BURN NOTICE

"Burnout, Boundaries and Wellness"

5 Ways to insulate yourself.
Burn Notice...

Burnout is probably one of our biggest problems in this industry.

Driven by passion (and by a culture that values devotion over balance/wellness).

Underpaid and under-resourced.

This industry values emotional engagement.

What other workplaces might consider irrational behavior, our industry sometimes embraces.

Cursing, Emotional Outburst and Compromising of Values…
Burn Notice...
Tough as Nails Wrapped in Velvet…

• Production people have a culture that embraces being tough and even eye-rolling at the emotions of the others. As a result, the production people are actually the most likely to be burned out and simmering with unaddressed grievance.

• Production folks also work the longest/weirdest hours sometimes. And they're most likely to be working in unsafe conditions. Almost none of us get adequate sick time, down time, or vacations.

• So we are all working in various states of burnout, sometimes old weary people alongside seething rageful people alongside newbies super excited and tail-wagging. And we all use our burnout as an excuse to behave badly. That said, we all celebrate like crazy on opening night (which is a little like birth in that it makes us forget all the pain that came before).
Boundaries

• Boundaries are a real problem for us in a variety of ways. The most obvious is related to the above in that there is a culture of devotion that borders on religious, and so there is sometimes an expectation that we'll all do "whatever it takes" to get to opening night or to hit the fundraising goal or to keep the lights on.

• There is a bit of a crisis mentality that pervades everything. We have a very high turnover rate in our industry. But it doesn't just manifest in people leaving one organization; many just crash and burn and leave the whole field. Perhaps that's Darwinian, but we do lose a lot of good people that way.
Trigger Alert

• Another boundary issue is pretty specific to the rehearsal room, but bleeds over.

• Drama is filled with violence, conflict, sex, and trauma. In telling these stories, we must dig into these things, even embody them. This creates gray areas in terms of what it is appropriate to ask people to do, explore, and share.

• An obvious example is working with actors to re-enact violent, sexual or abusive acts upon each other.
Building Resilience
We are Resilient

We can bounce back and facilitate resilience when we pay attention to these truths.

**TRUTHS**

- **HUMANS CAN LEARN, CHANGE, AND GROW**
- **PEOPLE DO WHAT THEY THINK WORKS**
- **ALL BEHAVIOR IS GOAL DIRECTED**
- **ATTITUDE IS A REACTION TO GOALS**
Authenticity & the Real Me…

• Less obvious is everyone in the creative process participating in conversations and dramatization of emotionally painful and culturally complex stories. It’s confusing where one’s own identity fits in sometimes. Representation doesn’t always include empowerment.

• Micro-aggressions and micro-abrasions happen all the time. We're all expected to just be tough about it. Obviously, bravery and open-heartedness is necessary. So is authentic exploration and creative expression. But we tend to skip over the check-ins on everybody's sense of empowerment in the process.
SIGNIFICANCE
BELONGING
SAFETY
Misguided Motives
Harassment uncut:
Power dynamics and plain–old harassment happens.

• We are pretty isolated, each in our work areas, not just metaphorically, but even physically:
  • Actors and administrators rarely step foot into the shop
  • Administrators are rarely in the rehearsal room
  • Often nobody but the director is in the audition room
Family vs. Team

- Unrealistic Expectations
- Unclear Demands
- Goals vs. Acceptance
- Relationships vs. Competence
- Subjectivity vs. Objectivity
- Memembership Requirements
Family vs. Team

Harassment, bullying, inappropriate behavior goes unseen, and with a highly competitive job market, and lots of gossip, the power dynamics make dealing with this behavior very difficult.

• Many people treat theater as a second home, and their co–workers as a second (or even replacement) family. So there's messiness in all of that as well.
To Heal the Soul!
Wellness, Well-briety

Wellness, because creative people need this as much, or more perhaps, than other kinds of workers. For all the reasons above, a high level of focus, efficiency, communication and courage are required for every job every day.
Calluses

• The ironic thing is most theater people are drawn to the trade because they value emotional courage, empowerment, and nurturing collaborative space. In college, we’re all pretty kumbaya and touchy-feely and do a lot of check-ins and circles and discussions about all of this.

• But then in the professional world, with the limited resources, all that just falls out of the mix.

• Also, the ones in charge are the ones that have weathered decades of burnout, and many of them have done so by getting hardened, cynical and tough – so they create a workplace that is hardened, cynical and tough.
Who Stole the Soul?

What does it mean to be human?
How does Tricknowledgy work on the soul?
What tries to fill the Void?
Who Stole the Soul?

Tales of the Divided Life

OUTER OR ONSTAGE LIFE
- Image
- Influence
- Impact

INNER OR BACKSTAGE SELF
- Ideas, intuitions, feelings, values, faith
- Mind, heart, spirit, true self, soul, or place-beyond-self, or place-beyond
- all-thinging

SYMPTOMS:
Depression
Aimlessness
Anxiousness
Anger

HAVE YOU ACKNOWLEDGED THE SYMPTOMS?

HUMAN SOUL

BODY

VOID
FREE MARKET
CONSUMERISM
POWEROLESS

SPIRIT

THING

BODY

SPIRIT
Hidden Wholeness

Chapter 1: Images of Integrity: Living “Divided No More” Palmer explains how we are capable of living more fully.

Chapter 2: Across the Great Divide: Rejoining Soul and Role Palmer discusses the possibility of inner wholeness.

Chapter 3: Explorations in True Self: Intimations of the Soul Palmer explores the shyness of the soul.

Chapter 4: Being Alone Together: A Community of Solitudes Palmer expands upon working as a group.

Chapter 5: Preparing for the Journey: Creating Circles of Trust Palmer prepares us for the circular journey.

Chapter 6: The truth Told Slant: The Power of Metaphor Palmer displays his perspective on losing and finding our true selves.

Chapter 7: Deep Speaks to Deep: Learning to Speak and Listen Palmer teaches us how to listen and when to speak.

Chapter 8: Living the Questions: Experiments with Truth Palmer walks us through the truthful questions.

Chapter 9: On Laughter and Silence: Not-So-Strange Bedfellows Palmer listens and laughs with us (not at us).

Chapter 10: The Third Way: Nonviolence in Everyday Life Palmer shows us a world of nonviolence.
Culture of Respect

Attitude: Goal Focused

Listen to movement

Respect...in the Face

Disrespect is violence

Rebel without a Cause

Micro Inequity / Micro Aggression

Micro Abrasions

Micro Affirmations

Macro Affirmations
Five features of a circle of trust:

1. Clear Limits: meeting dates and times, have an end point, description of circle, intention

2. Skilled Leadership: well grounded in the principles and practices required to create safe soul space, authority comes only to those granted it by others

3. Open Invitations: participation is a voluntary response to an open invitation, the soul knows what it needs to do, begin with silence

4. Common Ground: people of diverse beliefs can explore issues of the inner life, open and focused, the soul wants hospitality and honesty

5. Graceful Ambiance: the environment or space has an impact
   - Ambiance: room neither cramped nor cavernous, eye-level windows to provide visual relief, warm and inviting decor, carpet on the floor for sound absorption, and incandescent and warm lighting

It is important to “slow down, do more with less, and pay attention to rhythm” (p. 87).
Caring for the Soul....

there is Dignity & Honor in Being Human

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