


A Journey from Exhaustion to Wholeness

THE WEARY LEADER'S GUIDE TO BURNOUT



SEAN NEMECEK

Foreword by Glenn Packiam

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

The Weary Leader's Guide to Burnout
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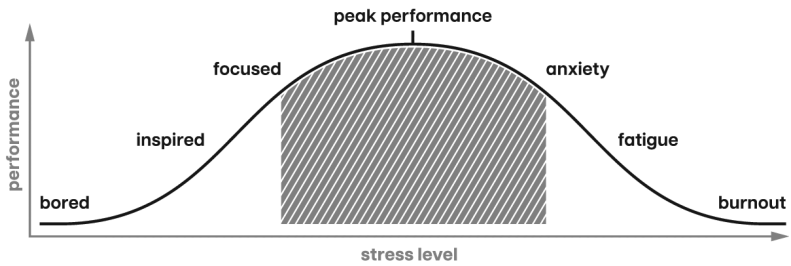
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STRESS AND BURNOUT

FIGURE 1

YERKES DODSON LAW



ENERGY AND RHYTHMS

FIGURE 2

WAVE RHYTHM

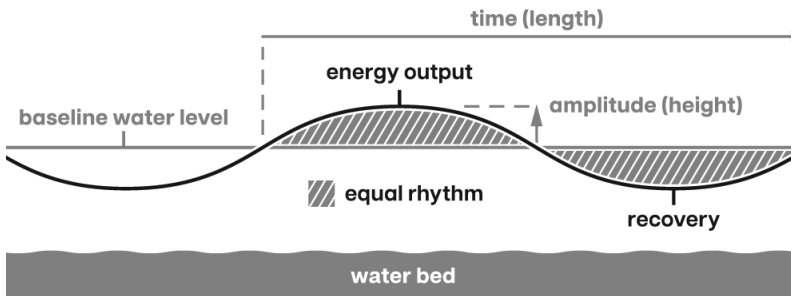
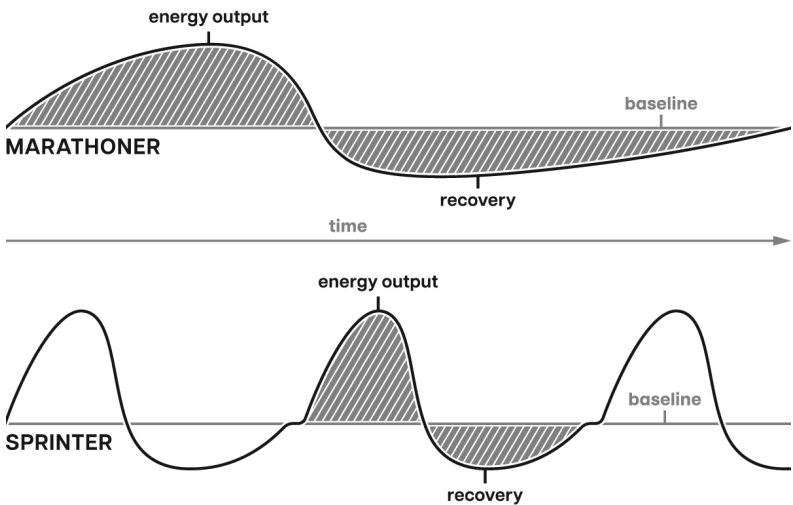


FIGURE 3

MARATHONER AND SPRINTER RHYTHM



NEVER BURN OUT AGAIN

PSALMS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF PAIN

| <i>Are you . . .</i> | <i>Read:</i> |
|--|-------------------|
| Sick? | Psalms 28 and 38 |
| Lonely or isolated? | Psalms 25 |
| Losing patience? | Psalms 35 and 79 |
| Feeling abandoned by God? | Psalms 12 |
| Suffering? | Psalms 69–71 |
| Seeking vengeance? | Psalms 137 |
| Being treated unjustly? | Psalms 43 and 109 |
| Desperate? | Psalms 80 |
| Afraid of death? | Psalms 26 |
| Feeling completely hopeless or forgetting God? | Psalms 88 |
| Grieving? | Psalms 55 |
| Experiencing guilt? | Psalms 51 |
| Anguished? | Psalms 6 |
| Confused? | Psalms 22 |
| Depressed? | Psalms 42 |
| Persecuted? | Psalms 3 |

APPENDIX 1

PLANNING YOUR SABBATH

Jewish families often use rituals to help them plan and prepare for the Sabbath. This guide is designed to help you discover your own rituals to make your Sabbath day the most life-giving day of the week. As you make the following lists, think about what leads you to wonder, worship, gratitude, laughter, and contentment. Approach your Sabbath playfully, not as a religious duty but as a gift from God for your own refreshment.

