

Critical Conversations for Pastoral Teams



About the Author



Bonita Eby is the owner of Breakthrough Personal & Professional Development Inc., a company that specializes in burnout prevention and wellness.

Bonita has a professional healthcare background and extensive research knowledge combined with over 20 years of experience developing leaders, training teams, and coaching people to become the best they can be.

Bonita will help you or your organization:

- Recognize the symptoms of burnout
- Create strategies to prevent burnout and support recovery
- Embrace a culture of wellness

BREAKTHROUGH PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INC. provides personal and professional development to organizations and individuals via Coaching, consulting, Equine Assisted Coaching, workshops, speaking engagements, retreats, online learning and other programs.

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Preventing Burnout

If you've been looking for a solution to keep quality employees highly engaged in your organization, this is for you.

Pastoral team members are passionately invested in the mission and vision of their church. They pour out their lives into caring for their church community while also working on projects and running programs to benefit those they serve.

Often times, their passion and drive lead to feeling burned out.

If you've ever experienced the loss of a key team member to physical, mental, emotional or spiritual burnout, you know the pain it brings to both the afflicted person and the team.

If this has happened within your team, you'll love what I share here. If you are lucky enough never to have experienced burnout personally or in your organization, this guide will help you make practical steps to ensure your team stays healthy!



So, where do you start in terms of creating healthy team members? It's by creating and fostering over-all team health.

Team members are often afraid to share concerns with their supervisor regarding feelings of burnout as they fear being seen as weak or unworthy to be on the team. Now is the time to break down those barriers.

This guide can be used both in person and virtually. It will help you open the conversation about burnout and remove the attached stigma so team members can speak openly and honestly about their concerns. You need to establish trust, and even if you feel you have the confidence of your team, you can increase it by providing safe spaces in which they can share. By doing so, you can help your team members stay healthy for the long haul.



There is an effective way to create trust and help your team to flourish.

1. Start With Leadership.

The best way to train your leaders to build trusting relationships with those they oversee is by modelling a trusting relationship with the leaders *you* oversee. Use the exercise in this guide with your leaders in your next one-on-one meeting.



2. Prepare your leadership team.

Now that your leadership team has experienced the care you've shown, they'll be eager to offer similar care to those they oversee. Share your vision for all staff, at every level, to encounter authentic care and feel safe enough to be vulnerable with staff supervisors.

3. Plan for organization-wide professional development.

Ask your leadership team to prepare a 3-minute story about how feelings of burnout (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) have affected their lives and the practices they've implemented to ward off exhaustion and stay healthy. By modelling vulnerability and showing staff that the team is a safe place to express their concerns, you will gain the trust required to move on to the next step.



4. Use the exercise in this guide.

With a foundation of trust laid, introduce the training found in this guide and have a couple of leaders describe how it helped them. Then take the time for all staff to complete the guide.



5. Take a break and evaluate.

Schedule a break so your staff can rest after digging deep and being vulnerable. At the same time, confer with your leadership team to discuss how you collectively feel the meeting has gone so far based upon observations. Make any adjustments to the remainder of the meeting and make sure you and the leadership team take time to rest. Now is an excellent time for lunch.



6. Create an engaging atmosphere.

Lighten the mood for staff by doing a fun ice breaker, watching a funny video, or implementing another method that works well for your environment. Get people laughing and feeling comfortable.

7. Small group discussion.

To get the most of the guide, have your team review their responses from the exercise. Ask them to choose 2-3 areas of concern they have for longevity in their role. Then break into small groups to discuss these items.



8. Make it actionable.

Continuing in small groups, ask everyone to brainstorm how they might be able to overcome some of their concerns and what supports would help them. Then, facilitate a large-group sharing time to glean responses from the small group sessions. Make sure to end the meeting on a good note and explain the next steps, so everyone is clear on expectations and how the work you've collectively done will be used for better team health. In other words, bring it back to your vision and an actionable step.



