

# Case Study: What Happens After Hearing Rashad Hayes Speak? Don't Burn Your Cake: High Performance Without Self-Destruction

## Executive Summary

Across 14 different speaking events with social workers, educators, healthcare professionals, youth workers, and cancer survivors, audiences consistently walked away from Rashad Hayes' keynotes feeling:

- **Reignited in their purpose** ("This allowed me to remember my why.")
- **Convicted about self-care** ("I don't want to burn my cake.")
- **Seen and valued as humans, not just helpers** ("I walked in with my head down and walked away with my head up.")
- **Equipped with simple, memorable tools** they could share with their coworkers, clients, students, and families ("I'm going to show the x-y graph to foster parents and co-workers.")

This case study pulls together the impact from 14 speaking engagements to answer one question:

**What actually changes after people hear Rashad Hayes speak?**

---

## About the Engagement Series

Over the course of 14 events, Rashad spoke to:

1. **County child welfare & DHR staff**
2. **State social work conferences**
3. **Supervisors and frontline social workers**
4. **AYA (Adolescent & Young Adult) cancer survivors and caregivers**

5. **Family resource center and community-based organization staff**
6. **K–12 teachers and school district back-to-school convocations**
7. **High school assemblies and youth programs**
8. **Counselors and mental health professionals**
9. **Child support and human services agencies**
10. **Faith-adjacent and community nonprofit staff**
11. **Multi-disciplinary human service conferences**
12. **Frontline case managers and advocates**
13. **Supervisors and agency leaders focused on burnout and culture**
14. **Mixed audiences of helping professionals at statewide conferences**

Across all 14, the through line was the same: “**Don’t Burn Your Cake®**” and the CAKE framework as a fresh, real, and relatable way to talk about burnout, resilience, and purpose.

---

## **Before Rashad Speaks: The Core Challenges**

From the testimonials, a consistent picture emerges of what audiences were facing **before** the session:

- **High burnout and emotional fatigue**
  - “Very tough and emotionally draining jobs.”
  - “A helping profession that drains you.”
- **Feeling unseen, unappreciated, and taken for granted**
  - “I’ve been in and out with leaving due to lack of support from my supervisor.”
  - “A leader needs to show appreciation for their workers.”

- **Disconnected from their ‘why’**
    - “This session allowed me to remember my why... why I want to work with children and families.”
  - **Avoidance of traditional ‘self-care’ sessions**
    - “I usually avoid sessions classified as self-care. However, I’m glad I came to this one.”
  - **Survival mode over purpose mode**
    - People described themselves as stuck, bitter, tired, on the edge of leaving, or simply going through the motions.
- 

## The Rashad Hayes Experience

Participants repeatedly described the experience in the same ways:

- **Energetic, engaging, and interactive**
  - “Energetic and REAL talk!”
  - “Very engaging! Even when he puts you on the spot, it’s still enjoyable.”
  - “Lighthearted but serious in all the right ways.”
- **Relatable and honest**
  - “Real, inspiring, self-reflective.”
  - “Heat helps you rise! I love that so much.”
  - “He spoke from a genuine familiar space as a social worker.”
- **Accessible tools, not fluff**
  - “Easy steps to remember.”

- “Prepare–Pause–Proceed. Continue to learn, always love yourself, know your worth, and enjoy your life.”
  - “You’re going to learn you can’t bake a cake in a cold oven.”
  - **Practical metaphors that stick**
    - “I love analogies, and yours is one of the best!”
    - “Don’t burn your cake! Icing on a burnt cake doesn’t change the cake.”
    - “Our life is like baking a cake... how it tastes, texture, moisture, etc.”
- 

## What Happens After: Key Outcomes Across 14 Events

### 1. People Remember Their “Why.”

Across child welfare, schools, and nonprofits, people walked out with a **renewed sense of purpose**:

- “This session allowed me to remember my why.”
- “Much needed to help employees regain their purpose!”
- “Reignited our passion for teaching and reminded us why we show up for our students every day.”

#### Post-event behavior:

- Staff shared they wanted to **stay in the field**, not just quietly exit.
  - Many said they planned to **share the message with their teams**, foster parents, students, and even family members.
- 

### 2. Self-Care Moves From Buzzword to Daily Practice

Participants didn't just hear about self-care; they **reframed it as essential to their effectiveness**:

- "I can serve others better when I am better taken care of."
- "Motivational... gave me the recharge that I needed and sought after."
- "Great metaphor for self-care, especially for social workers."

**Post-event behavior:**

- Intention to **prioritize rest, boundaries, and emotional check-ins**.
  - Teams reported wanting to **build CAKE language into team culture** ("Pause and reset," "Don't burn your cake," "I want my cake!").
  - Participants expressed a desire to **teach these concepts** to the families, youth, and clients they serve.
- 

### **3. Confidence, Identity, and Self-Worth Get Restored**

Rashad's approach consistently leads to **personal identity and self-worth breakthroughs**:

- "It reminded me I will be okay and to keep going."
- "I walked in with my head down and walked away with my head up."
- "Inspiring and rationally accepting of what life is and how to unconditionally accept yourself."
- "I felt seen with him."

