

# THE DEFINITIVE BURNOUT CHECKLIST



*Including:* 3 common mistakes that keep you exhausted  
& 3 easy steps to begin to restore your energy



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Hi, I'm Dr. Shawna Darou, as a women's health and hormone naturopath, I help women experiencing overwhelm and burnout to return to vibrant energy, balanced mood & hormones, and slow down stress aging.

In this checklist, you'll discover:

- ✓ The difference between burnout & depression
- ✓ Why an antidepressant is not the answer if you're burned out
- ✓ 3 mistakes women make in treating burnout / that keeps them exhausted and overwhelmed.
- ✓ 3 Simple steps to manage your stress energy better

Enjoy!

*Dr. Shawna Darou*



# 01

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## IS IT BURNOUT OR DEPRESSION?

Feeling exhausted, unmotivated and emotional can easily be viewed as depression, but if it is following a long period of high stress, your response may be more physiological than psychological. If you're like many women I've worked with, basic testing with your doctor has likely come back all normal, and you've been offered an antidepressant. Use this quick checklist as an indicator of whether what you're really experiencing may be burnout (or in medical terms "HPA axis Dysfunction").

## SIGNS THAT CAN BE BOTH BURNOUT & DEPRESSION

- Tired on waking in the morning
- Trouble sleeping (falling or staying asleep)
- Weight gain or loss
- Feeling irritated & easily annoyed
- Social withdrawal
- Difficulty concentrating and forgetfulness
- Mood swings
- Crying easily
- Lower sex drive
- Lack of passion for things you usually enjoy
- Feeling disconnected



# SIGNS THAT POINT MORE TO BURNOUT

- Easily overwhelmed by small stresses
- Elevated resting heart rate
- Reduced tolerance for exercise
- Tight muscles - neck, shoulders and lower back
- New health issues have developed: allergies, rashes, ulcer, frequent colds, colitis
- Injuries aren't healing
- Rapid aging over the past 2 years - deeper wrinkles, graying hair, under-eye bags
- Getting easily startled
- Your muscle tone has reduced
- Gaining abdominal fat





# 02

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## THREE COMMON MISTAKES WOMEN MAKE IN TREATING BURNOUT

If you have at least three symptoms in the 'Burnout' category, it is possible that your low mood, fatigue and lack of motivation are more physiological, meaning a physical response to prolonged high stress levels. What this means is that the way you're feeling right now is certainly not all in your head. Three mistakes to watch out for are...



## **MISTAKE #1: TREATING THE SYMPTOMS, NOT THE CAUSE**

It's easy to look at the lists above and start picking off symptoms to treat - anxiety, depression, low immune system, reduced muscle tone, and even as a naturopath it is tempting to give each of these areas support. What's most important though is to treat the stress response as a whole, and provide the body with a strong foundation to heal.

## **MISTAKE #2: PUSHING THROUGH WITH AN "I CAN DO IT ATTITUDE" OR MORE CAFFEINE**

Women tend to just keep going with stress. Even when you feel completely drained, depleted and burned out. Pushing for even longer, and keeping the body in a state of stress will only wear you down further, and can eventually create some very significant health issues.

## **MISTAKE #3: STARTING A CLEANSE OR A NEW WORKOUT PLAN TO TRY TO FEEL BETTER**

If you're truly burned out right now, a cleanse is absolutely the wrong thing to do right now. Anything that is more depleting, where there is a calorie deficit, and perhaps not enough protein and healthy fats will actually do more harm than good and add to your stress.

Similarly with exercise, when your body is burned out, overdoing it with exercise will actually add more stress to your body and make you feel worse. Gentle exercise is the best strategy right now - activities like walking, swimming, gentle cycling and yoga.



# 03

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## THREE SIMPLE STEPS TO MANAGE YOUR STRESS ENERGY BETTER

The good news, is that once we identify that you are suffering from burnout, there are some key steps to take to break the negative stress cycle, and to repair damage caused by stress. It starts with building a strong health foundation, and learning how to manage your stress energy.



## STEP #1: BUILD IN BREAKS

In order to balance out the day to day stresses that we all encounter in life, it is essential to build in breaks - in your day, in your week, in your workout schedule, and in your life

A few simple places to start: your body needs a 10 minute break at least every 2-3 hours while working to create balance with your nervous system and prevent stress hormones from climbing. Set an alarm and take a conscious break - have a glass of water or tea, turn away from your screen, or better yet get some fresh air during your break.

