

How to Minimize Burnout

As a Student Leader

By
Viviana M. Romero

An Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Graduation from the
Western Oregon University Honors Program

Ashley Hortman-Cooper
Thesis Advisor

Dr. Gavin Keulks,
Honors Program Director

June 2025

Acknowledgements

This acknowledgement section will probably be longer than most as I am very fortunate and have so many people to be thankful for. I would first like to thank every single student leader I have ever had the privilege to work with. You all inspired this thesis and I hope you are able to get something valuable from this. Next, I would like to thank the Honors Department at Western Oregon University, coming into college I never expected I would still be an honors student but I am glad I decided to go down this path. I have met so many amazing students in the honors department who all inspire me to keep going and to fight for a better WOU. I would also like to give a special shout out to the honors thesis webpage as I was CONSTANTLY on that site in order to make sure I was doing this right. With that I also want to say a big thank you to Antonia Scholerman as she has helped my imposter syndrome with writing a thesis more than she'll know. I would also like to thank Tina Fuchs. Tina, meeting you and being able to work with you is one of my favorite parts of my time at Western.

Next I would like to give a huge shout out to Ashley Hortman-Cooper as my thesis advisor. Ashley you planted the seeds for this thesis all the way back when you were my RHA advisor. Thank you for the continual guidance throughout my college career, I wouldn't have gotten here

without you. I would also like to thank Western Oregon University's University Housing. You gave me a home in Oregon and allowed me to come into my own. I would always know that either Jodi Reimer or Susie Garcia would be in the office with a smile and ready to help me with whatever I needed. Thank you Sierra Logan for taking a chance on me to present in Fall Training this wouldn't have been possible without that. Thank you Lindsey Gibson, you are one of my biggest inspirations and every time I am leading I ask myself what would Lindsey do? Thank you to Angel Mae, Tea Curtis, Jadyn Smith, Layla William, Squeaks Ferguson and the 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, and 2024- 2025 RHA executive boards. All of you have consistently fought for me and become my Western family. I appreciate you all so much. The last person in University Housing I want to thank is Payton Wagner, Payton you have taught me so much on how to be a good leader, I can promise you that if you weren't the RHA advisor my sophomore year I would not have accomplished all I have. You taught me the most important lessons which are to advocate for myself and to set boundaries. Thank you so much for everything you have done.

I would also like to thank my family and my found family. For my found family I would like to thank the Kishes for taking me in with open arms, being an out of state student is so hard and I didn't realize the impact of not being around family when I came out here. I am so fortunate to have such a loving Oregon family. I would also like to thank my best friends. To

Jamie Weber and Kaley Mountain, thank you for always being there for me, you are my biggest cheerleaders and I am so happy we are a trio. To Ema Aros, thank you for trusting me this year as your president, you have been one of the best friends I have ever had and I can't wait to see where you go and cheer you on. To the best friend I have ever had Megan Bernal, thank you for everything. You are such a big part of my life and the reason I am so sure of who I am as a person today. I know you will always be in my corner and always down for a 14 hour road trip. Now onto my family, Mia, my little sister, you are the reason I am a leader today. If it weren't for being your big sister I probably never would have gone down the path for leadership. Thank you for always being there for me, and everyday I wake up I try to be the best big sister I can be. Mom, thank you for always being in my corner, I am so comfortable in my emotions because you allowed me to have a place where I can feel them. Thank you for always picking up when I am breaking down. Dad, I am so happy about where our relationship is. I love you so much, and I know that whatever I need you will try your hardest to get it for me. Thank you for answering all of my thesis questions as I am writing this action research thesis. I have felt so much closer to you.

Finally, my last two people to thank. Thank you Wesley (My Guinea Pig ESA), he has always been there for me since October of 2020. Taking care of him reminds me that I also need to take care of myself. He has

taught me how to love someone outside of me. Finally, Megan Kish, you have been my absolute rock during my time here. Without you I wouldn't have felt confident to make all the decisions I have to make. You mean so much to me, and everyday I am so grateful that I get to be your girlfriend. I love you so much.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Abstract.....	6
Identification of the Problem.....	7
Background & History	7
Personal Impact.....	8
Literature Review	12
Action Plan.....	15
Aims and Methods	15
Goals.....	16
‘Tips and Tricks’	17
Presentation	23
Results	26
Discussion.....	31
Conclusion	35
Retrospection/Reflection	35
Achievements & Challenges	35
Personal Impact.....	36
Connections to Field	38
How to Minimize Burnout Presentation	39
Bibliography	54

Abstract

In this action research project, the question of how to minimize burnout as a student leader will be explored. Burnout is almost a rite of passage for many student leaders in this day and age. With some wearing their burnout status as a badge of honor showing how dedicated they are to their work. However, burnout is not something to be proud of. When burnout is left unchecked it can create many unhealthy coping mechanisms for students that lead to many different unhealthy behaviors that end up being very hard to unlearn as adults in the workforce. This thesis plans on defining burnout and how it affects student leaders, then moves on to create a list of approximately 10 'tips and tricks' to help minimize and cope with burnout. I will also explore how the institutions themselves contribute to burnout in their student leaders and what they can do in order to minimize burnout. All from the perspective of a current college undergraduate student who has experienced burnout.

Identification of the Problem

Background & History

Burnout is a word that has struck fear into a lot of people. When you hear the word, images of burnt forests from forest fires or a candle that has reached the end of its wick come to mind. When you learn that you as a human can feel that way, it is understandable to be scared. The study of burnout is relatively new, with the first mentions of the term being from psychotherapist Herbert Freudenberger coining the term in 1974. After that first initial introduction from Freudenberger the phenomenon of burnout has been studied by many different people from psychologists to social scientists to college students. According to WebMD burnout is defined as “a form of exhaustion caused by constantly feeling swamped. It happens when we experience too much emotional, physical, and mental fatigue for too long.”(WebMD).

Although burnout itself has been studied for quite some time the most studied kind of burnout has been occupational burnout. Which is the study of how one can become burnt out within their job. The original Freudenberger study mainly focused specifically on social jobs, however it broadened its scope to include all jobs where people experience stress in situations of perceived overwork. (Hillert et al.) This original study can now be applied to the case of student leaders. With many student

leadership opportunities coming in the form of jobs, but these jobs, from their beginning, have not given the proper compensation to the student leaders doing them. So, many people have felt like burnout could not apply to student leaders as they aren't doing "Real Jobs". This view in itself is warped and diminishes the impact thousands of student leaders have on people all over the world. In recent years we have finally seen student leader burnout being taken seriously as shown in a handout given to advisors of student leaders at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The handout details ways in which advisors can help their students combat burnout giving them tips such as returning to the center. (RSO, UNL).

Personal Impact

I have been a student leader since I started at Western Oregon University in 2021. I started my time on the RHA, Residence Hall Association, executive board as the first-year liaison. My job was to reach out and act as a bridge for the executive board and the first-year community at WOU. During this year, I pushed myself the hardest I had ever pushed myself. Trying to prove myself as the best student leader I could be. After this first year I decided to stick with the Residence Hall Association as that is where I fell in love with student leadership, and felt the most at home. In my next year I served as Vice President to the board and this is when I first experienced burnout and the effects it could have on

my mental health. During this year, I began to really not like my job and find excuses to not do it. It was then I realized that if I didn't make any changes, the job I had grown to love and feel at home in would no longer feel that way for me. Since that year, I have worked on developing boundaries for myself in this job.

