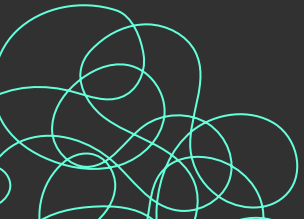




The Accessibility To Burnout Pipeline

Shell Little | axe-con 23 | March 15th

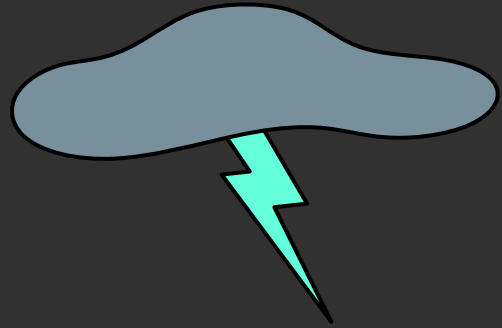


Indigenous Land Acknowledgment
Native-Land.ca

www.RealRentDuwamish.org

Content Warning

- Mental health
- Workplace trauma
- Ableism
- PTSD



I'm **Shell Little** | She/Her

@ShellELittle

-Independent Sr. Accessibility Specialist

-Inclusive Design Consultant

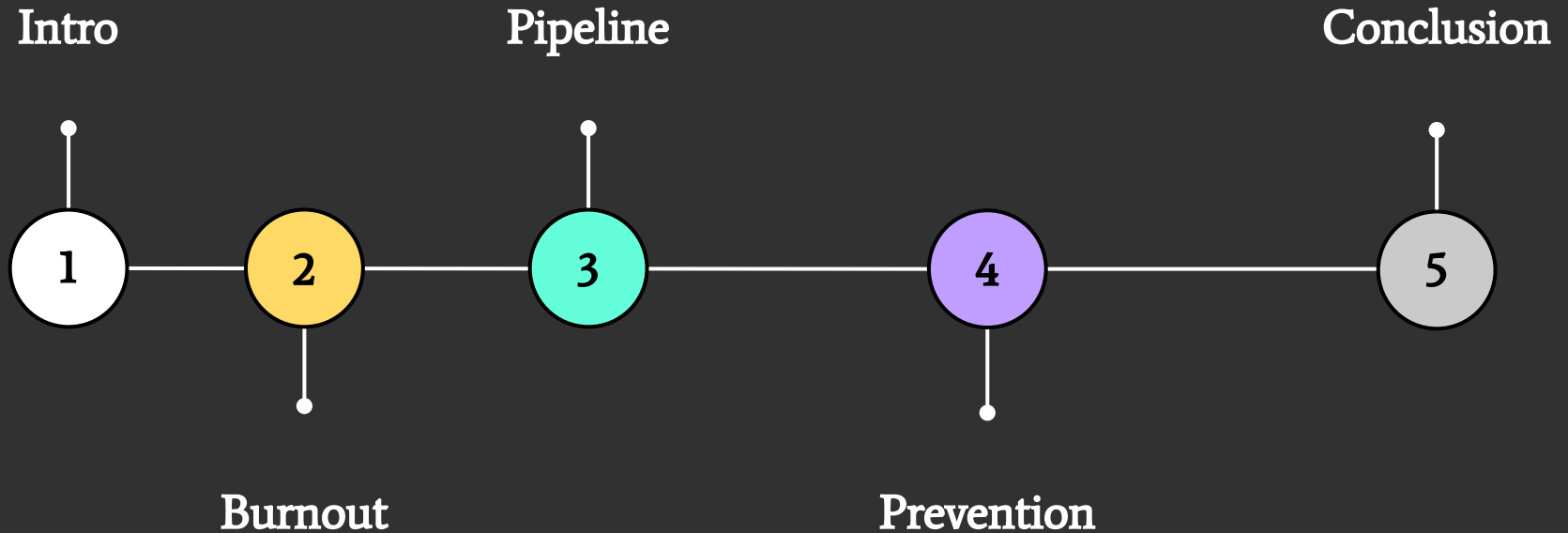
-Speaker:

- Disability, Cognitive
- Accessible Design
- Game Accessibility

-Seattle | Partner and Kids w/ Tails



Talk Roadmap





Intro

1



Writing this talk
was **difficult**

Workplace trauma *is real*

Your feelings *are valid*

Why This Talk



#1 I burnt the f*ck out.

