

## Ep #4: 5 Burnout Alarm Bells You Need To Know



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

**Kelle Cobble & Nina Lynch**

## Ep #4: 5 Burnout Alarm Bells You Need To Know

Kelle: You know burnout, it's obvious. It looks the same on all of us.

Nina: Yeah, and addressing burnout isn't urgent if you're not a hot mess dumpster fire. So as long as you can put one foot in front of the other, you're doing just fine.

Kelle: Alright, I'm calling BS on this, Nina.

Nina: Almost got you there, Kelle.

Kelle: Burnout is sneaky, it clouds our self-awareness. It's the crash after we've been unknowingly running on empty for too long. Burnout blocks you like a linebacker from the balance, energy, and self-confidence you crave.

Nina: Join us today as we bust three common myths about burnout and then explain our five burnout alarm bells and how to work through them. Let's get going. This is *Ambitious-Ish*.

Burnout, check. Daily overwhelm, check. Resentment rash, stress, and a complete lack of well-being, check, check, check. You're not alone. We're your hosts, Kelle, and Nina, and we're here to help you feel calm, balanced, and empowered so you can redefine success, make choices that feel authentic and actually enjoy the life you work so hard to create. Are you ready? Let's go.

Kelle: Hey everyone, I'm Kelle.

Nina: Hey, I'm Nina.

Kelle: Did you know that women are more likely to burn out than men?

Nina: I can believe it. We are the perfect women to talk to you about burnout today. Do you want me to go first, Kel?

Kelle: Let's do it.

Nina: There I was maybe 18 years ago, sitting in my suit in front of a hassled exec for the fourth round of interviews for a PR job at Visa. He asked the textbook questions and then, "Tell me your weaknesses." "I'll be honest", I said,

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“I work really hard and have a tendency to overdo it. I burned out at my last job and I’m coming to you after taking some time off to kind of get my shit together.”

Kelle: Wait. You have to give them some backstory here, Nina.

Nina: Alright, good call. So I was the PR manager for The North Face for five years and lost my sister in a car accident during that time.

Kelle: This was around the time Jen died?

Nina: Yeah, it was a lot. So in that interview, the exec asked a question I’ll never forget. He goes, “So taking time off helped you get your shit together. What will you do differently here at Visa?” And I totally stumbled. You see, while I felt recovered, having gotten away from the grind of my old job, the demanding stakeholders, the annoying commute, and also grieving my sister, it was really just me taking a much needed deep breath.

Kelle: The kind of deep breath you take before diving back into the pool?

Nina: Exactly. I realized in that moment I was about to dive right back into my old ways of being. I didn’t know how to not put my nose down and plow through. That wasn’t going to change with time off or in a new job. It wasn’t about doing anything differently at first. It was about slowing my role and checking in. I had to ask myself, what was I believing and thinking that made me overwork, to let everything stress me out so much? What was I saying yes to? What was I saying no to?

Was all of this serving me, my relationships, my health? I didn’t get the job at Visa, shocker. My suit and I landed at a PR agency called FleishmanHillard on the Visa account, the irony. I took the elevator to work, pulled my chair up to the table, wore uncomfortable shoes, carried my Blackberry in my right hand and a latte in my left. You can guess what happened next.

Kelle: We don’t want to guess, Nina, just tell us.

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Nina: Well, just put it this way. I came to coaching to solve my own problems, to actually enjoy the life I worked so hard to create. I'm a coach now because what I learned changed my life and I had to share it all with women just like you.

Kelle: I can totally relate. I was a queen of hustle. I worked hard at everything I did. I had this unstoppable work ethic, and I had no idea what rest even looked like. I mean, who rests anyway?

Nina: Only lazy people rest.

Kelle: That was my thinking, but underneath all that I was mostly terrified of not having money. My family didn't have money growing up. At one point we were on food stamps. A fancy dinner out was hitting the local pizza place once a month. We camped at the beach for vacations.

Nina: These were not sunny warm soak out beaches, though, right?

Kelle: No, we camped at freezing gray Washington state beaches. And I didn't have an awful childhood, looking back, it was actually pretty normal. But I definitely crafted a money scarcity story. From an early age I promised myself, I would never not have money and was determined to do whatever it took. As soon as I was old enough, I got a paper route. I collected bottles and cans back when they actually paid you to recycle them. I did odd jobs, babysitting, anything to make my own money.