My junior year I discovered just how badly the rest of the student leaders were doing with managing their own burnout. I saw this first hand when my first ever RA, and current RA for the year, stepped down from their position because they realized how burnt out they were and how unhealthy the job had become for them. With that, the idea for this thesis was born, so more student leaders could help themselves before they fully lose passion for the things they love the most about the job. In that year I also realized that the best way for people to learn how to set boundaries for themselves is by leading by example. That year was my first year as President of RHA, so once I learned that people learn by example I tried to emulate that in my Presidency. I asked for help when I needed it, stepped down from roles and tasks when I was unable to complete them and made sure to stay firm in my boundaries. That year was great for my building of boundaries however it was also hard as I took on more responsibilities outside of RHA to complete my leadership certificate within student engagement.

I am so grateful for doing the leadership certificate as I feel like it encompasses all I have been able to accomplish in my leadership journey however it also had some negative side effects. My first advisor for the Leadership Certificate, unintentionally made me feel like I haven't accomplished enough as my “only” leadership experience stemmed from working in housing. Because of that I decided to push myself harder to make an impact on WOU outside of housing.

That year I chaired the Incidental Fee Committee (IFC) and mentored for Discover Leadership here on campus. These opportunities were amazing and I am so glad I have them, because they both opened my eyes to what I wanted to do going forward in my leadership career and my career outside WOU. Chairing IFC, set me up to be considered to serve as the Undergraduate Student on the Board of Trustees for my senior year. This opportunity is one I do not take lightly as it is such a huge privilege and an honor to even be on the Board. The position, however, did trigger a little bit of my imposter syndrome, and caused me to feel like I was unworthy of the position.

Along with the Board of Trustees position, my Senior year of college I also hold the position of President of RHA for the second time and I serve on a regional RHA board as the Coordinating Officer of Leadership Development for the region of PACURH. Doing all of these things this year has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had. In all of

these positions I have been able to help other students and student leaders in ways I could never have imagined. This has been one of the things that has kept me going because, in the greatest twist of irony, I have burnt myself out. This has happened with a mixture of imposter syndrome and trying to be everything to everyone, I have spread myself too thin.

This has caused me to take a large break from writing this thesis as everytime I tried to write I felt like a fraud. How was I, a girl who preaches to make boundaries and not overwork yourself, going to write a thesis on how to minimize burnout, when I am burnt out myself? I then realized that I was probably one of the people who SHOULD be writing this. In order to minimize burnout it is important that it is coming from someone who has, and is, currently dealing with forms of burnout. So, I picked up my fingers and began getting all of this on a page, so that the student leaders who come after me can learn from my mistakes and take from this thesis what they need in order to create a plan that would work best for them.

Literature Review

At one point or another in everyone's life, they reach a point where they are physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted. In all forms of media, many storylines focus on exactly this. Burnout. What we fail to see is that Student Leaders are one of the most susceptible groups to face burnout.

At this point in history, we are seeing a higher number of students attend college than ever before, as discussed in "Passion and Burnout" by Saville et al. This rise in college attendance is not all positive. This leads to more competition to even get into college, as well as competition in the classes themselves. In the same article, it is discussed how burnout is found in a decent amount of college students and how it is linked to worsening academic performance. "... Meier and Schmeck (1985), in an early study, found that students with high levels of burnout earned lower scores on a memory task, showed lower levels of cognitive functioning, reported lower self-esteem and lower levels of sensation seeking, and had more ambiguous vocational identities than students whose burnout scores were lower" (Saville et al. pg. 106). These effects of burnout happen to students who are in their 20's, while their brains are still developing, which means the burnout you experience as a student leader could affect them well into their adult lives. Along with that, if these students are not equipped with the

correct coping skills for burnout they can learn unhealthy coping mechanisms, which will just add to the difficulty of Adulthood.

As mentioned in “Rising Student Burnout: A Distributive Leadership Approach to Creating Student Well-Being” by Taylor J. Ross, burnout is also the result of some systematic issues within the universities themselves. “Institutions have unintentionally weaponized grit, persuading students that it is the only attribute that contributes to personal and professional success. As a result of students' insatiable desire to work hard at all times, a culture of constantly pushing oneself beyond one's limits has evolved (Petersen, 2020)”(Ross pg. 2). Systematic problems are some of the hardest to dismantle and bring down; the best way to do it is from the inside. Who is more inside than the student leaders themselves? Giving students the tools to minimize burnout themselves will inspire them to advocate for themselves. The reason burnout is so widespread is because no one wants to admit that they are experiencing said burnout. If we give the students the knowledge of what burnout is, and the confidence to put their needs first, we can begin to tackle the systematic problems. Many institutions have begun to see and acknowledge burnout, with this being evident in the PDF poster by the University of Lincoln Nebraska called “Student Leader Burnout and How to Avoid it”. Where they discuss some of the best ways their students can avoid and minimize burnout. With

universities beginning to advocate for students when it comes to burnout
we can begin to see just how many student leaders are affected by it.

Action Plan

In order to minimize burnout among student leaders it is my opinion that it is most important to go straight to the source and talk to the students directly. So, my presentation was aimed at them, I specifically aimed for students in housing leadership, because that is where I have the most knowledge, understanding, and experience. However, I believe that the ‘tips and tricks’ I thought of can apply to almost any student leader in any organization. All of these ‘tips and tricks’ to minimize burnout all stemmed from things that worked out for me. So throughout the entirety of this section please keep in mind the fact that they all might not work for everyone.

Aims and Methods

To get started I needed to get permission from the Associate Director (AD) of Residence Life in University Housing (UH) to present the presentation at fall training. Before it was approved, the University Housing Associate Director let me know that they would need an outline of what I am going to cover and the slides in advance to review and make sure the content was in line with our training goals. So with that I waited with baited breath to see if everything would get approved. As I am sure you can already guess because you got this far, I was approved to present. When it

was fully approved I learned of the things that I would need to add as well as the guidelines for the presentation. The guidelines included that they had the right to change any information I had on the presentation if it was not in line with employment requirements, maintain alignment with different sessions in training, or if it did not fit in with the University Housing Fall training learning goals. I was also asked to include a slide explaining what training goals this aligned with for both Resident Assistants and for Executive Board members of the Residence Hall Association. So with this information I set off on creating a powerpoint within the guidelines that still held the heart of what my thesis is, and also incorporated this year's training theme which happened to be 'Leveling up Leadership'. As it got closer to fall training I was told when my session would be (Tuesday) and how long I was able to present for (an hour). So I made my 29 slide presentation and sent it off. Luckily, all of my tips and tricks aligned with the guidelines, so no changes were required for my presentation.

Goals

The biggest goal of this presentation is to give student leaders agency and the ability to advocate for themselves when it comes to burnout. The next goal would be having them understand what burnout is and the ability to catch any early warning signs. This will be done by defining burnout,

explaining the different types of burnout, things that contribute to burnout, and its causes and symptoms. Before we can even discuss how to minimize burnout it is important to understand what it is, as burnout affects different people in vastly different ways. The final goal is introducing them to some basic coping mechanisms so they can take the root of the mechanism and turn it into something that will directly benefit them in their combatting of burnout.

