



# **Trauma-Informed Care Basics Facilitator Guide Module 1: Understanding Stress**

# Module One: Understanding Stress – Collective Learning Session

## Objectives:

- Develop a shared language around stress, adversity, trauma, as well as healing and resilience.
- Identify different types of stress.
- Identify ways stress affects the body.

## Facilitators Guide

Review the content from the Understanding Stress web-based module. Collective learning sessions supplement the independent learning and create a space where you can contextualize the learning to the setting you work in. Not all content will be covered, rather the time together is used to integrate learning using discussion, problem-based learning (practice), and dynamic learning generated by the participants and the experiences, identities, and roles that they bring.

Use an inclusivity first mindset. Use nametags or virtual naming tools for participants. Provide information regarding access to bathrooms, when breaks will take place, dietary needs, accessibility, and information that helps participants make decisions and increase their own feelings of comfort, trust and safety in the learning space. Prior to coming together for the first time, you can send out a group norms survey to build consensus and inclusivity.

All participants should have completed Module One: Understanding Stress independently.

The timing and content map provides flexible guidance for carrying out the live session. 90 minutes has been allocated for this collective learning session, however the time parameters suggested can change based on a variety of factors.


The live sessions take the shape of a three-part process in which the participant is asked to:

- 1) Reflect. Either through internal investigation or in pairs through discussion.
- 2) Explore. By examining a problem space through group discussion using their own observations, lived experience, and knowledge gained.
- 3) Build community. Cultivate a space to integrate, embody and/or question these findings.

TIME	GOALS	ACTIVITY
10 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sets the tone, slowing everyone down mindfully.</li> <li>• Provide connection to body/breath.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Setting:</b> Taking a moment to settle in. If the participants are in person, invite them to turn off cameras and settle in, find a comfortable seat, invite them to rest their arms, perhaps find a place on their knees with their palms up.</p> <p><b>Grounding Exercise Script:</b> Curiosity allows us to begin to turn toward the entirety of experience, moving us from avoidance to approach, including that which we don't like. Curiosity can be used as a way to inquire into our experience—the joyful and painful alike. Curiosity and kindness can be the antidotes to judgment and other harsh evaluations we may direct toward ourselves or others and it is a quality that can be developed.</p> <p>This breathing exercise allows us to cultivate curiosity with our breath. Take a quiet moment to focus on where in your body you feel your breath.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take three slow breaths, and while you are breathing, try to notice where you feel your breath the most.</li> <li>• Put your hand up to your nose, and notice what your breathing feels like.</li> <li>• Put your hand up to your chest, and notice what your breathing feels like.</li> <li>• Put your hand on your stomach, and notice what your breathing feels like.</li> </ul> <p>Now, cultivate your curious observer. Ask with a curiosity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where do I feel my breath the most?</li> <li>• What does it feel like when I breathe in?</li> <li>• What does it feel like when I breathe out?</li> </ul>
<b>REFLECT</b>		
10 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recap of the web-based module through open discussion.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Review &amp; Recap:</b> The Understanding Stress module talks specifically about stress and adversity. The module asserts that in order to support a trauma-informed approach, we have to build a language, which includes healing and resilience, which is based in equity. To do so, we must examine how stress shows up in own work and within the systems we work. The module invites participants to examine stress reductions strategies in their own work, understanding that prolonged stress can impact the body. This collective learning session will engage in exercises to expand your integration of your understanding of stress.</p> <p><b>Examples of open-ended questions that can be used:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your understanding of _____?</li> <li>• What do you want to know about _____?</li> <li>• What is the first thing you think about in relation to _____?</li> <li>• What are some questions you have about _____?</li> <li>• State one image/scene/event/moment from your experience that relates to _____?</li> </ul>

15 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an exploration question for the dyad (groups of two).</li> <li>• Hold space for how this topic shows up in the person.</li> <li>• Practice modeling what it feels/looks like to hold a gentle open space for how stress, adversity or trauma shows up.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Dyads: Developing a Share Language</b></p> <p>Invite participants to engage in discussion with a partner. Randomly assign so that people can get diverse learning experience from this activity. The goal of this activity is to support participant's in their development of a shared language around stress, adversity, trauma, as well as healing and resilience. Ask participants to engage in a brief discussion with their partner, each taking 5 minutes each to examine how their language and experience with these concepts have shaped their understanding. Use these questions as guidance for the discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What words stood out to you which were defined in the Understanding Stress module?</li> <li>• What was new or surprising?</li> </ul>
---------	--	---

**EXPLORE**

20 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use problem-based learning to integrate a case study specific to the system or organization the learners are familiar with</li> <li>• Provide participants with a case study to examine in groups</li> </ul>	<p><b>Case Study: Different Types of Stress</b></p> <p>Remind participants of Elisa's case study. Provide each group of three to four participants a copy of the case study or display for all participants to see. Ask if the participants understand the different types of Stress. Process the questions that arise.</p> <p><b>Module One Slide 3.9</b></p>  <p><b>Acute Stress</b> Acute stress is one of the least damaging types of stress, which is good because it is also the most common type. We experience acute stress multiple times throughout the day.</p> <p><b>Chronic or Toxic Stress</b> Toxic stress occurs when we experience chronic or prolonged stress, without adequate support to overcome it, and we are unable to rebound or return to a normal state of functioning.</p> <p><b>Eustress or Good Stress</b> Eustress means beneficial stress. It can motivate, focus energy, improve performance and produce positive feelings of excitement, meaning, satisfaction and well-being.</p> <p><b>Acute Episodic Stress</b></p>
---------	---	--

