Feel like you are burning the candle at both ends? Have you asked yourself lately, “What am I doing here?” You are not alone. Everyone experiences some type of burnout from time to time. It has been said that fatigue makes cowards of all of us.

After the season’s peak, recovery should follow. We need to look back at the successes and mistakes, evaluate what happened, and plan for rush of next season. Have you ever noticed that our successes seem to take place in private, while our failures in full view?

In his book “The New Mental Toughness for Athletes,” James Leohr discusses the necessary conditioning to be at peak performance on demand. This is accomplished by meaningful recovery time. It is impossible to be at peak performance everyday, 24/7, although there are some in the horticulture industry who are giving it a try.

Burnout takes its toll on personal abilities, employees, and relationships that are important to customers. It is extremely important that you give yourself the opportunity to recover mentally, physically and spiritually. If that recovery hasn’t taken place, you might be wind up in peak season, or even the next day, depleted and incapable of balanced performance.

When I talk with owners and managers in the horticulture industry about time management, I often get the same response. They fear if they take time off to get away, vacation with family or relax, their business will shut down or be in such a mess when they returned that it just wouldn’t be worth it. If this situation is true, you need to take a serious look at your training programs, leadership and management skills, and ability to empower others. The result of time off would probably not be as bad as expected. The real scenario is the umbrella of guilty feelings for not being totally accessible and the self-perception of being indispensable.

A nationwide survey asking people about their priorities indicated that family, God and friends are at the top of the list. The reality of this survey show that highest priorities in life are also the most neglected. The red flag should be flying. We need to take the time and the initiative to prioritize and schedule what really matters.

A successful businessman with multiple stores and more than 400 employees shared that every four weeks, he and his family took several days of vacation from work responsibilities to recover and renew family bonds. We must include our commitments, personal time and the ones we cherish the most on our list of priorities and treat those values accordingly.

Don’t let your business burn you at both ends. Keep the important things a priority and don’t allow day-to-day deadlines dominate your focus. The entire company will benefit from having a leader capable of peak performance, balanced and excited about the day’s challenges. More than anyone in the company, you need to be good to yourself.

Emily Nolting, Ph.D., Commercial Horticulture Specialist, K-State Research and Extension