Overview

We are all leaders, but in order to be able to be effective, we have to understand our own needs first and make sure that we are contributing to a culture (both in small groups and wider society) which recognises our value, appreciates the risks of taking action, and where people are not afraid to think differently.

Burnout

Burnout can be described as the experience of persistent physical, emotional and mental exhaustion in multiple parts of our lives. It is often brought upon by activism, and an imbalance between the things which give us meaning and the things which give us energy (and joy). If those two things are intertwined, then it opens us up to the risk of burnout.

Two simple exercises you can do:

1.   Complete the rating scale (see separate document). Caveat – this is a highly subjective scale, and should not be taken as 100% accurate. It is most useful when done to highlight potential burnout factors, or completed a number of times over time to spot patterns, trends or peaks. It also does not account for diagnosable mental or physical health conditions.

2.   Consider how the following drivers do or do not affect your thought processes when involved in food work/activism:

a.   Be Perfect – you must get everything 100% or you might as well not bother

b.   Try Hard – if you don't put all that you have into a task then you have failed

c.   Be Pleasing – making others happy is the main outcome for you

d.   Hurry Up – you feel a great pressure to do things quickly

e.   Be Strong – you cannot show weakness or vulnerability

Also consider how you might unconsciously trigger these drivers in others, including those you are trying to motivate and support.

Value

As a society we are generally rubbish at acknowledging, sharing and celebrating our own value. In order to support ourselves and others this needs to change, we need to take responsibility for telling others when they have had a positive impact on us. We are all lighthouses, but unless we share that message then we are in danger of all standing alone, shining our lights into darkness. More on this [here](#)!

U.Lab

U.Lab: Grow Your Own Leaders is a collaborative leadership development course, co-produced by Impact Hub Brixton, Incredible Edible Lambeth, Lambeth Food Partnership and some participants in an online course called U.Lab run by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Autumn 2015. The participants recognised during that first course there were gaps in community leadership capacity and wanted to pilot a collaborative leadership programme to build the capacity of that leadership around specific themes – in this case, the food system.

Focussing on food would help people collaborate beyond the course, bringing people together around a strong shared interest.

Building leadership capacity would also address 'burn-out' amongst existing 'leaders', giving them the tools to maintain the high level of energy and enthusiasm in the existing food activist sector.

Seven participants co-produced a six-week programme focussed on people working in food activism. The course was aimed to

- Help people understand what leadership skills they had already

- Identify where their personal passion and energy lies (particularly important for volunteers)

- Explore how to work with that personal energy so it is used effectively – usually by finding ways to collaborate with others

The course materials for the Grow Your Own Leaders programme can all be found here: http://ulablambeth.blogspot.co.uk
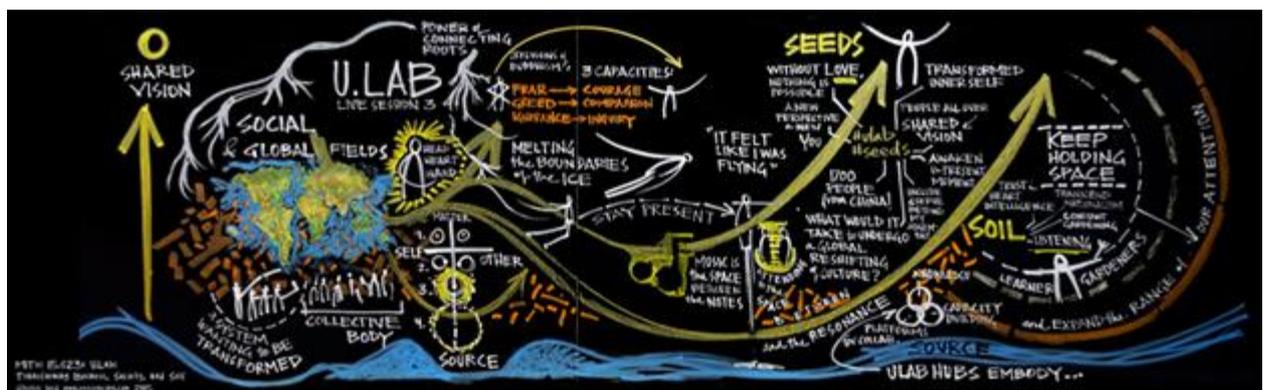
We are happy to share all of our materials, although many of them actually belong to the Presenting Institute, who need to be acknowledged. You can learn more about the core material on-line for free here: https://www.edx.org/course/awareness-based-systems-change-u-lab-how-mitx-15-671-0x.

Please do get in touch with Sue (suesheehangcc@gmail.com Twitter: @GreenCChampion) if you would like to know more, or if you need help with facilitating a course in your area.