

# System Drivers of Compassion Fatigue

## Section 4

Staff Support



Circle Agenda

Circle Topic	CR Section 4: System Drivers of Compassion Fatigue
<p><b>Planning</b></p>	<p>Send the <a href="#">introduction document</a> from Section 4 in the online toolkit at least 4 days prior to the circle to all participants.</p> <p>Hold a meeting with leadership to prepare for this section and invite the leader(s) to consider the following:</p> <p>This section will begin with a brainstorm on what is driving staff fatigue and resilience. If you are participating, avoid defensiveness and share your own drivers of fatigue and resilience, resist the temptation to correct perceptions brought forward by staff. As the activity unfolds you will see that it asks staff to consider both what they can control and what they look to you as a leader to control. One goal is to increase an internal locus of control mindset to promote shared accountability for the culture.</p> <p>The Leadership team should be prepared to discuss items the staff designated to “leadership control” after the session and report back to the staff which items leadership is or will be exploring this year or next and which items would likely not change in the next two years. Some items you may want to ask for clarification from staff or engagement of a team to address. Reporting plans back to the staff allows the staff to add the items the leadership team will not address to their “cannot control” list. It is most helpful to validate the need to look at those items in the future, once other priorities are met, unless there is no possibility of change. Let the staff know that you will share progress on the items the team has chosen to address will be shared throughout the year.</p> <p><a href="#">The following document</a> names sources of system stress from a school perspective and protective factors under leaderships’ control.</p> <p>For the full leadership preparation document, please visit <a href="#">this page</a>.</p>
<p><b>Purpose of Circle/ Learning Objectives</b></p>	<p>We are learning to name things about the system we work in that are contributing to our compassion fatigue and which items we have control over and have the opportunity to spend energy addressing.</p>

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<b>Materials/ Preparation/Time</b>	<p><b>Time:</b> 45-50 minutes</p> <p><b>Materials:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Circle kit</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Values and shared agreements created in first session</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Markers and flipchart paper</li> </ul> <p><b>Set-up:</b> Up to 15 chairs arranged in a circle without furniture in the middle.</p> <p><b>To consider:</b> <a href="#">Understanding Your Social Location as a Facilitator – Active Bystander Intervention: Training and Facilitation Guide.</a></p>
<b>Welcome/Check-In (5 minutes)</b>	<p><i>“Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don’t.” – Steve Marboli</i></p> <p>(Go-around) What is something from your childhood that as a child you wished you had control over that now as an adult you do?</p>
<b>Grounding/Wellness Practice (5 minutes)</b>	<p>(Pair Share) What are you doing when you feel most alive – most like yourself?</p> <p>After 2 minutes, bring the group back and discuss these points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise your hand if you shared a situation of being at work (most will not).</li> <li>• Think about what that means for how well we know our colleagues.</li> <li>• Think of when you feel most alive at work.</li> <li>• When you go home from your workday, do you have a tendency to share what happened in your day that left you feeling most alive or what was most draining?</li> <li>• Our bodies experience the stress we relive in our conversations to some degree as if we were experiencing it again. Sharing the hard parts of our day may be needed to be understood and validated. We can become aware of when it moves from helpful to hurtful. We have a choice about how much time and on what we focus when talking about our work. One practice to play with is to include what made you feel most alive in your day as you talk with friends and family.</li> </ul> <p>If you would like to consider a different grounding practice, please review the <a href="#">mindfulness appendix</a> for additional suggestions.</p>
<b>Review (5 minutes)</b>	<p><b>Share:</b> We have looked at what compassion in action looks like, some of the challenges we face in those steps (such as engaging people in deciding their next best steps based on their strengths and available resources), and how fatigue develops through the cats cycle. Today we will look one more time at fatigue to gain some insights into the drivers of fatigue that are specific to this team as well as what drives resilience.</p>

