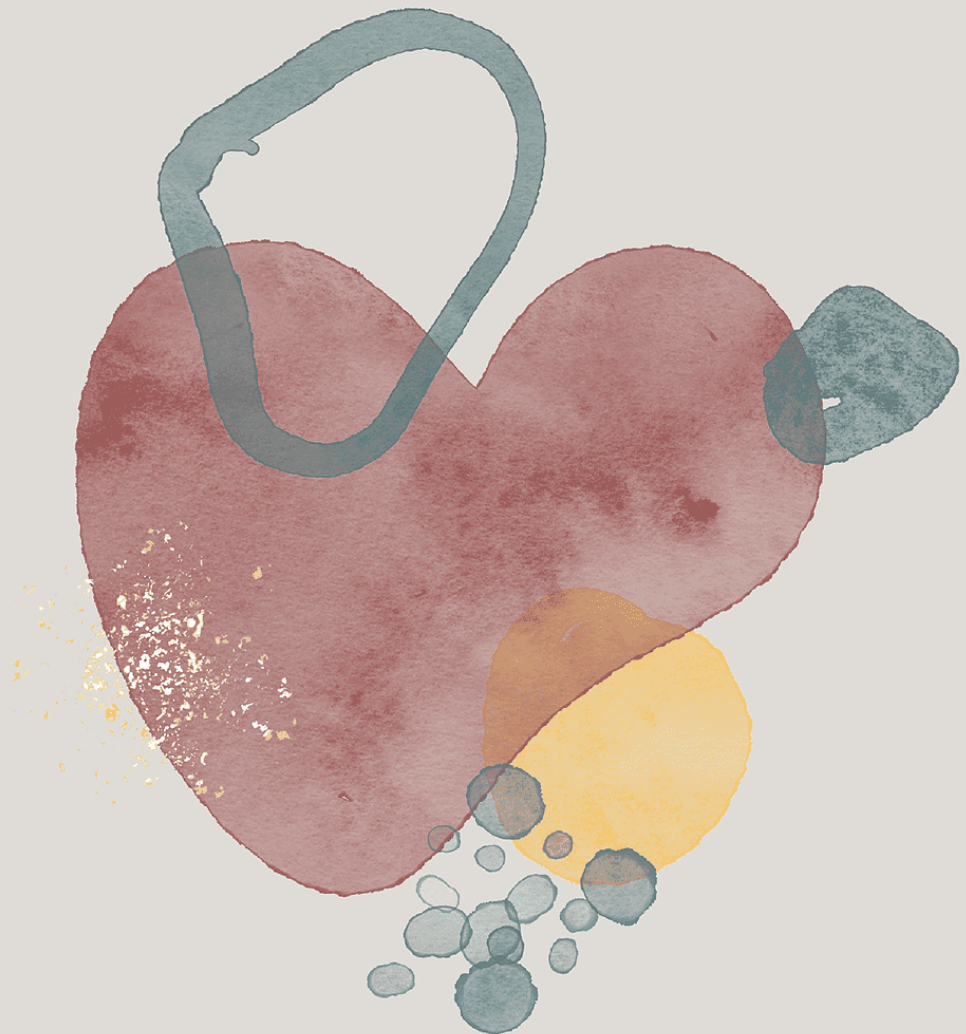# RESILIENCE: INTERCEPTING BURNOUT IN NONPROFIT WORK

PREPARED FOR

Katherine Russell

TJS

Transformative
Justice Solutions

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Working in the nonprofit space can demand our entire selves. We are often short-staffed, light on resources, and simultaneously dealing with a challenging social and political climate outside of work. The demands of the job can take so much from us that we are left physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted.

As a result of "burnout," we can experience a lack of motivation to do even the most basic tasks, extreme exhaustion, intense feelings of negativity toward work or life in general, and depression. Once burnout sets in, it is very difficult to reverse.

Your assessment was designed around extensive research on burnout and has been vetted by psychology experts with a trauma-informed and culturally-responsive lens. Its purpose is to respond to your answers with recommendations on building resilience and making positive adjustments to intercept the underlying causes of burnout.

This report has taken your responses and generated insights to help you build your knowledge and skillset around resilience. While some factors might be in the hands of leadership – for instance, organizational practices – this report will demonstrate that there are many practices within your power to reinforce your spirit in this work.

The assessment you just completed reflects 5 areas of burnout resilience:

- Boundaries
- Personal Gratification
- Autonomy & Control
- Community
- Organizational Support

If you rated strong on certain categories, you will have fewer recommendations than in categories where the assessment has identified a higher need.

CONFIDENTIALITY

This report was created and is administered by Transformative Justice Solutions (TJS) and is not affiliated with your organization. Even if TJS has been hired to consult around the report's findings, your organization will *not* have access to our raw data. Staff results will be presented to management in aggregate data as we advise the organization. We will never share your individual responses, with or without your name or other identifiers, with others in your organization. Honesty is integral for this report to be the most effective; however, we understand the discomfort and anxiety that is often associated with providing your employer with feedback about your work life. This is why your trust and confidentiality are of the utmost importance to us.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BUILD **BURNOUT RESILIENCE?**

BURNOUT IS...

Burnout is a state of extreme exhaustion and demotivation after prolonged stress. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of workers reporting burnout skyrocketed – in fact, a global survey in late 2022 indicated that 40-50 percent of the global workforce reports feeling burned out. For those working in social justice, political and social challenges have become even greater in the past few years, and the risk of burnout is even higher.

RESILIENCE IS...

Resilience is our ability to endure difficult times without breaking down mentally, emotionally, socially, or physically. While there are many external factors we cannot control, we can build resilience within ourselves, our communities, and our organizations to help us intercept burnout before it is pervasive. "Burnout resilience" involves a set of skills and practices that allows social justice workers to intercept and prevent burnout before it sets in.

BURNOUT LEVELS

13

Your Current
Capacity
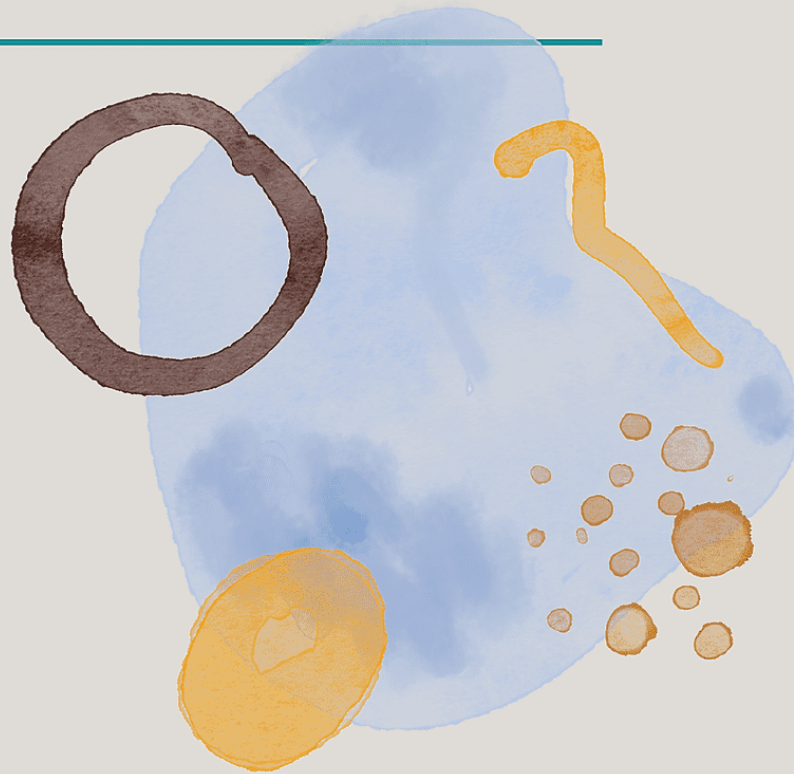
At the start of your assessment, you selected your signs of burnout, resulting in your score reflected above. This number is a sum of your responses and can be an important indicator of how much strain you are experiencing. Remember, this number is a snapshot in time. It is not a diagnosis, but rather a tool to help you reflect on your current state of wellbeing.

Score Indicators

12+: Little Concern - You don't appear to be approaching burnout. This report will be useful in highlighting your resilience skills so that you can continue to hone and care for them.

8-11: Mild Concern - You are exhibiting some signs of burnout and may need to tend the underlying causes before they worsen. This report will help you identify some of the areas that lead to burnout as well as skills that can help build your resilience.

3-7: Moderate Concern - You are experiencing multiple signs of burnout, and it is time to make important changes before you hit a point of no return. Once burnout sets in, people find it very difficult to reset. We hope this report can offer some guidance in changing course and identifying what you need for better work/life balance.

0-2: Severe Concern - You are experiencing burnout. This report will help you identify skills and strategies to help you recover; however, it might also be time to seek outside help to address the symptoms you are experiencing.

TRAUMATIC STRESS & BEYOND

Your assessment indicates a **moderate** risk score for work-related traumatic stress. This means you are sometimes subject to exposure to traumatic events throughout your regular workday. It is important to monitor how these exposures affect you and to create a conscious effort around recovering from them.

It's important to consider traumatic stress that occurs at work, such as witnessing violence, taking care of someone who has experienced extreme abuse, and beyond. Even if we are trained to handle these specific scenarios, encountering them frequently can play a big role in burnout. We need to intentionally design our self care and recovery with these experiences in mind.

Additional Definitions to Explore

Two other terms that are often woven into our discussion of burnout are compassion fatigue and moral injury. While these concepts can all be interconnected, when we talk about "burnout," we are distinguishing it from these other experiences listed below.

Burnout

"Physical, emotional or mental exhaustion, accompanied by decreased motivation, lowered performance and negative attitudes towards oneself and others. It results from performing at a high level until stress and tension, especially from extreme and prolonged physical or mental exertion or an overburdening workload, take their toll."

-American Psychological Association

Compassion Fatigue or Secondary Traumatic Stress

"The burnout and stress-related symptoms experienced by caregivers and other helping professionals in reaction to working with traumatized people over an extended period of time."

