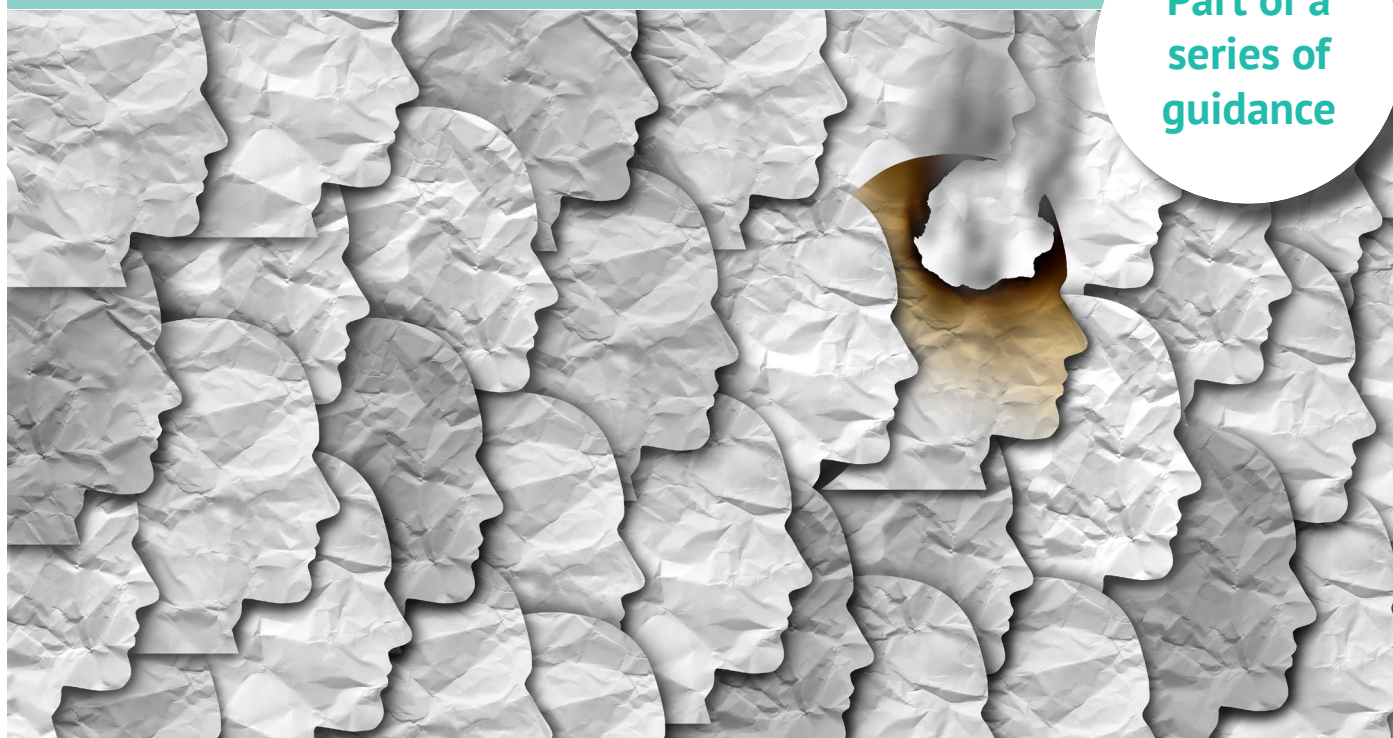


Guidance on preventing stress and burnout in churches and Christian faith-based organisations

Part of a
series of
guidance





Forewords

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For a number of years now I have led the National Centre for Post-Qualifying Social Work and Professional Practice (NCPQSW) and the Centre for Leadership Impact and Management Bournemouth (CLiMB) providing consultancy, research and education programmes within the Health and Social Care sector. With my lifelong friend, Richard Field, I have worked on leadership development and published widely in this area. One of the themes that kept recurring has been how to deal with stress and pressure in the sector, and this has led us to write and develop materials in coaching, self-leadership and managing conflict.

Having developed materials and theories for the health and social care sector, we have over the past few years often discussed how these ideas could be of real value in the Christian faith context. We both have lifelong personal Christian faiths; indeed, it was via a church connection that we first met each other over 30 years ago. We are clear though that we do not see ourselves as Christian Leaders, but rather as Leaders who are Christians (though I have been previously employed as a full-time Christian leader in my early career, before returning to professional practice and academia).

Recently, we have begun to consider how some of our thinking about stress and burnout could be helpful in a Christian context, especially as we had personally witnessed and heard many stories about Christian leaders who were struggling and suffering with stress and burnout. This all crystallised in 2019 when I met Bethan Edmunds on an Oak Hall holiday on the west coast of America. Bethan is a highly experienced counsellor specialising in working with Christian leaders who are burnt out or traumatised. We spent many hours discussing our various experiences and views on these matters and by the end of the holiday, during an evening in San Francisco, I committed to bringing us together to write some guidance on preventing and dealing with stress and burnout for leaders in Churches and Christian faith based organisations.

For the past year we have extensively researched this area, talking to a number of key individuals, seeking the insight and experience of others. We are very grateful to those who have shared their experiences with us, some of them with deep struggles and personal pain, and especially to those who have allowed us to share these experiences with you via the case studies in this guidance. The experiences described here are not exhaustive. They are simply recorded to provide insight and examples of some of the types of pressures and issues that some leaders experience. We are convinced that there is far more stress and burnout in Christian ministry than previously recognised and that too many leaders are simply buckling under the pressures they experience. It's not their personal lack of resilience or ability that is usually the main problem, but rather it is the unreasonable expectations laid on them, or the poor governance and structure of the organisation they work in leading to a lack of appropriate support, which means they are unable to thrive.

We therefore offer you our reflections, based on years of research and development in these fields, in a sincere hope and belief that they might in some way help reduce stress and burnout for those engaging in Christian ministry. This guidance is full of useful advice coupled with tips for success and reflections. We also want to thank Hil Sewell (Head of People and Facilities at the Evangelical Alliance), Bethany Silezin and Tom James for their insights and contribution. They provided insights beyond our experiences or understanding.

Finally, I want to thank Martin Charlesworth and his team at Jubilee Plus. This is the second time we have worked together to provide resources such as this, and this new guidance is part of a series written with Jubilee Plus and Faith in Later life. Jubilee Plus are a constant reminder to society and the Christian community that there are many marginalised people in the world and in particular they challenge us all to consider how we might better respond to the issues of poverty and marginalisation in our world. This is a demanding calling, faced with many challenges and thus we trust that this guidance will help us all work even more effectively in our calling to make a difference in our world.

Professor Keith Brown
August 2020

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I have been in Christian leadership roles for over thirty years, both in local churches and in national organisations. I have personally experienced many highly stressful events which have threatened to undermine my capacity to work effectively. I know the feeling of being traumatised by things that happen along the way as I have sought to be an effective leader. Events such as a sudden death, or a health crisis in my family, or a really difficult working relationship, or just the sheer emotional tiredness of caring for people. Looking back, I realise that many times I lacked a good understanding of what I was experiencing and I also urgently needed suitable support. I came close to burnout a couple of times along the way but managed to avoid the full impact of burnout. Some of my friends in Christian leadership facing similar pressures did not come out so well. Either they had to give up their leadership roles prematurely or they limped on in leadership without having really recovered from burnout.

Such things should not have to happen. That is why this booklet is so important. I am delighted to be collaborating with my friend Professor Keith Brown in bringing this new and important resource to you.

Martin Charlesworth
August 2020

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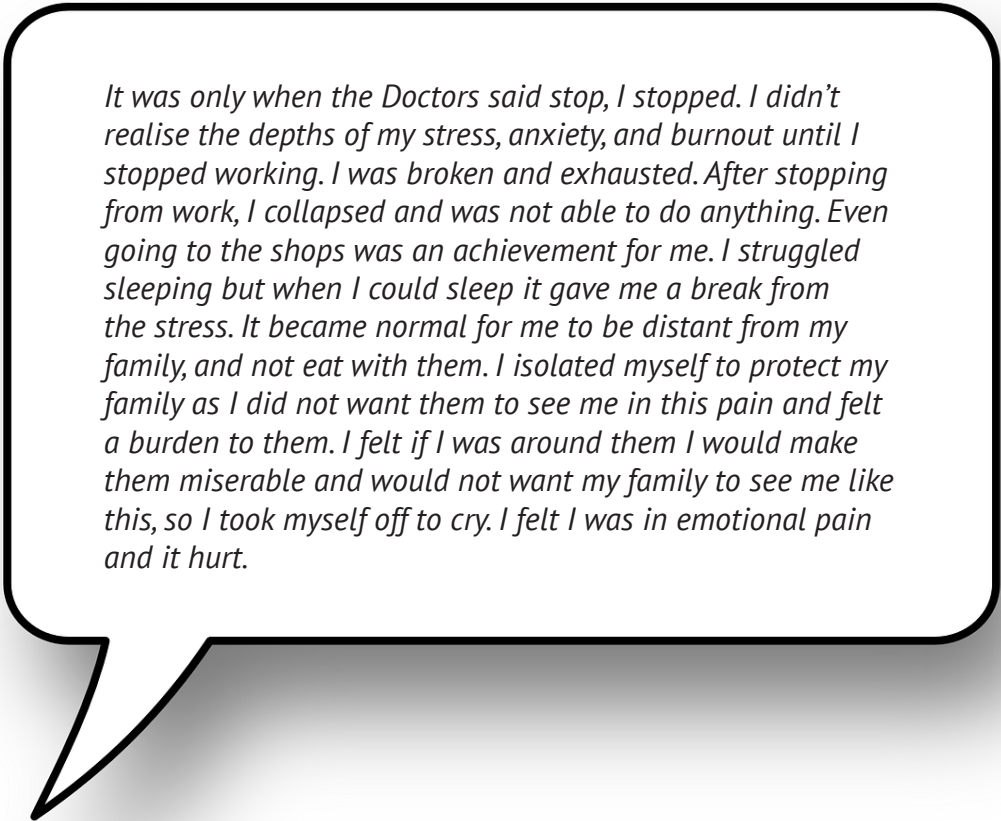
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Introduction

The focus of this guidance is burnout, a work-based phenomenon that can affect leaders in any organisation, including Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations.

Burnout is a “syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with people in some capacity (Maslach 1996:193).

This definition, whilst helpful, fails to convey the potentially life-shattering impact that burnout can have, as described in the words of ‘Peter’, a Christian leader who contributed to this guidance.



It was only when the Doctors said stop, I stopped. I didn't realise the depths of my stress, anxiety, and burnout until I stopped working. I was broken and exhausted. After stopping from work, I collapsed and was not able to do anything. Even going to the shops was an achievement for me. I struggled sleeping but when I could sleep it gave me a break from the stress. It became normal for me to be distant from my family, and not eat with them. I isolated myself to protect my family as I did not want them to see me in this pain and felt a burden to them. I felt if I was around them I would make them miserable and would not want my family to see me like this, so I took myself off to cry. I felt I was in emotional pain and it hurt.

Burnout should be a concern to all of us leading in Churches and Christian faith-based organisations. As individuals, we are called to love our neighbour and none of us should be prepared to witness the personal damage that high levels of stress and burnout causes a brother or sister. As organisations, we have a duty of care for staff and volunteers, even more so given we generally espouse values that express a regard for people. It is essential that this is reflected in how staff and volunteers are treated.

Why this Guidance?

Having worshipped and worked with Christian leaders for many years, we have seen a disturbing number of them struggle with the challenge of being a healthy and productive member of a Church or Christian faith-based organisation. For some leaders, this struggle is short lived or acute; arguably a natural part of the rough and tumble of being in relationship with others within an organisation. We are concerned for those in leadership positions where stress becomes a constant feature that gradually builds to the point where it becomes chronic or toxic, leading to burnout.

Burnout is real and its existence can significantly impact individuals, families, economies and organisations. The consequences of burnout are not only serious but costly to both the organisation and the individual in the following ways:

- 1. Financial Cost:** This can arise from leaders being distracted from the purpose of the organisation, increased sickness absence and sickness presence; a greater number of mistakes being made, reduced quality, decreased productivity and a reduced level of commitment, all of which have financial implications for the organisation. Equally, the time and cost associated with recruiting, inducting, and training replacement leaders can be high; often more so than investing in measures intended to encourage retention.
- 2. Health Cost:** It is widely recognised that prolonged stress is the major cause of most human illness and diseases whether mental or physical. This causes pressure on our NHS which impacts our economy as more public funds are required to keep the service running.
- 3. Relational Cost:** Due to pressures in the workplace, relationships can be affected in other contexts of our life, especially at home. Similarly, prolonged stress increases a sense of loneliness and lowers self-esteem. The personal cost of covering a highly stressed leader may start a journey towards toxic stress and burnout for colleagues and others. Stress may not be infectious, but it can spread quickly and impact widely, including ultimately on those the organisation seeks to serve.
- 4. Personal Cost:** Burnout can cause emotional and spiritual cost, loss of idealism, loss of purpose and loss of self-worth which slowly erodes a person's identity.

Numerous studies have been conducted exploring the relationship between religion and health and one of the most common ways that people cope with stress is through the comfort found in spiritual practices (Pargament 1997). Psychologists of religion have explored how religious practices can be both a positive life-transforming experience where meaning and comfort in life is sought from faith; and a negative one which expresses conflict, questions and doubt regarding God and faith when stress is present.

Many of us believe that faith is a great comfort when feeling anxious and stressed, but what happens to the Christian leader who is experiencing signs of burnout and has the added pressure of being a “model Christian” who should be able to cope with severe, ongoing and overwhelming trials?

Whilst there are many statistics circulating on the internet about stress, there is very little published regarding burnout in Britain, and even less from a Christian perspective. The HSE Executive in 2019 reported that in 2018/19 there were 602,000 people in the UK with work-related stress, depression or anxiety, representing 1,800 people per 100,000 workers. The incidence of this varies, being more prevalent, at 2,120 per 100,000, in industries such as education, health, and social care. Worryingly, the overall rate appears to be increasing, albeit slowly. If Churches and Christian faith-based organisations are experiencing similar rates, there may be a sad haemorrhaging of gifted and

committed leaders. Our experience of working with those with toxic stress and burnout suggests it is relatively common and that even one instance is too many.

In order that leaders can be effective, they should be aware of:

- **Their own state always, know the causes of stress to which they are susceptible and indicators of when they are becoming stressed, together with management strategies that work for them, etc.**
- **Indicators of possible stress in other people and be prepared to flex their own behaviour as part of the support they offer them.**
- **The overall level of pressure within their part of the organisation and be willing to act, if they consider this is likely to become detrimental.**

There are a number of clinical concepts and terms that anyone looking at burnout will encounter as they try to make sense of what this is, the potential causes, how the likelihood of it occurring can be reduced and how people may be helped to recover.

We believe a combination of trauma, organisational purpose and culture can combine to cause toxic stress which, if unchecked, is likely to lead to burnout (**Figure 1**).

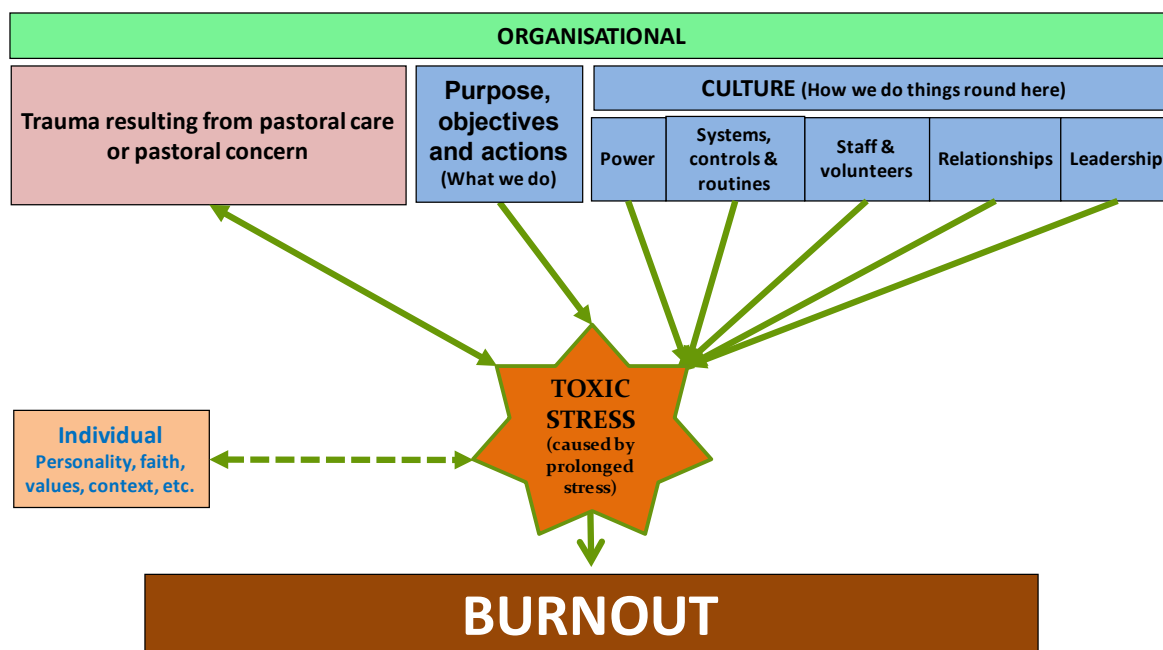


Figure 1 - Stressors, Toxic Stress and Burnout

It should be noted that burnout is associated with organisational life, so while someone who is not at work may experience a severe acute or chronic psychological event, this would not be described as burnout.

This said, we believe that the extent to which someone experiences toxic stress and how they try to handle this may be affected, but not caused, by how they are as a person. This is different from saying that how they are as a person causes burnout. Life is, of course, more than work. In practice, people move between different contexts every day: for example, between Church, home, work. Each of these contexts are a potential source of pressure, as are the boundaries between them.

Concurrent pressure in two or more contexts may combine to pose a significant problem, as can the interplay between them. Difficulties in one context may quickly cause pressure in another. For

example, when a Churchwarden handling a difficult situation in their Church may be absent from home, this may cause problems in that context, which increases the pressure on the individual which, in turn, may affect how they are at Church.

Whilst developing internal resources of becoming self-aware, emotionally healthy and resilient is important, we believe that personal signs of burnout do not mean that something is wrong with the person. Rather we believe that there is a need to address dysfunction in organisations, as healthier working practices reduce the likelihood and impact of burnout on the individual and our Christian community.

This guidance continues to explore burnout in detail and the way in which aspects of organisational life can combine to create an environment within which burnout is more likely. Preventative and curative actions are proposed to help avoid burnout and, where it does happen, to promote a good recovery.

Burnout and Toxic Stress

Burnout

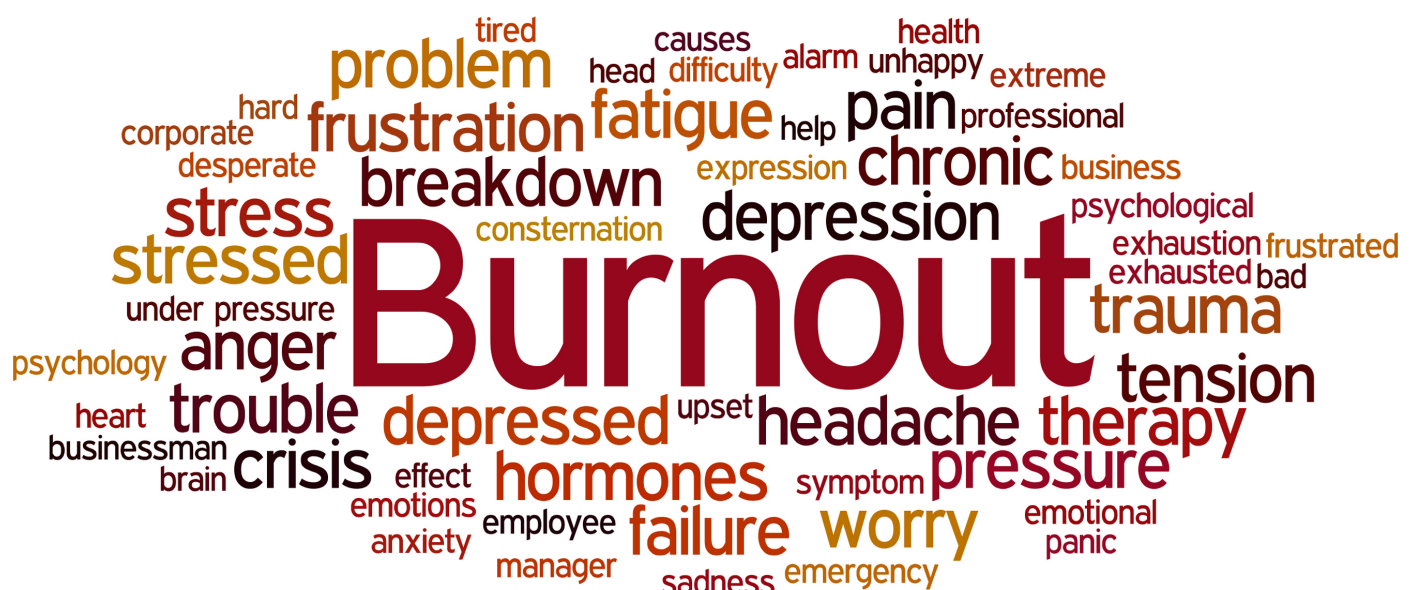
Burnout is a physical, emotional, and psychological response to constant levels of high stress and is experienced in three dimensions:

1. **Feelings of Exhaustion** - not being able to cope with workload.
2. **Cynicism/depersonalisation** – emotionally detaching from the role especially from the people they serve.
3. **Inefficacy /Poor job performance** – believing they are no longer making a positive contribution to their job.

