



HOW TO BATTLE ADVOCACY BURNOUT

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We all became advocates, activists, and entrepreneurs because we are passionate and dedicated to improving the world. We love what we do so investing ourselves in certain causes does not always feel like work. Although other times it feels like an overwhelming amount of work.

Burnout is not something that hits you all at once, it is more of a gradual scale. There are a variety of different signs associated with burnout including feelings of anxiety or sadness, drastic changes in sleeping or eating habits, physical pains, or increased irritability. It can feel different for everyone, but if you notice changes negatively affecting your daily life, chances are you are sizzling out.

Sometimes we get so caught up in helping everybody else that we forget that we need to take care of ourselves too. Here are some tips to battling advocacy burnout:

SCHEDULE IN SELF-CARE

There were some days where I would look at the clock at 7am and ten minutes later, find that the day was nearly over. Twenty-four hours just wasn't enough time to finish everything that needed to be done. I started practicing my own version of the [Pomodoro Technique](#) and found that it really boosted my energy and productivity. I set my timer for 45 minutes to work on a single task then when it rings, I stop wherever I am to take a five to ten-minute break. You have to think of it like a test. The second the timer rings, pencils down and hands up. I repeat this process three more times, then on the fourth break, take 30 minutes for myself - eat my lunch, Facetime my friend, paint my nails, whatever it may be. Then, I start the process over. This technique forces me to reassess what really needs to be done and learn how to delegate or let go of things that don't demand my immediate attention.

PRIORITIZE YOUR WELLBEING

[Self-care](#) is not selfish. It is necessary. When I first started to schedule time for myself, it actually stressed me out more than it relaxed me. Casually reading or taking time to journal made me feel "unproductive" and guilty that I wasn't working on my projects. There will always be something to do, but you have to prioritize your own wellbeing before anything else. If you are not maintaining a balanced lifestyle, you are eventually

going to reach your tipping point. There is a quote by author and productivity consultant [David Allen](#), “You can do anything – but not everything.” Don’t try to prove otherwise because your mental wellbeing will lose every time. Been there. Tried that.

CONNECT IRL (VIRTUALLY)

Now more than ever we are socially connected via platforms like Instagram and Twitter, but we couldn’t be any more relationship deprived. We are social distancing from one another in more ways than one. Even after a while, sitting in front of the video camera talking can seem like a tedious routine. Whether it be with your friends, peers, or family, here are some fun ways to maintain and deepen your relationships without getting zoom fatigue:

- **HAVE A PICNIC**
Everyone lays out their blankets, makes themselves a sandwich, and just enjoys some vitamin D (or indoor air conditioning) from their own space. You would be surprised how much of a difference a PB&J and a blanket can make.
- **PLAY AN OLD-FASHIONED GAME**
Charades, Taboo, Pictionary. If you type in virtual [insert game here] you’ll get plenty of results, but it’s also fun to get creative and add your own twists on these traditional games.

BUILD YOUR COPING BANK

It is important to have a list of coping skills and exercises that can serve as a release and give you a sense of calmness when those moments arise. There is not a one-size fits all method, but there are a variety of different ways and [resources](#) that can help you refresh your mental wellness. Make a list of all of the things that you know work for you and don’t be afraid to try some new things too. Be open to trying new methods and don’t be afraid to reach out for help. Remember you are not alone and talking with someone who can relate (like another HERlead Fellow) can feel like such a relief. Sometimes you don’t even know how you feel until you explain it to someone else.

"HAVE YOU TRIED TURNING IT OFF AND ON?"

Your ability to deal with stress is often tied to how much you are having to handle on a regular basis. Sometimes you just need to take a step back to reset. It can be difficult separating ourselves from our work because our hobbies, circle of friends, and social communities, are typically related to our causes. Nevertheless, every once in a while it is important to remove yourself entirely from anything work-related in order to clear your headspace. Your work is not who you are. It’s what you do. You don’t have to feel like you need to be doing something all the time. It’s okay to just *be*.

I think inspirational writer Eleanor Brownn sums it up best, “When you take time to replenish your spirit, it allows you to serve others from the overflow. You cannot serve from an empty vessel.” You know yourself best so do not try to ignore the signs of burnout. When you feel your best, it reflects not only in your work, but in all aspects of your life. Put your best foot forward by simply taking a step back.