9. Team-based discussions.

Ask your supervisors to schedule and prepare an open conversation with those they oversee at their next meeting to discuss the team member's concerns with empathy and non-judgment while fostering a safe place for these conversations.

10. Discern common themes.

Come together as a leadership team to discuss the common themes discovered in team-based conversations. Keep in mind the confidentiality of individual team members and discuss issues and concerns without naming the individual. The established trust must continue to be authentically fostered.



11. Create a plan.

Consider the repeating themes as well as solutions team members offered. What measures can you implement right away? What goals can you set for developing and supporting your team's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health?

12. Begin implementation.

Implement immediate measures, and schedule follow up planning sessions to develop the goals you set as a leadership team. Pull staff into these meetings who you feel could lend valuable insight into the development and support stages. Roll out implementation regularly with clear communication at all levels. Repeat the process in totality annually and consider hiring a burnout prevention specialist to help you design, implement, and create systems to foster your staff's wellness.

Using this guide is a great way to show your employees that you genuinely care for their wellbeing and that they have a safe place to share their concerns. It provides an opportunity to learn the real issues and address them before they become critical problems.

The Guiding Exercise

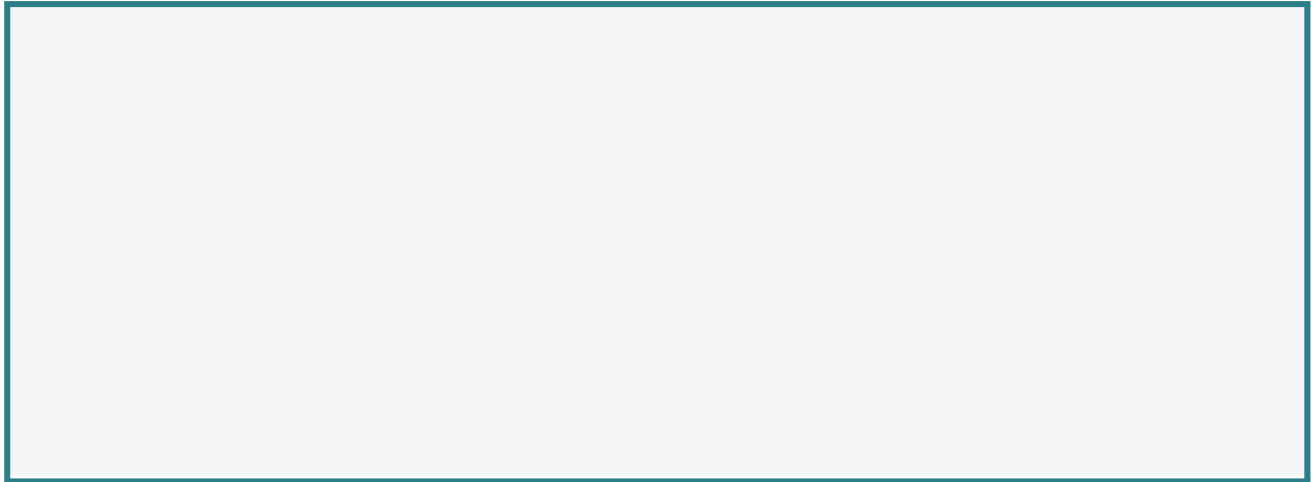
Physical Wellbeing

Do you feel any physical indications of stress due to your job?

Examples:

- Difficulty sleeping.
- Racing heart.
- Difficulty maintaining a healthy diet.
- Excessive or increased tiredness.

