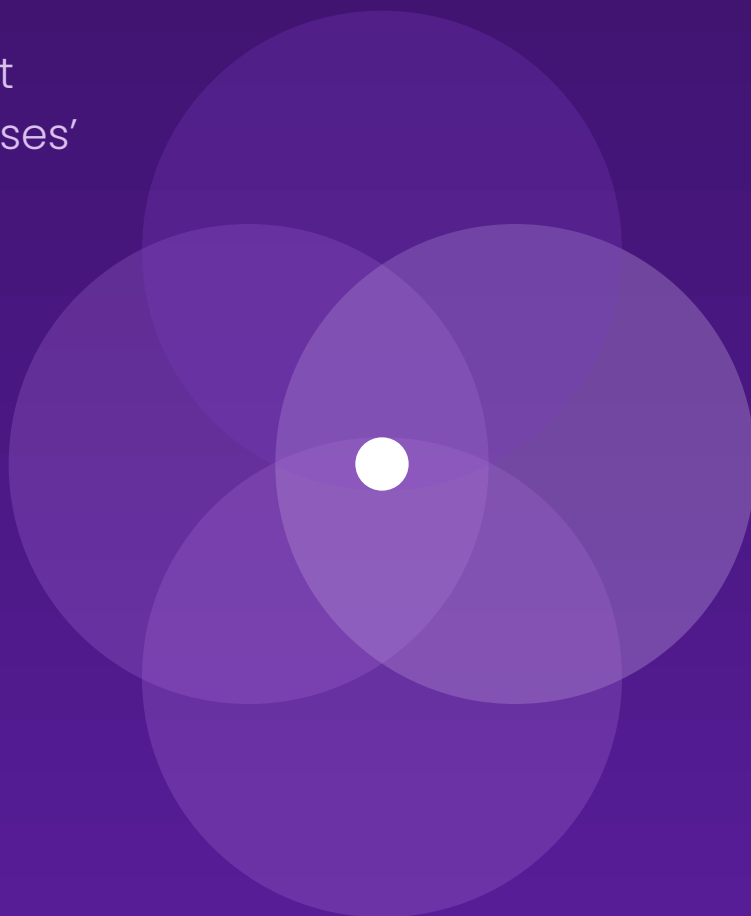


RESIST. REVOLT.

A FIELD GUIDE FOR ORGANIZERS & ADVOCATES

Collective Care

The fight is long. A movement that burns out its people does the bosses' work for them.



Why it matters · Warning signs · Care practices · Org care plan · After hard actions · Worksheet

01 Burnout Is a Political Problem

Burnout is not a personal weakness. It's what happens when people carry too much, for too long, without enough support, rest, or wins. Preventing it is organizing work.

Burnout usually shows up as deep exhaustion, growing cynicism or detachment, and a sense that nothing you do matters. In movements, it drives away some of the most committed people, and often the people who carry the most: women, people of color, working parents, and those directly affected by the injustice.

What it costs the movement

- **Lost leaders.** Years of relationships and skills walk out the door.
- **Worse decisions.** Exhausted people get rigid, reactive, and short-tempered.
- **Conflict and splits.** Unaddressed strain turns into infighting.
- **A culture that repels newcomers.** If the movement looks like misery, who will join?

Read through a class lens

Capitalism treats people as resources to be used up and replaced. Movements against it can't reproduce the same logic: martyrdom, endless hours, and guilt for resting. Care is not a retreat from the struggle. Sustaining our people, sharing the load, and protecting our rest is how we stay strong enough to win, and a preview of the world we're fighting for.

Pace yourselves. This is a marathon, not a sprint.

A LESSON EVERY LONG-HAUL MOVEMENT LEARNS

Unions, civil rights groups, and tenant movements that lasted decades did it by building structures that kept people going.

02 Know the Warning Signs

Catch it early, in yourself and in each other. Burnout builds slowly, then all at once.

In yourself

- Tired even after rest; dreading the next meeting.
- Cynicism: "Nothing we do matters."
- Irritability, snapping at comrades.
- Trouble sleeping, eating, or focusing.
- Pulling away from friends, family, and things you enjoy.
- Feeling guilty whenever you're not working.

In your team

- The same few people do everything.
- Meetings run long and decisions drag.
- Volunteers quietly stop showing up.
- Rising conflict, gossip, or blame.
- No one celebrates wins anymore.
- People say yes to everything, then drop the ball.

