



# 4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

N e b r a s k a 4 - H Y o u t h D e v e l o p m e n t

## Volunteer Burnout

### What Causes Burnout?

- Over commitment (always in motion)
- Inadequate breaks and rest (continuous involvement)
- Idealistic standards
- Constant low-grade stress (occasionally interrupted by crisis!)
- Lack of help and assistance
- Chronic fatigue from pushing oneself (“hitting the wall”)
- Strong sense of responsibility, even when others “dropped the ball”
- Guilty feelings about missing events/activities
- Heavy job and family responsibilities/expectations
- Inability (or strong reluctance) to say no

### Who Gets Burnt Out?

Burnout happens to nice guys—to the dedicated, loyal, idealistic volunteers who want to make a difference. This all-out commitment drives some volunteers to take on too much, too soon, too often. They overlook their heavy responsibilities at home and on the job.

### Steps for Avoiding Burnout

It's easier to avoid burnout than it is to overcome it. Following are 10 tips for escaping burnout.

1. Get lots of rest, relax, recreate, renew.
2. Give something up before taking on a new commitment or responsibility.
3. Learn to say **NO** and set up reasonable boundaries around your involvement. Specify the help you'll need and the constraints on your time.
4. Set priorities and consult with your work and family.
5. Get away from it all regularly through hobbies, recreation, and just plan R & R.
6. Listen to your body's stress warning signals, such as headaches, backaches, dizziness, insomnia, and unexplainable fatigue.
7. Reduce the hurry and worry. Stress is the natural byproduct of trying to stuff a round peg in a square hole.
8. Do only what you can reasonably do in the time and with the resources available to you.
9. Communicate with those to whom you relate by informing them of your changing commitments and priorities.
10. Avoid guilt trips and being “should upon.”

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Greve, V., & Fox, J. (2001). Managing effective volunteer teams. University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension 4-H Youth Development.



Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

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