

# Creating and Maintaining A Healthy Work Environment

## A Resource Guide for Staff Retreats

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“... the elements that define a healthy work environment [include] collegiality and sharing; recognizing employees' contributions; having policies that are based on trust; doing what we say we will do, both individually and as an organization; [and] encouraging employees to have a balanced life.”

Report on key findings from the Association of Professional Executives of the Public Service of Canada (APEX) colloquium entitled “Beyond the Talk: Achieving a healthy and productive work environment,” 1999

“Think of communication as the organizational cardiovascular system. The lifeblood of an entity is nothing without the heart, lungs, arteries and veins to transport it to its destination. Departure from regular and effective communication can eventually atrophy the creative engine of [an organization].”

Wanda Shumaker, WJS Consulting Group

“ ... surveys suggest that the main source of stress in the workplace, at every level of the organization, is interpersonal relationships ... studies further indicate that the two most important factors that make staff feel positive about their work environment are the respect they are given and the recognition of their contribution in the workplace.”

Ron Sparrow, Vice President, Source Line Corporate Wellness Services Inc.

# Table of Contents

## Acknowledgments

## Introduction

- Why hold retreats?
- Purpose and use of the guide

## Retreat Planning & Evaluation

- Convening a retreat planning committee
- Determining retreat goals
- Choosing a facilitator
- Selecting a retreat location
- Promoting the retreat
- Arranging the retreat space
- Preparing food
- Spicing up the retreat
- Documenting the main points
- Evaluating the retreat

## Retreat Content – Key Questions & Activities

- What is the “essence” of this organization?
- What are the key characteristics of a healthy work environment?
- What difference does a healthy work environment make?
- Whose responsibility is it to create a healthy workplace?
- How healthy is this organization?
- What difference do structural issues make?
- How important is communication?
- What does self-care have to do with organizational wellness?
- What steps can organizations take to create a more vital workplace?

## Appendices

- Appendix A – Tips for Retreat Facilitators
- Appendix B – Ice-breakers and Energizers
- Appendix C – Group Discussion Methods
- Appendix D – Sample Quiz Questions
- Appendix E – Healthy Organization Handouts
- Appendix F – Sample Staff Satisfaction Survey
- Appendix G – Communication Handout
- Appendix H – Self-Care Handouts
- Appendix I – Selected Resources
- Appendix J – Sample Outline for Day-long Staff Retreat
- Appendix K – Sample Retreat Evaluation Form

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A particular resource I have found valuable in developing this guide is Training for Transformation (revised edition 2001), written by Ann Hope and Sally Timmel, illustrated by Chris Hodzi, published by Mambo Press, Gweru, Zimbabwe. It is available in the United States from the Grailville Art & Bookstore, Loveland, OH, 45140; 513-683-0202. I am appreciative of such resources that stretch my thinking and spark creative ideas.

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# Introduction

## Why hold retreats?

It can be difficult for people who are deeply committed to their work, such as those who work in Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) settings, to justify taking time to retreat – to step back from one's work, to reflect, and see the world through new eyes. Yet it is precisely because of this level of dedication that retreat time is so valuable.

Challenging work requires perspective. Stepping back periodically from one's work is critically important to ensure the ability to function well and continue to do so over time. Just as vehicles need regular tune-ups and safety checks to keep them running well, so do organizations and individuals need to be taken "off the road and into the shop" occasionally.

Action without reflection can be costly. The words of Thomas Merton are applicable and instructive:

"The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence ... It destroys the fruitfulness of one's work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom, which makes work fruitful."

Retreats essentially provide an opportunity to be reminded of the authentic calling of our lives and organizations. Retreats can help to keep us grounded in the values and practices that make this work meaningful. A solid foundation contributes appreciably to sustaining healthy work habits and a healthy organization.

It is known from the literature and from experience that the nature of the work environment is a strong determinant in successfully recruiting new staff, enhancing job satisfaction, and retaining quality staff. These are issues of critical importance to HCH projects. High rates of staff turnover can be costly and negatively affect the quality of care delivered. Thus, it is beneficial for organizations to actively pursue creating a healthy work environment.

## Purpose and use of the guide

The intent of this resource guide is to assist HCH projects in conducting staff retreats that increase morale, commitment to mission, mutual understanding, staff cohesion, and staff retention. These aims are brought together under the theme of "creating and maintaining a healthy work environment."

