
The Burnout Exit Interview

A guided journal for professionals ready to walk away

NOT A MANIFESTO. A MIRROR.

*"I'm not a therapist or career coach.
This is a framework based on my experience navigating burnout.
If you're in crisis, please reach out to a professional."*

WELCOME

How to Use This Journal

This is not a "quit your job tomorrow" manifesto. It's a structured self-interview designed to help you see clearly, decide honestly, and plan an exit that doesn't burn bridges — or yourself out.

There are four sections. Work through them in order. Skip nothing. Take breaks between sections — some of these questions will hit hard.

Section 1: The Evidence

Facts. Data. The case for leaving. (5 pages)

Section 2: The Truth

Hard questions. Honest answers. What you've been avoiding. (6 pages)

Section 3: The Plan

Financial check, exit timeline, network, the letter. (7 pages)

Section 4: The After

What happens when you walk out the door. (4 pages)

Your name	Your name
Date started	Today's date
Current role	Job title

This journal is for personal reflection. It is not medical or legal advice. Burnout is a serious condition — if you're struggling, please consult a healthcare professional.

SECTION 1

The Evidence

Before you decide what to do, prove to yourself why you're here.

The Sunday Dread Index

Rate your last four Sundays on a scale of 1 to 10:

1 = "Fine, normal weekend" • 10 = "I'd rather be hit by a bus than go to work tomorrow"

SUNDAY 1

(most recent)

1-10

SUNDAY 2

(two weeks ago)

1-10

SUNDAY 3

(three weeks ago)

1-10

SUNDAY 4

(four weeks ago)

1-10

What did you feel on those Sundays? Describe the physical and emotional state.

Write honestly. No one reads this but you.

Average dread score:

Average _____

If it's above 7, you already know what you need to do.

Symptoms Checklist

Check every symptom you've experienced **regularly** in the past 3 months.

PHYSICAL

- ☐ Chronic fatigue / low energy
- ☐ Insomnia or disturbed sleep
- ☐ Headaches / migraines
- ☐ Digestive issues
- ☐ Muscle tension / pain
- ☐ Frequent illness
- ☐ Change in appetite
- ☐ Chest tightness / shortness of breath
- ☐ Skin issues (rashes, breakouts)
- ☐ Teeth grinding / jaw clenching

BEHAVIORAL

- ☐ Procrastinating on tasks you used to do easily
- ☐ Withdrawing from colleagues
- ☐ Missing deadlines or meetings
- ☐ Increased alcohol / caffeine / comfort eating
- ☐ Zoning out during conversations
- ☐ Reduced performance / output
- ☐ Checking out early (leaving, logging off)
- ☐ Avoiding phone calls and messages

EMOTIONAL

- ☐ Cynicism / negativity
- ☐ Feeling detached or numb
- ☐ Irritability / short temper
- ☐ Anxiety (general or work-specific)
- ☐ Feelings of dread
- ☐ Loss of motivation
- ☐ Sadness / depression
- ☐ Feeling trapped
- ☐ Low self-worth / imposter syndrome
- ☐ Sense of failure

COGNITIVE

- ☐ Brain fog / difficulty concentrating
- ☐ Forgetfulness
- ☐ Difficulty making decisions
- ☐ Rumination (replaying events)
- ☐ Negative self-talk
- ☐ Reduced creativity
- ☐ Paranoia about job security

The Cost of Staying

What is this job actually costing you? Be specific. This is the price of staying.

HEALTH

Physical and mental toll

SELF-WORTH & IDENTITY

Confidence, pride, sense of self

RELATIONSHIPS

Partner, kids, friends, family

TIME & FREEDOM

What you're missing out on

CREATIVITY & PASSION

Ideas, curiosity, joy

FINANCIAL COST

Medical bills, lost earning potential, missed opportunities

If nothing changes, where will you be in one year?

Honest projection — be specific

The "If I Won the Lottery" Test

Remove money from the equation. If you had enough to live comfortably forever, answer honestly:

Would you stay?	Yes / No / Maybe — and why?
What would you do instead?	The honest answer
What would you miss?	Anything from this job?

