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Reclaiming The Fire: How Successful People Overcome Burnout

RECLAIMING
THE FIRE



HOW SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE
OVERCOME BURNOUT

DR. STEVEN BERGLAS



Synopsis

The definitive work on avoiding burnout, written by the psychologist who is the leading specialist on the issue. An illuminating and useful book for anyone coping with the pressures of work. In *Reclaiming the Fire*, Dr. Steven Berglas analyzes the rises and falls of corporate executives, middle managers, lawyers, entrepreneurs, and others as they struggle to handle the trappings of successful careers. How does one deal with encore anxiety, the monotony of having to use talents that are no longer psychologically rewarding? Why is it that our national obsession with wealth traps people in careers that often lead them to wonder, "Is that all there is?" And why do highly successful people often set themselves up for disastrous falls? Dr. Berglas answers all these questions and many more in this groundbreaking book by discussing real people whose careers have left them feeling pressured, burdened, and jaded. In his most progressive and striking contribution to the literature on career success, Dr. Berglas debunks the persistent myth that women suffer more stress and burnout than men. He disproves the common claim that women involved both in careers and in family life suffer from trying to have it all, and he demonstrates how the drive to form close interpersonal ties a drive that is intrinsic to women can actually prevent both men and women from experiencing burnout. In a related analysis of the mentoring process, Dr. Berglas shows why it is more important for careerists to build legacies for future generations (a process he terms generativity) than to become obsessed with their own personal success. He proves that the process not only benefits the student but provides the mentor with psychological satisfaction and even improved physical health. *Reclaiming the Fire* uses the working world not the psychiatric couch as a venue for understanding the psychological and emotional burdens of success. It is the first comprehensive account of how to balance self-esteem and ambition while maintaining challenge and stimulation throughout your career. *Reclaiming the Fire* provides insight into:

- *Why baby boomers are currently suffering an epidemic of career dissatisfaction*
- *Why women are uniquely suited to cope with the pressures that cause men to suffer burnout, and what men can learn from them*
- *How to escape golden handcuffs: the workaholic devotion to a job that is no longer emotionally satisfying*
- *How to cope with anger that threatens to sabotage your career*
- *How all professionals can identify the passions that will allow them to sustain and enjoy success throughout their lives

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Customer Reviews

Berglas is good. His topic hits right at the center of what I'm experiencing. I kept saying "Boy, that's me!" as I read. His case study stories are engaging and pertinent. Once in a while I had to slow wa-a-a-ay down to digest all the psychological principles he drifts into, but patience pays, because those principles, too, are pertinent. I felt that the last chapter of the book ended up being a receptacle for everything else he hadn't mentioned yet, and I had to read the last two chapters twice to see exactly what his proposed solutions were for what he terms "Supernova Burnout". The only reason I didn't give this book a "5" is that while he develops the syndrome's characteristics very well, and shores up his analysis with sound psychological principle, his proposals for dealing with it, and turning it around, lacked clear direction. I would've liked to have seen more.

This book deals with the phenomenon of people who have or have had extraordinary successful careers and nevertheless found themselves to be extremely unhappy - partially up to the point of self-destruction. This also defines the audience for this book: the people described above or those who take a keen interest in such people. The book has been written by an adjunct faculty member at Harvard Medical school. The academic level is - as far as I can judge - impeccable. The author quotes on many occasions from actual patient-cases which are common enough that many a reader

will recognize some of his or her own headaches. One notices that an effort has been made to write a book that is accessible to the general public. However, the book does maintain a certain academic tone that will be off-putting to some people. There are no exercises, questionnaires, or the like that would involve the reader a bit more with the subject matter. Whoever thinks that reading this book and applying a few quick-fix exercises here and mental readjustments there is going to enable them to continue like before, just happier, is extremely mistaken. Dr. Berglas points out that a lot of the misery discussed is a direct result of some deeply engrained characteristics of our culture. For most people, following up on Dr. Berglas' suggestions will imply a drastic (but doable) change in lifestyle. Being somewhat of an academic myself with a keen interest in psychological issues, I found the book extremely valuable. The value to you depends on how you personally feel about the above. However, my advice: if in doubt, buy it!

Reading Dr Berglas is akin to sitting through a great sermon. You intuitively know what your being told, but it somehow clarifies things to hear it from an expert. I found the book to be both readable and rich in content. In my experience most successful people are unable to give themselves the necessary distance to appreciate what is going on in their apparently unhappy lives. As obvious with hindsight as many of Dr Berglas' remedies may seem, I'm certain they will result in life changing epiphanies for many hardcharging but unhappy individuals. We all hear that "it ain't the money" when we talk about happiness-- Dr Berglas lays out why that's so with inescapable logic, science, and humor. Reclaiming the Fire is about more than simply getting business types back to the grindstone. Dr Berglas' solutions are relevant to everyone who's come to realize that there's probably more to life than what they're experiencing. "Who Moved My Cheese" will tell you why its stupid to be unhappy (three word summary: "get over it")- Dr Berglas tells you what the heck you can do about it. Great book-highly recommend it.

When I started reading the first few chapters, it was like the author was speaking directly to me, knowing what goes on inside my head. Actually, he even made me realize some things I never did myself. The only thing that hurt about this book is the author's writing style and his habit of using superfluous words. I mean when you have to run to a dictionary and back ten times in one chapter, it takes your mind off from the topic. The book is good if you want to understand the problem, but there aren't any real remedies inside this book. Until the very end, we were still discussing the problem and not the cure. Even in the last two chapters there are just more details about the problem yet no actual remedies. This is a good book and if you're suffering from a burnout and you

should get this book because it's a good first step!

I read this book looking for some practical advice on breaking through burnout in my development career. This book was OK, but focused FAR too much on very successful people such as CEO's, actors and sports stars. I had a very hard time finding any application to my own professional life.

As a counsellor, I cannot begin to count the number of individuals who come to me suffering from burnout, and the number is on the rise. As this book will point out, there appears to be more baby boomers experiencing burnout than any other group of individuals, but burnout is by no means restricted to baby boomers. Our fast-paced lifestyle, the accumulated demands that are put upon us, some by others and some self-imposed, and the combination of fulfilling demands and responsibilities both in the workplace and at home, can quickly lead to burnout. There are also those who are chronic workaholics, and sooner or later people in that classification will undoubtedly experience burnout. While many of the solutions provided in this book may appear to be common sense, the common sense is obviously not kicking in for many people or burnout would not be the tremendous problem it is today. Long-term effects can include physical and emotional health problems, addictions, and personal relationship problems, including divorce. The longer the effects of burnout go untreated, the more devastating the outcome can be. Dr. Steven Berglas is a well-recognized clinical psychologist and has authored an extremely well-written book. Many individuals may be suffering from burnout and not readily recognize the problem; self-diagnosis can be difficult. Through the pages of this book, readers will learn more about burnout and perhaps recognize some of the symptoms within themselves. This is a highly recommended book by an author who is well-qualified in his field.

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