Collect your thoughts here:

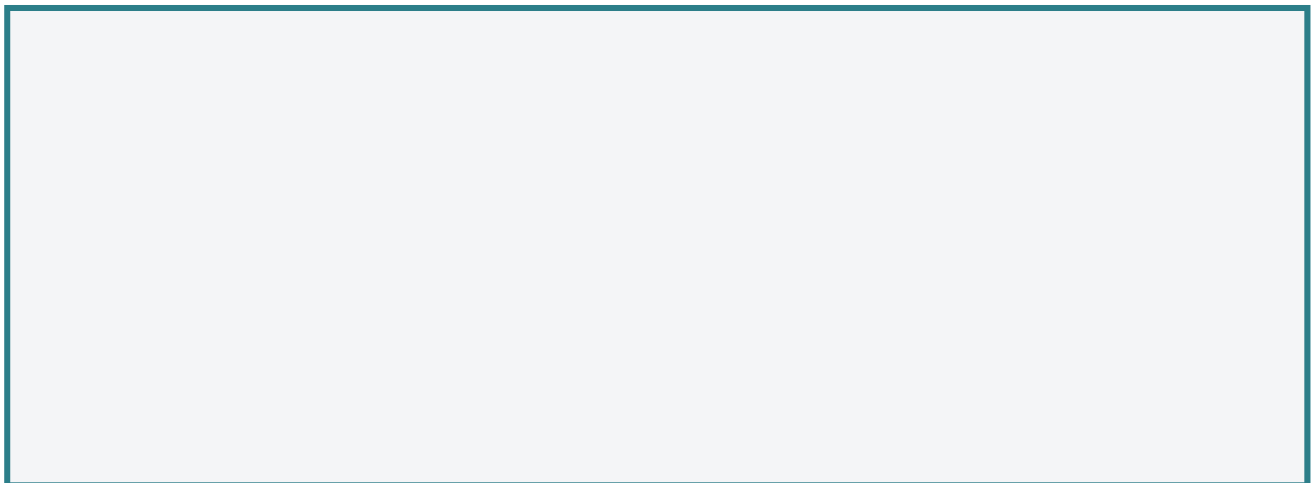


Mental Wellbeing

Do you experience any cognitive concerns due to your work or work environment? Examples:

- Stress dreams (dreams of performing the tasks of your job).
- Mind racing at night.
- Concerns about failing at certain aspects of your job.
- Continually feeling a need to check your phone, email or other correspondence after hours.

Collect your thoughts here:

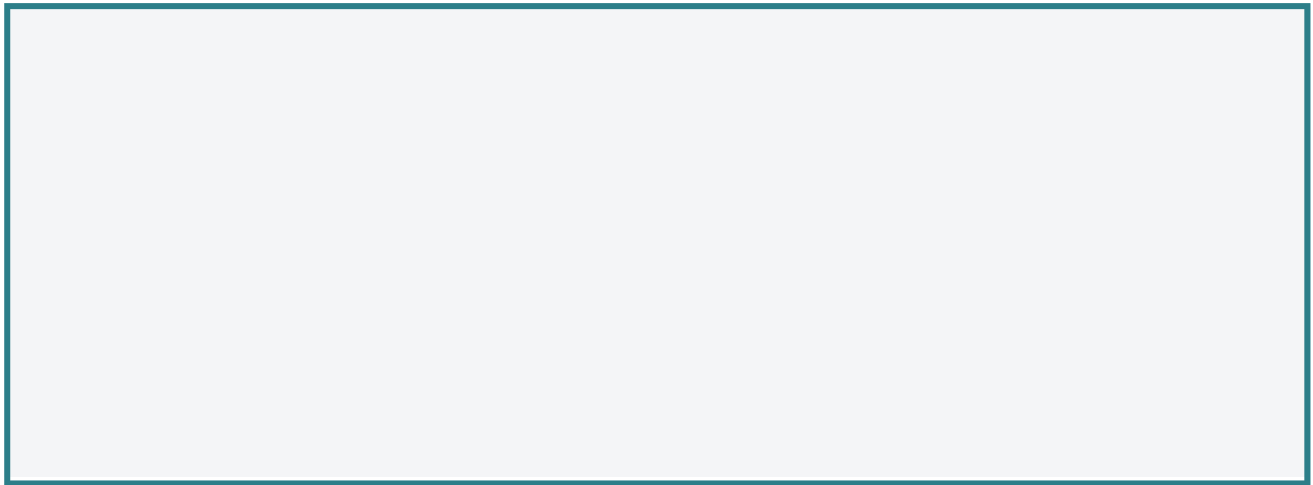


Emotional Wellbeing

Do you feel you have limited capacity for relationships and endeavours outside of work due to the amount you are outputting in your job? Examples:

- Lack of patience with family members or friends.
- Concerns about running into members of the church while running errands due to the emotional output required.
- Do you find yourself having less desire to engage in extracurricular activities?
- Do you feel less creative than in the past and no longer engage in activities you once enjoyed?

Collect your thoughts here:

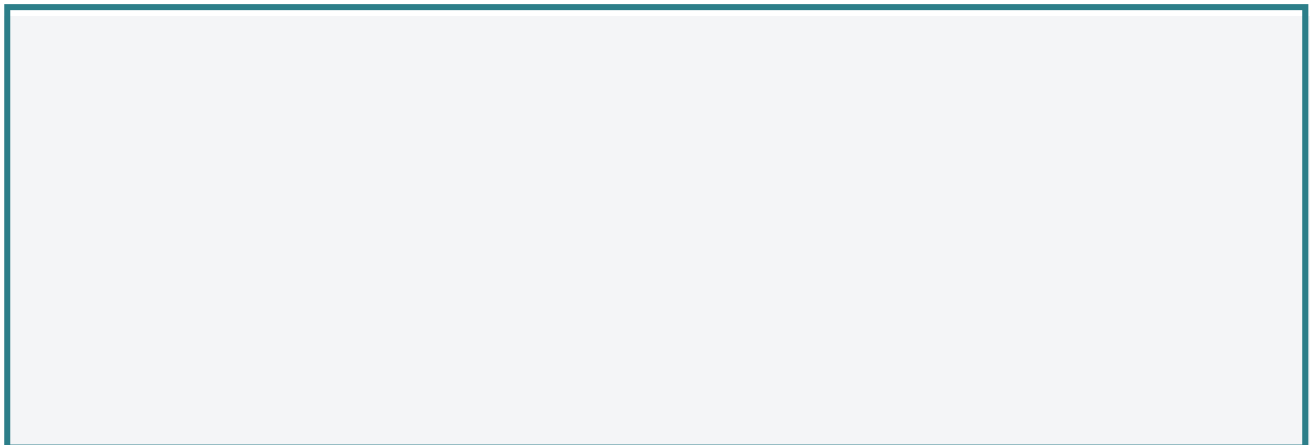


Relational Wellbeing

Do you feel well-connected and supported? Do you have a broad base of relationships both inside and outside of work? Examples:

- Do you live with close friends or family?
- Do you have peace within your home?
- Do you connect regularly with friends?
- Are you engaging with volunteer opportunities outside of your employment?
- Are you actively seeking mentoring for at least one area of your life?

Collect your thoughts here:



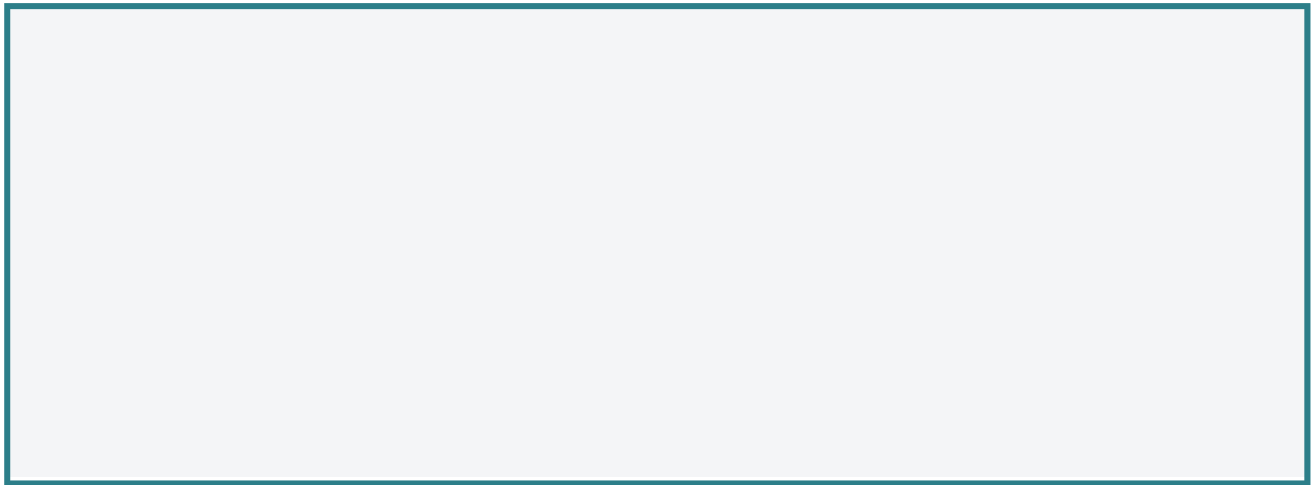
Spiritual Wellbeing

Do you experience a lack of enthusiasm or lack of engagement in spiritual disciplines you once enjoyed?

Examples:

- Less time or interest in reading the Scriptures.
- Lack of desire to engage in spiritual conversations with others outside of work.
- Lack of a weekly restorative Sabbath practice.
- Feeling your prayer life lacks depth or are lacking a close relationship with God.

Collect your thoughts here:



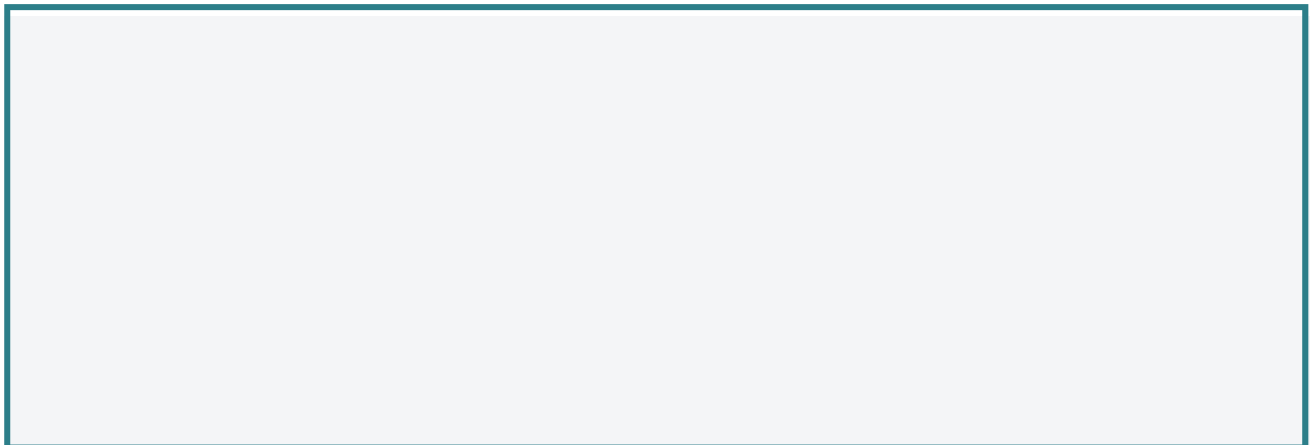
Financial Wellbeing

Do you feel you have the appropriate financial resources to support your life and the life of your family?

Examples:

- Does your salary provide the means to live without financial concern?
- Does your benefits package provide the resources necessary to support the wellbeing of you and your family?
- Do you have a financial advisor to help you with your finances including budgeting, managing debt, investing, and planning for the future?