- American Psychological Association

Workplace Moral Injury

"Moral injury is experienced as a trauma response to witnessing or participating in workplace behaviors that contradict one's moral beliefs in high-stakes situations and that have the potential of harming others physically, psychologically, socially, or economically."
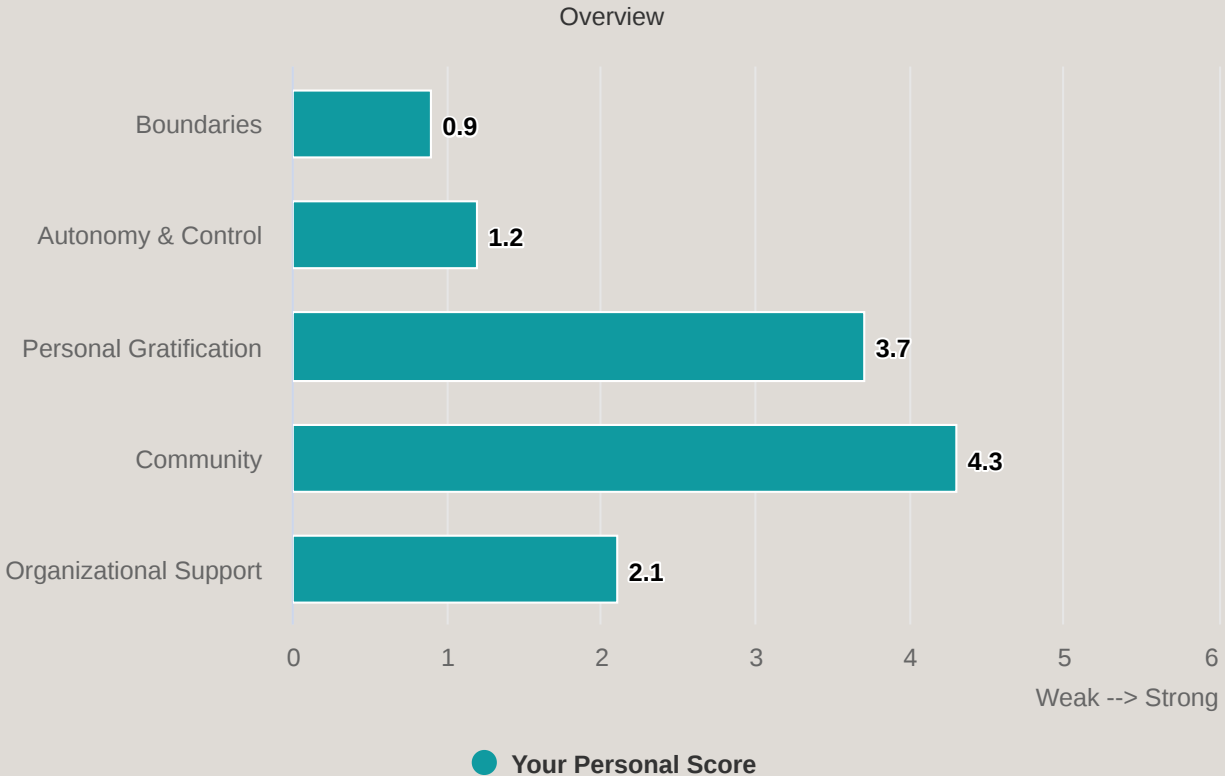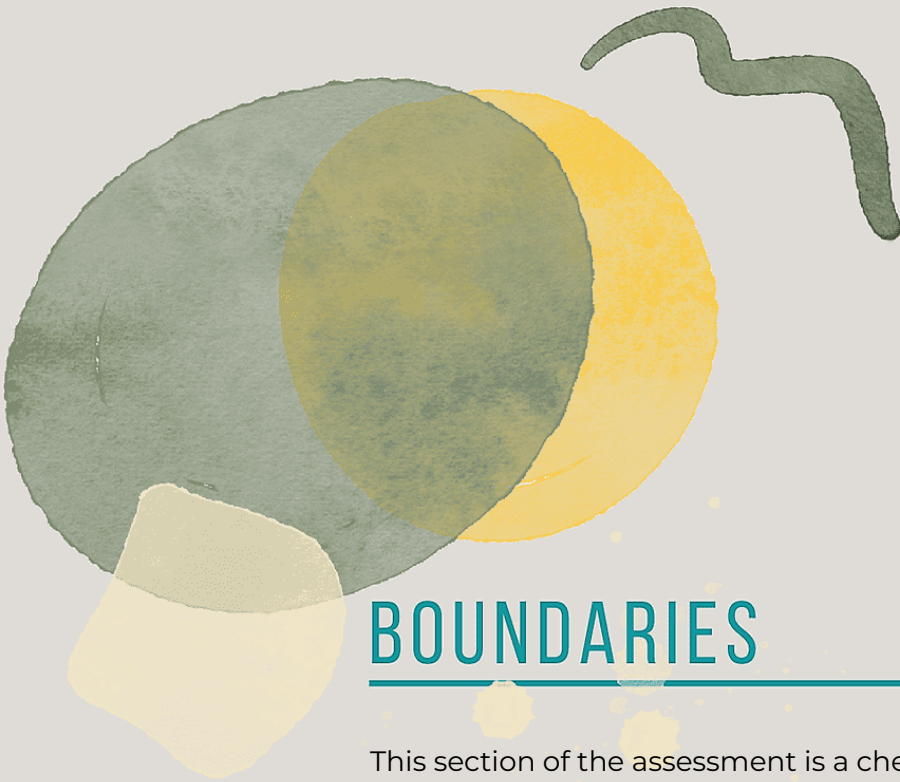
- Carucci & Prasnova

RESILIENCE SCORES OVERVIEW

The assessment you just completed reflects 5 areas of burnout resilience skills. Scores are compiled by averaging responses to relevant questions. Your report recommendations will be broken into 3 categories based on the following ranges:

- **Low** (Needs urgent attention): 0 - 1.9
- **Medium** (Consider strengthening): 2 - 4.4
- **High** (Strong skillset): 4.5 - 6.0

Overview

Category	Score
Boundaries	0.9
Autonomy & Control	1.2
Personal Gratification	3.7
Community	4.3
Organizational Support	2.1

Weak --> Strong

● **Your Personal Score**

BOUNDARIES

This section of the assessment is a check-in on your boundary health.

Boundaries are personal limits we communicate to others and reinforce through our actions. Boundaries are not about other people; they are about you. Your boundaries can be rigid, porous, or fluid. Someone with fluid boundaries can navigate between rigid and porous boundaries based on changing context or circumstances.

How you respond when someone disregards your boundaries will either reinforce them or weaken them. If we don't communicate our boundaries and we fail to uphold them when they are violated, they don't actually exist.

Your Boundaries Score

0
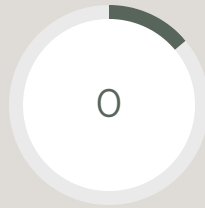
Total Score

<u>0.86</u>

out of 6

This score means you have porous boundaries at work and may take on more than one person can realistically handle while also having personal time to recharge. This can place you at a higher risk for burnout if you haven't already reached it. No matter how much joy and purpose you derive from your job, every speeding train wears out its brakes at some point. When we don't exercise our power to choose what we say yes to and what we say no to, we lose control of our schedule, our free time, our resources, and our energy to show up fully.

Recommendations

To familiarize yourself with the tenets of healthy boundary-setting, take a moment to review the [Ten Laws of Boundaries](#).

Consider journaling on "The Law of Motivation," found in the Ten Laws of Boundaries. Think about the last time you said yes to something at work that you actually wanted to say "no" to. What caused you to put your own needs on the back burner? Was any of it motivated by guilt, fear of rejection or anger, a desire for acceptance or to be seen as valuable, or the need to pay someone back for something they had done for you?

Remember, "no" is a complete sentence. Boundaries do not require apologies or explanations. However, if it is helpful, draft up a few statements you can remember to say when setting a boundary is difficult.

- To a colleague who is asking for a favor: "Right now I am too busy to take that on, but I hope I can be supportive when my schedule clears."
- To an overzealous boss: "In order to deliver the quality we want, I only have the time and resources to take on one of these projects."
- To a chatty coworker: "I have a few things I have to return to so I can wrap up my work for the day. It's always great catching up!"

If you're a more visual person, consider the "plate analogy." Assess how full your plate feels at the moment. Are you taking on more than is realistic for one person? Before you take on anything new in your work, home, and personal life, consider offloading something from your plate first. You could even consider clearing TWO projects or assignments for every new one you take on.

Your Boundaries Score Continued

Questions Up Close

On the question of whether you accept phone calls outside of work hours or during personal time, you answered Frequently.

