

STAYING RESILIENT WHILE TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD:

THE
COVID-19
EDITION

HUMAN
RIGHTS

A stylized illustration in black, white, and grey. In the center, a woman with dark hair and a black top holds a sign that says 'HUMAN RIGHTS' with both hands raised. To her left, a woman with long blonde hair is shouting with her mouth wide open. In the foreground, a woman with dark skin is shouting into a megaphone. To the right, another woman with dark hair and a bindi looks on. In the background, a person in a white shirt and a grey cap holds a flag with horizontal stripes. The scene is set against a dark background with white dots, suggesting a night sky or a protest at night. The entire illustration is framed by a yellow brushstroke at the top and bottom.


A FANZINE FOR ACTIVISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

THIS FANZINE BELONGS TO:


STAYING RESILIENT WHILE TRYING TO SAVE THE WORLD : A FANZINE FOR ACTIVISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

*Fanzine
April 2020*

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Amnesty International is a global movement of people who take injustice personally. We are campaigning for a world where human rights are enjoyed by all. We investigate and expose the facts, whenever and wherever abuses happen. We lobby governments, and other powerful groups such as companies. Making sure they keep their promises and respect international law. We support people to claim their rights through education and training. By telling the powerful stories of the people we work with, we mobilize millions of supporters around the world to campaign for change and to stand in defence of activists on the frontline.

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Campaigning for human rights is **straight-up** *exhausting*.

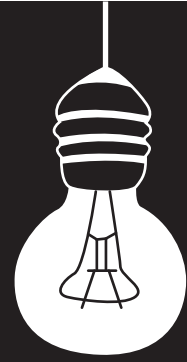


People who do activism and volunteer with **Amnesty** are some of the most passionate people on the planet –



That's what makes activism with **Amnesty** so empowering and so much fun: working with others who have the same dreams and the same drive as you, who want to protect and respect human rights around the world.

But there's also the darker side to activism.



While trying to make the world **the best place it can be**, you see *the worst of it*.

It can make you question
what you're doing, and why.

It can make you ask,
"What's the point?"

And it can *seriously*
impact on your

MENTAL HEALTH



Young people from the Americas came together and we talked about the burnout that we've all been feeling. Our activists and volunteers are central to the Amnesty International movement; without them, it just couldn't work. So, we wanted to produce something that could help you to avoid the most common pitfalls of being an activist, while helping you to fight human rights in a way that doesn't drag you down.

Something that you can use to help keep yourself healthy, happy, and inspired to keep striving to make the world a better place. Because you can do both – be an activist AND have a life. This fanzine is designed to give you some tools and ideas to do that. We hope you find it helpful, and that it reminds you that you – as a person as well as an activist – are just as important as the people you're fighting for.

