

BURNOUT EARLY WARNING SIGNS

A CHECKLIST TO HELP LEADERS NOTICE WHEN A HIGH-PERFORMING TEAM MEMBER MAY BE UNDER SUSTAINED PRESSURE.

LOOK FOR CHANGES FROM THEIR USUAL PATTERNS

High performers may keep delivering long after pressure starts to take a toll. Look for changes over time, not one-off behaviour or a drop in results. Always be curious about how results are achieved.

1

THEY'RE TAKING ON MORE

Keeps volunteering, absorbs colleagues' work, rarely pushes back, or has become the go-to person for every problem.

2

PERFECTIONISM IS RAMPING UP

Spends longer than usual on tasks, struggles to delegate or let work go, rechecks decisions or is unusually self-critical.

3

THEY'RE PUTTING IN EXTRA HOURS

Regularly works late, responds during time off, responds to emails after hours or seems constantly available.

4

THEIR USUAL BEHAVIOUR IS SHIFTING

More irritable, impatient, withdrawn, or unusually emotional. Interactions feel different from their normal style.

5

THE SPARK IS FADING

Less curious, creative, positive, or engaged. Stops contributing ideas or seems to have lost enjoyment.

6

THEY'RE RUNNING ON WILLPOWER

Still delivering, but relies on longer hours to 'stay ahead'. Noticeably increased effort to maintain the standard.



WATCH OUT

Behaviours that should trigger a conversation

Replying to emails or messages at night

Finding it difficult to move on from feedback

Regularly eating lunch at their desk

Making uncharacteristic mistakes more often

Being unusually distressed by small issues

Being the first online and last to log off most days

WHAT TO DO IF YOU NOTICE A PATTERN:

NOTICE	Pay attention to changes in behaviour, not just changes in results. Check in with them: <i>"I notice you've been pushing hard lately, how are you?"</i>
NAME	Start a conversation using specific, non-judgemental observations. <i>"You've done incredible work on X. How are you scheduling time to recharge?"</i>
NUDGE	Coach your top performers to build recovery into their work, and strengthen boundaries. <i>"What would help you reset this week?"</i> or <i>"What needs to be taken off your plate?"</i>

IMPORTANT: A sign isn't a diagnosis. Look for patterns and ask – don't assume. These behaviours can have many explanations. Use this checklist to guide a supportive conversation, not to label someone or diagnose burnout.