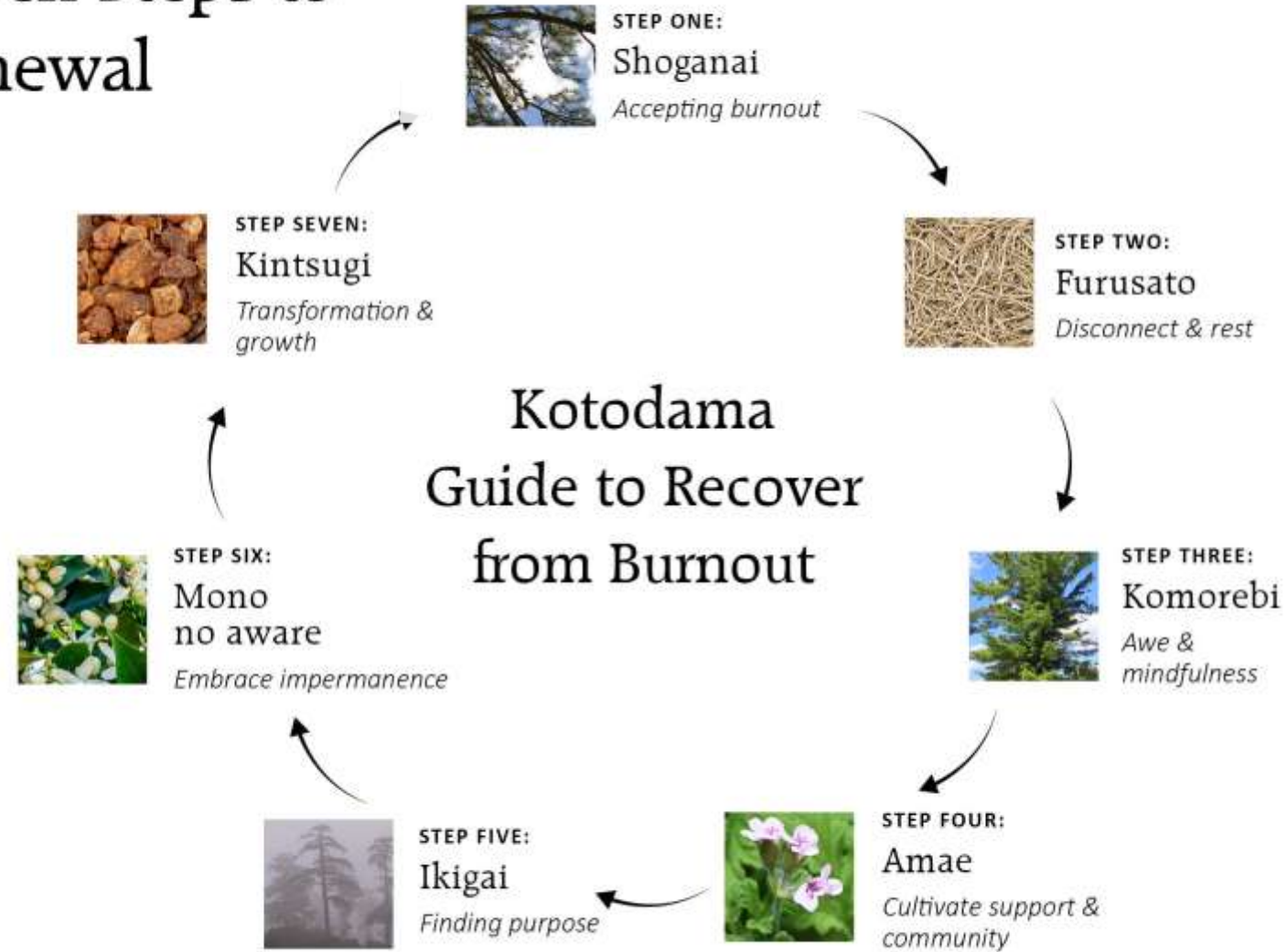


Ancient wisdom, modern healing –
integrating the ancient Japanese
wisdom of *kotodama* with the science
of character strengths into our
aromatherapy practice to support
mental wellbeing.





