

**Counteracting burnout:  
a workshop for people starting activism**

**Introduction:**

During this training, we will deal with the topic of burning out of women politicians. We will look at the factors conducive to the appearance of burnout, mechanisms and symptoms of political / activist burnout, as well as ways to counteract burnout. During the training, the participants will have the opportunity to look at their own work and organizational culture related to rest. We will also reflect on potential changes that can be made in organizations and / or in their own everyday functioning.

**General objective of the training:** Encouraging female participants to change their work, which will enable them to avoid or reduce the level of burnout in activist activities.

**Specific training objectives:**

1. Gaining knowledge about the mechanisms of activist burnout.
2. Self-reflection about your own work and factors favoring burnout.
3. Development of skills related to preventing burnout at the organizational level.
4. Development of skills related to preventing burnout at the personal level.

**Key words:**

- Burn-out
- Self-care
- Rest
- Diversified activism
- Time budget

**Time:** 2 days (6 hours + breaks each). The scenario assumes the participation of 12 people in training (this number of people is included in the specific duration of individual modules).

**Required materials:**

- flipchart
- Markers
- Small post-it cards
- Exercise cards (attached)
- Overhead projector
- Computer
- Speakers
- Colored yarn

Important note - this scenario is not a manual on activist burnout. As a trainer, you should have the appropriate theoretical preparation regarding the mechanisms of burnout and ways to counteract it, to provide students with knowledge and adequate information at every stage of the training. The scenario includes tips on knowledge to present during the training, to develop by you and



suggestions for exercises that you can modify or change, depending on the needs of the group with which you work.

The scenario is addressed to women who are just beginning their socio-political engagement (as councilors, MPs, local government officials, activists, NGO activists).

### Needs assessment

If there is such a technical possibility, before the workshop it is worth carrying out a short online questionnaire in which we ask the participants about their expectations, needs and previous experience related to the subject of the training. This will make it much easier for us to adapt this general scenario to the needs of the people we meet.

## Module 0 - Introduction

When the workshop program is very tight, there may be a temptation to "save time" on the so-called Module 0. Meanwhile, in a workshop situation, when the participants do not know each other well, and have the prospect of spending two days working together, sharing, sometimes personal experience, this introductory part is very important and allows to build a solid base for further action. Therefore, at the beginning of the training, ask for a mutual representation (eg in the form of a "round"), presenting the planned program and training objectives and making sure that there is consent from the group, gathering fears and expectations from the participants, as well as working out the rules (contract) that will give a sense of security and support those who participate in the fullest possible use of the workshop. At the end of this part, you can propose to the group "energizer", which on the one hand will have an integrating character, and on the other hand it can introduce people to the next substantive part of the workshop in a light manner.

### The suggested plan of the module:

1. Presentation of the persons leading and participating and integration of the workshop group.
2. Presentation of the training goals.
3. Gathering the expectations / needs of participants and their concerns related to participation in the training.
4. Presentation of the training program.
5. Developing the principles of cooperation.
6. Energizer introducing to the next part of the training (optimally one that even at least refers to the subject of the training).

**Time:** 90 minutes

### Presentation of the persons leading and participating

- Welcome training participants
- Presentation of the persons leading and presenting the subject of the training, organizer, source of financing, etc.
- Participants' presentation - name (optionally name), with which activism I am connected? Why am I here?

### Presentation of the training goals

- Present training goals (previously write them on a flipchart), discuss them with the participants
- Gathering the needs of the training participants



- Invite the participant to share their expectations and fears - choose your preferred form (eg using the so-called balloon - you draw an air balloon on the flipchart and ask people to stick cards with expectations (one expectation) in the balloon bowl, and worry (1 concern = 1 sheet) with sandbags)
- Group the needs and fears of the participants, summarize them and then refer to which needs and to what extent they can be realized during this meeting. You can also refer to your concerns as fully as possible, so that your anxiety will not make it difficult for people to face the difficult topic of burning out.

