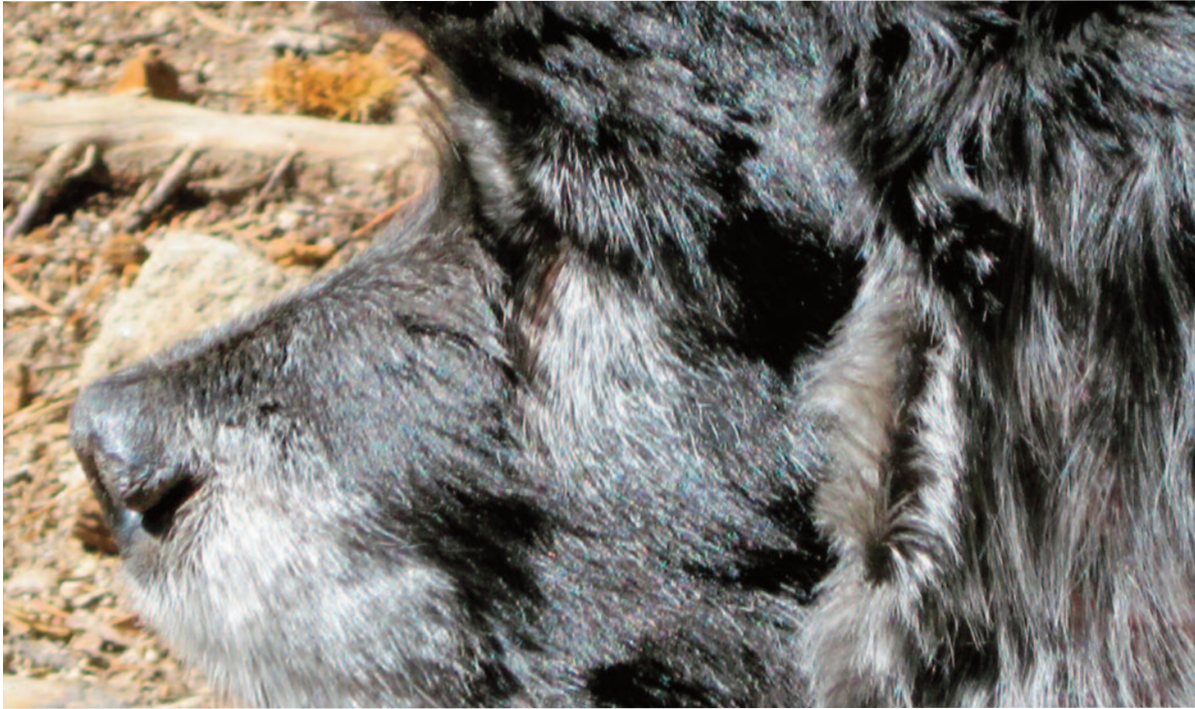


FROM BURNOUT TO BRINGING IN JOY

By Karla Boyd



BURNOUT IS BAD FOR THE ANIMALS, STAKEHOLDERS AND YOU

“Burnout” is a clear and present danger for animal stewards. Many believe that burnout is just part of the inevitability of working on behalf of animals. *In Leadership and Spirit*, author Russ Moxley explains that “being used up” is an occupational hazard for those who leave—and those who stay. He writes:

“On the whole today, American workers are a dispirited lot. Many leave work each day feeling drained, de-energized, used up. As a result our organizations and we are losing a source of vitality that is desperately needed. One reason we are dispirited is because of how leadership is understood and practiced. Too often, [outdated] practices of leadership suffocate spirit. We can, and must, do better. There is a process of leadership that is inspiring, a process that includes all of us, at different times and in different ways, in the activity of leadership.”

Russ Moxley

In the wild, animals live in environments that have a natural order and rhythm to them. All too often humans have separated from this rhythm and the animals. To compound this split they have separated from their own spirits, bodies and values. When this happens they often ignore their passion and leadership principles that shelter spirit, body and soul. They take these conflicts into the lives of the animals that they serve. Nonalignment with the animals and the natural rhythm of things and misalignment with stakeholders and organizational vision leads to burnout, breakdown and resignation.