A key aspect of the burnout syndrome is increased feelings of exhaustion where one feels emotionally depleted from internal resources and no longer able to give of yourself at a psychological level. Consequently, one disengages in work commitments and productivity decreases, reducing job satisfaction. Maslach (1996) believed that the cause of burnout was situational and was due to long working hours, being underappreciated, poor work/ life balance, lack of time off, low salary and being under resourced.

In May 2018, the World Health Organisation (WHO) updated its definition of burnout from one that was known as a stress syndrome to “a syndrome conceptualised as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed”(cited in Fraga 2019). As a result, burnout is predominately known as a workplace phenomenon and, whilst it has been linked extensively to the field of organisational stress, it goes beyond the specific stresses in the workplace to one which impacts an individual’s well-being. At severe levels, burnout can overlap with symptoms of depression and anxiety, impacting a person’s sense of identity, self-worth, significance, and purpose.

Recovery from burnout is often a long complex process and is very costly to our emotional, mental, spiritual, and financial welfare. Whilst recovery is possible and successful, we believe prevention is better than cure as it takes more energy, time, and commitment to recover from post burnout than introducing healthier workplace practices and lifestyles that prevent it.



Toxic Stress

The term 'burnout' is often used within the framework of 'stress'. Whilst the term stress is used in our daily vocabulary, there is no medical definition of stress whereas burnout is a known disorder. According to the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) stress is defined as 'the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed on them'. Stress is often described as feeling overwhelmed and overloaded by pressures and worries which cause physiological changes such as heart palpitations, sweating, heightened breathing, and muscle tension. When we are in a stressful situation which makes us feel anxious or scared our body releases stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol, causing us to go into the fight, flight, freeze mode which is normal to enable our survival. Hans Selye (1956) who **introduced the term 'stress'** as a concept believed that stress has a major protective role in all organisms, and that not all states of stress are harmful. **He coined the terms 'eustress' stress** referring to the moderate, brief, and controllable states versus 'distress' meaning severe, prolonged and uncontrollable situations. These concepts have developed into the following terms:

1. **Acute stress:** This can be quite intense but is short lived, such as panic about forgetting a meeting or running late which activates the stress hormone in the body. Once the "threat" or stress situation is over, our bodies go back to a relaxed state before we experience this again. These episodic stresses can happen on a regular basis and can develop emotional resilience and stress management skills.
2. **Toxic or chronic stress:** It is stress that builds up when a person is exposed to a high-pressure situation over a prolonged period. When this type of stress occurs on a regular basis the stress hormone is constantly being activated, keeping the body and mind on alert to any sense of perceived threat. When this happens, the body does not go back to its relaxed state and remains in a stressed state which causes significant damage to a person's mind, body, and emotions.

According to Fink (2010) "stress has different meanings for different people under different conditions" (2010:5). We all experience stress, whether positive or negative. It will always exist in our lives. However, toxic, or chronic stress when left untreated causes burnout and symptoms not only become more critical, but normal life is interrupted, and daily functioning is hindered.

Preventing Burnout and Toxic Stress

This section explores ways to prevent burnout using well-known literary sources as well as interviews from leaders in Churches and Christian faith-based organisations. The aim is to identify helpful strategies and best practice to ensure rewarding and satisfying workplace environments. Table 1 outlines a process for exploring and overcoming burnout and toxic stress, which is followed by a case study that illustrates how changes can be made to an organisation aiming to reducing burnout.

1. Know the problem: explore the origins and definition of burnout

The work of Maslach et al. in the 1970s has been foundational in understanding burnout. Maslach and her team were one of the first leading researchers to highlight, identify and create a measuring tool (Maslach Burnout Inventory, MBI) to conceptualise and give voice to an invisible syndrome that was impacting the workforce. Burnout was originally applied to the helping professions such as social workers and health care providers where prolonged stress of a highly demanding work environment saw high turnover of staff and absenteeism. Now it is widely accepted that burnout can occur in any profession.

2. Know the signs: explore the physical, emotional, behaviour symptoms

The road to burnout is slippery and sadly one that is well travelled. Burnout does not happen overnight; it is an accumulative process. It can take years to identify that something is out of balance. Sadly, those who have experienced the profound effects of burnout have often seen the signs too late.

One of the persistent messages that leaders have stated regarding the experience of burnout is that they could no longer carry on with their responsibilities and there was a voice inside saying “I don’t want to do this anymore, get me out of here”. Being aware of the signs and symptoms can alert leaders when they might be on the road to burnout so that changes can be made earlier.

3. Know the causes: explore the external factors that causes stress and exhaustion

Based on the work of Foss (2002), Adams et al (2017), and Bloom (2017) this section explores the major causes of burnout amongst Christian Leaders.

1. Role ambiguity

Leaders are expected to be spiritual and societal role models, administrators, employers, counsellors, managers, pastoral workers, life coaches, fundraisers, mediators, and providers of physical support, just to name a few aspects of the role. The role of many leaders appears limitless, unclear and difficult, as can be seen in the struggle they experience when answering the question “what do you do?” In Church life, there is often no job description regarding work outside of services and pastoral visits, or the contents might be vague, as in the Anglican Church, with “the cure of souls”, for the whole parish. Whilst admirable, the nebulous nature of this task is immeasurable and intangible and therefore it is impossible to prove success and experience job satisfaction.

2. Role Overload/under resourced

Burnout often occurs when a leader is overworked, under resourced, and their expectations of their calling slowly erodes into discouragement and disillusionment, believing their work is never done and doubt that their efforts make any difference. There are high expectations on leaders regarding service demands, celebrating holy-days, being available 24/7 to support congregants in all types of crisis. The demands on their time, energy and commitment can be relentless and at times thankless. Managing of resources such as volunteers and finance can also be challenging and there is a significant risk that a leader takes on more than they can handle, especially where there is no one else available.

3. Role conflict

This often occurs when dealing with different expectations and values among staff/volunteers/church members. For example, introducing new ways of practice within the working environment can cause conflict. Similarly, there might be a poor fit between the leader and the local church/organisation where some leaders might not have the knowledge, skills, or abilities necessary to undertake the required role. Handling conflict is difficult and if there are constant cycles and episodes of significant conflicts among people this can become emotionally, physically and spiritually draining, especially as there is an expectation on the Christian leader to model high standards and maintain the peace.

4. Public life

The life of the Christian leader and their family is often on display and open for public approval or criticism. It is readily accepted that the spouse and immediate family of the Church leader cannot just be ordinary members of the congregation. There is an even greater stress on the family to behave and act to the highest standard, often shaped by the expectations of others and biblical references. Stressors from public life are also seen on social media platforms and engagement with this is a potential source of stress. Further consideration to the potential impact of social media on individuals is included in a section starting on page 56.

5. Financial Pressures

The financial remuneration of those working in churches and Christian faith-based organisations is often low which can be especially challenging for leaders who are the main bread winners in their families. The sufficiency of funds from which remuneration is made tends to reflect the size of organisation and its location.

6. Unfair treatment at work

According to Bloom (2017) age, gender and ethnic origin can cause discrimination in the workplace. For example, female pastors and pastors of colour report much higher incidences of mistreatment by their congregation and by leaders of their denomination. Similarly, younger leaders seem to be particularly susceptible to being over-controlled or disempowered regarding important ministry issues and feel they have high levels of responsibility without the power to make changes.

4. Overcoming the causes: explores external and internal strategies of creating a rewarding working environment

There are evidence-based approaches that have proven to be effective for preventing and responding to burnout. Some of these concern personal care and the rest are organisational, both of which are explored in detail later in this guidance.

Table 1 - Process for exploring and overcoming burnout and toxic stress

Case study 1 is a good example of how changes can be made to the way organisations operate so that the likelihood of burnout is reduced. The context is of a training provider who having identified causes of student burnout, responded by requiring organisations responsible for student placements to change their support arrangements.

CASE STUDY 1: How an organisation made changes to become a healthier working environment

A Director of a Youth Worker Training Ministry provider made significant changes to his organisation when he began to see an unexpected number of youth workers leave the profession due to burnout. It saddened him to see gifted, positive, and passionate youth leaders lose their zest for youth work and leave the profession. He noticed the stark difference in appearance in these youth workers. Those joining looked full of life while those leaving appeared completely exhausted, to the point that they lost the sparkle in their eyes and would focus on the negative aspects on life, church and ministry, than the positive.

One of the key aspects he explored with his supportive trustees was their organisational culture and values. As a result, one of their core values was to focus on personal health and well-being and he created the following support packages:

1-to-1 support (different people for different roles):

- Regular (weekly) time with line manager to check in, assuring realistic workloads and work goals.
- Regular (fortnightly) 1-to-1 with a mentor to explore personal as well as professional well-being.
- Termly time with organisational representative regarding ministry placement.

Community support:

- Provided bi-monthly conferences for youth workers to get together to connect, worship and pray.
- Providing weekly support groups (clusters) for connection, sharing and prayer.
- Provided ongoing training for professional development support.
- Provided referral list for counsellors and spiritual directors if required.

Comments from the Director:

"The change process was exciting and dynamic. We saw a difference in the first couple of years through good engagement from both workers and churches. We were able to enforce changes in terms of support/supervision by saying to churches that they needed to follow our support package if they wanted placement students in their church. This made life a lot easier as there wasn't much kick back, but this would have been harder if placement churches did not buy into our scheme. We began this cultural transformation over a decade ago and would not go back to old ways of doing things. We want to continue learning and growing and improving our organisational culture and practices. We now see graduating youth workers professing a growing walk with Jesus, a foundation for a lifetime of ministry established and ready to go out and make a difference after being prepared well."

Organisational Causes of Toxic Stress

We believe there are three significant causes of toxic stress in Churches and Christian faith-based organisations as shown earlier in **Figure 1**: the impact of trauma resulting from pastoral care or concern, the purpose, objectives and actions of the organisation and elements of culture, or the way things are ‘done around here’.

Pastoral Care and Concern

A distinguishing feature of Churches and many Christian faith-based organisations is that the people within them are often directly involved in pastoral care or exercising pastoral concern, supporting people in difficult and traumatic situations.

Being directly or indirectly exposed to traumatic material can cause compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder, all of which can be workplace hazards and potentially lead to burnout.

Trauma comes from the Greek word ‘wound’, meaning injury and damage. Originally it was applied to physical wounds but in more recent times it is used to describe the emotional and psychological wounds caused by a shocking, threatening and deeply distressing event which is too big for our minds to comprehend. Sadly, the significance of trauma is still underestimated, as suggested by LaRowe (2006) *“The experience of trauma is one of the least identified and most under-treated underlying causes of human suffering today.”*

Examples of traumatic events include international or national events such as war, natural disasters, and pandemics. At a more local, individual level, but no less significant is abuse and violence experienced by individuals

It appears in most cases emotional trauma contains three common elements:

- **It was unexpected.**
- **The person was unprepared; and**
- **There was nothing the person could do to prevent it from happening rendering the person helpless, which is a key predisposition of trauma.**

Trauma takes three main forms, compassion fatigue, vicarious/secondary trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, as outlined in tables 2, 3 and 4.



Compassion Fatigue (Figley 1995)

Explanation	Case Study
Compassion fatigue can affect anyone serving in a helping capacity. It is commonly known as “the cost of caring”. The insidious nature of being around high levels of emotional need that result in disappointing situations and not seeing change can lead to moral distress. As a result, helpers lose their sense of compassion and disconnect from people around them.	A trainee vicar was tasked to set up a resettlement programme that helped newly arrived refugees rebuild their lives in the UK. They provided emotional and practical support on a weekly basis as part of their outreach programme. Hearing the grief and sadness of the traumatised refugees for a number of years, the trainee vicar started noticing chest pains and headaches and dreaded going into work. They struggled concentrating and found themselves crying and getting irritable at the smallest of things and withdrawing from their family. They started avoiding members in church, afraid of hearing any more painful stories. After experiencing their first panic attack, they began to take notice of their emotional and physical health. After taking eight weeks off from work, they were able to process their emotional distress with trusted friends and families. As a result, they were able to rediscover the joy of their calling and gradually returned to work which limited time with traumatised refugees.

Table 2 - Compassion Fatigue

Vicarious /Secondary Trauma (Pearlman and Saakvitne 1995)

Explanation	Case Study
Vicarious/secondary trauma is an occupational hazard when working with traumatised people and can disrupt the internal world of the helper and cause emotional, mental, and spiritual distress. It feels like the trauma has been absorbed by the helper and they are now experiencing overwhelming stress that feels like the traumatic event is happening to them. Pearlman and Saakvitne (1995) describe this experience as involving “profound changes in the core aspects of the therapist [helper] self” (1995:152, [emphasis added])). It alters a person’s world-view, develops psychological needs, changes beliefs and memory systems and causes symptoms closely related to PTSD.	The CEO of a Christian charity that supported children and adults who experienced sexual violence and exploitation, was constantly being exposed to shocking and painful stories. Being exposed to repeated material of sexual trauma had an impact on their marital relationship and with God. Intrusive images of sexual violence infiltrated their mind which affected intimacy with spouse. Their body would become rigid at any sense of physical touch. The CEO would experience nightmares of being attacked and turned to alcohol to relax, especially before bedtime. Their belief in seeing good can come from any situation began to disintegrate and they questioned the goodness and power of God to do something to alleviate this suffering. They felt helpless and believed it did not matter what they did, it felt like evil was triumphing. Noticing they no longer felt themselves and dreaded going to work, they received professional help and spent more time doing life-bringing activities.

Table 3 - Vicarious/Secondary Trauma

Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM III APA 1980s)	
Explanation	Case Study
<p>Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a type of anxiety disorder which may develop after being involved in, or witnessing, traumatic events. It often occurs 4-6 weeks after the initial event and causes flashbacks, avoidance of any reminders of the trauma, and living in a state of being on guard from threats. PTSD can be described as suffering from memories and a trigger can transport people back to the place or event of original event and make them feel they are reliving the trauma over again. Triggers are very personal and are activated through one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste.</p>	<p>An experienced Pastor of twenty years was put on suicide watch after admitting to their spouse they had plans to die. A few months prior, the leadership team asked this pastor to leave their leadership post due to a conflict of theology. The pastor felt they had experienced what amounted to a “civil war” within their church and was devastated and confused by the incident as they did not see it coming. The congregation began to take sides with the divided leadership team and started to shun the pastor and their family. They lost friends, finances, support networks and their spiritual home. The grief, sadness and shock triggered previous memories of a church split when the Pastor was a teenager and lost their home due to it being owned by people from “the other side” in the church. The Pastor lost a significant amount of weight, barely slept, and looked like a “shell of a person”. For the first few months of leaving the post, they feared bumping into people from their previous church and lived in a constant state of fear. They would be jumpy when the phone rang as they did not know who was friend or foe. They needed to be chaperoned when outside the family home as they struggled concentrating and recognising places. Their GP, family, few loyal friends, and counselling were key to this Pastor’s healing and over time the pastor began to feel like themselves again. The Pastor did not return to paid church work but is an itinerant speaker for Christian charities.</p>
Table 4 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	

The study of trauma and its effects on the human body, mind and emotions has revolutionised ways of treating human suffering and preventing further harm. It is widely accepted that those in the helping professions such as therapists, mental health practitioners, carers, public and social care workers can experience overwhelming amounts of stress due to being exposed to traumatic material which can cause burnout, depression, anxiety, sickness and ongoing psychological difficulties. As a result, these professions have safeguards in place such as case load management, regular supervision, debriefing, and specialised training to recognise signs and symptoms of stress and burnout to maintain a sense of self and a sound mind.

Christian leaders are on the frontline in being exposed to painful stories of violence, abuse, death, sickness, household dysfunction and torture. They are called to love, care and help the broken, vulnerable, and burdened and their desire is to make a difference in people’s lives. The short of it: trauma hurts. Directly experienced or witnessed second-hand, it is like a dangerous disease that can be transmitted, even to those not directly in its firing line. When left untreated and unresolved it can cause mental, emotional, psychological, physical, and spiritual damage - it can take a person to breaking point. The compassion that brought a Christian leader into their ministerial role can also be the very reason that causes them to leave it due to burnout, sadness, sickness, and a defeated spirit.

Whatever form trauma takes it is important to understand because:

- Trauma is everywhere and Christian leaders will encounter traumatised people.
- It is now recognised that even 'just' bearing witness to the impact of human tragedy in the lives of others can cause a costly toll on an individuals' well-being and health.
- Validating and normalising the impact of trauma can transform lives and communities and dissolve feelings of suffering in silence.
- The health and well-being of the Christian leaders matters too, and we want them to keep pursuing their God-given destinies and not be hindered, limited, or knocked out by the impact of trauma and burnout.
- Being equipped and understanding trauma-informed care can shape and transform cultures and lives, giving hope to a better and prosperous future.

Just like the COVID-19 virus is a threat to anyone anywhere, the impact of trauma poses a similar danger. Therefore, acting strategically and together will stop its spread and reduce its impact on individuals and communities. A three-word phrase is suggested, with echoes of COVID-19.

1. Be Alert

This section explores the signs, symptoms and causes of trauma for the three main trauma-related phenomena of Compassion Fatigue, Secondary Trauma, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), together with burnout and stress.

2. Protect Your Health and Well-being

This explores ways to maintain and develop resilience in the workplace and personal life to reduce the risk of long-term damage of trauma exposure and burnout.

3. Staying Safe

This introduces new ways of how to live in a broken world where trauma exists. We are slowly becoming a trauma-aware society which is led by Trauma-informed Care (TIC) initiatives. TIC's are set up to educate and inform organisations and Government-led establishments about the impact of trauma and ways to reduce causing further harm to the people in our society.

Be Alert

Tables 2, 3 and 4 introduced compassion fatigue, secondary trauma and PTSD, the signs, symptoms, and triggers associated with which are detailed in **Table 5**. In addition, **Table 5** includes the same detail for stress and burnout. Whilst only GP's, Psychiatrists and medical professionals can give formal diagnosis of these conditions, recognising the signs, symptoms and causes gives us a key to prevention and recovery.

Trauma turns our whole world upside down and causes physiological changes that affect daily functioning. For some people, the symptoms of trauma can take weeks, months or even years to surface and not everyone will react to the same event in the same way. Trauma may be a single disturbing experiencing or can occur over a series of events.

