

Burnout + Boundaries

The Radical Act of Being Human

Move United Education Conference, Spring 2026

Harlow Nonprofit Consulting



Abbey reading a book about outer space outside with her kids

ICEBREAKER

The Subversive Hobbyist

Having something in your life that is just for you — unoptimized, unjustifiable, entirely yours — is a countercultural act.

Stop glamourising “hustle culture” and start glamourising the Frog and Toad lifestyle.



Frog and Toad enjoying life

Who I Am



Abbey with her daughter and cotton candy at a farmers market



Abbey with her kids at the Tunbridge Fair

Why I Carry This Question



Young Abbey with her dad



Abbey's husband and kids



Abbey's kids dressed up as a rabbit and cat

Rest is not something you earn on your way back to being productive.
It is something you are entitled to as a living human being.

Agenda

○

¹The Frame

Defining Human-Centered Work

○

²The Context

Naming the data and history

○

³The Practice

Releasing your time

○

⁴The Organizational

Shifting the 'water' we swim in

○

⁵The Closing

Cathedral Building

The Norms

A few things before we dive in:



Half-Baked Ideas

Bring 'em!



We're All Bringing Our Own Things

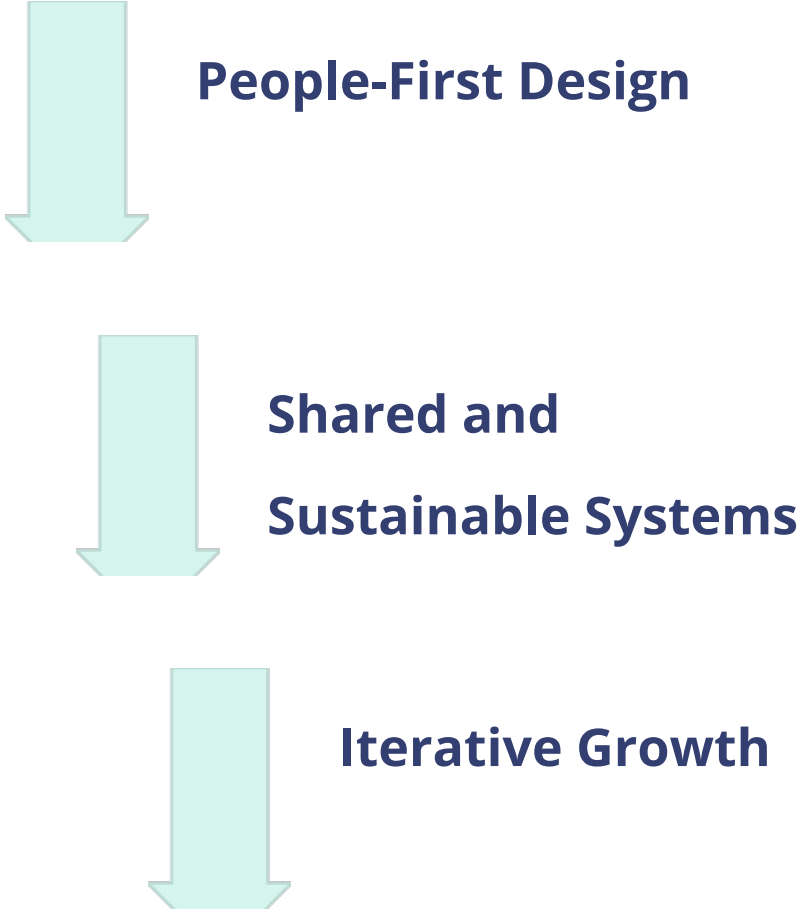
Step outside of your comfort zone
as you feel able.



Self-Care

Step away if you need to.

What The Heck Is Human-Centered Work?



Abbey's husband Justin with their newborn children, working

State of the sector:

7 in 10

**Plan to Look for a
New Job**

59%

**Not Enough
Support**

200%

Cost of Turnover

Sources: 2025 Nonprofit Retention Survey, Chronicle of Philanthropy

Themes:

1

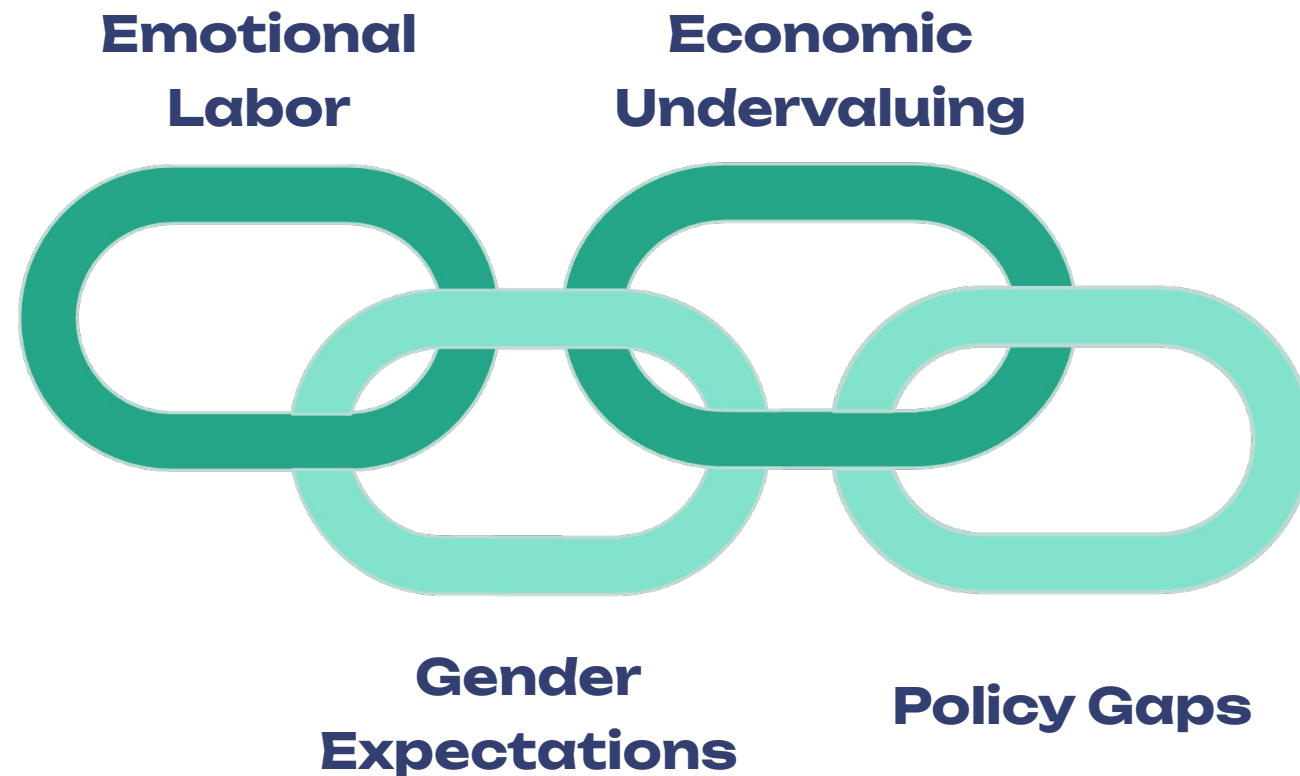
**Caring Was Never
Supposed to Pay**

2

**The System Makes
the Personal Look
Like Failure**

3

**Rest Is Not the
Opposite of Good
Work**

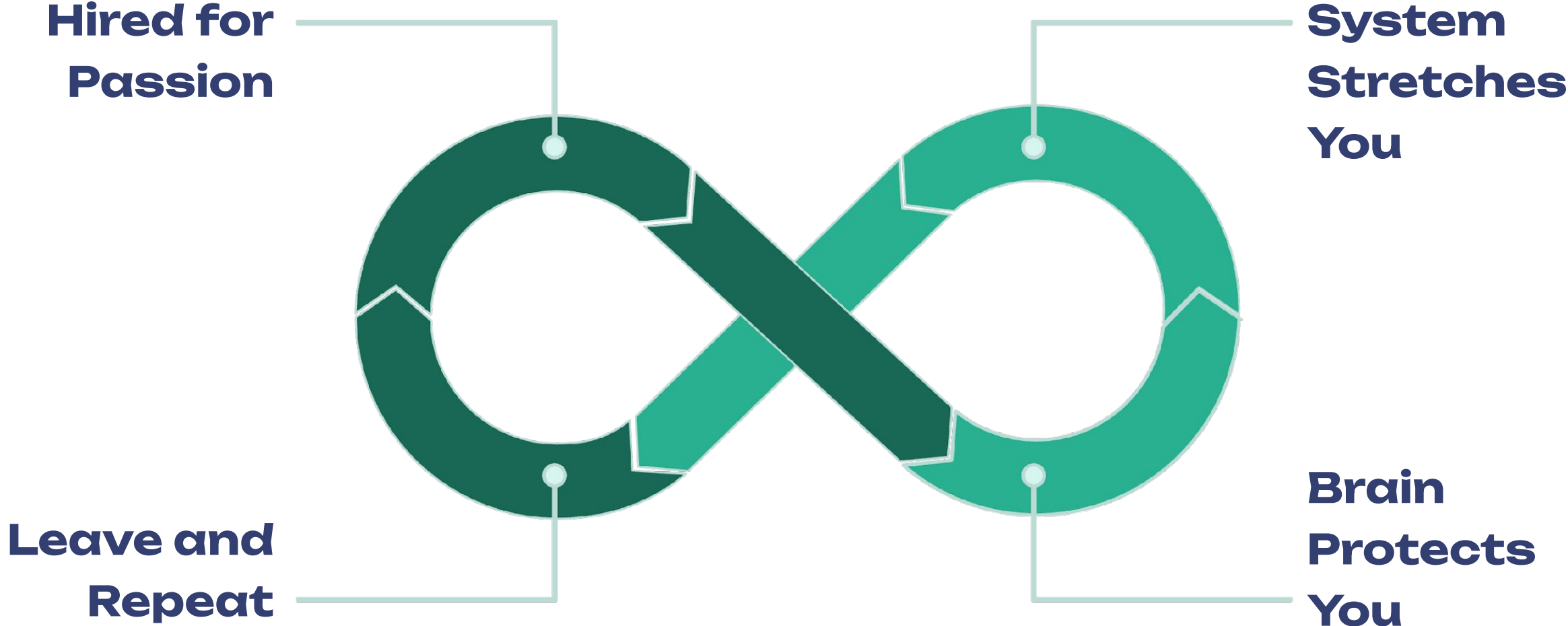


THEME ONE

Caring Was Never Supposed to Pay

Nonprofit work emerged from charitable volunteerism, labor coded as "women's work."

The System Makes the Personal Look Like Failure





Credit: Jon Klassen, *The Skull*
Image shows a young child lying in bed
next to a skull

THEME THREE

Rest Is Not the Opposite of Good Work

We've collectively decided that rest is a reward you earn once you've done enough.

Small Group Discussion

“What’s one expectation — at work or in your life — that you meet every day... that you never explicitly agreed to?”

Choose one theme to go deeper:

Theme 1: The Passion Discount

Where is your "care" for the mission being used as a justification for an overabundant workload?

Theme 2: Personal vs. Structural

What have you been blaming on your own discipline or personality that might actually be your nervous system protecting you from a structural flaw?

Theme 3: Rest

What part of your human self have you been told is "unprofessional" to bring into the room?

Exploring What's Possible

Individual Level:

Let some things not get done.

You are not the load-bearing wall of the universe. You can put something down.

And she didn't say a word.



Credit: Vera Brosgol, Leave Me Alone!

Image shows a woman happily overwhelmed by children

The Eisenhower Matrix

Urgent + Important Do Now

A major donor just called. Your ED is out. You handle it.
The grant deadline is tomorrow and you're the only one who knows the login.

Not Urgent + Important Schedule It

Building your mid-level donor pipeline. Writing the thank-you call script. Updating your case for support.

Urgent + Not Important Delegate or Limit

Reformatting the gala program for the third time.
Responding to a board member's email about the font on the newsletter. Attending a meeting that could have been a memo.