‘Tips and Tricks’

These are the strategies that I found would be the most effective in minimizing burnout; How we feel (app), Journaling, Ask for help, Go to events that you didn’t plan yourself, Set Boundaries, Say no, get off campus, do jobs you are passionate about, pick up a hobby, and therapy. These are all coping mechanisms that have greatly helped me in the minimizing of burnout.

The first tip is a mobile phone app called How We Feel. This app was created by scientists with the goal to help users overtime learn the words to describe how they are feeling and allow them to spot patterns and create and practice strategies to help them regulate these thoughts and feelings in a healthy way.(How We Feel Team). This app stemmed from The How We Feel Project which started in 2020 where they created a different app to report Covid-19 symptoms, and from there, their mission to improve public

health went forward. I chose to include this app as its very own 'About' statement includes the goal of getting people to understand their emotions and feelings. I included this app as this is one I have been using for a while now. I discovered very early on in my own mental health journey that I am able to combat my negative feelings easier if I understand what they are and have a name to put to it. For me, it allows the emotion/feeling to seem like something more tangible that I can deal with and not some great big mystical thing that is hard to battle.

Next, is journaling, this tip is one that I am sure many people have already been doing or have been told to do before. Journaling allows you to get all of your thoughts and feelings out in a healthy way that is free of judgement. Your journal is only meant for you, so you can write whatever you want about any situation or feeling you have. The root of what journaling does for you is that it allows you to get everything out of your brain and let it stay on the piece of paper. Allowing you to not have to waste the time or energy getting stuck in a spiral thinking of the situation or feeling. You can set it and forget it, so if someone doesn't like to write or they feel overwhelmed with journaling, they can do alternatives like voice recordings or talking to a pet/inanimate object. I do the pet one frequently with my ESA Wesley and it really helps me.

The next tip is one that seems obvious to a lot of people, but is one of the hardest things for many people to do. One of the things that is

universal in every student leadership role is that you have an advisor/supervisor. These are professional staff that are there to help you learn and be the best student leader they can be. In my time at Western for the many different positions I have had in student leadership I have had around 13 advisors. All of them have only ever wanted the best for me and for me to succeed, so they have all been more than happy to help me, sometimes even when they are no longer my direct advisor. Your Advisor/Supervisor is someone you should trust so if you are unfortunately in a position where there is no one you can trust, go to someone else in the organization or even outside, that you trust and they will want to help you with what you need. Most student leadership opportunities I have held have all also been team orientated activities. So I knew there was always a coworker or a team member who I could go to for help.

This tip is targeted more towards the Student Leadership positions that are in-charge of planning events, however I think this can apply to all student leaders. The tip is to go to events that you didn't plan yourself, a large part of being in housing leadership is planning events, and while it is true you should plan events that you would want to go to, you can get fatigued and not have a joy in planning the events. When you are working on the events you plan, you don't get time to enjoy the event as you are worried about all of the things that could or have already gone wrong. Yet when you are attending someone else's event you can remember the joys of

going to events and just be a student. Going to events can also help build rapport and relationships with other student leaders allowing you to feel more connected in the campus community.

As mentioned in the Personal Impact section of the Introduction a large inspiration for this thesis was me learning how to set boundaries, which is why it is the next tip. Setting boundaries is one of the most important things to do in life, just in general. Boundaries are really hard to set, as sometimes you can feel like a burden for setting them, but that is not the case. Your boundaries are there to protect you and your mental health. After you set your boundaries, it is important to remain clear and firm in them, if you allow someone to cross it once after they know it, they will continue to cross them. It is also important to remember that boundaries are individual so you can have different boundaries with different people and your boundaries have the ability to change and morph overtime like you have the ability to change and morph overtime. A boundary that is really hard to set within housing is when you are walking around campus and a resident comes to you sobbing. It is important to make sure that you yourself have the bandwidth and capability to even help the person in the first place, but if you don't, remember to help them by directing them to someone who can help them. If you can't help them it is important to remember that you are not a bad person, you are just not in a spot to help, but it is still your job to get them to the right place where someone can.

This next tip is actually an example of a boundary you can set. This tip is to say no, if someone asks for help and you are unable to help because you are doing a million other things or you just don't have the energy it is okay to say no! As a former people pleaser I understand first hand saying no to helping people is one of the hardest things to do. However, you can't continue to give and give and never take time for yourself, saying no to things, allows you to get some of that self-care time back.

This tip is one that has some privilege associated with it and that tip is to get off campus. When you are a student leader, and a housing student leader on top of that, you are so involved on campus. With housing student leadership you quite literally live where you work, so it is extra hard to get the separation of work and life. One of the main contributors to burnout is not having that separation. When you get off campus you can get away from all of your responsibilities and be free from your work persona. If you can't get off campus, take a day inside! Tell your coworkers and advisor/supervisor that you need a day and to please not contact you. Having a literal or mental separation can make it so much easier to continue to thrive in your job.

A preface before this tip is that there is a large amount of privilege with this tip. This tip is to do jobs/leadership roles you are passionate about. As we saw earlier in the literature review one of the quickest ways to experience burnout is by being in a job that you are not passionate about.

There is a lot of privilege in this statement because a lot of people unfortunately don't have the ability to do this as they need the money that the job provides. As a college student and someone who has been in this position I completely empathize with that statement. When we are able to do jobs that we are passionate about it can make burnout less likely to happen, however it does not mean you are immune to burnout if it is a job you are passionate about.

This next tip is a catch all, which is pick up a hobby, hobbies are something that everyone should have as they allow you to do something fun that you are passionate about. Hobbies can be anything from playing video games to reading to arts and crafts. All hobbies can allow you to feel productive and remind you to take time for yourself. Doing certain self care things like painting your nails or dying your hair can also be considered hobbies, however it is important to remember that self care is not a hobby and is something that you should be doing consistently no matter what role you are in.

This final tip is one that I think everyone should be participating in, whether you are a student leader or not. That tip is going to therapy, at WOU we are lucky enough to have trained certified therapists on campus that don't take any outside charges as the cost is already covered when you pay your tuition. As well with the rise of wellness on social media therapy is becoming less and less taboo. Therapy allows you to work through any

trauma you may have. It is important to remember that when we are told traumatic things, our brain doesn't understand that we aren't experiencing that specific trauma, so in your student leadership roles you are more likely to experience secondary traumatic stress. A therapist can help you work through that as well as help you create coping mechanisms that will work for you. If you take any of these tips and tricks I really recommend that it is this one, as even the act of just going to therapy can help drastically change your mood.

Presentation

The actual presentation went well, it was presented at my fourth and final fall training, so the crowd was full of familiar faces making the presentation much easier to accomplish. I was originally very nervous because I thought that many people would not want to take me seriously as sometimes people can feel that if you don't have experience in a position you can't ever understand how to help that position. Luckily this was not the case and people were very kind and understanding during my presentation.

My presentation was the first of the day so everyone got to me either sleepy or happy and full of breakfast so it felt like such a safe atmosphere. Before I began the presentation I included a statement where I recognize the privilege I am given in even being able to present to them and their

privilege in the fact that they are in these roles and college which is unattainable to many people. In the privilege statement I also included the disclaimer that not all of these tips and tricks will work for everyone and to please try and take the core of the tip/trick and turn it into something that they themselves will benefit from. I also asked if they would allow this room to be a brave space where everyone can share what they believe is helpful, free of judgement.