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<b>Guiding Questions (20 minutes)</b>	<p><b>What Can I Control Activity</b></p> <p><b>Explain:</b> Identifying drivers of fatigue can broaden our self-awareness of what we CAN do and identifying drivers of resilience can do the same. The questions in this exercise may raise ideas that you at first feel uncomfortable sharing. You might ask yourself if you can trust the group and leaders to consider your thoughts without judgment. You may hear ideas from your colleagues that you do not understand. Participating in conversations of this type may feel vulnerable to some. Please approach this activity with openness to learn your colleagues' perspectives and share what feels right for you to share. I ask that you consider leaning into discomfort in order to have the conversation this team needs to have.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. (Go-around) Think about all you do in your work and the systems in which we work, the ones serving youth and families and the larger systems responsible for setting local, state, and national policies. What about your work and the systems within which you work have a negative impact on your ability to do your work with compassion?</li><li>2. If in-person, give participants markers to write their ideas on flip-chart paper. Use more than one paper so they can write simultaneously which keeps a bit of anonymity in the process. If virtual, use a google doc or other online brainstorming tool.</li><li>3. Facilitators suggest examples to get the group going or to help the group continue when they seem stuck. Be sure to use some examples related to inclusion and equity such as: a driver of fatigue – feeling like your opinions and experiences are not sought out when decisions are made or lack of acknowledgment of my identity such as using my pronouns or pronouncing my name correctly. An example of a driver of resilience related to equity might be acknowledging the diversity of our team and patients/clients when we celebrate holidays and important historical events from various cultures.</li><li>4. Re-do step 1, but ask (Go-around) What about your work and the systems you work in have a positive impact on your ability to do your work with resilience?</li><li>5. Once the two lists have been created explain that each item will be read aloud. Participants can show with their hands if they feel the item is: closed fist – one they feel they have no control over or open hand – could have some control over it. When they look to leadership of their organization to have some control over the item read, use their other hand to make an L for leadership. Explain that control should be something that could be accomplished in the next two years (i.e., I can vote for a new candidate in the next election, but their policies would not take affect for multiple years.) If a majority of participants give the item a fist – strike through it, an open hand – circle it, L – mark it with a large L. Allow there to be some discussion if people have more than one idea for the same item and items can be marked with dotted lines when there is variance. You can vote for control or no control from your perspective AND L for your thoughts on leadership control.</li><li>6. Another approach to this activity is giving everyone a marker and asking them to write on the flipcharts directly.</li><li>7. Ask administration if they would be willing to look at the items with which participants felt leadership has some control over and would commit to looking at the list and reporting back to the circle if any of the items are things leadership will spend time on in the next 1-2 years, which items they would like more staff feedback on and which items they will not be addressing in the next couple of years.</li></ol>

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<b>Putting it into Practice (10 minutes)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. (Open mic) What percentage of time does your team or sub-set spend discussing the things they cannot control when they are together?</li><li>2. (Open mic) What percentage seems healthy for your team?</li><li>3. (Open mic) How can you identify to your team members when the group has gone over that percentage?</li></ol>

<b>Closing (5 minutes)</b>	<p>Hand movements activity from Section 4 in the Toolkit. Share the statements below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hold your hands out and squeeze them into fists. (Hold for at least 30 seconds and invite participants to close their eyes for the rest of the activity.) This may be akin to feeling fatigue.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Think about what emotions arise as you close your fists. This is a metaphor for resistance – what it feels like when cannot accept our current reality. Resistance can be helpful if it leads us to discover where we might have some level of control and motivates us to act. Yet, staying in the place of resistance without a path of action can be emotionally fatiguing.</li></ul></li><li>• Now, bring your elbow to your side, open your hands and turn your palms upward.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Think about what emotions arise for you. This is a metaphor for mindfulness – what it feels like when we are present and open to ourselves, our experiences and the changes, challenges, and opportunities we are faced with. Being mindfully present may help us to hear more clearly what others are saying, see a path of action, or how to care for ourselves in the moment.</li></ul></li><li>• Now extend your palms and your arms forward.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Think about how this makes you feel. This is a metaphor for common humanity – what it feels like when we reach beyond ourselves and welcome and include others. In our vulnerability we discover the common aspects of humanity and can form bonds with others. We can act with compassion and make a positive impact together.</li></ul></li><li>• Now place one hand in the other with both palms facing upward. Slowly bring them to your chest. Feel the warmth and gentle pressure. Breath naturally.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Reflect on your feelings during this last step. This symbolizes self-compassion. Caring for ourselves is the foundation that supports our compassion for others and helps us find comfort in our common humanity.</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>Bonus Activity:</b> Test it out! Suggest again that the participants practice sharing something that made them feel alive in their workday with someone outside of work at least once each day until the next session. Ask that they observe the listener’s reaction and their own.</p>
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