Seven Steps to Renewal



Prevalence of Burnout

The statistics on burnout prevalence are alarming, with some regions showing a higher rate than the global average.

- **Global Prevalence:** In 2020, about 43% of people from 100 countries reported experiencing workplace burnout, a rise from 39% in 2019.
- **Australia-Specific Data:** Australia has one of the highest reported burnout rates in the world. A recent study indicated that 61% of Australian workers have experienced burnout, compared to a global average of 48%.
- **Healthcare Professionals:** Burnout amongst health care professionals is a common theme. The healthcare industry is particularly vulnerable, with some surveys showing burnout rates as high as 84% among healthcare workers.
- **The Gender Gap:** Women are consistently found to be more likely to suffer from burnout than men. For example, one report found that the rate of women experiencing burnout had grown to 42%, while the rate for men had decreased to 30%.
- **Generational Trends:** Millennials and Gen Z are also reporting high rates of burnout. A USA study found that 59% of millennial employees and 58% of Gen Z employees feel burnt out, indicating a generational crisis of well-being.

Who is Most Vulnerable?

Burnout can affect anyone, but certain professions and personality types are at a higher risk.

- **Helping Professions:** Individuals in caring roles, such as nurses, teachers, social workers, and mental health professionals, are highly susceptible to burnout due to the emotional demands and nature of their work.
- **High-Pressure, High-Pace Jobs:** Professions such as surgeons or law enforcement officers are at high risk due to constant exposure to stressful situations, long hours, and the pressure of a high-stakes environment.
- **Personality Traits:** Certain personality traits can increase vulnerability to burnout. Perfectionistic, over-committed, and highly empathetic individuals who struggle to set boundaries or say 'no' are more likely to experience burnout.



So many good books
to help navigate
burnout

Not many for business
owners - burnout is different

The Anatomy of Burnout

- *Phase 1: The Honeymoon Phase*
- *Phase 2: Onset of Stress Phase*
- *Phase 3: Chronic Stress & The Detachment Phase*
 - *Phase 4: Burnout & Exhaustion Phase*
- *Phase 5: Habitual Burnout & The Vicious Cycle*

Character Strengths

are the building blocks of virtues,
working with our signature
character strengths allows us to
flourish.

Understanding your personal
character strengths can help you
reduce risk of burnout

Discover your character
strengths at
www.viacharacter.org



The VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

VIRTUE OF Wisdom	 CREATIVITY Original & Adaptive. Clever. A problem solver. Sees and does things in different ways	 CURIOSITY Interested, Explores new things. Open to new ideas	 JUDGMENT A critical thinker. Thinks things through. Open minded.	 LOVE OF LEARNING Masters new skills & topics. Systematically adds to knowledge.	 PERSPECTIVE Wise. Provides wise counsel. Takes the big picture view.
VIRTUE OF Courage	 BRAVERY Shows valor. Doesn't shrink from fear. Speaks up for what's right	 PERSEVERANCE Persistent, Industrious, Finishes what one starts	 HONESTY Authentic, Trustworthy, Sincere	 ZEST Enthusiastic. Energetic. Doesn't do things half-heartedly.	
VIRTUE OF Humanity	 LOVE Warm and genuine. Values close relationships	 KINDNESS Generous, Nurturing, Caring, Compassionate, Altruistic.	 SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE Aware of the motives and feelings of others, Knows what makes others tick.		
VIRTUE OF Justice	 TEAMWORK Team player. Socially responsible, Loyal	 FAIRNESS Just. Doesn't let feelings bias decisions about others.	 LEADERSHIP Organizes group activities, Encourages a group to get things done.		
VIRTUE OF Temperance	 FORGIVENESS Merciful, Accepts others' shortcomings, Gives people a second chance	 HUMILITY Modest, Lets one's accomplishments speak for themselves	 PRUDENCE Careful, Cautious, Doesn't take undue risk	 SELF-REGULATION Self-controlled, Manages impulses and emotions	
VIRTUE OF Transcendence	 APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE Feels awe & wonder in beauty. Inspired by goodness of others	 GRATITUDE Thankful for the good, Expresses thanks, Feels blessed	 HOPE Optimistic, Future-minded	 HUMOR Playful, Brings smiles to others, Lighthearted	 SPIRITUALITY Searches for meaning, Feels a sense of purpose, Senses a relationship with the sacred