Bad.



If I can save even 1
person from
burning out, this
will *all be worth it*



The more I talked
about it the more I
realized
I wasn't alone



#A11yToConf

Why We Suck at Hiring Accessible Designers & How To Fix It

Shell Little | A11yToConf 22 | Oct 17th



Really awesome hiring and training tool?

The screenshot shows a 'Public Library' registration form with the following elements and annotations:

- 1:** Uncommon icons in the top navigation bar.
- 2:** 'Library Card Registration' link with a 'click here' tooltip.
- 3:** 'Go Back' button.
- 4:** 'Go Back' button with a random color change.
- 5:** Error message: 'There was a problem processing your request'.
- 6:** 'Name' input field containing 'Alex Lastname'.
- 7:** 'User ID' input field.
- 8:** 'User ID' input field with text that fails color contrast.
- 9:** 'SSN' input field with masked characters.
- 10:** 'Address' input field containing '444 Fake St. Name Apt 2 Seattle Washin'.
- 11:** 'Address' input field with text that fails color contrast.
- 12:** 'Phone Number' input field containing '555 666 7678'.
- 13:** 'Incorrect Format' error message below the phone number field.

Public Library Home | About | Contact | Help

Library Card Registration To learn more, [click here](#)

Go Back

! There was a problem processing your request

Name
Alex Lastname

User ID

SSN * * * * *

Address 444 Fake St. Name Apt 2 Seattle Washin

Phone Number 555 666 7678

Incorrect Format

1. **icD** Uncommon icons used with no visual label, relies on tool tips, bad for CogDis & Speech Rec users

2. **icD** Random change in color for the H1 for errors

3. **Use of Color/Link Purpose/icD** needs underline, unhelpful link text, incorrect use of language

4. **Inconsistent Identification** "Go Back" vs "Return"

5. **Error Suggestion** Nonspecific or helpful error information lacking a count or anchors

6. **Color Contrast/icD** Text inside input field doesn't pass color contrast, label placement

7. **Use of Color/Error Identification** No way for users to tell there is an error beyond color, no required information

8. **Labels or Instructions** Form elements require visual labels

9. **icD** The use of masked field broken into 3 with no character cap or way to reveal input

10. **Error Message/Message/Color/Link Purpose/Suggestion/Setting**


Burnout, mental health, work issues!

The image shows a screenshot of a web form titled "Library Card Registration" with various accessibility annotations. A large red 'X' is overlaid on the entire screenshot, indicating that the form is not accessible. The annotations include:


- 1. **icD Unconventional** no visual label, relies on tool tips, bad for screen users
- 2. **icD** color for the H1 for errors
- 3. **icD** **Link Purpose/icD** needs underline, unhelpful use of language
- 4. **icD** **Link Purpose/icD** needs underline, unhelpful use of language
- 5. **! There was a problem processing your request.**
- 6. **icD** **Form Elements** require visual labels
- 7. **icD** **Form Elements** require visual labels
- 8. **icD** **Form Elements** require visual labels
- 9. **icD** **Form Elements** require visual labels
- 10. **icD** **Form Elements** require visual labels
- 11. **icD** **Form Elements** require visual labels
- 12. **icD** **Form Elements** require visual labels

The form fields include: Name (Alex Lastname), User ID, SSN (masked with asterisks), Address (444 Fake St), Name Apt, and Phone Number (555 666 7678). There is an "Incorrect" error message at the bottom left.