Collect your thoughts here:



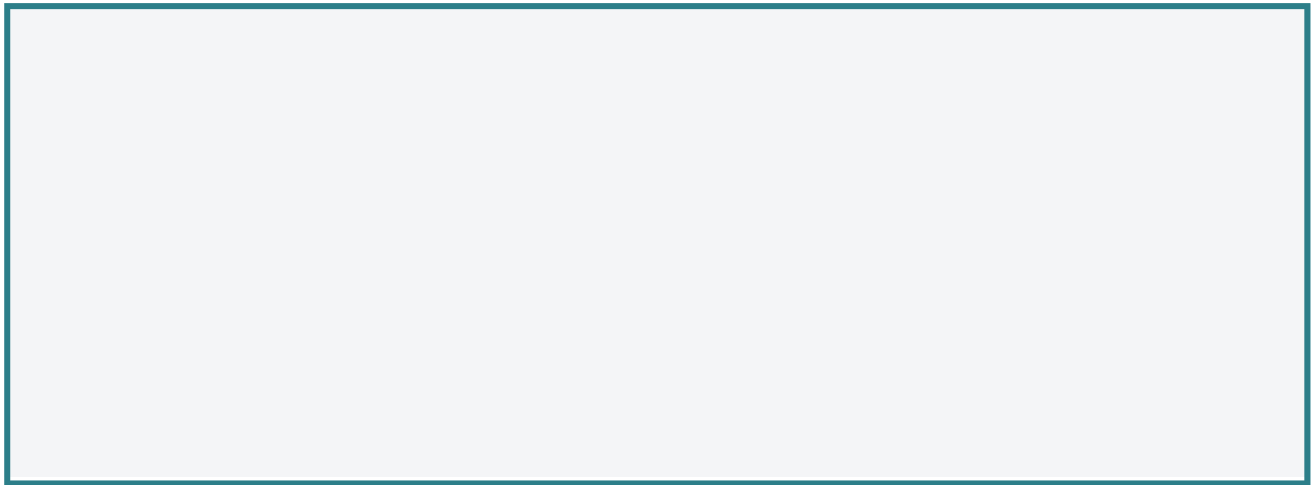
Professional Wellbeing

Do you feel equipped and supported to do your role to the best of your ability?

Examples:

- Is your workload appropriate for your capacity? Explain
- Do you feel you have a satisfactory level of autonomy (control) over your work?
- In what ways do you feel connected or disconnected to your coworkers, the church, and those you serve?
- Are there any areas in which the values of the church are incongruent with your personal values?