Character Strengths that may contribute to Burnout

Certain character strengths, when overused or taken to an extreme, can actually contribute to burnout. It's not that they're bad traits; they're simply double-edged swords.

When we use certain strengths in excess or without balance, they can become risk factors.

- **Perseverance**
- **Love of Learning**
- **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence**
 - **Spirituality**

Character Strengths Important for Recovery

The road to recovery from burnout requires a shift in mindset and behaviour. I believe the following strengths are crucial for building resilience and healing.

- **Hope**
- **Humor**
- **Self-Regulation**
- **Gratitude**
- **Bravery**
- **Kindness**

Kotodama Guide to Recover from Burnout

Seven Steps to Renewal



Step 1: Acceptance

しょうがなん

Shoganai

Translates to 'it can't be helped' or 'it is what it is'. It's about letting go of what you can't control. Accepting the past choices that led to burnout or the expectation that I should have been immune. This is a critical step in anyone's journey to recovery – accepting that it is what it is.



Character Strengths aligned with *Shoganai*

Shoganai is a cornerstone of the Japanese cultural mindset. The mindset behind *shoganai* resonates with several VIA strengths, including:

- **Prudence:** This strength involves being careful, thoughtful, and far-sighted. *Shoganai* requires prudence in recognizing that some outcomes are not modifiable.
- **Perspective:** This strength is about having wisdom and a big-picture view. *Shoganai* embodies this acceptance by providing a way to make peace with unchangeable circumstances, allowing one to move forward without being bogged down by negative emotions or regret.
- **Humility:** This strength involves having an accurate view of oneself without seeking undue attention. *Shoganai* is inherently humble because it involves acknowledging the limits of one's own power and influence.

Essential oils to support *Shoganai*

Pine trees can thrive in harsh conditions, symbolising resilience and endurance, which reflects the principles of *shoganai*. The fresh vibrant resilient energy of the conifers such as pine helps us to focus on the presence moment, a key principle of *shoganai*, encouraging us to let go of worries about the past or future.

Other essential oils include **rosemary**, **frankincense**, **sugi wood**, **spruce** and **vetiver**. Each of these essential oils, helps us to cultivate the character strengths aligned with *shoganai* and a mindset of calm acceptance and strength in the face of life's inevitable challenges.



Step 2: Disconnect and Rest

古里

Furusato

A deep longing for a simpler life or one's hometown. It's the psychological equivalent of seeking refuge in a place of safety and comfort. It's a return to what nourishes the soul, away from the demanding pressures that caused the burnout.



Character strengths aligned with *Furusato*

Furusato resonates most strongly with the following VIA character strengths:

- **Gratitude:** *Furusato* evokes a deep sense of gratitude for one's roots and the nurturing environment of the past.
- **Love:** *Furusato* is not just a physical place; it's a place filled with the love of family, friends, and community. It represents the emotional bonds and sense of security that come from those loving relationships, providing a safe haven to which one can always return.
- **Spirituality:** *Furusato* often has a deep, almost spiritual quality. It represents a connection to one's past, heritage, and the natural world, providing a sense of grounding and belonging that transcends the mundane.
- **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence:** This strength involves noticing and appreciating beauty in all its forms, from nature to skill and moral goodness. The feeling of *furusato* encourages a mindful appreciation to a simpler lifestyle which is a key part of the disconnection and resting process.