Stress Mild-Toxic (Seyle 1956)	Compassion Fatigue (Figley 1995)	Secondary Trauma/Vicarious Trauma (Pearlman and Saakvitne 1995)	
Related to anything that puts a high demand on internal resources.	Related to interpersonal relationships that are an emotional and relational drain.	Being traumatised by exposure of traumatic material and it becomes your own.	
Signs and Symptoms			
Physical			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches and other aches and pains • Diarrhoea or constipation • Nausea, dizziness • Chest pain, rapid heart rate • High blood pressure • Weakened immune system • Heart disease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatigue • Rapid heartbeat • Breathing difficulties • Muscle tension/Aches and pains • Dizziness • Overwhelmed hearing stories of suffering • Detached from surroundings – might not feel physically present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhaustion • Insomnia • Headaches • Increased susceptibility to illness • Sore back and neck • Irritable bowel • Rashes, breakouts • Grinding teeth at night • Heart palpitations • Hypochondria • Difficulty sleeping 	
Emotional			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depression or general unhappiness • Anxiety and agitation • Moodiness, irritability/anger/tearful • Feeling overwhelmed and out of control • Loneliness and isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powerlessness • Anxiety • Guilt • Sadness & grief • Anger/rage • Shut down • Numbness • Fear • Helplessness • Depression • Overly sensitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional exhaustion • Negative self-image • Depression/increased anxiety • Feelings of hopelessness • Guilt • Reduced ability to feel sympathy and empathy towards clients or family/friends • Resentment of demands being put on at work and/or at home • Dread of working with certain people • Diminished sense of enjoyment/career (i.e. low compassion satisfaction) • Depersonalization – spacing out during work or the drive home • Disruption of world view/heightened anxiety or irrational fears • Hypersensitivity to emotionally charged stimuli or emotional numbing • Difficulty separating personal and professional lives • Failure to nurture and develop non-work related aspects of life • Suicidal thoughts 	

	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM-III 1980s)	Burnout (Maslach 1970s)
	Stuck in trauma memories and reliving the horror, even when it has passed.	Related to occupational processes/daily grind of prolonged stress that can occur in any profession.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tiredness and fatigue • Palpitations (rapid heartbeat) • Breathing difficulties • Nausea – children will often have a stomach-ache • dizziness • altered sleep patterns • changes in appetite • headaches • gastrointestinal problems • shaking • loss of concentration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling tired and drained most of the time • Headaches, chest pains, muscle pains • Frequent illness due to lowered immunity • Changes in sleep habits such as difficulties falling and staying asleep or sleeping too much. • Changes in eating habits as over/under eating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock • Helplessness • Powerlessness • Overwhelming anxiety/panic attacks • Guilt • Sadness & grief • Anger/rage • Shut down/ Numbness • Fear/terrified • Depression • Overly sensitive • Suicidal thoughts • Dissociation – spacing out and not being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking frustration out on others • Feels helpless, powerless, and hopeless • Feels numb and nothing brings the highs and lows like it used to • Feeling lonely • Not feeling understood

Stress Mild-Toxic (Seyle 1956)	Compassion Fatigue (Figley 1995)	Secondary Trauma/Vicarious Trauma (Pearlman and Saakvitne 1995)	
Related to anything that puts a high demand on internal resources.	Related to interpersonal relationships that are an emotional and relational drain.	Being traumatised by exposure of traumatic material and it becomes your own.	
Signs and Symptoms			
Behavioural			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating more or less • Sleeping too much or too little • Withdrawing from others • Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities • Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax • Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impatient/ irritable • Withdrawn • Moody • Nightmares • Appetite changes • Hypervigilance • Accident prone • Poor concentration • Decreased intimacy • Increased sick days off work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preoccupied with thoughts of the traumatised person and have horror and rescue fantasies. • Avoiding listening to people's story of traumatic experiences • Difficulty in maintaining boundaries with the person and might try and overextend self to help the person. • Increased use of alcohol and drugs • Anger and irritability at home and/or at work • Avoidance of people that need help • Watching excessive amounts of TV/ Netflix at night • Consuming high trauma media as entertainment • Not returning phone calls at work and/or at home • Avoiding colleagues and staff gatherings/ social events • Impaired ability to make decisions • Feeling helpless when hearing a difficult client story/feeling unskilled in job • Difficulty with sex and intimacy due to trauma exposure at work • Thinking about quitting job • Impaired appetite or binge eating 	
Cognitive			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory problems • Inability to concentrate • Poor judgment • Seeing only the negative • Anxious or racing thoughts • Constant worrying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preoccupied with thoughts of trauma • Thoughts of self-harm • Apathy • Changes in beliefs, expectations, and assumptions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrusive imagery • Loss of control, trust, and independence • Worldview changes and effects beliefs such as good and evil • Loss of hope, pessimism, cynicism 	

	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM-III 1980s)	Burnout (Maslach 1970s)
	Stuck in trauma memories and reliving the horror, even when it has passed.	Related to occupational processes/daily grind of prolonged stress that can occur in any profession.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nightmares • Disturbed sleep due to intrusive and unpleasant thoughts • Insomnia • Emotional outbursts and unable to cope with heightened emotions • Quick mood changes • Triggered by memories of the event which causes overwhelming emotions • Hypervigilant – being more ‘jumpy’ as feel on the alert of something happening • Preoccupied with the trauma/complete avoidance of any reminders • Obsessive and compulsive behaviours • Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawing from responsibilities • Loss of motivation and vision • Sense of failure and self-doubt • Detachment/feeling alone and disconnected from others including those who work with • Decreased satisfaction and sense of accomplishment • Procrastinating and slower at getting things done • Skipping work or coming in late and leaving early • Using food, drugs, or alcohol to cope
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impending doom • No sense of feeling safe and the world is a dangerous place • Negative thoughts about self, other people, or the world • Hopelessness about the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory problems • Inability to concentrate • Poor judgment • Seeing only the negative • Anxious or racing thoughts • Constant worrying

Stress Mild-Toxic (Seyle 1956)	Compassion Fatigue (Figley 1995)	Secondary Trauma/Vicarious Trauma (Pearlman and Saakvitne 1995)	
Related to anything that puts a high demand on internal resources.	Related to interpersonal relationships that are an emotional and relational drain.	Being traumatised by exposure of traumatic material and it becomes your own.	
Signs and Symptoms			
Triggers			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Anything that puts high demands on you can be stressful. This includes positive events such as getting married, buying a house, going to college, or receiving a promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Previous exposure to traumaEmpathetic and high emotional energyProlonged exposure to traumatic material of sufferersPersonal characteristics, i.e. helper role	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Previous exposure to traumaEmpathetic and high emotional energyProlonged exposure to traumatic material of sufferersPersonal characteristics, i.e. helper roleOrganisational context	

Table 5 - Summary of Stress, Burnout, Compassion Fatigue, Secondary/Vicarious Trauma and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Based on the works of Seyle (1956), Maslach (1977), Figley (1995 & 2002), NHS guidelines and Helpguide, Pearlman & Saakvitne (1995) and Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III 1980s) published by American Psychiatric Association (APA).

	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (DSM-III 1980s)	Burnout (Maslach 1970s)
	Stuck in trauma memories and reliving the horror, even when it has passed.	Related to occupational processes/daily grind of prolonged stress that can occur in any profession.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous exposure to trauma • Prolonged exposure to traumatic material of sufferers • Serious Accidents • Abuse, including childhood or domestic • Torture • Serious health problems • War and conflict • Childbirth experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational processes and structures • Personal characteristics, e.g. perfectionist, not able to stop working • Work-related attributes, e.g. colleagues

Common responses that traumatised people experience are:

- Often feeling 'unsafe' as they have lost a sense of safety in their being.
- Constantly 'on guard' of something bad happening and can seem 'jumpy'/hypervigilant.
- Difficulty in trusting people and feeling isolated.
- Loss of memory and poor concentration.
- Preoccupied with the trauma/complete avoidance of any reminder of the event. i.e. visiting a place.
- Deep sense of guilt, shame, and despair.
- Emotional dysregulation, which means it is very difficult to calm distressing emotions and self-soothe when feeling terrified and overwhelmed.

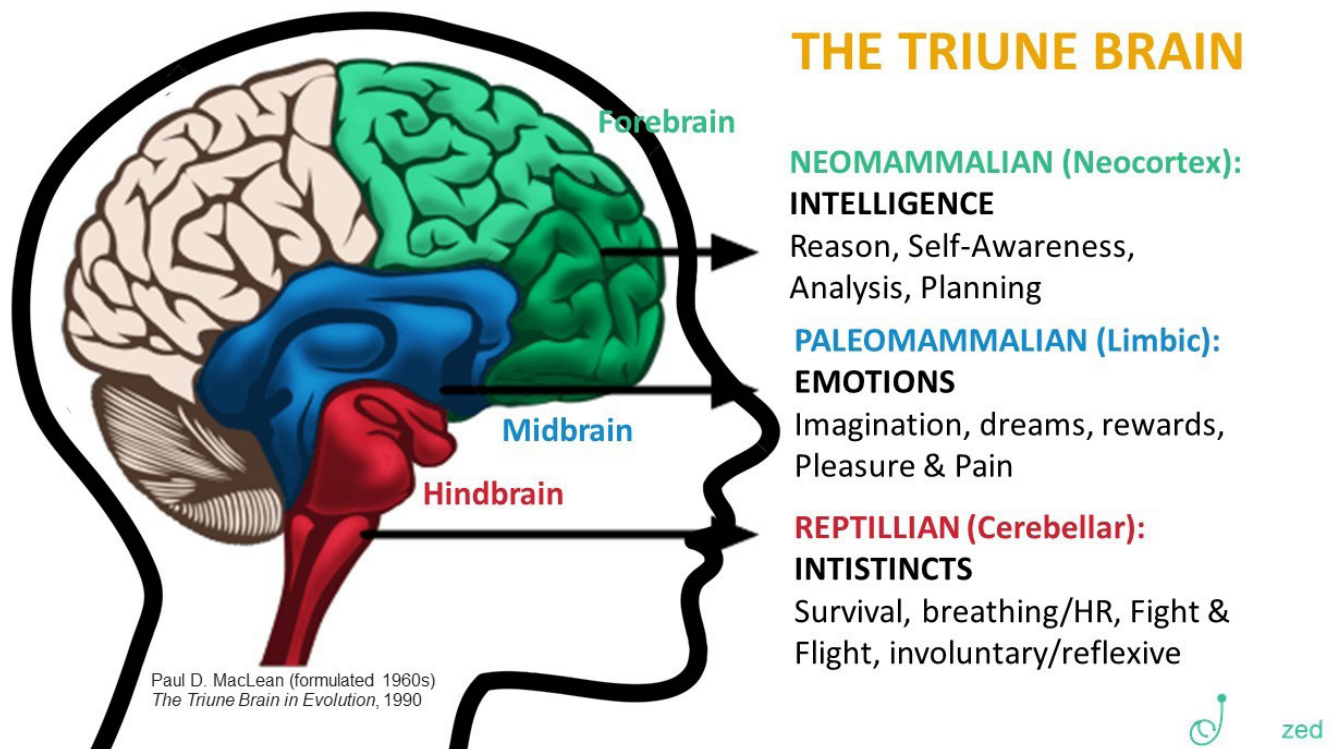


Figure 2 - The Triune Brain

Source: MacLean (1960) cited in Zarcinas (2019)

Appreciating the range of common responses is helpful, as to an extent is understanding how the brain works. In recent decades, the collaborative work of neuroscience and psychotherapy have revolutionised ways of understanding the way stress and trauma impacts the brain which affects our behaviour. In the 1960s American physician and neuroscientist, Paul D. MacLean (1990), identified three areas of the human brain called the Triune Model (Figure 2) which gained wide acceptance especially in the field of trauma therapy. As a result, other models have been conceptualised based on the early findings of MacLean's work linking brain functioning with social behaviour.

The Triune Model includes three entities; a "reptilian brain" which is in charge of survival functions; a "limbic brain" which is in charge of emotions; and the "neocortex brain", which is in charge of rational thinking. MacLean (1990) argued a brain hierarchy in terms of evolutionary development, believing the reptilian brain is the oldest part of our brain and the neo-cortex is the youngest. During times of stress, the oldest part of the brain takes precedence to enable survival and its reaction is involuntary. However, one of the main reasons why we do not use our fight or flight reflex when we are angry or stressed with someone is because the rational part of the brain helps us develop more civilised ways of behaviour, such as engaging in a difficult situation in a calm, collected and emotionally regulated manner. This way of behaving is learnt.

Below is a closer examination of the Triune Model and how stress and trauma affects brain functionality.

- 1. The Neo-cortex** - also referred to as the executive part of the brain. It is responsible for all higher-order conscious activity, such as reason, self-awareness, language, decision making, and holds thoughts and memories such as talking, writing, and learning.
- 2. The limbic system** – also known as the emotional brain. This part is responsible for regulating emotions and has a connection with the rational part of the brain that can manage difficult thoughts and emotions without being overwhelmed. Terms such as amygdala and the hypothalamus are commonly used when talking about stress and trauma. These areas of the brain are designed to keep us safe. For example, the amygdala is known as an early warning system that highlights that something is unsafe and forms a fast reaction in response. It is called a “smoke alarm” indicating there is a fire/threat somewhere. It might not always be accurate, but it responds quickly to a threat. The hippocampus also plays an important role in encoding events as it is responsible for the ability to store and retrieve memories.
- 3. Reptilian brain**- this is the most primitive part of the brain which keeps us alive, including breathing, balance, feeding and regulating heartrate. A key element of the reptilian brain is that it is instinctive and involuntary.

A classic example indicating how all three elements link is explained using a lion. If we come face-to-face with a lion in a jungle, our automatic response to enable survival would be to run from the lion, fight the lion or play dead and freeze. The stress response hormone is activated to aid quick and instinctive reflexes to enable survival. Yet, what happens if we sensed a perceived threat which is less obvious than being confronted by immediate danger, such as seeing a lion footprint? It would not be helpful if the person saw the footprints and became curious and started asking rational questions such as what type of lion is this? How close is the lion? Is it a dangerous lion? At this point, using the rational part of the brain would slow down a lifesaving response. As a result, the neo-cortex part of the brain shuts down, and the reptilian brain takes precedence over any other brain function as it is designed to do. The limbic system interprets the emotional significance of this event and stores it as visual and sensory memories. Levine (1997) notes that once the threat is over, the body and brain system needs to calm, soothe and release the stress energy so normal brain and body activity resumes, which includes the rational part of the brain being switched back on again.

Levine (1997) believes that humans have never found it easy to resolve the dilemma of the fight/flight/freeze mode. When confronted with a life-threatening situation, our rational brains may become confused and override our instinctive impulses. Though this overriding may be done for a good reason, the confusion that accompanies according to Levine (1997) leads to trauma.

Whilst the Triune Model has been foundational in understanding our natural responses when confronted with explicit danger, how is it relevant in today's world as we do not live in a jungle? The work of Porges (2003) has been ground-breaking in answering this question. He develops a more sophisticated model that goes beyond the primitive root of the effects of the fight and flight response and puts social relationships at the forefront of trauma. He argues that our survival depends on our ability to connect socially. Perceived threats are picked up by cues from tone of voice and facial expressions which can activate our nervous system and cause emotional dysregulation when we feel unsafe. Relationships, connection, and attachment are vital in healthy human functioning and survival and while relationships have the power to damage us, positive, kind, calm and loving relationships also have the power to heal us.

Bessel van der Kolk (2014) is a leading voice highlighting that traumatized brains look different from non-traumatized brains. Put simple, the following happens:

1. **The Neo-cortex/ Rational brain is under-activated** - this makes learning and retaining information difficult.
2. **The Limbic system/ Emotion Regulation brain is under activated** - this makes it difficult to self-regulate and feel connected to self and others.
3. **The Reptilian/ Fear brain is over-activated** - this is when traumatised people see danger where other people see the situation as manageable.

As the above has indicated, it is not as easy to say to someone suffering with trauma-stress related symptoms to “just snap out of it”, or “just get on with it”. Trauma is very deep rooted and disrupts the original design of how the brain and body normally functions. Modern neuroscientists believe that our brains are malleable and treating trauma means rewiring our brains to new pathways so better thought patterns can bring healing. It is interesting to note that modern science has proven the verse “be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:2), especially in the field of stress, burnout, and trauma.

Protect Your Health and Well-being

Trauma is treatable but the journey back to full recovery may not be an easy one, and normally requires professional counselling/trauma support to aid recovery. Whilst we might not avoid being exposed to traumatic materials, there are many simple and effective strategies to reduce long-term effects and support our body and mind to function at its best:

Tips for Success:

Organisational Care

1. **Recognise that trauma can impact Christian leaders in churches and organisations and have open discussions about this.**
2. **Normalise the symptoms.** There is no shame in feeling that you are not able to cope or needing extra support for a time.
3. **Encourage proper debriefing, especially when engaging with difficult situations in a person's life.** This may include talking to a skilled professional outside of the organisation or peer support.
4. **Have regular breaks and even have mental health days as part of the organisational culture.**
5. **Assess workloads and adjust accordingly.**
6. **Have training days to equip in handling traumatic material and growing in emotional resilience.** Trauma-informed care training can be helpful in developing strategies when working with trauma in pastoral care situations.
7. **Regular checks in with self and others.**
8. **Be creative in exploring ways to integrate self-care in the workplace.**

These ideas and more are developed in the section in which we address culture.

Personal Care

1. Be honest about how you are feeling and take responsibility for your own well-being.
2. Have a fulfilling personal life and keep connecting to people and activities that bring joy and comfort such as dancing, listening to music.
3. Treat yourself to things you enjoy like massages, cinema trips, etc.
4. Acknowledge that there are limits in hearing traumatic material and take regular time out.
5. Much research says that trauma gets stuck in the body and it needs to be released. This can be achieved through regular heart-exerting exercises and deep breathing. This helps calm the nervous system and helps it switch back to normal functioning.
6. Acknowledge any self-medicating using drugs, alcohol, gambling, or any act that feels shameful; speak to a trusted person and develop healthy ways of coping.



Staying Safe

There is a growing trend in education, social services, mental and healthcare services, to become 'trauma- informed' which is backed by local and national Government. Trauma Informed Care (TIC) was inspired by the work of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE's) which originated in California in the early 1990s.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is the term used to describe traumatic experiences before the age of 18 that can lead to negative, lifelong emotional and physical outcomes. It explores 10 areas of traumatic experiences covering abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction. In 2013, the Public Health Wales survey reported that 50% of Welsh adults had experienced at least one ACE, and England reported a figure of 47%. The 2020 ACE's report indicates that research into ACEs consistently shows that a set of 10 adverse experiences in childhood are associated with an increased risk of poor health and other problems in later life. As a result, the government ensure that it is making the most of the opportunity for early intervention to effectively and cost-effectively address childhood adversity and trauma, and the long-term problems associated with such experiences. (ACE 2020: 7)

Consequently, Churches and Christian faith-based organisations are going to come across traumatised people and being trauma-informed can reduce harm to individuals and help people flourish in their wellbeing. Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role it has in an individual's life. One of the greatest paradigm shifts in this area is moving from the question, "What is wrong with this person?" to "What has happened to this person?". As mentioned above, the impacts of trauma change the way our brain works, which affects our emotions, behaviour, and daily functioning. The intention of Trauma-Informed Care is not to treat symptoms but create better support systems to reduce any further harm to people regarding re-traumatisation. Re-traumatising means that the person has been triggered and feels like they are reliving the trauma over again. Trauma-Informed Care educates ways to be mindful of creating safe practices and procedures that is conducive for healing and restoring lives.

Trauma and its effects will always exist in our broken world but working together strategically is more powerful than trauma will ever be.

Purpose, objectives and what we do

Significant stress for individuals can arise from problems with the stated reason for the existence of the organisation, what is to be achieved, how this will be brought about and the sufficiency of the resources to do so. In well-run organisations, the purpose is usually articulated in a mission statement or similar and what it is intended to achieve is expressed either as outcomes or objectives. Planned actions set out how the outcomes or objectives will be achieved so that each member of staff or volunteer understands how doing what they do contributes to meeting the objectives, in furtherance of the mission.

As shown in **Figure 3**, there is, in effect, a golden thread between these elements which extends to include an estimate of the resources needed to ensure planned actions can occur while the budget expresses the money needed to acquire those resources.

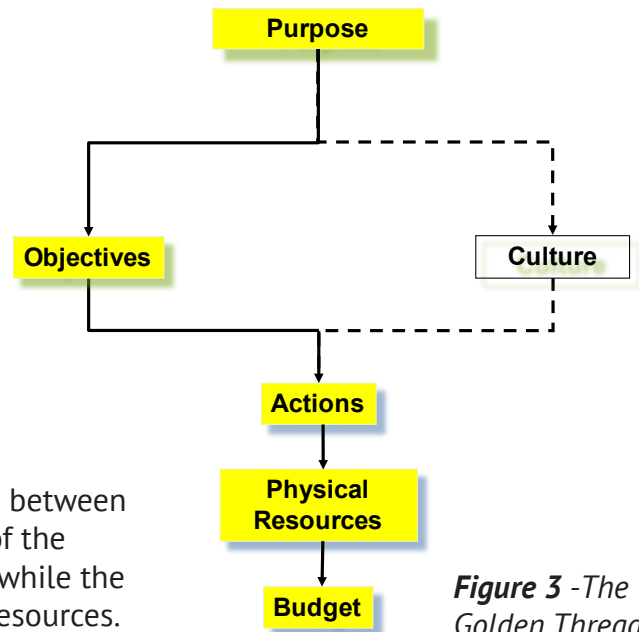


Figure 3 -The Golden Thread

A failure to have an adequately developed golden thread gives rise to several stresses for leaders, including them:

- **Not understanding where their organisation is going.**
- **Not knowing what is to be achieved in terms of outcomes or objectives and expected quality.**
- **Not knowing how they contribute to organisational goals.**
- **Having insufficient physical resources to do what is asked.**
- **Feeling guilty because they have overspent a budget, pushed staff and volunteers too hard or because the plan has not been achieved.**
- **Missing opportunities to celebrate successes.**

To one side of **Figure 3** is culture which concerns how things are done round here and is the subject of the next section.

Various terms are used to describe a sense of purpose, objectives and goals, as illustrated in the following contribution by Martin Charlesworth, Director of Jubilee+, who describes the importance and value of vision and goals to Church leadership teams and staff members.