1. List some people who give life to your soul, people who love and appreciate you for who you are and not necessarily for what you do, people whose company you truly enjoy and who enjoy yours, people who do not drain your soul.
2. List some physical locations that help you be more aware of God's presence. These may be places of beauty, places associated with special memories, or new places you feel led to explore. If there is a cost involved with visiting these places, be sure to note that too.

3. List your favorite foods or drinks that bring joy to your soul or cause you to give thanks to God. (This principle comes from Deuteronomy 14:26.)
4. List some music that helps you worship God, that brings peace to your heart, or that makes you happy. (If it makes you want to dance, even better!)
5. List some playful activities. These are things you enjoy doing for the mere pleasure of doing them (e.g., games, sports, hobbies, dance, theater, movies).
6. List some restful activities that restore your spirit (e.g., naps, meditation, reading, journaling, mindfulness practices).
7. List some things that help you notice God's presence or that are beautiful to you (e.g., candles, campfires, scents, art, poetry).
8. List some spiritual disciplines that are meaningful to you or that you would like to try.

DEVELOP A SABBATH PLAN

Prayerfully look over your Sabbath lists. The following questions might be helpful in planning your next Sabbath day:

1. When will you practice your Sabbath? Decide what time this week you will set aside as your Sabbath. Set aside a full twenty-four-hour period, preferably starting before sundown (e.g., 7:00 p.m. Saturday to 7:00 p.m. Sunday). Try to include the whole family so you can all enjoy the same Sabbath day together. Plan your Sabbath for the same time every week.
2. What spiritual activities will you do to connect with God and to be more aware of his presence (e.g., worship, Bible

- reading, prayer, spiritual disciplines)? Be sure to plan these first as they are most important to the practice of Sabbath.
3. What activities that bring joy to your soul do you feel led to include?
 4. Plan a special meal with family or friends. This is a great way to start your Sabbath.
 5. What items of beauty will you use throughout your day to remind you of God's presence?
 6. Be sure to leave open spaces in your Sabbath day for silence, solitude, physical rest, or spontaneous fun.
 7. Decide what ritual you will use to signal the ending of the Sabbath.
 8. Schedule a time for planning next week's Sabbath.

THINGS TO AVOID ON THE SABBATH

The Sabbath is about ceasing from our productivity and receiving God's love and good gifts. So it's helpful to disconnect from the following things in order to focus on God:

- Work
- Electronic media (email, social media, TV)
- Productivity
- Attempts to control
- Perfection
- Aggressive activity
- Power
- Planning
- Judgment

THINGS THAT MIGHT SURFACE AS YOUR SOUL BEGINS TO REST

As you spend time away from the busyness and productivity of life, fewer things can distract you from what is happening in your soul. This is good because it allows the hidden, wounded, or unwanted parts of you to come into God's presence for healing. As you notice these things, name them in God's presence. Be honest about them, express them as fully as you can, and then move on. Try to avoid judging yourself or your feelings. Here is what might surface in your soul:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Sadness
- Grief
- Sorrow
- Aggression
- Sin

ATTITUDES TO ADOPT ON THE SABBATH

The Sabbath is a good time to reflect on what Jesus values and how he expressed his character. Intentionally, choose and adopt those same values on the Sabbath. You will soon find them showing up on the other days too. Here's a partial list:

- Love
- Joy
- Peace
- Patience
- Kindness
- Goodness
- Faithfulness
- Gentleness
- Self-Control
- Thankfulness
- Playfulness
- Grace and Mercy
- Forgiveness
- Truthfulness
- Authenticity

RESOURCES FOR SABBATH PLANNING

Sabbath: The Ancient Practices by Dan Allender

Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton

Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership by Ruth Haley Barton

Sabbath as Resistance by Walter Brueggemann

Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting by
Marva J. Dawn

Unhurried Living by Alan Fadling

The Unhurried Leader by Alan Fadling

The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel

Rhythms of Rest: Finding the Spirit of Sabbath in a Busy World by Shelly
Miller

Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives by
Wayne Muller

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality by Pete Scazzero

The Emotionally Healthy Leader by Pete Scazzero

Subversive Sabbath by A. J. Swoboda

APPENDIX 2

HOW TO CREATE A RULE OF LIFE

To create your own rule of life you will need to have clarity on your core values, your priorities, and your boundaries. You'll also need to know your life rhythms, gifts, talents, and personality. As you craft a rule of life, you will be bringing all these things under the rule of God and surrendering them to his will. If you have already done this work, you are ready to begin forming your rule.