Burnout Timeline

Map the arc of your burnout. When did things start shifting?

Started this role	Date
First felt off	Rough date
When it got worse	Rough date
Started thinking about leaving	Rough date
Where you are now	Today

Key events, changes, moments that mattered between those points.

SECTION 2

The Truth

The hardest conversations are the ones you have with yourself.

The Exit Interview You'll Never Give

This is what you'd say to HR if you were fully honest. Write it for yourself — not for them. Don't soften it.

Why are you really leaving? The unfiltered reason

What made you stay longer than you should have?

Fear, money, guilt, obligation, hope things would change

If you could say one thing to leadership without consequences, what would it be?

The truth they never hear

How do you want them to remember you?

Your legacy

The Fear Inventory

Name every fear you have about leaving. Then rate how realistic each one is.

MY FEAR	LIKELIHOOD (1-10)	IMPACT (1-10)	CAN I HANDLE IT?
Fear 1	1-10	1-10	Yes/No/How?
Fear 2	1-10	1-10	Yes/No/How?
Fear 3	1-10	1-10	Yes/No/How?
Fear 4	1-10	1-10	Yes/No/How?
Fear 5	1-10	1-10	Yes/No/How?
Fear 6	1-10	1-10	Yes/No/How?

What's the one fear that's holding you back the most?

Name it. Look at it. Is it as scary as you think?

The Regret Audit

"What will I regret more in 5 years: leaving or staying?"

If I STAY, in 5 years I'll regret...

Write what your future self would say

If I LEAVE, in 5 years I'll regret...

Write what your future self would say

Which set of regrets is heavier?

The honest answer

Energy Audit

What drains you vs. what fuels you at this job?

DRAINS ME

Specific tasks, people, situations

FUELS ME

Moments that give you energy

Is the drain worth the fuel?

Yes / No — and why

The "What Actually Lights Me Up" Discovery

Reconnect with what you love. Answer these 10 prompts — don't overthink them.

1.	What did you love doing as a kid?	The first thing that comes to mind
2.	What could you do for hours without getting bored?	Flow state activity
3.	When did you last lose track of time? What were you doing?	That moment
4.	What do people thank you for?	What you're known for
5.	If your best friend described your superpower, what would they say?	Your superpower
6.	What's something you're curious about but haven't explored?	Curiosity
7.	What kind of problems do you enjoy solving?	Your kind of problem
8.	Where do you feel most like yourself?	Place / context
9.	What did you used to do for fun that you've stopped?	Long-lost joy
10.	If you could build a life around one activity, what would it be?	Your ideal life

The Identity Question

"If I'm not my job title, who am I?"

This is the hardest question in this journal. Don't skip it.

When someone asks "what do you do," and you can't say your job title — what do you say?

Not your resume. Your essence.

What parts of your identity are actually yours, and what parts belong to your employer?

Separate them.

What would you want your answer to be one year from now?

Who you're becoming

SECTION 3

The Plan

Clear eyes, full pockets (or a plan for them), can't lose.

Financial Reality Check

You don't need a trust fund to quit. You need a number. Let's find yours.

MONTHLY EXPENSES

Housing	\$
Food	\$
Transport	\$
Insurance	\$
Healthcare	\$
Debt payments	\$
Other	\$

YOUR RUNWAY

Savings	\$
Partner income	\$/mo
Passive income	\$/mo
Side hustle	\$/mo
Monthly burn rate: \$	
Runway:	months months

HEALTH INSURANCE GAP?

COBRA / ACA / spouse plan / none

The Exit Timeline

A 30/60/90 day plan for winding down — not up.

Days 1-30: Preparation

Secure your finances, update documents, gather records. No one needs to know yet.

What needs to be in place before you tell anyone?

Days 31-60: Transition

Notify your manager, transition work, set your end date. Graceful exit, not a fire drill.

How will you handle the conversation? What needs to be handed off?

Days 61-90: The Landing

Final weeks. Knowledge transfer. Goodbyes. Last day. The door closes.

What does a good last day look like?

