



**Moving from a Reactive to Reflective Ministry:
Leadership and Ministry Longevity in a Hectic and
Troubled World**

**Valerie Ling
Clinical Psychologist
Masters Clinical Psychology
Masters Leadership**

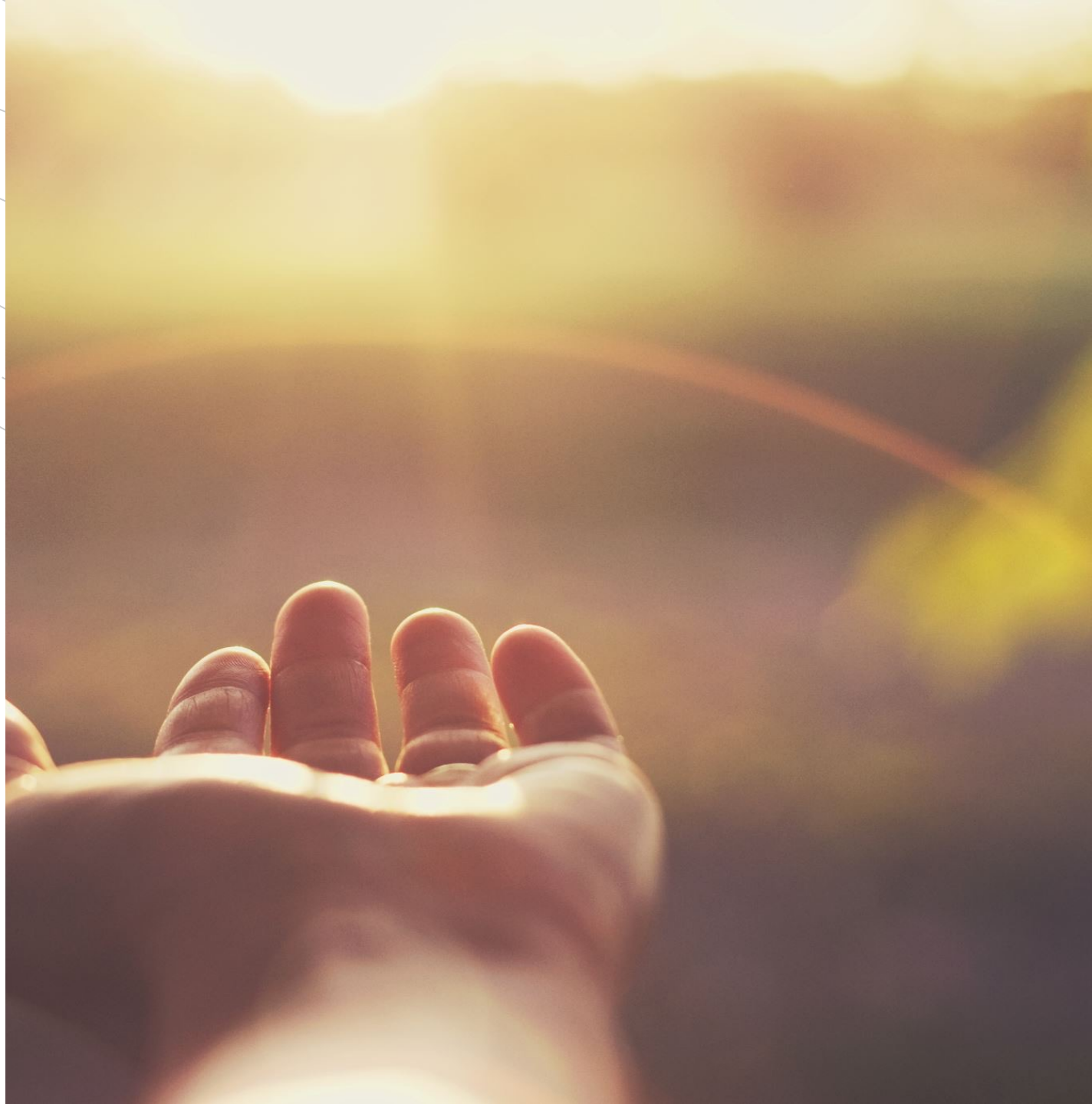


Hello!

It's a hectic
world!

