



The Human Optimization Project

Pod-Club

E11 Burnout Decoded: Strategies for Individuals and Organizations to Understand it, Prevent it, and Overcome It

Discussion Questions for this Episode:

- 1) Dr. West discusses three components of burnout: 1) emotional exhaustion, 2) depersonalization, and 3) a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Define these with your group. Then, discuss which of these three components resonates most with your own experiences or observations in the workplace?
- 2) As discussed in this episode, burnout is a systemic problem, not an individual failing. Is this perspective different or similar to what you knew about burnout before listening? How much responsibility do you place on systemic issues vs. Individual responsibilities?
- 3) Dr. West discusses early warning signs of burnout, such as feeling detached, treating colleagues or clients as objects, or losing sight of the meaning in your work. Have you noticed any of these subtle signs in yourself or others? How might you mitigate them?
- 4) Burnout is not a medical diagnosis but a "normal human response to workplace stress." How might reframing burnout in this way reduce stigma and encourage more open discussion and proactive solutions on your team or in your department?
- 5) Dr. West suggests that burnout, while negative, can lead to growth if processed adaptively, using the phrase "don't let it win twice." Can you recall a challenging work experience that, in retrospect, taught you valuable lessons or led to positive changes?
- 6) The call to action asks listeners to assess six categories (workload, connection, control, rewards, values alignment, respect/fairness) and identify one worsening their stress. Which category would you choose? What is one small, actionable step you could take to positively impact it?
- 7) Dr. West stresses the importance of connection and gratitude as individual solutions. How do you intentionally build community and express genuine appreciation? Share with your pod club and then identify an additional approach to try shared by someone else.