

Exhausted? Join the world's oldest club

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Dr. Anna Katharina Schaffner. Credit: Dr Anna Katharina Schaffner

In her new book, *Exhaustion: A History* (Columbia University Press, 2016), Dr Anna Katharina Schaffner, Reader in Comparative Literature and Medical Humanities, in the University's School of European Culture and Languages, says 'burnout' and worries about work life balance were known to different eras by different terms.

Dr Schaffner says we do live in an exhausting age but she was surprised to find that there was a substantial body of evidence to show other ages have been preoccupied by the same worry though it may have been called something else.

In her book, Dr Schaffner examines how every age battles with its own historically specific challenges. Anxieties about exhaustion, and the loss of physical and mental energies, are present both in fiction and in the medical, theological, and philosophical literature from classical antiquity onwards. Exhaustion is a timeless concern related to fears about death, illnesses, and the gradual waning of our energies as we age.

She concludes that though today we do live in an exhausting age, and there is much to justify debates about burnout, [work-life balance](#), and how other cultural factors affect our energy resources, ours is by no means the only age that has had to struggle with anxieties about technological, political, and cultural change.

More information: Dr Schaffner has been interviewed by the US magazine, *Psychology Today*: www.psychologytoday.com/blog/6/exhaustion-history

Provided by University of Kent

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