

Managing Burnout and Life Events

Lori A. Futterman R.N.,Ph.D.

PSY8636

Avoid Burnout

Burnout depletes your energy. You function at levels below what is normal for you. Employing methods such as the following can help you prevent this serious personal condition. Jones & Bearley* developed a list of practices that you can use.

1. **Focus on options.** You do have options, and that is energizing. Focus on the idea that there are choices available to you.
2. **Set goals and make plans.** This is axiomatic. We are much better at keeping ourselves energized if we know where we are going. Like the old bromide says, “If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there.”
3. **Accept the givens.** Moaning and groaning about the economy, about what happens if the hills slide is de-energizing. Accept the fact that you work in a company where there is a lot of pressure and that you are working in an economy that is somewhat less than perfect. That's the way the world is right now.
4. **Focus on a better world.** Obviously the world is in pretty bad shape. However, the world that we live in is getting better—better transportation, better communication, better food, and better medicine. You can maintain your personal energy by focusing on what is improving.
5. **Maintain optimism.** A person with little hope does not maintain energy adequately.
6. **Set yourself up to be successful.** Take challenges that you are pretty certain you are going to be able to meet.
7. **Live by this rule: “When in doubt, confront, when all else fails, try honesty.”** In other words, if you are having problems with somebody, go to him or her, look him or her in the eye, and say, “Let's talk. We need to work this thing out.”
8. **Reward yourself.** When you do something that is difficult for you, give yourself a reward. Other people may not notice, or they may not know how tough it is for you to do a particular thing. Instead of making yourself vulnerable by waiting for them to notice, reward yourself.
9. **Value the importance of your work.** Some people do not think that their work is important. If what is important is making money, or having a house at the lake, then the work itself does not nurture them. Put your work into a larger context, and you will treat yourself better. Focus on the purpose of your work, how it contributes to others. Believe in what you are doing.

10. **Focus on the “here and now.”** Don't look back at the “good old days.” There is a good chance that those times were not so good as today. Concentrate on what is before you right now.
11. **Turn off your motor every now and then.** Learn how to waste time. “Type A” people often seem to be going ninety miles an hour all the time. Sometimes you need to rest, to relax, to reflect, and to re-energize yourself.
12. **Confide in other people.** In general, all significant information about you should be known to some collection of others. That doesn't mean that you should get yourself a therapist. It does mean to “let it out,” to avoid keeping secrets inside yourself. If there is anything significant about you in relation to your “significant other,” go to the source.
13. **Engage in self-analysis.** Stop every now and then and ask, “Where am I going, what is going on here, who am I these days?”
14. **Remind yourself that you are not the target.** If you are a leader, some people will get angry with you. You will be a “tar baby” for some people's problems. You may be for them a representative of a system that they feel is wrong for them. You are not the target. People make themselves angry -- you can't. They make sense out of what happens to them. You can only take responsibility for what you do.
15. **Keep everything in perspective.** Try to put what is bothering you right now into a “big picture.” Sometimes the worries become trivial when viewed in a larger context.
16. **Claim your higher self.** Each of us has a higher self, or an ideal self. Some people call it a soul or spirit. Claim that part of yourself, and center on it.
17. **Love yourself unconditionally.** We all have our faults. If we can look at ourselves optimistically and pump up our positive self-esteem, we can maintain our personal energy effectively. Being unconditional about yourself means prizing yourself without regard for (not in spite of) your “warts.”

*J.E. Jones & W.L. Bearley. (1996). *Managing your energy*. Amherst. MA: HRD Press.

Lori A. Futterman RN, Ph.D. is experienced in partnering with physicians, to offer patients optimal care by integrating both medical and psychological care.

To explore how we may partner in the best interest of our patients, please call:

Lori A. Futterman RN, Ph.D.

591 Camino de la Reina Ste 705

San Diego Ca. 92108

Drlorifutterman.com

laf1@cox.net

619-297-3311(voice)

619-294-3322(fax)