

Living every moment

# VOLUNTEER VISION

laughter • friendship • support • hope



**HELPGUIDE.org** states that burnout may be the result of unrelenting stress, but it isn't the same as too much stress. Stress, by and large, involves too *much*: too many pressures that demand too much of you physically and psychologically. Stressed people can still imagine, though, that if they can just get everything under control, they'll feel better.

Burnout, on the other hand, is about *not* enough. Being burned out means feeling empty, devoid of motivation, and beyond caring. People experiencing burnout often don't see any hope of positive change in their situations. Burnout is a gradual process that occurs over an extended period of time. It doesn't happen overnight, but it can creep up on you if you're not paying attention to the warning signals. The signs and symptoms of burnout are subtle at first, but they get worse and worse as time goes on.

**Barbara Wexler** (The Gale Group Inc., Gale, Detroit, 2002) writes that: *Health professionals and volunteers who work in hospice programs have special needs related to professional and emotional support. Since they work so closely with patients and families, they often experience grief and depression when patients die. Sympathy and empathy, the qualities that enable them to perform effectively in their hospice roles, may also hinder their abilities to maintain the emotional distance needed to successfully perform their work, or may lead to premature burnout.*

It is certainly not a sign of weakness but of compassion. So what can we do to avoid or combat burnout? Being aware of the possibility is the first step - come and discuss how you are feeling with us and we can devise a plan to alleviate your stress. This may involve taking a break from volunteering for a while, or from your current assignment. Why not try some relaxation techniques: meditation; yoga; Tai Chi; massage; Reiki etc... There is certainly no shortage of options and we could all benefit from trying them!

For a refresher in Communication training, please visit

<http://training.hpcoco.ca> and take part in one of the modules for

**Bridging The Gap - a fun and interactive on-line training resource for hospice volunteers.**



Communication