

# Creative burnout

 By [Jessica Coombs](#)

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There's something to be said about sitting with my laptop open, staring blankly at this page, attempting to summon words from the dark corners of my mind. I've committed to writing a piece on creative burnout. Easy, right?



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Not so much.

Not when you are in fact in the midst of creative burnout.

It's not so easy to string together a thoughtful and insightful sentence when your brain is tired and your creative well is looking rather parched.

I've been told that it is 'that time of year' and that it's just 'one last push'. Which are great motivators and sentiments to trope out in an industry where you're not relied on for creative thinking. Burnout in a creative industry is a threat to your livelihood. The Mayo Clinic describes burnout as "a special type of job stress — a state of physical, emotional or mental exhaustion combined with doubts about your competence and the value of your work."

All of this makes burnout is a bad enough bogey man to deal with. Creative burnout is its ugly, bigger cousin lurking in doorways and bumming cigarettes off pretty thoughts while accosting creative things.

## All that is required is rest

Coping with burnout is easy enough. All that is required is rest. **Rest.** And more rest. As your body starts to relax, those cortisol levels plummet, and the adrenaline that you've been fuelled by for the last couple of months peters out to be replaced by healthier day to day things like breathing normally and eating lunch (not in front of your laptop). Your mind relaxes. You no longer have to fight the urge to smother your partner in their sleep because their breathing annoys you.



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Creative burnout is a little trickier. This rather insidious monster digs its tentacles in deep. Rest alone won't evict it. Healthy eating and exercise simply won't cut it. To rid yourself of this beast you need to replenish that creative well. You need to nurture and re-ignite that creative spark. Reading, painting, drawing; all help top that well up. Finding the time and space to let your imagination loose to roam free unhindered by deadlines, CI's, and messaging hierarchies is like the first big thunder storm after a long drought. Slowly those pretty thoughts and creative ideas return as your creative well fills up. Until one day, you sit down in front of your laptop with words spouting and flowing from you, filling up the page.

Productivity will return, bringing with it your ability to focus, making meeting those deadlines a breeze. With business boosting side effects like this you'd think that more companies would pay closer attention to employee wellbeing, right? A [recent survey](#) of 614 HR Chiefs in the USA showed that up to 50% of staff turnover is due to burnout. What can companies do to help their employees slay their burnout beasties?

## Boils down to your company's culture

Open door policies are a great start, as they allow your employees to approach you should they need help with anything, including burnout. This way, you're able to fix a problem before it snowballs into a Franken-monster. Another way to avoid burnout is letting your employees feel like they have a say in the decision process. Adam Cronenberg from Alpha1 Garage Service gives more details on how his company helps their employees banish the burnout beastie [here](#).

Dealing with burnout in all of its ugly forms is ultimately down to your company's culture. Too many companies tend to view their employees as faceless replaceable resources that can be swapped out when needed. They breed it. To combat this scourge, you need to nurture your employees. Give them the resources they need to get their job done. Give them feedback on their work. Let them have a say in their career path and growth.

For me, it took a little longer to get rid of that monster than I'd care to admit. After months of attempting to write this piece, and being unhappy with the words vomited up by my tired mind, I've sat down and realised that the creative burnout I've been plagued with has packed its bags and left. Hopefully, it'll be a long while before that beastie decides to visit again.

## ABOUT JESSICA COOMBS

Jessica is a social media manager at Native VML and a self-confessed social media junkie, fascinated by the way social is changing human behaviour.  
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