Accessibility as a field is stretched too thin and it's leading to burnout



#2 The work we do is
too important to lose
more people to Burnout



According data from
LinkedIn:

the number of job listings
with 'accessibility' in the
title grew 78% in 2021 from
the previous 12 months

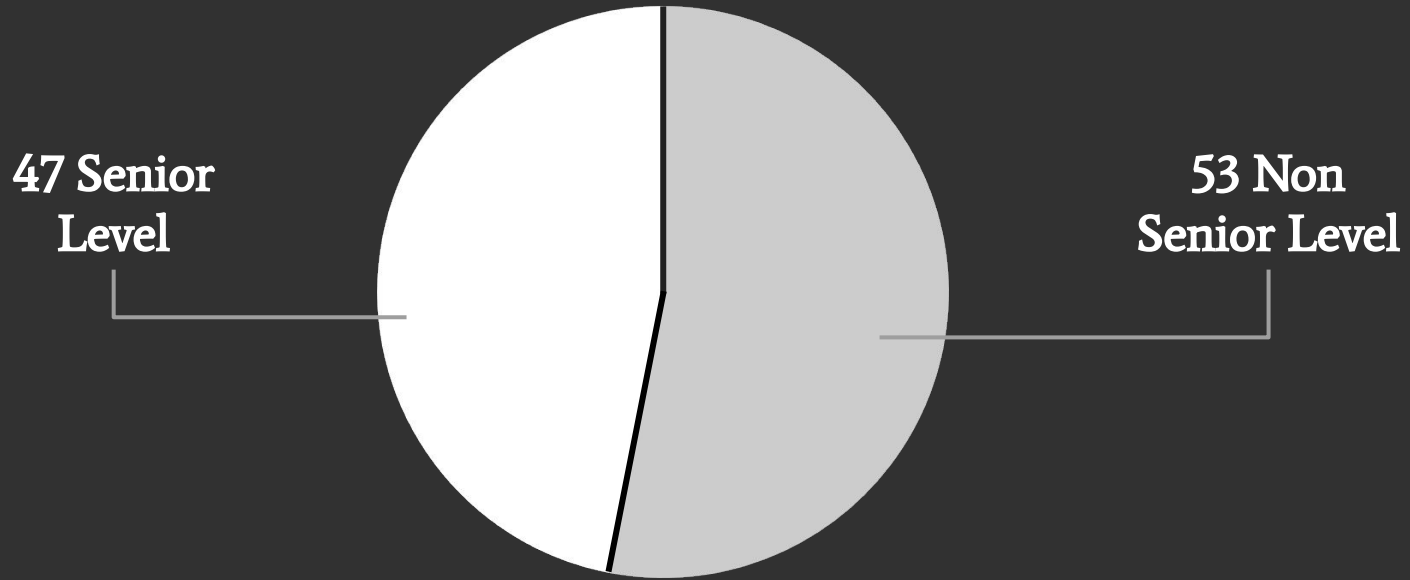


We're losing *amazing* minds and
voices to burnout in this field

We are losing *both* our
senior leadership and
the generation that will
fill those shoes



Out of 100 accessibility job postings





Eric Eggert

@yatil

And if we cannot afford one thing, that's people quitting accessibility because they are burned out. Because they feel that they are ineffective and their work is worthless. I feel like that all the time.

12:06 AM · Aug 9, 2022



Burnout

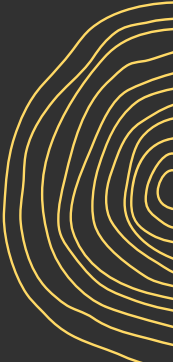
2





Mental Health in the US

The mental-health crisis of the pandemic is real. In 2021:

- 4 out of 10 adults have reported symptoms of anxiety and depression - x4 from pre-pandemic
 - Over 1/4 mothers reported that the pandemic has had a major impact on their mental health.
 - Visits to primary care for anxiety and depression have increased 13 percent among kids.
- 

Definition

Burnout

According to Mayo Clinic it is a special type of **work-related** stress—a state of physical or emotional exhaustion that also involves a **sense of reduced accomplishment** and **loss of personal identity**