"I spent twenty years as the pastor of a growing church. I inherited a church which had little sense of purpose after a previous leadership crisis. I soon discovered that my most important role was to define the vision of the church and do so in such a way as made sense to members, staff and fellow elders. Our goals had to be understandable, tangible, measurable and obtainable. I quickly learnt that it is only vision that really motivates a church community to embrace any form of change or development. I also found out that vision had the power to produce amazing productivity and teamwork across the whole church community. Vision also had a profound impact on me personally - it gave me something to aim for! I often use an analogy to describe the process of building a vision for a church community. Imagine a church leader holding a pencil and drawing on an empty canvas. He has a clear idea of a scene that he (or she) wants to create - maybe a beautiful country scene with hills in the background, a lovely cottage in the foreground and clouds dancing across the sky. The only problem is that this is merely a pencil drawing. When the church members look at the scene being drawn they feel the excitement of its potential as well as the frustration of its total lack of colour! It turns out that they each have colour paints in their hands. They develop a strong desire to contribute their "colour". When this is facilitated, a beautiful painting emerges - the fruit of partnership between leaders with a vision and a gifted church membership. All this has a strong bearing on the well-being of leadership teams and staff members. They need to know what it is they are working to create or develop and they need to be reminded regularly of their valuable contribution to this bigger vision."

Tips for Success:

1. Periodically review the statement of purpose for your organisation, department or team.
2. Set clear, measurable objectives or outcomes.
3. For each objective or outcome identify the actions needed to bring it about.
4. For each planned action identify the physical resources required.
5. Create a budget sufficient to acquire and maintain the required physical resource.
6. Be realistic and honest about what can be achieved with the money that is available.
7. Communicate purpose, objectives, and actions so that every employee and volunteer know how what they do fits the purpose and is inspired to deliver.

Culture (how we do things round here)

We believe leadership should be widely distributed within organisations. It is not exclusive to a job title, role, or level, whether the person is paid or not. Leadership is found in every function and part of an organisation including corporate level, departments and teams.

Organisations vary in complexity from the small entity with a flat organisational structure to those with multiple levels within a single location such as an office or church and, beyond this, a wider regional and national organisation. A person working in a team will primarily be affected by what happens in that team and indirectly by the department within which their team is located, and beyond this perhaps by a regional office which in turn is influenced by head office. As **Figure 4** suggests, individuals may therefore be subject to influence from many levels.

Beyond the organisation are external influences which for the most part are picked up, filtered, and processed by leaders operating at the highest organisational level, the implications of which are then transmitted to lower levels.

There are thousands of ways in which organisations potentially stress leaders, some universal, others more commonly found in Churches and Christian faith-based organisations, the rest being unique to an organisation or context.

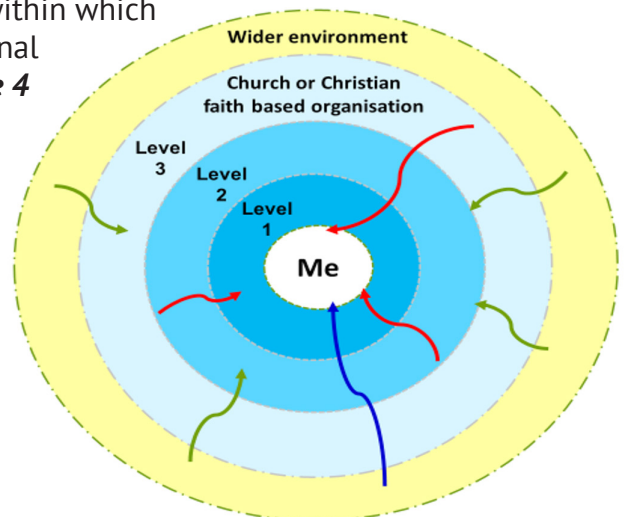


Figure 4 - Sources of Influence

Many of these sources of stress are caused by the 'way we do things round here' or culture of the organisation which Field (2012) suggests is part of a strategic framework for the organisation.

While a golden thread helps ensure clarity of purpose and action, it is no guarantee of success. Peer teams in the same organisation, working to the same purpose, with identical objectives may differ hugely in the 'way they do things around here'. Visit these teams and you may quickly sense differences in how driven, happy, and worried staff and volunteers are, all of which significantly impacts on the stress of everyone involved, including those leading.

Johnson and Scholes (1993) suggest that a paradigm exists within each organisation, that draws on beliefs and assumptions about the world, how their organisation should operate and how its people behave. The paradigm is made real through different aspects of organisational life such as: power structures, organisational structure, controls, rituals and routines, stories, and symbols. As an example, a paradigm based on a shared belief of the importance of appearing professional, demonstrating integrity, and avoiding risks is likely to have a hierarchical structure with power largely resting with qualified, experienced, and trusted individuals. There are likely to be significant controls and routines designed to avoid errors and stories will be told of people who got it wrong and were punished. All of this is likely to be accompanied by a formal dress code and perhaps even office space being given to leaders based on seniority rather than need.

Over time, variants of this cultural web have emerged including Field (2012) who substitutes the word 'recipe' for 'paradigm' and 'ingredients' for 'aspects'. The resulting baking analogy suggests that it is essential that all the required ingredients are present, they are fit for purpose, balanced and 'baked' correctly. **Figure 5** illustrates this point based on an incoming Chief Executive articulating a new recipe for their organisation: 'we shall be successful if our staff and volunteers are free to work creatively with clients'. If this is to become how 'things are done round this organisation' then all the ingredients need to contribute individually and collectively to make this happen. Any ingredient not set up to deliver a recipe is likely to affect, if not spoil it.

Example

Imagine you work with an organisation where a recently appointed Chief Executive has publicly stated they believe the organisation should be more client-centered, the potential of staff and volunteers should be unleashed and that it is ok to make mistakes providing you learn and try again. The work of the charity requires staff and volunteers to respond quickly and sensitively to client needs. The Chief Executive has overseen the introduction of a flatter organisational structure and prompted the Human Resources Department to start appointing and inducting people who can demonstrate initiative and courage. These two ingredients are now consistent with the recipe espoused by the Chief Executive, which is more than can be said for the rules governing the ability of staff to commit expenditure. Other than very small client support packages, all decisions have to be financially approved by a senior manager and, if they exceed a certain weekly cost, also by a member of the finance team. The extent and way in which financial control is exercised is inconsistent with the structure and staff ingredients and out of step with the intended recipe.

Figure 5 - Recipe example

Table 6 is based on years of experience of working with leaders who faced with the situation described in **Figure 5** can be expected to experience a multitude of feelings, all of which potentially affect stress levels.

Confused	I thought I was coming into an organisation where I would be able to act quickly and responsively but financial controls slow things down
Restricted	I cannot act creatively as this will appear risky, particularly to financial folk
Guilt	I am letting down clients who do not receive care as quickly as they could or should
Compromised and not trusted	I am manipulating care packages, so they fall within lower spending levels – it seems I am trusted with the lives of clients but not with money
Frustrated	I spend far too much of my time completing paperwork
Angry	How dare people who are distant from clients and unaware of care practice have the final say on packages?
Suspicion	What does the organisation really value – it appears to be economy and efficiency over outcomes or effectiveness?
Tired	I am trying to make it work by doing paperwork in the evenings and on the weekend just to 'feed the beast'
Doubt	I am not sure the Chief Executive knows what she is doing
Regret	I was duped at interview

Table 6 - Example feelings arising from a poorly executed change to the paradigm

Good chefs periodically check their recipe is working and make necessary real-time adjustments. So, it should be with leaders who have a recipe for organisational success and who should constantly check to ensure this is delivering the intended outcome. Even a tried and tested organisational recipe can fail as the wider environment constantly changes, as might less frequently, the direction of the organisation. With each change, the recipe might need to be tweaked or perhaps transformed.

However, not all organisational leaders work this way; some are like intuitive cooks, able to bring together a random set of ingredients and by using knowledge and experience, invent a workable recipe. While this can work, equally it might not and failing to consider and act on 'the way things are down round here' can cause considerable stress. Leaders can consume a lot of energy trying to deliver organisational mission with a recipe that is not fit for purpose.

In this next section we share cultural causes of stress which we believe to be a particular problem for Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations, recognising these might arise from inappropriate or poor ingredients, an inappropriate recipe and, or, poor execution.

Our approach is to take Johnson and Scholes' cultural web, as described in the third edition of their Exploring Corporate Strategy text (1993), apply it to the context of Churches and other Christian-faith based organisations with the particular purpose of identifying ingredients of organisational culture we think may be significant common causes of leadership stress. Of necessity, the six aspects of culture identified by Johnson and Scholes (1993) are broad and while all could potentially cause stress, some appear more likely to than others. We believe that within some of these broad aspects are factors that should be headlined, to which we add others that have emerged or seem to have become more important in recent years.

In this paper we identify five ingredients of culture we believe are significant sources of stress, taking into consideration of Robert Warren's (2004) seven marks of a healthy church, Stephen Blandino (2013), who proposed a five ingredient cultural equation for Churches, the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators' thirteen cultural markers for use in the charitable sector (2017). We also looked at the somewhat contentious work of Oakley and Humphreys (2019) who focussed on spiritual abuse. To these texts we have added our own experience of leading Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations.

Appendix A shows how five key sources of stress for leaders working within Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations were identified. We believe that these sources, which are summarised in **Table 7**, are generally applicable to Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations. However, we recognise that leaders within an organisation might experience other stressful aspects of culture, together with other factors such as the physical layout of a building, location within a neighbourhood, troublesome relationships with neighbours, etc.

Sources of Stress	Brief description
Power	Leaders experience people around them using various forms of power with different degrees of ability. Poor use of power is a significant cause of problems within organisations and a potential stressor for all involved, including leaders.
Systems, controls, and routines	Systems, controls, and routines that are not fit for purpose are a waste of time and energy and may cause game playing to beat the system in order to deliver the mission.
Staff and volunteers	Poor practice regarding how staff and volunteers are found, appointed, deployed, managed and led, inevitably affects those involved and often leads to stressful problems for leaders.
Relationships	Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations feature a complex web of relationships between different levels of authority, different functions and professions as well as between staff and volunteers. Significant and desirable staff, volunteer and member diversity is a rich source of experience and potential creativity, yet if handled badly may lead to unproductive conflict and stress for leaders.
Leadership	Central to success is effective leadership throughout the organisation. Leaders need to be skilled in strategic management and day-to-day operation, able to intervene culturally and sufficiently skilled and courageous to tackle challenges and problems associated with power, systems, controls and routines, staff and volunteers and relationships.

Table 7 - Key cultural sources of stress

Power

Power is a feature of life; Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations are no exception.

The power available to a person varies hugely, as does their willingness to use it, their ability, the opportunities to use it and their reasons for doing so. In turn, each of us experience power being discharged by other people in ways that may help or hinder what we are trying to achieve. This might take the form of gentle one-to-one influencing, stronger pressing of a case, coordinated campaigning by two or more people or perhaps, more occasionally, strong, and clear demonstrations of raw power. Field (2019) suggest there are seven main forms of power.



Figure 6 - The Power Web

Field (2020) building on the earlier work of French and Raven, 1959, Raven 1965 and Raven 2008, suggests there are seven main forms of power.

These combine to form a complex web of power within which organisational leaders operate, as shown in **Figure 6**. Leaders should expect to be subject to appropriate pressure from a wide range of people seeking to express their views, press the pursuit of the vision, further their own personal goals, etc. Power used for the right reasons, consciously and appropriately, is integral to moving an organisation forward. Power used carelessly and, or for the wrong reasons, results in relationship damage, wasted energy and feuds that may rumble on for ages. Shying away from the use of power or denying its existence will lead to clumsy or even powerless leadership.

When people think of power they typically think of situations where one person has authority over another, for example a Chief Executive over a Director, a team leader over a team member and a Churchwarden over the leader of the Sunday School. Often their understanding of power is limited to reward or coercion, classic 'top down' forms, which in many situations may be inappropriate and much less effective than other forms. Staff and volunteers may exert pressure on those leading them, for example, by threatening to take an idea or grievance to a more senior person. Colleagues may use power to win resources for their own project, even at the expense of the work or project of a peer. A service user may assert their rights and willingness to go to the press on a matter, or a member of the congregation, or to the Bishop.

Often the use of power is unconscious, a leader simply acting or 'shooting from the lip', without considering whether they are likely to be successful. It is easy to handle power poorly, win a battle but lose the war, in the process incurring longer term collateral damage to yourself, to others and to relationships. When frustrated or stressed, people who normally use power consciously and with skill and sensitivity, may slip into crude, aggressive or bullying behaviour.

It is vital then that leaders:

- **Understand the sources of power available to them and those which they habitually use.**
- **Know how well they use power, in particular the impact of this on other people.**
- **Understand the extent to which aspects of culture encourage or discourage inappropriate use of power.**
- **Can discern when the use of power by others is unhelpful and intervene in ways that help maintain the intended recipe.**



Field (2019) identified seven main types typically found in organisations

Type	Explanation
Position	Arising from a position or role in an organisation, for example as Chief Executive, Minister in Charge, Finance Director, Elder, Car Park Attendant and Chair of a working party.
Reward	The ability to approve a promotion or pay increase, allocate attractive projects, invite a person to preach on a Saint's day, etc. More subtle rewards include private or public recognition of an achievement, supporting a person during a meeting or simply acknowledging a person's existence.
Coercive	Causing or threatening actual physical harm, implying redundancy in the next reorganisation, actual or threatened whistleblowing and consequence stating and removal of a privilege, such as being part of a management team.
Expertise	Arising from being qualified or having an ability or personal knowledge that others do not possess. Examples include social workers, Ministers, accountants, people who know a piece of software, those able and know how to use social media or 'how to get things done round here'.
Network	Drawing upon knowledge and expertise outside the context to influence others e.g. 'I was chatting to the head of Fundraising at ***charity (normally a well-known and respected organisation); they have been using this technology for some time and have found it works well'.
Information	Access to information that others do not possess with the power to decide what to share, with whom, when and how.
Personality	Factors such as levels of energy with which ideas are presented, being able to master and present detail, make a compelling case, argue logically, or convey a powerful vision. Additional factors such as charisma, humour, assertiveness, sarcasm, and willingness to be combative make personality a significant source of power.
<i>Table 8 - Sources of power in organisations</i>	

All these types of power can be seen in Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations, but of note we believe is:

- **Significant use of positional power conferred by the organisation such as the use of job titles e.g. Chief Executive, Finance Director, Archdeacon and Bishop. The use of strict rules as to how a Church should operate, mysterious traditions, obscure language and heavy use of symbols combine positional, information and expert power that enhances the overall power of the Ministerhood and make it difficult for everyone else to understand Church, which in turn frustrates, disempowers and renders them less personally effective.**
- **The relative ease with which a small subset of Church members can assume significant power. A willingness to volunteer for roles and jobs, the possession of certain abilities, financial generosity, energy, and enthusiasm can make these people irresistible to the clergy. The power of these members is less of an issue when they are part of the formal system and therefore subject to governance and other people using positional, reward and coercive power. Those that stay outside the formal system can be much more of a problem and may be a constant source of unease and stress.**
- **Expertise power in Churches and Christian faith-based charities includes a spiritual dimension where, for example, a person believes they have a calling or are responding to a vision, that they can prophesise, discern, etc. This raises the question of how such expertise can be given appropriate voice and integrated with more traditional information when making decisions. There is a risk that spiritual gifts are either ignored in favour of secular approaches to planning or that people with these gifts become an overly powerful influence. This is a particularly difficult challenge when these gifts are held by the laity; a potential source of stress for all concerned.**

Tips for Success:

1. **Understand which types of power you habitually use and why.**
2. **Regarding specific contexts, understand which types of power are available to you and anticipate those you are likely to face. Be prepared to act so that you can appropriately exercise influence.**
3. **Invest time and energy in developing your ability to use all types of power appropriately when needed.**
4. **When chairing a meeting identify agenda items in respect of which participants may hold strong and or differing views and be prepared to intervene to ensure people are heard, that behaviours that distract, annoy or in any way reduce proper participation are challenged.**
5. **Periodically talk with your team and individuals about how well they feel able to meaningfully participate in discussions and decision making. Be prepared to talk about the appropriate use of power within your team or organisation.**
6. **Challenge inappropriate use of power and provide developmental support to those wishing to improve their ability to influence others.**
7. **Periodically consider whether any organisational changes are necessary to make the use of power consistent with the recipe or culture.**

Systems, Control and Routines

Systems, controls, and routines are vital to a well-run organisation, the absence or poor quality of which can lead to chaos, poor performance and leave the organisation vulnerable to a multitude of risks associated with safeguarding, industrial tribunals, fraud, etc. Overly complex bureaucratic systems and controls are little better, causing delay in decision making, frustration and may tempt leaders to find ways to play or beat the system.

Systems, controls, and routines that leaders work with arise from a variety of potential sources. Outside the influence of organisational leaders are systems and controls set or framed at a societal level, for example employee taxation, data privacy and safeguarding. Leaders operating in a wider organisational structure will normally be required to work within systems and controls that are imposed at national, regional or group levels; collecting and submitting data, and subject to inspections and institutional audits to ensure compliance. Finally, at a local level, leaders also design systems and controls.

Along with formal systems and controls, organisations also create and maintain routines, most of which are determined locally. Some of these, for example supervision, team meetings and morning briefings play an important part in organisational life and can be both problematic and stressful. Ask people who attend team meetings about their experiences and, rather than tell you how much they appreciate the opportunity to hear of latest developments, be listened to and involved in decision making, they are more likely to complain about lengthy meetings that lack focus, where a few loud members dominate and even fewer decisions made.

Typically, routines evolve over time, are not written down and can be a source of disproportionate aggravation and stress, as for example with an office 'coffee club' where members pay a monthly sum to cover ingredient cost. All very straightforward other than where individuals are 'slow to pay', there is a mix of part and full time staff, a variation in the extent to which individuals are in/out the office and people who generally 'over-consume'. Not to mention catering for ever-widening preferences regarding drinks, washing up, cleaning kitchen areas, etc.

If systems, controls, and routines are well designed, they help efficiency, balance consistency and flexibility and protect service users, members of a congregation, donors, public, staff and volunteers and leaders, as the example in **Figure 7** illustrates.

Example

The bookkeeper of a small charity receives a cash donation of £50 early one morning. They are particularly busy when the money comes in and promise to post the donor a receipt later. Later that morning the bookkeeper goes out and buys some coffee and other provisions which they purchase from an open air market using £38.70 of the money received earlier. They get a supporting voucher which they put in their wallet. The remaining cash (£11.30) is put in an unmarked envelope in the safe. Later that week when they are updating their finance records the bookkeeper forgets these transactions have taken place. In the meantime they have emptied their wallet and destroyed old receipts.

At the end of the month when the Chief Executive does a routine check of the office they discover £11.30 in the safe. While the bookkeeper can explain what it relates to, he cannot:

- Remember who the £50 came from - the Chief Executive has no way of knowing if it was £50 or a higher figure
- Confirm that the tea, coffee, etc. actually cost £38.70 but can accept that there was a purchase

While the bookkeeper has been entirely honest they cannot prove what has happened which can cause suspicion.

Figure 7 - Bookkeeper Example

Elegant, simple, and proportionate systems and controls are needed in all organisations; in the example in *Figure 7*, financial instructions might reasonably require that:

- **Receipts are issued for all cash and cheques immediately they are received.**
- **All cash is banked promptly and intact.**
- **Vouchers are gathered and retained as evidence of expenditure.**

These controls are sensible and proportionate. However, if you required a bookkeeper to evidence that they had obtained written quotes from three suppliers before purchasing a jar of coffee this would be excessive, as would requiring the Chief Executive to approve this purchase. These requirements would be appropriate however if a new accounting system were to be purchased.

