



The Rec-Room

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Re-Creative Resources, Inc.
 Education, Consultation, and Resources for
 Recreation and Activity Professionals

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Frustrated, Burnt, Angry & Resentful: A-Z Tips for Activity Professionals Who Need a Boost!

By **Kimberly Grandal BA, CTRS, ACC**
 Executive Director of **Re-Creative Resources Inc.**

"Hi Kim,

It is good to be on your mailing list. I am going through some rough times right now and I need help finding a path! I am in a small assisted living coming off my 3rd year as the Activity Director and we are down in census right now, so everyone is getting things heaped onto their plates. I am feeling very burnt, angry, and resentful that I have to be everything for everybody. I have been looking for jobs but not sure that I want to stay in this field because this feels like the nature of the job all over. What I need the help in is standing up for myself and my department on what we can and won't do as part of our jobs. Right now we are the porters, the food service, the activities, the bus drivers, and marketing and I have little to no time or energy for my family and I am certainly not getting paid enough for all the extra hours I put in. I love the residents and when I can do a group, uninterrupted, and have some creativity (but that is rare) I feel as if I am responsible for making it all happen! It feels like there is no way to manage time because of the crisis factor and the end result if that I am stifled creatively and therefore shutting down. All of this is holding me back from getting my MEPAP 2 done and getting certified. I just don't think it is any better anywhere else!

*Sincerely,
 Frustrated in XYX Assisted Living Facility"*

Does this sound familiar? Signs of burnout include: frustration, failure, despair, irritability, helplessness, exhaustion, isolation, and powerlessness. I recently received this email and found it to be so



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 Recreation Directors in LTC

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Kim's Corner and Holiday Tips

This is a busy time of year for Activity Professionals and Recreation Professionals and I can emphasize with what you are probably going through right now and in the

weeks to come. You all provide so much holiday cheer and quality of life.

It is amazing how you continue to smile throughout the process of decorating the facility, wrapping large amounts of gifts, coordinating with dozens of community groups, while maintaining your regular workload and the ability to keep the festivity alive within yourself to share with your friends and family. It can be quite the challenge!

Please take a moment to enjoy the holiday season for yourself. Here are some tips to help you get through this hectic time of year.

- *Maintain a daily list of things to do. [Download a free things to do list](#)
- *Avoid waiting until the last minute to buy and wrap resident gifts.
- *Shop online (if possible) or ask volunteers to help.
- *Utilize a gift giving tree.
- *Ask churches, [community groups](#), family members, etc, for donations.
- *Take a trip to the dollar store if funds are really low.
- *Buy wrapping paper after Christmas at clearance prices and wrap gifts as you buy them.
- *Have a wrapping party with refreshments. Invite volunteer, staff, family members.
- *Purchase holiday cards after Christmas at clearance prices and prepare them in September.
- *Plan the holiday parties way in advance to assure you have the best entertainers!
- *Don't overbook community groups. It's ok to ask them to come in January or another time of year.
- *Involve residents, volunteers, facility staff and family members in the tree trimming and decorating.
- *Have decorating contests to elicit support such as a tree trimming contest, unit decorating contest, door decorating contest, etc.
- *Delegate, delegate, delegate!
- *Learn to say no. Practice now-say "NO" out loud. You can do it! Go ahead. Say it again.... "NO"! Great job! Remember, you don't have to do it all, go to every party, or help with everything. Yes, be a team player, but remember, you have limitations.
- *Schedule one or two personal days during the holidays. It's a must to make

powerful and quite honestly, reminiscent of my own earlier experiences as an Activity Director. I worked in one facility in which I actually resigned three times! Luckily I had supportive administration who realized my resignations were related to burnout and that I needed support and guidance.

For this reason I had to address this issue further. Many Activity Directors go through times of such despair and burnout that they actually leave the profession that they used to LOVE! Sometimes we act out of impulse and resign out of sheer frustration and burnout. Please try some of these ideas BEFORE making decisions that could change your life or your career path.

