



Burnout Risk Profiles: 'The Martyr'



Burnout is a state of complete emotional exhaustion as a result of a long term pattern of 'over investing' in other people or things and 'under investing' in ourselves. The Martyr is a risk profile that is common to many of us who take our 'people pleasing' or 'rescuing' to an unhealthy level.

The origins of The Martyr begin much earlier in our lives when we learn that we need to keep people around us happy (especially our caregivers) or they may abandon or reject us which would jeopardise our survival. We become 'over-sensitised' to the negative emotions of others and any time our caregivers were unhappy we interpreted this as 'our fault'.

This 'self blame' gives us a practical and safe explanation for any distress or displeasure our caregivers show towards us – as it becomes a problem that is 'my fault' and a problem which I can try to solve (*if I can be nicer to them they'll love me more*). This is a positive 'survival adaptation' when we are young (as to believe our caregiver's distress is not our fault nor can we fix it would leave us feeling totally helpless, unloved and alone). Thus we begin a lifetime pattern of prioritising the need to seek love from others by always trying to keep other people happy (and blaming ourselves for any rejection we encounter) over the need to attend to our own True Self and our needs for self-care and self-love.

The Martyr was a useful survival adaptation in our early years but as adults it can become very detrimental to our health. Most of the adults I work with in the caring professions who are suffering from burnout struggle with The Martyr – compulsively helping others while simultaneously feeling increasing amounts of resentment. Their journey into burnout is accompanied by hearing the quiet whisper of their True Self telling them something is wrong. However they avoid this whisper and instead double down on the distractions of busyness, social media, alcohol, substances, excessive exercise and self-improvement..... until they breakdown!

The path to healing The Martyr is to therapeutically reverse engineer the unhealthy 'survival adaption' by swapping the habit of seeking love from others to reconnection with the feeling of unconditional self-love that originally existed within our True Self (and still does). Importantly, healing the wounds of The Martyr does not necessarily lessen our desire to help others but rather moves it from a *driven* 'must do' to a *motivated* 'would like to do'. This shift in approach amplifies the benefits of our helping to both ourselves and the world.