Systems, controls and routines in Churches and other Christian faith-based charities must be fit for context and avoid problems such as:

- **Leaders who over-trust staff and volunteers because they are Christians and espouse the same faith. In practice, the values they hold and the strength with which they uphold them may vary. We all enjoy freewill, suffer temptation and can be as frail as anyone else. Churches and Christian faith-based organisations should be no more relaxed and less vigilant regarding safeguarding, money, etc. than other organisations. Appropriate controls are needed to protect the vulnerable from abuse and the organisation from fraud, loss, and reputational damage. These are also needed to protect staff and volunteers from malicious rumour and false accusations of inappropriate behaviour.**

- Failing to recognise the tension between consistency pursued in the name of efficiency, and local flexibility that allows individuals to tailor what they do and how they do it, to local circumstances. A failure to think this through can lead to a culture that is so loose the organisation becomes chaotic or so bureaucratic that nothing gets done, with constant game playing, arguments and disputes that create rifts between individuals and groups. It is very easy for a situation to arise where one group of people views another group as people 'who want to micro-manage and don't understand the front line or Parish Church' while this later group sees the former as 'the loose cannons who cut corners and take risks'. Such rifts can emerge between hierarchical levels, head office and local offices, between specialists such as marketeers and front line services. Where rifts occur, expect to hear myths and stories of battles and heroes who beat the system. In turn, such stories encourage game playing and other dysfunctional behaviour that is likely to fly in the face of espoused values.
- Systems, controls, and routines that do not keep pace with organisation change. A small charity set up in the front room of the founder with one service offered to a handful of clients in a local community may only require simple systems. If the charity expands by adding an additional service, offering an existing service to two different groups of clients, moves into a small rented office or diversifies funding to include grants, it is highly likely that existing systems and controls will be inadequate. Growth places a strain on existing systems which is a source of stress for those running them and equally those who rely on their outputs. Often attempts to cope with growth centre on adapting simple manual or spreadsheet systems which either fail or become so complex that only their creator understands how they work. These largely undocumented systems can lead to unnecessarily high levels of expert power, a felt vulnerability by senior managers who do not really understand what is going on and a concern about what will happen if the person operating it leaves or at least, threatens to do so.
- The absence of a central information system resulting in duplication, private data storage, data security risks, etc. In a Church context many people create documents, lists, and schedules, and keep records of events and decisions, many of which do not need approval by the governing body. Some information may be held in a physical filing system, some on laptops, tablets, mobile phones and memory sticks and the rest in human memory. This fragmented approach is made worse where staff and volunteers serve short fixed terms of office resulting in significant churn, loss of information and time spent trying to work out what has happened and been agreed in the past.
- The lack of an internal communications policy that reflects the recent explosion in the way information is communicated within an organisation. Life was complicated enough when based on face-to-face meetings, letter, telephone, fax, text, and memo. While fax and memo may no longer feature, these have been replaced by e-mail, WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook, and the like. Uncontrolled use of a range of communication channels can result in stress through leaders.
 - Needing to be able to use several channels efficiently.
 - Missing a message that they were intended to receive.
 - Missing information launched generally into the organisation.
 - Being included in a group and feeling they have to become involved in a conversation that could have taken place without them.
 - Getting caught up in a felt need to read and respond immediately irrespective of when the message was sent.
 - Being copied indiscriminately into messages and often all the responses that follow.

Further information on the potential impact of social media is included in a section starting on page 56.

Tips for Success:

1. Regularly review systems and controls to ensure that the organisation is protected from fraud, loss, misuse of assets, waste, etc.
2. If systems and controls are circumvented, abandoned, or short-circuited establish why and investigate instances where it is claimed necessary to discharge responsibilities. Act to enforce compliance or improve systems and controls.
3. Ask staff and volunteers for their experience of using systems, controls and routines and seek their ideas for improvement.
4. Ensure there is a well-thought through handover procedure when staff/volunteers change.
5. Check systems are protected from malicious damage by internal or external parties.
6. Complete and act on the outcome of a risk assessment, relaxing or increasing as appropriate measures to protect stakeholders, maintain privacy, organisational image, etc.
7. Prepare a communication policy that stipulates which channels are to be used, for what reason, reasonable expectations, and requirements.

Relationships

Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations are communities, which we define as 'associations of people with similar beliefs who are in relationship'. Traditionally, people working or worshipping in organisations do so in close physical proximity, something which has been slowly reducing due to developments in technology, hot desking, and a gradual move toward home-working. Covid-19 caused a significant increase in the number of people working from home and the forced closure of Church buildings rapidly increased the number of live-streamed services and more generally, home-worship. It remains to be seen whether, in the longer term, people will return to their pre-covid working and worshipping practices. There is surely a good chance there will be a permanent reduction in face-to-face contact and the extent to which we work, and worship in close physical proximity. With this there is likely to be increased recognition of virtual communities of interest.

Organisations, other than exceedingly small ones, are heterogenous communities, made up of overlapping micro-communities, each with its own culture. Within a charity, people based in departments, teams, professional groups, etc. are such micro-communities, as for example are pastoral care teams, the choir, and the youth group within a Church. Similarly, congregations comprise several communities, often distinguishable by when they worship or the order of service they prefer. People attending 8.00 Communion, a 10.00 Family Service or daily Morning Prayer may share the same beliefs and belong to the same Church and choose to attend certain services with others of the same disposition. To these groups we need to add 'on-line congregations', which will further challenge those leading Churches. Relationships within and between micro-communities are a potential source of stress, existing as they do in tension with each other, competing for attention and resources and fighting to protect their interests.

Good quality relationships in Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations are key to achieving the vision, holding inevitable tensions and being attractive, safe spaces to worship and work. Within any organisation there is a complex web of relationships, between superiors, managers, colleagues, subordinates within a department or function and between departments and beyond the organisation to suppliers, clients, etc.

This complexity is also found within Churches but is arguably less clear and even more complex, for example between:

- Elders who need to operate as a team.
- Members of the Ministry Team.
- The Minister and Elders.
- Elders and the Ministry Team.
- Elders and the congregation.
- The Ministry Team and the congregation.
- Individual members of the congregation and groups within.

The relationship web extends far further to include individual members of the local community, other faith groups, community organisations, hall hirers, funeral directors and other suppliers of goods and services. Churches that are part of a wider body will also be in relationship with a hierarchy above them.

Just one poor quality relationship can be a significant source of stress for leaders as well as for staff and volunteers. Leaders experience the stress of being in relationships that are not working well, to which can be added the stressful fallout of poor relationships elsewhere within their organisation. The impact of some poor relationships will be little more than irritating, while others pose a serious threat to the organisation, A few relationships are critical such as between two Board Directors or a Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees, Minister and Elders, etc. **Stress caused by relationship problems may be due to several reasons, including:**

- A felt need to reconcile or hold in tension different interest groups.
- A concern that the views and interests of some individuals and groups is not being heard.
- A concern that colleagues or members of an organisation are being hurt by others.
- Game-playing and inappropriate use of power playing out in meetings and other contexts.
- Holding multiple confidences at the same time.
- A felt expectation that you should be able to deal with outbreaks of dysfunctional behaviour.
- A sense of sadness and failure when relationship problems cannot be resolved.
- Frustration that relationships between people of faith can be problematic.
- Accepting that sometimes it is impossible with relationship problems to get a good outcome for yourself, for others who are directly involved and for spectators.

Shared beliefs and a strong sense of common endeavour do not themselves guarantee that a group of individuals will get on. In other respects, group members may be diverse, something which is potentially valuable, but often plays out in ways that cause stress.



In Churches, relationships are also affected by the following factors:

- Church members vary in the extent to which they wish to know each other and be in each other's presence, together with varying enthusiasm for building and sustaining relationships. Depending on how the Church operates, an individual may choose to be quite contained, limiting their engagement to Sundays only – arriving a few minutes before a service and rushing off before coffee afterwards. For other people, Church membership is a full and integral part of their life – they wish to be part of what is going on, to learn from each other and to be a source of support and challenge. Churches influence the level of engagement by encouraging and expecting a wider and deeper commitment to the organisation by the approach they take to stewardship, inviting individuals to become part of rotas, allocating people to Home Groups, etc.
- Most Churches are open to anyone wanting to explore their beliefs, to worship, seek respite from life, etc. Membership can therefore be quite diverse in terms of education, knowledge and skills which should mean they are collectively well equipped to tackle a wide range of problems and challenges. Additionally, such diversity provides different perspectives which, if harnessed, leads to fresh insights and innovation. However, with this comes the likelihood of tension and potential relationship problems.
- Staff have a financial relationship with a Church or Charity which is regulated by an employment contract, meaning that to an extent and for a time, they are tied to the organisation. The same is not true of voluntary workers and congregation members, who if they do not agree with something or feel offended can leave with ease. These low barriers to exit are a source of coercive power and a cause of concern for leaders.
- A significant challenge facing Church leaders is the relationship between the Minister and elders, deciding who does what and with what degree of freedom. There are two challenges here – firstly how to deal with routine business (*Figure 8*) and, secondly how to handle matters which are made known to the Minister first, normally more strategic and from outside of the immediate organisation (*Figure 9*).

Challenge 1. Part-time Ministers and those managing two or more locations have little choice but to rely on elders. In practice, there are many 'just do it' decisions about Church life that can and should be taken by Elders and do not need the involvement of the Minister, thus reducing pressure on potentially overworked Ministers and allowing Elders to discharge their responsibilities without feeling micro-managed. A second group of decisions can be treated on a 'do and tell' basis where elders make and act on decisions and then make the Minister aware so as to keep them briefed. For example, an Elder dealing with an issue concerning a member of a congregation, and concluding the latter still appears unhappy, would be wise to brief the Minister so that they can be prepared, should the person then approach them.

There is a third group, which are 'suggest and ask' decisions, usually involving more significant matters where the Minister should always be involved in deciding what needs to be done, either via joint decision making or in a few instances where the Minister may need to make the final decision.

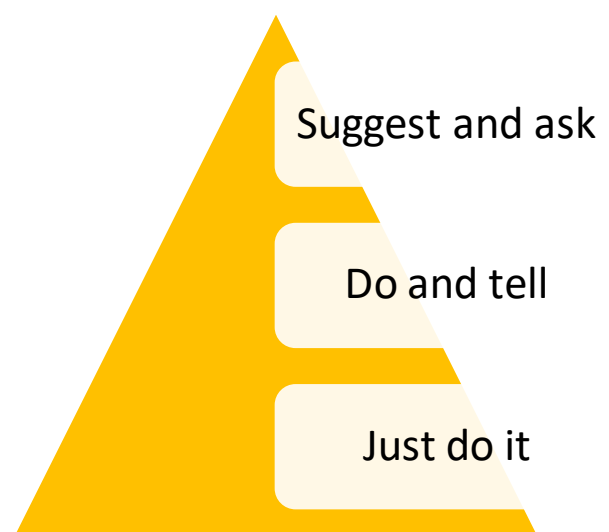


Figure 8 – Routine Decision Making

Challenge 2 – Some matters, typically originating from higher organisational levels, present themselves to Ministers who then have to decide whether to decide on their own authority ('my call'), decide after discussion with Elders ('I consult'), decide with Elders ('we decide') or seek the approve of the governing body, (formal approval) as, for example, with a Parochial Church Council or Board of Trustees.

At any point Ministers and Elders will be handling several issues within these two frameworks. These frameworks should be discussed early in a new relationship to identify examples of the sort of decisions that fall within each category. Ministers engaging in minor decisions which would be better made by elders end up micro-managing Elders causing them frustration and slowing decision making.

Elders should exercise the full extent of their power, not referring 'just do it' matters to Ministers unless there is a justified reason. Ministers who keep Elders in the dark about problems and developments that could be shared may cause those Elders to feel they are not trusted and that their views are not valued. If they do involve them but late in the day they shorten the time available for proper consideration. Elders who overstep their authority and take decisions that the Minister should be involved in, or at least know about later, may cause the Minister embarrassment and anxiety about whether they have lost control. These frameworks apply to many relationships, for example between Archdeacons and Ministers, Ministers and Churchwardens, Churchwardens, and flower arrangers. However clear the framework is, either party will on occasion, at least in the eyes of the other, get their level of involvement wrong. It is essential that these incidents are reviewed as they can lead to a deterioration in essential levels of trust irrespective of whether a decision is ultimately proven correct. These frameworks may be tightened or relaxed in the light of experience, as relationships evolve, levels of trust change, etc.

Elders have significant individual and collective responsibility which should be matched by appropriate authority. **This extent and significance of this responsibility has increased in recent years, for example with respect to safeguarding, health, and safety and GDPR.**

- **Strong governance and a willingness to hold each other to account is important but not as much as trust. If trust goes, potentially everyone and everything suffers.**
- **A reluctance to bring or risk bringing a problematic relationship to an end even when all other attempts to improve this have failed. A reluctance to 'go there', or even consider doing so, seriously weakens the influence of the leader on those involved and risks a relationship problem, holding back fulfilment of the mission.**
- **Overuse and poor use of e-mail and messaging, resulting in communication that is focussed on task, often lacks explanation and frequently does little to build or sustain relationships.**

Tips for Success:

1. Review the levels of participation within your organisation, identify measures to maintain or improve this.
2. Talk to team members to ascertain how well they think they are working.
3. Review how well decision making frameworks are operating and establish if decisions are made at the correct level and in a timely way.
4. Ensure that Elders work to ensure good communication between the Minister and the congregation – explaining decisions, listening to feedback, testing the temperature, reassuring individuals, and generally supporting the Minister.
5. Identify if any relationship is so poor that it is seriously impacting on the organisation and or causing undue levels of stress. Be prepared to act in a timely manner.
6. Be prepared to have difficult conversations and follow through.
7. Encourage conversations, video and telephone calls as well as e-mails and messaging.

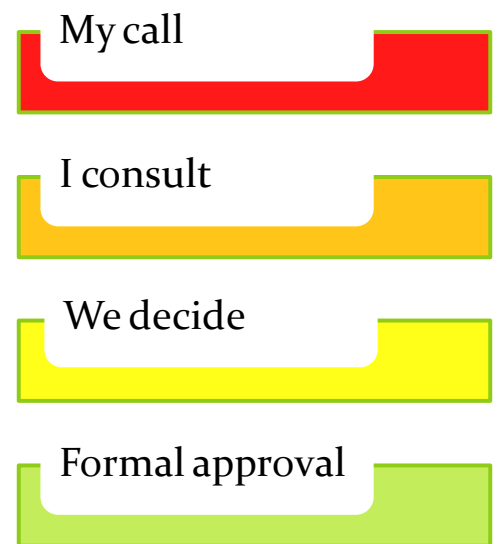
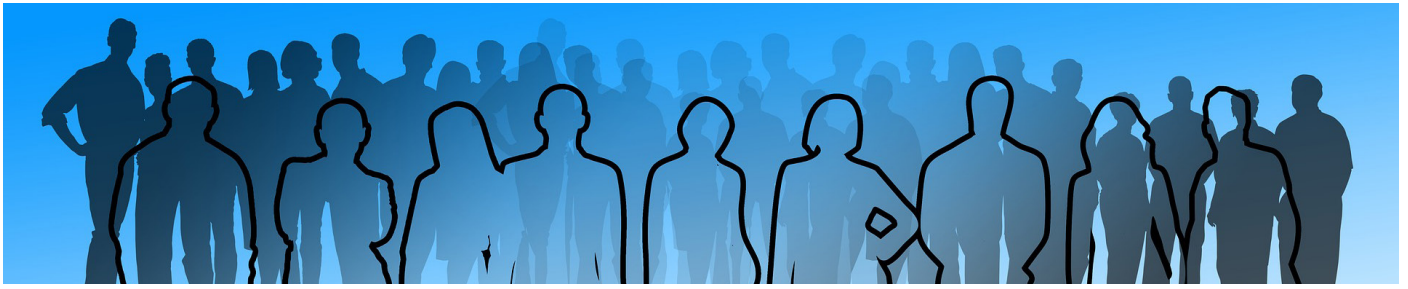


Figure 9 – Strategic Decision Making

Staff and Volunteers



Staff and volunteers are essential to the operation of Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations and should be managed and led in ways that reflect best practice. All organisations should keep under review how they recruit, induct, train, task, reward and, where necessary, discipline staff and volunteers.

Church and Christian faith-based organisations differ from other organisations in certain respects, which need to be recognised in how staff and volunteers are managed and led. **Failure to do so will affect what is achieved, slow down progress and may cause relationship problems that in the end have to be resolved at a financial and personal cost. These differences include:**

- **The risk of staff and volunteers over-working when someone with high personal drive and a strong belief is appointed to a role with apparently never-ending opportunities. This, coupled with an over-awareness of people in society who are not getting much needed support, can prove immensely stressful. While long working weeks and high workloads may be sustainable for a while, if these become the norm individuals will find they have little or no capacity to deal with what should be relatively easy ad hoc incidents in their organisation or their personal lives. While it can be argued that individuals should exercise self-control, this is really difficult where an organisation directly or indirectly pressurises staff and volunteers to increase their workload or adds 'opportunities' that are incidental to the main task in hand. This is even more difficult where over-work is put down to poor time management, inefficiency and ultimately a lack of personal resilience.**
- **Considerable difficulty in recruiting the best or even good people to posts, particularly where financial rewards are relatively low.**
- **There being several roles within Churches that are typically difficult to fill such as Churchwarden or Elder, Treasurer and Secretary, each with its own challenges and demands. Vacancies in any of these roles is potentially serious, however that is no excuse for 'grateful recruitment' where good recruitment practices are abandoned because someone, in fact anyone, has stepped forward. Volunteers must not be 'lent' on, 'guilted' into stepping forward, persuaded that their turn has come or misled about what is involved. The wrong person in the wrong role is to be avoided as they may fail to perform, suffer stress from feeling out of their depth, guilty about letting down the Church and God. Ultimately they may have to step down or be removed from the role, in either case there being a risk of short and perhaps long-term, damage.**
- **It is quite common for a few members of a congregation to be permanently in a role of responsibility in one capacity or another, or fulfilling the same role for many years. When individuals are in a role for a long time care needs to be taken to ensure that this is not for the wrong reason, for example a fear that 'if I step down there will be no one to replace me and the organisation will run into difficulties'. The burden of this on these individuals and their families can be very stressful. Far better that these people can step down from their responsibilities and remain in the Church, creating a pool of experience and talent for the future. There is a further risk with long-serving volunteer leaders in that their experience, accumulated over years, becomes a source of power; change may prove difficult and the organisation vulnerable should the individual leave.**

- In small organisations it is common for staff and volunteers to assume multiple roles irrespective of where their heart or abilities lie. This can be particularly stressful over a long period of time or when a particularly difficult challenge is faced. In larger organisations, there is likely to be a greater diversity of experience, a depth of talent and perhaps sufficient financial resource to buy in expertise where needed. Smaller, less resourced organisations may have to go without expertise or plea for pro bono help, with the risk of non-specialists being and feeling responsible for aspects of an operation for which they lack competence. A sense of 'plate spinning', feeling trapped and vulnerable may be experienced in these circumstances. Attending Church should be a joyful choice and occasionally, at least, a person should be free to worship without responsibility. The reality for many, however, is that attending Church is more to do with fulfilling obligations set down in the 'dreaded rota' which can be a source of stress.
- Problems with balancing an understandable wish to care for individuals in their organisation and the need to ensure they perform so the organisation can fulfil its purpose.

When leading staff and volunteers, it is worth considering:

- Whether you are being tempted to fill a post with the 'wrong' person. Rather than simply appointing anyone, a problem with recruiting should prompt a review of the job. Is it too big? Has it become too demanding? Does it impinge on personal life? Does it require excessive hours a week? Does it involve being on-call and for how long? If remunerated, is the pay sufficiently attractive? Is there appropriate induction, training, and supervision? Filling a post with simply anyone or fudging a solution might well mask serious problems with the role.
- If positions are filled by people who are clinging on by their fingernails. Just 'getting by' is not a basis for growing or developing an organisation; those appointed to a job must be able to manage the present while imagining and delivering the future and possibly dealing with the odd crisis.
- Whether you are meeting your legal and moral responsibility to a person irrespective of whether they are paid. Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations should be good employers, adopting clear policies and procedures, demonstrating best practice regarding job descriptions, person specifications, application forms, etc. References and interviews should help ensure that only a suitable person is offered the right job and, in turn, applicants should be able to assess whether this is something they want and be able to do. Every person has a right to understand what is required of them and for this role to be risk assessed with appropriate measures taken. Every individual needs to be adequately inducted, trained, supported, and supervised.
- Whether problems with staff and volunteers are dealt with in an effective and timely fashion. Ironically, an unduly kind manager who fails to deal early with a problem when a gentle word might work, can find themselves having to take harder action later.
- Whether staff and volunteers feel that raising a problem, such as coping with their workload, will result in them being blamed for getting themselves into this situation, seen as lacking competence or just weak, each of which might adversely affect their careers. Senior leaders who absolve themselves of any responsibility regarding the workloads of others can expect their own workload to rise as a result of having to deal with the longer term consequences of their behaviour. It is important that senior leaders try to prevent workload problems where they can, but if they fail to do so at least spot an emerging or worsening problem.

Tips for Success:

- 1. Follow best practice when engaging staff and volunteers, including the use of job descriptions, person specifications, contracts, and supervision.**
- 2. Agree how many hours per week are required to discharge responsibilities, ensure this complies with legislation and is realistic.**
- 3. Only ever appoint people to jobs who possess the necessary skills and have the time to be effective. If suitable applicants are not forthcoming, investigate why and confront underlying reasons.**
- 4. Ask staff and volunteers periodically for feedback on their experience of belonging to the organisation.**
- 5. Once a year discuss with each volunteer the responsibilities they hold, the length of time they have held these, the personal and organisational implications and whether it may be time for them to step down.**
- 6. Ensure staff and volunteer plans, policies and practices protect those working in the organisation together with service users, congregations etc.**
- 7. Check that training mentoring, coaching and supervision are in place, used appropriately and presented positively.**

Leadership

Over the years, much has been written about the characteristics, behaviours, and competences of effective leaders. Several leadership ideas are circulating at present, including that leadership should be widely distributed rather than dependant on job title or paygrade, that there should be greater emphasis on transformational rather than transactional leadership, the shift to whole system leadership and the importance of leading self.