- Global review of over 6000 studies
- Significant increases in depression and anxiety due to COVID-19
- Most impacted: young people, pregnant/postpartum individuals, COVID-19 hospitalised patients
- Rates of anxiety and depression:
 - 24.4% and 22.9% in general populations
 - 41.1% and 32.5% in vulnerable populations
- Rates of stress, psychological distress, PTSD/PTSS symptoms: 39.1%, 44.2%, 18.8%

It's a gospel
battle

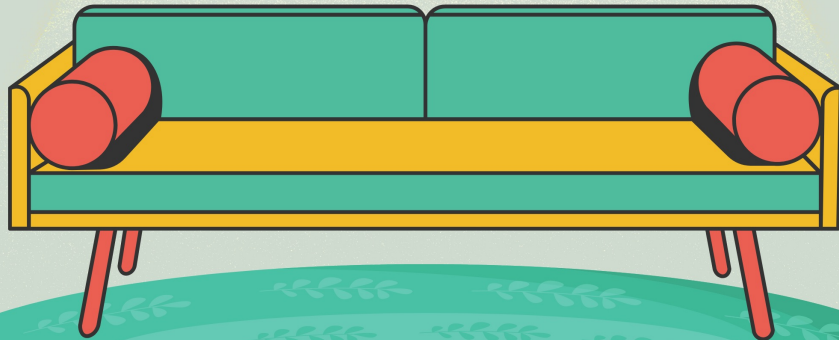




Clergy Wellbeing Quiz



CLERGY WELLBEING DOWN UNDER PODCAST



WITH VALERIE LING
WWW.EFFECTIVESERVING.COM.AU





Took formal education and training in leading teams

No leadership training received
= Servant leadership behaviors

Formal training in leadership
= Transformational leadership behaviours



Those who indicated they had thought of resigning in the last 12 months also rated higher levels in total burnout



Females rated higher levels of burnout and than men



Top 3 reasons for quitting

(multiple responses allowed)



76%

My family suffers



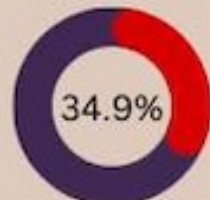
75%

I feel lonely & isolated



49%

Immense stress of job



Seriously thought of leaving ministry

35.79% of the sample endorsed moderate to very high levels of total burnout



Solo clergy leaders had statistically significant higher levels of external burnout than any of the other groups who had staff and team



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF AWARENESS PATTERNS AND CLERGY BURNOUT



Burnout



Lower level
of insight

Moderately strong correlation

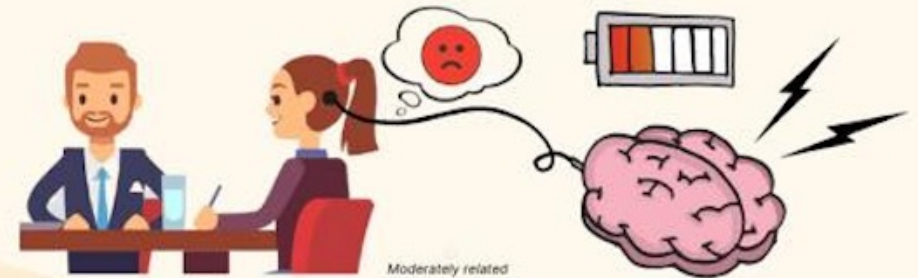
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BURNOUT AND DESTRUCTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR



Destructive leadership
behavior

+ Burnout

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND CLERGY LEADERSHIP BURNOUT



Moderately related

SHIELDS UP!

- **S - Shame:** When feeling threatened or insecure, leaders might respond defensively out of a sense of shame. This could be a deep-rooted feeling of inadequacy, or the fear of exposure and vulnerability.
- **H - Habitual Patterns:** These are automatic, unthinking responses that we've developed over time. They may have served us well in the past, or they may simply be ingrained behaviors that we've never challenged or examined closely.
- **I - Insight Poor:** Defensive behaviors often lack insight and self-awareness. We may react defensively without fully understanding why we're doing so or realizing that there could be more productive ways to respond.
- **E - Evasion:** One common defensive responses is to side-step the trigger altogether. This could take the form of avoidance, surrender, or attack.
- **L - Lack of Empathy:** Defensive responses can often be characterized by a lack of empathy or understanding for others' perspectives. When we're in a defensive mode, we're focused on protecting ourselves and may struggle to see things from other points of view.
- **D - Deflection:** Deflection is another common defensive behavior, where we shift the focus or blame onto others instead of dealing with our own feelings and responsibilities.

REACTIVE LEADERSHIP

- **R - Retaliate:** One immediate response when our shields are up could be to lash out in retaliation. This can escalate the situation and potentially cause harm to both parties involved.
- **E - Escalate:** Leaders may escalate the situation by amplifying their defensive behaviors or the perceived offense. This might involve raising one's voice, becoming more aggressive, or making the problem larger than it actually is.
- **A - Avoid:** Avoidance can be a reaction when defensive behaviors are triggered. Leaders may dodge the issue at hand, ignore feedback, or physically remove themselves from the situation, which can lead to unresolved issues and heightened tension.
- **C - Criticize:** When defenses are high, leaders might react by criticizing others. This can be a form of deflection, shifting blame or focus onto others instead of addressing their own behaviors or feelings.
- **T - Threaten:** In an escalated state, leaders might resort to threats as a means of regaining control. This could range from subtle intimidation to overt threats, both of which can damage relationships and create a hostile environment.