The presentation is not as professional as I believe most other action research projects actually are but I had to keep in mind that my audience is college students who can get bored very easily in training. So I used sillier language that allowed for the tone to be a lighter one. To make sure people wouldn't be bored I tried to include some audience participation time towards the beginning and the end of my presentation. I decided to go with a word map from this website Poll Everywhere in two different parts for this presentation. Unfortunately, I accidentally opened the polls too early so they were inactive by the time of the presentation. So, for the audience participation I switched to hand raising instead. I originally wanted to stay away from taking hands as in my experience people wanting to talk and add to the conversation is what made past presentations in past training go longer than the allotted time. Luckily, this year's group of housing student leaders tend to be on the quieter side so for the first audience participation I only had five people raise their hand to speak and they all kept it very

concise. When it came time for the next audience participation my poll didn't work, yet I had gotten through the presentation faster than anticipated so I could spend more time on audience participation. The second time I had about 13 people participate, as people were more awake towards the end.

During the presentation I went off my script a few times to make some silly jokes like reminding them that no one is perfect, said perfectly by Hannah Montana as well as comparing our job to the reality TV show *Below Deck*, where they live where they work. I ended up finishing my entire presentation in about 30 minutes and it fully finished around 40 as they took 10 minutes to fill out my google feedback form. Overall it was such a wonderful opportunity and I believe allowed for many student leaders to see me as a resource and just a fun person.

Results

This section will not be as fledged out as most results for an action research thesis, as I can not get into the numbers of people who have dropped housing student leadership as that is most likely confidential. However, after my presentation in order to get a good sense of how effective it was, I asked all in attendance to fill out a google form I created. This google form was completely anonymous to ensure constructive criticism. As mentioned in the action plan I was given an hour for my whole presentation so to ensure it actually got filled out, as I know from experience many people do not like to fill out surveys, I built time into my presentation at the end for them to fill it out.

Luckily, my strategy to get people to fill out the google form worked, as I got 31 responses, which is actually one more than the amount of student leaders in attendance. The extra one, was one of my advisors filling it out to give feedback which was greatly appreciated. In this google form I asked a total of 9 questions, with one of them being a spot for them to share their pronouns if comfortable. The first question was 'Have you ever experienced Burnout?' 93.5% of respondents answered that yes, they had. With 3.2% of respondents answering no and the other 3.2% answering probably. The next question was 'Was this presentation helpful?' 100% of respondents shared that it was helpful.

The next question was a qualitative one asking ‘Did you learn something new?’, a majority of the respondents indicated that they did learn something new. With only three respondents indicating no and n/a. The yes answers to this question had a long range of what exactly they learned, however they can be broken up into 3 categories. Those being the stages of burnout, tips and tricks, and overall. The overall category consists of people just answering yes for this section and not giving any example of what they learned. There were four respondents in this category. The tips and tricks category consisted of people who found they learned the most from the different strategies presented to minimize burnout. This category is where eleven of the respondents fell. One respondent shared that “..the examples you gave to help minimize burnout were very helpful!”. Out of the tips and tricks, the two that people learned the most from were the How We Feel app and the tip to say No. Each of these tips had three respondents sharing they were new information and that they will be helpful to use. Two respondents shared that the tip explaining the setting of boundaries and how they can be difficult was the one they learned. The two other people in this category shared that the tips that they learned were to have a productive hobby and that when people yell or get angry that it isn’t always about you. The final and biggest category where respondents fell into was the category of respondents learning the most about the kinds and the different stages of burnout. 14 respondents

answered this, with many citing that having a better understanding of burnout made it so they feel better equipped to handle it in the future.

The next two questions lead us back into the quantitative realm, with the first one being ‘How likely are you to use any of the 10 tips/tools in this presentation?’. 58.1% of respondents shared that they are 5/5 likely to use these tips. 32.3%, shared that they were a 4/5 on likelihood and the last 9.7% shared they were 3/5. The next question was ‘Are there any tips/tools you use to minimize burnout that were not mentioned?’ 58.1% of respondents indicated yes and 41.9% indicated no. The next question asked the respondents to elaborate further if there were any tips/tools not mentioned, and what are those tools, ‘If yes, what were they? If no, write n/a.’ This question was another one that required qualitative answers, and these answers can also be broken down into different categories. These categories are specific examples of the tips I gave, outside help, and something not mentioned in the tips. The first category had the most respondents with fourteen, giving specific examples of their hobbies, how they journal and mentally escape. The next category, with three respondents, is outside help, meaning spending time with friends, family, and people who don’t drain their energy. The final category is tips that I feel were different than ones I gave. Two respondents fell in this category with one of them answering ‘making a consistent routine’ and the other

answering 'keeping ourselves culturally grounded as people of color'. The n/a part of this question had 13 respondents.

The second to last question is one that ended up not being helpful to the results, which will be elaborated on more in the discussion section. This question was 'Would you be willing to fill out an additional survey at the end of the term, reflecting on the tools and burnout?' 80.6% of respondents indicated yes and 19.4% indicated no.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph the main goal of this survey was to get constructive criticism. So the last question was one where respondents could share any additional comments and constructive criticism. Out of 31 responses to this question 6 of those were N/A, 6 was constructive criticism, and the last 19 responses were well wishes and good jobs. For this response I want to highlight the six responses that had constructive criticism. I will lay them out here and in the discussion section I plan on going more in depth into these 6 comments. The first piece of constructive criticism was "Maybe add some examples of how burnout can affect not only the person experiencing it but also others around them to help put it into more perspective.". Next, which we will call constructive criticism (CC) 2, "Really helpful presentation and you can add more about how to set healthy boundaries in the future!" Then it is CC 3, "The 12 stages of burnout could be reduced to 3 (1 - 4, 5 - 8, and 9 - 12). You spoke about them in that pattern with emphasis on those and it would feel more fluid to

describe them as a stage of "blank" with maybe 4 flags to look for. Great presentation with a well thought out thesis." After that is CC 4, "The last type of burnout mentioned you said was the most dangerous, but I didn't fully understand what made that type of burnout different from the others. I think more clarity on that specifically would be very beneficial." Then CC 5, "I would recommend slowing down and seeming calmer. Overall the presentation was great, however you seemed worked up and very anxious. You did great!" Finally we have CC 6, "I love your guinea pig. I also liked the privilege statements you included! Maybe you could expand more on what privilege means to you and how it ties into your thesis specifically?". On the other side away from constructive criticism I want to highlight one of the positive comments I got in this section. "I appreciated the privilege statement and acknowledgment to others' experiences, I especially appreciated the recognition of the stages of burnout and the explanations for each. I also thought it was cool how you related the experiences of living where you work to RHA and RAs". In the discussion section I will be discussing all of the results laid out in this section.

