





Preventing Volunteer Burnout

Volunteering is a noble and rewarding endeavor, but it can also be demanding and lead to burnout if not properly managed. In this presentation, we will explore strategies to prevent volunteer burnout and ensure a positive and sustainable volunteer experience.



What is Burn-out?

Volunteer burnout refers to feeling emotionally and physically drained due to the demands of your volunteer role within the organization. This exhaustion can stem from constantly juggling responsibilities, feeling overwhelmed by the workload, or experiencing a lack of appreciation or support. It may lead to decreased motivation, effectiveness, and enjoyment in volunteer work, potentially resulting in volunteers stepping back or resigning from their positions.

Who experiences burn-out?

Those who give too much...

Burnout can affect anyone, regardless of age, profession, or background. It's not limited to just one group of people. Anyone who experiences prolonged stress, overwhelming demands, or a lack of support in their work or personal life can be susceptible to burnout. This includes professionals, students, caregivers, volunteers, and others who may feel exhausted, detached, and less effective in their roles due to chronic stress and fatigue.

Strategies to Prevent Volunteer Burnout

One Person On Job

Many Hands Make Light Work

1. Try to make sure each volunteer has only one job
2. Establish Clear Expectations and Roles,
3. Offer Ongoing Support and Supervision
4. Foster a Positive Volunteer Culture
5. Provide Meaningful and Engaging Opportunities
6. Implement Effective Volunteer Management Practices
7. Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Most importantly: Learn to recognize the signs of burnout and pro-actively work to prevent it.

1. Establish Clear Expectations and Roles

Clearly define volunteer responsibilities and time commitments.

Provide detailed job descriptions and training to set volunteers up for success.

Regularly review and adjust volunteer roles as needed.

Make sure each person has only one roll, and they are trained in it

2. Offer Ongoing Support and Supervision

Make sure each person is trained in their role

Assign an experienced volunteer to provide guidance and support. This should be the job of your unit trainer or guide.

Encourage open communication and feedback between

Provide opportunities for volunteers to share their experiences and concerns. Hosting regular monthly committee meetings is the best place for volunteers to speak.

3. Foster a Positive Volunteer Culture

The aims and methods of scouting should guide your culture. Encourage scouters to get advanced training, such as WoodBadge and USA

Recognize and appreciate the contributions of volunteers.

Organize social events and team-building activities to build a sense of community.

Encourage volunteers to take breaks and practice self-care.

4. Provide Meaningful and Engaging Opportunities

Align volunteer tasks with the interests and skills of the individual
(Merit Badge Counselors)

Offer a variety of activities to prevent monotony and burnout, change roles annually.

Provide opportunities for volunteers to take on new challenges and grow.

5. Implement Effective Volunteer Management Practices

Regularly review and update volunteer policies and procedures; make sure volunteers are fully trained

Collect feedback from volunteers and use it to improve the program.

Use ScoutBook to streamline volunteer tasks

6. Don't Reinvent the Wheel

Use the Leader Guide - Each rank has a Leader Guide built specifically for the required and elective adventures using endless working experience and tried-and-true Scouting methods.

Use Scoutbook - Use ScoutBook to log your Scouts awards, advancements and logs. This syncs with your Council so you always have an accurate roster, and the monthly reporting makes award purchases a breeze! This is also a great way of passing on timely communication with unit families.

Use Signup tools, like Signup Genius for things with time slots

Use Reminder apps, such as Remind.com and make sure everyone signs-up. Don't try to use multiple communication methods

The Rule of 5

Scout leaders are notorious for volunteering and over-committing. We like to say and hear the word YES! Leaders often get burnout when they over-commit to anything.

The perception of burnout happens quickly when there is an imbalance of one or more of these. Balancing these five priorities and helping others balance their commitments, makes everyone happier people. Always remember you can say NO (politely) and still help find someone who is able to say yes. Just think about the Rule of Five before committing yourself or others to anything.

- (1) Family – That's your family and friends you would consider family.
- (2) Faith – Putting God in your life will help give it purpose and meaning.
- (3) Career – Using your skills to pay the bills.
- (4) Self – Taking time for yourself, downtime is important.
- (5) Others – Helping others become better people and doing good turns for them.

Identifying Burnout

How are you doing? Seriously. Are you alright?

I ask because, just like any job, Scout Leadership can take a toll and leave us all susceptible to mental, physical, and emotional burnout. Like the true Scouters we are, many of us will feel that strain and plug along because of our obligation to our Scouts and the unit, because “reliable” is the unwritten 13th Point of the Scout Law, and because we take that Scout Oath very seriously (as we should).

Stages of Burnout

Getting started - enthusiasm is high, goals are lofty

Mid Stream - You realize your expectations were too high, you feel confused and disillusioned. You try harder and become bored and frustrated; things just aren't working

Brownout - As you enter the early stages of burn-out, you start to “run out of gas”. You are tired irritable, indecisiveness becomes the norm

Burnout - Frustration sets in. Anger, loss of enthusiasm, when you realize you won't achieve your goals, you feel despair. People at this stage talk of wanting to quit or just don't show up anymore.

Once a person is burned-out, it is highly unlikely you will be able to retain them or convince them to re-join.

Signs of Burnout

Know the signs of burnout so it can be prevented.

- Struggling to create meeting plans or see them through
- Constantly questioning yourself and/or others
- Feeling irritable and cynical
- Criticizing your Scouts without seeing failure as a step to success
- Becoming impatient with your Scouts
- Feeling isolated, stressing about a lack of help or parent participation
- Cancelling meetings because you're struggling with a lack of interest or satisfaction
- Feeling physical symptoms like headaches, stomach issues, or a change in sleep habits

Consequences of Burnout

The consequences can be serious; excessive stress, depression, true fatigue, insomnia, high blood pressure, a vulnerability to illness, and heart disease.

Combating Burnout

If you are burned-out, accept your negative feelings of anger, confusion, depression, anxiety and failure.

This is a necessary step to recovery.

In burnout, there is a deep sense of loss. Allowing it to pass will take time and patience.

- Talk about your pain and frustrations
- Expect less of yourself
- If your feelings are severe, seek counseling