

Burnout is defined as the manifestation of long-term, unresolved stress. In a study of high school students conducted by New York University, 49% of students reported facing a large amount of stress every day. This chronic stress can take a major toll on one's mental and physical health when left unaddressed.

According to the National Institutes of Health, people who are burnt out have weaker connections between the amygdala (a part of the brain responsible for emotional responses such as fear and aggression) and the anterior cingulate cortex (a part of the brain responsible for regulating emotions). This can result in difficulty reducing negative emotions. Burnout can also develop simultaneously with depression and anxiety, which have similar symptoms and can worsen mental health.

Stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline can stay heightened as a response to stress, which can disrupt sleep cycles, according to the New York Times. Because sleep helps reduce stress, insomnia, the inability to sleep, can worsen burnout and exhaustion, creating a vicious cycle. Burnout can also manifest itself as other physical symptoms, such as headaches, fatigue and changes in eating habits.

## SYMPTOMS

According to the New York Times, the following are potential symptoms of burnout:

depression



frustration



exhaustion



irritability



difficulty concentrating



difficulty sleeping



Burning out?  
Over the next few weeks, Aragon Wellness will be hosting two flextime wellness groups: one on stress management, and the other on motivation. Fill out the Google form located on the Canvas dashboard to sign up.



## TEACHERS' TAKES

As a result of their experiences interacting with students and their ability to see burnout on a larger scale, teachers tend to have unique insight on the phenomenon of burnout.

"I think my sense [of burnout] is that it spawns from a student caring," said history teacher Will Colglazier. "They care so much and then they get overwhelmed and somewhat embarrassed that they aren't hitting the standard they have for themselves."

Teachers are also noticing the effects of burnout on students due to the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This can be seen specifically in the experiences of students who had to miss school due to exposure.

"What I found is that a lot of the kids who were out for COVID-19 and then come back are just flooded with work from every class," said history teacher Greta Huneke. "There are some kids that are almost giving up."

While students may be tempted to internalize burnout and ignore its effects, the reality is that many of the teachers and staff are willing to help and work with them to facilitate the best outcome.

"Everyone faces burnout, everyone struggles and the more you're willing to open up to people, I think you'll find that us teachers are not that big and scary," Colglazier said. "My sense of the colleagues I know is that they would absolutely work with student[s]."

A commonly forgotten type of burnout is the one experienced by teachers and staff. Instances of burnout amongst teachers have risen throughout the pandemic, with a September 2021 report from MissionSquare Research Institute finding that 52% of K-12 employees reported feeling more stressed and burnt out.

"I think [teacher burnout] shows [when teachers take] a lot of time to get papers back," said history teacher Greta Huneke. "I tend to have to chunk out the stuff that I do. I spend a week on planning and then turn to grading. Sometimes I get irritable, especially late in the afternoon if kids are really loud or really unfocused."

History teacher Will Colglazier has similar sentiments, noting that teachers often spend a lot of time outside of school working on lesson plans or otherwise.

"They're constantly working and ... wanting to give feedback back to students in a timely manner," Colglazier said. "Teachers constantly talk amongst ourselves about how ... this profession loses a certain number of teachers after a certain number of years. If you don't work on [finding a balance], after a couple of years of [spending] hours working at home and on the weekend, you think, 'I'd like a different career.'"

## TEACHER BURNOUT?

## ARAGON HIGH SCHOOL YEARLY FORECAST

FRESHMAN	SOPHOMORE	JUNIOR	SENIOR
70	79	82	87
PLEASANT & MILD	WARMER WEATHER	DRY LIGHTNING	WARNING: WILDFIRES!

## GOT SENIORITIS?

As workload and rigor increase by grade, students face the struggle of balancing their extracurriculars and home life with their school life. But for seniors in particular, burnout can be especially severe — so severe, in fact, that the humorous colloquialism "senioritis" has emerged over the years, defined by Merriam Webster as "an ebbing of motivation and effort by school seniors as evidenced by tardiness, absences and lower grades."

"Showing up late to class is the first big [sign of senioritis], like [being] late to every period," said senior Darshan Gupta. "You put a lot less effort into stuff. You're just [thinking], 'What's the minimum I can do and get by?,' which, for most people, is pretty little. You don't study outside of school. You don't pay attention in class. You're just checked out."

Senioritis has often been attributed to the events preceding the second semester of senior year, particularly the workload of junior year and the stress of college applications.

"I was getting tired last semester, definitely because I applied to a lot of colleges," Gupta said. "College admissions are rough. It takes a lot out of people. You have to balance a really hard semester [during your] first semester of senior year."

Teachers have also observed similar patterns.

"I see the 11th year [of high school] as the most stressful and therefore leading to the most burnout for students," said psychologist Ronna Milo Haglili. "[Senioritis] could be highly related to the junior year. The body ... cannot handle stress for a long period of time, it is just wired to cope with short term stress and ... this is where burnout starts."

Yet apart from the additional stress seniors may face, something that differentiates senioritis from regular burnout is its social context. With this social aspect taken into account, interpretations of senioritis tend to become a little less generous.

"There's kind of an attitude [associated with it] ... that kind of 'too cool for school' attitude, you know?" said English teacher Robert Thurtle. "I think the way it usually manifests is that [seniors] become keen to be ... at a distance. They start distancing themselves from me, the class, the work. It usually feels to me like they're acting above it."

Senioritis can have serious consequences. Although rare, college decisions can be rescinded and scholarships revoked due to low grades. However, the threat of this possibility still seems to do little to boost motivation.

"I think burnout in the second semester senior year doesn't really count because [it] doesn't matter as much for college admissions," Gupta said. "You already probably got into your school and unless you're failing classes, you should be fine. But if you burn out before, then you're burning out when it really matters."

Some students struggle to stay on top of study habits due to senioritis.

"I just had a test today which I probably didn't do that [well] on ... because I didn't study," said senior Johnny Huang. "I think colleges accepted me because they already know I can keep my grades. Even if my [grades drop] a little, they won't worry about me failing out of college."

Regardless of whether the true cause of senioritis is laziness, arrogance or even just genuine stress, its pervasiveness as a trend makes at least its existence hard to deny.

"I typically teach seniors, right?" Thurtle said. "I think it's kind of a typical senior year thing ... there's usually phases where students are [more] energized [or] burned out. I notice it every year."

Even so, senioritis doesn't have to be inevitable, and steps can be taken to mitigate its effects.

"Stay motivated [and] have a support system," Gupta said. "If you burn out, you need to reconsider what's going on, make some changes before college and prepare properly — and that change starts right now."