



CBF Peer Learning Groups

Avoiding burnout

Flight safety instructions usually include the advice to “put on your own oxygen mask before attempting to help others.” One of the most important issues for our leadership stance is whether or not we have developed the capacity for self-care. With all of the draws on a minister’s time, it is easy to care for everyone else and forget about yourself. Such behavior may seem valiant at the time, but too much stress can lead to burnout.

Here is what happens in your body when you experience stress:

- Adrenaline is pumped into body
- Sugar and cholesterol are emptied into the system
- The body is ready for action
- Fight/flight/freeze
 - Usual response to body symptoms is fight/flight
 - Continual stress can lead to shutting down, or freeze

Stress will happen, and it should not always be viewed as a negative. (Some level of stress is required for creativity and productivity.) It is something to manage, though. Prolonged stress or frustration leads to burnout, the exhaustion of physical or emotional strength.

3 factor types that influence burnout

Work-context factors

1. *Boredom* – monotony, lack of interest, dull
2. *Upward communication* – how often employee talks to people in higher positions
3. *Decision influence* – opportunity for independent decisions and control
4. *Growth opportunities* – personal growth and development of skills, knowledge
5. *Personal control* – autonomous function
6. *Salary* – appropriate compensation for work required
7. *Task identity* – completion of the whole task vs. just a part
8. *Task responsibility* – accountability, responsibility of tasks
9. *Task significance* – impact on lives and work of others
10. *Skill variety* – different activities, skills and talents used
11. *Specialized skills* – high complex skill level or expertise
12. *Supervisor support* – immediate supervisor supports work efforts
13. *Work load* – not too heavy or light

Organizational factors

1. *Leadership effectiveness* – leadership effective inspiring excellence, getting work done
2. *Planning* – planning part of organizational processes
3. *Clarity of policies and procedures* – clearly articulated and meaningful
4. *Organizational philosophy/mission* – guides people’s work throughout the organization

Alienation factors

1. *Meaninglessness* – future isn’t as good as current position or profession
2. *Cultural estrangement* – low reward value to goals typically valued by organization
3. *Powerlessness* – employee’s own behavior won’t determine outcomes or reinforcement they seek
4. *Social isolation* – exclusion or rejection
5. *Work-activity estrangement* – position duties and tasks don’t provide enjoyment or satisfaction
6. *Worker alienation* – degree to which person disassociates from a work identity

Questions for discussion:

- What are the stresses in your family?
- What are the stresses in your work?
- What are the stresses in your other key relationships?
- What are your signals that you’re experiencing too much stress? Too little?
- What are some of the strategies you’ve developed for managing stress?
- In the areas of your life in which you still experience too much stress, what would an optimal level of stress look like? What are some strategies you could employ to lower your stress to that level?
- On the list of factors that impact burnout, which ones strike closest to home? What is one small step you might take toward addressing those factors?
- How can your PLG encourage you in and hold you accountable to managing your stress level?