Presentation of the training framework program

- Discuss the program - both at the substantive and organizational levels (issues of working hours, breaks, meals, accommodation, find out everything, and answer all the bothering questions)

Working out the principles of cooperation

- Briefly enter the subject of the rules, ask the group if they are ready to jointly generate the rules in force during the meeting.
- When generating cooperation rules, write them on a flipchart, making sure beforehand whether a given rule is acceptable for all participants.
- Take care of the rules that are important for the subject of burnout, such as kindness, confidentiality - maybe in the formula of the Las Vegas principle ("what happens in Las Vegas, stays in Las Vegas"), do not evaluate)

### Integration exercise

- Choose the exercise that you like to do and which somehow refers to the content of the meeting (eg Activistic bingo - Annex No. 1 or "Flower" from the textbook of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System "Games and Fun" available at: <http://czytelnia.frse.org.pl/media/games-pdf-19070-0.pdf>)

### Module I [My engagement styles]

As part of the beginning of the substantive part, invite people to reflect on how they engage in various tasks. In order to be able to prevent burnout, we must first realize what it implies and deepen our reflection on our commitment.

**Time:** 90 minutes

### Instructions and description of the course

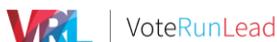
Ask the participant to think about some personally important case / organization / event in which they were or are involved. The exercise aims to reflect on what this action gives us and what it takes. Give the participants clean sheets of A4 paper and something to write. Ask the participant to draw both hands on a piece of paper. In the outline of one hand, the participants will write what they do (eg Sense of influence on reality, new experiences, etc.), in the other it takes what it takes (time for relatives, energy, etc.) - writing out takes about 10 minutes. When the participants have already written all these issues, invite them to talk in their threes about their "hands" [for about 30 minutes]. Then invite people to come back to the circle and conduct a discussion summarizing this experience.

### Discussion

Ask people about how they felt during this experience.

Was it an easy or maybe a difficult task?

Which of the "hands" was easier to fill? Where did they write more?



Ask people to share what they are doing - if possible, write these factors on a flipchart. Summarize that it is worth remembering about it in difficult moments, coming back to them when doubts are over.

Then go to the factors that activism "takes". Write down these factors on post-it notes and stick them to the flipchart, grouping them in terms of similarity (eg categories: "health", "relationships", "paid work", "security", etc.).

Think about the factors that we can influence and which ones can not influence? Which of them are potentially the most dangerous for us?

Summarize that in the following parts of the training we will deal with what we can do to make activism more than it takes.

## Module II [Activist burnout]

The second module will focus on what activist burnout is and how we assess our current functioning in this context. During this module, we will deal with defining the activist burnout and its favorable factors. We will also try to define our own level of burnout in this area.

### The suggested plan of the module:

1. Introduction of definitions
2. Self-evaluation using a questionnaire
3. Summary

**Time:** 150 minutes

### Definition [60 minutes]

Introduce the participants to the issue of activist burnout. At the beginning you can ask the participants to take part in a storm of associations regarding the activist burnout. Write on the flipchart the words "activist burnout" and ask people to give associations, save them.

Next, divide the group into 4 teams and ask them to formulate short definitions of what activist burnout is. Discuss the similarities and differences in emerging definitions. You can also show different definitions (previously saved on a flipchart or on a multimedia presentation) appearing in the literature.

### My current burnout level [90 minutes]

#### Description of the course

Invite the participant to complete the Burn Self-Assessment Questionnaire [Annex No. 2]. Emphasize that this material is not intended to make a diagnosis, but only to generally indicate a certain tendency that arises in their well-being. Give the participants about 15 minutes for their own work, then explain how to calculate the result.



When people finish filling out a questionnaire and become acquainted with the result, invite them to talk about the results obtained in small groups (up to 4 people). Encourage the person to share their feelings and reflections that appeared while completing the questionnaire [approx. 25 minutes].

You can ask people to mark their results on a scale drawn on a flipchart (it can be anonymously), so that you can see how the burnout level is at the group level. Consider together what this may result from.