This question is measuring whether you are setting boundaries through your actions. If you don't wish to be contacted during personal time, not only do you have to proactively communicate that boundary to your colleagues, but you also have to reinforce it with action. That means not responding or answering when people reach out during personal time; you stated you would be unreachable, so naturally you should be.

On the question of whether the organization would come to a halt if you needed to take care of a personal emergency, you answered "It would be a serious struggle, and people would still try to get ahold of me."

No organization should rest on one individual's shoulders. It doesn't matter if that person is the Executive Director or the COO – if the business is unable to run without their constant presence, something is amiss: staff may not feel empowered to step into new responsibilities, there is little ownership of tasks (often a result of micromanagement), and/or there is a fear of "doing things wrong." Alternatively, the fear that "things will fall apart" can also be a manager's own flawed belief – it can be a self-fulfilling myth that makes it difficult for them to relinquish control. If you feel that the organization might fall apart if you need to disconnect, it is important to step back and ask yourself whether you might be creating those conditions.

Further Exploration

- Book: *Boundaries for Leaders*, by Dr. Henry Cloud
- Book: *Set Boundaries: Find Peace* by Nedra Glover Tawwab
- Article: "[Beat Generosity Burnout,](#)" by Adam Grant and Rob Rebele
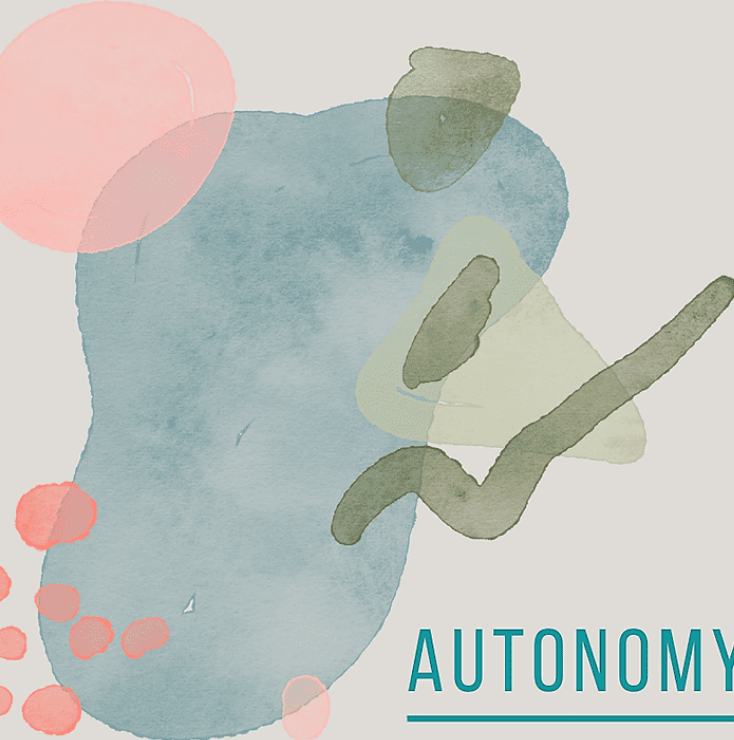
AUTONOMY & CONTROL

Autonomy and control is about your freedom to decide how, where, and when you do your work. A high score in this category could mean you set your own schedule; you have the mental space to think creatively; you are able to make certain decisions without a lot of red tape; and you have the freedom to decide how you work.

A series of 2016 studies published by Will Crescioni *et al.*found that belief in free will is "a stronger predictor of life satisfaction, meaning in life, gratitude, and self-efficacy." It is no far leap, then, to say free will within a work context can carry a lot of weight in the feelings of fulfillment and gratification you garner from your job.

The question is: in your work context, *do you feel that you have some semblance of control in setting and maintaining your work goals, environment, and daily activities?*

This section is intrinsically tied to Boundaries, and it is also a matter of self-care. While engaged in your work, are you still preserving a sense of yourself, your autonomy, and your control to make choices around your values and character?

> Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.
>
> AUDRE LORDE

Your Autonomy & Control Score

The assessment measured your sense of autonomy and control through several questions. Your score was **low**.

You indicated that you are Strongly Disagree around saying "no" to a new project when you feel overwhelmed or you don't have capacity to take on more work. This is an understandable discomfort to have – often we say yes in order to keep supervisors happy, to maintain a sense of peace, out of obligation to "the cause" or to clients, or because we fear what will happen if we say no. Unfortunately, taking on more than we have capacity for comes at the expense of the services offered, the quality of the deliverables, meeting deadlines, and keeping promises to coworkers. It can breed an overall tense and stressful environment in the organization and leave colleagues (and ourselves) feeling resentful, unheard, or undervalued.

Let's discuss what it looks like to hone this skill. There are a few things you can practice *right now* that can immediately give you a better sense of freedom.

- Evaluate why it is difficult for you to set boundaries. We often want to be agreeable, and when we say "no," we fear we will be perceived as difficult. Other times, we worry that saying no will cut us out of other opportunities. Whatever your reasons, bring awareness to them. When you understand your emotional motivations around boundary setting, you can find productive ways to navigate those underlying emotions without letting them trap you or dictate your actions.
- Get comfortable with saying "no." The word NO is one of our first exercises in autonomy and control in life. As young children, we learn that "no" gives us power to choose – *no* to the broccoli, *no* to going to bed, *no* to brushing our teeth. As adults, we lose touch with this assertiveness, and many of us learn to ignore what *we* want or need in order to fit social norms. Often people who struggle with their own boundaries have difficulty hearing "no," but you either have to get comfortable with *their* discomfort, or you have to get comfortable with losing your autonomy. Note that there are a lot of ways to say "no" in a professional setting – you might propose alternatives; compassionately explain why you can't say yes; and avoid making false promises or beating around the bush.
  - Recommendation for Further Learning:
    - Is it difficult to hear "no"? Consider learning about [Rejection Therapy](#) by Jia Jiang, or taking the "Rejection Resilience" assessment on their website.
    - *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz can help us manage our expectations around others' responses to what we do/say in realizing that their perception is based on their experiences.
- Stop self-imposing new stressors. If you find yourself making promises that no one asked you to make; volunteering for tasks you don't have capacity for; creating deadlines that you know you can't meet – all you have to do is reel yourself in. Begin with saying less. You are in this work likely because you enjoy helping people and fixing problems, so naturally you put yourself forward when you see gaps that you can fill. However, it's important to sharpen your discernment of when your skills are truly needed and when you should give yourself much-needed space to focus on your current projects. When you want to sacrifice yourself for something, practice counting to ten before making the decision to commit. This first allows you to examine your impulse to be the fixer, and it allows others in your space to step up as well.