Discussion

For the question ‘Have you ever experienced Burnout?’ I was very unsurprised that the majority of the respondents answered positively as burnout has been a topic of discussion for the past couple years at my university. As mentioned in my action plan the first step to battling burnout is understanding and coming to terms with the fact that you do have burnout. For the other 6.4% of respondents who half answered no and the other half answered probably, I believe they answered this way because they were either new to student leadership or they didn’t have an understanding of what burnout is. This percentage is really an underrepresented group, as most burnout presentations or training really target those that have experienced burnout. I believe what my presentation did was address the beginnings of burnout as well as the other stages, so this group has the tools if they ever feel as if they are experiencing burnout, to address the problems right away. The next question, ‘Was this presentation helpful?’ had every respondent in 100% agreement of the answer that it was indeed helpful. This is really affirming to hear as I had really hoped everyone would take something useful from this presentation.

For the range of responses for the next question ‘Did you learn something new I am not surprised of the 2 categories people learned the most in. The category that people learned the most from, being the knowledge of burnout itself, made sense to me as when creating this thesis

and presentation that is the category that I myself learned the most about in this journey. The most important step in minimizing burnout is understanding and identifying what burnout is and if you yourself are experiencing it. The next category that people learned the most from was the ‘tips and tricks’ which also made me very happy to hear. The tip of using the ‘How We Feel’ app being the one people felt the most useful made sense as it aligns with the previous category of understanding burnout. These gives me a better understanding of what exactly from my presentation was helpful so when I go on and represent the presentation I know which parts to spend more time elaborating on.

Similarly, to the question regarding if the presentation was helpful I was very pleased that every respondent responded a 3 or higher to the question ‘How likely are you to use any of the 10 tips/tools in this presentation?’. The next two questions go together so I will discuss them together. They are ‘Are there any tips/tools you use to minimize burnout that were not mentioned?’ and ‘If yes, what were they? If no, write n/a.’. 58.1% indicated that there were some tips and tools that were not mentioned and elaborated on in the next question. As mentioned slightly in the results a majority of respondents gave specific examples of one of the tips I mentioned with the largest being specific types of hobbies. I appreciate that they went out of their way to give specific examples, however going forward I will still keep the presentation more vague, so

people have the freedom to explore on their own. The next category I will also probably keep out of my presentation and that is outside help. A majority of the outside help they discussed were family and friends, I feel that these are things that can help minimize burnout however my main goal of this thesis is to give student leaders the tools they need to minimize burnout on their own. The next two answers that I felt were tips that were outside of ones I mentioned were 'making a consistent routine' and 'keeping ourselves culturally grounded as people of color'. These are ones I want to implement into my own life as I feel these are things that would help keep my burnout minimized so, going forward I want to find a way to work them into the presentation.

The next question 'Would you be willing to fill out an additional survey at the end of the term, reflecting on the tools and burnout?' as mentioned in the results was not helpful. This is because I became too busy in order to create and actually send out another survey at the end of fall term. I believe that this is not the end of the world as I got a lot of really good constructive feedback from the next question.

The next question was one asking for constructive criticism, from this question there were 6 responses that I felt actually contained constructive criticism. The first response, which is CC 1, was very helpful and something I did not think about. Going forward, I want to keep improving my understanding of burnout so I hope to do more research on

how burnout can affect others around the individual. CC 2, gives me understanding on which tips and tricks to go more in depth on and gives examples of how to actually practice them, which is honestly an oversight on my part. As for many people, placing boundaries is one of the hardest things they can do as an individual. CC 3, gave me probably the most to think about, as it deals with the 12 stages of burnout. When I first saw this response I almost dismissed it as I can't change the way burnout is overall interpreted, however for the sake of time in the future I can combine some steps or talk about them in waves like the response suggests. CC 4, is another case of me not going in depth on the last stage of burnout. Going forward for this presentation I plan on elaborating more on how it is dangerous and why people shouldn't let their burnout get that far. CC 5, is a unique one as it discusses myself rather than the presentation. I believe my "nervous" appearance is a result of past fall training, where many people often disregarded the presenter and acted as if they already knew things. I was nervous that that would happen to me, however my audience was a very kind one who made me feel comfortable and was very open and willing to learn. Finally CC 6, discusses my privilege statement in the presentation. I included it because it is important that everyone recognizes their own personal privilege, as well as I wanted to acknowledge that not all of these are going to work for everyone.

Conclusion

Retrospection/Reflection

Overall, from all of the results and what was discussed in the discussion section I am very pleased with how this thesis turned out. I feel that the student leaders I initially presented to took away many valuable tools from the presentation. I am also appreciative of the 6 people who left me constructive criticism as it allows me the time to sit with the presentation and edit it to be something that is even more beneficial than the last.

It is important to also remember that the work doesn't end here, this thesis is by no means the be all and end all to minimizing burnout. These are the strategies that I found work best for me and I am one student leader. I plan on taking everything I have learned over the course of this thesis and use it to help my own burnout and also make people more aware of their own burnout.

Achievements & Challenges

The biggest achievement of this thesis is honestly finishing it. The whole time I had built it up in my head to be this huge scary thing. When in reality it's MY thesis, it isn't meant to be revolutionary, it is just meant to get the word out and start the conversation of burnout for student leaders,

as well as give them some tools that worked for me, that they could adapt and work to their journey. Another achievement is that this year I was able to use these tools and apply them in my leadership and finish the year with all 7 RHA executive board members that we started the year off with. I am so proud of every single one of them as this was a very crazy year,

Most of the challenges with this thesis came in the presentation of the slides. Which were previously discussed in the presentation section. Another challenge of this thesis came in the form of time management. With the 2024 - 2025 school year being my senior year, I took on many different responsibilities. I am very glad I did all of them as I feel they all helped me grow and were very beneficial to my leadership journey. However, this left me with little time to consistently work on my thesis so it wasn't until spring term of this year that I was really able to focus on my thesis.

Personal Impact

This thesis really allowed me to feel more confident in recognizing when I needed a break and when I am approaching burnout. In my time within PACURH and RHA this year I took more of a focus on burnout in my leadership. In both places I was responsible for leading a team, with RHA it was my executive board and for PACURH it was the presidents of other institution's RHA or equivalent. In these spaces I always made sure

to place an emphasis on taking care of yourself, which I feel allowed me to bond with them more than I would have. Doing this also opened my eyes to a passion for advising. I wasn't a full blown advisor in these spaces however I really found a love for leading and inspiring my team to be the best leaders they could be. So I hope to go into Student Affairs and advise students, whether it be in housing, student engagement, or any other place.

Connections to Field

As discussed in the literature review, burnout is affecting more and more student leaders, with real world answers from my housing peers 93.5% of respondents reported that they did experience burnout in one form or another. This is a growing problem, and one more universities and colleges need to be aware of. With this thesis I hope that student leaders who find it can take these tools and create a plan for them that allows them to enjoy what they do without feeling burnt out by it. I also hope that they can take these to their housing professional staff, and they can recognize the impact that burnout is having on their student leaders. As the work to minimize one's own burnout does begin with themselves but it is also on the university to create an environment where student leaders can feel comfortable enough to discuss that they are going through burnout.

How to Minimize Burnout Presentation



How To Minimize Burnout *as a Student Leader*

By Vivi *a student leader*



Privilege Statement



Before we begin, I wanted to say that some of these things might not be accessible to everyone. So please if you are unable to do something try to still take the core value and adapt it into something that serves and helps you. I have been given the privilege to stand here in front of you all so thank you. I also wanted to ask that while you watch this presentation you remember that all of us in this room have some form of privilege.