Invite people to discuss this experience - completing the questionnaire, reading the interpretation.

Ask for thinking about the factors that make people feel that way. Ask for identification of factors from different levels - personal (eg Perfectionism, need for control), organizational (eg Unclear division of responsibilities), structural (eg Big social resistance related to the topics we are discussing). Summarize with a brief coaching presentation about the factors conducive to activist burnout.

### **Additional materials**

The coaching presentation on the processes of activist burnout can be based, among others, on for a review article by Laurence Cox (2011). How do we keep going?

Activist burnout and personal sustainability in social movements available at:

[http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/2815/1/LC\\_How\\_do\\_we\\_keep\\_going.pdf](http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/2815/1/LC_How_do_we_keep_going.pdf)

Summary of the day I [ok. 30 minutes]: Ask people to say what they are ending today, what was the most important to them, what they found out? As the topics discussed could be difficult for those who participated, you can do some exercise that will give people a sense of power and agency.

## **Day II**

### **Welcome**

**Time:** 30 minutes

Greet the participants and ask them to share what they start with - it can be feeling, reflection, energy level, question. Remind the plan for the day, make sure everything is clear.

### **Module III [Time budget / rest]**

#### **Proposed course of the module**

1. Reflection on the time budget.
2. Rest.
3. Summary and transition to the next module.

**Time:** 120 minutes

#### **Time budget**



At the beginning, invite people to exercise, in which they will reflect on their own style of work and the organization of their own time. Give the participants the exercise cards (Annex No. 3), pens and multicolored pens / pencils.

On the exercise cards there are empty circles. These wheels symbolize the time we have throughout the day for all tasks, duties and pleasures: paid work, activist / political work, time with relatives, friends, relaxation, sleep, physical movement. The task of the participants is to divide the circle into four parts. One part is to symbolize the time devoted to the family / relatives, the second time devoted to rest, the third time devoted to paid work, the fourth time for activist / political activity. The size of these parts is to correspond to how much time the participants actually devote to the activities. Finally, color the circle, indicating the time we spend on different things / activities, in this way:

- green color meant time devoted to family / relatives,
- blue color meant time spent resting,
- yellow color meant time for paid / professional work,
- red color meant time devoted to activist / political work,

Then ask the participants to think about how the proportions in the circle would look if they could freely and freely decide on the division of their time. Participants do not have to show their drawings to other people, they can do it if they want to.

### **Discussion:**

While discussing it is worth emphasizing that there are no ideal proportions, but if almost the whole circle has been painted red or yellow, it can be alarming, it can be evidence of workaholism, excessive involvement in work and can contribute to professional burnout. You can also ask participants whether their preferred time division differs significantly from the actual division? Can they do something to bring these two models closer together?

It is also worth discussing how our gender influences our time budget? Do the participants do more work, their colleagues / partners / spouses? How does this affect their ability to rest / engage in important areas for themselves?

Finally, ask the participant for comments and reflections. What do they think about this exercise? Did they make them want to change the organization of their own time? What are the biggest challenges they face due to changes in their time budget?

### **Work-life balance**

Suggest to the participants watching Michelle Ryan's film on work-life balance, and the private "Work-Life Balance: Balancing Time or Balancing Identity?": <https://youtu.be/79tRTivyMSM> [the film takes about 15 minutes].



Discuss the movie. What do people think about it? How does this film resonate with their experiences? What do they think about the results of the research presented during the film? What can they apply to this film in their lives? You can also offer participants a different perspective on this issue - as juggling with different elements, and not looking for the perfect balance (see <https://www.workingmother.com/work-life-juggle-consider-work-life-teeter-totter>)

### Rest

Ask people to mention different behaviors that rest for them (e.g. sleep, walk, book reading). Collect them on a flipchart.

Ask people later about the thoughts and feelings that arise when they think that they want to rest. Do you think that rest is selfish? Does guilt feel like? What does it result from? What can we do when such thoughts appear?