Your Autonomy & Control Continued

You indicated that you **Sometimes Agree, Sometimes Disagree** with the statement that you *have the flexibility in your schedule to take care of personal needs (doctor appointments, child needs, personal calls).* This question ties back to self-care: Are you getting the space you need to determine when and where to work, allowing you space to engage in proper self-care?

Some people misconstrue "self-care" as something we do to decompress. While decompression is important – such as taking a vacation or getting a massage – self-care should be a daily practice in order to avoid burnout. This includes carving out time to:

- take care of your medical and health needs; exercise
- get ahead of problems before they get big – i.e. getting your car's oil changed
- have fun with your family
- plan your meals so you eat well during and after the workday
- connect with your coworkers on a human level, not just about work
- practice kindness and patience with yourself without the expectation of perfection

Lastly, you indicated that you **Strongly Disagree** with the statement that *change in your workplace feels controlled and managed.* Turnover in nonprofits can be high, and this can certainly lead to feelings of disorganization, detachment, and disinvestment, all of which can contribute to burnout. While you may not be able to change the way your organization is running, there are some things you can do to manage these changes:

- Encourage your organization to strengthen its transition plans, such as: creating protocols around introducing and onboarding new staff, notifications around the departure of staff, and a communications for rolling out new projects.
- Create rituals that help colleagues (and yourself) process change. For instance, "sendoff" parties when a coworker leaves or an open-door office 'tea' at the end of every Thursday where staff can air their anxieties about the change.
  - "It isn't the changes that do you in; it's the transitions. Change is not the same as transition. Change is situational: the new sire, the new boss, the new team roles, the new policy. Transition is the psychological process people go through to come to terms with the new situation. Change is external; transition is internal." – William Bridges, *Transitions*
- Root yourself in the things you do have control over. Make a list of what exists in your workplace where you can feel calm, certainty, and order. Nothing is ever guaranteed or permanent, but the perspective you choose – the positives you draw your awareness toward – can make a world of difference.
- Utilize the 50/10 Rule: for every 50 minutes of working, take 10 minutes to rest/reset/recover. In your 10 minutes, you could practice a basic self-care activity including mindfulness, movement/exercise, stretching, or socializing.
- Embrace uncertainty. The more you accept that uncertainty exists in your daily reality, the easier it will become to navigate ambiguity, unpredictability, and new experiences. If uncertainty makes you very uncomfortable, reflect on the things in life you don't have control over. Work on opening your mindset with a few mantras:
  - *Challenges are good for me as I build my professional skills.*
  - *Trying new things can open up great opportunities.*
  - *"Tolerance" is a muscle that I am building.*
  - *I can experience changes with curiosity rather than resistance.*
  - *I have the skills to manage what comes my way.*

Your Autonomy & Control Continued

Further Exploration

- Book: *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz
- Article: [Dealing with a micromanager](#)
- Article:[Assertiveness in the workplace](#)
- Article: [Negotiating your autonomy](#)
- Article: [Learning to embrace uncertainty](#)

PERSONAL GRATIFICATION

This section covers your personal gratification in your work and how this interacts with resilience and burnout.

Martin Seligman, coined "The Father of Positive Psychology," developed the "Three P's of Optimism." Your score is based on these Three P's: **Personalization, Pervasiveness, and Permanence**. When we understand these concepts, we can begin to develop habits that feed positive thinking over the all-too-common feelings of helplessness and hopelessness that can come with this work.

Your personal gratification score, 3.67 out of 6, is calculated from your Personalization, Pervasiveness, and Permanence scores, which we will break down in the next several pages.

> The happiest people according to all the best studies have a balanced portfolio. You need to balance your life portfolio between four things: the transcendental, which is to say the spiritual things bigger than you; your family; your community, which is your service and your friendships; and earning your success through meaningful work that creates value.
>
> ARTHUR BROOKS

Personalization

The concept of Personalization is about how we process challenges and failures. For many of us, this work is personal. We come to it with our own stories and our own understanding of why it is so important. And when we are dealing with human lives, there is urgency and emotion attached to our outputs.

But just because this work is personal does not mean we have sole responsibility for it. When we personalize what happens in our jobs, we take on responsibilities and guilt that aren't ours to hold. We believe that failures in work or in the broader movement are a signal that there is something wrong or ineffective about *us*, or that there is something deficient in our skills, character, or inherent value.

On your assessment, you rated Low on Personalization. This indicates you may feel there is a strong correlation between how you perform at work and what you believe makes you valuable as a person. We recommend taking a look at your internal dialogue to address this.

Challenge Core Beliefs

Core beliefs are internalized attitudes that shape our perception and worldview. Destructive or unconstructive core beliefs can disintegrate your sense of self and your feelings of worth. In a work context, this can make it increasingly difficult to receive feedback, accept change, or handle events when they don't go as planned. In a social justice context, destructive core beliefs can hinder our effectiveness by assigning power and influence to factors that don't necessarily deserve it.

While challenging core beliefs can be a great exercise to tackle with a therapist, you can get started by developing a practice of self-awareness around the stories you are telling yourself about perceived failures. Whenever you start feeling defensive, angry at yourself, fearful for your future, or helpless and ineffective, recognize these feelings as cues to something deeper you are telling yourself about failure. Do any of these core beliefs cross your mind? If so, bring your awareness to them and continue to work on revising them.

Core Belief	Revised
If I fail, I am no longer useful.	I still have inherent value as a human being.
If I fail, I have wasted the past __ months/years of my life.	I'll have learned from the experience, and I know that sometimes the impact of this work is not always immediately visible.
If I fail, my colleagues will judge me.	I can be certain that others around me have felt the same feeling of failure before, and I can demonstrate that it's okay to embrace this process.
If I fail, it will damage the organization's reputation.	I can't control how others perceive the organization, but I can trust my own perspective on how this project/event/initiative unfolded.

