

How Can We Avoid Burnout?

Did you know that a small portion of all volunteers in Canada contribute over three-quarters of all the recorded volunteer hours?

It is a troubling yet very real fact that 7% of those who volunteer contribute 73% of volunteer hours given. Look around your community. It is often the same people volunteering for the soccer club, the hockey club, the church bazaar and the community fun day. It's great to see such commitment and dedication, but along with their involvement there is a great danger – volunteer burnout!

AVOIDING BURNOUT - A CHECKLIST

What does your Group do to Avoid Burnout?

- Get to know volunteers.** Understand why they volunteer with your group – their motivations, their interests, their likes and dislikes.
- Share the workload.** Ensure the basic, repetitive and routine tasks are shared and spread around.
- Offer everyone the right tools, resources and opportunities to succeed.** People want to do well, not fail.
- Communicate, listen to new ideas and encourage open discussion.**
- Create volunteer positions that are task-driven and specific.** When tasks are clear, and work is distributed evenly to members of the group, volunteers are less likely to become overwhelmed.
- Create an environment that is welcoming.** People want to feel safe and welcome. They need to have access to basic needs—such as a place to hang their coat, a work station, refreshments and support.
- Thank volunteers in both formal and informal ways** Let them know how their contributions support the group and help achieve specific goals.
- Be organized – it will reduce stress.**
- Make it everyone's business to take care of everyone else.** Work as a team and encourage group “check-ins” to reduce the risk of over-working or over-committing certain volunteers in the group.

As a group, you need to make sure everyone is pulling their weight and that no one carries a larger load. People who take on/are given too much often leave the group with a bitter taste in their mouth. They feel discouraged, frustrated, guilty, self-doubting or turned-off by the whole experience - and once they leave, they will probably never come back!

There is an approach to finding, involving and keeping dedicated volunteers. It's called **Volunteer Development** and it is made up of five stages. This **Fact Sheet** (no. 12 of 14) addresses the importance of **volunteer recognition and motivation**.

For more information on the Volunteer Development Cycle or Volunteer Involvement, contact your local Volunteer Centre (www.volunteer.ca/volunteercentres).

Volunteer Development Cycle



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