



How to Avoid Burnout

By Tim Brown

Burnout is a word that has become more and more common over the past several years. A lot of that is due to a lifestyle with lots of stress and busyness. If you're not careful, burnout can creep into ministry, even puppet ministry. It usually shows up when things have fallen into a predictable routine and mediocrity sets in. In this article, I'd like to address some things that will help you avoid burnout.

Stress is often considered to be a large factor in burnout, but I tend to disagree. Stress is actually helpful and needed in our lives. For example muscles don't grow without stress. To build muscle, you need to stress the muscles by pushing them and working them out in a systematic way. That stress is helpful and is in fact needed.

So, stress is not the problem in our lives—distress is the problem. Distress comes from handling stress the wrong way. When stress hits and you turn inward and begin to complain or feel sorry for yourself or focus on the problem it can quickly lead to burnout.

On the other hand, if you look at the problem (whatever is causing the stress) in a positive light and focus on a solution, it can actually become a stepping stone to take you to a better position.

Passion is one of the first of three key ingredients for avoiding or defeating burnout. When you are passionate about something, that passion stirs you on and helps you to confront and overcome problems. When you're passionate about something, problems or obstacles become a challenge and you tend to look for creative ways to overcome them.

Passion can help overcome criticism, fatigue, lack of help, and many other things that tend to contribute to burnout. The question then becomes, "How can I keep (or regain) a high level of passion about puppets?" The answer is in the second key ingredient—purpose.

What I've noticed is that when people burnout, they are focusing on themselves and the difficulties they face and the obstacles they have to overcome. When you center in on yourself, you lose focus on the purpose behind what you're doing.

Why did you get into puppetry in the first place? What do you want to use puppetry to accomplish in your life and in the lives of others? Can you look back at lives that have been touched because you ministered to them with puppets? What can you do to raise the level of your puppetry that will allow you to impact more lives?

Take time to think through the answers to these questions and ones that spawn off of them. If you do, most likely you are going to get a renewed sense of purpose that will fight off burnout or help restore the passion you had when just getting started.

That leads to the third key ingredient—vision. A definition of vision I heard recently caught my attention. Vision is the ability to anticipate and make provision for future events. Another definition is that vision is seeing the invisible and making it visible. What is your vision for your individual puppetry experience? What is your team's vision? Where do you see yourself and your team in three to five years? What dreams do you have for your puppet experience?

The Bible tells us that without vision, the people perish. Many times, burnout hits because we've lost sight of the vision of what we want our puppetry to accomplish. Sometimes we listen to others who try to steal or kill our dream. I heard someone say once that if you tell someone your dream or vision and they don't laugh then it isn't big enough.

What size is your vision? Is it clear? Are you focused on it and not allowing other things to sidetrack you? Are you looking for ways to accomplish your vision or are you just hoping that it will somehow unfold by itself? Do you communicate your vision to the right people, the ones that can come alongside you and help you carry it out? What problems are you facing and what steps can you take to overcome them?

Challenge yourself or your team to seriously think through and answer the questions in this article. It's a great idea as a team to review your vision and purpose on a regular basis to make sure you're staying on track.

Schedule times for vision building and casting. Get together as a team and dream. Dream about where you want to go with your puppets, what you want to accomplish, who you want to help, etc. Then begin to brainstorm ideas on how to accomplish that vision. Seek to add variety to your team and ministry so you don't fall into the mediocrity rut.

Hopefully you noticed that if you answer the questions, you're not focusing on the negative or on the problems, but on the solutions and the possibilities. When you begin thinking that way, you are properly handling the stress in your life and instead of causing distress you can actually begin to soar.