Personalization Continued

<u>Learn about Radical Compassion.</u>

How can compassion be "radical"? [An excerpt from an interview with Tara Brach with Victoria Dawson (2019)]

What I call "radical compassion" is a mature, fully evolved expression of compassion, grounded in an embodied, mindful presence. There's a movement to help, and it's all-inclusive. That is, it's not feeling compassion for one person but then being completely shut off, for example, from a politician whose policies or ideology I disapprove of. Radical compassion is an all-embracing tenderness.

There's a teaching that's very relevant to me: Somebody goes in the woods and sees a little dog and they go over to pet the dog and the dog lunges at them with its fangs bared. Instead of feeling friendly, the person pulls away into anger. But then the person sees that the dog's leg is caught in a trap. As soon as they see it, everything shifts. It's like, oh, you poor thing. Now, they don't get close again because the dog still could bite them, but their heart is relating differently...

... I encounter the same old challenges of judging myself and getting anxious about things and so on. I used to get stuck in a grim or hurting or reactive place for days; now it's minutes or an hour before I realize what's going on. The grip is not as great. I don't believe my thoughts and when I'm stuck, there's a natural turning toward presence and compassion ...The more you glimpse who you are beyond the story, the more you trust it.

Further Exploration

- Article: [RAIN of self compassion](#)
- Listen: [RAIN Meditation](#)

Pervasiveness

The belief of "Pervasiveness" is that if one thing goes wrong, it will affect all areas of our life. A criticism from a boss or colleague might sit in our chests, and then when we go home, we might be more sensitive to a criticism from our significant other, leading to an argument that then throws our home life off-kilter. We've all heard the expression, "When it rains, it pours." A lot of times, when one thing goes wrong in our lives, we start to notice where everything else is going wrong.

In reality, often our belief that "everything is going wrong" is an issue with perception. When we experience something negative, we might simply start focusing on the negatives of every corner of our lives. Another expression may come to mind here: "What we focus on magnifies."

Your resilience depends on your ability to maintain perspective in these scenarios. This doesn't mean you have to be unrealistically chipper about what you are going through; instead, it means you can observe the unpleasantness without letting it obstruct your experience of the things in life that are still going *right*.

You rated High in your Pervasiveness score. A high rating may indicate that you likely have healthy ways of compartmentalizing negative experiences without letting them take over how you see the world and your life as a whole. You may even have the capacity to help others around you learn this skill, particularly by redirecting gossip or checking in on a coworker who is having a hard time.

Permanence

Permanence is the belief that a problem or state of negativity will last forever. Optimists look at challenges, difficult emotions, and unpleasant experiences as temporary: emotions will pass, tension will get resolved, and difficult projects will eventually wrap up. Embracing this mindset guards you from feelings of despair and hopelessness that can come when problems feel permanent.

Avoiding the Permanence Mindset is about understanding the struggle will either come to an end, evolve in new ways, and/or introduce new problem-solvers. With certainty, even if the problem itself does not improve, *you* will evolve in new ways, allowing you a perspective on the problem that can only be achieved with the passage of time.

It is also worth noting that persistent states of stress can contribute to this permanence mindset. Of course, problems will feel permanent if we aren't designing new ways to navigate persistently high levels of stress in our work. This means we either need to develop stronger methods of self-care, find new approaches to our work, or change our boundaries. If you find yourself managing a persistent state of stress, this is an opportunity to reinforce some skills previously discussed in this report.

Permanence Continued

On your assessment, you rated Medium on your feelings of permanence. A medium rating may indicate that you are reaching a point of frustration with persistent problems in this work or in other areas of your life. How might you intervene with this frustration?

Recommendations

- **Observe Change**: Put yourself in a position where you can observe the impact your organization is having. If your personal job involves a lot of computer work rather than client-facing work, you might not get the opportunity to observe such impact. See if you are able to volunteer for another team's event, or if you happen to be more on the advocacy side, find time to volunteer with an organization that does more direct service work. It may seem odd to pile on work when you are approaching burnout, but studies have shown that hands-on volunteering where you can observe the direct interaction of giving can actually help mitigate feelings of burnout.
- **Take a Break**: Alternatively, if you are in a position where you are constantly working to resolve others' problems, and you may be coming up against feelings of frustration with systemic barriers or even bureaucratic issues within your own organization, it may be important to take an emotional step back. This involves taking a moment to pause and assess your current investment in the problems you are solving: Are you taking on more responsibility than your client for resolving their problems? Are you valuing client autonomy and personhood, understanding where they have the ability to take action on their own? Are you over-promising your time and resources out of guilt, over-identification, or sympathy?
- **Address Your Work Supports**: Everyone gets frustrated with their coworkers. A large part is that our perspective on their work can be very limited; we see how much work we do every day, but we aren't necessarily observing what our colleagues' days look like minute by minute. Nonetheless, it is true that others can let us down, shirk responsibilities, and break our trust. Are you communicating to others on your team when they have let you down or become unreliable? Or are you holding it inside in order to avoid conflict?
- **Break the Pattern**: Take a moment to step out of the norm. If problems seem persistent, do something to change the monotony of the problem. Interestingly, this tactic can work even if you aren't doing something directly related to the problem. For instance, let's say you organize a weekly lunchtime walk with colleagues: once a week, you leave cell phones and emails behind and take a half hour walk around the block. Doing something out of the ordinary can remind your brain that our schedules are pliable; we aren't always at the mercy of our work.

Further Exploration

- Book: *Difficult Conversations: How Discuss What Matters Most* by Stone & Patton
- Article: [Protect Your Brain from Stress](#)
- Toolkit: [DEAR MAN Approach](#)
- Toolkit: [FAST Skill](#)
- Video: Understanding [DEAR MAN Skills](#)
- Book: *Wellbeing: The Five Essential Elements* by Tom Rath & Jim Harter
- Book: *Wellbeing at Work: How to Build Resilient and Thriving Teams* by Jim Clifton & Jim Harter

COMMUNITY

This section takes a look at the community you have built around you.

If you have ever felt helpless or hopeless while working in nonprofit, in particular social justice advocacy or direct service, you are not alone. Changing the world (or our community, or simply one life) is difficult, relentless work, and sometimes our successes are clear, while other times our effort can feel futile. When we feel this way, our greatest tool is community. Social justice demands that we work in community; similarly, we also should have the ability to heal and build resilience in community.

