



# Our stories matter: Preventing burnout when sharing lived and living experiences publicly

## What is lived and living experience burnout?

Lived and living experience roles, like advocacy or media work, may lead to people being asked to share their story many times and across different platforms and mediums. This can sometimes lead to a state of emotional, physical, spiritual, or mental exhaustion known as burnout.

Burnout can occur when you feel overwhelmed, emotionally drained, engaged in lived experience work that feels tokenistic or like nothing has changed despite your efforts to contribute to meaningful progress.

Everyone's experience is different. What works for one person to reduce burnout may be different to another.

In a recent study we asked people with a lived and living experience of suicide, and had experienced burnout as a result of sharing their stories of suicide, to provide advice for managing symptoms.

Every quote in this resource has been provided by a person with a lived and living experience. The following pages summarise the key points and advice they, and others, shared.

## Tip 1: Set boundaries

Boundaries are necessary for self-care. Boundaries protect your own mental and emotional space and support you to feel safe and comfortable. Setting boundaries is a unique process, however, it can also be helpful to work with someone to help you identify where your boundaries are and how you want to communicate them to others. It can also be useful to prepare some responses for when someone pushes against or breaks the boundaries you've set.

“Don't take on too much. Know your limitations and give yourself permission to have time out.”

Survey respondent: 46-55yrs

“Set limits on availability. Shut down social media and email for set periods. Only do what you can cope with and do not try to solve or respond to every person who is seeking guidance - it's overwhelming.”

Survey respondent: 65yrs+

### Some examples of boundary setting include:

- “I don't share that part of my story but I'd be happy to talk about [EXAMPLE TOPIC].”
- “I've already spoken to the media on this topic twice in the last month. You could contact [ORGANISATION] if you'd like to hear from others with a lived experience of suicide.”
- “Please do not tag me in posts about this story as I'll be taking a break from social media for the next few weeks.”
- “I don't feel comfortable doing the interview right now; could you please call back after business hours?”

“I had to learn to refuse to answer questions, so had a ‘I am not talking about that today’ comment ready to go to shut down conversations, as I was having the same conversation 15 times a day with different people. After I started to use that line people started to respect some of my boundaries.”

Survey respondent: 46-55yrs



## Tip 2: Take time between public engagements and allow appropriate time to recover after sharing your story

Sharing your personal story with the public can be mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically exhausting. It is important to be aware of how you feel after sharing your story publicly and take appropriate time to rest and recharge afterwards.

“Time. I just must wait for the aches and exhaustion to go away. That’s not to say that it isn’t a long wait, but it’s the only remedy that seems to do anything.”

Survey respondent: 36-45yrs

“Taking lots of breaks between engagements and really being honest with yourself about your wellbeing (or mental ill-health). Be prepared for trauma responses and the unknown. Be unapologetic that you may need rest both after sharing and, if media, after the publish/air date.”

Survey respondent: 46-55yrs

## Tip 3: Engage in self-care

Self-care is undertaking personal practices that help you maintain your wellbeing. These activities are important for maintaining our mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health. We all have different ways of practicing self-care. Self-care can also involve formal or informal supports.

Read more about self care: [\*Our stories matter: Self-care planning for sharing your lived and living experience publicly.\*](#)



“Being mindful to acknowledge my feelings, taking time to decompress and writing about my feelings in my journal helps.”

Survey respondent: 46-55yrs

“I take time to reset and recharge my batteries, through rest and recreational activities. I like reading at the beach, yoga, and skating, as well as relying on my own peer and more formal supports including friends, partners, and therapists.”

Survey respondent: 36-45yrs,  
Aboriginal person, LGBTQ+



#### Tip 4: Align with organisations that support your wellbeing

Working with organisations that are involved in the mental health and suicide prevention sector can support you to develop skills to share your story safely.

They can also help you manage media engagements and provide support during the storytelling process.

It is best to work with organisations that align with your values and key messages and genuinely promote lived and living experience voices.

“I have at times shared when I felt like it would contribute to a larger systemic reform regardless of my own fatigue or vulnerabilities. Having it clearly identified by employers that saying no when I am at capacity or unable to engage in effective self-care efforts will not result in the loss of those opportunities in the future has been helpful for me in being selective about how and when I share.”

Survey respondent: 26-35yrs

#### About this resource

This document is part of a suite of resources developed out of this research project that also includes a guide to avoiding burnout when sharing your story, a guide to self-care, and a workbook with a range of advice and things to consider as you prepare to share your story.

To support your personal wellbeing when sharing your lived and living experience, please see our self-care planning resource at: [mindframe.org.au/our-stories-matter](https://mindframe.org.au/our-stories-matter)