Generally, people enter professions and take on projects on behalf of animals to make a difference in the world. Yet, all too often, dispiritedness and exhaustion become the outcome of their effort. Workers cannot inspire boards, investors or staff if people are dragging their spirit behind them. Yet the very leadership programs that help organizations become revitalized and inspired get too often touted as “too soft” and therefore questionable to strategic organizational expansion. Many good works and their organizations dwindle to mediocrity. Many good people lose heart and succumb to a numbing kind of despair that stops the inspired creation of innovative and heroic futures for the animals.

BEING RESIGNED AND DISPIRITED CAN SOUR A WHOLE ORGANIZATION

“When people are worried, discouraged, frightened, and uncertain about the future, the last thing needed is a leader who feeds these negative emotions.”

Leadership the Challenge by Kouzes and Posner

Just as negative emotions move through and contaminate whole organizations, souring employees, animals too are poisoned by atmospheres of fear, resentment and negativity. The animals look to their human partners for hope, inspiration and acknowledgement of their goodness. Turmoil, anxiety and conflict do not support their lives. Encouragement and soaring spirits do.

Leadership work is about congruency of action, speech, vision and values. When there is alignment there is connection with the natural world and what the animals need. When there is not there is abuse, objectifying, exploitation, disposing, confusion, anthropomorphism, and disconnection. Animals sense our lack of leadership and respond in kind.

INSPIRING SPIRIT, NOURISHING THE SOUL

“The climb to the top [of the summit of our visions and dreams for the animals] is arduous and long. People become exhausted, frustrated, and disenchanting. They often are tempted to give up. Leaders encourage the heart of their constituents to carry on. Genuine acts of caring uplift the spirits and draw people forward.

We need leaders who communicate in words, demeanor, and actions that they believe we will overcome. Emotions are contagious, and positive emotions resonate throughout an organization and into relationships with other constituents. To get extraordinary things done in extraordinary times, leaders must inspire optimal performance—and that can only be fueled with positive emotions.”

Leadership the Challenge by Kouzes and Posner

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The opportunity is to cultivate new work practices, before burnout comes knocking, through leadership development. Replenished spirits and souls bring about profound shifts. Development work helps participants align their leadership with core values. Participants cast out wide, elegant visions that create better futures. Participants learn to be congruent with their communication to bring about intended changes. Congruency of vision, values, actions and results promotes breakthroughs in relationship and performance. These breakthroughs source cultures that are happy, sustainable and in joy.

Participants working on behalf of animals turn to leadership development to transform burnout, renew their states of mind and learn partnership skills that benefit the animals. They seek leadership on how to be stewards of animals rather than caught in the egoistic outmoded paradigms that infect partnerships with animals and colleagues. Just as negativity is contagious so are joy, laughter, light heartedness and appreciation. Animal stewards who answer the call of leadership advance personal and organizational breakthroughs. They bring in refreshing energy to elevate spirits. Soulful communication practices revive hungering and drained workplaces. The animals thank them for that.

THE SOUL INSPIRES, INNOVATES AND STRENGTHENS

Animals love the kind of leadership that enjoys, respects and celebrates them. They in turn wag tails and purr out messages of gladness, they welcome all practices that help them to flourish. Often when one of them is rescued from destruction they communicate their appreciation in subtle and dramatic ways. David Greybeard was the first chimp of Gombe to let Jane Goodall get close to him. Jane had sat nearby in patient vigil offering friendship while learning about how the chimpanzees were much like humans. The day when David moved closer to Jane as an act of trust and acceptance, Jane and David changed history. Jane broke the scientific code to treat the “other” as object that discouraged all “i-thou” or compassionate encounters in the scientific community. In that moment, Jane pioneered the advent of the human-animal bonding as a legitimate means of learning.

Jane Goodall’s exemplary leadership is now slowly spreading to the animal steward community as practices noteworthy to emulate. Leadership work helps participants bring those timeless practices to life. These are the leaders who have what it takes to inspire others. Inspired leaders motivate and inspire staff, cultures and organizations to transform burnout and worn-out paradigms into groundbreaking precedents that let their stakeholders be enthusiastic, nourished and creative. Precedents that bring freedom, vitality and magnificence into the workplace and into the lives of animals.