DISCLAIMER I

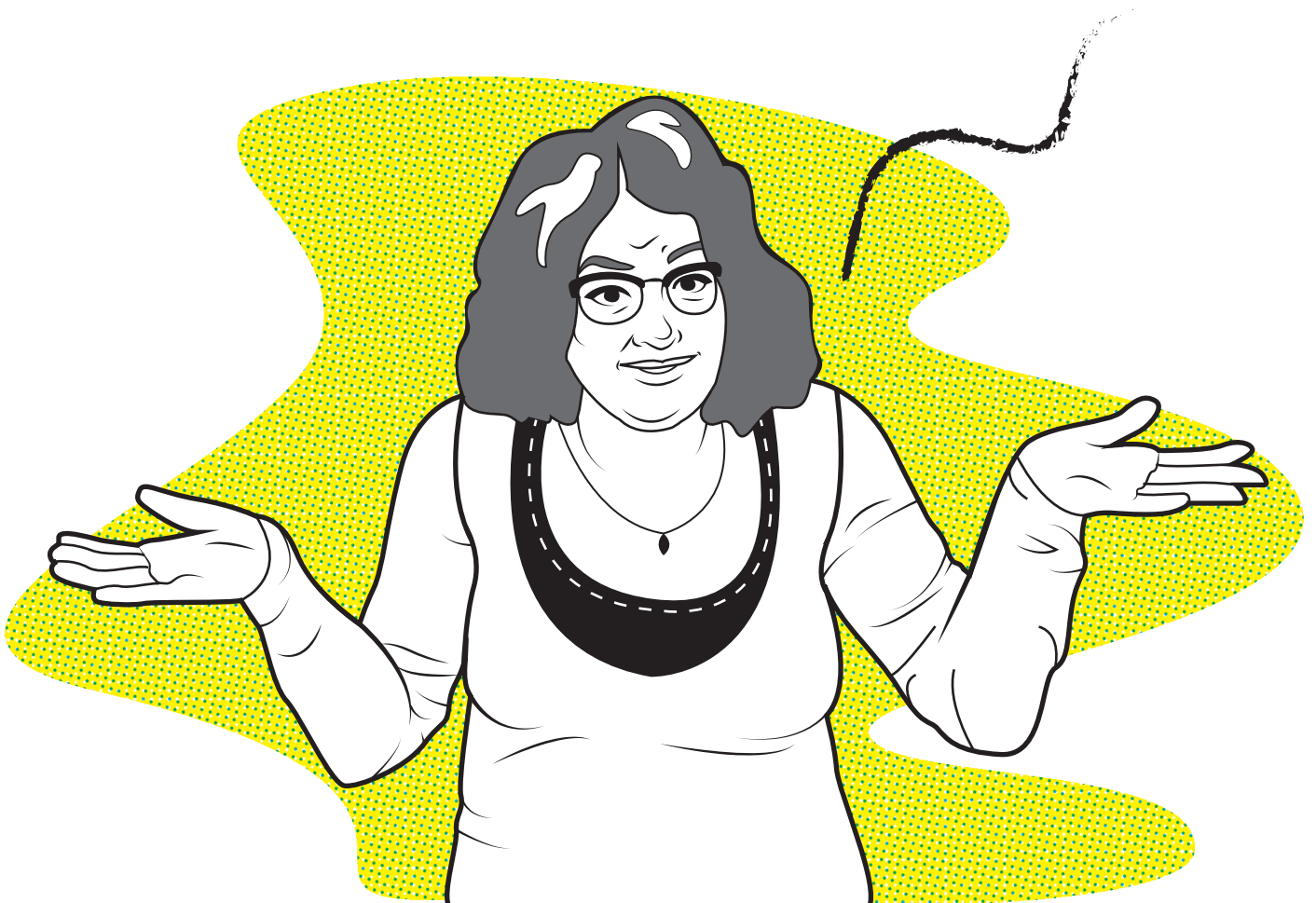
We understand that the discussion around mental health, wellbeing, self-care, and burnout is complex. There is no one-size-fits-all solution and we do not attempt to come up with one here. Additionally, we believe it's important to emphasize the fact that it can be dangerous to generalize the experiences of our activists or reduce them all to the same experience, as no one source of information can accurately represent the experience of every person. We hope that this fanzine sheds some light, answers some questions, prompts some ideas, and at the same time sparks conversations about the topic of mental health that are more comprehensive, more nuanced, and more sustained than before – because the conversation shouldn't end here.

DISCLAIMER II

Yup, we have more stuff to say. For the purposes of this fanzine we welcome and will use Amnesty's Trans Inclusive Language Guidelines.

DISCLAIMER III

The stories in this fanzine are reflective of our collective experiences. The characters portrayed here are fictional.



MY ANXIETIES HAVE ANXIETIES

When the news around **MARIELLE FRANCO'S**

assassination broke, it left many Brazilian activists in a state of sadness and despair.

Thais Silva, a 24-year-old activist from Complexo do Alemão in Brazil in Brazil was no exception.

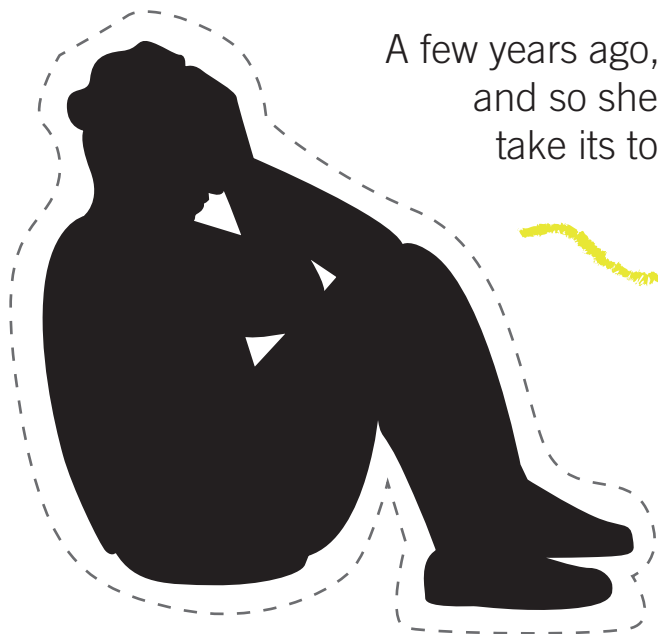


“We were in a conference in South Brazil, and when the news broke, we just could not believe it. I spent a few days crying feeling enraged, sad, pissed, lost, and afraid for young black people like myself.”