Whilst leadership of Churches and other Christian faith-based organisation is similar in many ways to other contexts, certain aspects are of importance, as highlighted in previous sections. Leaders in Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations need a full range of leadership skills and knowledge as well as being able to discern and incorporate God's will in decision making.

Experience of working with leaders of Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations causes us to believe there are certain aspects of leadership which can be difficult and deserve attention, such as the need to:

- **Resolve or hold tensions between different viewpoints on a full range of matters.**
- **Balance organisational requirements with a legitimate concern for individuals working within the organisation.**
- **Acknowledge when a problem exists. Rarely do problems resolve themselves and denying they exist or hoping these will somehow go away, is poor leadership.**
- **Be decisive and act on that decision. Often leaders face a choice about when to deal with a matter. If no choice is made, the opportunity to prepare for conversations and, to an extent, control proceedings, is lost. Instead, the leader is likely to be forced to deal with the matter at a time which may be unhelpful or inconvenient to them. It is better to have a potentially difficult conversation with someone about an issue in a private place, when you feel resourceful rather than for this to later emerge at a time of its choosing, as perhaps towards the end of a larger meeting when it is late, emotions may be high, people are tired and want to go home.**
- **Be willing to make decisions that, to others at least, might appear uncaring. Leaders must accept that sometimes they will be unpopular and the decisions they make might cause pain to others.**
- **Recognise that the extent of 'decision pain' will be affected by when and how a matter is dealt with. Making someone redundant by a one line text at 4pm on Christmas Eve is much more harmful than a face-to-face conversation a few days earlier or indeed after Christmas, with time given to explain the decision and support the individual. Good practice is as much to do with the 'how' of leadership as it is to do with the 'what'.**
- **Engage when necessary in difficult conversations where negative reactions might be anticipated, other people may be adversely affected, emotional responses feared, or personal control threatened.**

Tips for Success:

1. **If you find difficult conversations daunting, seek coaching support, and recognise that with practice these become easier.**
2. **If when thinking about a matter you find yourself considering delaying a decision or an action, challenge yourself. Are you hoping this will go away, thereby avoiding a difficult conversation and the consequences of acting?**
3. **Remember that as a leader how you do something is often as important as what you do.**
4. **If you do not attend to something at the right time it is highly likely it will attend to you, normally at a time that is unhelpful.**
5. **Be prepared to talk about tensions held by yourself and others.**
6. **Ensure that prayer, time to listen to God and discernment are embedded in the culture.**
7. **Look after yourself.**

Supporting Leaders

In this section we explore different reasons for support, share our beliefs regarding this, identify typical forms and offer factors to consider when planning support. Examples of how support can be used to support people in, and recovering from burnout, are offered.

Reasons for support

Leaders of Churches and Christian faith-based organisations experience many, if not all the challenges faced by leaders of other organisations, plus perhaps a few others, such as behaving in a way that is consistent with Christian beliefs.

Leaders need to be able to lead in normal times, maintaining routine activity while undertaking continuous improvement. In addition, they may experience peaks of activity, periods of more significant growth and development, significant problems that affect their part of the organisation, critical incidents and even perhaps once in a lifetime global events, such as Covid-19.

Over the course of their lives, and to be effective in the short and long term, leaders of Churches and Christian faith-based organisations will need support, the nature of which at any point is affected by the level of stress a person is experiencing, as shown in *Figure 10*.

We suggest that different forms of support are needed for each of five broad and sometimes fuzzy, categories:

- **Normal state of functioning – the support needed is general and preventative in nature, aimed in part at reducing the likelihood of a person experiencing undue stress.**
- **When stressed, support needs to be more intensive and personal, aimed in part at providing stress relief and reducing the likelihood of a person entering a toxic state of functioning and avoid burning out.**
- **If a person is functioning in a burnout state, professional support is critical.**
- **With people in recovery from burnout, support usually becomes more general, aimed at helping the individual enter a normal state of functioning and preventing recurrence.**

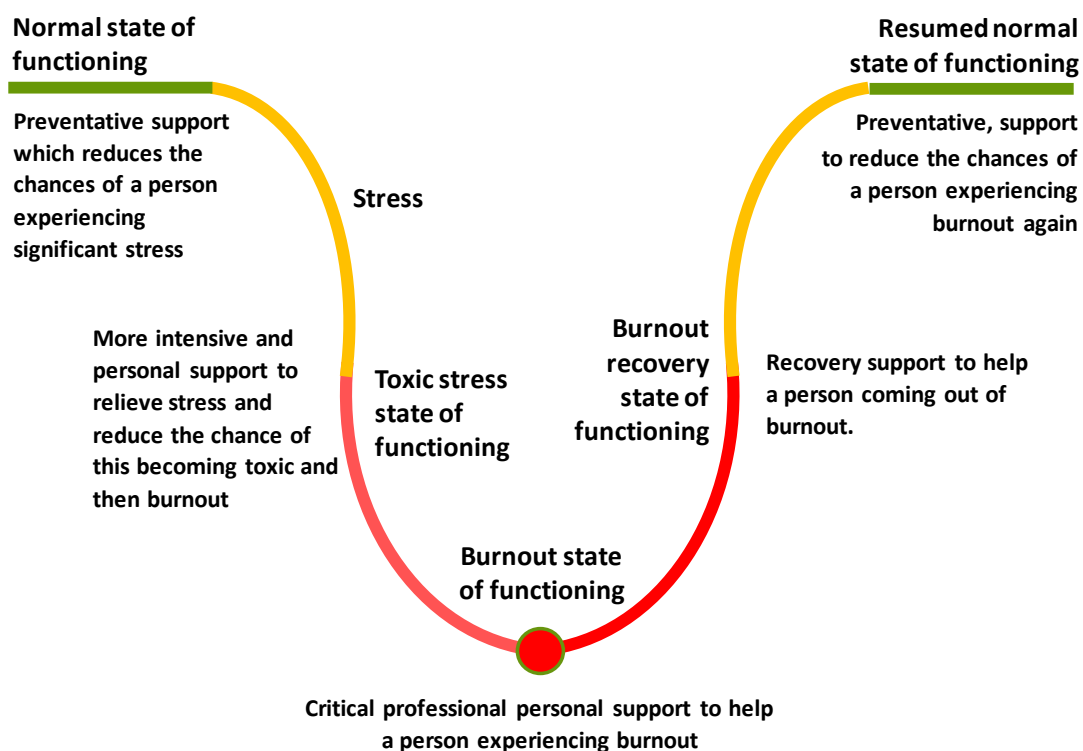


Figure 10 - The Burnout Journey

It is important to note that support can take many forms, including training and personal development, access to technical advice and professional services, consultancy, supervision, coaching, mentoring, counselling, etc.

When functioning normally, most of the support that is needed and given is general in nature, focused on equipping a person to discharge their current role and/or prepare them for the next one. **As a result of being more competent and confident, individuals will be better equipped for the challenges they face, such as:**

- **Stepping into a first leadership role.**
- **Transitioning from one role to another, normally because of promotion.**
- **Implementing organisational change.**

Typically, support during normal functioning includes reference to employee handbooks and manuals, technical support and managerial advice, access to on-line training material, traditional training and development programmes, use of psychometrics, mentoring, supervision, etc.

The need for support given to a person experiencing levels of stress at any level up to, and including toxic, may be because preventative development has been lacking, or that the topics covered had only been touched in general terms. **While general development might include, for example, health and safety, performance management and working with teams, this is unlikely to be at a depth to support:**

- **A Church Elder faced with reviewing fire prevention and evacuation arrangements.**
- **A leader experiencing a performance problem with a member of staff who has not responded to 'normal measures'.**
- **Help with how to lead a dysfunctional team.**

During this stage, support is likely to become increasingly individual, focussed, and intense, including, for example, hands-on technical help from a consultant or personal help from a qualified coach, counsellor, or mentor.

If a person is experiencing burnout, they cease to function at even a basic level, finding concentration impossible, failing to sleep or eat properly, etc. They will be absent from work, will find it difficult to understand or act on advice and be highly unlikely to respond to preventative support, which at this point is likely to be too general and feel superficial. They will not be in an appropriate state to complete a psychometric instrument and, even if they could, a person supporting this process may find they are drawn to a point where counselling or some form of therapy is required. The same is likely to be true with supervision, coaching and mentoring and it is important that referral to a counsellor or therapist is made where appropriate. Working with people in burnout requires experience in the sector and a specific set of skills and experience, bordering on and sometimes including clinical.

Once a person emerges from the acute experience that burnout is, they should be supported in longer term recovery. The type and range of support that will be helpful will, to an extent, depend on what the person is thinking of doing next and this may be unclear and liable to change. Consideration should be given as to which supports might be helpful, how they might be coordinated and scheduled over time, recognising that recovery is an individual journey that 'takes the time it takes'. A person at this point should not be left unsupported, nor should they have so much support that they cannot cope without it. For many people, the early stages of recovery will still be personal, intense and require high levels of supporting skills. Over time this might reduce, and less specialist support will become more appropriate. Hopefully, at some point the person will return to a normal functioning state be able to take on responsibilities, make decisions, pursue goals, and look after self and others. This does not necessarily mean returning to their pre-burnout role, for unless organisational changes have been made the context will still be hazardous and unsafe, and recurrence of burnout likely. Whatever and wherever normal functioning takes place, more general preventative support might be required.

Our beliefs about support

Regarding support, we believe that:

- The forms of support available to leaders should be sufficiently diverse to meet their differing roles, contexts and needs as well as matching learning styles and preferences.
- A failure to invest early in largely preventative support may result in higher costs later due to the need to support people experiencing toxic stress or burnout.
- Care should be taken to identify the presenting need and the best response. It is important to avoid automatically choosing a favourite 'go to' option, prescribed because it is easy, unlikely to upset someone or kicks a problem into the long grass. As an example, it is common for a person who is struggling at work to be offered time management training. Whilst on the face of it this appears logical, a conversation with a stressed individual might reveal that the root problem is excess workload. If this is the case, sending someone on a time management course is cruel as it suggests the fault lies with them and how they operate. No time management skill will ever resolve excess workload and there is an irony in sending someone who is stressed by their workload on a course which further reduces the time available to them.
- Where support is offered for a problem, particularly one experienced by several people, this should be responded to with a 'stay fix' solution rather than a 'quick fix' one. If for example, a piece of software keeps freezing, the quick fix solution might be to reboot the system, while what is needed is a change to the software to stop it freezing in the first place.
- All development should occur within the working week. Expecting individuals to pursue development in their own time risks this not happening or being skimped, especially when people are tired. Equally, where development occurs within the working week the individual should not be expected to catch up on the work they would normally have done while being developed.
- As far as possible, all forms of support should be presented positively, rather than as needed because a person is struggling to cope or perform, is not up to a responsibility, lacks competence, or resilience, etc. If support is viewed negatively leaders who need support are less likely to ask for it, will delay their request, or hide the need, fearing that if this becomes known it will affect how they are seen, harm career chances, etc. Self-referral is to be encouraged as it shows a level of self-awareness and a commitment to the organisation and someone who does this is more likely to be open to the learning than someone who is 'sent'. If the attitude to stress and burnout support is generally poor, this may indicate a wider problem with how the organisation views mental health, something that should be addressed, as this in itself, is likely to cause stress.
- The full cost of support needs to be considered when making decisions, recognising that some costs are easy to establish, such as employing an external trainer while other costs are hidden, such as the time and cost of arranging training and the time managers devote to supervision.
- Any assumption that support should always be delivered by internal trainers should be challenged. The argument that internal trainers understand leadership in the sector, the specifics of the organisation, the roles involved and maybe even the individuals, is often true. However, it should be appreciated that reliance on internal trainers can fail to expose leaders to knowledge and experience from other organisations, may limit thinking and even perpetuate poor practice. Equally, it is important that for comparison purposes the full costs of support options need to be identified, including organisational overheads. In some situations, internal support will be the most appropriate source, otherwise external support should be bought in. It is essential that Churches and Christian faith-based organisations open support arrangements to appropriate expertise from elsewhere.

Typical forms of support

Traditional support takes many forms, including those in Table 9. The general suitability of these for preventative work, reducing stress, supporting someone in burnout and through recovery, is indicated. It should be noted however that with appropriate adjustment, some of these can be used for other purposes.

Form	Preventative	Toxic Stress	Burnout	
			Incident	Recovery
Certificated Leadership Development Programme	✓			Long-term
Non-assessed CPD and topic specific development sessions	✓			Medium/long-term
Action learning	✓			Medium/long-term
Supervision	✓	✓		✓
Psychometric instruments – general self-awareness	✓			✓
Psychometric instruments – deeper, focussed use	✓	✓		Long-term
Restorative activity – e.g. sport, leisure, hobbies	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coaching	✓	✓		✓
Mentoring	✓	✓		✓
Spiritual advisor	✓	✓	✓	✓
Counselling		✓	✓	✓
Membership of professional bodies – use of forums	✓			✓
Membership of networks of interest	✓			✓
Internal technical advice and support	✓	✓		✓
Facilitators	✓	✓		✓
Consultants	✓	✓		✓

Table 9 - Typical Forms of Support

In addition to ensuring that the nature of the support is consistent with where a person is on their burnout journey, other factors need to be considered when planning support, including:

- The nature of the need which might require advice, training, or simply someone to talk to.
- The breadth/depth of support required.
- The number of people needing this support at this time.
- The extent to which the development needs are personal and the support confidential.
- How quickly the support is needed.
- Lead time, and time commitment for those involved.
- Whether evidence of competence or learning is needed, in which case some form of assessment is required.
- Cost and benefits.
- Risks involved.

Examples - working with leaders who are experiencing toxic stress and burnout

How leaders come to experience toxic stress and burnout vary hugely. The causes of this, the support given, and other factors are specific to the individual concerned. Below we offer two case studies, one focused on supporting a leader functioning in a state of burnout and the other, recovery support.

Case study 1 is a first person account of the experience of going through burnout. An extract from this featured in the introduction to this guidance as an illustration of how difficult burnout can be.

CASE STUDY 1: Supporting someone functioning in a state of burnout

‘Burnout has consequences and it is messy, broken and it hurt my family, my friends, my church and me. I first noticed how unwell I had become when my family and I went on holiday and the stress I had been experiencing for a number of months left. It was then that I realised work was the cause of my stress which had been building for 18 months. I felt confused by this, as I loved leading church, the role energised me but it was the relational aspect of working with difficult people that damaged me. My situation felt inescapable as the more time I spent in this unavoidable relationship, the worse my stress became. Friction would build, trust would erode and I would constantly over-analyse things such as “Is this just me?”, “Am I the problem?”. I knew I needed to step back and take time out from my work situation as I felt sick, nausea, couldn’t concentrate and my productivity was low. But I deluded myself and thought if I worked harder I would become more productive, but this didn’t happen. I would just show up and stare at a screen. I felt very isolated and alone and would drive to a quiet place and cry. I got to the point that I believed no one cared about me and that I was a product of their convenience, and existed for their needs. My self-worth became non-existent and I just felt broken. People would notice that I was not myself, but I still felt I needed to perform and meet their needs and felt their expectation on me was high. I got to the point that I was no good to anybody.

It was only when the Doctors said stop, I stopped. I didn’t realise the depths of my stress, anxiety, and burnout until I stopped working. I was broken and exhausted. After stopping from work, I collapsed and was not able to do anything. Even going to the shops was an achievement for me. I struggled sleeping but when I could sleep it gave me a break from the stress. It became normal

for me to be distant from my family and not eat with them. I isolated myself to protect my family as I did not want them to see me in this pain and felt a burden to them. I felt if I was around them I would make them miserable and would not want my family to see me like this, so I took myself off to cry. I felt I was in emotional pain and it hurt.

Acknowledging my brokenness before God was the start of my recovery. I recognised that I am not the hero of people's lives, and I do not need to be. It is ok to stop, take a step back, switch off and take proper time off, and not feel guilty about taking breaks and practising self-care. Having trusted people who were not in my everyday life or part of my church context helped me recover. It was invaluable to be able to speak freely to them and it stayed confidential. They listened and deeply cared for me. I also had counselling which helped. I valued the input from others who understood the signs and symptoms of burnout and normalised my experience. This helped me believe that I was not necessarily the problem, but burnout happened to me rather than I caused my own burnout. I may have contributed towards the difficulties such as not stopping sooner but it was an unbearable and toxic situation. Knowing others had also experienced this helped me feel less isolated. I am still in the process of recovery and I want this experience to not only shape me in a positive way but to also help others through it.

Case study 2 is an account of an individual's experience of being supported when in burnout recovery, having experienced states of toxic stress and burnout.

CASE STUDY 2: Supporting someone in burnout recovery state of functioning

Context

This case study concerns a large thriving Church, with Sunday Service attendance of around 900 people and a wide set of established, successful ministries. Over 200 formal and informal volunteers support the work of the Church, alongside which is a paid staff team of 15, including Ministers, Children's Workers, Youth Workers, Student workers, Pastoral workers and support staff. The Church is a registered charity, led by a team of Trustee Elders, who set the overall direction of the Church and appoint the Senior Minister.

Leading in any capacity within a large and active organisation is likely to be exciting and, to an extent, stressful given the need to maintain high volumes of activity and quality across a diverse range of services, using a large team of staff and volunteers. In addition, depending on leadership style, it is likely that there will be considerable drive to expand and develop.

Even the most successful organisations are likely to have actual and emergent problems and it is easy for relatively weak areas to be overlooked and for stressful situations to develop.

In this example, one such area of concern was 'outreach' to the local community. The Senior Minister of this Church, who believed this was a priority area in which growth and development should be encouraged, is the focus of this case study.

Situation

Most of the church's staff resources had been primarily focused on work that served people already involved in the church, but there was a growing move (primarily among volunteers, but supported by staff) to develop outreach work to the community. The leadership of the church recognised the importance of this and agreed to appoint a part-time outreach worker to develop this work.

The outreach worker employed was dynamic and creative in suggesting novel ideas for new areas of ministry. They were highly motivated for change and innovation, but less interested in policies and structure, simply wanting to have a positive impact in the community. Much excellent work was done but, as time went on, frustration and stress grew as some of the ideas received little support from other team members, meaning that progress was at best slow and hard-won.

A divide started to develop with two 'camps' emerging. In one camp, the outreach worker was becoming increasingly frustrated that colleagues were slow to engage with their innovative ideas. In the other camp, colleagues were struggling to cope with the large number of new ideas, which would impact their priorities and how they worked.

Not unusually in a Church or Christian faith-based context, the individuals concerned respected each other, for which we might be thankful. However, all this did was to temporarily mask emergent difficulties and conflict; respect was never going to be sufficient to overcome the underlying problems and tension just got worse over time.

The intention to develop the church's ministries to the community, which stood behind the appointment of the Outreach Worker, was generally going well. However, the unforeseen consequence of the appointment was a growing problem with how to get the whole team working well together. As tensions increased, the Senior Minister was increasingly drawn in, effectively trying to 'bridge' the two camps.

Eventually the outreach worker became so frustrated by a perceived lack of support for their ideas that they resigned.

The experience of trying to resolve these tensions, on top of maintaining business as usual proved very difficult personally and professionally for several of the people involved. This was one of a wide range of issues that were creating stress for the Senior Minister, who experienced significant sleep and health problems and was absent from the church for six weeks and received professional psychological support.

Burnout recovery

Alongside the psychological support, the Senior Minister had a number of 'helpful conversations' with a long-serving member of the congregation who was neither in a leadership role nor directly involved in the outreach ministry. These conversations were informal and unstructured and took place away from the Church. This member is a strategic leader in their own field, leadership coach and licensed user of psychometric instruments.

As is often the case, the nature, extent and seriousness of the need was not apparent until late on, by which time much of the damage to the outreach worker, team colleagues and the Senior Minister had occurred. Had support been sought earlier, the source of the stress could have been dealt with before it became toxic.

The conversations between the senior minister and the member of the congregation required business skills to help explore the organisational causes of burnout, blended with sensitivity and pastoral care, all set with an understanding of Church life and a shared faith. Apart from continuing the healing process and aiding return to duty, the conversations helped the Senior Minister make sense of what had happened and their part in it. The resultant learning should also reduce the likelihood and severity of further stress-related problems. To underpin the

conversations about what had happened within the team, the Church member used his knowledge of Kirton's adaptor/innovator theory (<https://kaicentre.com/about-a-i-theory/>) as briefly introduced in *Figure 11*. Accompanying the theory is a useful psychometric instrument that could, had the problems within the team been identified earlier, have been used with the Senior Minister, the team and the outreach worker.

Had this theory been used earlier in this situation, it would have enabled the diversity within the team to surface and be valued, leading to the identification of strategies for working together. It was decided that it was too late to attempt to use the instrument within the team during recovery, given that the outreach worker had left, and the situation remained fragile both for the Senior Minister and the remainder of the team. However, at some point in the future, the use of the KAI questionnaire would be worth considering as part of team development.

