





If you get exhausted caring, you are not broken.

There is a kind of tiredness that sleep does not fix. It is the one that appears when you hold others —at work, at home, in your community— and the equation breaks: you give more containment, more listening, more problem-solving than comes back. You reach the end of the week and the body feels empty even though you have not moved boxes. You reply with three words to what used to get ten. Simple things start costing you. The people around you do not notice anything

wrong — outside you keep functioning — but inside the muscle that feels is exhausted. If this is you, you are not weak, you do not lack vocation, and you are not "not cut out" for what you do. It is an equation that broke. This space is for seeing it, reordering it, and starting to recover what you give — without waiting for vacation.

 [Want to see your equation? Take the 3-minute test](#)

 [Want to start today? Map your demands and resources](#)

It is not that you are weak or that you "lack vocation"

Emotional exhaustion is not laziness or lack of character. Demerouti and Bakker (2001) formalized the Job Demands–Resources model (JD–R) and showed that chronic exhaustion arises when the demands of the role —caring, containing, solving, holding others— sustainably exceed the resources available to respond. Figley (2013), in turn, described compassion fatigue as the specific cost of caring for others who suffer when there is no space to replenish what is given. In both cases, the body does not fail: the equation fails. And like every equation, it can be reordered.

-  It is normal to feel something emptied, even when you have not made any visible physical effort

- ✓ It is normal to reply with two words to what used to get ten, without understanding why
- ✓ It is normal to need silence after a day of caring — and to feel guilty for needing it
- ✓ It is normal to realize that Sunday already arrived and there is nothing left for yourself — that is the equation that broke

Demands vs resources map

What is weighing on you and what are you missing?

A first reading based on Demerouti and Bakker (2001). It helps you see the equation — and where to start reordering it.

Emotional exhaustion: when giving more than you receive drains you, it is not weakness

- Emotional exhaustion is not laziness or lack of character. Demerouti and Bakker (2001) formalized the Job Demands–Resources model (JD–R) and showed that chronic exhaustion arises when the demands of the role — caring, containing, solving, holding others — sustainably exceed the resources available to respond. The body does not fail: the equation fails. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499
- There is a subtype that the clinic recognizes well and that common language confuses: compassion fatigue. Figley (2013) defined it as the cost of caring for others who suffer, especially when there is no space to replenish what is given. It is

not classic burnout (task overload) nor is it depression (mood state). It is exhaustion of the empathic muscle. DOI: 10.4324/9780203777381

- It is worth distinguishing three figures that look similar from outside: emotional exhaustion (exhaustion of the muscle that feels — reactive to load, reversible with real rest), burnout (structural exhaustion of the role — chronic, with cynicism and detachment), and depression (a mood state that turns off interest — clinical, requires intervention). The three ask for different paths. Confusing them delays recovery.
- If this repeats on what you most care about —the work that cares, the family you hold, the people who depend on you emotionally— it is not that you are weak or lack vocation. It is a pattern that gets recognized, named, and moved. Starting by making the equation visible: what demands are operating, what resources are missing, what can be reordered.

One thing today

Emotional exhaustion does not resolve with a weekend or with "stronger willpower." It moves when you reorder the equation: lower a demand you could stop carrying, raise a resource you were missing, or adjust the pace so the body can replenish what it gives. Demerouti and Bakker (2001) called this intervention on resources: when the deficit is clear, adding to the equation usually moves more than asking the body to perform the same. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499

1. Do the demands vs resources map — you will see where the equation is loaded.
2. Choose ONE demand you can reorder (not eliminate: reorder). One single one.
3. Choose ONE resource you can add (real rest, support network, concrete limit).
4. Commit to moving that piece in 7 days. After that, evaluate without guilt.

If this sounds too small, it is because your instinct wants to resolve the full exhaustion at once. The equation moves by pieces, and each piece adds up — even the one that goes wrong.

Read something that understands what it costs you

Not pep talks. Three evidence-based pieces to distinguish emotional exhaustion from burnout and depression, understand what produces it, and start recovering what you give.



Emotional Exhaustion vs Burnout vs Depression: Three Ways of Being Exhausted That Often Get Confused



Sources of Emotional Exhaustion: The Demands-Resources Model That Explains It Without Blaming You



Recovering from Emotional Exhaustion: What Actually Recharges and What Only Seems to



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When to seek professional help

This is information, not diagnosis. If any of these signs show up in your life right now, talking to someone trained matters more than reading further.

- Thoughts of hurting yourself or that life isn't worth continuing
- Weeks without sleeping, eating or getting out of bed
- Avoiding people, work or places that used to matter
- Using alcohol or substances to not feel what you feel

► **Crisis lines and resources**

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