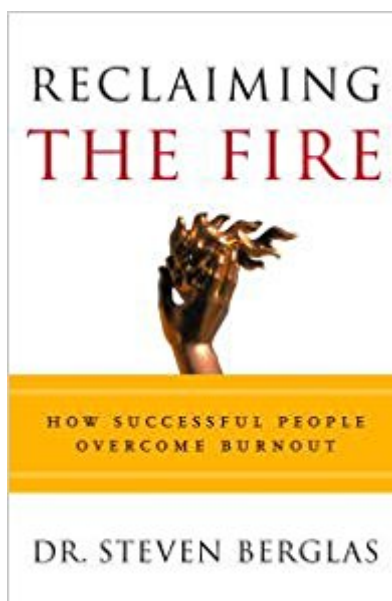


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Reclaiming The Fire: How Successful People Overcome Burnout



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

Book Information

File Size: 696 KB

Print Length: 256 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0679463216

Publisher: Random House; 1 edition (July 3, 2001)

Publication Date: July 3, 2001

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B000FC1K70

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #632,685 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #38

inÂ Books > Business & Money > Business Culture > Health & Stress #503 inÂ Kindle Store >

Kindle eBooks > Business & Money > Organizational Behavior > Workplace #842 inÂ Kindle Store

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Customer Reviews

“Burnout” and “successful people” are not two words I had previously thought belonged in reference to the same people at the same point in time. When I first read the title of the book it really resonated with me and I was further convinced to read the book as I had heard great things about Dr. Berglas from the management teams of my companies who worked with him as their executive coach. I found the book to be intelligent, well-researched and innovative. The early chapters did a tremendous job outlining the root causes behind why otherwise successful people experienced mid-career burnout. And the latter chapters gave a very helpful framework to apply to one’s own personal situation to rejuvenate oneself and one’s career. I have implemented a lot of what I read in my own life and continue to refer Dr. Berglas to management teams where CEOs or other critical members suffer from similar dynamics. This is a must-read book “an outstanding return on the time invested.”

I’m leaving Harvard with my second masters degree and I’m still searching for a purpose in life. A friend suggested I read Berglas’ book, and while it did not give me a formula for finding my “true calling,” it was probably the only psychological tome I would call “gripping.” I’m certain that I’ll mull it over a while and be materially benefited for having absorbed all of what Berglas has to say. GREAT

WORK!

Great for identifying causes of the problem and a description as to what the ultimate solution looks like. However, the book does very little in helping the reader identify those elements that would allow him or her to participate in the solution. A follow-up book would be great.

This book was written before the 2007 financial meltdown and recession. Things are very different now, and I found many of the observations and advice to be of limited applicability or usefulness today.

I'm very glad that I bought this book because it has been very helpful to me and I look back at my copy often. I have not solved all of my particular burnout problems yet (no fault of the book's) but it helped me to identify my misery and malaise, how I got so deep into it (trying to please, trying to prove to my parents and myself that I'm worthy of living) and identifying the problems alone helped a great deal. Don't be put off by any claims that an academic or scientific tone is present or that any part of the book is difficult - this is a very helpful resource. You know you need this book when your most common feeling at work has become 1) wanting to throw everything out of a window, 2) wanting to throw a file at a coworker's head, or 3) answering all questions, comments or greetings with "F^%\$ you" or "drop dead." Or when you start praying to be fired to just get the hell over with. When one or more of these is present, look to the burnout book for help....

I expected academic loftiness from an author of this background, but the book was painful to read at times. Examples were stretched out, sometimes too far, as if struggling to turn experiences into a marketable-length book. Solutions were few and far between, choosing rather to remain in the clouds of theory and to focus on the author's success as a psychologist rather than the journey of those counseled. There was a common theme or attitude of how the author "saved" many of these individuals through the counseling provided. As another commented, the author's clients were mostly famous, situated at the CEO level, or had other other prestige afforded, so it was difficult to relate their situations to average Joes. There were good nuggets of information throughout (hence two stars versus one), but they can be difficult to find, especially in light of the gender stereotypes assumed. Given many of the clients, examples are mostly men. Those with women are focused on him having met their emotional needs or addressed personal life more than discussing work implications as with the male examples. Language is often stereotyped so if you aren't the "typical"

man or woman, you may be quite put off by this book. One vague chapter is even titled, "if at first you do succeed, try thinking like a woman." Another descriptive word choice would have been more appropriate here, especially since it still didn't clearly convey what the author wanted us to remember from this chapter. Far more engaging (i.e. not wordy and dry) choices on this topic. Couldn't bring myself to finish in entirety, so skimmed the last few chapters.

Short answer: Successful people overcome burnout by hiring Dr. Berglas. The author talks about several of his patients and how they did (or did not) overcome their problems. This is quite insightful, but the main message of this book seems to be a warning to people who believe that once they have achieved success everything will fall into place. According to Dr. Berglas, more often than not the opposite is true. After reading other reviews here, I expected more of an academic treatment of the topic, but it's far from that. For example, there is less than one references per page on average, and most of these aren't even to peer-reviewed papers and studies. And between the quotes from the ancient Greeks and Shakespeare, the tone tends to get a bit preachy.

Until reading this book, I never realized the limiting effects of success. If you're feeling entrapped or alone by your success, Reclaiming the Fire can help you find the spark that brings you back to life. Dr. Berglas' writing style pulls you in, makes you reflect, brings out buried emotions and will challenge your beliefs with real life examples backed by clinical evidence. Whether you're at your pinnacle or pursuing it, this book is a must read for learning how to truly handle success.

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