Stress vs Burnout

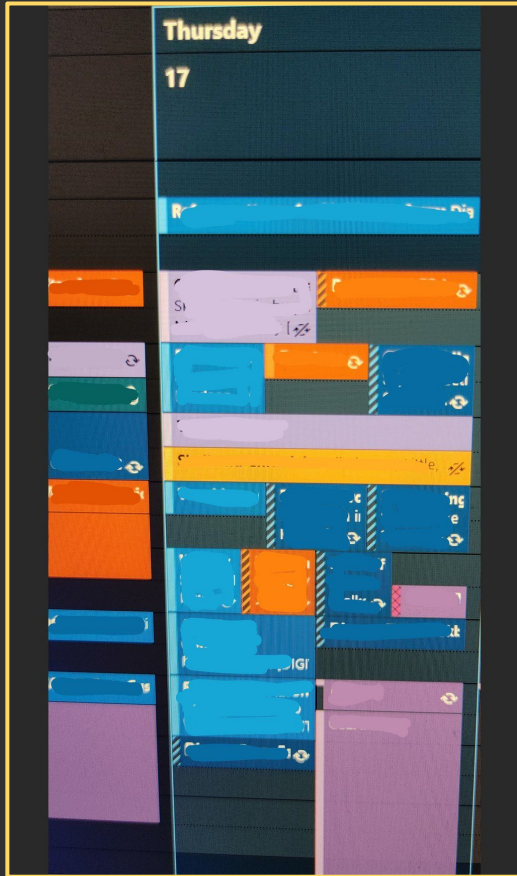
Stress is a normal response to situational pressures and demands with the knowledge of an end in sight

Burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress

Stress vs Burnout

- Emotional state is overactive
- Leads to exhaustion and fatigue
- Feelings of restlessness and urgency
- Emotional state is numb
- Leads to lack of purpose and motivation
- Feelings of hopelessness and helplessness

My Story



“ShEll hOw DiD
yOu BuRn OuT?!?”

"Help I'm drowning!"



me

management



me

"We're confident
in your ability to
figure it out!"



me



Me lol 🦴

Something broke

Burnout causes apathy
for your work and in
extreme cases that
bleeds into your real life

Due to my job I
developed a
panic disorder





Shell Little   **#AxeCon23** ...

@ShellELittle

 Hey all, before this conference week kicks off I wanted to open up about a life change I've been resistant to speak publicly about. I have officially joined the [#GreatResignation](#) & quit my day job due to burnout. It was both a difficult decision & a very easy one. 1/5

6:06 PM · Mar 14, 2022

Why is it so bad?

Factors leading to Burnout

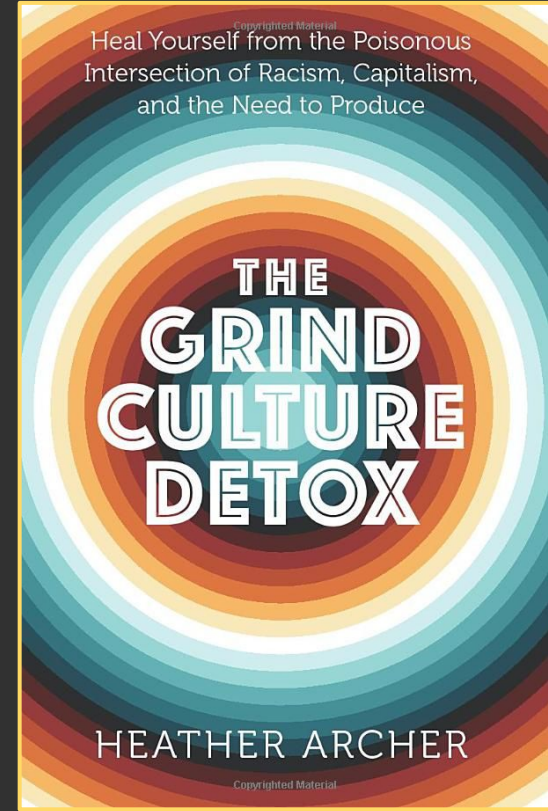
Grind Culture

American Capitalism

Lack of workers rights

White Supremacy

Patriarchy





Burnout Pipeline

3

Why are
Accessibility
Professionals at
higher risk?