ASK for help when you need it. It doesn't mean you are weak, it means you are smart!

Find a **BALANCE**. Try to balance all aspects of your work such as office time, resident time, staff time, you time, and so on. You must also find balance between work, family, friends, and so on.

COMMUNICATE your needs, issues, responsibilities, etc. to the appropriate individuals, especially your supervisor/boss. Don't assume he/she knows that you are feeling stressed or burnt out.

DELEGATE your responsibilities when appropriate. Even residents, family members and volunteers can help.

EDUCATE anyone and everyone about the importance of therapeutic activities and quality of life.

Make time for **FAMILY and FRIENDS**.

Set **GOALS** for yourself and your department as well as personally and professionally.

Have a **HEALTHY** lifestyle. Get enough rest, eat right and exercise.

Find the **INSPIRATION**. What inspire you? Is it the residents? A mentor? A religion or spirituality preference? Nature? Poetry? Music? Once you find what inspires you, then MAKE time to pursue your inspirational cues.

Review your **JOB DESCRIPTION**. It's important to know exactly what your responsibilities are.



shopping easier for you with less crowded stores. If you are a director, allow your staff to take a day or two off as well to avoid call outs.

*Try to avoid overtime hours if possible. I know, I said, TRY!

*Schedule major projects after the first of the year. It's just not that important to categorize the video collection right now.

*Do as much as you can earlier in the week so you are not as tired when the weekend comes. You don't have to have big parties on Fridays!

*Schedule one to one time with some residents. Listening to residents share their life always inspires me when I'm overwhelmed.

*Take some time for yourself at work. Close your office door (if you're lucky enough to have one), do some deep breathing, put your feet up, have lunch **away** from your desk, go for a walk outside, etc.

*Laugh it off! [Click here](#) for some holiday humor. For some great holiday riddles [click here](#).

*Do something for yourself (hot bath, massage, manicure, aromatherapy, etc.)

*Get adequate sleep!

*Walk around the facility at night time to enjoy the holiday lights and décor. Everything looks so different at night.

*To avoid having to cancel routine programs because of last minute community groups wanting to schedule, maintain a list of all community groups and contacts. Call **them** in advance next year instead of waiting for them to schedule with you at the last minute. Download a free [Community Groups Contact Form](#)

*Make sure all recreation staff has completed mandatory education **BEFORE** the beginning of the holiday season. Download a FREE [In-service Tracking Form](#).

*You don't have to reinvent the wheel. Go ahead and utilize resources that are available to you. Join the [Activity Resource Center](#).

*If you waited too long to prepare this year, take a deep breath and take it one day at a time, but next time remember to start preparing in September.

I truly hope that you all get a chance to enjoy the holiday season and take some time for yourself. Happy Holidays to you, your friends and family and your

KNOWLEDGE is power so educate yourself in all aspects of activities, therapeutic recreation, the regulations, policies, the population you serve, and so on.

Know your own **LIMITS**. Seriously consider what you can and cannot do in terms of time, skills and resources.

MARKET, MARKET, MARKET. When you let others know all about the various activities, special events and programs that you offer, you will receive more compliments, recognition and appreciation. This in turn, boosts your confidence and morale.

Say **NO**. Activity professionals are often afraid to say they cannot help with some special project or new responsibilities and the profession often becomes the dumping ground for all those unwanted tasks. With a positive demeanor and some negotiations, sometimes it's ok to politely decline.

Schedule **OFFICE** time. It's ok to close the door and get your managerial duties done.

PRIORITIZE. Setting priorities is often difficult for activity professionals, everything seems like a priority. But it's important to look at deadlines, schedules, and needs.

QUIT doing what you are doing if it continuously makes you feel this way. But before doing so, be sure to try this A-Z list. If there is no relief, then ask if you can be transferred, take a leave of absence or ask if there are other positions available.

