

Why Burnout Hits High Performers and Veterans After Success

(And What to Do About It)

Most people think burnout looks like weakness.

It doesn't.

It looks like strength that never turns off.

It looks like responsibility.

Structure.

Success on the outside... and pressure building underneath.

In a recent episode of *The Enduring Mindset Podcast*, I sat down with Keith Cole, a Vietnam Marine, CPA, and author of *Burnout: God's Recovery Plan*.

What stood out immediately was this:

The hardest battles don't happen during the mission.

They happen after.

In the quiet moments... when everything is supposed to be fine.

Burnout Does Not Start Where You Think

Keith's story didn't begin in business.

It began in Vietnam.

Combat.

Injuries.

Then one of the most difficult roles imaginable—
notifying families their loved one had been killed in action.

But here's the part most people miss:

That wasn't the hardest part.

The real struggle showed up later.

Through:

- Sleepless nights
- Short temper

- Drinking
- Internal pressure that never shut off

Burnout isn't immediate.

It builds.

Why Strong People Do Not Ask for Help

There is a pattern with veterans and high performers:

They carry everything alone.

Not because they have to...
but because they believe they should.

As Keith put it:

“I was a Marine sergeant. Why would I need anyone's help?”

That mindset works in high-stakes environments.

It does not work long-term.

Because eventually, what made you strong... starts working against you.

What Burnout Actually Looks Like

Burnout is not just being tired.

It is:

- Feeling disconnected even when you are successful
- Losing purpose
- Increased reliance on distractions or vices
- Irritability and short patience
- Quiet mental exhaustion

And most importantly:

It is the gap between how you appear... and how you actually feel.

The Breaking Point Most People Hide

For Keith, everything came to a head one night in his office.

Alone. Drinking. Overwhelmed.

And then:

“I can't do this anymore.”

That moment wasn't failure.

It was the start of change.

Because for the first time, he stopped pretending.

The Shift: You Don't Have to Carry It Alone

If there is one takeaway from this conversation, it is this:

Do not go it alone.

Recovery did not start with a perfect system.

It started with a conversation.

First with God.

Then with other people.

As Keith said:

“Talking to someone you trust... that's not weakness. That takes strength.”

That is a mindset shift a lot of people need.

A Simple Framework to Start Moving Forward

One of the most practical tools Keith shared is his “P.R.A.I.S.E.R.” framework:

- **Prayer** – Alignment, not weakness
- **Reading** – Replace negative input
- **Affirmations** – Rewrite internal dialogue
- **Inscribing** – Write down what you are grateful for
- **Seeing** – Visualize a better path forward
- **Exercise** – Move your body to reduce stress
- **Rest** – Recovery is required, not optional

It is simple.

But it works because it restores structure—something many veterans lose after transition.

Why Movement Matters More Than Motivation

One of the most important ideas from this conversation:

You do not need clarity first.

You need movement.

In the military, you were taught:

Initiate movement. Adjust as you go.

Life works the same way.

Sitting still amplifies anxiety.
Movement disrupts it.

Final Thought

Burnout does not mean you are weak.

It usually means:

You have been strong for too long without support.

You do not have to stay there.

You do not have to carry it alone.

And you do not need permission to start moving forward.

 **Listen to the full episode:**

<https://open.spotify.com/show/7fQ5oHIOZe94Jcjj6ytL2h?si=0c4c82fc29c6465f>

If you're a veteran, leader, or someone trying to figure out your next step, I share conversations like this every week through *The Enduring Mindset Podcast*.

Related conversations:

- *You Don't Have to Do This Alone*
- *Stop Waiting for Permission to Become Who You Already Are*
- *You Can Have It All... Just Not All at Once*