▮ How Will This Presentation Tie Into The Training Goals ▮

RHA

RHA members will understand various leadership strategies and will utilize these strategies to advocate on behalf of the student populations they serve

4.2- RHA members will be able to understand their own talents, values, and interests as related to leadership.

4.4- RHA members will be able to appropriately advocate on behalf of their constituents.

4.5- RHA members will be able to explain the role that self-care plays in leadership and advocacy.

RA

Resident Assistants will build strong, personalized relationships with their residents and team members by utilizing helping skills such as active listening, outreach strategies, and connection to resources.

2.5- RAs will be able to define their boundaries with residents, colleagues, and advisors.

Resident Assistants will apply crisis management skills to address situations within University Housing.

4.6- RAs will be able to develop self-care plans for post-duty recovery.

▮ TABLE OF CONTENTS ▮

Who Even Am I?

Why am I Giving this Presentation?

How to Minimize Burnout!

The Tips and Tricks

What is a Student Leader?

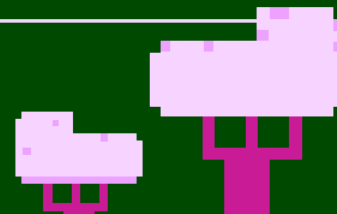
Audience Participation Time!!




Closing Remarks

Maybe a Little More Audience Participation 🙄

What is Burnout?

How Does it Affect Student Leaders?







01

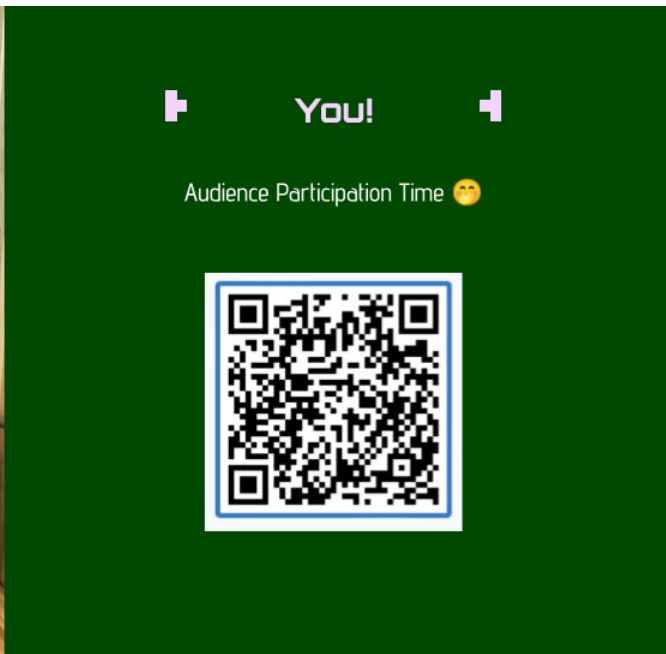
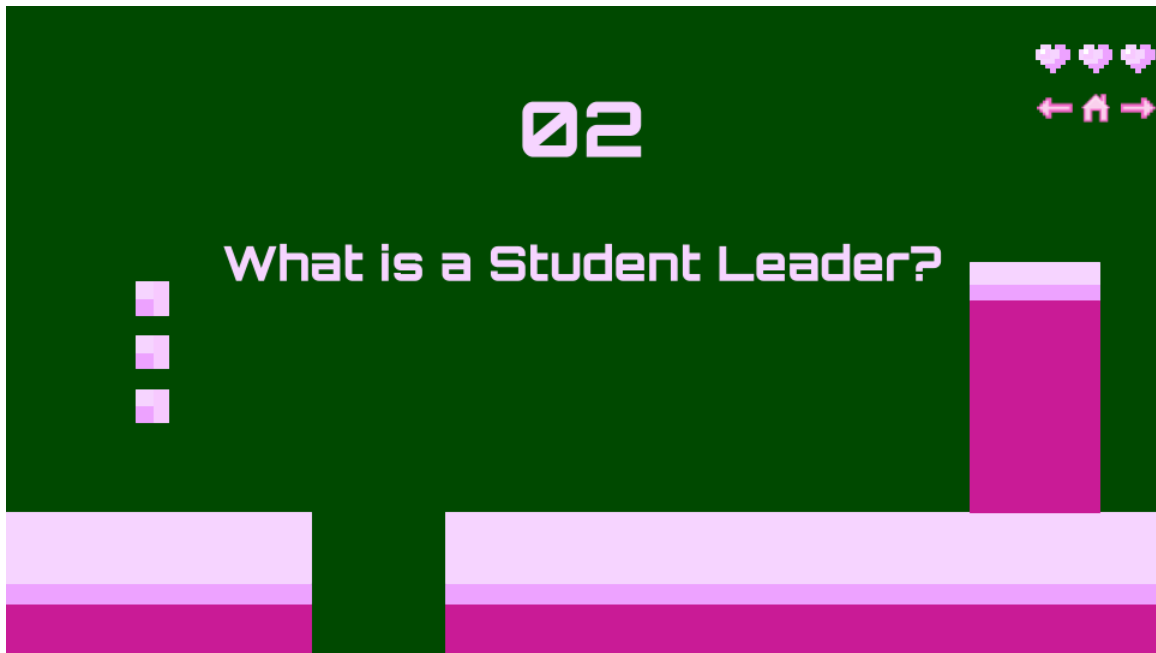
Who Even Am I?

