

TRAINING FOR CHANGE TOOL

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Sustaining Self-Care

a tool for personal awareness

This design allows participants to reflect, in a natural and easy flow, about sustainability and self-care: it uses participants' experience to uncover new lessons and appreciate old ones. Introduce the goals of this exercise by letting participants know this is a chance to do some reflection about themselves and how to take even better care of ourselves.

Step 1. Story-telling of a time I felt sustained

Have participants get into pairs or buddies. Then, have them settle into a moment of silence to recall a particular moment when they felt sustained or energized in their organizing work, especially within their group, organizational, or activist context (for example, “it helps sustain me when I can delegate work to others” versus “doing yoga on my free time”).

Encourage people to recall a particular moment or story for each of the questions. Share the stories. Give them about 10 minutes for this section (about 5 minutes each). Ask folks to listen actively to each other, offering back reflections and questions, not advice.

Step 2. Create a list of “What sustains you?”

Bring the group back together and report - looking for common themes. Make list: “What Sustains You?” Encourage the list to focus on behaviors within their activist work. (This is because this exercise looks at the dimension of self-care as an organizational and cultural behavior, not a personal one.)

Notice any patterns. Be light and help the group be honest as they disclose.

Step 3. Pick something on the list you want to do more of, then tell how you are already doing it

This next step is a little tricky. First, get them into small groups of two or three.

Next, in those small groups, have people identify one or two items on that list that they want to do more or feel they do poorly. Make sure each person has one of those on their list.

Then, ask them to tell a time in which they *most effectively* did that behavior. This may be a stretch – and that’s the point. However small the example is, encourage them to tell the whole story of what happened to play out how they did it, including what happened inside them.

The rationale for this design is this: people grow by identifying behaviors to *keep* doing rather than reminding themselves of behaviors they are not doing. For example, say someone thinks, “‘Taking a break’ is on the list, and I am terrible at that.” Rather than allowing the self-limiting belief to get reaffirmed, this design challenges it directly by getting them to see when they do it – even if it is only a little bit, like accepting a ten-second distraction by looking outside. Then explore what goes inside them that allowed them to do that.

Then encourage them to do it again during the large group debrief. Support others who may have had trouble coming up with a story. This may be an opportunity to delve deeper as feelings may surface.

This design was created by Nico Amador, Training for Change

based on a design from Claudia Horwitz and Jesse Maceo Vega-Frey www.stonecircles.org