

Vibrant Press

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An Excerpt from *Transforming Burnout: A Simple Guide to Self-Renewal*

Several years ago, after two decades of rewarding but challenging work, I found myself bereft, unable to carry on. I was a family physician practicing in a Native American community clinic when the demands of my work began to overwhelm me. It wasn't sudden, but insidious. A gradual fatigue had crept in, leaving me exhausted and disheartened, scattered and unfocused. All my life I had enjoyed my work and had felt a natural sense of enthusiasm. But now, to my great dismay, that well of energy and inspiration had run dry. I felt drained and used up. I was burned out. . .

Burnout can be quite serious. You can locate burnout in organizations by measuring absenteeism, declining morale, and personal dysfunction. A previously stable and reliable professional may suddenly do something crazy or unexpected. At a recent conference I heard one physician say, "One cool autumn afternoon with all the exam rooms occupied, and with my waiting room full, I quietly slipped out the back door." I knew just what he meant. Even though I had never given in to this impulse when I was suffering from burnout, I vividly remember that powerful desire to escape from work. . .

A life out of balance leads to burnout. Yet however difficult a person's situation is at work, there is always hope. For someone who chooses to examine her life, burnout can become a helpful catalyst, a vehicle of revitalization and renewal, as it was in my case. As I looked at the causes and conditions that had led me into burnout, and as I began to address them, I learned an important truth: that my sense of well-being was not dependent on situations, relationships, or any outer circumstance. My well-being was directly related to the quality of my inner life.