



Ten Commandments for
AVOIDING COUPLE BURNOUT
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I. Couple burnout is caused by too great a discrepancy between unrealistic expectations and the vicissitudes of life. Understanding this discrepancy will enable you to move from blaming your partner to trying to change the situation that has caused your burnout.

II. The burnout of love is a gradual process. It is rarely sudden in onset. Instead, there is a slow fading of intimacy and love. It is important to identify the onset of burnout before it gets to the breaking point, when one or both partners say: "I can't take it anymore!"

III. Couple burnout is characterized by physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion. It is important to identify these symptoms as couple burnout and treat them accordingly.

IV. Romantic love is not an eternal flame. If fuel is not added to it, sooner or later the flame is going to burn out. When the spark has gone out completely, at times it is a signal to leave a long-dead relationship. But when there is even a small ember burning, it can be rekindled. It is important to remember that burnout can be a positive trigger for change.

V. Couple burnout is not inevitable. Some couples have a romantic, supportive, and exciting relationship even after many years together. These couples' relationships have "roots" (you can be completely yourself knowing that you are accepted and loved) and "wings" (you can reach your full potential with your partners' support).

VI. Couples with "roots" and "wings" tend to perceive the relationship positively, as a whole, (rather than focusing on a particular annoyance or trait). When something upsetting happens, remind yourself of all the positive things in the relationship that you love and in the partner who you love.

VII. Happy couples talk all the time about absolutely everything. Invest in both the quality and quantity of communication with your partner.

VIII. Growth and variety are the antithesis of burnout. As long as couples keep growing they will not burn out. Variety involves deliberately breaking out from accustomed patterns and behaviors, and can be accomplished in all spheres of a couple's life.

IX. If you want your partner to be loving, sexy, and exciting, treat your partner as loving, sexy, and exciting. Being treated that way will help bring out and strengthen those traits and behaviors in your partner.

X. The wisdom of our unconscious directs us to fall in love with the most appropriate person to work through our unresolved childhood issues. Therefore, the things that attracted us most when we fell in love inevitably become the things most likely to cause our burnout. When something your partner does infuriates you, remember that it is the flip side of this quality that made you fall in love.

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Professor Ayala Malach-Pines is a clinical, social, and organizational psychologist and the Dean of the Faculty of Management at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Prof. Pines is one of the pioneers in the study of burnout and has published extensively on the subject. Her *Burnout Measure* has been used by researchers all over the world. Prof. Pines published ten books, thirty book chapters and more than one hundred research articles. Among her books: *Career Burnout: Causes and Cure* coauthored with Elliot Aronson; *Couple Burnout: Causes and Cures*, *Experiencing Social Psychology* coauthored with Christina Maslach, and more recently: *Career Choice in Management and Entrepreneurship* and *Handbook of Research on High-Technology Entrepreneurs* co-edited with Mustafa Özbilgin of the UK. Prof. Pines' books are translated into many languages including French, German, Spanish, Greek, Polish, Turkish, Chinese, Korean and Japanese.

Prof. Pines supervises ten PhD students and her research includes such topics as: job burnout and couple burnout in dual-earner families; stress and burnout in multinational virtual teams; psychological and cultural aspects of entrepreneurship; and psychological determinants of career choice in management and entrepreneurship. In 2008 Prof. Pines was awarded the President's Award for Excellence in Scientific Research.