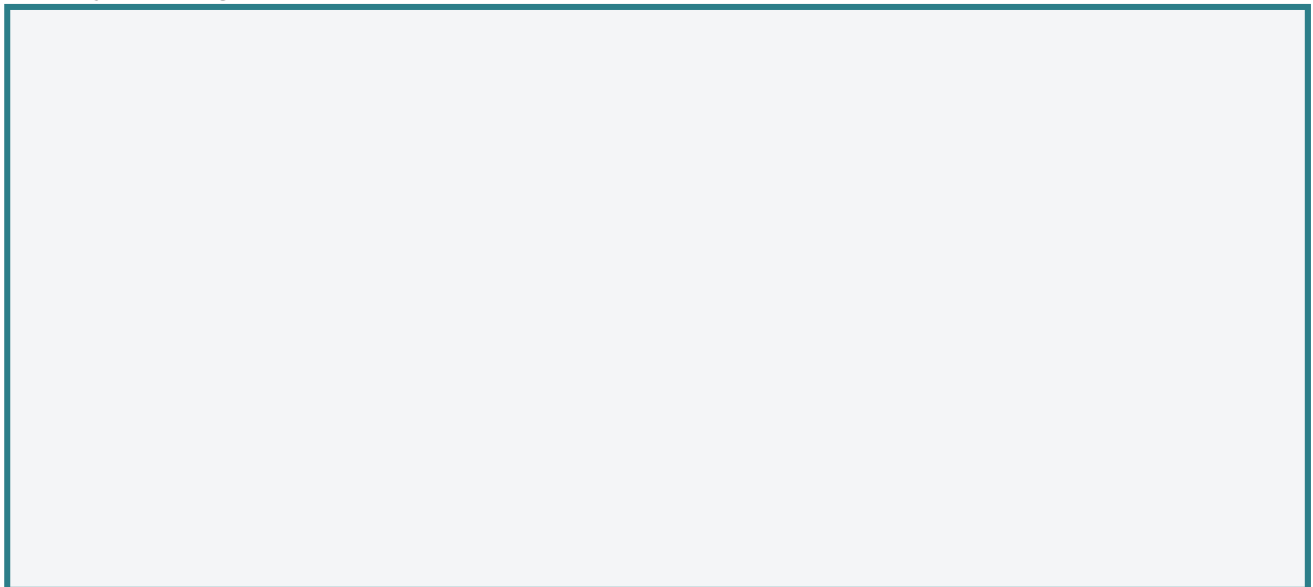
Collect your thoughts here:



Other Areas

- What other areas of life feel unbalanced at this time?
- What questions or concerns do you have?
- Where are you thriving, and what would allow you thrive more fully?

Collect your thoughts here:



Next Steps

Hello, I'm Bonita Eby, an executive coach, burnout prevention strategist and the owner of Breakthrough Personal & Professional Development Inc., a company that specializes in burnout prevention and wellness.

With a rich history of developing leaders, training teams and coaching people to become the best they can be, you are in good hands.

Twenty years of experience training leaders, managing projects, and designing and delivering workshops and retreats have prepared me to offer you outstanding service.

You will benefit from my health-care and wellness background. I worked as a Registered Massage Therapist in my clinic in Kitchener, Ontario, and with the Wellness Centre of St. Mary's Hospital multidisciplinary team, helping bring victims of traumatic motor vehicle accidents back to wellbeing.

Combined leadership, business, health-care, and coaching experience provides you with a broad scope of knowledge and expertise for burnout prevention and wellness. As a certified coach, I can guide you and your team to greater wellbeing.



My Story

After a decade in the health-care business, and with a desire to help people on a spiritual level, I felt the call to pastoral ministry. I began as the Director of Youth Ministries and then moved into pastoral roles with leadership and team-building being two of my strongest suits.

Through many years of being on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week responding to crises, while also holding responsibilities in leadership development, innovative programming, and community event planning, I burned out.

Finding very little help to understand burnout or how to recover, I went on a quest to learn how burnout works, how to prevent it, and how to recover from it. My health-care background, research and experience helped me gain explicit knowledge of burnout.

Now I'm passionate to help teams care for one another, prevent burnout, recover where necessary, and establish systems that lead to long-term effectiveness and joy as they serve their organization.



Let's Get Started

If you desire to develop your team to care for and engage deeply with your organization, then consider the facilitation I offer. Equine Assisted Coaching, Executive Coaching, Workshops, Webinars and Retreats will be a catalyst to the long term health of the individuals on your team and the entire organization.

Want to learn more about how I can help your team engage deeply in burnout prevention and wellness so they can focus on the Kingdom of God? Together, we can create systems for transformational change that will empower your team to thrive for years to come!

For a free consultation to discuss the specific needs of your team:

- www.break-through.ca/contact
- bonita@break-through.ca
- 519-501-2860

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Thank you for joining me on this journey.

I've devoted my life to helping others prevent burnout so you can live a life of thriving. This is why Breakthrough Personal & Professional Development Inc. exists. It would be my joy to help you prevent burnout and transform the life of your team.

I look forward to working with you!

Truly, Bonita Eby