

FIRED UP or BURNED OUT? Your power to make a difference

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1. BEING LABELED “glorified babysitter”, yelled at by a distraught parent, sued by a resentful ex-staff member, or addled by our own “2nd guessing”, all deplete our power. When the status of our profession is reflected in our paycheck, we can feel anxious and undervalued. Like a persistent terrier, burnout may nip at our heels.

What depletes your energy and spirit? (From within and without)

2. POWER can be used or abused. When we experience abuses of power, we learn to fear or have distaste for the powerful. People of color & women, who have been denied direct expression of/access to power, tend to distrust POWER. Consider Christopher Reeves’s insight: “*I could have been remembered as a man in a red cape.*” Perhaps power isn’t what we were taught it is.

How do you define POWER (your personal view):

Describe your power (with examples):

3. GENTLY HELPING a person grow, confronting injustice, sharing your gifts, telling your truth lovingly, are expressions of power. Daily, we are given opportunities to make a difference. Change the life of one child and you change the world.

Name SOMEONE who used her/his POWER in ways that you appreciate

In the world:

In our field:

In your life as a child:

4. WARNING SIGNS OF BURNOUT. Despite all the endearing, memorable moments we share with children, we work in a high stress profession. Many of us become so involved helping others, we do not take adequate care of ourselves.

List 3 WARNING SIGNS you have (physically, emotionally, socially) that indicate you may be in DANGER OF BURNING OUT:

5. SOURCES OF POWER differ for each of us. When burnout threatens, renewing our spirit becomes crucial. What is the source of your enthusiasm, energy, optimism and passion? Research shows that optimistic people live longer, have happier lives, and are healthier.

What do you stand for?

What renews your passion for your work

When people help us to feel good about who we are, they are really helping us to love the meaning of what we create in this life. It seems to me that the most essential element in the development of any creation must be love - a love that begins in the simple expressions of care for a little child, and, once received, goes onto mature into responsible feelings about ourselves and others.

-Life's journeys according to Mr. Rogers (2005)

6. PREVENTING BURNOUT: your personal SUPPORT SYSTEM We do not have to change the world by ourselves. Others are waiting to help us. Reflect for a moment on your support system: Who helps you keep your sense of humor and cheers you on in hard times? Who challenges you to face the things you prefer to avoid? Who celebrates your accomplishments? **Fill in the chart below with names of folk who support you.** If you find you have blank spaces, consider who may be waiting for you to ask them for support.

Personal life

Professional life

Community

**Unconditional
Support/love**

**Challenges you
To be the best
You can; to confront
Your "demons"**

**Celebrates your
Successes &
Efforts**

7. Thirty seconds on the pathway to serenity. Here is a simple exercise you can do inside yourself at almost anytime, especially when you feel stress rising and your power fading. This can actually lower your blood pressure.

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1. Picture a serene place you go to feel restored, at home, at peace (the beach, walking your dog, watching a sunset, being hugged by a friend).
 2. Place your right hand over your heart, so you can feel your heart beat.
 3. Imagine yourself in your serene place. Close your eyes. Breathe in and out.
 4. When distracting thoughts or fears intrude, shoo them away. This is your time.
 5. Breathe in and out, while you imagine being in your serene place.
 6. Open your eyes with an "attitude of gratitude" for quiet places.
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Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the song without words and never stops-at all.
-Emily Dickinson
