From Bash to Burnout

Staying Sane in a 24/7 Tech World

Eric Hendricks • The IT Guy • CIQ

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The phone on your chest.

3am. A server is down. Nobody to call.

You're alone in the dark, waiting.

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I didn't call it burnout.

I called it dedication.

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Show of hands.

✋ Worked through a holiday weekend?

✋ Canceled personal plans for an incident?

✋ Checked your phone before saying good morning to another human?

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Burnout isn't a personal failing.

It's a systemic pattern — and an industry that too often treats exhaustion as a feature.

THE NUMBERS

The numbers don't lie.

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55%

of the U.S. workforce is burned out right now

Eagle Hill Consulting Workforce Burnout Survey — November 2025

And in tech? The numbers are worse.

58%

of senior developers considering quitting over legacy systems & frustration

Storyblok Developer Sentiment Survey, 2025

10pm

nearly 1 in 3 employees still active on work apps at 10pm

Microsoft 'Infinite Workday' Report, 2025

42%

of burned-out workers who speak up say their manager takes no action

Eagle Hill Consulting, 2025

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You're not bad at your job.

You're in a profession where the rulebook changes faster than you can read it.

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WHAT BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE

What burnout actually looks like.

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It doesn't announce itself.

You're not suddenly unable to work.

You just stop caring — slowly, quietly.

WHAT BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE

Signal 1: Energy Flow Inversion

Explode at work. Collapse at home.

'I told myself I'd give it a year.

I gave it 36 hours before the meeting that changed everything.'

WHAT BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE

Signal 2: The Irritability Spike

The people closest to you notice before you do.

Your family is your canary in the coal mine.

WHAT BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE

Signal 3: Obsession vs. Diligence

There's a difference between caring about your job

and being unable to leave it.

If it's interfering with sleep, games, family, presence — that's the signal.

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WHAT BURNOUT LOOKS LIKE

Signal 4: Social Isolation

Camera off. Head down. Anonymous online.

Throwing memes instead of building relationships.

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Quick gut check.

(No hands. Just notice.)

1. Where's your energy? (1 = empty / 5 = strong)

2. How's your irritability? (1 = peaceful / 5 = friction everywhere)

3. How connected do you feel? (1 = invisible / 5 = plugged in)

4. How much of your identity lives at work? (1 = just a job / 5 = it's everything)

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THE PATTERNS

The patterns that get you there.

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PATTERN

Pattern 1: The Hero Trap

'If I just punch through this wall, I'll feel like I've arrived.'

The problem: in IT, you never arrive. The tickets never stop.

And the culture that rewards suffering will keep rewarding it — until it doesn't.

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PATTERN

Pattern 2: Context-Switching Hell

Sysadmin → incident → meeting → PR review → ticket → repeat.

More than half of DevOps teams name context-switching as their primary productivity drain.

The brain never fully settles — and that toll compounds.

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PATTERN

Pattern 3: The Always-Be-Learning Spiral

74% of IT professionals feel anxious about keeping up with technology trends.

You finish one cert. The next is already obsolete.

When learning becomes anxiety instead of joy — that's worth noticing.

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PATTERN

Pattern 4: The Identity Trap

'I was so wound up in who I was in that job that when that ended,

part of me felt like it ended too.'

When your employer is your community, your purpose, and your identity —

a reorg becomes an existential crisis.

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MY STORY

What I did — right and wrong.

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The meeting I knew was a layoff before it started.

I joined a Google Meet.

My supervisor. A member of HR. At the exact same moment.

'My stomach dropped. My brain went blank.

Because I knew exactly what was going to happen.'

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96 days at a gas station.

Overnight shifts. 60-lb crates. Lost 15 lbs.

I went from managing $100K hardware inventory
to cleaning up at QuikTrip at 3am.

'I don't recommend it as a diet plan.
But it kept me going.'

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What I did right / What I'd do differently

✓ DID RIGHT

• Reached out to network immediately

• Stayed visible on LinkedIn

• Built a daily rhythm (work / learn / rest / time off)

• Said yes to unexpected opportunities

• Rewatched Stargate SG-1 without guilt

↻ WOULD DO DIFFERENTLY

• Give myself time to grieve first

• Quality over quantity on applications

• Not step away from community podcasting

• Separate work identity from personal identity sooner

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Job hunting is a job.

The worst job you'll ever have.

The boss is terrible. The pay is atrocious.

Build a schedule for it — or it will consume you.

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PRACTICAL RITUALS

Rituals that survive the trip home.

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01 Automate the toil that drains you.

Not all toil is bad. Some toil builds your skills.

But toil that isolates you, exploits you, or keeps you stuck?

Script it. Delegate it. Eliminate it.

'Closing JIRA tickets will be part of your entire career.

Find a way to make it work — or find a way to make it take less of you.'

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02 Build a daily rhythm — and protect it.

Job hunt block. Learning block. Recovery block.

Build intentional time off into the schedule —

not as a reward, but as a maintenance task.

'Wednesdays were my weekends.

I put it in the calendar and I defended it.'

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03 Build a life that isn't your job.

Something professional but yours — a podcast, a community, a personal brand.

Something that has nothing to do with a screen —

D&D, strength training, learning to dance.

The goal isn't balance. It's roots.

'I relaunched my podcast not for the content.

I relaunched it to remember who I was.'

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04 Maintain 3 relationships. No agenda.

Pick 3 people in your network.

Check in once a month. Just check in.

'You cannot network in a crisis.

You can only activate a network you've already built.'

My network gave me two jobs —

including one I almost dismissed.

05

Ask for help — and mean it.

Don't be too proud to say:

'I'm hurting and I need help.'

Reach out to your network. Your community.

A peer who's been through it.

You cannot white-knuckle your way through burnout alone.

And you shouldn't have to.

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06 Name what you need in a conversation.

'Are you asking for a solution,

or are you asking me to listen?'

The question that saves relationships — and your own sanity.

Know which mode you're in.

Ask which mode they need.

You have both. Use them intentionally.

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CLOSING

The best admin isn't the one who never sleeps.

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Sustainability is a technical virtue.

Reliability requires maintenance.

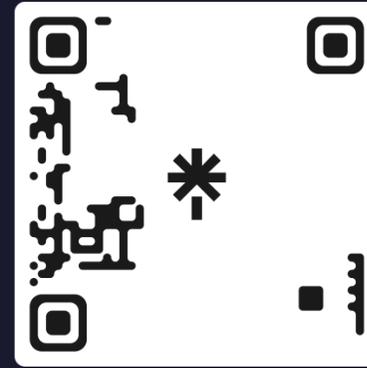That includes the human kind.

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What's next — right now.

→ Consultations open at lunch — have the conversation you can't have with your boss

→ Khewna Dawar's workshop (12:00–1:30, Room 104) — burnout prevention for engineering teams

→ Michelle Brenner's workshop (1:30–3:00, Room 104) — build the network that saves you

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If you're in it right now:

You are not alone.

Take one step. Put in one application.

Reach out to one person.

You will come out of this stronger, more resilient,

and with a refined sense of purpose.

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Let's keep talking.

Eric "the IT Guy" Hendricks

Podcast: The IT Guy Show

Podcast & social links

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