



Episode 127: After Burnout: Going Back to Work

with Dr Katya Miles

We often discuss the importance of taking a break, especially for high-stress professionals. However, we don't always think about and plan for what happens after a prolonged break: your return to work. Returning to work can be a significant change — almost as much as going to a new work environment — especially if you have spent a lot of time away. And just like most changes, it can be a challenging hurdle.

Dr Katya Miles has also experienced her share of changes brought by coming back to work after taking a break for burnout. Like her, you might feel both negative and positive emotions. Your workplace may have changed during your break, and you might find that you have changed too.

If you're about to face the challenge of returning to work, it can benefit you to plan how you'll approach your return. Listen to the episode and use this workbook to help you understand how you can navigate through the process of going back to work after burnout.

Podcast links

Find out more about the [Shapes Toolkit](#)

Join the [Resilient Team Academy](#)

[Email Rachel](#) or reach her on [LinkedIn](#) or [Twitter](#)

Remember to tune in to [Episode 128](#), next on the series of After Burnout.

[Yerkes-Dodson Stress Response Curve](#)

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Find support going back to work with the [SuppoRTT Programme](#)

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Guest links

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Join Katya's Newsletter - [Thrive Well News](#) - a really useful email packed with tips for work, wellbeing and fun!

Register for the [Burnout Remedy Course](#) - 3-week online course to help if you are feeling overwhelmed or one crisis away from your tipping point.



Workbook, CPD & Reflection Log

Quote to remember:

‘Coming back to work and finding things a little bit difficult initially doesn’t mean you’re right back into burnout. It just means that change is difficult for all of us, and we need to give ourselves time, learn and adapt.’

What You Will Learn

Coming back to work after a long break might feel like arriving in a new place altogether. In your absence, life continued in your workplace. You might return to find guidelines, events and colleagues unfamiliar to you. You might also be a different person than who you were before your break. How can you reintegrate your new self into your changing workplace?

The activity below can help you go through the process of reintegrating yourself back into work. Planning for the anticipated changes can prepare you and ease your way back in. While you may feel lost or outside your comfort zone, you are still in control. As Katya said, being proactive in your planning, time management and choices can help you make and embrace these changes in your life.

You will remember that you are not alone either. Your colleagues and even new friends and support groups you find are there to help you. Don't be afraid to reach out to them to understand the changes at work better. Likewise, don't hesitate to bring your newly honed or acquires skills into your workplace and use them to elevate your performance.

Lastly, you'll remember to be kind and care for yourself. You are still skilled, even after a long break. It's understandable that you may feel rusty, lacking or like you have nothing to offer your colleagues — but that's simply not the case. With help from others and planning, you can take time to learn and adapt to your work.



Activity: The Back to Work Plan

Finding yourself back at work after a long break might make you feel different. Observe how you feel and be aware of your emotions during this change.

✓	Symptoms
	Imposter Syndrome/Feeling like a fraud
	Decreased confidence
	Different stamina level
	Different tools for sustaining yourself
	Stigmas you may feel/observe

Don't be afraid to let others know what you need and accept their help. Reflect on these questions:

Why did you take time away from work?

How do you feel now that you've returned? What are your expectations and fears?

What adjustments in your workplace can help you meet your needs?



Workbook, CPD & Reflection Log

Based on your answers, you can express and talk about what you are comfortable sharing with people who can help you at work. Write down what you would say, including your situation, feelings and needs.

If you have a colleague coming back from a work break, try to practice respect and kindness as well. How can you welcome them back to the team?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

You can have a lot of catching up to do. Ask a coworker or manager for an updated list of guidelines, courses and activities you can brush up on. List them below:

Guideline	Courses	Activities/Events





Catch up with your team as well. Take time to drop by and ask how the team has been doing.

Colleague	What's going on for them at work?

You can also bring what you've learned during the changes in your life to work. What skills did you learn during your break? How can you apply these skills in your work?

Skills you've learned	How you can use them at work

You may also find that you're not alone. Many others have experienced returning to work due to various reasons. Reach out to them and find groups who can support and relate to your situation.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Workbook, CPD & Reflection Log

Once you've transitioned back into work, it's essential to continue being happy and healthy there. The transition back is just a phase — plan check-ins on how you're adjusting with a colleague or an occupational health provider.

Check-In 1	Check-In 2	Check-In 3	Check-In 4
(date)	(date)	(date)	(date)

Learn from your experiences. Ask yourself: What were the reasons and warning signs that built up, causing you to need a break?

Reasons/causes:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Your Warning Signs:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Acknowledge that you're going through a significant change. Give yourself time to learn and adapt to being back at work. What can you do differently to avoid the same result of burnout or stress?



Finally, it's okay to care for yourself even as you care for your patients. Don't forget to attend to your health too. Have you discovered any limits about yourself? What boundaries can you set to stop yourself from crossing these limits?

Limits	Boundaries

Schedule wisely. Give yourself buffer time before reaching the limit. Fill out your schedule for the next week, but include a space just in case your tasks start overlapping.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun

Don't forget Katya's top three tips for you as someone returning to work. Plan ahead, communicate and remember to be kind to yourself.

CPD time claimed:

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