

System Drivers of Compassion Fatigue

Section 4

Leadership and Staff Activity

What Can I Control?



1. You can do this activity with a large group up to 30 people or divide into smaller groups. Prepare a large space for individuals to come forward to write their ideas for others to see. Have multiple markers ready for simultaneous writing. Divide the space in half and write Drivers of Fatigue at the top of the first half.
2. Share with the group: 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.
3. Invite staff and leaders to brainstorm on the first half of the space: Think about all you do in your work and the systems in which we work, the ones serving students 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 job with compassion?
4. 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.
5. Suggest that the board will be pretty full by the time they are out of ideas. Facilitators may 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 students when we celebrate holidays and important historical events from various cultures.
6. Next write Drivers of Resilience at the top of the other half of the space and ask the group, what about your work and the systems you work in have a positive impact on your ability to do your work with resilience? Have the group write their responses on the shared brainstorm space.
7. Once the writing area is pretty full and the ideas have slowed, read each item one-by-one and ask the group to identify if:
 - a. They have little to no control over the item (strike through these items).
 - b. They have some level of control over it (circle it).
 - c. They believe that leadership could have some control over the item (mark with a large L).

Do not worry if some have more than one such as, I have some control and my leadership team has some control. Mark those items both ways. Allow people to discuss their ideas on which best fits. Suggest that they think of control in a time frame such as in the next two years. For example, I can vote for another candidate in a few years yet the change I want to see will not likely come in the next few years. If there is disagreement, ask them to use dotted lines to cross out or circle.

8. Once the list is sorted as described in #3, suggest that the group look at those items that they have identified as not being able to control. Ask them to assess the percent of time when they come together as a team they typically spend talking about these items. Too much? Not enough? What seems like the right percentage of time to allow for validation of the reality but not too much to waste time? Then, ask could they do to remind each other to avoid giving time to that which they cannot control? One idea is to have a signal that colleagues give each other when they start into circular conversations about things that will not change in the near future.

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Section 4

Leadership and Staff Activity *(continued)*

9. Next, look at the list that the group thought leadership might be able to control. Ask the leaders in the room if they would commit to looking at the list in the near future and get back to the staff with:
 - a. What they will spend time on in the next year or two.
 - b. What they want more information on from the staff.
 - c. What they will not address in the next year or two.

The Leadership team should be prepared to discuss items the staff designated to “leadership control” and report back to the staff which items the team would be exploring this year or next and which items would not change in the near future. Consider the three-tiered approach described in the information area of this section. 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 express willingness to look at those items in the future unless there is no possibility of change. Let the staff know that progress on the items the team has chosen to address will be shared throughout the year.

10. Ask the group to discuss in pairs, the steps they would like to take this year in one or two areas that they identified as under their control.
11. Close the activity by letting the group know that the next section will look at expectations that we have of ourselves and others have of us. Suggest that clarifying expectations is an important aspect of letting go and exercising our control. In addition, the content of the Mind section will address growing our self-awareness and challenging our thoughts. Again, these are skills that support our ability to let go of what we cannot control to avoid the weight of those things dragging on our effectiveness and compassion. [Do this hand gesture exercise.](#)