### Sleep

Ask people how much they sleep on average, write these numbers and add the arithmetic mean to the group. Ask if this is enough for them? Invite you to the short (4-minute) movie "How to Succeed? Get More Sleep", during which Arianna Huffington talks about sleeping as a very important activity of every leader.

[https://www.ted.com/talks/arianna\\_huffington\\_how\\_to\\_succeed\\_get\\_more\\_sleep?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/arianna_huffington_how_to_succeed_get_more_sleep?language=en)

Talk to people about their impressions from the movie. Do they feel convinced by the author? How do they think, what can they do to sleep more?

## Module IV [Plan of Self-care]

The module's plan:

1. Self-care - what is it?
2. Good practices in the field of self-care.
3. Creating Self-Care Plans
4. Neutralizing potential obstacles

Time: 150 minutes

### Self-care - what is it?

Introduce people to the subject of self-care and what it really means. Also note that despite the fact that there is a certain set of practices that we can define as self-care, it must be tailored to our individual needs - participants must design their own plan by themselves, or simply this plan will not work.

The first step will be to discuss various ideas about what may fall within the scope of the self-care plan. Work on this with the help of the World Cafe method (more on the method here:



<http://partycypacjaobywatelska.pl/strefa-wiedzy/techniki/world-cafe/>). Divide the group into four teams, which will then discuss the various areas of self-care:

- Body
- Mind
- Relations
- Organization

Each group receives their flipchart, after some time (eg after 10 minutes) there is a change and everyone except one person (housewife) moves to other tables, discussing other areas of self-care. The table host summarizes what the previous groups said and encourages further discussion. Encourage the participant to save or draw their ideas.

If these threads did not appear spontaneously - approach the groups during the discussion, suggest introducing them:

- prioritizing [why am I doing this? What is the most important? if you know what is a priority, it may be easier to focus / abandon guilt]
- Making mini-breaks during the day
- Ask for support
- Maintaining relationships with loved ones (family, friends and other people who give us energy)
- Learning to say "no".

Once all people have gone through all the tables, summarize the discussions in the plenary part.

### Creating a self-care plan

Once people know what they can do as part of self-care, give them the Self-care Plan cards (Annex 4) and ask them to work on their own plans (about 30 minutes).

It is important to ask additional questions: what might be the obstacle ?. What can they do to remove these barriers? If they can not remove them, ask them to think about how they can modify their strategies.

Once people create a self-care plan, ask people to pair up and discuss their plans and what they will start in the near future. It is worth asking people to mark 3 things that they will be able to implement next week, so as to give the opportunity for immediate success.

### Additional auxiliary materials

Many interesting materials and exercises on self-care: <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/self-care-starter-kit/self-care-assessments-exercises/exercises-and-activities.html>

## Module V - Summary and evaluation

### The module's course:

1. Summary of the most important content
2. Feedback on the training
3. Closing the training



**Time:** 60 minutes

- Collect the key topics emerging during the training together with the participants
- Invite the participant to the ending round - choose the "topic" you prefer (for example: with what reflection you end the training, one thing that I change after this training, three most important things, etc.)
- Evaluation of the meeting - choose the method of evaluation you prefer (eg What people liked / what they would change, survey, suitcase and basket, thermometer, etc.)
- Completion by building a "network". People successively throw a bundle of yarns together saying what they thank for and thank for the other participants. When all people are holding a piece of yarn, a net is created. Wait a moment, then stand up and cut the network so that each person can take her piece with him to commemorate the meeting.

Annex 1: Activist bingo

Instructions: We invite you to collect the names of people who meet the criteria. You can collect no more than two boxes from one person. The person who fills the whole card screams "bingo" and wins. (Both bingo content and instructions can be freely modified)

Does not like integration games (why?)	Dreams about traveling (where?)	Does not like to take part in demonstrations (why?)
Likes watching TV series (which?)	Was this year at the seaside (where?)	Likes reading books (what kind?)
Has a different hobby than you (what?)	<b>BINGO!</b>	Practices sport regularly (what sport?)
Plays an instrument (what?)	Is interested in cinema (what?)	Likes animals (what?)