Essential oils to promote *furusato*

Whenever we feel we have lost touch with the earth and our roots, the smoky, earthy and grounding aroma of **vetiver** perfectly embodies *furusato*, and promotes a sense of security, comfort and peace. We feel energised and empowered.

Other essential oils include **lavender**, **neroli**, **sweet orange** or **sandalwood**.

Each of these oils helps to cultivate the character strengths aligned with *furusato* – promoting a gentle comfort, the deep-rooted stability and revitalizing solitude – a safe space.



Step 3: Cultivate Awe & Mindfulness

木漏れ日

komorebi

Komorebi is the beautiful Japanese word for the scattered, dappled light that filters through the leaves of trees. It's a feeling of awe and wonder, a simple reminder to pause and appreciate the subtle, fleeting details of life.



Character Strengths aligned with *Komorebi*

Komorebi resonates most strongly with the following VIA character strengths:

- **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence:** This strength involves noticing and appreciating beauty in all its forms. *Komorebi* is a perfect example of this, as it requires a mindful pause to observe a simple, everyday phenomenon. Cultivating awe through this phenomenon directly builds this strength by training your mind to seek out and appreciate moments of beauty.
- **Spirituality:** *Komorebi* often evokes a sense of spiritual connection. This strength is about having a sense of purpose, meaning, and a feeling of connection to something larger than oneself.
This moment of awe can feel sacred, fostering a sense of peace and interconnectedness.
- **Gratitude:** The ability to stop and notice *komorebi* is a form of gratitude. This strength is about being thankful for the good things in life. This small act of thankfulness can shift our perspective away from the stress of burnout and toward a more positive and appreciative mindset.

Essential oils to promote *komorebi*

The beautiful fresh and invigorating aroma of **black spruce** embodies the essence of *komorebi*.

The scent is comforting and grounding which beautifully aligns with the sense of tranquillity and peacefulness evoked by *komorebi*.

Other essential oils include **fir**, **hinoki wood** or **pink grapefruit**. These essential oils provide a deep sacred & grounding state for awe, helping us to re-engage with the world in a more mindful way.



Step 4: Cultivate Support & Community

甘
え

Amae

Amae, is the unspoken need to be loved and to depend on others without feeling judged. It is the joy and comfort of being able to rely on another person. Overcoming burnout requires you to let go of the idea that you have to do it all alone and to embrace the support of your community.



Character strengths aligned with *Amae*

Amae resonates with several VIA character strengths, particularly in the context of burnout recovery:

- **Humility:** *Amae* is humility. It requires acknowledging that you don't have to carry the burden of burnout alone. By allowing yourself to be vulnerable and dependent on others for support, you are expressing a humble understanding that you are not invincible and that it is okay to need help.
- **Social Intelligence:** It involves sensing the readiness and willingness of others to offer support and being able to communicate your need in a way that is received well. It's about building and maintaining a strong social network that fosters mutual care and trust, which is a key component of recovery.
- **Love:** The core of *amae* is love. It is the feeling of being able to rely on another person's care and affection. This strength involves valuing close relationships with others, including family, friends, and partners.
- **Gratitude:** When you allow yourself to receive support through *amae*, a deep sense of gratitude often follows. This strength is about being thankful for the good things in your life. By accepting help, you become more aware of the kindness and generosity of those around you.

Essential Oils to nurture *Amae*

Geranium is comforting and helps to create a safe space for emotional vulnerability one may feel during burnout. The balancing qualities of geranium beautifully embody *amae*, which seeks to find a healthy balance between dependence on someone and maintaining our own emotional strength.

Other essential oils that provide a warm embrace of *amae* include **German chamomile, fragonia, lavender** and **tea tree**.



Step 5: Finding Purpose

生きがい

Ikigai

ikigai, is often translated as ‘a reason for being’. *Ikigai* can be found in the small, daily joys – it’s about finding satisfaction and meaning in ordinary life. Burnout often happens when we lose touch of our *ikigai*.

