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Overcoming Burnout: *Recharging, Reenergizing and Restoring Your Power*

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Multiple studies and research continue to report an escalation of stress, high pressure, and burnout in the workplace. Burnout is generally described as a reaction to prolonged or chronic job stress and is described as physical and emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and feelings of reduced professional ability. Burnout is often characterized as a sense of hopelessness and/or helplessness due to seemingly unresolvable situations and problems.

Gallup's 2018 study of 7,500 full-time employees found that two thirds of respondents are experiencing burnout on the job. They also reported of that group, 63% or more are likely to take a sick day and they are half as likely to openly discuss their performance goals. And, 23% are more likely to visit an emergency room and 2.6 times more likely to leave a current employer.

In May of this year, World Health Organization (WHO) declared burnout to be an official occupational phenomenon. It isn't just a common word for stress—it is now classified as a “serious, widespread health concern.”

In Medscape's 2019 report, 44% of 15,000 physicians (in 29 specialties), reported feeling burnout. Reasons cited for overall physician burnout were bureaucratic tasks (charting, paperwork), too many hours at work, computerization (EHRs), and lack of respect from administrators, employers or colleagues.

Bryan Bohman, MD, senior advisor to the WellMD Center at Stanford Medicine, states in *The Nation's Health*, regarding burnout, “The problem affects quality of care, results in high turnover, reduces productivity, destroys

people's personal lives and increases the risk of suicide. And...it tends to work undercover.”

RN Network's 2017 study on nurse burnout determined that nearly half of nurses working in the United States have considered leaving the field. MED+ED, citing various studies said that 49% of registered nurses under age 30 and 40% over age 30 experience burnout. They described 4 out of 10 nurses dreading going to work. Nurses reported the main contributors to burnout were a poor work environment including management issues, poor leadership and a lack of teamwork as their top stressors.

Burnout can manifest in many symptoms including irritability, frustration, emotional detachment, on-going complaints, resignation, frequent sick days, lack of sleep, family problems, addictions, and depression. People suffering from burnout contribute to a culture of blame, gossip, poor communication, internal conflict, relationship breakdowns, and victimization. Feeling powerless or helpless seems to be an epidemic.

Burnout is a symptom of a greater problem

The prevailing advice for easing the pressure and stress causing burnout includes work life balance, exercise, listening to music, family time, recreation, talking with friends and family, and therapy, all of which are good. But that still does not address the source of the problem.

Burnout is a symptom of a greater problem: a dysfunctional workplace culture fraught with fearful egos battling and competing for power. Most everyone is aware of it, but fear of reprisal or retaliation keeps people silent. An insidious current of fear is running beneath the surface of most workplaces, to some degree. Organizations are trying to address the issues but I believe a deeper understanding is needed to address the complex relationships of blame and victimhood in workplace culture. Burnout will cease when we rebuild relationships with trust and compassion in the workplace.

Regaining power by giving up blame and victimhood

Blame and feeling victimized are both rampant in today's workplace and world. Most people don't realize that when they blame others, they are actually giving up their own power. When we blame others, the reaction is to blame back. This reaction and counter-reaction is going on everywhere, in all industries, in families, in governments and in the world. Both sides of an interaction that is locked in blame are operating from a hidden fear.

Consider this concept—you cannot be a victim without a perpetrator, and you cannot be a perpetrator without a victim. Each side claims to be the self-righteous victim and holds the other responsible. Each side feels exonerated if the blame can be placed fully on the other person, situation, or group. Each side is operating as the self-righteous victim. It is a mutual dynamic with both sides claiming innocence. So, who is the victim?

The solution lies in self-awareness and reclaiming your own internal power, one person at a time. I call this process *A Personal Restoration Plan: The Path to the Authentic Power*. Self-awareness, the basis of emotional intelligence, leads to new insights and freedom from fear. But it takes willingness to see things you don't like about yourself and the readiness to change. Few people want to do this.

Guidelines to recharge, reenergize, and restore: *A Personal Restoration Plan*

Overcoming burnout and finding your inner strength brings the ability to make choices that benefit you and those around you. You can be a voice for change, but first you need to reenergize yourself.

Here are steps to recharge, reenergize and restore yourself.

1. Practice *Compassionate Grace* for yourself and, thereby others.
Give up guilt, self-criticism and harsh judgment of yourself. When you berate yourself, you drain your own power and energy. Be courageous enough to see your perceived weaknesses, inadequacies and fears—without judgment. Honest insight allows you to release your defenses and fears of exposure. When you

accept your own weaknesses without judgment, you no longer waste energy by holding them inside or covering them up.

2. Claim your inner authority.

Observe how you let the opinions of others impact your view of yourself. These observations can help you discover how you diminish your own authority and disqualify yourself based what others say or do. As you release your need for approval and external validation, you will feel a returning strength and an uplifting energy of confidence, peace and joy.

3. Begin each day with a fresh perspective.

When you are feeling burned out and disempowered you are blind to new possibilities. Replace dread with the optimistic belief in change and opportunity. Recognize how carrying the burden of yesterday impacts your ability to work freely today. Renounce your helplessness. You are NOT helpless.

4. Choose wisely where you place your energy.

Don't drain your energy needlessly on small issues, things outside your control or other people's business. Discover the path of true commitment to a cause that is worthy of your attention, ambition and energy. Be revitalized by bringing passion and joy into your work and personal life.

5. Trust in the unknown and be willing to face change.

Let go of energy-draining stories from the past and allow new experiences to unfold.

If you already know something based on past experiences, then it is not new, and you will project the same stories into your future. When you trust that the future will unfold from the wisdom in the moment, you are inviting new and synchronistic experiences.

6. Practice meditation, mindfulness and being present.

Presence brings clarity, breakthroughs and inspiration. You can't change the past nor the future. Only the present moment exists. When we are present, we align with the source of Universal Love, the power that sustains all life—a power that can and will sustain you.

Danna Beal, M.Ed., lives in the Seattle, WA area where she is an international speaker, author, retreat/workshop leader, and executive coach. She has spoken to thousands of businesses and conferences and has been on countless radio shows, podcasts, and webinars discussing “Enlightened Leadership” and “Workplace Culture” based on her book, “The Extraordinary Workplace: Replacing Fear with Trust and Compassion.” Her audiences and clients have included: Seattle Science Foundation--Spine Surgeons Grand Rounds, Kaiser Permanente Grand Rounds, Oakland, CA, AHRA, Orlando, FL, Federal Aviation Administration, Overlake Hospital Perioperative Conference, Radia, numerous physician practices and hospitals. Her website is www.dannabeal.com.