PREVENTING LEADER BURNOUT

- Many expressions have been cleverly coined for volunteer burnout.

  —Fried/toasted/crackers/zoned out/zombified …

  —It ceases to be funny when burnout is why volunteers stop doing what they are passionate about.

- What is burnout?

  —Burnout is a reaction to unrelieved, consistent, draining, sapping clusters of emotional and/or physical exhaustion.

  —It is a psychological descriptive for the experience of longterm exhaustion and diminished interest.

Key causes of burnout

—Taking on too many responsibilities without receiving enough help from others

—Unclear or overly demanding expectations

—Feeling a lack of empowerment/control over one's work

—Lack of recognition or rewards for good work

—Lack of close, supportive relationships and/or adequate resources

—Doing work that's monotonous or unchallenging

—Working in a chaotic or high-pressure environment

—Lack of personal time for relaxing and socializing

—Being expected to be too many things to too many people

Personality traits that can contribute to burnout

- —Perfectionist tendencies
- —Pessimistic views of self and the world
- —Need to be in control; reluctance to delegate
- —High-achieving, type A personality

Signs of burnout

—Signs can be subtle at first, but they worsen as time goes on.

—Paying attention to the early warning signs can prevent burnout and the loss of good volunteers.

Physical signs and symptoms of burnout

—Feeling tired and drained most of the time

—Lowered immunity; feeling sick a lot

—Frequent headaches, back pain, muscle aches

—Change in appetite or sleeping habits

Emotional signs and symptoms of burnout

—Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment

—Loss of motivation

—Increasingly cynical and negative outlook

—Feeling powerless or ineffective

—Overreacting to frustrations (conflict)

—Detachment; feeling alone

—Sense of failure or self-doubt

—Feelings of guilt

Behavioral signs and symptoms of burnout

—Procrastinating, taking longer to get things done

—Loss of focus

—Apathy

—Skipping meetings/activities

—Taking frustrations out on others

—Withdrawing from responsibilities

Preventing burnout

—Clear position descriptions enable leaders to gauge their level of involvement.

—Training clarifies expectations; prepares one for the position with program ideas and activities; and gives an understanding of available resources and how to use them.

—Active, effective shared leadership lessens the burden and provides support and understanding.

—Meaningful responsibilities help provide satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment.

—Fun, interesting quality program helps prevent boredom.

—Effective communication keeps everyone in the loop and informed; allows for expression of ideas and concerns; empowers leaders; and provides support to leaders.

—Recognitions help give leaders a sense of accomplishment and make them feel appreciated.

Recovering from burnout

—Slow down, take time off.

—Get support: Resist urges toward isolation.

—Acknowledge losses: idealism, role identity from position, sense of community.

—Reevaluate goals and objectives: what is truly enjoyed versus what was not enjoyable and created a sense of burden.

—Make changes: Take a break or find a new role with new challenges

QUESTIONS??