Burnout factors

- Lack of control or support from management
- Sense of futility or hopelessness
- Unclear and changing job expectations
- Unreasonable workload
- Having to fight for a seat at the table

These factors disproportionately
affect Accessibility Specialists

Lack of control

An inability to influence decisions that affect your job such as your schedule, assignments or workload

Lack of control: in Accessibility

Being at the mercy of
budget, hiring
freezes, asks from the
C-suite add up



Lack of control: in Accessibility

Having management that does not have the technical knowledge or understanding of the importance of accessibility



“85% of leaders said they are aware of what website accessibility is, compared to less than 57% of managers”

Burnout is a **failure** of
management

Sense of futility or hopelessness

The feeling that nothing you're doing makes a difference at your job and the effort you're putting in is disproportionate to the outcome



Sense of futility or hopelessness

This feeling can stem from a combination of not having the power or resources to achieve a goal



**No one should
fear taking time
off**

Sense of futility or hopelessness

Do you feel you have the resources and support you need to do your accessibility work effectively?

This question was required and respondents could make a single choice from a list. There were 442 respondents.

Have resources and support	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Yes	173	39.1%
No	197	44.6%
Not sure	72	16.3%

“Who am I if I can't
carry it all?”



Unreasonable and ever changing workload

A feeling of insecurity with how much work you're doing vs what is expected of you vs what is **reasonable** to be doing

Unreasonable and ever changing workload

After you began the job, did the scope of the role change?

This question was required and respondents could make a single choice from a list. There were 442 respondents.

Job scope change	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Became bigger	225	50.9%
Became smaller	21	4.8%
New role	22	5.0%
Not sure	31	7.0%
Stayed the same	143	32.4%

Lead Inclusive Designer Role

- Define and implement accessibility requirements through scalable templates and components in Company's CMS
- Consult and provide expert guidance on digital accessibility matters for other entities within the Company System
- Provide leadership in the development of accessibility requirements for website and the Mobile App
- Develop accessibility requirement implementation roadmap and prioritize implementation workstreams through an agile approach
- Define scope of user impact and partner with engineers to provide input on level of effort for implementation
- Collaborate with legal, digital product management, design, engineers, QA team, and external consultants to define accessibility requirements and acceptance criteria
- Oversee the implementation of accessibility requirements in collaboration with engineers
- Manage user testing and validating accessibility solutions through automated/manual tools and external vendors
- Develop and maintain training, best practice, and education materials as related to digital accessibility
- Develop and maintain monthly or quarterly accessibility scorecard across web and mobile and communicate implementation progress with legal and leadership

Lead Inclusive Designer Role

- Implement requirements with templates for CMS
- Consult & Provide guidance on all programs in Org
- Make requirements for website & mobile app
- Create & manage agile accessibility roadmaps
- Create scaling systems with Dev across the Org
- Collaborate with legal, digital PM, design, dev, QA team, & external consultants
- Manage user testing with internal and external vendors
- Develop and maintain training, best practice, and education materials
- Develop and maintain monthly or quarterly accessibility scorecards

Lead Inclusive Designer Role

This is at *least*
nine different
jobs!

The average employee
is productive for
3.5 hours a day

It takes an average of
24 minutes to refocus
on a task after a
distraction

Math!

3.5 hours / 9 jobs = 23 mins per job

Math!

$$8 \text{ hours} - (9 \text{ jobs} * 24 \text{ mins}) = 4.4 \text{ hours}$$

Math!

Over half of your work day
is lost to switching tasks



We wear **TOO** many
hats!



