

SUSTAIN



Not only does nature sustain us physically, it can also engender in us, if we allow it, a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against alienation from the sources of our strength.

~ Rachel Louise Carson



DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE...

As a Kid, I Don't Remember Who Gave Me This Sage Advice, But It Has Always Served Me Well.

In my work building capacity with social profit organizations, I'm often confronted with issues of burnout surfacing from staff, board, volunteers, and sometimes, even clients. As a result, I've spent a lot of time looking at the issue in the context of sustainability.

Most of our consulting practice at Common Ground has to do with creating organizational systems that support long-term stability, manageable growth, and healthy systems. From an organizational perspective, it is usually not hard to convince leaders of the need to pay attention to these concepts.

As someone who works hard and cares deeply about the world we inhabit, however, I'm not always as good at paying attention to these same concepts at home. In fact, I haven't met

many social profit leaders who couldn't benefit from spending a little more time focusing on the balance between their personal and professional lives.

Lately, I've been doing a lot more coaching of social profit leaders (and being coached myself). This has been an excellent strategy for identifying potential burnout issues before they really take root. Research tells us that most burnout is related to one of the following six areas: "workload (too much work, not enough resources); control (micromanagement, lack of influence, accountability without power); reward (not enough pay, acknowledgment, or satisfaction); community (isolation, conflict, or disrespect); fairness (discrimination, favoritism); and values (ethical conflicts or meaningless tasks)."¹

In order to address burnout, it's important to first identify and then understand the particular stressors at play in your situation. I believe that if the conditions causing the burnout exist for you, they are probably affecting others as well. In these cases, there needs to be an organizational shift in practice if the health of the overall system (which includes you) is going to improve.

Of course, in the meantime, you don't have to wait for the organization to get better. You can also act to change your own behaviors and reactions to the situations that are causing the stress and the feelings of burnout. Ride your bike at lunch, don't eat at your desk, delegate more, leave your laptop at the office . . .

And don't forget to breathe!

¹ From "Reversing Burnout," By Christina Maslach and Michael Leiter, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Winter 2005

RULES FOR BEING HUMAN

By Chérie Carter-Scott

When you were born, you didn't come with an owner's manual; these ideas help make life better:

01. You will receive a body. You may like it or hate it, but it's the only thing you are sure to keep for the rest of your life.

02. You will learn lessons. You are enrolled in a full-time informal school called "Life on Planet Earth." Every person or incident is the Universal Teacher.

03. There are no mistakes, only lessons. Growth is a process of experimentation. "Failure" is as much a part of the process as "success."

04. A lesson is repeated until learned. It is presented to you in various forms until you learn it—then you can go on to the next lesson.

05. If you don't learn easy lessons, they get harder. External problems are a precise reflection of your internal state. When you clear inner obstructions, your outside world changes. Pain is how the universe gets your attention.

06. You will know you've learned a lesson when your actions change. Wisdom is practice. A little of something is better than a lot of nothing.

07. "There" is no better than "here." When your "there" becomes a "here," you will simply obtain another "there," that again looks better than "here."

08. Others are only mirrors of you. You cannot love or hate something about another unless it reflects something you love or hate in yourself.

09. Your life is up to you. Life provides the canvas; you do the painting. Take charge of your life—or someone else will.

10. You always get what you want. Your subconscious rightfully determines what energies, experiences, and people you attract—the only foolproof way to know what you want is to see what you have. There are no victims, only students.

11. There is no right or wrong, but there are consequences. Moralizing doesn't help. Judgments only hold patterns in place. Just do your best.

12. Your answers lie inside you. Children need guidance from others; as we mature, we trust our hearts, where the Laws of Spirit are written. You know more than you have heard or read or been told. All you need to do is to look, listen, and trust.

13. You will forget all this.

14. You can always remember.

QUICK TIP SERIES

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**There must be quite a few things
that a hot bath won't cure, but I
don't know many of them.**

~ Sylvia Plath

COMMUNITY



Communities are inherently sustaining. Seek them out.

"We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been. A place half-remembered, and half-envisioned that we can only catch glimpses of from time to time. Community. Somewhere there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our throats. Somewhere a circle of friends will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. Someplace where we can be free."

~ Starhawke