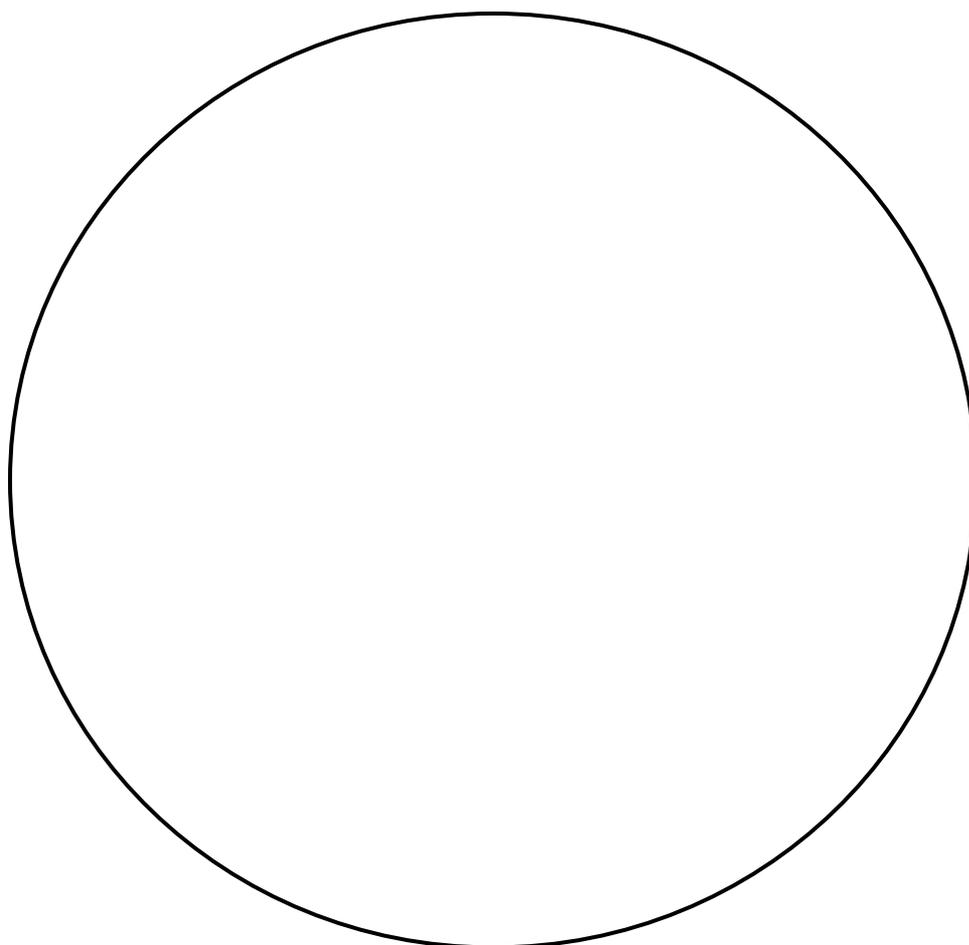


Knows at least 3 languages (what?)	Likes to cook (what?)	Does not like to write grant applications (why?)
---------------------------------------	-----------------------	---

**Annex No. 2 - Burnout self-evaluation questionnaire**

[In original version here we provided Polish translation of the questionnaire] Questionnaire from the book "The Happy Healthy Nonprofit: Impact with Burnout" by Beth Kanter and Alizy Sherman (2016 Wiley) <http://bit.ly/happyhealthynpbook>

**Annex No. 3 – Time Budget**



**Annex No. 4 – Self-Care Plan**



body	emotions	relationships
organization	workplace	Other?

*How will I feel when I manage to implement this plan?*



*Additional questions for the Self-care Plan:*

<i>What can stop me?</i>	<i>How can I deal with this?</i>

*What negative strategies do I want to avoid?*

