

Sick – then burnt out!

There often appear Burn-out syndromes after virus infections!

Walter can not afford getting sick. What would his company do without him? But then Walter gets fever, sore throat and anything that belongs to it... "I trail myself into the office despite 38°C fever" he announces proudly. Despite his illness he also goes jogging further on. After some time fever and co. actually fade away and Walter seems to be healthy again. He seems to be healthy, but in reality he feels miserable. Constantly tired, nervous, he can not concentrate, his performance slows-down, anxiety comes up... He is on the best way to a Burn-out syndrome, a post viral fatigue syndrome.

"After some virus infections there appear after-effects like listlessness, reduced ability to work under pressure but also pain in the joints" confirms Dr. Herbert Woschnagg, deputy of the "Rudolfstiftung" in Vienna. "This syndrome which can appear after an influenzal infection can often hold up for weeks or even months".

Especially endangered are people who ignore infections and influenzas. Above all the body needs rest to cope with an infection. And it is signaling it. "Lassitude when having an infection tells us that our immune system needs all the power we have to recover" according to Dr. Woschnagg.

"Our immune system needs all the power to recover!"

In many cases the background for a Burn-out syndrome can be found in a patients' personality structure. According to Dr. Alexander Bernhaut, there are primarily those people concerned "who classify themselves as not worthwhile to care for their body as well as stressed and over-directed people with a very high pressure to perform". Who is egoistic enough to take care of oneself is not endangered to feel burnt out. "But in our times taking care of oneself almost seems to be a crime" according to Dr. Bernhaut. We think that we are indispensable, we fear to lose our job and so we go to work. Taking care of oneself is even a foreign word when we are at

home because there is still that much to do or the invitation can not be cancelled anymore and so on. Eventually body and soul are beyond their capacities and burnt out. It comes to chronic fatigue, sleep disorders, mental pressure, loss of power, anxieties, desperation and hopelessness.

Learn to be your number 1!

How to escape that vicious circle? Dr. Bernhaut: "The first treatment is a time out!" That can be hours, days, weeks. The person concerned has to listen to the body and meet own needs.

Preventive the psychiatrist advises us to sometimes take time outs for ourselves and to "take stock": "Every company takes stock, why not doing so too?" Back yourself out into an unirritating surrounding and ask yourself:

- How have your last weeks been? What have been the stress factors?
- What can I do differently to feel better?
- What do I really need?

Dr. Alexander Bernhaut is psychiatrist and psychotherapist in Vienna.