

# 7 Ways to Prevent Burnout When “The Day of Rest” is Your Work Day

As a clergy member, there are many pulls on your time and, ironically, the day that our tradition has set aside to rest and renew is likely one of your busiest days.

Additionally, perhaps the joy and advantages of a restful shabbat is part of why you followed this path in the first place, but these benefits may feel out of reach in your current role.

So, what can you do to both reclaim some of the rest of Shabbat for yourself AND find ways to prevent burnout during the other 6 days of the week?

Here are 7 ways (of course it's a top 7 list – it's about Shabbat!) to accomplish these goals:

- 1) **Oneg Shabbat (Joy of Shabbat):** Think about one of your favorite things to do, or something you used to enjoy doing on Shabbat before you got busy, and make a designated plan to engage with this activity for at least a small portion of your day on Shabbat. You might decide to host a meal and enjoy time with family or friends around the Shabbat table. Perhaps you would like to start off your morning with a walk to be out in nature, get a little exercise, and have quiet time for yourself. Maybe you just want to curl up with a good book after services are over. Whatever you choose, make it your own “sacred” time.
- 2) **Ruach Shabbat (Spirit of Shabbat):** Aim to have all of your shabbat service and teaching preparation done by Friday morning so you can spend the afternoon serving your community in a way that puts you in the best mental mindset for Shabbat. Some ideas of this kind of service are bikkur holim (visiting those who are unwell,) birthday calls to congregants, or a weekly writing of Thank You notes to congregants or staff who did something extra special for the community that past week.
- 3) **Embrace Your Own Needs:** While you may feel a powerful drive to care for others, it's equally important to care for your own mental well-being. Make sure to set aside time in your week for activities, such as exercise, time with friends, meditation, engaging in a hobby, or spending time in nature, that will contribute to your happiness, satisfaction, and calm. Try out a few options to see what works best for you.

4) **Your Body, Your Self:** Just as it's important to care for your mental health, it is important to care for your physical health. Allocate time in your week to activities that create a healthy lifestyle. These can include engaging in regular exercise, eating well, getting enough sleep, and making the time to see doctors, as needed.

5) **The Bonds & Benefits of Comradery:** Being a member of the clergy can feel like a lonely role and one important way to prevent burnout is to have a strong support network of colleagues, mentors, and friends. Having people who can offer guidance, share experiences, and offer emotional support can help sustain you. Also, when you reciprocate for others in your network, you gain energy and support as well.

6) **Boundaries are Healthy:** Clergy members often feel pressure to be available for their congregants at all times. However, setting boundaries and being realistic about what you can and cannot do, can help prevent burnout. You can and should be careful of overcommitting or taking on too much of the responsibility. While it might get the task accomplished in the short term, in the long term you are doing you and your community a disservice. Set reasonable expectations for YOURSELF and then communicate your availability clearly to your leaders and staff.

7) **Don't mistake a buzz or ping for urgency:** Technology is an incredible tool for keeping in touch with your staff and congregation. However, it can have a negative impact when you allow the buzz of a text or the ping of a new email to grab your attention and divert your thoughts. Very few communications need to be dealt with immediately; instead schedule your day with a few blocks of time devoted to responses. During that dedicated time, respond to all messages, even if it's letting the sender know that you will reply further when you have more information. Set the proper expectations by arranging an auto-response for your text, email, and voicemail saying you will reply within a given period of time (for example, 24 hours) and what to do in the case of a true emergency.

**Clergy members must prioritize their own well-being in order to better serve their communities. By taking time to rest and recharge, you can maintain your physical, emotional, and spiritual health and be better equipped to handle the demands of your work.**



Tami Arnowitz has a BA in economics from Wellesley College and an MBA from Columbia Business School. She has studied at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The Conservative Yeshiva. She received her Life Coach certification from The Life Coach Training Institute. Tami has professional experience in sales, strategic planning, marketing, and product management. Tami is also a Jewish educator, an engaged volunteer, and an active clergy spouse for over 20 years. She lives in Mamaroneck, NY with her husband, Rabbi Jeffrey Arnowitz, their 4 boys and 2 dogs.



✉ TAGoodQuestions@gmail.com

📘 facebook.com/TAGoodQuestions

📞 609-923-7519

📷 @tamiema4

🖱️ [www.goodquestionscoaching.com](http://www.goodquestionscoaching.com)