Thais has been an **activist** for years, campaigning on *the rights of people in favelas, feminism, and the environment.*



A few years ago, she was diagnosed with an *anxiety disorder* and so she knows better than anyone that **activism** can take its toll on emotional wellbeing and mental health.



“I used to feel, *and part of me still does*, that I’m not doing enough for my country and for the world. I kind of forgot to take care of **myself** and as a result my **mental health** took a hit”.

“This is when I realized that *in order to keep defending human rights, I needed and will always need to put myself first*”.



THE 101 ON STRESS

Our *activism* and
volunteer work
combined can get

**SUPER
STRESSFUL**



STRESS

is the way that
our mind and body
react to demands or threats.

It occurs when there is a build-up of pressure which is above the level a person can cope with. Although in certain moments being under pressure is not necessarily a bad thing, in the long-term it can negatively affect your overall physical and emotional health.



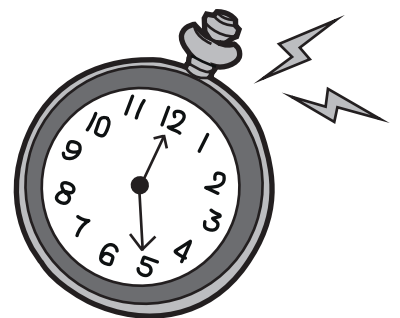
Feeling **STRESSED** does not make you weak, it is *completely normal*.

Recognizing and understanding some of the *signs and triggers that you feel* can help you address and deal with them.

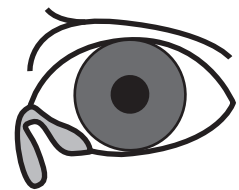
Stress Factors that affect Amnesty activists and volunteers



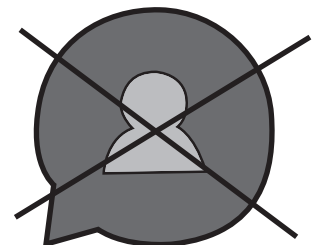
Taking on too much:
you take on too much and feel guilty for taking a break



Unhealthy boundaries:
you start overlooking your own self and collective care



Adultcentrism:
In our most recent survey to young board members, respondents felt very stressed in environments that were adult centric.



Global socio-political and environmental state of affairs:
have you read the news recently?
That is already enough to stress us out!



BURNOUT

Have you ever felt guilty of taking a break because other people might be suffering?



Have you ever felt *overwhelmed, unmotivated, cynical, emotionally drained and detached from your activism or volunteer work?*

If you feel like this more often than not, you might be facing burnout. Burnout is a condition of exhaustion and disconnection (in this context also referred to as compassion fatigue) that evolves gradually within a chronic stressful environment. Experts recognize that activist and volunteer burnout is one of the biggest barriers to sustain social justice movements. In the long run it can actually hinder social change.



As burnout impacts your overall wellbeing, it can grow into an anxiety disorder and/or depression. Serious consequences, such as reduced performance, insomnia, social withdrawal, and life dissatisfaction are associated with these conditions.