Based on described behaviour the original team sound as though they were individually and collectively relatively adaptive in nature. They were stable, excelled in delivering in familiar ways and improvements made over time tended to be adaptive in nature.

The Senior Minister appears to be less adaptive than original team members but the extent of the difference between him and the team was not so great as to cause relationship difficulty. This said, the church leadership (including the Senior Minister) were keen to see new and exciting ministries develop and believed that a new dynamic outreach worker, who would generate new innovative ideas, would help significantly.

The advertisement was written in such a way as to attract the 'right sort of person' and, in this respect, an appropriate appointment was made. However, the interview panel did not fully appreciate what it would mean for team dynamics when the chosen person displayed classic innovator characteristics in their work.

The Senior Minister appears to be less innovative than the new outreach worker, probably falling between the 'two camps' and therefore well placed to bridge, assuming they possessed the necessary competence and were motivated to help. Based on reported observed behaviour and applying Adaption-Innovation Theory to the team led to the working belief that the problem facing the Senior Minister in this situation was as represented in *Figure 12*.

Adaption-Innovation Theory and its associated psychometric instrument (KAI) provides insights into how people solve problems and interact whilst decision-making. The theory is based on the idea that people differ in how they are creative, solve problems and make decisions. These style differences lie on a normally distributed continuum, at one end of which are people who are more adaptive in their style and, at the other, those who are more innovative.

The more adaptive tend to approach problems within the current policies, practices and systems, tending to adapt what exists.

By contrast, the more innovative person tends to approach problems in a more detached way, less influenced by how a problem is customarily perceived. As a result, the more innovative are likely to generate ideas that are novel and outside the existing paradigm.

Both styles of problem solving are of value but involve different patterns of behaviour that can be a source of tension in relationships

Typically, the more adaptive seek and use structure when approaching problems. Existing policies, rules, procedures, and way we do things round here provide a framework within which a problem can be seen and solutions generated. Typically, the more innovative pay less attention to existing ways of viewing something, being unconstrained by existing structures and thinking they are more likely to look at problems differently and come up with solutions that challenge the existing way of doing things.

Rarely does any team function well if comprised of only one style, either all adaptors or all innovators. A mix of the more innovative and more adaptive brings both styles of problem solving into one team, the balance of which should reflect the environment and challenges faced.

Figure 11- *Adaption – Innovation Theory*

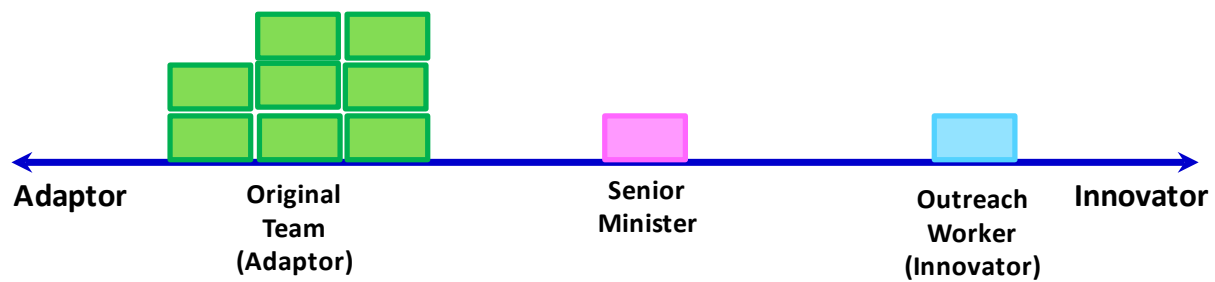


Figure 12 - Outreach Team – Apparent Adaption/Innovation Distribution

In situations where one person significantly differs from the rest of a team, various problems can arise such as:

- The individual feeling different and isolated, perhaps believing their contributions are not valued which can cause them to participate less, feel frustrated and isolated. As in this case, ultimately it might cause a person to withdraw from a situation.
- The rest of the team, who could benefit from the particular input of this person, losing the very contribution they need.
- The person trying to bridge becoming frustrated, in this case believing they appointed the right person yet not seeing the positive impact on the wider team in practice. They may feel guilty about the problems in the team and weary of trying to get people to work together. They may also be concerned about being held to account by Trustees for the 'failure' of this appointment and resultant turnover cost. All this, together with the practical implications of dealing with resignation, vacancy, and reappointment, are likely to cause significant stress.

Learning

- It was only after the burnout recovery conversations that it became clear that what occurred was almost inevitable given an understanding of KAI and the people in the team. Staff in this Church are appointed based on their competence and skill level without any thought as to how they are as individuals, including their preference for adaption or innovation.
- Adding a more innovative person to a team largely made up of people who behave adaptively can be problematic unless done carefully. The same would be true if a more adaptive person were added to a generally innovative team. In this example, without knowledge of KAI, all stakeholders were 'flying blind', relying on gut instinct to try and fashion a way forward, not realising that they were all part of the problem.
- If the Senior Minister and team members had understood KAI they could have consciously developed ways of working that would have brought to bear the best contributions of both innovators and adaptors. It should be noted that KAI is only one theory that can help unlock understanding of how people differ and help develop strategies for working.
- The ideal time for learning about how to work with people we experience as different is in the preventative rather than recovery stage of the burnout journey.
- Learning about self, difference and how we might work with a wide range of people is key to leading in Churches and Christian faith-based organisations.

Tips for Success:

1. Ensure an appropriate range of supports exists within your organisation and that consideration has been given as to whether these should be provided by internal staff or external providers.
2. Always present support in a positive manner and model this at the highest levels, ensuring that individuals seek support early without feeling they have failed.
3. Invest early in leadership development and ensure this includes developing self-awareness and self-leadership.
4. Respond quickly and appropriately to support requests, ensuring they address real need rather than presenting symptoms. If the need is not clear, consider a form of support that will tease this out, for example coaching.
5. Think carefully when creating new posts and/or recruiting new staff – what are you trying to achieve, what sort of person do you need to attract?
6. Recruit the person you need, not necessarily the one you think would be easiest to work with. Avoid the risk of recruiting people who are similar and missing the value of working with people you may experience as being different.
7. Consider how a recruit might affect the balance of an existing team and be prepared to support the individual and the rest of the team.
8. Ensure that supervision includes consideration of support and development needs.
9. Limit, or at least coordinate, multiple sources of support, ensuring it occurs in a way that enables learning and does not itself become a source of stress.
10. Recognise that someone functioning in states of toxic stress or burnout should receive individually tailored support from an appropriately qualified and experienced person.

Further support

This guidance is the latest of many publications written and/or edited by our team. **These have been produced in-house, by SAGE or in partnership with other organisation, with the aim of supporting individuals wishing to pursue leadership development:**

- **Effective Leadership, Management and Supervision in Health and Social Care (2020).** This is an excellent introduction to effective leadership, written for the health and social care sector, with learning that can easily be applied to Churches and other Christian faith-based organisations. This text is in its 3rd Edition and published by SAGE Publications.

The following three texts develop some of the themes introduced in the general text and are ideal for anyone wishing to further develop knowledge and skills:

- **Self-Leadership and Personal Resilience in Health and Social Care, SAGE Publications 2015.**
- **Performance Coaching Skills for Social Work, SAGE Publications 2012.**
- **Planning and Budgeting Skills for Health and Social Work Managers, SAGE Publications 2012.**

An HR Perspective on Burnout in Churches and Christian Faith-Based Organisations

Hil Sewell

Head of People and Facilities, Evangelical Alliance

Editor's note: During research for this guidance we became aware of the value of including differing perspectives to our own, in the process broadening its scope, depth and insight. One such area was human resource management. Hil Sewell, Head of People and Facilities at the Evangelical Alliance, kindly agreed to read our draft guidance and then offer the following perspective.

Introduction

The fact that the authors saw the need to produce this valuable piece of work reflecting on burnout in churches and Christian faith-based organisations shows the clear need for appropriate preventative methods and support mechanisms. In any larger corporate organisation, this would surely fall to the HR or talent team where policies and processes are developed and implemented to train, develop and coach to support well-being and, ultimately, performance.

Policies and processes should recognise the rights, responsibilities and organisational requirements relating to volunteers, these either being integrated within documentation applying to paid staff or written as separate volunteer policies and processes.

There is no denying the cost to both organisations and individuals of the effects of burnout and so the importance of an HR strategy as a preventative measure is key.

At the time of writing, I would suggest that the majority of our churches do not have a developed HR function but many larger Christian faith-based organisations do.

My reflections having read this material are that there needs to be an expectation in organisations and churches that this subject matter will be discussed. HR professionals should be regularly raising awareness, leading from the front, and giving permission for conversations in this area. These professionals have a responsibility to provide training, intervention and care and where this is not available in our churches we should be thinking about support networks and opportunities to access support.



Key Issues

The key issues here are clearly around increased awareness of health and wellbeing with intervention and strategies which prevent extended poor health and burnout.

I believe the issues that need to be considered as a priority are:

- **Communication** – There needs to be regular opportunity to discuss the issues. There should be no taboo regarding feelings of stress and an inability to cope. Rather there should be conversation and opportunity for learning. Those large organisations who have introduced 'Mental Health Champions' have seen significant improvement in workplace conversations. Deloitte is a good example (<https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/case-studies/deloitte/>). Their aim was to focus on building mental health conversation skills amongst their leaders and increase their confidence to help team members if they were struggling. Listening is key, 'being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable' (David W. Augsburger, Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard).
- **Education and Training** – This is key if organisations are to continue to raise awareness and manage meaningful conversations. Resilience can be learned and an employer has a responsibility to teach skills which build resilience. Deloitte's experience (<http://citymha.org.uk/the-rise-of-mental-health-champions-at-deloitte/>), is helpful here too; their aim was to banish the misunderstanding and prejudice about those who endure anxiety and depression and they achieved this by educating managers and providing people with easy access to mental health information. They learned that having open and honest conversations about mental health ultimately leads to a more resilient and productive workforce. This should be a priority for every organisation in managing mental health.
- **Boundaries** – How much permission does an organisation actually give to individuals to work excessive hours, to compare with others and to feel inadequate as a result? A good employer should define the expected hours required to do the job, should encourage, guide and support staff in setting boundaries. An organisation culture where, for example, sending messages and emails out of hours, particularly late at night, is not helpful and should be actively discouraged. Leaders are important in setting the tone here. Defining and managing workload is essential, a good employer should produce a clearly defined job description and employee and manager should regularly review it.
- **Induction** – Organisations need to make policies and expectations clear during the induction process. Knowing that your employer values the individual from the start is key. To expect to have regular conversations about your health, both mental and physical, should be normal. There will be gain from having regular one-to-one or mentoring sessions diarised through a probationary period with the view to extending this as a permanent feature of an employee's management and indeed performance management process.
- **Understanding people** – Richard Field, in his writing, refers to the fact that an individual's experience is affected by how they are as a person and this is important for employers to remember. We recruit people, not machines and an organisation has a responsibility to know its staff and volunteers and to work with them. Managers must be encouraged and trained to take time with people who work for them, to understand their personality, the team dynamic where relevant, and to work and support with those factors very much in mind. There is no 'one size fits all' in managing mental health in the workplace. Top-down communication and training is crucial here; managers must understand they are to take time to invest in their staff to create healthier environments. The HR function should be taking the lead, particularly in communicating this is not an optional extra when time permits, but a core part of a manager's role.

So how might this look in practice?

Healthy working practices need to be set by HR leaders or, in their absence, this needs to be led from the top of an organisation by trustees/boards of support. A healthy culture that regularly and openly discusses issues of mental health, resilience and workplace stress must be established. This involves input and effort and will develop over time. Policies and guidelines must be in place that clearly evidence organisational care and these need to be actively promoted. Leaders must be equipped and this will involve an investment in training.

Below are some key practical steps that can be taken that are more appropriate to smaller organisations perhaps typical of churches and Christian faith-based organisations referred to in the literature:

- **Encourage a regular time at team meetings for issues to be discussed. Normalise such discussion. Throughout our time of remote working in the recent Covid-19 crisis the CEO gave me, as the Head of People, as much time as I felt appropriate each week at our all staff meeting, to communicate with staff in the area of my choice based on perceived current needs. He did not control or limit what I might discuss but allowed me to prioritise. Staff expected and anticipated my time. The feedback reflected its value.**
- **Encourage openness and honesty as the norm. I presented on issues such as feeling tired and sad, loss of motivation, establishing routines and good working patterns, rest, and relaxation, being kind to self as we are to others. It was normal and acceptable to talk about these things and to develop coping strategies. As time progressed, we began to explore changes in how we were feeling towards work and lockdown, we talked about expectations particularly relating to the return to office based working. The list is much longer but the overarching aim was to encourage people to realise and accept their feelings, to reflect and act on them and to stand back where necessary.**
- **Share strategies and ideas. Encourage staff and volunteers to 'try a different way' and encourage them to talk about the issues in their teams and 'one-to-ones'. Staff reaching out to one another, sharing successes, and practising the power of encouragement is a really powerful tool for change in an organisation. Our focus should be for staff and volunteers to thrive rather than survive.**
- **Signpost further resources. Having self-help resources immediately available to staff and volunteers, through the staff resources area of your website is great. Encourage individuals to request training and support in areas where they feel they might need it, or to be more effective, ensure that managers are asking key questions in terms of development needs both relating to knowledge and skills in their role but also self-development in terms of working style and practice.**
- **We need to build working practices that show leaders are competent and can be trusted. This comes through regular exposure, conversation, and profile of those tasked with ensuring positive well-being within the workplace.**
- **Schedule regular reviews to include a complete health check with staff and volunteers. Manager's appraisal and regular review meetings should include open questions about health and well-being. This should be expected and the norm and just as we expect to ask about progress on a particular project or piece of work, we should expect a conversation about how we are managing our health and stress levels.**
- **Encourage and skill managers to have difficult conversations. Managers will need to be trained in this. Addressing seemingly personal questions to begin to talk about stress levels can be difficult but as a manager it is a skill that needs to be learned and developed.**
- **Ensure that face-to-face meetings happen regularly. Lockdown has worked really well for many organisations who have used 'Zoom' and 'Teams' effectively. But these forms of meetings have huge limitations. As we begin to return to office-based working or less remote forms of working we must very quickly establish face-to-face real time meetings as so much more can be gleaned from such meetings.**

- **Be aware of levels of support required. We are working with people who all have very different needs, and this must be factored when developing guidelines and good practice. We must manage those with extraordinarily high drive and ambition and those who are more relaxed with those traits in mind. We may all have different capacity for work, but we are all limited and finite beings and we must work and support with this in mind.**

Leadership is key, and how we lead rather than what we do is particularly significant here. Leaders must lead by example, they need to be willing to share their journey, their hopes, fears, and anxieties where they exist. Whether we like it or not, we each leave an emotional wake and we need to be aware of this. Whilst leaders must be competent and trusted, projecting that they cope whatever the circumstance with never a doubtful thought may not be helpful.

And last, but very much not least, we must be aware of the power of prayer when working in churches and Christian faith-based organisations. We serve a God who is interested in the whole person, who can transform and renew. He will work with us and in us. He will use the gifts and abilities he has given us to help and support those around us. So, let's use the many tools available to us whilst at the same time praying that God will be at work in and through us.

Tips for Success:

1. **Encourage a regular time at team meetings for issues to be discussed.**
2. **Encourage openness and honesty as the norm.**
3. **Share strategies and ideas. Encourage staff and volunteers to 'try a different way' and encourage them to talk about the issues in their teams and during 'one-to-ones'.**
4. **Signpost further resources.**
5. **Build working practices that show leaders are competent and can be trusted.**
6. **Schedule regular reviews to include a complete health check with staff and volunteers.**
7. **Encourage and skill managers to have difficult conversations.**
8. **Ensure that face-to-face meetings happen regularly.**
9. **Be aware of levels of required support.**
10. **Leaders must lead by example, they need to be willing to share their journey, their hopes, fears, and anxieties.**

Technology and Social Media; the rise of mental health issues, stress and burnout on a society living online

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and

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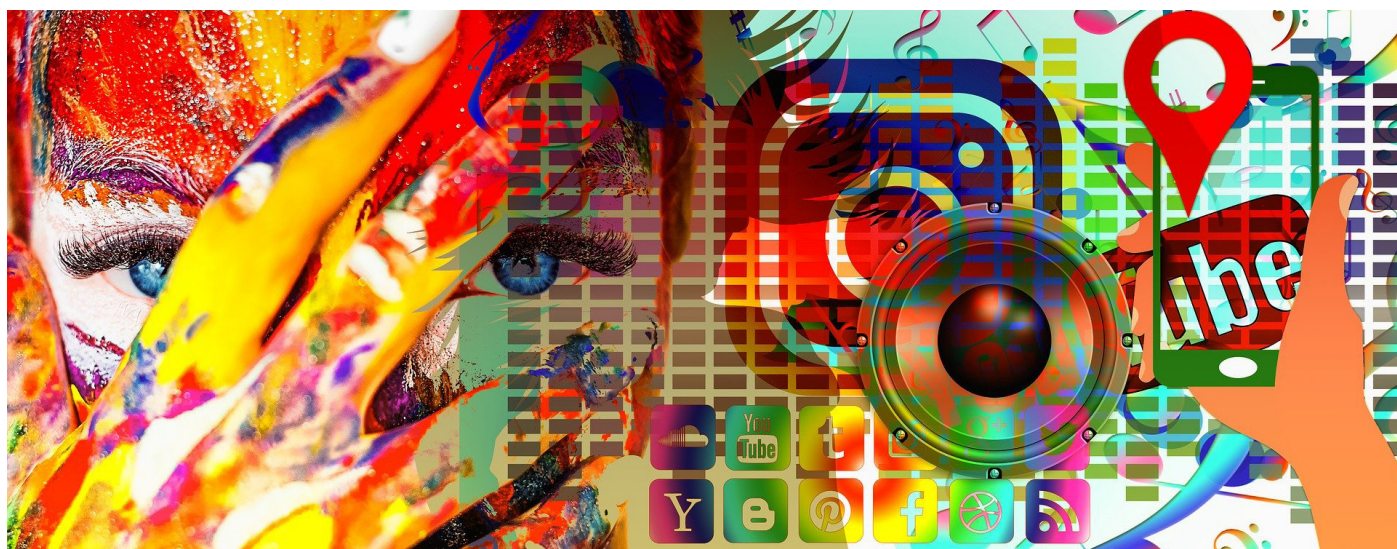
Editor's note: During research for this guidance, we became aware of the value of including differing perspectives to our own, in the process broadening its scope, depth and insight. One such area was technology and social media. Bethany Silezin and Tom James kindly offered the following perspective

Technology & Social media – and its influence on us all – has been growing rapidly in the last few years. Stevenson (2018) suggests that it has really been over the last decade that we have been “truly connected to everyone and everything in the world 24/7”. This ever-connected world has had many positive effects on society: a development in networking opportunities, potential for growth in productivity, a higher amount of motivational content available and an opportunity to reach audiences far larger than has previously been possible, to name a few. But the endless abyss of content, “information overload and product placements” (Stevenson 2018) has also shown signs of significantly affecting the mental health of many within our society. Whether you engage in this connectivity through emails, group messaging through platforms such as WhatsApp or one of the plethora of sites - such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter – the same issues are present; we will be exploring these and possible solutions in this section.

One key aspect and issue of technology & social media is instant gratification. Seen throughout modern society, there is now an expectation of being able to achieve, receive and complete things instantaneously. The content uploaded and consumed helps to create a new social media identity that many spend hours a day crafting and shaping; on average 2 hours a day, or 705 hours a year (Comer 2019) creating their new selves. This can be a problem: as one's physical self is lost to the social media self, real world interactions become distant and unrealistic expectations filter into all aspects of life. Studies show that spending this much time on social media can result in permanent loss of concentration (Newport 2016), as well as negatively affecting our working memory and problem-solving skills (Meyer 2017). We see here that not only is this need for unrealistic immediacy affecting our ability to function at our best, but the frustration experienced as a result can ultimately lead to a rise in stress and anxiety.

Social media has, to some, become an addiction. Many platforms employ tactics intended to make it “as addictive as possible” (Newport 2016). ‘Likes’ and ‘Shares’ supply dopamine hits, the substance also known as the “happy hormone” (Medical University of Vienna 2016). For example, if a social media post of yours were to get 100 likes, your brain would recognize those ‘likes’ as a reward and you would experience a dopamine spike. However, the unpredictability of social media means that your next post may not get 100 ‘likes’ and, like many other addictions, this can lead to the experience of withdrawal symptoms or a constant “pervasive background hum of anxiety” (Newport 2016) until you are able to

create a post that fuels your next dopamine hit. This is the calculated system by which social media operates - keeping you coming back for more. Products and services are advertised to make our lives “better” quickly, bringing new expectations of response rate and validation. In short, people are believing the social media lie that ‘the good life’ is achievable easily and instantly. Many have become fixated on their social media feeds – literally feeding off the constant supply of content, information, and adverts to satisfy the need for instant gratification and validation.