Rediscovering our *ikigai* is essential for finding a sustainable path out of burnout. *Ikigai* is about reconnecting with your purpose—what nourishes your soul, not just what makes you money—is vital for one’s recovery.



Character strengths aligned with *Ikigai*

Here are the VIA character strengths that resonate most strongly with the concept of *ikigai*:

- **Spirituality:** It's about feeling that your life has meaning and value. This strength involves a sense of purpose and a feeling of connection to something larger than yourself. It provides a moral compass and a sense of direction, which are crucial for re-evaluating one's life after burnout.
- **Perseverance:** Finding your *ikigai* isn't a single event; it's a process of self-discovery and action. This strength is about persisting toward a goal despite obstacles and setbacks. The path to a purposeful life is often filled with challenges.
- **Love of Learning:** *Ikigai* is a dynamic concept that encourages continuous growth. This strength is about the desire to acquire new knowledge or skills. It's the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, which can lead to new passions and open up new avenues for purpose.
- **Creativity:** This strength involves coming up with new and effective ways to do things. For someone recovering from burnout, this strength is vital for reimagining their life and career outside of a traditional, linear path.
- **Hope:** Finding purpose after a difficult period like burnout requires a belief that the future can be better. Hope is about having an optimistic outlook on the future. It gives a person a 'reason to be', which provides the hope and motivation needed to rebuild.

Essential oils for ikigai

The tenacious woody aroma of **Atlas cedarwood** gives us immovable strength and courage in times of crisis. Its grounding and centring aroma promotes feelings of stability and calm. It is associated with strength and resilience which perfectly aligns with the concept of *ikigai*.

Other essential oils that embody the kotodama of *ikigai* include **elemi, ginger, sage, coriander seed** and **mandarin**.



Step 6: Embrace Impermanence

物の哀れ

Mono no aware

The Japanese concept of *mono no aware* embodies impermanence. It means ‘the pathos of things’ or a deep, gentle sadness and appreciation for the transient nature of beauty and life. It's the wistful awareness that all things, beautiful or painful, are fleeting.



Character strengths aligned with *mono-no-aware*

- **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence:** It's the act of being present enough to observe the subtle, fleeting beauty around you. By cultivating this awareness, we can train ourself to find wonder and value in moments that are not permanent, shifting our focus from a static, production-oriented mindset to one that cherishes the present.
- **Perspective:** This strength involves having a broad view of life and the ability to see things in their larger context. *Mono no aware* provides a powerful perspective on burnout. Perspective helps reduce the feeling of being 'stuck' and provides the mental space to accept the present while looking toward a different future.
- **Humility:** It encourages a surrender to the natural cycles of life, growth, and decay. This humility helps in burnout recovery by releasing the need for absolute control and perfection. By accepting that we cannot control every outcome or prevent every ending, we can let go of the immense pressure that often leads to burnout in the first place.
- **Gratitude:** Embracing impermanence can lead to a profound gratitude for the present moment, recognizing that even the most difficult times will eventually pass and that there is always something to be thankful for, however small.

Essential oils to help you appreciate *mono-no-aware*

The delicate ephemeral aroma of **neroli** is so stunning and fleeting. It helps us to appreciate the present and perfectly embodies the symbol of impermanence. It's no wonder that it is often used in aromatherapy to bring awareness to the present moment and help bring us in touch with our higher spiritual selves.

Other essential oils that embody the kotodama of *mono no aware* include **bergamot** and **rose otto**.



Step 7: Transformation & Growth

金継ぎ

Kintsugi

The core of *kintsugi* is the acceptance of ‘brokenness’. This directly applies to burnout recovery. Instead of viewing your experience of burnout as a personal failure or a flaw to be hidden, *kintsugi* encourages you to see the cracks—the exhaustion, the emotional pain, the forced pause—as an integral part of your story. By accepting your imperfections and vulnerabilities, you can move away from the pressure of being flawless and embrace the reality of being human.