Target exit date

Date: Target date

Notice: 2 weeks / 4 weeks / negotiated

Bridge Income Ideas

Low-effort income options to keep cash flowing while you figure out next steps.

1.

Idea — how much? how soon?

2.

Idea — how much? how soon?

3.

Idea — how much? how soon?

4.

Idea — how much? how soon?

5.

Idea — how much? how soon?

Freelancing, consulting, part-time work, digital products, gig economy — anything counts.

Network Activation

Who to tell, what to ask, how to tap your network before you leave.

WHO	WHAT I'LL ASK	WHEN
Name	What you'll ask for	Date
Name	What you'll ask for	Date
Name	What you'll ask for	Date
Name	What you'll ask for	Date
Name	What you'll ask for	Date

The Non-Negotiables List

For whatever comes next — what you will and won't accept.

I WILL NOT...

Things you refuse to compromise on again. Long hours?
Bad culture? No growth? No respect? Write them down.

I WILL ONLY...

Standards for your next chapter. What must be true for you
to say yes?

Read this list before every interview or opportunity. Don't negotiate against yourself.

Resume Refresh Guide

Framing your departure story for whatever comes next.

Your departure story (1 sentence)	"I left to pursue..." or "The role was eliminated, and I used it as an opportunity to..."
Key achievement 1	What you're proudest of
Key achievement 2	Another win
Key achievement 3	Another win

Skills gained at this role (both technical and human)

The Letter Draft

A resignation letter template with quiet luxury grace. Professional, clear, no bridge-burning.

Dear Manager's name,

Please accept this letter as formal notification that I am resigning from my position as Your role, effective Date.

Brief, gracious, professional. This is going in your file — write accordingly.

Thank you for the opportunity to What you genuinely appreciated.

I wish you and the team continued success.

Sincerely,
Your name

The After

The door closes. Then what?

The First 30 Days Plan

What NOT to do during the first month after leaving.

DON'T DO THESE

- ☐ Take the first job offer that comes along (panic applies)
- ☐ Tell everyone you quit (not everyone needs your story)
- ☐ Fill every hour with productivity (you need rest more than hustle)
- ☐ Check LinkedIn or work email (burn the bridge behind you)
- ☐ Second-guess yourself (you did the work in this journal — trust it)

DO THESE INSTEAD

- ☐ Rest without guilt for at least one full week
- ☐ Reconnect with one hobby you abandoned
- ☐ Have honest conversations with your partner / close friends
- ☐ Make a list of what brought you joy before this job
- ☐ Set a low-bar daily routine (wake up, move, eat well, sleep)
- ☐ Revisit this journal — especially your Non-Negotiables list

Guilt & Identity Journaling

For when the "what have I done" feeling hits. It will. That's normal.

Prompt 1: What am I actually afraid of right now? (Name the feeling, not the story.)

The raw emotion

Prompt 2: What would I tell a close friend who made the same decision?

Show yourself the same compassion

Prompt 3: What have I gained since leaving, that I didn't have before?

Time, peace, sleep, dignity — list them

Prompt 4: Who am I becoming now that I'm not that job title?

This is a new chapter. Who's the main character?

Prompt 5: What small thing can I do today that would make my future self proud?

One small step

Success Metrics Redefined

Measure life by fulfillment, not salary. What does success actually look like now?

OLD METRICS
(THINGS YOU USED TO MEASURE)

Salary, title, years of experience, number of direct reports, performance rating...

NEW METRICS
(THINGS THAT ACTUALLY MATTER)

Energy levels, time with loved ones, creative output, peace of mind, curiosity...

What does a "good week" look like in this new chapter?

Describe it in detail without referencing work

I Did It.

This wasn't easy. But you did the work.

I walked away on Date

From Your former role / company

I chose What you chose instead

Your signature



"The exit was not an ending. It was the start of something real."

Notes & Reflections

Use this space for anything that didn't fit on the other pages. Thoughts that came up between sections. Insights you don't want to lose.

Free writing space



You did the hard part.
Now live it.

✦ G4 Approved ✦

This journal is a personal reflection tool. It is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, a mental health crisis, or need immediate support, please contact a crisis helpline in your country or go to your nearest emergency room.

