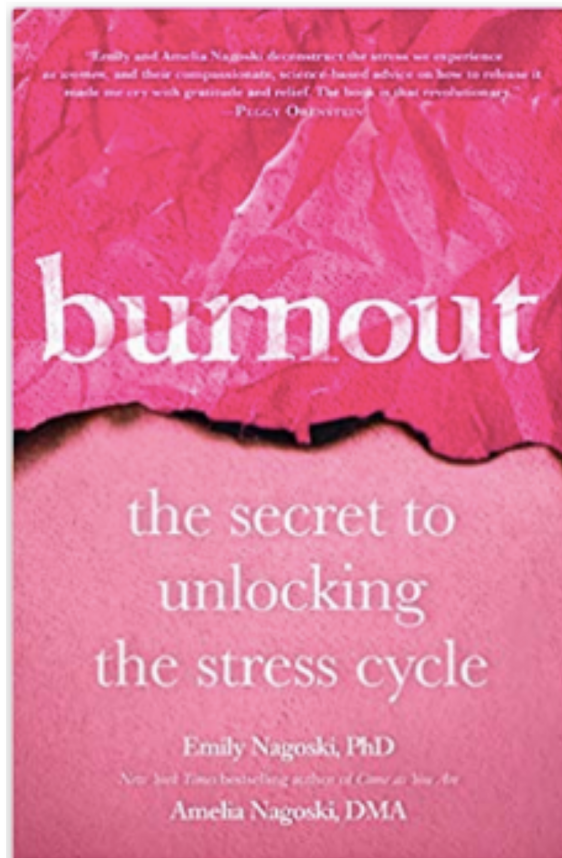




# Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle



By Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA



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## Herbert Freudenberger's Definition of Burnout (1975)

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA



1. **Emotional Exhaustion.** The fatigue that comes from caring too much; for too long.
2. **Depersonalization.** The depletion of energy, caring, and compassion.
3. **Decreased Sense of Accomplishment.** An unconquerable sense of futility; feeling that nothing you do makes any difference.

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## Why We Get Stuck in the Stress Tunnel

By Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA



1. **Chronic Stressor.** We get stuck in the stress response, because we're stuck in a stress-activating situation. That's not always bad--it's only bad when the stress outpaces our capacity to process it.
2. **Social Appearances.** And sometimes the world tells you it's *wrong* to feel that stress. It's not nice; it's weak; it's impolite.
3. **It's Safer.** Sometimes walking away is the win. Smiling and being nice, ignoring it and telling yourself it doesn't matter--these are survival strategies.

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## Human Giver Syndrome

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA



In *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*, philosopher Kate Manne describes a system in which one class of people, the "human givers," are expected to offer their time, attention, affection, and bodies willingly, placidly, to the other class of people, the "human beings." The implication in these terms is that human beings have a moral obligation to *be* or *express* their humanity, while human givers have a moral obligation to *give* their humanity to the human beings. Guess which one women are.

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# How to Complete the Stress Cycle



## Physical Activity

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA

“Physical activity is what tells your brain you have successfully survived the threat and now your body is a safe place to live. Physical activity is the single most effective strategy for completing the stress response cycle.”

And, even if you hate to exercise, the authors have got your back. “...even just standing up from your chair, taking a deep breath, and tensing all your muscles for twenty seconds, then shaking it out with a big exhale, is an excellent start.”



## Breathing

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA

Breathing. meditator to reap the benefits of breathing. Deep breaths, where the exhale is longer than the inhale, help to calm the body when your stress level isn't too high, or if you are trying to get through a stressful situation in the moment and then do something more physical later.

The authors recommend breathing in for the count of 5, holding your breath for 5, breathing out for the count of 10, and holding for the count of 5 again. Repeat two more times.



## Positive Social Interaction

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA



Did you know that people with more acquaintances are happier? Instead of popping in your headphones when you leave your home, try making eye contact and saying hello to neighbors, baristas, etc.

“Reassure your brain that the world is a safe, sane place, and not all people suck.”



## Laughter

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA

- The trick here is deep, uncontrollable laughter where your smile is so big that you can hardly see.
- If those physical belly laughs are not available in the moment, it also helps to call a friend to reminisce about a time when you did experience those belly laughs.
- This type of laughter with friends deepens relational bonds and releases tension.



## Affection

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA

If you are too stressed for humor, the authors recommend a deeper connection with a loved one.

- Try a six-second-kiss (The Gottman Institute) or hugging for 20 seconds. The reason the time recommendations are longer than your average kiss or hug, is because you wouldn't be affectionate with someone for that long unless they were a trusted and loving presence that signals to your body that you are safe.
- Petting an animal is also another way to use affection to move towards calm and safety.



## A Good Cry

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA



- Typically this isn't a favorite, but it works! Crying is a physical release of emotion and stress.
- Even watching a sad TV show or movie provides a cathartic release of emotion.



## Creative Expression

Emily Nagoski, Ph.D. + Amelia Nagoski, DMA



**Engaging in creative activities today leads to more energy, excitement, and enthusiasm tomorrow.**

- The arts encourage the expression of big emotions, allowing people to release their stress.
- Examples include: painting, sculpture, music, theater, and storytelling in all forms.



## Creative Self-Care Practices



Cooking



Baking



Writing



Painting



Scrapbooking



Dancing



Coloring



Gardening



Digital Art



Knitting



Making Music

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