



Burnout and the High Holidays? It's real.

For many of you who work in and for the community, there is very little time to think, let alone set aside time for personal reflection when preparing for and overseeing High Holiday programs. Your job is to provide for others – to make others' High Holidays experiences meaningful.

This is one of the reasons you probably wanted this job; you believed it would be meaningful. You wanted to make a difference. And, when you believe you're making a difference, you feel good about yourself and your work.

Indeed, studies show that people are happier, healthier, more engaged, more committed, and better-performing when their work is meaningful to them. However, research by Michael Steger has led to an unexpected insight: There is a downside. For most of those who work in Jewish community, you probably already know this.

“Meaningful work, in a sense, is where the work itself is rewarding and worth doing – regardless of pay. And that's the downside. Those who find their work to be most meaningful – those who are most driven, most passionate, most committed, most fulfilled by what they do – are working for reasons much loftier than their paycheck. They know that what they do matters, is important, and is very much worth the bumps and stumbles along the way.

People driven by meaningful work are always stepping up to new challenges and stepping in to fill gaps. They are not the ones who say, “not my problem,” or “that's not what I'm paid to do.”[1]

And, this can lead to burnout.

With the holidays approaching and the Jewish year just beginning, what can you do to help protect yourself from the downside?

DON'T BE THE HERO

If you are committed to your work, it is challenging not to feel obligated to put others before you. You will work longer and harder to make sure everything is done “right.” I want you to aim for that goal but be kind to yourself. You cannot be responsible for everything and everyone during the holidays. **ACTION:** You need to determine where your boundaries lie BEFORE your schedule gets even busier. What and how much are you willing to do? WRITE IT DOWN.

Take care of yourself first

Be compassionate with yourself! As the adage says, “you need to take care of yourself before you can take care of others.” It is ok that you need time to do what is important to you. If you are really stressed and exhausted by the end of the holiday season because you did not give yourself time, it will be that much more difficult to take on the rest of the year. **ACTION:** Decide how much time you need for yourself (not your family/friends, etc.) each day to reenergize and schedule it in your calendar.

Remember why you chose this job

This may seem obvious, but it is easily dismissed. There are reasons you took this job that relate to your connection to Judaism and the community. If you don't maintain your own personal connection to Judaism/community, it will get lost in the busy-ness and doing for others. This, guaranteed, will lead to burnout. **ACTION:** Write down a few reasons you took this job and keep it front-of-mind. Make it a reminder on your phone. Print it out and place next to your desk. Just make sure you place it somewhere that you'll see it every day.

Identify what is most important to you

I strongly encourage everyone to identify and WRITE DOWN what is most important to you. Only when you are clear about your values will you be able to make decisions that ensure that you are focusing on what is most important to you. When you have this information, it will also be easier to share what you need for self-care with your colleagues and boss.

There is one caveat. There will be times that work takes more time than personal time and vice versa. The goal is to make sure that you don't swing too far in one direction

for too long. High Holidays take time, but it can lead so far in one direction that you feel fully depleted by the time it swings back.

How do you want to personally prepare for the holidays?

The holidays are quickly approaching but you still have time. Think about: 1) What inspires you during the holidays? 2) Instead of focusing on what you are doing for others to create meaning, how can you create meaning for yourself? 3) How much time do you need and want to make it happen? 4) Who can you share this information with to be held accountable AND get support?

This time of year is challenging for many professionals working in the Jewish community, I challenge you to create space for yourself so you not only make the holidays meaningful for others, but meaningful for you as well so you can do this for years to come.

[1] Steger, Michael. "[Does a Meaningful Job Need to Burn You Out?](#)" *Greater Good Magazine*, August 21, 2019.

Heidi Geller, MSW and Master of Industrial/Organizational Psychology, is passionate about providing professional development training and coaching mostly focusing on communication for those who work in nonprofits, particularly in the Jewish community. She comes to us with 15 years of experience in coaching, training and human resources. Her prior work experience also includes working for Hillels of Georgia for eight years.

Source: <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/burnout-and-the-high-holidays-its-real>