A quick note on the definition of *Community*. Just like the concept of "family," the word "community" can evoke different emotions and associations within us – some positive, some complicated, and some problematic or difficult. We all hold our own definitions and values in what it means to build community. For the purposes of this report, we are referring to "community" as people and the places they occupy; community is ultimately a sense of belonging among others and within the spaces we inhabit.

> When we give love, when we receive love, we feel replenished, we feel empowered and we're able to do more, to be more, for those around us.
>
> DR. VIVEK H. MURTHY

Your score indicated you have *some* community, but there is room to grow. On the next page, we'll look at how we arrived at that answer and how you can strengthen your support within the workplace and outside of it.

Workplace Community

Whether you are building relationships in your workplace or in the broader movement, this community is a critical piece of strengthening your resilience. Anyone working in social justice needs like-minded individuals to reinforce the value of their work; decompress after navigating a crisis; troubleshoot and bounce ideas off; share in the joy and excitement of progress; commiserate in the challenges; or simply to vent. We need spaces where our emotions and our minds can recover – and fellow social justice advocates can help provide a safe, nonjudgmental, and relatable space for that.

Your answers indicated that you are experiencing some sense of community with your coworkers. You have likely built a baseline relationship and sense of trust with them. You have the power to make incremental changes to strengthen this. This score may also be impacted by whether you answered positively to getting pulled into office gossip. While gossip can sometimes build a bond with coworkers, it's typically artificial. Gossip becomes toxic when it causes people to fixate on the negatives, ostracize others, and create a sense of exclusivity in the work environment. It also has the effect of fostering distrust with the person you are gossiping with; how you speak about others and guard their information reveals your integrity, discretion, and trustworthiness.

We know how to connect,
and we long for it.

ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN

Personal Community

Your answers to questions about your supports _outside_ of work indicate you have strong community. It is important to have people who can pull you out of your work life, especially when it is consuming you. Finding people who validate your personhood and _who you are outside of work_ is an important part of renewing your energy and reinforcing your self-worth. Building your outside support system is a critical item to consistently commit time and energy toward.

Recommendations

- **Find people who appreciate the way you think.** We don't necessarily need to surround ourselves with people who think the same way as us or who always agree with our ideas or opinions. Rather, we need our social supports to be willing to listen and understand where we are coming from, respect our minds, and allow us to be our authentic selves.
- **Find people who share your values.** We create safe spaces by surrounding ourselves with friends who don't threaten our intrinsic values. Our friends should root for our success, and it helps when they can talk deeply about the issues we care about. When we celebrate our values with others, we multiply our sense of power, influence, and capacity to manage the factors that threaten our values.
- **Also find people who don't want to talk about work!** People outside of our social justice circles can also help replenish our energy and wholeness. Picking up an activity or hobby where you can talk about _anything but work_ will help keep you from burning out.
- **Get to know yourself.** If you want to find people you like being around, first figure out what _you_ like. Your hobbies and interests can lead you to people you enjoy spending time with.
- **Build your sense of community at work.** Don't discount the importance of socializing at work and allowing yourself to be open about your life, within professional boundaries. While there is a lot to be done at work, building relationships with coworkers will make it easier to accomplish what you need to, lean on others for support, and foster an environment where you can have caring, honest conversations.

Further Exploration

- Speech: adrienne maree brown, [Emergence Speech](#)
- Book: _Black Magic: What Black Leaders Learned from Trauma and Triumph,_ by Chad Sanders
- Podcast: [Laverne Cox on Transgender Representation, Advocacy, and the Power of Love](#)
- Article: [5 Myths and Realities About Finding Your Tribe](#)

ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

This section takes a look at the organizational support you're receiving. While your organization's policies and practices aren't always in your control, we will provide some resources on negotiating difficult work environments and initiating change talk.

Organizations can have all the talent, passion, strategic planning, and funding – but they cannot meet their fundamental goals without a well-functioning internal culture. Organizational culture is about how people within a workplace interact, relate to, and support one another. It is set by policy, leadership, and individual example; it is present in every interaction in an organization. If a culture is chaotic, unsupportive, or worse yet, "toxic," staff become more consumed in responding to the dysfunction than in carrying out the work they sincerely want to do. This is a recipe for burnout.
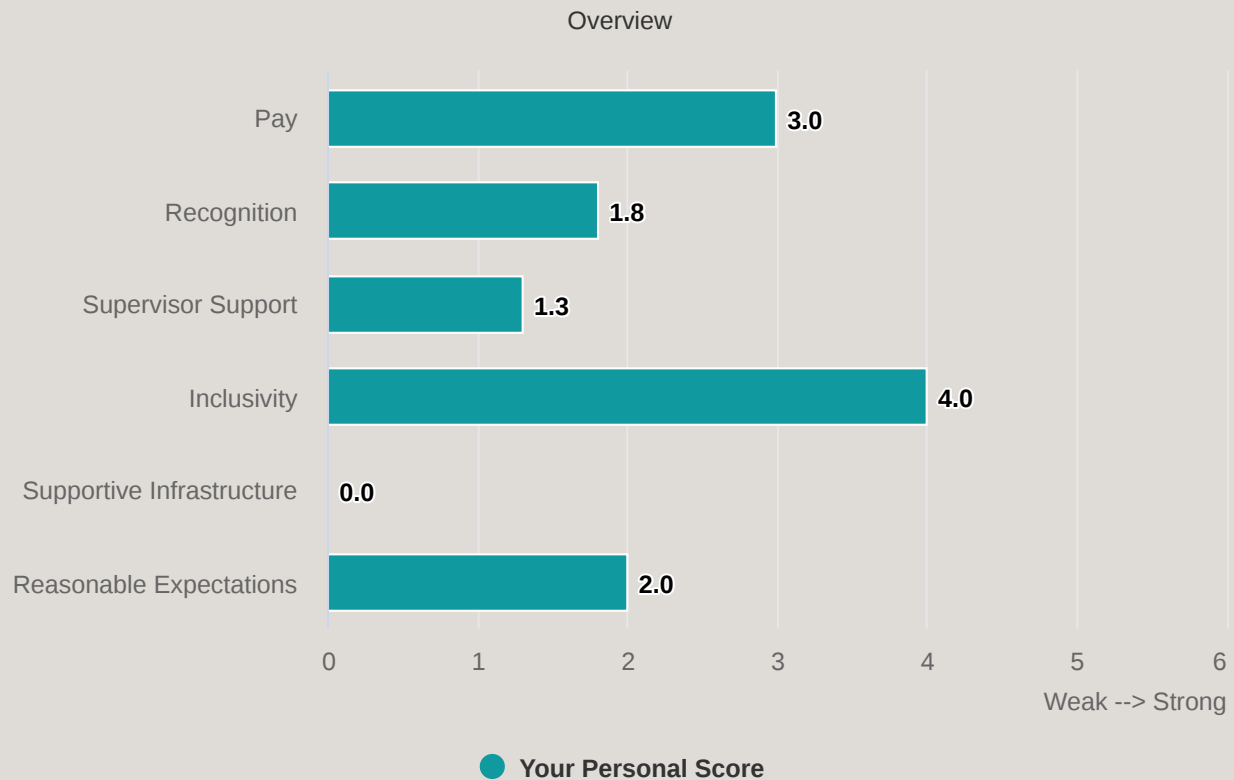
> Culture eats strategy for breakfast.
>
> PETER DRUCKER