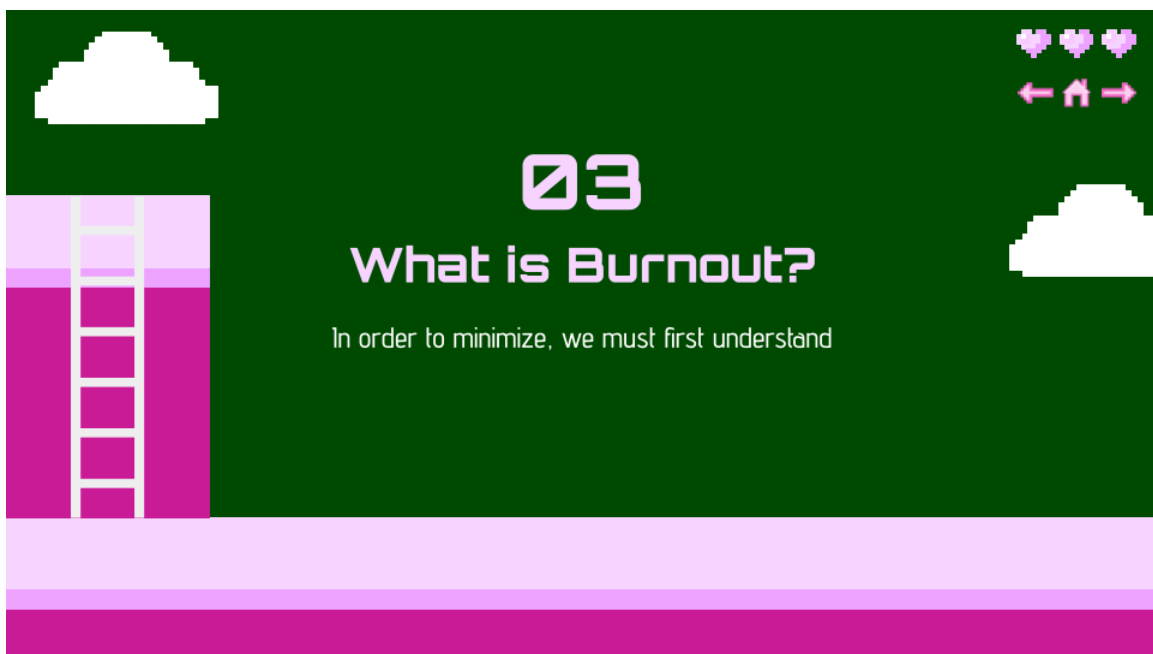
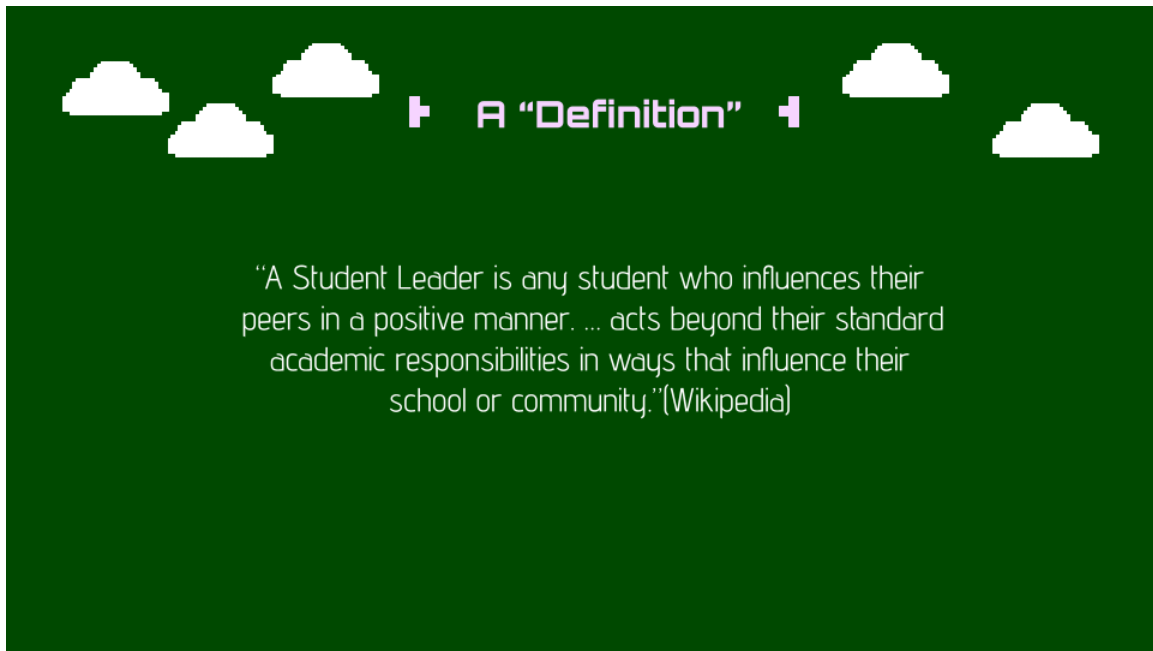
Why am I qualified to be giving this presentation?



┆ VIVI! ┆

- ★ Involved in Leadership from a young age
- ★ Comm Major w/ a Leadership Certificate
- ★ 4th year in housing
- ★ Working at least 2 jobs at a time
- ★ IFC Chair 23-24
- ★ Apart of a Regional RHA Board
- ★ Burnout Experiencer
- ★ Writing a thesis on Minimizing Burnout as a student leader







Burnout and its Types



- ★ Overload Burnout
 - Happens when one works harder and harder and gives and gives
- ★ Under-challenged burnout
 - Happens when you feel underappreciated and bored
- ★ Neglect burnout
 - Happens when one feels helpless
- ★ Habitual burnout
 - Most dangerous, happens when physical and mental fatigue is chronic

Things that Contribute to Burnout

- ★ Emotional Fatigue
 - Feeling emotionally worn-out as a result from school, work, relationships, etc.
 - Symptoms: physical fatigue, low motivation, irritable, change in appetite, nervous, absent minded
- ★ Imposter Syndrome
 - When you believe you are undeserving of the things you have or your achievements
 - Symptoms: feeling like you need to do more than need to, believe others no more than you, etc.
- ★ Secondary Traumatic Stress
 - the behaviors & emotions that result when helping someone through a traumatic event or from the knowledge of that traumatic event
 - Symptoms: exhaustion, anxiety, depression, anger, difficulty sleeping, irritably, hypervigilance, tension pains



└ Burnout Causes + Symptoms ─

Causes

- ★ Unmanageable workloads
- ★ Too much work compared to amount of rest
- ★ Boring work routine



Symptoms

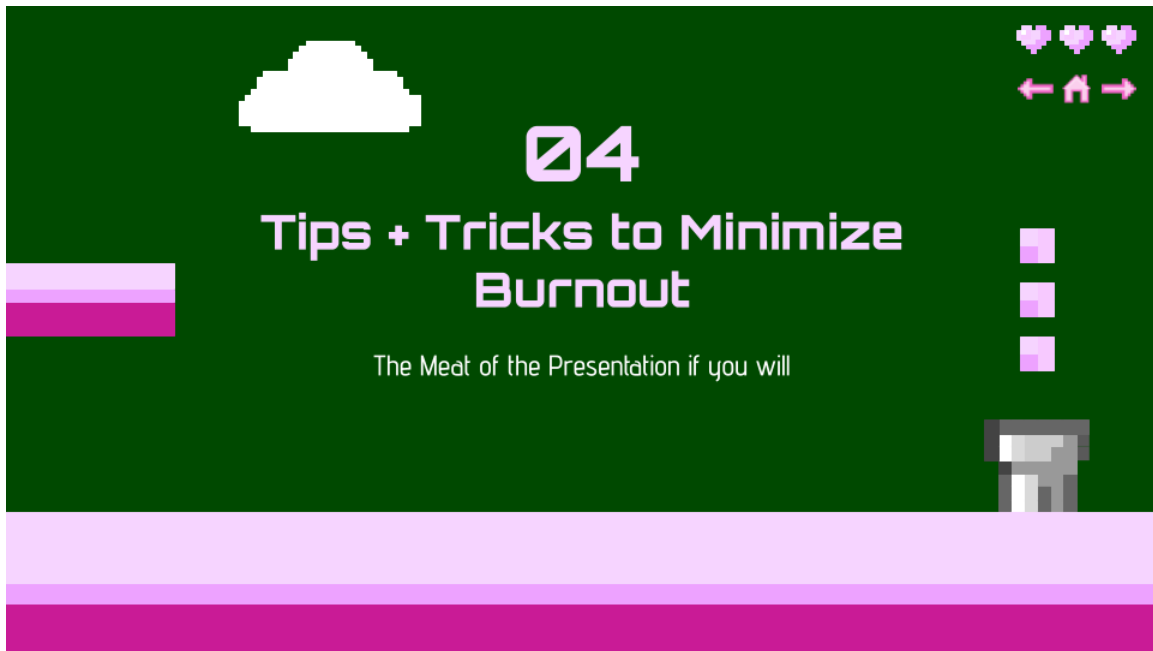
- ★ Feeling overtired
- ★ No enthusiasm
- ★ Inability to perform job
- ★ Alienating yourself




Stages of Burnout



- ▲ 1. Urgent need to prove yourself
2. Working harder
3. Neglecting your needs
4. Interpersonal conflicts
5. Revision of values
6. Denial
7. Withdrawal
8. Behavior changes
9. Depersonalization
10. Feeling empty
11. Despair
12. Total burnout ▼






How We Feel

Welcome to HWF!

