## Centering Staff Wellbeing

*Alliance of Artists Communities Conference, St. Paul, MN*

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### OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK FROM ATTENDEES:

#### I know I’m stressed/approaching burnout when...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job disillusionment/don’t want to go to work/looking for other jobs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient/Irritable/Frustrated</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not supportive of coworkers</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling isolated/lonely</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No breaks/working long hours</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical symptoms in the body/illness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping too little or too much/tired</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking about work outside of work hours/can’t focus on outside interests</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distracted/unproductive/paralyzed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crying/sad</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor self-esteem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of agency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnect with leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### I am comforted/supported when...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talking through issues/having open conversations with colleagues and leadership/feeling heard</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling acknowledged/appreciated</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling trusted/respected/not micromanaged</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible hours/hours spent in the community as work hours</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from colleagues and leadership/overlapping responsibilities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership support for self-care/time off, including lowered productivity</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal life, including artistic practice, is recognized/ability to turn off work outside of work hours</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic goal setting and prioritization</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured social time with colleagues</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal friends and support network</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The systems of support that are helpful to me are...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support System</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible hours/work remotely/hours spent in the community as work hours</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to set boundaries/say no/turn off work outside of work hours</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space for open conversations with colleagues and leadership/support through communication (formal and informal)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work environment is a supportive community environment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal friends and support network</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from colleagues at other organizations</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to use days off</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activity</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance reviews</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development opportunities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstructured community-building time with colleagues</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapy/self-reflection</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside resources such as apps, podcasts, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room for failure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open time in work schedule for critical thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support for personal artistic practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES FROM ATTENDEES:

I know I’m stressed/approaching burnout when...

- When reaccounting my dreams from the night and were all “organizational” based
- I have a hard time coming to work/staying at work
- I become impatient (rushed)
- I’m unable to authentically support others.
- I’m don’t have a break between work events to workdays. I’m replying to all emails at any time. Constantly on my phone – even in work meetings.
- My hair falls out.
- every little thing bothers me and gets me frustrated and irritated
- I can’t sleep, waking w/ anxiety
- I resent my coworkers
- Less generous with my colleagues
- Can’t focus on my personal practice
- Don’t want to go into work
- Struggle to sleep
- I feel isolated
- There’s no in-between on the spectrum from tears to numbness
- I feel anxious, sad and overly responsible for every aspect of what is happening in the org.
• I don’t feel well in my body or like myself.
• My coworkers find me crying in the office.
• I can’t accomplish a task at work b/c I’m so stressed/distracted by having so much going on. (A great reason for employers to address burnout)
• I cannot/do not want to look at, speak to, engage in any way with colleagues or residents.
• I am no longer finding my job gratifying or enjoyable.
• I’m grumpy. When I can’t do my personal artwork.
• burnout: I lack patience, get defensive, get narrow-minded or have tunnel vision.
• Pain or illness flare up (too late by then!)
• I isolate myself from others.
• I want to put my headphones on and block out everyone.
• I know I am stressed when I am unable to let go of conflicts and challenges at work during extended time off (weekends/vacation).
• I work close to 40 hours or more per week. I didn’t take 3 breaks a day. 1 short in the morning and afternoon – lunch 1 hour. Take time to walk.
• I know I am stressed when: I don’t recognize my best traits showing up. I can’t pull from anything in me to just push through because I am depleted.
• My physical and mental health is in decline.
• When I feel like I’m in a hostage situation. When I hear other staff complain and express their own personal burnout and need to “get away”
• When Dir. of Ops sends an email to all staff indicating what the warning signs of burnout look like... When I say in a staff meeting I’m burned out... and share the same w/ family and friends. When I resent where I work.
• I don’t look forward to or don’t want to go to work.
• I keep falling asleep. Watch too much Netflix.
• I can’t sleep despite making time, despite CBD, despite exercise. The list goes on.
• I can count the number of human interactions I have had on one hand.
• I start being less patient and generous with people.
• I am daydreaming on idealist.org. Googling Burnout.
• I am constantly talking about being overextended.
• Always making jokes about how I am consumed by work.
• When I feel isolated and feel I can’t call anyone for collaborative input. I work as an independent curator.
• I’m resentful of my job and wonder if I have anything to offer anyone.
• I’m paralyzed by overwhelm and lack of motivation.
• stressed/approaching burnout – working long hours remotely, multiple assignments – little results.
• everything the leadership says feels in opposition.
• I don’t want to go to work even though I love my job.
• I’m angry and everything looks like a problem rather than opportunity.
• Work thru meals and don’t take a break.
I am comforted/supported when...

