



HOW TO AVOID BURNOUT

A VSGN LEADERSHIP DISCUSSION

March 2, 2017

What is burnout?

- Becoming overwhelmed by the responsibility of running a group
- Compassion fatigue
- Boredom

Tips for avoiding burnout

Panel Member 1: Keeping the group active and engaged helped her avoid burnout and feel like it was worthwhile. This means making sure enough people attend the group and the content is interesting.

- Setting the group up for success:
 - Make sure the location is accessible to most people.
 - Take a break during the summer, when attendance is low.
 - Only meet as frequently as you can manage.
- Keep things engaging:
 - Repeat the most valuable topics yearly, as new members join.
 - Have a variety of guest speakers, both conventional and alternative - e.g. PT, tai chi, researchers, Reiki
 - Keep people informed:
 - Send reminders 1 week before the meeting.

Panel Member 2

- Remember why you're doing the group and look at the results, i.e. the people you are helping - this is motivating.
- Take a break when you're feeling overwhelmed.
 - Use speakers to relieve some of the pressure of having to lead the group.
 - Invite other group members to lead a discussion.

Panel Member 3

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- Record presentations that can be shared at other group's meetings; add to VSGN library resources.
- Create a list of FAQ's so others can access - discuss further, i.e. what questions do support group leaders have?

Panel Member 4:

- The ANA started a recording library last year; available through their website. This also helps people who have thought about attending a SG but weren't sure what exactly happened during meetings to see and feel comfortable coming, manage their expectations.
- Topics don't have to be medical; talk about coping skills (social worker or psychologist guest speaker); meditation & mindfulness (guided meditation guest speaker); caring for the caregiver.
- Survey group members - have a form to give to group members with topic options and open ended question re: what topics they want to hear about.
- Assign a regular attendee to be a greeter so people feel welcomed.
- Have a panel discussion.
- Invite caregivers to help with the discussion.

Panel Member 5

- Ask yourself why you are doing this.
- Revisit your support structure - i.e. utilize the tools available through VEDA, and reach out to other SG leaders.
- Engaging others in the group helps them take ownership; suggest that they help you come up with topics.
- Your health comes first or you can't help others.

Panel Member 6

- Personal self-care: whatever you need to do for yourself. Leaders take on other people's burdens; over time this can result in compassion fatigue.
- What patients are doing for self-care can be a SG discussion topic.
- Ask a co-leader to take over.
- Journal, cry, talk to a friend, etc.
- Remember: Every time you have a new group member, it's a new group because the dynamics change.

Overview

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1. Delegate/share responsibilities
2. Keep the group interesting
3. Find a meeting location that is convenient for you and accessible to other.
4. Use VEDA's resources to help you (e.g. meeting outlines)
5. Recycle topics as you get new members
6. Participate in VSGN Leadership meetings to get validation and ideas from other SG leaders
7. Don't take on the weight of your attendees' burdens
8. Practice self-care (relaxation, meditation, massage, etc.)

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