Scan QR code with your phone to download HWF in the App Store or Play Store



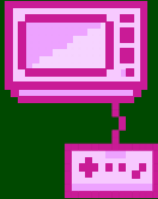
- ★ A mobile app created by scientists to help mental health
- ★ A FREE app that has an array of words that can help you put a name to the emotion
- ★ Choose your own check-in schedule
- ★ Once you know what emotion you are feeling it is easier to figure out how to help yourself best!



Journaling



- ★ Similar to How We Feel, journaling allows you a space to fully express yourself
- ★ w/o fear of judgement or anyone overhearing
- ★ Allows you a place to set it and forget it



Ask For Help



- ★ You're on a team for a reason!
- ★ There is at least one other person who can help/understand what you are going through
- ★ Nobody's Perfect - Hannah Montana



┆ Go to Events that You Didn't Plan ┆



- ★ A huge part of our job is planning and going to programs, but still being on the clock
- ★ Make sure to take the time to go to an event where you don't have to do anything but be a student
- ★ You could remember what you enjoy about planning events



┆ Boundaries ┆

- ★ When you're on duty, you're on duty, when you're not, you're not!
- ★ Help students turn their negative energy into something positive instead of them just dumping it all on you
- ★ Remind residents that you, yourself are still a student

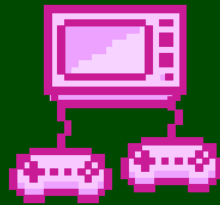




Say No <3



- ★ A personal favorite of mine
- ★ Goes hand to hand w/ boundaries as no itself is a boundary
- ★ If you are off duty or you have too much going on say no (respectfully)



GET OFF CAMPUS!!



- ★ A student leader is INVOLVED on campus
- ★ As housing student leaders we have the absolute pleasure of living where we work
- ★ This causes a hard time separating living and work
- ★ Can't leave? Bed Rot!
 - Be mentally off campus, put your signs to away and vibe



▮ Do Jobs You're Passionate About ▮

- ★ This tip is a very privileged statement
- ★ Ultimately, you only have one life so make the most of it
- ★ When you are doing a job you are passionate about you are less likely to experience burnout as you are having fun on the job

▮ Pick up a hobby ▮



- ★ Video games, crocheting, archery, horseback riding, embroidery, reading, drawing, etc.
- ★ Having a productive hobby can help you take time for yourself
- ★ As well as helping to feel productive

+

Therapy

+

★

At the end of the day we live in a crazy world

★

We all need therapy, as so many bad things happen around us

★

As Student Leaders we are in charge of the wellbeing of all residents and that is a lot for just one person

05

Closing Remarks

♥♥♥

← →

▮ What do you do to minimize Burnout? ▮

More Audience participation!!



▮ Important Things to Remember! ▮

- ★ There is not a right way to minimize burnout
- ★ All that matters is what works for you!
- ★ Keep things in perspective!
- ★ You were chosen to be here, you belong here.
- ★ You are a Human first, Student second, and Student Leader last



Thank You!

Any Questions??

Also pretty please fill out this
google form 🙏🙏



Quick Thank you to Sierra and Housing Pro Staff
for allowing me to present!

CREDITS: This presentation template was created by Slidesgo,
including icons by Flaticon, and infographics & images by Freepik.



Bibliography

- Atienza, Mhelett V, et al. "Influencing Factors of Academic Burnout and Coping Mechanisms of Student Leaders in BatStateU-Lemery and Balaya." *Batangas State University- Lemery Campus, Lemery, Batangas, Philippines*, Asia Pacific Journal of Advanced Education and Technology, 2022. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/8eef/9522c054526e30cb8dc3a64a0a5520515b7c.pdf>
- Booth, Stephanie, and Smitha Bhandari. "What Is Imposter Syndrome?" *WebMD*, WebMD, www.webmd.com/balance/what-is-imposter-syndrome.
- Hillert, Andreas et al. "The Burnout Phenomenon: A Résumé After More Than 15,000 Scientific Publications." *Frontiers in psychiatry* vol. 11 519237. 9 Dec. 2020, doi:10.3389/fpsyt.2020.519237
- "How We Feel." *How We Feel*, howwefeel.org/. Accessed 15 Mar. 2025.
- Hortman-Cooper, Ashley. "Self-Care and Burnout." Western Oregon University Housing, Fall Training, 2024.
- "Imposter Syndrome." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/imposter-syndrome.
- Kerr, Jacqueline, director. *How To Stop Burnout Before It Starts* | Jacqueline Kerr | *TEDxMcMasterU*. YouTube, YouTube, 17 May 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YYogVnVPoQ>. Accessed 31 Oct. 2023.
- Mostert, Karina. "Burnout and Engagement in University Students : A Psychometric Analysis of the MBI-SS and UWES-S:" *North West*

UniversityPotchefstroom, South Africa, Higher Education South Africa,
2007. <https://journals.co.za/doi/epdf/10.10520/EJC37307>

Pisarik, Christopher T. “Motivational Orientation and Burnout Among Undergraduate College Students.” *College Student Journal*, Project Innovation Austin, 2009. <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA217511785&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&isn=01463934&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7E8f819eb1&aty=open-web-entry>

Reynell van der Ross, Malissa. “Student Engagement and Learning Approaches During COVID-19: The Role of Study Resources, Burnout Risk, and Student Leader–Member Exchange as Psychological Conditions.” *Walden University, Higher Learning Research Communications*, 2022. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1346101.pdf>

“Retro Video Games Newsletter Presentation.” *Slidesgo*, slidesgo.com/theme/retro-video-games-newsletter#search-video+game&position-1&results-45&rs=search.

Ross, Taylor J. “Rising Student Burnout: A Distributive Leadership Approach to Creating Student Well-Being.” *Grand Valley State University, Scholar Works @ GVSU*, 2021. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gradprojects/29/>

RSO. *Student Leader Burnout and How to Avoid it*. Lincoln, Nebraska. <https://involved.unl.edu/soar/docs/RSO%20Advisor%20Burnout.pdf>

Saville, Bryan K, et al. “Passion and Burnout in College Students.” *James Madison University, Project Innovation Austin*, 2018. <https://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/prin/01463934/v52n1/s10.pdf?expir>

[es=1698774325&id=0000&titleid=72010514&checksum=390DC5EB1E43B9A07A7FB9BAC69D86D2&host=https://www.ingentaconnect.com](https://www.ingentaconnect.com/es=1698774325&id=0000&titleid=72010514&checksum=390DC5EB1E43B9A07A7FB9BAC69D86D2&host=https://www.ingentaconnect.com)

Sieberhagen, C. (1970, January 1). *Burnout and engagement of student leaders in a higher education institution*. NWU.

https://repository.nwu.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10394/175/sieberhagen_c.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Web MD Editorial Contributor, and Jabeen Bagum. "Burnout: Symptoms, Risk Factors, Prevention, Treatment." *WebMD*, WebMD, www.webmd.com/mental-health/burnout-symptoms-signs.