- I am trusted... and this is exhibited through reflecting back what my contributions are
- Leadership has created space for check-ins and responds to conversations about fatigue, isolation, burnout, etc.
- I can walk away
- I can have honest conversations about challenges with my colleagues
- My whole self is acknowledged and appreciated
- Allowed to express all feelings of joy, frustration, anger, envy, accomplishment, failure with all staff and receive compassionate responses.
- expectation-holders acknowledge that self-care will have to result in less being delivered/achieved
- I feel comfortable and supported when – I am able to speak to my supervisor and find solutions about challenges I am facing, when I am asked to speak and listened to
- leadership makes a point to acknowledge differences
- I’m listened to. I can take my time and arrive late to work if I need to. I can make personal calls at work.
- Supported when I have people to lean on/listen to me (I am a sole proprietoress)
- My work is valued/acknowledged
- I have the time, mental space and physical energy to work on personal projects, read, think at the end of a work day or on a day off.
- I get acknowledgement of the work I am doing
- Comfort and support, communal eating, non-alcoholic settings, family friendly environments
- I can speak authentic truth, something that is a road block at work.
- I feel comforted and supported when... I am not only heard, but pointed in a resource direction to that can offer some possible solutions
- I can reach out, I am acknowledged.
- I can tell folks what I feel without judgment
- When I am recognize as a working artist. My work is value. We do our best to set up our team for success – real goals that can be achieve. Have a good boss!
- My time is respected and unquestioned
- Colleagues allow space for conversation, debate, and critical thought about our work and the conditions of our work. (This never happens)
- My supervisor is able to listen to me and receive my concerns, and help me solve them
- when my work is acknowledged
- Given the oppn to chat through actual priorities when everything is treated as a priority
- I’m asked if I am taking time off
- Myself and my coworkers can communicate openly and without judgment
• I have control over my time.
• When I feel affirmed.
• When my work, stress, and well-being are acknowledged by coworkers and board members.
• I can see my colleagues being supported.
• There is equity in the listening process.
• Life beyond work is acknowledged
• I am trusted
• I am trusted and given freedom to just get it done. No micromanaging
• Talking with coworkers about problems
• People look me in the eye and are truly understanding of my role and work
• I feel trust rather than having to prove with my labor or over-investment
• My responsibilities overlap with others so that we can help each other
• I can have an open conversation about issues I’m having with my coworkers and (especially) my boss without feeling like I might be chastised
• I’m empowered to say when I need to work from home and when I can count professional development and community outreach as work hours or participate during the work day
• I have time with friends that has nothing to do with the field.
• I am trusted to do my work w/o being checked on, micro-managed, or continually nagged or reminded

The systems of support that are helpful to me are...
• Phys. activity, work from home, friends
• Systems that support me: performance review, staff meetings to review events and collaborative work, space to have conversations w/ colleagues when challenges arise
• Thorough staff review. Professional development. Acknowledgement of needing personal days.
• Talking to others in vulnerability rather than keeping to myself.
• A learning community that shares successes and strategies.
• Affinity group, support group texts w/ colleagues
• Remote and flexible working
• My smaller, family department within a much larger organization
• Saying no or “No, because”, “Not right now”, “Yes, but first...” as a way to set boundaries, initiate negotiations, manage expectations, increase transparency
• Setting up social time and talking. Admitting that I need help.
• Board-level culture setting (and policy making!) that insists on and pushes staff leadership to selfcare (w/ true awareness of the productivity tradeoffs required)
• Flex hours. Being able to go to a doctor’s appt part of the day w/out using PTO. Being listened to by my supervisors. My employer investing in my prof. dev. – I bring back more!
- Asking forgiveness after instead of permission before (leaving office for a couple hrs or taking PTO)
- Being in community with friends/colleagues outside the sector of arts admin.
- Roasting vegetables with friends.
- Systems/supports – visiting campus, work remotely, flexible schedule
- Flexible time policies
- Room for failure
- Having honest conversations with colleagues
- Therapy
- Drawing boundaries. A regular movement practice.
- Affinity and allyship amongst peer and mentors.
- Creating a collaborative work group that is long distance
- Given time for pause/reflection
- Email signature – “I work M-F, 10-6 and only those hours emails are responded to”
- Flex time. No work emails on personal phone. Sharing w/ co-workers.
- Co-workers who have context for the complexities of my job.
- Creatives always want to problem solve and “make it work”. Sometimes we have to say “no, it cannot work.”
- Some systems/supports that have been helpful... Having a community of peers that identify with these issues and point to important practices
- Wunderlist – an app for daily to do lists
- not being contacted during days off!
- Realizing that I can only control me – not others’ emotions, expectations, actions
- Have friends (support community) in different organizations and share experience how they figure out? Change job if need it!!!
- No passive aggressive. Set boundaries and repeat them. Make sure you say you are an artist! And this is a plus to your employer and makes you better at your job
- formal and informal check-in meetings w/ staff
- Regular staff retreats and sharing sessions that are not strategic, organizationally based.
- Unf*ck your Brain podcast (support for thought work, anti-perfectionism)
- Boundaries, knowing in advance
- Set boundaries – turn off phone, tell people “no”
- counting all my hours, including when I’m in public after hours (e.g. at gallery show or artist meet up)
- flexibility