

Finding or Reconnecting to our Meaning and Purpose

[This template can be used by region board members to lead and facilitate a 45–60-minute session at a chapter event. Region leaders should feel free to adjust the content and approach.]

Description

During the last year, CUPA-HR has been so fortunate to engage with author Jennifer Moss regarding content from her 2021 book, *The Burnout Epidemic*. In chapter 7 of her book, Moss focused on the importance of taking care of ourselves, finding meaning in our work and taking the time to focus on the bigger picture of the importance of our work to our colleges and universities and to society overall. During this session, board member, _____, will facilitate a discussion to help us reflect on the features of our work that give it meaning and purpose. We will also discuss ways that we help our teams and co-workers finding meaning and purpose in their roles.

Speaker Comments and Facilitation Guidance

[Opening comments from region leader that acknowledge that burnout is a challenge for higher education HR leaders and that part of the way we work through this challenge is sharing with and leaning on our higher ed HR colleagues across the country. Region leader should also restate the program description from above.]

Outcomes Expected

- Strengthen connection between participants.
- Identify what is meaningful about our work as higher ed HR leaders.
- Share and identify ways we help our teams and colleagues find meaning in their work.

Small Group Discussion

Let's break into small groups of 4-5 for 20 minutes to discuss the following questions. *[Note that the chapter leader coordinating the meeting will need to know about this in advance and be prepared to send participants to small groups in Zoom or help you identify the groups in the meeting room if this is an in-person event.]*

We will use the discussion prompts to help us focus on what is meaningful about our work as higher education HR leaders. We will also use the prompts to help us focus on how we inspire our teams and co-workers and help them find meaning in their work.

In your small groups, please identify a notetaker and a spokesperson. When we return, we will hear from some of the groups, but we will also ask our notetakers to start posting some of the responses in the chat (if this is a Zoom meeting). I will also ask our notetakers to share their notes with me via email following the large group discussion so that I can compile the responses to share with the national office.

The following questions were adapted from an activity that Jennifer Moss recommended in her book, *The Burnout Epidemic*.

Here are the questions for the small groups:

- What features of your work give it meaning?
- In what ways do you push through feelings of demotivation?
- What do you love about being a leader?
- How do you choose to inspire purpose in your teams and co-workers?
- How should your staff and/or co-workers feel about the meaning of their work?

Discussion Process

- Break into small groups for 20 minutes.
- Following small group discussions, facilitate group report outs for approximately 15-20 minutes. Encourage notetakers to be posting in the chat if facilitating virtually.
- On the next page of this facilitator document are the summary responses from a similar activity during the 2022 Association Leadership Program. Please feel free to incorporate some of these responses to supplement and support the comments shared by session participants.

[When groups return from breakout groups, facilitate report outs from 3-4 groups (or more if you have time during the 15–20-minute report out segment). Following report outs, summarize overall comments and ask notetakers to send their notes to you via email. We would appreciate it if you would then follow-up within a week or so by sending the summary to learn@cupahr.org.]

Closing Comments

If you are not already doing so, I encourage you to frequently visit the CUPA-HR website and use the resources we have created and curated to help you work through your challenges as a higher education HR leader. We also encourage you to continue sharing with your CUPA-HR colleagues. *[Insert other comments you would like to share to summarize the session and thank participants, including the chapter board, for the opportunity engage with the group.]*

Summary of responses from a similar activity at July 2022 Association Leadership Program (ALP)

Finding or Reconnecting To Our Meaning and Purpose (Fri opening)

- **What features of your work give it meaning?**
 - Problem-solving/big picture/impact/seeing results
 - Creativity
 - Supporting others/contributions (succeed, realization of positive)/service/advocate
 - Change/complexity of job
 - Relationships/building connections/interaction/community
 - Mentorship/coaching/guiding others
 - Feeling engaged/finding purpose
 - Leadership team/influencing culture
- **In what ways do you push through feelings of demotivation?**
 - Reset (take breaks, vacation, walk, self-care, campus activities)
 - Have discussions/vent/connect with others in similar areas/be in-person
 - Reflect/focus on successes, impact or possible solutions/take action/reframe/re-evaluate definition of success/open communication
 - Reconnect to the mission or purpose/keep eye on bigger picture
 - Develop others/training/mentorship
 - Humor
- **What do you love about being a leader?**
 - Accomplishment/resolving issues/involvement
 - Developing leaders/lead by example/set the tone/empower others
 - Opportunities/responsibility/accountability/challenges
 - Strategic planning/envision future/influence decision-making/see impact and transformation on campus
 - Relationships/mentoring/coaching/partnerships
 - Serving our teams/removing barriers/seeing success and growth
 - Gathering data/info
- **How do you choose (or what can we do) to inspire purpose in the teams and work groups you are part of?**
 - Acknowledge accomplishments/show outcome of work/give credit/regular meetings
 - Engagement/team-building activities
 - Training/career development/provide feedback
 - Ask for feedback/understand employee differences in motivation/listen to ideas and take action
 - Connect to big picture, mission and goals/set the tone
 - Empower others/allow mistakes
 - Thank yous/respect/raises or bonuses/hear from other leaders about impact of work
- **How should your staff and colleagues feel about the meaning of their work?**
 - Accomplished/experienced/skillful/proud
 - Excited/engaged
 - Respected
 - Bringing value/impact on other staff and ultimately students
 - Understand that meaning/contentment is different per individual
 - Build relationships to understand motivations of staff