Schedule **RESIDENT** time. Nothing reminds us more of why we started working in the activity profession, more than spending quality, uninterrupted time with the residents. Designate certain activities that only you facilitate like a support group, Activity Planning Committee, Leisure Education or activities that you enjoy the most. It will rejuvenate your spirit every time! The key is to let go of all other responsibilities during your resident time and just enjoy the interaction.

SOCIALIZE and network. Joining local, state and national professional organizations can provide you with much support, information, and inspiration. Many people love attending conferences and group meetings for the networking and sharing that is offered.

residents!

Life. Be in it! *Kim* ☺

Stock Up on Your Resources!

Re-Creative Resources Activity Resource Center Members now receive **50% off** all Re-Creative Resources Inc.

[Downloadable Materials](#).

Just another reason why you should join the Activity Resource Center!

For more information on this offer, please contact [Kim Grandal](#).

. Books are not included.

Re-Creative Resources' Inc. November Raffle Winner

The winner of the Re-Creative Resources November raffle is **Rebecca Lewis** from state of Florida. Rebecca won the **Country Classics DVD** from **Melody Lane Productions**. This great prize is courtesy of Melody Lane Productions. Visit their website at www.melodylane.ca for a fantastic collection of singalong DVDs! Congratulations Rebecca!

Enter December Raffle

Enter the December raffle for a chance to win the **"Recreation Department Review Manual**, courtesy of **Re-Creative Resources Inc.** This manual (valued at \$39.95) was designed to assist the Recreation Director or Recreation Consultant in providing a thorough assessment of the facility's Recreation Department in Long-Term Care facilities. The various audit tools may be utilized for quarterly Quality Assurance projects, annual review of the department, survey-preparations, or spontaneous assessment. It is also a great tool for Recreation Consultants or Recreation Directors that are new to a particular facility.

For a chance to win this comprehensive downloadable manual, simply enter the raffle drawing by contacting **Kimberly Grandal**. Please be sure to put **Raffle Drawing** in the comments section. A random winner will be selected and



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TIME MANAGEMENT. Time management is often an issue for Activity Directors who are trying to manage a department, facilitate activities, train and educate, market, attend meetings, write reports, recruit staff and volunteers, provide documentation, talk to family members, raise money, and so on. The list is endless. It's important to find a time management system that works for you. My favorite time management system comes from Steve McClatchy, President of Alleer Training and Consulting. You can read his article, "[How to Save an Hour a Day](#)".

UNITE! All for one and one for all! If you're a team player and you help out other departments and colleagues, chances are they will help you in return.

VENT! Don't let it ferment! But do so to the appropriate people. Don't vent to your staff, residents, volunteers, family members, etc. You must remain positive around those individuals. Vent to other AD's, certain co-workers or people you trust. Close your office door and vent if you need to.

WRITE it down. Studies show that writing is very therapeutic. When you feel that work and life are becoming overwhelming and stressful, write down your feelings. What is the cause of these feelings? How exactly do you feel? Are you sad, angry, bitter, frustrated, exhausted, etc.? What will help you feel better?

Remember that **XANADU** does not exist. It is a mythical, fabulous place that was allegedly situated in contemporary China thousands of years ago. This place was protected from external hazards by a special shield that created a "paradise" environment for its inhabitants. Each place you work will have its own issues and challenges.

Schedule **YOU** time! It's of utmost importance to get enough rest, relaxation, and leisure time for you. Activity Professionals are the worst at self-recreating!

Create a **ZEN** garden. Zen gardens are said to help heal and relax the mind, body, and soul. Mini Zen gardens are common in stressful business jobs. This consists of a small box of sand with miniature rocks and a miniature rake. When you get stressed, you can rake the sand in slow strokes while breathing deeply and feel the calming effect! To make your own affordable table-top Zen garden, [click here](#).

announced in the January issue of The Rec-Room. The deadline for entry is **December 10, 2008.**

Please note: all entries are kept confidential and are for the sole purpose of winning a fantastic prize. Don't miss out!

