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Privileged and marginalized people really seem to be having two totally different conversations when talking about burnout. And because we often internalize and center privileged people's experiences, it's also easy to assume that we're talking about those experiences constantly.

When I talk about burnout, I mean the experience of chronic, severe overwhelm, often brought on by trauma, oppression, and constant chronic crisis (crisis become ordinary). When understood this way, we can recognize that burnout is ALWAYS more common in all marginalized people.

But in witnessing and holding other community members' discussion of burnout, I think too many of us assume that burnout means "ability to rest and do self-care, with few to no consequences for taking a break or engaging in pleasure." That is something different.

The ability to rest or do self-care, with few to no consequences for doing so, is a *response* to some forms of burnout - and is a privilege available only to people with more privilege, resources, institutional support, societal support, etc.

Burnout is more common, more severe, and more emotionally catastrophic for people at the margins of the margins. Where living is about mere survival. The manifestation of burnout is different in each person. Many of us can never stop or take breaks - until we literally collapse.

And when queer and trans, BIPOC, disabled, poor, and other marginalized people collapse, the consequences are disastrous and catastrophic in ways that they will never be for wealth-privileged white abled and otherwise resourced people. We'll get evicted. People will die.

TL;DR "burnout" and "taking a break/doing self-care" are not the same. Burnout is a chronic experience of trauma and constant crisis. Self-care is often an experience only those with more privilege can access while community care keeps the rest of us alive, and isolation kills.

So let's be clear - are we talking about (A) the experience of burnout; (B) people's different manifestations of burnout; (C) people's responses (and ability to respond) to burnout; or (D) the consequences for responding to or acting on burnout?

I also want to be clear that I witness and share in the pain and frustration of many other marginalized people at glorifying/idealizing "self-care" by more privileged people, and their ability able to rest while facing no consequences for it because society supports them.

Here are some examples of what I'm trying to explain here:

If an abled, rich, white person experiences burnout from work/caregiving, they can pay staff to take care of their caregiving responsibilities instead and take a long vacation. They'll still be able to pay their bills.

But if a poor, disabled person of color experiences burnout from work/caregiving/constant crisis/CPTSD/being in survival mode, they don't have money to pay others to take over their responsibilities. They might not have any paid time off. They are already worried about bills.

The poor, disabled person of color experiencing burnout must keep working three, four, or even seven different jobs just to pay the bills. They must keep doing caregiving work. They must stay hypervigilant. They have no opportunity to take time off. No free time. No energy left.

If the poor, disabled person of color experiencing burnout DOES lose the capacity to literally, physically function (as happens to some people, but not all), they may end up in an ER, saddled with an impossible medical debt. Wages garnished or fired from job for no-show.

Then, that poor, disabled person of color might have no more money left for rent, let alone anything else. Phone shut off. Loss of access to internet. Nowhere to sleep/stay. Can't go to library because COVID. No energy to look for work. At even higher risk for criminalization.

This is what I mean. Those with more privilege have the resources to do something about their burnout. Those who are more marginalized do not - which means that if burnout results in collapse, we face stark consequences because of denial and deprivation of support/resources.