



Trauma Stewardship: Strategies for Self and Organization

“To participate in trauma stewardship is to always remember the privilege and sacredness of being called to help.”

—Trauma Stewardship, 2009

Creating Space for Inquiry

1. Take time within the organization to reflect and “remember who we are, where we’re headed, and what we need.”
2. Use moderation as an organizational strategy. Consider work schedule, work load, etc. to find a balance and allow space for creativity. Make time to just do nothing, allowing creativity to blossom.

Example: One organization decided to inspire creativity by substituting one staff meeting per month with a writing group that they had collectively formed.

Choosing our Focus

Learn to stay present in your experience. Allow yourself the space to observe and be curious. Ask “where am I putting my focus?” Slow down and pay attention to where you and your organization focus your thoughts and actions.

Building Compassion and Community

1. Practice self-care through healthy lifestyle choices, social support, and pursuit of personally meaningful tasks and creative projects. Shape an organizational climate that encourages self-care and a “family community.” Build in time for social or celebratory gatherings, retreats, etc.
2. Diversify your friendships so not all are in your profession. This can expand your world view and increase feelings of positivity.
3. Use positive statements for yourself and within your organization.
4. Create opportunities for staff and former clients to reconnect, through an avenue such as a forum. This can have a profound effect on staff, providing them with valuable insights and inspiring a renewed commitment to their profession. It can



offer clients a space to provide feedback about their experiences, allowing for closure and growth for both client and worker.

Finding Balance

1. Cultivate a sense of gratitude. "Locating something to be thankful for at all times is an essential part of trauma stewardship." Weave gratitude time into staff meetings. Set aside moments when workers can honor what is going well and express gratitude to one another. Take the lead in thanking others.
2. Create a work environment that is as humane as possible.
3. Decide to say no, at times, to taking on more, both individually and as an organization.
4. Claim moments during the workday to attend to your inner well-being. Encourage others to do the same.
5. Negotiate a sane work schedule and help others do the same. Write down all your sick leave time, vacation time, and mental health days. Start planning ahead.
6. Surround yourself with colleagues who will support you as you stick to your agreed-upon hours and take time off. Support others to do the same.
7. Identify one thing that you would love to incorporate into your workday but are certain you could not. Now try everything in your power to make that aspiration a reality.

Example: A group of child protective services workers in Seattle meet in the local park to practice tae kwon do during their lunch hour; others drive down to the lake and sit eating their lunches with a view of the Cascade Mountains.

Centering Ourselves

1. Create an intention for your day. Begin to cultivate moments of mindfulness. For self-reflection and growth, develop a regular practice in centering oneself:

Examples include: breathing exercises, meditation, playing an instrument, taking a daily walk, prayer, etc.

2. Designate a day of rest.
3. Take a vacation. Have the ability to completely suspend work (no e-mail, Blackberry, etc.)

(Source: van Dermoot Lipsky & Burk, 2009)