Not Urgent + Not Important Let It Go

Perfecting a report no one reads. Maintaining a social channel with 40 followers because 'we've always done it.'
Saying yes to a partnership that doesn't serve your mission.

Rest Is Not Evenly Distributed

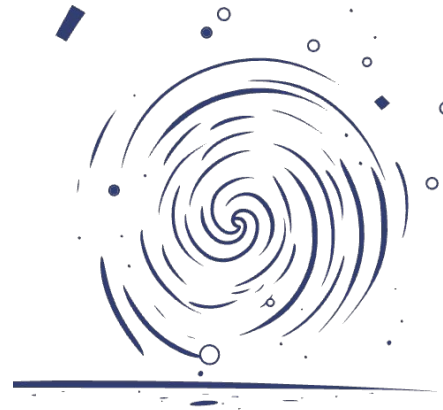
If you have power, your job is different

- Send interview questions ahead of time
- Make norms explicit — don't assume absorption
- Define what "urgent" actually means
- Offer a menu of communication styles
- Build recovery time into project timelines
- Share leadership — don't let one person hold everything

THE ORGANIZATIONAL

Small Groups

What's one thing your organization does — intentionally or not — that makes it harder for someone with less power than you to protect their time or energy?



CLOSING

The Cathedral

- Something you're releasing: an expectation or practice that doesn't belong to you anymore
- A boundary that protects your energy for what matters
- One stone you'll lay for someone else, however small, that makes it easier for the people around you to do this differently

Books to Find



Emergent Strategy

adrienne maree brown



Four Thousand Weeks

Oliver Burkeman



Bullshit Jobs

David Graeber



Rest Is Resistance

Tricia Hersey



Wintering

Katherine May



Burnout

Emily Nagoski &
Amelia Nagoski



How to Do Nothing

Jenny Odell



The Art of Gathering

Priya Parker



Laziness Does Not Exist

Devon Price

Questions? If we didn't get to yours, please email me to continue the conversation.

Let's Stay in

I'm around and I love chatting.

Touch

Email: Abbey.drake.harlow@gmail.com

Free Resources

<https://harlownonprofitconsulting.myflodesk.com/voxer>

Ask Me Anything Voice Note Channel!



<https://www.harlownonprofitconsulting.com/newsletter>

Newsletter: Practical & a little unconventional



Starting April 29 (Free for Move United conference registrants)

<https://www.harlownonprofitconsulting.com/learninglab>

Strengths-Based Leadership Learning Lab