Nina: Why don't they pay us to recycle anymore?

Kelle: I know, it's so silly. Okay, fast forward to college, I got a degree in accounting so I could understand money. I became a CPA so I could know how to account for it and take care of money. And then I went into sales where I knew my overworking ways would be rewarded with big money and hefty commission checks. So the big checks came, and the awards came and eventually so did the burnout.

Nina: Love, hate with both of these stories. So let's do this, before we dive in let's clear up a few myths about burnout. How does that sound, Kel?

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Kelle: Let's do that. Okay, myth number one, burnout is obvious.

Nina: Calling BS here, Burnout clouds our self-awareness. It's the crash after we've been unknowingly running on empty for too long. We ignore the small signs because we can muscle through them, but they're really important alarm bells. Here are a few examples we borrowed from clients basically over the past week.

You're on the edge of irritation all the time. You feel like you're running on fumes. It feels like groundhog day. Every day feels the same. It's kind of like that hamster wheel story. You're saying yes when you could say no. An actual sick day actually sounds kind of nice.

Kelle: Been there.

Kelle: You feel like you don't have choices, which is a big one for our clients and ourselves. Does any of this sound familiar?

Kelle: Yeah, that whole excuses thing, needing an excuse to rest. It's so in my background. Okay, myth number two. Addressing burnout isn't urgent if you're not a dumpster fire. So as long as we can put one foot in front of the other we're all good, right?

Nina: Calling BS again.

Kelle: Because when we're in go mode all the time, we create a habit of busy, that prevents reflection and rest, the stress builds. And the more space it takes up in our nervous system, the less space we have for our work, our friends, our family, and the world around us. Burnout is a pile up of many, many self-betrayals.

Nina: This really sings to me what you just said. I'm just going to say it again, that burnout is a pile up of many, many self-betrayals. On to myth number three. Burnout looks the same on all of us. No, no, not true. There are different shades of burnout, and we all experience more or less of all of them. We call them the three effs.

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Kelle: The three effs.

Nina: The first one is, eff it. You're just so done, emotionally exhausted and depleted, you've got nothing to give. The second one is eff them. We've all been here where you just have zero empathy for colleagues and the humans around you.

Kelle: Yeah, who cares?

Nina: Who cares? Who cares? That's a nicer way to put it. You're disconnected and disengaged, and the third one is eff me. This one sucks, eff me. You're thinking what's wrong with me? Your sense of accomplishment's in the toilet and it just feels like you can't do anything right.

Kelle: Okay. When you know how to prevent burnout, you're happier. You're a positive force in the world. You're better at being your favorite you. You're a better friend, a parent, caregiver, and role model. You achieve your goals faster, you feel confident in your ability to handle whatever life throws at you, and you genuinely like yourself.

Nina: We love this book called *Big Feelings* by Liz Fosslien and Molly West Duffy. And we've adapted some of their research on burnout here into these alarm bells. So we'll link to this book in the show notes. But these are all warning signs that we're going to introduce to you that you might be headed towards burnout. Awareness is key in keeping burnout at bay, so let's take a closer look here.

Kelle: Alright, let's get into the five burnout alarm bells, burnout alarm bell number one, you are the queen of yes.

Nina: People pleasers listen up.

Kelle: When you're being the queen of yes, you're overextended. This is one of the most common ways to become burnout, giving everything you do 120% and deliver it a day early.

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Nina: Yeah, we show people what we're available for when we're the queen of yes. We are the one to pile it on and we'll take it with a smile. For a lot of people, this looks like overworking. We don't have to dive deep here. You know what we're talking about. And rockstar, you're not alone if you're working a lot.

Kelle: Yeah. We overwork because we care. We're passionate. The people around us don't talk about it like it's a problem but it definitely can be.

Nina: Yeah. Our society favors busy, values it. We don't really question if someone has to work, we think that's so cool, you're so committed.

Kelle: Yeah, it becomes a problem when we tell ourselves we're not burned out because we love what we do. This must be just the cost of ambition and that's where we call BS.