		Acute episodic stress refers to frequent, consistent periods of stress where the stressful experience occurs on an intermittent or regular basis. This type of stress can also occur when you're impacted by consecutive stressors, or often worried about a negative experience or event that could happen in the future.
5 mins		<p><b>Brain Break: Cloud Gazing</b></p> <p>The idea of this brain break activity is to exercise one's creativity. Do you remember as a child of visualizing the clouds as the shape of animals or daily items? This activity is a nice shift which supports holding space for self and others, as it is a calming activity that reconnects the mind and body with nature. This is a practice most people lose track of with the usual hustle of work-life. Other than the long-lost reconnection, cloud gazing improve observational, non-judgment, skills as well. During a break, ask participants to take a step or look outside to observe the clouds and identify visual shapes.</p>
<b>BUILD COMMUNITY</b>		
15 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate learning through a group exercise</li> <li>Use liberating structures exercise</li> </ul>	<p><b>Group Learning Activity: How Stress Affects the Body</b></p> <p>Materials for In-Person Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flip Chart Paper</li> <li>Markers</li> </ul> <p>Materials for Virtual Learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Google Jamboard</li> </ul> <p><b>Instructions:</b></p> <p>Break participants into groups of 3-4. Engaging the participant's creativity, you will ask them to draw a picture of how stress affects the body. Provide them with the tools needed to carry out the activity and inform them that they have 8 minutes to complete the activity. May need more time if using a virtual learning space and will require breakout room functionality.</p> <p><b>Collective Learning Experience:</b></p> <p>Participants may have laughed about their artistic skills and bonded over the activity. Provide assurance and encouragement for each group to share their drawing to the larger group. Once everyone has shared, you can unpack by providing probing questions.</p> <p><b>Group Process Questions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did what you see/experience in your service area inform your drawing?</li> <li>Does stress show up similarly across groups and within your system?</li> <li>How can this inform your own plan for self-care?</li> </ul> <p>Highlight some of the commonalities, while also bringing forth areas of the body that might be ignored or uncomfortable to talk about. The processing of the prompt should take approximately 7 - minutes.</p>
10 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brings the learning together.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Group Process: Tying It Together</b></p> <p><b>Liberating Structure – What? So What? Now What?</b></p> <p>After learning about stress and applying it to your work ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“WHAT? What happened? What did you notice, what facts or observations stood out?”</li> <li>Then, after all the salient observations have been collected, ask, “SO WHAT? Why is that important?”</li> <li>What patterns or conclusions are emerging? What hypotheses can you make?” Then, after the sense making is over, ask, “NOW WHAT? What actions make sense?”</li> </ul> <p>Participants will likely draw the conclusion that stress is harmful and they need strategies to support people in the service system as well as themselves.</p> <p>Take a moment to answer any questions or comments about the content that was covered in the collective learning session.</p>

This is a good opportunity to take a moment to introduce the Rapid Cycle Adaptive Leadership Journaling worksheet. This is a practice that can help with stress reduction and also enable clear understanding of what can work in stressful situations. Journaling can help us gain perspective and support us when we most need it.

**Rapid Cycle Adaptive Leadership Journaling**

Created by the National Council

For some, writing down thoughts and feelings allows a leader to understand themselves more clearly. It allows a leader to observe and learn about their thoughts and emotions in a more concrete way. Journaling gives a person an opportunity to mark successful strategies and what has been learned from unsuccessful strategies by viewing thought processes and emotions from more of an outside perspective, which can help identify opportunities for growth as well as track moments of brilliance. The National Council suggests journaling at the same time daily, allowing oneself the space to start a ritual of contemplation. Even if a person cannot think of what to say, it is worthwhile sitting for the full five minutes and allowing the space for examination.

Week of __/__/__	My biggest success today was...	My biggest stressor today was...
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

A year from now I want to remember this is the week that \_\_\_\_\_ happened.

5 mins

- Close the loop effectively and with calm.

**Check-Out Closing**

Closing a collective learning session allows participants to process their learning and the facilitator to check-in on the participants. This particular check-out practice is called the 3-2-1. Ask participants to draw on what they have learned and explored using the following questions:

- Three things you learned, examined or had the opportunity to press into.
- Two things that resonated with you.
- One question you still have.

**Optional Understanding Stress Homework**

One way you can integrate stress reduction into your everyday experience, is to pause at intervals throughout the day, connect to your breath, and honor yourself if only for a moment, before returning to your day.

- Set 1-3 reminders in your phone. Choose a sound for this alert that is unlike any of your other notification sounds.
- Alternatively, you could choose specific landmarks in your day, such as the moment before you turn out of your driveway, the ride in the elevator to your office, immediately after a daily routine, or the threshold of the door into your place of worship.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When the alarm sounds or you are at your “landmark”, set down whatever it is you’re doing. If you are able, close your eyes and place your hand on your heart. Focus solely on your breath for 1-2 cycles. Feel the beat of your heart, the warmth of your skin, the peace within.</li></ul> <p>It can be tempting to skip a landmark in your day or finish up whatever you’re working on before taking some time for yourself. And that is where the work of this practice lies. Honoring your breath, body, and beat of your heart. Choosing you over tasks, chores, and yes, even others.</p>
--	--	--

### Module One Slide 3.9



Hi! My name is Elisa. I recently lost my job. I am the primary caregiver for my chronically ill mother. We live in subsidized housing. Our extended family lives out of state, which makes it hard to get a break.

Elisa has several stressors in her life. Her recent job loss is an example of what kind of stress?

- Acute Stress
- Chronic or Toxic Stress
- Eustress or Good Stress
- Acute Episodic Stress