Having to fight for a seat at the table

The feeling of having to self
advocate for not only your role but
your reason of being there

**On top of having to prove accessibility
is important to the organization, you
also must prove it to your coworkers**

Lack of buy-in adds up

Missing resources and supports	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
Buy-in from senior leadership	172	38.9%
Buy-in from colleagues	128	29.0%
Buy-in from manager	44	10.0%
Buy-in from clients	5	1.1%
Budget	187	42.3%
Time	247	55.9%
Tools	142	32.1%
Workflows and processes	206	46.6%
Mentorship and coaching	122	27.6%
Access to disabled testers or users	7	1.6%
Staff, headcount, or hiring	16	3.6%
Accessibility education	13	2.9%
Change management	6	1.4%
Law or policy	3	0.7%
Other	12	2.7%
Not sure	2	0.5%
None listed	45	10.2%

**Fields that include helping others
and advocacy are the highest
likely to burn out**

Advocacy fatigue is a real issue in the field. Especially for those with disabilities in the accessibility field





city of florence

@movewiththeflo



Advocacy work is mentally draining! Advocacy fatigue is real.
the things you see, the people you meet, the stories you hear, the
backlash from people who have no clue, will all literally take a toll on you.
never forget to take a minute, days, months or even a year off to refuel.



Prevention

4



I don't say this to
discourage people
from doing
accessibility just to
state the reality of
where a lot of us are at

It is not the actual work
we do. It is the
environment that we
are forced to do the
work in that is the
problem

All hope isn't lost! The more
we talk about these issues the
easier they will be to address

You have my
permission to
complain about how
difficult the stuff we
do can be

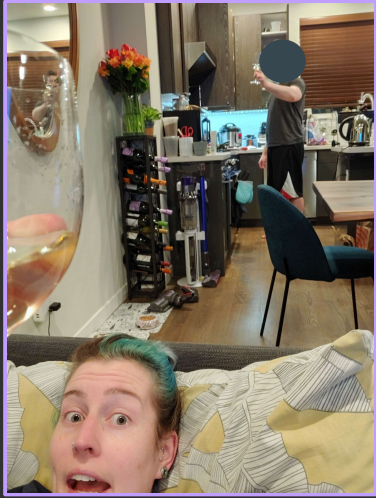
As A Community

What can we do as a community?

- Be transparent about how things are going at your job
- Find an accessibility professionals group for support
- Raise awareness about the difficulties of accessibility
- Managers, check in with your teams



Burnout Sabbatical





Office

Destigmatize talking about mental health at work

- Talking openly about mental health
- Taking your mental health days
- Letting mental health be the reason

Learning to pick your battles

- Learning to take the “L”
- Every situation is an educational one
- Compromise, compromise, compromise

Having a serious conversation with your manager

- Make your manager aware of your concerns
- Ask for resources and continue to do so
- Utilize **boundary statements**

Boundary Statements

“I’m excited for this new task, what on my current workload would you like me to de-prioritize to accommodate this new project”

Boundary Statements

“My plate is currently too full to take on this task, who would you like me to offload some of my projects to?”

Boundary Statements

“While I understand this work is important this task is outside of my job description. Would you like to reevaluate my job responsibilities and compensation?”

Boundary Statements

“This task is outside of my knowledge and current job description but I would love to help advocate for a new team member to handle this responsibility”



Health

Accommodations: AskJan.Org



▼ Stress Intolerance

- Products
 - Apps for Anxiety and Stress
 - Environmental Sound Machines / Tinnitus Maskers / White Noise Machines
 - Fitness Trackers
 - Simulated Skylights and Windows
 - Sun Boxes and Lights
 - Sun Simulating Desk Lamps
- Services
 - Counseling/Therapy
 - Employee Assistance Program
- Strategies
 - Behavior Modification Techniques
 - Communicate Another Way
 - Complying with Behavior and Conduct Rules
 - Flexible Schedule
 - Instant Messaging and Texting Solutions for Businesses
 - Job Restructuring
 - Marginal Functions
 - Modified Break Schedule
 - On-site Mentoring
 - One-on-One Communication
 - Policy Modification
 - Positive Feedback
 - Supervisory Feedback
 - Supervisory Methods
 - Support Person
 - Support Animal
 - Telepresence
 - Telework, Work from Home, Working Remotely

Medical Leave: FMLA

Fact Sheet # 280: Mental Health Conditions and the FMLA

May 2022

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides job-protected leave to address mental health conditions. This fact sheet explains when eligible employees of covered employers may use FMLA leave for their own or a family member's mental health condition.