Common causes

- Unclear roles and endless to-do lists.
- Crisis mode that never ends.
- No wins, or wins never acknowledged.
- Isolation and lack of support.
- Harassment, online attacks, or trauma from actions.
- Juggling organizing with work, family, and money stress.

What to do when you see it

- Name it gently and privately: "You seem stretched thin. How are you doing?"
- Take something off their plate, for real.
- Encourage real rest, and protect it.
- Connect them to support: peers, family, or a professional.
- Change the conditions, not just the person.

03 Collective Care Practices

Share the load

- Rotate roles: facilitation, notes, turnout, logistics.
- Every task has a backup person.
- Develop new leaders so no one is irreplaceable.
- Say no to some good ideas to say yes to the right ones.

Set humane norms

- Start and end meetings on time.
- Agree on response hours; no expectation of late-night replies.
- Schedule breaks and quiet periods after big pushes.
- Make it normal to say “I can’t take that on.”

Build real relationships

- Open meetings with a short check-in.
- Eat together. Laugh together.
- Pair people up as buddies who check on each other.
- Make room for people’s families and lives.

Celebrate wins

- Mark every victory, even small ones.
- Thank people by name for specific contributions.
- Tell the story of how far you’ve come.
- Remember the people you’re fighting for.

Remove barriers

- Provide childcare, food, and transport at events.
- Reimburse expenses quickly.
- Offer stipends for key roles when you can.
- Choose accessible locations and online options.

Handle conflict early

- Agree on how disagreements get raised and resolved.
- Address issues directly and privately, not in group chats.
- Train people in facilitation and conflict resolution.
- Focus on behavior and repair, not blame.

04 Build an Organizational Care Plan

Care can't depend on individuals remembering to be kind. Build it into how the organization works.

1

Take stock

Ask members anonymously how they're doing, what drains them, and what would help. Look at who is carrying the most work.

2

Set shared agreements

Write down norms on meeting times, response hours, time off, and how to ask for help. Revisit them every few months.

3

Redistribute the work

Map every role and task. Break big jobs into smaller ones, assign backups, and recruit for the gaps.

4

Plan rest into the calendar

Schedule lighter periods after major campaigns, elections, or actions. Protect holidays and personal time.

5

Create support structures

Buddy systems, peer support circles, a care or wellness committee, and a list of trusted counselors and resources.

6

Prepare for hard moments

Plan debriefs and support after arrests, confrontations, losses, or harassment, before they happen.

7

Review and adjust

Check in on the plan quarterly. Is it working? Who still feels stretched? Change the plan, not just the people.

05 After Hard Actions & Losses

Arrests, police violence, online attacks, and defeats take a toll. How we care for each other afterward decides who comes back.

Debrief together

- Within 24 to 72 hours, gather everyone involved.
- Start with how people are feeling, before strategy.
- Then: what happened, what worked, what we'd change.
- End with appreciation and the next step.

Peer support

- Check in personally with everyone who was arrested, hurt, or targeted.
- Keep checking in for weeks, not just days.
- Make it normal to talk about stress and fear.
- Pair people who've been through it with those going through it now.

Online harassment

- Don't engage; document and report.
- Help the targeted person lock down accounts and personal info.
- Have others respond publicly so the target doesn't carry it alone.
- Take threats seriously and plan for safety.

Professional help

Some experiences need more than peer support. Keep a list of counselors and therapists, including low-cost and culturally competent options, and help people connect. If someone is in crisis in the U.S., they can call or text **988**, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any time.

06 Personal Sustainability Plan

Fill out for yourself. Share what you're comfortable sharing with a buddy.

MY EARLY WARNING SIGNS

WHAT DRAINS ME MOST

WHAT REFUELS ME

MY BOUNDARIES (HOURS, ROLES, WHAT I'LL SAY NO TO)

PEOPLE I CAN CALL WHEN I'M STRUGGLING

ONE THING I'LL STOP, AND ONE THING I'LL START

Team load check

NAME	ROLES	HOURS / WEEK	FEELING (1-5)	SUPPORT NEEDED

Rest is not surrender. Care is how we win.

Take care of each other like the future depends on it, because it does.

RESIST. REVOLT.

Further reading

adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy* (2017).

Tricia Hersey, *Rest Is Resistance* (2022).

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, *Trauma Stewardship* (2009).

In the U.S., call or text 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

Companion guides: *Relational Organizing, Data & Lists*, and *Grassroots Fundraising* (Resist. Revolt.)