The assessment measured your feelings around the organizational support you are receiving in regards to:

- Pay: work compensation fairness and livable wage
- Recognition: appreciation and timely feedback for the work you do
- Accessibility and supportiveness of supervisor: open-door policies and approachability
- Inclusivity in the workplace: receptive atmosphere toward diversity
- Supportive infrastructure: HR reporting procedures and helpful programs
- Reasonable expectations: acceptable work burden given the time/resources at your disposal

Overview

Category	Score
Pay	3.0
Recognition	1.8
Supervisor Support	1.3
Inclusivity	4.0
Supportive Infrastructure	0.0
Reasonable Expectations	2.0

Weak --> Strong

● **Your Personal Score**

There are a few important things for an organization to consider:

- **Do your practices match your stated beliefs?** For instance, an organization's handbook says they value creativity, but their top-down approach to program design silences the input of staff. Another organization publicly espouses transparency, but it does not have systems in place for employees to report problems without fear of backlash.
- **Does your workplace environment reflect your intended culture?** For instance, an organization states that it wants to be centered in teamwork, yet there are no comfortable places in the office to congregate as a group and people's office doors generally remain closed.
- **Is there alignment in organizational values?** For instance, at one organization, some managers might promote time off for mental health days because they believe people need intentional breaks for self-care, but other managers at the same organization don't believe this is necessary, creating a misalignment of "cultural norms" for the organization.

Organizational Support Continued

Developing a supportive workplace culture isn't necessarily about free lunches or puppy parties or massage gift cards – although these perks certainly have their place. A supportive organization, more importantly, **develops a culture that is built to weather the storm of social justice work.**

Recommendations

- **If you have concerns about fairness in your work, especially around pay and recognition:** Keep an accomplishments "log" to bring to your next performance review. Managers might not always notice what you are producing, or they might bring certain biases into your review, such as recency bias (looking at your most recent performance markers and not the full picture) or confirmation bias (seeking out evidence to confirm something they already believe). Keeping a log or a place where you compile your accomplishments, helps present a fuller picture and can help you negotiate your pay.
- **If you feel your supervisor is unsupportive in your development:** Consider seeking out a coach or mentor on your own terms. You can find a career mentor in your network, on social media, or even through an online service.
- We have listed some resources below around honing your negotiation skills to get what you need out of your workplace.

The Role You Play

While we often take a "top-down" view of organizational culture, placing the responsibility with leadership, everyone has a role to play in creating a supportive workplace. You don't have to wait on leadership to call colleagues together for a happy hour or a lunch, or to check on a coworker who is encountering a particularly challenging project. You make the choice to uplift or tear apart a colleague's idea; you make the choice to shut down gossip or engage in it; you make the choice to react with envy or celebration at a colleague's success; you make the choice to judge and make assumptions or to give grace and understanding. When you see potential and reasons to celebrate another person, you are actually seeing potential and reasons to celebrate *within the greater movement for social change.*

In her book *Emergent Strategy*, adrienne maree brown talks about how the choices we make in our daily interactions ultimately ripple out to the larger movement. For instance, if we want restorative practice in the criminal justice system, we must also practice restorative justice in our personal lives. If we want to safeguard women's rights, we must also support the voices and root for the success of the women around us. If we want to dismantle racist structures, we must challenge the biases that live within all of us. The work starts within us. You are a part of building resilience in others and ultimately the social justice movement as a whole.

Further Exploration

- Toolkit: Mandi Money [Negotiation Scripts](#)
- Book: *Brown Ambition* by Tiffany Alice & Mandi Woodruff-Santos
- Book: *Negotiate Anything* by Kwame Christian Esq.
- Podcast: Episode of Think Fast, Talk Smart: [Communication Techniques – The Art of Negotiation](#)

REPORT SUMMARY: Review of Helpful Skills

- Set boundaries: Don't make promises you lack the capacity to deliver on.
- Delegate: Trust that others can share the workload.
- Manage your schedule: Block off time for your personal care, such as doctor visits, errands, therapy, or simply quiet hours to complete your tasks – and stick with it.
- Ask for what you need: Your work should not cause a chronic state of stress. If you cannot get the resources you need, then it is time to scale back on what you are promising to deliver.
- Avoid the unnecessary stressors: If outside factors such as social media or a toxic relationship are adding to your stress, it is time to re-evaluate committing your time to them.
- Practice self-care: Make time for the hobbies you love, for the activities that relax you, and for rituals with your loved ones.
- Understand what is and is not in your control. Grieve it if necessary (i.e.: sociopolitical climate which can directly affect the efficacy of your work and general progress). During planning sessions with your team, find actionable strategies you can use to counter things outside of your control.

**Transformative
Justice Solutions**

Thank you for your trust in our assessment.

If you have any questions, concerns, or feedback about this assessment or report, please reach out to us on our website at www.transformthework.com

If you would like to explore bringing this assessment and further consultation to your workplace, please send an email to katherine@transformthework.com

Transformative Justice Solutions is a Washington, D.C.-based company offering project development, training, and organizational support for social justice organizations. TJS holds particular expertise around raising up voices of people with lived experiences with incarceration, violence, and social or economic inequity.