Nina: And that's where *Ambitious-Ish* comes from, questioning the cost of ambition. It's often the most passionate, committed people who become burnt out. We can already hear what some listeners are going to come back to us with, "But Kelle and Nina, life is so busy, I have to work this hard. It won't get done or get done right if I don't do it. I don't have a choice."

Kelle: This story is designed by your big, beautiful human brain to keep you safe and avoid discomfort, the discomfort of resting.

Nina: The frustration with your spouse, boredom with your kids, tedium of laundry, the presence of your own company. Work becomes a safe distraction and a valid excuse.

Kelle: Totally. So we create this habit of busy that we practice on repeat, which makes us feel overwhelmed and exhausted and then we eventually burn out.

Nina: Yeah. So today, try this. Practice, what we call B minus work. If that concept makes you gasp, go for B or B+, high achiever. Anything less than perfection is where we want to go here. Don't triple spell check, just hit send. Spend 20 minutes instead of an hour. Don't iron it and see what happens. The only one judging you is honestly you.

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Kelle: Yeah. I don't even think I own an iron actually. Alright, burnout alarm bell number two. When you realize, I haven't peed all day. The body keeps score, we like to say. This is a core value in our coaching practice and a big part of what we do with our clients. It's all a part of a concept we call protecting the asset. We'll get into that in a sec.

Nina: Right. So have you ever worked until 3:00pm to realize you haven't eaten, had a sip of water or gone to the bathroom all day? Just us.

Kelle: When our body is tired, it needs rest. When our body signals hunger, it needs fuel, you all. Ignoring these signals and others on repeat causes physical harm, we know this.

Nina: But at some point in our lives we were told to suck it up, walk it off and push through. Just me. In our culture, we're praised most when we care for ourselves the least. We feel guilty or selfish when we do things to benefit our own selves, our own health, happiness, and fulfillment.

Kelle: Rockstar, when you think about what's most important in your life, you need to be on top of that list.

Nina: When you don't think of yourself as important or important enough and take care of yourself that way, your health will reflect that. Chronic stress is junk food for the body, and the body keeps score.

Kelle: That sounds awful, chronic stress is junk food for the body. Okay, if you thought of yourself with more importance than you do right now, if you believed you were the asset, you'd be making sure your needs were met daily.

Nina: How might you show up for yourself, manage your time, make decisions, invest in yourself? Would you continue to put you off? This is what we mean by protecting the asset. Self-care like this doesn't start with what you do. It starts with how you think and what you believe.

Kelle: We're going to be talking about this so much more, this whole what you're thinking thing. So just stay tuned on that. Alright, let's go to burnout alarm bell number three, flying coffee mugs. We've all been there, road rage, workplace



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rage, partner rage, mom rage. You lose control. You can't keep your shit together. You yell, maybe drop an eff bomb or two or five, or one of the coffee mugs you saved for those moments like this. You know who you are, and we love you.

Nina: We love you, you know who you are. It happens and then it happens again. And when it happens regularly, when the emotional scale tips towards the negative more often than not, and you just don't feel like yourself. Consider checking in. That emotional imbalance is our third burnout alarm bell.

Kelle: Emotional imbalance really is rampant, but no fun. So how do you cope when things are difficult? The difference between reacting to stress and overwhelm and responding to stress and overwhelm lies in your coping skills. How do you manage uncomfortable emotions?

Nina: This means when shit hits the fan like anything from illness or death, or even something smaller like traffic in the roundabout, you understand how to handle it. You recognize that you can't control the situation, but you can control your response. You can navigate the situation with grace and strength.

Kelle: Yeah, learning to tolerate uncomfortable emotions, to cope mentally and emotionally when life turns into a dumpster fire is what we call resilience. So try this. Practice sitting with an uncomfortable emotion for at least 90 seconds. Studies show that's how long it takes for an emotion, especially a strong emotion, to flood your nervous system, peak and then subside, without reacting impulsively or doing something you'll regret later.

Nina: Yeah, and the keyword here, Kel is practice. This takes a lot of practice, being with our uncomfortable emotions. So give yourself a break. So burnout alarm bell number four is eff everything.

Kelle: Back to the effs.

Nina: Back to the effs. Why is it that when we do something well, we're like, "Nice work?" But when we make a mistake, it's more like, "Why am I like this? I can't do anything right. I'm totally going to lose my job. I could have done so much more. Of course I messed up. OMG the world is ending. I suck."