BURNOUT IN PEOPLE OF COLOUR AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING ACTIVISTS

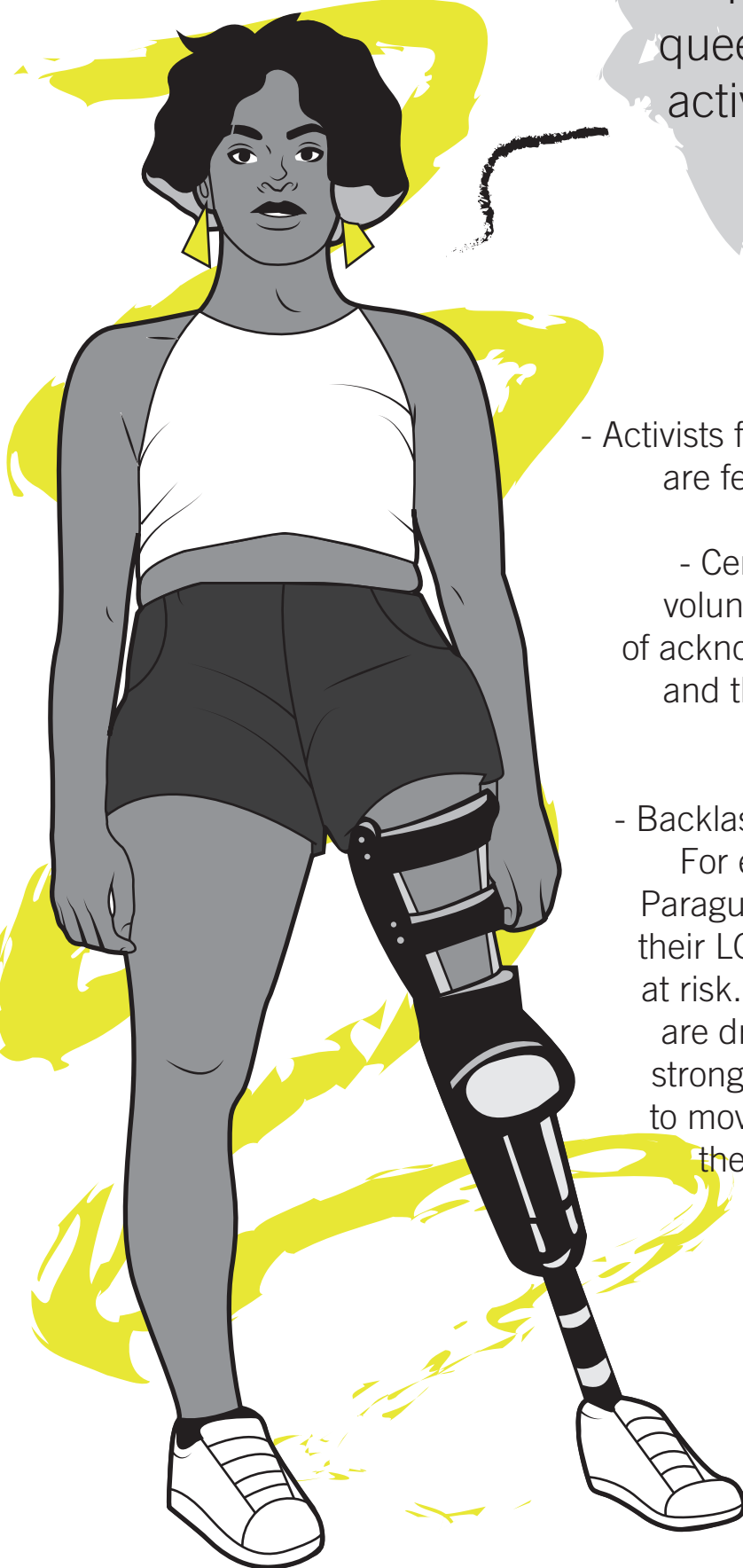
Research suggests that queer gender non-conforming activists and people of colour are even more at risk of facing burnout.

This could be due to:¹

- Activists feeling drained and feeling that there are few safe spaces free from oppression.
- Certain interactions with other activists, volunteers, and staff where there is a lack of acknowledgement of the depths of racism and the strain that colonialism has played and will continue to play.
- Backlash in workspaces and environments.
For example, when consulted activists in Paraguay have said that they often feel that their LGBTQI+ activism could put their jobs at risk. People of colour and queer activists are driven by deep senses of morality and strong emotional and identity connections to movements which leaves less space for them to feel that they can take a break and if they do, they tend to feel guilty about it.



¹ Gorski (2019: 678)





Which, again, if you're reading this, please know that you deserve a break to keep up the good human rights fight.

- Trans and non-binary people face all sorts of violent backlash.

This backlash can come in the form of physical violence, but it also takes place through subtle, but dangerous, microaggressions - language that communicates hostility and that attempts to render them invisible. Using inclusive language and questioning our own biases is key.

Are you an ally,
and want to stay woke?
It is crucial that
you become very
self-aware of your own privileges.
And while you're at it-LISTEN,
empathy is key.



SELF CARE & RESILIENCE



“Caring for myself is not *self-indulgence*, it is *self-preservation*, and that is an act of political warfare.”

Self-care practices are very important these days. However, as young activists and volunteers we are worried that the word has become a new “buzzword”.

You might find that these days social media bombards you with all kinds of messaging on “self-care”. Oh yes, we looked, and we saw that the hashtag has over 21,301,898 tags.

