

Making Activism Sustainable

In a perfect world, engagement in activism is characterized by energy, hopefulness, involvement and efficacy. But, we don't live in a perfect world. Activism is hard. Change is slow. The work is important, and the stakes are high, so we often feel the pull to "do the work" every moment of every day. But if we are to sustain our engagement in this kind of work, we must cultivate an awareness of our own emotional state and needs. And we must also cultivate habits and strategies for self-care that can be responsive to our needs. When we do that, we remain engaged to fight the good fight another day.

CARING FOR MYSELF IS NOT SELF-INDULGENCE, IT IS SELF-PRESERVATION AND THAT IS AN ACT OF POLITICAL WARFARE.

AUDRE LORDE



Burn-out is real and is characterized by frustration, cynicism, exhaustion, loss of motivation and enthusiasm.

The antidote to burn-out is self-care, stress management, connecting with hope (even when change is slow), and identifying places of control within our work and our lives.

A Few Self-Care Tips for Activists

- Self-care doesn't have to take a long time, but it is important to do regularly. Making sure to engage with activities that bring you pleasure and joy can help get you through difficult times.
- At least occasionally disengaging and "unplugging" from the constant stream of "news" can help maintain your energy so you can stay engaged for the long-term.
- Connecting with friends and others with similar experiences and values is validating and helps us re-energize.
- Connecting with nature can help you recharge and feel grounded.
- Play is an important part of self-care. Ben Franklin said, "Games lubricate the body and the mind."
- Spiritual practices can reduce stress, and help people live with a greater sense of gratefulness and trust in the unknown.

Assessing Your Own Emotional Wellbeing

Warwick Brief Emotional Wellbeing Assessment

Read the statements below and select a score that best describes your experience over the last 2 weeks. Note your scores, then add them to discover your general emotional wellbeing score.

1=None of the time; 2=Rarely; 3=Some of the time; 4=Often; 5=All of the time

- I've been feeling optimistic about the future: _____
- I've been feeling useful : _____
- I've been feeling relaxed :
- I've been feeling interested in other people :
- I've had energy to spare :
- I've been dealing with problems well :
- I've been thinking clearly :
- I've been feeling good about myself :
- I've been feeling close to other people :
- I've been feeling confident :
- I've been able to make up my own mind about things :
- I've been feeling loved :
- I've been interested in new things:
- I've been feeling cheerful :

If you scored between 0 & 32, your emotional wellbeing is low. You may benefit from a range of counselling and skill-building workshops to improve your emotional wellbeing

If you scored between 32 & 40, your emotional wellbeing is below average. You may benefit from workshops and counseling to improve your emotional wellbeing.

If you scored between 40 & 59, your emotional wellbeing is average. You may benefit from workshops and self-guided resources to improve your emotional wellbeing.

If you scored between 59 & 70, your wellbeing score is above average. Continue doing the things that are keeping you happy; you may also benefit from workshops and self-guided resources to maintain your emotional wellbeing.

Identifying How Self and Community Care Intersect

- How can you engage your community in ways that are responsive to your own needs?
 - Given the needs that you identify for yourself, what might you ask of different members of your Home Team (Supporter, Interruptor, Accountability Partner, Wise One)?
 - What communities do you connect with that provide a sense of belonging, validation of values, support, and fun?
- How can you best contribute to building inclusive, anti-racist, and healthy communities at this moment in your life, while honoring your own needs?