**Post-event behavior:**

- Participants talked about **no longer needing to prove themselves**: "I don't need to prove myself to anyone."
- Others described being ready to **move up, lead, and change things**: "I am more than ever ready to move up and make a difference."

---

## 4. Teams Connect Around a Shared Language & Culture

The cake analogy and CAKE method become a **shared reference point** for teams:

- “Will provide perspective and encourage you to evaluate your purpose and motivation for your profession.”
- “This session encourages listeners to celebrate resiliency.”
- “Offered a new perspective on how to handle difficult situations. Encouraged self-care and unity.”

### Post-event behavior:

- Leaders planned to **present CAKE to coworkers** and teams.
- Staff committed to **supporting one another**, not just “pushing through.”
- Teams gained a **shared language** to talk about burnout and culture without shame.

---

## 5. Concrete Tools Travel Beyond the Room

People did not leave the message in the ballroom. They took it with them:

- “I’m going to show the x-y graph to foster parents and co-workers.”
- “I shared your cake analogy with friends!”
- “This session really hit home and made me want to share what I learned with my team.”

### Post-event behavior:

- Concepts like *heat helps you rise, don’t burn your cake, prepare–pause–proceed*, and *CAKE* became **portable tools** in staff meetings, supervisions, and classrooms.
- Participants expressed interest in **having Rashad back**, using him as a **mentor**, or bringing him in as a **graduation or keynote speaker**.

---

## Event Spotlights (Examples Out of the 14)

### Event 1: County DHR / Child Welfare Staff Reset

**Challenge:** High turnover risk, low supervisor support, and emotional exhaustion.

**After Rashad's keynote:**

- Staff reported: "This changed my view because I am the ingredient for my county... It's time I move on it and make a difference."
- Workers felt **seen and validated**, with one noting: "He hit the nail on the head of the current climate at DHR."
- Participants left committed to **supporting coworkers, uplifting each other, and staying in the fight.**

---

### Event 2: State Social Work Conference (Self-Care Track)

**Challenge:** Attendees are skeptical of self-care sessions, used to surface-level content.

**After Rashad's keynote:**

- "The most useful one I've participated in."
- "One of the best presenters I've ever heard!"
- "Inspirational & relevant content for anyone!"  
Participants left with **practical strategies**, a **new metaphor for burnout**, and a **fresh commitment** to their own well-being.

---

### Event 3: K–12 Back-to-School Convocation

**Audience:** Teachers, administrators, and district staff.

**Challenge:** Teacher burnout, low morale, repetitive back-to-school messaging.

**After Rashad's keynote:**

- “Not your typical back-to-school speech. No fluff, but still interesting and empowering.”
- “Help teachers not have burnout. Remind us to take time for self.”
- “It was motivating for seasoned and brand new teachers.”

Teachers left with a **shared language** (“**Don’t burn your cake**”) and a reminder that **their presence matters more than perfection**.

---

## **Event 4: AYA Cancer Community & Advocates**

**Audience:** Young adults with cancer and those who serve them.

**Challenge:** Grief, trauma, identity loss, and fatigue.

**After Rashad’s session:**

- “A session that carried elements of hope and reality. Emotional but purposeful.”
- “He’s great for the AYA community. I felt seen with him.”
- “Rashad gave such a unique way of making a really terrible experience into something good.”

Participants left with **renewed hope**, a **reframed story of their pain**, and a **language of cake and heat** to describe resilience.

---

## **Event 5: Statewide Family & Youth Services Conference**

**Audience:** Family resource centers, youth services, advocacy centers, and prevention agencies.

**Challenge:** Chronic burnout, secondary trauma, and compassion fatigue.

**After Rashad’s session:**

- “Inspirational, educational, thought-provoking, lit a fire for me to fight burnout and continue motivating my team.”
- “Very innovative and engaging! Allowed me to observe myself and reflect that I needed to take care of myself.”



- “Powerful and reflective content that’s much needed in today’s world.”

Agencies walked away with **renewed motivation**, **language for self-reflection**, and **tools to support staff longevity**.

---

## Why Organizations Bring Rashad In (And Bring Him Back)

Across all 14 events, planners and participants said things like:

- “Hire Rashad Hayes!”
- “One of the best live speaker events I’ve been to in a very long time!”
- “A speaker who can truly reach ANYONE!!”
- “He is truly a phenomenal speaker... from our same hometown.”
- “Rashad was dynamic and powerful... I don’t want to burn my cake.”
- “Our back-to-school speaker delivered a phenomenal message that reignited our passion for teaching.”

They’re not just reacting to good energy. They’re responding to **lasting impact**:

- Staff who were considering leaving... **recommit to their roles**.
  - Professionals who preach self-care... finally **apply it to themselves**.
  - Teams that felt disconnected... leave with **shared language and hope**.
  - Individuals who felt invisible... walk out **seen, valued, and standing taller**.
- 

## The Bottom Line: After Rashad Speaks

People don’t just feel better. They act differently.

They:

- Re-engage with their purpose
- Name and challenge burnout
- Normalize self-care as a professional responsibility
- Use the cake language to support each other and their clients
- Carry the message out of the room and into classrooms, courtrooms, clinics, and homes