ABOUT THE FMLA

30 minutes of “Out”

When is the last time you did NOTHING for 30 minutes without taking in new information?

30 minutes of “Out”

- Dance it OUT
- Talk it OUT
- Get OUTside
- Sweat it OUT
- Sing it OUT



Reevaluate your relationship with work

- Are you giving more than is reasonable to your job?
- Do you have things outside of your career that bring you joy?
- Is your job the main source of your stress?

Anyone who says quiet
quitting is bad either
wants to benefit from
your exploited labor or
doesn't understand **their**
labor is being exploited



Conclusion

5

1

If you are feeling burnt out
in your job, know you are
not alone

2

You are not at fault for the way you're feeling. The system is working as designed

3

The work you are doing
can be difficult, stressful,
and overwhelming but
never lose sight of the **why**
and the **who**

4

The work we do is
important but so is your
own well being

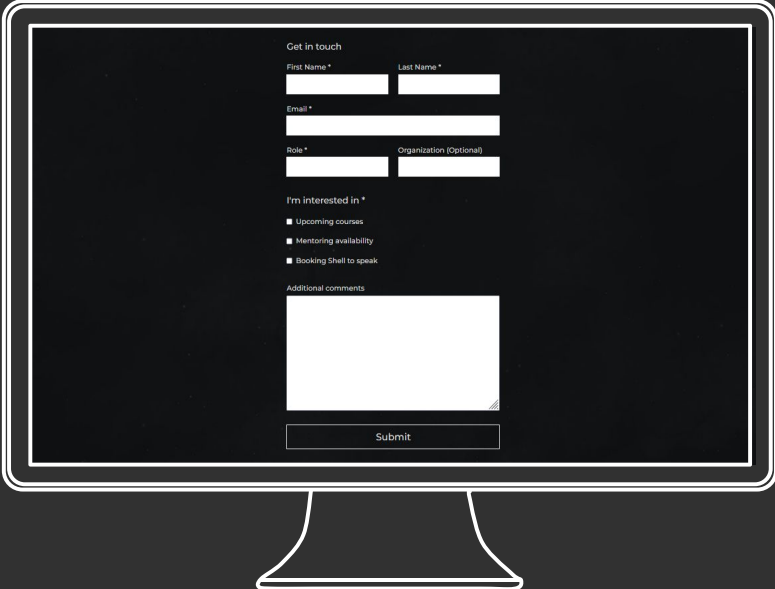
5

There are resources
available to you in order to
slow or mitigate burnout,
take advantage of them

Interested in more from me?

Visit ShellELittle.com

- Online classes
- 1:1 Mentorship
- Private speaking

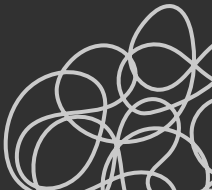


The image shows a computer monitor with a white outline, displaying a contact form. The form is titled "Get in touch" and contains the following fields and options:

- First Name * (input field)
- Last Name * (input field)
- Email * (input field)
- Role * (input field)
- Organization (optional) (input field)
- I'm interested in * (checkboxes for "Upcoming courses", "Mentoring availability", and "Booking Shell to speak")
- Additional comments (text area)
- Submit (button)

Additional Resources

- **Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle**
by Emily Nagoski, PhD, Amelia Nagoski, DMA
- **Your Money or Your Life: 9 Steps to Transforming Your Life** by Vicki Robin, Joe Dominguez
- **The Grind Culture Detox** by Heather Archer





Thanks!

Questions



[@ShellELittle](#)



Contact@ShellELittle.com



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