Character strengths aligned with *Kintsugi*

Kintsugi aligns with several key VIA character strengths that are cultivated through the process of healing and growth.

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence: *Kintsugi* is the ability to find beauty not in perfection, but in imperfection, resilience, and history. Instead of viewing your burnout as a personal flaw, you can see your journey of healing as something beautiful and unique.

Spirituality: This strength involves having a sense of purpose and meaning in life. The final stage of burnout recovery, symbolized by *kintsugi*, is about finding a new, stronger sense of purpose.

Humility: *Kintsugi* embodies a deep sense of humility. By acknowledging that you are not unbreakable and that you needed to go through this process, you can let go of the ego and the pressure to appear flawless.

Gratitude: This strength is about being thankful for the good things in your life. It's a way of saying 'thank you' for the wisdom gained, the boundaries set, and the renewed sense of self that emerged from a difficult time.

Essential Oils to support Kintsugi

Myrrh's connection to healing beautifully resonate with themes of resilience, renewal and finding value in the journey itself, not just the outcome.

In aromatherapy, all resins oils are used to promote emotional healing, promoting inner strength and providing us with the resilience to deal with life's challenges.

Other notable essential oils that aid in the final step of recovery from burnout include **immortelle**, **lavender** and **rock rose**.



Extra Step : Embracing Imperfection



Wabi Sabi

Wabi-sabi is the perfect antidote to the rigid and often unforgiving mindset of perfectionism. While perfectionism is a relentless pursuit of flawlessness, wabi-sabi is the philosophical acceptance and aesthetic appreciation of **imperfection, impermanence, and incompleteness.**



Character Strengths that embody *wabi sabi*

Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence: *Wabi-sabi* is the ability to find and appreciate beauty in the imperfect, the unconventional, and the understated. It redefines what 'excellent' means from flawless to authentic.

Humility: *Wabi-sabi* requires humility, which is the strength of not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. Embracing imperfection is an act of humility, acknowledging that you and your work are part of a larger, flawed, and beautiful universe. It helps a perfectionist accept their mistakes without shame.

Patience: *Wabi-sabi* teaches us to embrace a slow, natural, and organic pace. This aligns with patience, which is the ability to wait without frustration. For a perfectionist who wants results immediately and without error, *wabi-sabi's* emphasis on gradual change and the beauty of incompleteness cultivates the patience needed to heal from burnout and appreciate the journey.

Perspective: This strength is about being able to see the big picture and offer wise counsel. *Wabi-sabi* provides a profound perspective shift, moving from a narrow focus on details and flaws to a holistic view of life's transient, interconnected beauty.

Essential Oil for wabi sabi

Patchouli is a perfect embodiment of *wabi sabi*:

- **Imperfection and Complexity:** Patchouli's scent is rarely described as clean or perfect. It's sweet, earthy and herbaceous — a scent that many people either love or dislike. This complexity and its imperfect nature perfectly align with the *wabi-sabi*.
- **Impermanence and Aging:** Patchouli oil, much like a fine red wine, actually improving with age. It becomes deeper, smoother, and more refined over time.
- **Grounded and Acceptance:** Its deep, earthy aroma is profoundly grounding. It pulls you out of a racing mind filled with perfectionistic anxiety and centers you in the present moment, which is all that truly exists. It helps you accept things as they are, in all their flawed glory.



The top 7 character strengths involved in recovery from burnout

- **Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence** - neroli, jasmine, rose
- **Gratitude** – sweet orange, pink grapefruit, ylang ylang
 - **Spirituality** – frankincense, myrrh, sandalwood
 - **Humility** – patchouli, myrrh, vetiver
- **Hope** – bergamot, sweet orange, mandarin, yuzu
 - **love** – rose otto, geranium, lavender
- **Perspective** – frankincense, fragonia, lemon, rosemary