We noticed that a lot of the content (not all of it) features face masks, massages, or bubble bath bombs. While self-care differs from person to person, we’re pretty sure that Audre Lorde, a black lesbian author, civil rights activist and feminist wasn’t doing face masks or talking about self-care for the #gram while she was fighting a very aggressive liver cancer.



SELF-CARE 101

FOR ACTIVISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

What is self-care anyways? And how can you stay **combative**, **resilient** and **motivated** given the current *state of the world*? Again, we're not trying to reinvent the wheel here. But *self-care* can be:

Listening to your body:

You've probably heard it before, "the body keeps score and it always wins". Really listening to your body entails getting enough sleep, moving and exercising, eating a diet that nurtures your body, and doing what feels good to you.



Digital Breaks:

In this super connected world, it feels hard to disconnect. So many things are happening at once. When was the last time you had a no-social media and no-screens day? A day for and to yourself? Take a day to recharge; draw, sing, read, write, dance, visit a friend, hit your local park or do nothing. We promise you, you're gonna love it. Less Fomo and more Jomo.



Tapping yourself in the back:

Are you having one of those days, weeks or months? Please remember that you deserve all the love, kindness, and support that you give to fellow activists. (And that we love <3 you and are rooting for you)



Building communities of collective care:

Take time to create safe spaces for you and others in your community where you nurture each other, and take care of each other. This can include spaces to talk about issues you might be facing or wellness practices.



Putting up some healthy boundaries:

We have all felt the need to get involved in everything, particularly when a certain issue seems urgent. That said, if you feel you have too much on your plate, or need to rest, feel free to say NO.



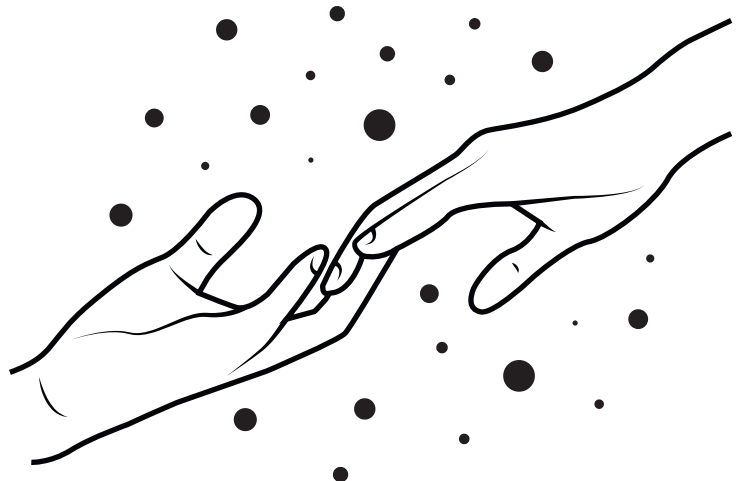
Practicing mindfulness and meditation:

Are you very busy everyday, all day? Taking some time on a daily basis to unwind, for example, sitting in silence for a few minutes, can really help release some of the stress, tensions and anxieties that come with being an activist.



Be mindful of your privilege:

If you're an activist that due to your background has certain privileges make sure you become self aware of your privilege and challenge racism and other forms of oppression when you see it. As author Adriene Mariee Brown would say, *"Less performance of wokeness, more real-time intervention."*



THOU SHALT GET YOUR OXYGEN MASK ON



Have you ever been on a plane?

Nope, I don't

Ahhh, it's cool.

Basically, when you're on an airplane before takeoff, flight attendants explain the oxygen mask principle.

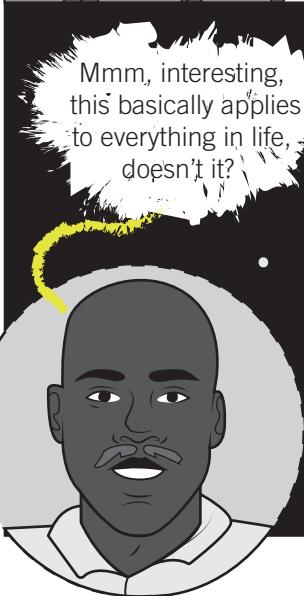


The what?



If there is a shortage in oxygen on the flight, oxygen masks drop from above your seat.

The first thing you should do is put your mask on first before helping others put on theirs. This is because if you don't have oxygen, you'll pass out and won't be able to help others anyway.



Mmm, interesting, this basically applies to everything in life, doesn't it?

Yeah. I sometimes feel guilty

TRUE DAT.

but I remind myself that *I can't help the world become a better place if I'm not okay.*



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