



ACCUMULATED LOSS

The following are a few suggested ways to do some catch-up mourning for losses that have accumulated and grief that has settled in your bones over time.

If you are already burnt out, you need to pay special attention and help yourself as you would help another who is critically ill. (Burnout can be under conditions of chronic tension and stress) Recognize its presence and honor it.

- First, be honest and allow yourself to acknowledge the possibility of experiencing burnout from accumulated loss. Your avoidance of it does not make it disappear.
- Build awareness of what may be your patterns of avoidance and become aware of when you want to avoid your feelings. Some avoidance activities might be: excessive working, excessive shopping, excessive eating, excessive exercising or watching too much TV. Perhaps you numb yourself with alcohol, or other drugs of choice. Cleaning your house/office or doing other tasks that don't really matter might be other ways of avoidance.
- Turn off your self-critic and turn on your self-love. Notice yourself and your avoidance actions with compassion, without self-judgment and move consciously into a time of reclamation.
- Enlist the support of at least one person who cares about you and perhaps layer support into your life at home, at work and even your alone time. Use the routes of support at work (groups, memorial services for staff, buddy system debriefing)
- Recognize the stressors in your personal life that interweaves with work.
- Become aware and acknowledge the specific stresses that may be most troublesome in your work. (Younger patients, patients the same age as you, speaking with spouses or young children of patients, angry patients, etc.)
- Be very mindful of minimizing the stress. Denial is a powerful old goat. Take care of yourself now. Don't wait until you become seriously ill. Create a decompression routine for tough days.
- Take your vacations and days off and use them wisely for restoration. Develop an increased awareness of your needs.
- Forgive yourself, Remember, you are always doing your best you can with what you have. Fine-tune personal flag-indicators to signal weariness and help you remember your limits.
- Keep a life outside work. Keep a connection to life. Play with children, observe buds on plants, have a pet as a companion, take a walk by the water, in the forest, Feel sun on your face.



- Remember the gifts and lessons from the work. Capture them in your journal. Store them in your heart. Allow your heart to teach you about what is unfinished, what needs to be healed.

Gently adapted from “Thoughts on Living and Working with Repeated Loss” by Vicki Hollander