

Working with burn-out

Some thoughts on the practice of working with leadership burnout: How to prevent it, how to work with if it arises

We have in our profound teaching multiple skillful means to work with the burnout factors listed below. First they must be recognized, and then they must be brought to the path. We could draw from the Six Ways of Ruling, as well as a wide range of Hinayana and Mahayana approaches. But the main thing is the willingness to work with one's own mind in a gentle, tough way.

In terms of presenting any of the below in a training session, just discussing each of them in a supportive practice environment could be of value to participants. We could invite them to share their experiences of the factors that lead to burnout, but more importantly, look for ways people are dealing with these factors in their own practice life. Maybe we could locate and /or develop contemplations that would address some of the factors below, or do an exercise where we invite people to create their own contemplations.

Some factors leading to burnout:

1. NOT PRACTICING. Balancing life so that meditation practice remains central. Burnout occurs in the context of post-meditation practice, but if there's no meditation, then there's no post-meditation. If you're too busy to practice, you're too busy.
2. CAN'T SAY NO. Learning how and when to say "no" to the requests of others, or even to your own ideas. Looking at and working with the mind that has difficulty setting limits.
3. TAKING THINGS TOO PERSONALLY. Leaders will always draw both praise and blame from others. Learning to develop equanimity in the face of criticism and the negative projections of others. Learning to work with pride, ambition and attachment to praise.
4. COGNITIVE DISSONANCE. Learning to work with the dissonance between vast Shambhala vision and the on-the-ground situation of earth. Developing a capacity to hold both heaven and earth without becoming overwhelmed by either.
5. LETTING "GOOD" GO TO WAR WITH "BEST". Working with the inflexible mind of perfectionism.
6. NOT APPLYING RIGHT-SPEECH PRINCIPLES. Exploring the mind that gossips, speaks harshly and/or complains. Learning how to work with the gossip and complaints that others bring to you so that this behavior is not reinforced.
7. MAKING THINGS TOO SOLID. Working with the mind that tends to see only the problems, and doubts the absolute brilliance and goodness of things as they are. Learning to work with space and openness. *"We are ruling a dream, and we all share the same dream."* ~ The Sakyong Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche