Toast of the town.

A cheeky guide for anyone who's been left in the toaster a little too long.

Eight exercises to work out what's draining you, put a few things down, and turn the heat back to a gentle simmer.

Fresh bread	Golden	Crispy	Charcoal

By Dee, founder of Anxious as Anything

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BEFORE WE START

Feeling a bit crispy around the edges?

Burnout isn't laziness and it isn't a personality flaw. It's what happens when you run on high heat for too long without anyone turning the dial down. Including you.

I'm Dee. I once answered a work email from a hospital waiting room and called it "being organised". Reader, it was not.

This guide has eight short exercises. Do them in order, or skip to the one that's shouting loudest. Grab a pen, a cuppa and about fifteen minutes each.

No hustle required. If you try to burn through this guide in one sitting, you've missed the point. Lovingly.

The three signs, minus the jargon

Running on fumes	Over it	Not cutting it
Tired in a way sleep doesn't fix. The tank's empty and the servo's closed.	Snappy, numb or cynical about work you used to care about.	Feeling like you're getting less done, no matter how hard you push.

A quick, serious bit

Burnout can overlap with depression, anxiety and physical health issues. This guide isn't a diagnosis or therapy. If you're struggling, see your GP. If you're in crisis, call Lifeline on **13 11 14**, any time.

EXERCISE 01

How toasted are you?

Circle where you sit today for each one. No judging. Nobody's ever blamed a slice of bread for the toaster setting.

My energy	**Fresh bread**	**Golden**	**Crispy**	**Charcoal**
My patience	**Fresh bread**	**Golden**	**Crispy**	**Charcoal**
My sleep	**Fresh bread**	**Golden**	**Crispy**	**Charcoal**
How much I care	**Fresh bread**	**Golden**	**Crispy**	**Charcoal**

EXERCISE 02

Smoke signals

Where there's smoke, there's you, at 11pm, still answering emails. Tick any that sound familiar, then add your own.

- ☐ Sunday nights feel like a countdown
- ☐ Hobbies? I remember those
- ☐ Snapping at people I like
- ☐ Getting sick every time I stop
- ☐ Small tasks feel like climbing a mountain
- ☐ Headaches, sore neck, clenched jaw
- ☐ Doom-scrolling instead of sleeping
- ☐ "I'll rest when this is done" (it's never done)

My own smoke signals:

EXERCISE 03

Drains and chargers

Think back over the last week. What left you flat, and what topped you up? People, tasks, places, apps, the lot. You can't plug in if you don't know where the sockets are.

Drains Left me at 2% battery	Chargers Gave me a bit of juice back

One drain I could shrink this week, and how:

> **"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you."**
>
> **ANNE LAMOTT, AUTHOR**

EXERCISE 04

The not-to-do list

Your to-do list has had enough attention. Write down things you'll stop, pause or hand over for the next month. Too many irons in the fire is how things get scorched.

I'm putting down...	Stop / pause / pass
Saying yes to every "quick favour"	*Stop*

EXERCISE 05

No is a full sentence. But here are some longer ones.

Boundaries are easier when you've rehearsed them. Finish each script in your own words, then practise one out loud. In the car counts. So does the shower.

THE EXTRA TASK

"I'd love to help, but my plate's full. If I take this on, what should I drop?"

THE AFTER-HOURS MESSAGE

"Got this. I'll look at it first thing tomorrow."

THE SOCIAL INVITE

"Thanks for thinking of me. I'm having a quiet one, but let's catch up soon."

YOUR TURN

The boundary I most need to set is...

EXERCISE 06

Rest is on the menu

Scrolling isn't rest. It's snacking. Fill each course with things that properly refuel you, so when you've got a spare moment you can order off the menu instead of staring at the fridge.

Entrée Five minutes or less. A stretch, a song, tea on the back step.	
Main An hour or two. A walk, a long bath, a phone-free arvo.	
Dessert A whole day. Beach, bush, bed. No plans, no guilt.	
Today's special The one I'll actually do this week.	

"Rest is not idleness, and to lie sometimes on the grass under trees on a summer's day, listening to the murmur of the water, or watching the clouds float across the sky, is by no means a waste of time."

JOHN LUBBOCK, SCIENTIST

EXERCISE 07

Rekindle the spark

Burnout puts the fire out on the good stuff too. Let's find some kindling. Small sparks only. No bonfires required.

As a kid, I could lose hours doing...

The last time I laughed properly was...

One tiny version of that I could try this week:

EXERCISE 08

Recipe for a slow-cooked week

Low heat, long time, much better results. Plan one charger and one "no" for each day. Keep it small enough that you'd actually do it on a Wednesday.

	One charger	One thing I'll say no to
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		

My early smoke alarm is...	When it goes off, I'll tell...
_____	_____

WHEN IT'S MORE THAN A ROUGH PATCH

No puns here. Just people who pick up.

If you've been running on empty for a while, talk to your GP about a mental health plan. In Australia, that can get you subsidised sessions with a psychologist. These services are free.

Lifeline Crisis support, 24/7, Australia	**13 11 14**
Beyond Blue Counselling by phone or chat, Australia	**1300 22 4636**
13YARN For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	**13 92 76**
Anywhere else Your country's free helplines, verified	**findahelpline.com**

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