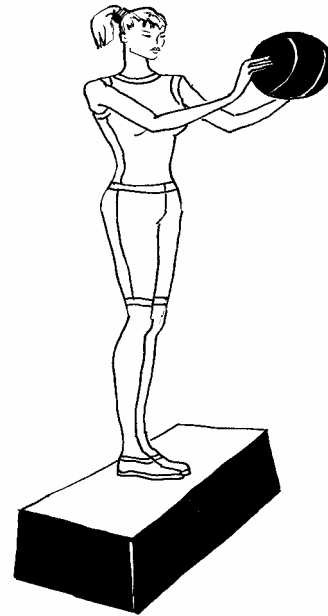
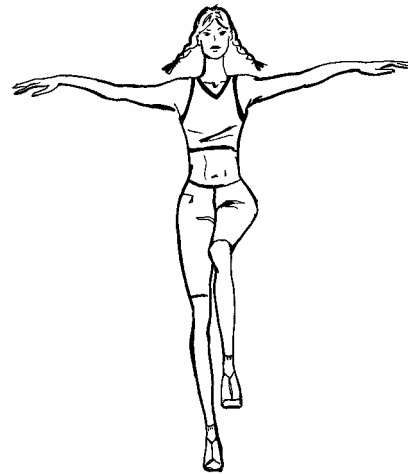
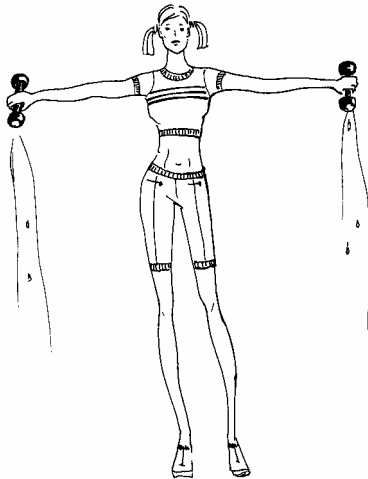


TARGETS CORE, BALANCE, CHEST AND TRICEPS

Maintain a push-up position off a stability ball for five to ten seconds. This is hard to do at first. You need to find your balance as you hold your abdominals in tightly and maintain total concentration. When you have progressed in due time, try to do as many push-ups or modified push-ups as possible.

STEP-UPS WITH A MEDICINE BALL

Step up and down a bench and catch a medicine ball thrown by a partner or trainer (weight of ball appropriate for your level) when standing at the top of the bench. Make sure to stand firmly with your whole foot on top of the bench. Push the ball off your chest as you throw the ball back to your partner. Do this for 8 repetitions for each leg. Then stand on the bench and lift the ball overhead and return to chest position for 8 repetitions. When you progress, combine the two moves: Walk up the bench. Catch the ball when at the top. Raise the ball directly overhead and then bring it down to your chest and throw it to your partner. Step down from the bench. Repeat for 3 sets of 8 repetitions per leg and increase the number of repetitions as you advance.

**SIDE LATERALS + SWAN POSITION****UPLIFTING SIDE LATERALS**

If you are bored doing side laterals, do this exercise while standing in the swan position with your knee up as you hold your abdominals in tightly. Always make sure that the head of the dumbbell points downward with your pinkie pointed up as though you were pouring water. Do a set of 8-10 side laterals (3-5 lb weights) with the right knee up and then switch knees. Aim for 3 sets of 12. Please refer to chapter 1, **Training To Be Conscious** for additional details on side laterals and the swan position.