The case of Pastor John

- Pastor John is not only a church leader but also a husband and a father. His weeks are filled with long days of sermon preparation, church administrative work, counseling sessions, and various community outreaches. His role as a spiritual leader takes an emotional toll, often leaving him exhausted and with very little personal or family time.
- In addition to his professional responsibilities, Pastor John also has his personal worries. His marriage is going through a challenging phase, adding stress to his already overwhelmed state. At the same time, he's dealing with financial struggles which often keep him up at night.
- On top of this, his three kids, all under the age of 10, require attention and care. Between their school schedules, extracurricular activities, and the normal chaos of growing children, Pastor John feels he is continuously juggling.

Pastor John's mental state

- Pastor John has been struggling with increased stress and anxiety in recent months due to his pastoral duties. After the Sunday sermon, he often works late into the night, catching up on emails, organizing events, and preparing for the next week's sermon. This relentless schedule, combined with the emotional toll of his work, has started to take a toll on his mental health.
- His anxiety levels have been escalating, causing him sleepless nights and making it difficult for him to switch off from his pastoral responsibilities. Despite his best intentions, he finds himself reaching for a glass or two of wine more often than he would like in the evenings, as a means to relax and unwind.
- To compound matters, his physical health is also deteriorating. His doctor has warned him about his high sugar consumption, and advised him to cut down on his caffeine intake, which has increased due to his need to stay awake and alert during his long working hours.



Pastor John gets an
email from Sarah

PASTOR JOHN'S SHIELD

- **S** - Leaders may react defensively due to deep-rooted feelings of shame or vulnerability.
- **H** - Habitual Patterns are unexamined, automatic responses formed over time.
- **I** - Defensive behaviors often display a lack of insight and self-awareness.
- **E** - Evasion is a defensive tactic to avoid, surrender, or confront a trigger.
- **L** - Being defensive can result in a diminished ability to empathize with others.
- **D** - Deflection redirects blame or focus away from oneself.

PASTOR JOHN'S REACT

- **R - Retaliation** involves lashing out when feeling threatened, risking harm to all parties.
- **E - Escalation** amplifies defensive reactions, making issues seem bigger than they are.
- **A - Avoidance** leads to dodging issues and increasing tension when triggered.
- **C - High defenses** can prompt leaders to criticize others as a form of deflection.
- **T - Leaders** may use threats, subtle or overt, to regain control in tense situations.

REFLECTIVE LEADERSHIP

- **R - Recognize Emotions:** Start by identifying the emotions you're experiencing in a given situation. Pay close attention to your feelings and try to pinpoint exactly what you're feeling - is it anger, frustration, happiness, confusion, etc.?
- **E - Examine Triggers:** Look at what caused these emotions. Was it a comment from a coworker, a certain situation, or a specific thought? Understanding what triggers your emotions can help you to manage them more effectively in the future.
- **F - Feel the Emotion:** Allow yourself to feel the emotion fully. Often, we try to suppress uncomfortable emotions, but it's important to let them exist. Don't judge or try to change the emotion, just feel it.
- **L - Look for Patterns:** Do you notice any recurring themes or patterns? Do certain situations, people, or types of work consistently trigger the same emotions? Identifying patterns can provide valuable insights into how you respond to different elements of your environment.
- **E - Evaluate Responses:** Assess how you typically respond to these emotions. Do you react impulsively, do you suppress the emotions, or do you try to confront them? Evaluating your responses can help you understand whether they're helpful or harmful.
- **C - Consider Alternatives:** Based on your evaluation, consider alternative ways to respond that could be more helpful. For example, if you notice that you tend to react impulsively when you feel angry, you might consider taking a few deep breaths and counting to ten the next time you feel this emotion.
- **T - Take Action:** Finally, take action based on your reflections. This might involve implementing new ways of responding to your emotions, changing certain behaviors, or seeking help if necessary. Remember that self-reflection is only the first step - real growth comes from taking action.

Pastor John's Reflective Spaces

- **Therapy:** To provide a safe environment for Pastor John to address underlying mental health issues – anxiety, perfectionism
- **Pastoral Supervision:** To create a structured and confidential setting for Pastor John to reflect upon, analyze, and improve his ministry practices, allowing him to address blind spots and enhance his pastoral care.
- **Mentoring:** To offer Pastor John a supportive relationship with an experienced individual who understands his struggles, providing a space for open dialogue about spiritual life, personal challenges, and fostering feelings of belonging and understanding.
- **Coaching:** To equip Pastor John with specific leadership strategies and skills, aiding him in conflict resolution, effective communication, and time management, especially in dealing with complex situations like the one with Sarah.

Stay in touch

Valerie@effectiveserving.com.au



Thank
you.

www.effectiveserving.com.au

contact@effectiveserving.com.au