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Kelle: We're so hard on ourselves. It's almost impossible to stay motivated when we're constantly beating ourselves up for not doing enough or not doing good enough. After a while, thoughts like these make us feel incompetent and unproductive. And we question, why bother doing anything at all? It's that eff everything feeling.

Nina: We learn to motivate ourselves at a young age with criticism. And while this no pain, no gain mentality, can get us through a quick 45 minute HIIT class or Peloton ride, it's not useful fuel in the long term. When you berate yourself on repeat, it starts to take a toll on your self-confidence too.

Kelle: Yeah, but it's tricky. We fear if we relax or be kind to ourselves, we'll become complacent or indulgent like a couch potato. We're here to tell you, not a chance, all the research says otherwise.

Nina: Cutting yourself, slack actually makes us more likely to improve. So try this. Notice how you treat a friend when their purse is stolen out of the car. And then notice how you treat yourself when the same thing happens to you. What would you say to her? And then how do you talk to yourself?

Kelle: Mistakes and fails aren't the opposite of success, they're part of it. How will you support yourself along the way? Alright, Nina, do you want to introduce the last one?

Nina: Sure, here we go, burnout alarm bell number five is lost joy. Do you celebrate your successes? Do you feel intentional and grounded when you say yes and when you say no? The fifth burnout alarm bell is all about lost joy.

Kelle: We don't have to dive deep here, you get it. Are you thriving or are you just surviving? When we wreck ourselves with work, when we choose to shoulder so much, we tend to push our personal self-care and well-being to the back burner.

Nina: And we're not talking about vanity self-care here, like manis and pedis, which are lovely. We actually neglect ourselves in a deeper way, that takes a serious toll on our work, confidence, relationships, and health, we burn out.

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Kelle: Alright, unpopular opinion here. Taking time off and going on vacation won't fix things. Burnout isn't only about the hours you're putting in. It's also about the stories you're telling yourself about how you approach what you do in the office and at home.

Nina: Yeah, burnout is sneaky, it's not obvious, we're already in it deep and don't know it until we're completely fried. And while we hate being at our worst when we have to be at our best, it keeps happening, we're just not ourselves.

Kelle: The whole point here with these alarm bells, for you to feel some relief knowing that what you're feeling has a name and that you're not alone. When we can name it, we have a better chance at getting the help we need, and we can navigate it in a productive way.

Nina: Yeah, we are on a mission here to help smart driven women just like you get to the root of burnout and address it.

Kelle: Yeah, we are.

Nina: To collectively support each other, to find balance and bring our meaningful work to the world so we can actually enjoy the life we work so hard to create. So if you're ready to put an end to your own special version of burnout groundhog day, there's another way to be, do and have what you want in your life, we promise.

Kelle: We've been there with the groundhog day. So we've created a burnout alarm bell study guide for you to do just that, to ramp up your self-awareness so that you're onto yourself when the highway signs start blinking, burnout ahead.

Nina: It's a summary of these alarm bells just for you in a simple downloadable PDF. So just go to [www.kelleandnina.com/burnoutalarmbellsguide](http://www.kelleandnina.com/burnoutalarmbellsguide). So let me just spell that out for you. We'll link it in the show notes, but [www.kelleandnina.com/burnoutalarmbellsguide](http://www.kelleandnina.com/burnoutalarmbellsguide).

Kelle: Alright, that's it for today. See you next time.

Nina: See you next time.

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Nina: If you enjoyed today's show and don't want to worry about missing an episode, you can follow the show wherever you listen to your podcasts. And if you haven't already, we would really appreciate it if you share the podcast with others who you think would benefit from it, and leave a rating and review to let us know what you think.

Kelle: It doesn't have to be a 5-star rating, although we sure hope you love the show. We want your honest feedback so we can create an awesome podcast that provides tons of value. Visit [ambitious-ish.com/podcastlaunch](https://ambitious-ish.com/podcastlaunch) for step-by-step instructions on how to follow, rate, and review.

Thank you so much for listening to today's episode of Ambitious-Ish.

Nina: If you're ready to align your ambitions with your heart and feel more calm, balanced, and connected, visit <https://www.kelleandnina.com/> for more information about how to work with us and make sure you get on our list.

Kelle: See you in the next episode!