IN2L Adaptive Computers and Software www.IN2L.com

Mention Re-Creative Resources when you purchase the IN2I system and receive a copy of "Breaking Down the Silos: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Quality of Life In-Service" (A \$15 value!)

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- *Guest Book (*Say hi!*)
- *Activity Resource Center
- *Re-Creative Resources' Blog
- *The Rec-Quest (*Q&A Forum*)

ProActivity Reports Activity computer software www.maturesolutions.com

Mention Re-Creative Resources when you purchase the ProActivity software and you'll get an additional two weeks free! (A \$25.00 value!)

January Issue of the Rec-Room

Due to the hectic holiday season, there will NOT be an issue of the Rec-Room published in the month of December. Instead, the January issue will become available the first week of January. Be sure to visit the [Re-Creative Resources Inc. Blog](#) for updates.

Are you a nationally certified activity professional? If not, take a few moments to learn about NCCAP and the benefits



Selecting the Best Talent for your Therapeutic Recreation Department

By Shelley Evans MT-BC, ADC, CDP

Because of the nature of the job requirements in a Therapeutic Recreation department, there is high potential for burn out. We work closely with individuals who are at the end of their life span. Each day we are reminded of the requirements that are upon us to provide person-centered care that enhances our resident's quality of life. As the leader of the Therapeutic Recreation department, it is key that we are hiring the best individuals for our department and our residents.

We as leaders need to make sure that we have all of the tools available to conduct the best possible interview with our job candidates. Hiring well leads us to have good employee retention. We need to address our organizations standards of behavior in the interview process.

Using behavioral Interviewing skills can increase retention and reduce turnover. When you hire the right person for your department, you have the opportunity to increase resident satisfaction and you will have higher levels of productivity, and increased satisfaction with your employees. This technique gives you, the leader, higher quality interview data and aids you in making the best evidence based decisions.

You will want to establish your behavior based interview questions in advance. Start with reviewing your therapeutic recreation job descriptions and identify your core competencies of each position. Review the skills you expect the staff to complete to perform the job well. Prioritize. This will be the foundation for you interview. When asking Behavior Based Interview questions, you are listening for 3 things. You want to hear about the event that occurred, the action that they took, and the result of their action.

If you would like to see how *adaptable* the candidate is in a busy Therapeutic Recreation department, questions you may ask could be:

- Can you give me an example of a time when the scope of your project changed?
- How did you change or modify your plan?
- What was the outcome?

If you would like to see how the *communications skills* are for the candidate, questions you may ask are:

of national certification.
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*Phone: 732-340-1210

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- Can you describe a time when good listening skills helped you overcome a communication problem or gave you an opportunity to exceed the resident or families expectations?
- How did you execute good listening skills?
- What was the outcome?
- How did you exceed expectations?

Planning is a large component in our field. It takes unique and *flexible* individuals to execute quality programs that fall within the range of our resident's goals and objectives. Questions that could be offered are:

- Can you give me an example of a time when your projected plan or schedule changed because of unforeseen circumstances?
- What did you do?
- What was your outcome?
- Describe for me a time when you had to handle multiple, competing priorities.
- What did you do?
- Please give me specific information/details.

When a leader has the proper tools when conducting an interview, they can hire the best person for their team. I would highly suggest that a leader takes a hard look into their department. If you have high performing individuals in your department that you can always count on, consider them for a peer interview team. Provide them with the education and knowledge on the interview process. Develop for them specific guidelines for the interview process. You have to be comfortable with the peer interview team's decision. Do not pass on a candidate to the peer interview team that you would not hire and be happy with. If you have questions about a candidate, solve them for yourself first.

Materials referenced from Quint Studers [Hardwiring Excellence](#)