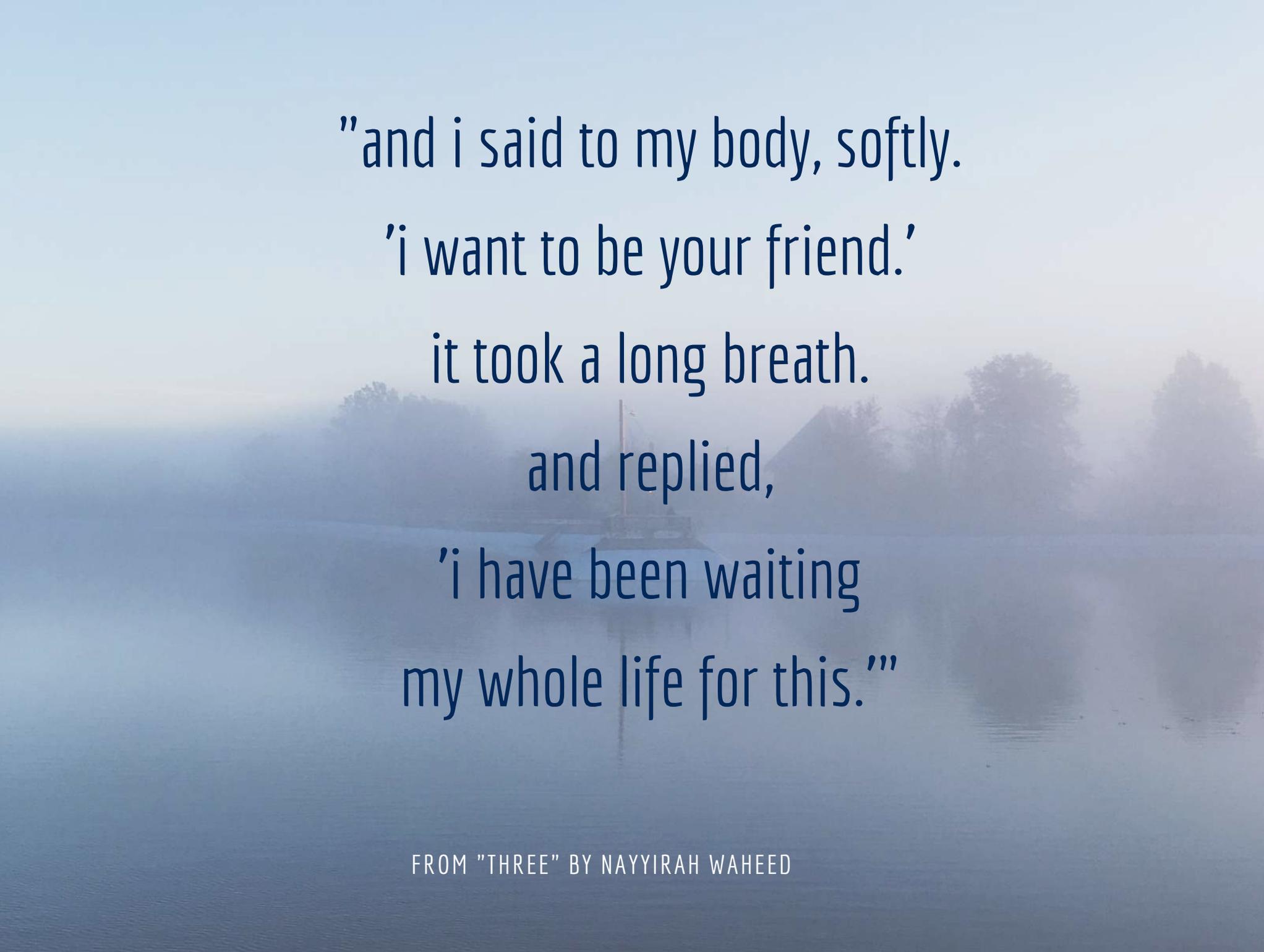
## STEP #2: PRACTICE RELAXATION

Start with 10 minutes a day - think of it like training - your body doesn't know how to relax effectively yet, so you need to train your 'relaxation muscles.' Some ideas - a guided meditation; a gentle yoga routine; breathing exercises; a relaxation App; or a gratitude practice.

## STEP #3: STOP RUSHING

One simple practice to reduce your daily stress output is to stop hurrying. If you start your day running late, and rushing from meeting to appointment, you are activating a stress response many times in the day.

From this point onward, make a very conscious effort to stop rushing. Give yourself a little extra time wherever possible, and try to shift your attitude of constantly rushing and trying to catch up. This will instantly slow your breathing, your heart rate and allow your muscles to relax without putting you into stress-hormone overdrive.

A misty, blue-toned photograph of a lake. In the center, a small boat with a red flag is visible. The background shows silhouettes of trees and a building, all shrouded in a soft, ethereal mist. The water is calm, reflecting the light.

”and i said to my body, softly.  
’i want to be your friend.’  
it took a long breath.  
and replied,  
’i have been waiting  
my whole life for this.”

FROM "THREE" BY NAYYIRAH WAHEED



# NEED MORE SUPPORT?

Struggling with burnout, overwhelm & mood swings? Are you worried about how to ever get off the stress / burnout rollercoaster with all of life's demands and so much to do in this lifetime? I know you have so much to give, but your own cup is empty.

There are several ways to get more support:

- 1) See me as a naturopathic patient in Toronto at the [Darou Wellness clinic](#).
- 2) Work with me as a Virtual Client: [contact the office to inquire](#).
- 3) Check out my [online classes](#).

Have a wonderful day!

***Dr. Shawna Darou, ND***

Naturopathic & Functional Medicine