PRAY AND LISTEN

Hopefully by now you are learning that all Christian leadership starts with prayer and listening to the voice of God. Discerning your rule of life is no different. We need to start by becoming aware of God's presence and being silent before him. As we sit in silence, we are to listen to the Spirit and the Word for direction from God. For each of the subsequent steps, let the Holy Spirit guide your decisions.

NOTICE YOUR LIFE RHYTHMS

Take some time to notice and evaluate your life rhythms. What rhythms of work and rest do you currently observe? Include your patterns for sleep, work, exercise, and eating. While this isn't an exercise in time management, our weekly calendars can be useful at this point. In discerning our life rhythms, we must notice the ebb and flow of our physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional energies as they relate to the calendar. For example, what times of the day and week do you feel most physically energized? When does your body most often feel fatigued? Chart your emotional, mental, and spiritual vitality too. When do you feel closest to God? When does he feel most distant? Benedict called these *consolations* and *desolations*.

Think through your daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly rhythms. When do you feel high or low energy? Try to understand *why* you feel this way. What patterns do you see emerging? Be careful to also notice when you are getting healthy rest and nutrition and when you are deprived or taking in too much. How do these patterns affect you?

As you notice your healthy and unhealthy life rhythms, try to evaluate them objectively. It usually helps to write them down or create a chart so that you can step back and see the big picture. You might need help from a friend or professional to ensure you are seeing yourself clearly.

Now ask yourself these questions:

- Where do I need to be closer to God in my day, week, month, or year? This may mean you are more aware of his presence or more filled with his love or more discerning of his will. Where do you need to see God more in your rhythms?
- Where do I need to make changes to be the most healthy version of myself? These changes can be physical, mental, emotional, social, or spiritual. Examine your health in each area.

- Where in my calendar do I see conflicts between my false self and my true self? What needs to change in order to become more wholehearted?

IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Now identify some spiritual practices that help you connect with God on a deeper level. Look at the spiritual practices covered in chapter 10 and in the workbook. Try several of these practices on for size. Which ones are most helpful for you? Which ones do nothing for you? Try to identify a few spiritual practices that will enhance your times of Bible reading, prayer, corporate worship, and Sabbath. What other spiritual practices would be helpful throughout other parts of the week? A spiritual director can be immensely helpful during this phase.

INCORPORATE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES WITHIN YOUR RHYTHMS

Now you are ready to write your rule of life. Here you are going to incorporate your chosen spiritual practices and healthy lifestyle changes into your regular life rhythms. It's okay to have a plan, but start small. Pick the easiest spiritual practice and healthy habit to adopt. Do those until they feel natural before incorporating more changes.

DAILY: Break up your day into four to six equal sections (early morning, late morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, evening, and bedtime). What spiritual practices or healthy habits feel right for each time?

WEEKLY: What weekly rhythms will you need to incorporate or improve? If you aren't practicing a weekly Sabbath or weekly corporate worship, these are a good place to start.

MONTHLY: Are there monthly practices that would help you in your relationship with God? I find it helpful to take one day per month as a mini prayer retreat. This also gives me space to lament, grieve, or give healthy expression to any emotions I was tempted to bury.

YEARLY: Are there patterns in your year where you need extra rest or deeper connection with God? What are your most draining times of the year? Plan time before and after to energize your body, mind, and soul. Seasonal vacations or extended prayer retreats can be helpful here. You would be wise to incorporate a sabbatical every five to seven years for renewal and realignment.

Now that you've created a plan by incorporating new spiritual practices and healthy habits into your life rhythms, build the rest of your life around them. Let your relationship with God and the care of your soul form the basis for the rest of your life and work.

ADJUST YOUR RULE AS NEEDED

As you start to live this new rule of life, you may find that your relationships are affected by it. In some cases this will be a good change. However, if you see it having negative effects on your most important relationships, renegotiate your rule. The goal is for your rule of life to *enhance* your relationship with God and your love for others. If your rule gets in the way of loving God or loving others, then it is not a healthy rule of life.

You may also find that over time certain spiritual practices lose their effectiveness. This is normal. It may mean you have drifted out of focus and aren't really giving yourself to the practices. If that's the case, try to reengage. However, you may need to mix things up and try a different practice or adjust your rhythms. Don't get so

locked into your rule of life that it feels like a burden. It is supposed to unlock your freedom and joy, so approach it playfully. Like a child on the playground, feel free to change the rules to make the “game” more life-giving.