Another factor to be considered when exploring the causes of mental health issues within technology and social media is comparison. We have never lived in a more connected world (Stevenson 2018); people have social media friends all over the world that they would never have met in real life. There are bloggers (people who contribute ideas via online journals, logs or informational websites) and vloggers (people who maintain a video log), public figures, and content creators, all out there on these platforms showcasing the best of their lives. No one shares with others on these platforms about their bad days, everyone “curates the best moments of their lives” (Comer 2019) and the highlight reels of everyone’s lives are being sold as the whole package. Instinctively, these highlight reels are seen and directly compared to people’s own realities, leaving feelings of inadequacy that can increase rates of depression (Newport 2016). Curated perfection is pitted against real imperfection, leading to assumptions of failure; feeling that we should be doing better because ‘everyone else is’. This idea of perfection is dangerous because it does not actually exist, though you can build a convincing profile that would tell you otherwise. The pairing of perfection and comparison can culminate in feelings associated with socially prescribed perfection – “that sense that everyone expects me to be perfect” (Curran 2018). As said previously, the bar is set too high here. Perfection does not exist, and so people are endlessly striving for something they will never reach; but the weight of these expectations does not go away. Couple this with the addictive nature of social media constantly drawing you back, and you have a toxic combination, leading to perpetual disappointment. This may be why we are seeing a rise in experiences of depression and anxiety, contributing factors to the experience of stress and burnout, brought on by endlessly striving for the unachievable.

These issues of comparison and perfection can often culminate in issues surrounding body image. Through the rise of fitness models and trends such as ‘fitspiration’, feelings of inadequacy are rife as people are encouraged to “diet, lose weight and bulk up” (Birch 2016) and other unhealthy practices masquerading as the epitome of health. Online platforms have made “obsessive weight, workout [and] calories more socially acceptable” (Monroe 2016) and as a result, disordered eating behaviours such as calorie counting, body checking, over-exercising and skipping meals increase; our self-esteem and self-worth dramatically decrease and give way to feelings of anxiety. Feelings of depression and exhaustion can also be experienced, leading many to sink into a perpetual state of overwhelm that can have seriously detrimental effects to their mental health.

Lastly, the internet permits anonymity; an online profile does not have to show your legal name or other personal information, and this can lead to a sense of freedom that some use to spread negativity. The Internet is a vast place, where good and bad content are mixed together. There are positive comments and negative comments, encouragers, and critics – often found side by side, fighting for attention. Studies have found that people develop a tendency to be more aggressive or violent when posting anonymously (Zimbardo 1969, in Zhang, Kaiping & Kizilcec, René 2014) and this is evident on many different platforms. When visiting a social media site expecting validation and a fresh dopamine hit, a person may open themselves up to receive criticism, negativity and aggression. This too may be why we are seeing a rise in experiences of depression and anxiety.

All in all, the effects of technology, social media and platforms that showcase how connected our world is can lead to experiences not only of symptoms relating to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, but also increase the prevalence of burnout in western society as the constant connection to other people - the notifications, the streams of content, the need for more from everyone – shapes the mind to be constantly switched on, trying to be productive. Replying to emails or messages in the early hours of the morning has now become acceptable and sleeping with our phones under our pillows is a new norm (Comer 2019). There is no current acceptable break from the connectivity of our world, and it is becoming a problem.

So how can we minimise the problem?

Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that not all use of technology and social media is negative. When used with care and in moderation, it can be a great tool for productivity, to source new ideas for creative projects, motivate positive change in people's lives and can help us keep in touch with people around the world. In today's society, social media is a core part of any organisation's marketing strategy – often seen as Social Media Content Marketing (Ahmad et al. 2016) - and audience growth is something to really take into consideration when analysing the positive effects of social media. Email, group messaging services and regular, accessible means of communication have become vital elements in the functioning of any organisation.

To overcome the issues discussed above, it is important to start by considering where each of us finds our sense of identity. If all of our energy, time and resource is going into building our online self or the online aspect of our organisation/ministry, our sense of identity will also be found there; we can become avatars living in an imaginary world to the point that we feel like imposters in our own lives (Akbari 2018). However, if we purposefully take time to consider our identity separate from technology - to be present in reality - we can gain an understanding of ourselves that we can come back to and be assured of when needed. As the gospel of Matthew puts it, "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21) – our treasure, in this case our self-worth, need not be in the empty promises of social media but in the solid foundations we can find in faith, community, relationship and quality time with each other, alone and with God.

Comer (2019) explores different ways to disconnect from technology and reconnect with yourself in his book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*. From family Sabbath once a week – where everyone turns off their phones and spends time together - to scheduled meetings with wise friends, he shows that the accountability of having people around you supporting your decisions and the affirmation that they give you and your progress can help massively in the effort to create a counter-cultural life that does not rely so heavily on social media. **The theme that runs through all these tips is to relate to our technology in a conscious, considered, and controlled way - to ask, "who is in charge here?"** In our busy, fast, connected world, it is so easy for our technology to control us, rather than the other way around; we must take back control.

Furthermore, the key to using social media positively is to gain full understanding of it and proceed with caution. Social media has value, and it is so much a part of our modern society that we cannot afford simply to withdraw from it - but we must find ways of controlling how much value it holds in our lives. This balance may look like setting strict time frames for interacting on social media, or regularly reviewing who your 'friends' are to ensure that you are taking in only what is healthy for you and your mind. You may also want to consider having social media as a creative outlet for a hobby you might have, but not posting any personal content so that any negative feedback or lack of 'likes' does not affect your personal identity so much.

Tips for Success:

- 1. Make social media a work tool – opt for just having a professional profile for your organisation/ministry, and leave your personal profile off the internet.**
- 2. Filter your connection: turn off notifications, delete apps that are being too much of a distraction or make use of apps that limit your time on specific things so that you don't find yourself scrolling through social media during work hours.**
- 3. Technology Sabbath – practice one day a week where your phone is off, finding ways to be more present and enjoy a day without the constant bombardment of notifications.**
- 4. Give your phone a bedtime – pick a time each night where your phone gets switched off and put away in a different room or a drawer, and don't take it with you to bed.**
- 5. If you really need to be contactable 24/7 by family or friends, consider using a second basic personal phone for making and receiving emergency calls to this limited group of contacts.**
- 6. Invest in an alarm clock instead of your phone to help keep distance.**
- 7. Accountability and Affirmation – have a community/support network around you that can help you keep any boundaries to technology you have set, and help keep you grounded in your real identity.**

Whilst there is no cure-all for the negative effects that social media can have on our mental health, there is a plethora of healthy habits that can be practiced to help minimise them. It is crucial that we live our lives presently; engaging in the physical world far more than the digital world and creating our sense of self from the community and relationships around us, not the online alter-ego's that we create for ourselves. Take time to find the positive side of technology and social media – invest in your organisations' online presence, and personally enjoy the benefits of shared family experiences and motivational content for the day but do so with an awareness of the power that your device holds and keep your feet firmly on the ground.

Summary

We believe that while it might not be possible to eradicate burnout within an organisation, the likelihood of it occurring can be reduced and anyone who does experience it can be supported through this difficult experience.

In this guide we have explored causes of organisational stress which, if left unchecked, can cause stress that can build till it becomes toxic. In turn, toxic stress if left unaddressed can easily become burnout.

In a good culture, the causes of undue stress are identified and promptly dealt with so that the risk of toxic stress and burnout are reduced. It is important that individuals feel able to ask for support before their situation deteriorates, without embarrassment or concern for the impact on their standing or promotion chances.

As we come out of Covid 19 and begin to deal with the practical and financial implications of this and Brexit, change will be inevitable. Leaders have a shared responsibility to develop their understanding of whether the nature and size of the change can be met by simply adapting the old normal to a **'not so different normal'** or prepare for a **'vastly different normal'**. Understating or overstating the nature of this change will significantly increase the level of stress felt by those concerned.

In writing this guidance as leaders who are Christian rather than Christian leaders, we have resisted the temptation to provide theological underpinning, preferring to leave this to others who are better qualified. What we did want to do was to offer our many years of experience and expertise in the leadership, coaching and counselling fields to shine a spot-light on the issues of stress and burnout in ministry and to offer practical insights and tips to help alleviate some of these issues for the benefit of all. We trust we have been able to do this.

We have not commented on how people might practice their faith, partly as recommending prayer and personal reflection feels obvious, if not patronising. More importantly we believe that how people exercise their faith, particularly when experiencing stress, has to be unique to them.

When we set out on this project, we expected the final product to be far briefer than it has turned out. The more we discussed this area, the more we felt we should write, the more we wrote, the more we discussed, to the point where we had to pause. We are aware that other topics could be included in this guidance and those that we have addressed could be developed further, for example material relating to general leadership skills, self-leadership and particularly our understanding of personality when leading teams and working under pressure.

Some of this content is available in texts that we have recommended; the rest we might address in further tailored publications.

We believe that leaders of Churches and Christian faith-based organisations should not have to routinely experience toxic stress or burnout, that if awareness of this is embedded in personal and organisational action the incidence will reduce and that the few individuals that still travel the journey to recovery may be supported in ways that lessen the pain and hasten the return to a state of normal functioning.

We are keen to continue developing our thinking in this area and welcome contributions, perspectives, and ideas from anyone affected by, or interested in this area. Please feel free to contact Keith Brown and/or Martin Charlesworth via e-mail.

The following tables bring together tips for success offered throughout this guidance which are aimed at supporting someone across the burnout journey.

Pastoral Care and Concern

Organisational Care	Personal Care
Recognise that trauma can impact Christian leaders in churches and organisations and have open discussion about this.	Be honest in how you are feeling and take responsibility for your own wellbeing.
Normalise the symptoms. There is no shame in feeling not able to cope and needing extra support for a time.	Have a fulfilling personal life and keep connecting to people and activities that bring joy and comfort such as dancing, listening to music.
Encourage proper debriefing especially when engaging with difficult situations in a person's life. This can include talking to a skilled profession outside of the organisation or peer support.	Treat yourself to things you enjoy like massages, cinema trips, etc.
Have regular breaks and even have mental health days as part of the organisational culture.	Acknowledge that there are limits in hearing traumatic material and take regular time out.
Assess workloads and adjust accordingly.	Much research says that trauma gets stuck in the body and it needs to be released. This can be achieved through regular heart-exerting exercises and deep breathing. This helps calms the nervous system and switch back on normal functioning.
Have training days to equip in handling traumatic material and growing in emotional resilience. Trauma-informed care training can be helpful in developing strategies when working with trauma in pastoral care situations.	Acknowledge any self-medicating using drugs, alcohol, gambling, or any acts that feels shameful. Speak to a trusted person and develop healthy ways of coping with stress.
Regular checks in with self and others.	
Be creative in exploring ways to integrate self-care in the workplace.	

Purpose, objective and what we do

1. Periodically review the statement of purpose for your organisation, department, team or project.
2. Set clear, measurable objectives or outcomes.
3. For each objective or outcome identify the actions needed to bring it about.
4. For each planned action identify the physical resources you require.
5. Create a budget sufficient to acquire and maintain the required physical resources.
6. Be realistic and honest about what can be achieved with the money that is likely to be available.
7. Communicate purpose, objectives, and actions so that every employee and volunteer know how what they do fits the purpose and is inspired to deliver.

Culture

Power	Systems, Controls and Routines
Understand which types of power you habitually use and why.	Regularly review systems and controls to ensure that the organisation is protected from fraud, loss, misuse of assets, waste, etc.
Regarding specific contexts, understand which types of power are available to you and anticipate those you are likely to face. Be prepared to act so that you can appropriately exercise influence.	If systems and controls are circumvented, abandoned, or short-circuited establish why and investigate instances where it is claimed necessary to discharge responsibilities. Act to enforce compliance or improve systems and controls.
Invest time and energy in developing your ability to use all types of power appropriately when needed.	Ask staff and volunteers for their experience of using systems, controls and routines and seek their ideas for improvement.
When chairing a meeting, identify agenda items in respect of which participants may hold strong and/or differing views and be prepared to intervene to ensure people are heard, that behaviours that distract, annoy or in any way reduce proper participation are challenged.	Ensure there is a well-thought through handover procedure when staff/volunteers change.
Periodically talk with your team and individuals about how well they feel able to meaningfully participate in discussions and decision making. Be prepared to talk about the appropriate use of power within your team or organisation.	Check systems are protected from malicious damage by internal or external parties.
Challenge inappropriate use of power and provide developmental support to those wishing to improve their ability to influence others.	Complete and act on the outcome of a risk assessment, relaxing or increasing as appropriate measures to protect stakeholders, maintain privacy and organisational image, etc.
Periodically consider whether any organisational changes are necessary to make the use of power consistent with the recipe or culture.	Prepare a communication policy that stipulates which channels are to be used, for which reasons, reasonable expectations, and requirements.

Relationships	Staff and Volunteers
Review levels of participation within your organisation, identify measures to maintain or improve this, as necessary.	Follow best practice when engaging staff and volunteers, including the use of job descriptions, person specifications, contracts, and supervision.
Talk to members of teams to ascertain how well they think they are working.	Agree how many hours per week are required to discharge responsibilities, ensure this complies with legislation and is realistic.
Review how well decision-making frameworks are operating to establish if decisions are being made as low as possible and in a timely way.	Only ever appoint people to jobs who possess the necessary skills and time to be effective. If suitable applicants are not forthcoming, investigate why and confront underlying reasons.
Ensure that Elders work to ensure good communication between the Minister and the congregation – explaining decisions, listening to feedback, testing the temperature, reassuring individuals, and generally supporting the Minister.	Ask staff and volunteers periodically for feedback on their experience of belonging to the organisation.
Identify if any relationship is so poor that it is seriously impacting on the organisation and or causing undue levels of stress. Be prepared to act in a timely manner.	Once a year, discuss with each volunteer the responsibilities they hold, the length of time they have held these, the personal and organisational implications and if it may be time for them to step down.
Be prepared to have difficult conversations and follow through.	Ensure that staff and volunteer plans, policies and practices protect those working in the organisation together with service users, congregations, etc.
Encourage conversations, video and telephone calls as well as e-mails and messaging.	Check that training, mentoring, coaching and supervision are in place, used appropriately and presented positively.
Leadership	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If you find difficult conversations daunting, seek coaching support and recognise that with practice these become easier. 2. If when thinking about a matter you find yourself considering delaying a decision or an action, challenge yourself. Are you hoping this will go away, thereby avoiding a difficult conversation or the consequences of acting? 3. Remember that as a leader how you do something is often as important as what you do. 4. If you do not attend to something at the right time it is highly likely it will attend to you, normally at a time that is unhelpful. 5. Be prepared to talk about tensions held by yourself and others. 6. Ensure that prayer, time to listen to God and discernment are embedded in the culture. 7. Look after yourself. 	

Support

1. Ensure an appropriate range of support exists within your organisation and that consideration has been given as to whether these should be provided by internal staff or external providers.
2. Always present support in a positive manner and model this at the highest levels, ensuring that individuals seek support early without feeling they have failed.
3. Invest early in leadership development and ensure this includes developing self-awareness and self-leadership.
4. Respond quickly and appropriately to support requests, ensuring they address real need rather than presenting symptoms. If the need is not clear consider a form of support that will tease this out, for example coaching.
5. Think carefully when creating new posts and/or recruiting new staff – what are you trying to achieve, what sort of person do you need to attract?
6. Recruit the person you need, not necessarily the one you think would be easiest to work with. Avoid the risk of recruiting people who are similar and missing the value of working with people you may experience as being different.
7. Consider how a new recruit might affect the balance of existing teams and be prepared to support the individual and the rest of the team.
8. Ensure that supervision includes consideration of support and development needs.
9. Limit, or at least coordinate, multiple sources of support, ensuring this occurs in a way that enables learning and does not itself become a source of stress.
10. Recognise that someone functioning in a state of toxic stress or burnout should receive individually tailored support from an appropriately qualified and experienced person.



HR perspective on Burnout in Churches and Christian faith-based organisations

1. Encourage a regular time at team meetings for issues to be discussed.
2. Encourage openness and honesty as the norm.
3. Share strategies and ideas. Encourage staff and volunteers to 'try a different way' and encourage them to talk about the issues in their teams and in 'one-to-ones'.
4. Signpost further resources.
5. Build working practices that show leaders are competent and can be trusted.
6. Schedule regular reviews to include a complete health check with staff and volunteers.
7. Encourage and skill managers to have difficult conversations.
8. Ensure that face-to-face meetings happen regularly.
9. Be aware of levels of required support.
10. Leaders must lead by example, they need to be willing to share their journey, their hopes, fears, and anxieties.

Technology and Social Media

1. Make social media a work tool – opt for just having a professional profile for your organisation/ministry, and leave your personal profile off the internet.
2. Filter your connection: turn off notifications, delete apps that are being too much of a distraction or make use of apps that limit your time on specific things so that you don't find yourself scrolling through social media during work hours.
3. Technology Sabbath – practice one day a week where your phone is off, finding ways to be more present and enjoy a day without the constant bombardment of notifications.
4. Give your phone a bedtime – pick a time each night where your phone gets switched off and put away in a different room or a drawer, and do not take it with you to bed.
5. If you really need to be contactable 24/7 by family or friends, consider using a second basic personal phone for making and receiving emergency calls to this limited group of contacts.
6. Invest in an alarm clock instead of your phone to help keep distance.
7. Accountability and Affirmation – have a community/support network around you that can help you keep any boundaries to technology you have set, and help keep you grounded in your real life identity.



Appendix A - Ingredient Analysis

Johnson & Scholes – Cultural web	Healthy Churches Handbook Robert Warren (2004)	Creating your Church's Culture - Cultural Equation Stephen Blandino (2013)	
Power			
Structure			
Rituals and routines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks to find out what God wants Faces the cost of change and growth Doing a few things and doing them well 		
Controls		Accountability	
Systems		Systems	
Stories and myths			
Symbols			
	Operates as a community	Relationships	
		Leadership	

It should be noted that the work of Oakley and Humphrey's mentioned earlier in the guidance adopted the same structure as Johnson and Scholes (1993) and is omitted from the above.

What Churches do - other aspects		
Healthy Churches Handbook Robert Warren (2004)	Creating your Church's Culture - Cultural Equation Stephen Blandino (2013)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outward looking focus Makes room for all Energised by faith 	Vision	

	Cultural Markers ICSA	Authors' experience	Final List
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of funders • Power of personality 	Power of all types and from all directions	Power
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered and reflective Board discussions about culture, values, and ethics • Ensuring that doing things right leads to doing the right things • Existential stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variations in liturgical practice and preference • Too many communication channels and poor use • Use of social media 	Systems, Controls and Routines
	A strong commitment to good governance	Poor balance between responsibilities and authority	
	Remuneration practices	The way staff and volunteers are recruited, mixed, trained, etc.	Staff and volunteers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing cultures • Membership charities 		Relationships
	Strong, ethical, and considered leadership	Leadership	Leadership

A small number of ingredients identified by various writers are more to do with the 'what' of the organisation rather than 'how we do things round here' and have been excluded from further consideration. Consistent with the early work of Johnson and Scholes (1993) we see different values as being part of the prevailing organisational paradigm.

	Cultural Markers ICSA	Authors' experience
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value of delivering public benefit (purpose) • Origins (purpose) • Pressure to increase funds to support the cause 	Different values evident in decision making

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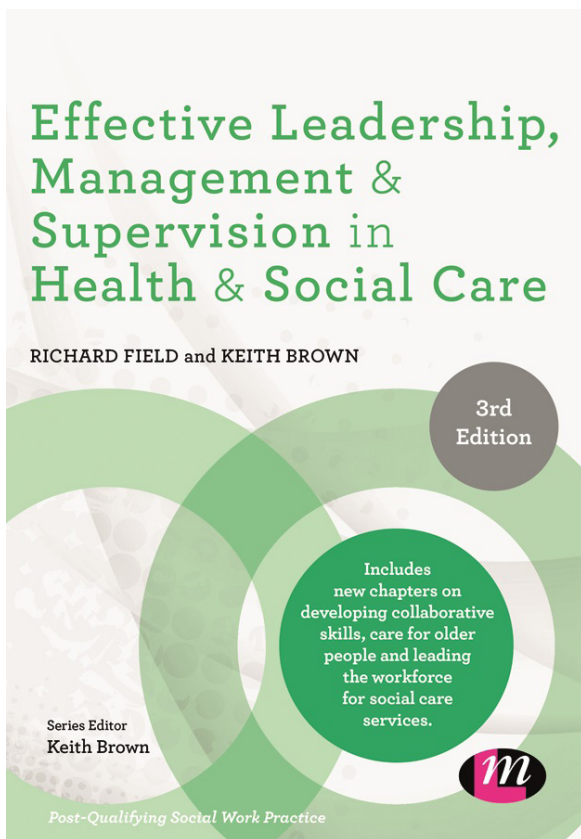
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