

TRAUMA-INFORMED, RESILIENCE-ORIENTED CARE

Organizational Self-Care Training Activity Worksheet

It is tricky to explore organizational self-care, it can force us to confront the invisible, hidden, and explicit organizational habits that we've created and that can often be uncomfortable to talk about. Here are examples of some common organizational habits:

- Leaving dishes in the sink for someone else to clean up
- Program staff getting more "airtime" than operations staff at organization-wide meetings
- Team meetings starting ten minutes after the scheduled start time
- Last minute requests made of colleagues which include incorrect or inconsistent information

There are other organizational habits which more directly sabotage an organization's self-care (i.e., its ability to reflect, renew, and be resilient):

- Scheduling back-to-back meetings
- Cancelling or continuously rescheduling meetings with colleagues, including direct reports, peers, and supervisors
- Saying "yes" to any and every request that comes in
- Doing more with less

Simply put, these habits are unsustainable. As writer and monk Thomas Merton said, "The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace, because it kills the root of the inner wisdom which makes work fruitful."

So, how do you create an organizational self-care strategy? We encourage the following steps:

1. **Reflect first on what the organization does to take care of itself.** Start from a place of strength and think about what your organization does well to create a supportive environment. I would contend that you probably have a few practices already in place (for example, one-on-one coaching or peer coaching circles) that you could leverage.

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2. Spend some time thinking about **what your organization’s cultural practices are and see whether those practices may support self-care**. For example, perhaps everyone gathers together for lunch on a weekly basis or perhaps someone leads a weekly Qi Gong practice (these examples illustrate that community building can be a part of organizational self-care).

3. Finally, you could facilitate an organization-wide discussion about **what it would feel like if the organization had a culture of self-care**, attuning to the neuroscience of stress?

- What would be different?

- What would you be doing more of or less of?

- How might you respond to one another’s requests differently?

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- How might you make requests differently?

- How would you make reflection, resilience and renewal a priority?

As you imagine what is possible, here are some organizational self-care practices to consider:

- Supervisors making work-life balance a standing check in question as part of regular supervision meetings
- Incorporating meaningful self-reflection activities before the start of all staff meetings
- Positional leaders modeling boundary setting (e.g., not responding to email after work hours, not scheduling back-to-back meetings)
- Implementing peer coaching circles across your organization to facilitate learning, reflection, and peer support
- The thought of adding one more item to your list of to dos may be daunting, but the short-term time investment in identifying and establishing these practice are outweighed leaps and bounds by the long-term benefits of a more supported staff and supportive organizational practices.

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