The concept of a “healthy” work environment is not easily defined. Individuals and organizations will characterize it differently. For the purposes of this guide, a healthy work environment refers to an organization in which people are valued and priority is given to the multiple aspects of the workplace that affect employees’ ability to function well in order to accomplish the goals of the organization.

It is anticipated that this resource will be particularly helpful to administrators, team leaders, and retreat planning groups in developing staff retreats. While creating a healthy work environment is a shared responsibility of everyone in the organization, it is the particular domain of the leadership to attend to this environment, set a proper tone, and initiate practices that promote organizational wellness, such as retreats.

While this guide is intended for HCH projects, the ideas and activities contained here have broad applicability to other settings and organizations as well. These materials can be adapted as needed.

This guide is written primarily with a day-long staff retreat in mind. It is common for organizations to hold such an event on an annual basis. It is important to remember, however, that the nature of this work requires more frequent practices of retreat and renewal. It would be erroneous to think that staff simply need one day of respite annually in order to “get back in the saddle again” for another year.

Retreats come in various shapes, sizes and forms. They can be scheduled for a day to several days. Mini-retreats, taken in the course of the workday, can be even shorter. Retreats can serve a variety of purposes. Some might focus on renewal, others on surveying the external environment, identifying problems, planning programs, developing new models, and so forth.

Retreats can also be held for diverse groups of people. They might include the entire staff of an organization, representatives from various program areas, specific programs, or teams. No one retreat will be like another.

This resource guide offers a menu of themes and activities relevant to creating a healthy work environment. Because retreats need to be planned with an organization’s specific context and needs in mind, this resource is not written as a recipe to be followed precisely. Instead, it offers ideas and themes to stimulate thinking so that the retreat might best serve the needs of the organization.

The guide is organized in three main sections followed by appendices. The *Introduction* section briefly explains the purpose of the guide and directions for its use. The *Retreat Planning and Evaluation* segment reviews the planning steps

and offers tips for conducting successful retreats. This section also addresses retreat evaluation. The third section, *Retreat Content – Key Questions and Activities*, is the heart of the resource guide. The content is arranged around key questions for organizations to explore. Specific activity ideas are provided as a means to facilitate discussion of these questions. The materials in the *Appendices* provide resource information for the facilitator and can also be utilized as handouts.

Certain themes or activities may seem risky to use due to their potential for causing discomfort among participants. These topics should not necessarily be avoided. Exploring them is encouraged to unveil issues of importance or areas of inertia. This risk-taking could provide the necessary breakthrough to increase employees' insight and understanding on the personal as well as the organizational levels. On the other hand, there are times when it will not be appropriate to broach controversial topics in the retreat context. The retreat planning group will need to make this discernment.

# Retreat Planning & Evaluation

This section contains key considerations and action steps that will contribute to a successful retreat.

## **Convening a retreat planning committee**

Successful retreats require good planning. It is wise to convene a planning committee that begins its work four to six months in advance of the retreat. The committee should be comprised of members who represent the organization's various programs and the staff's diversity. Aim for a cross-section of agency staff who will bring different perspectives and creative ideas to the table. Generally, a group of six to eight members works well.

## **Determining retreat goals**

Ideally, everyone in the organization should have an opportunity to provide input into the focus of the retreat. Staff surveys are useful in this regard. Other means for gathering information include discussions in team meetings, individual conversations with staff, and soliciting feedback to draft proposals.

Below are sample questions to explore with agency staff and within the planning committee to shape the retreat agenda:

- Are there "burning issues" to address?
- Are there hidden, vague, or "below the surface" issues that persist?
- Are there concerns about safety?
- Does the physical work space require attention?
- Do staff have concerns about the organizational culture?
- Do staff need an opportunity to connect with one another?
- Do internal structures and policies impede the agency's work?
- Are there external issues that need to be examined?
- Is there a need to focus on self-care and burnout prevention?
- Is there a need to grieve collectively?
- What upcoming issues should the agency address?

In addition to the organization's leadership, it is the planning committee's role to pose these questions and seek staff input. Ultimately, it is the planning committee's responsibility, in concert with the facilitator, to specify the agenda, activities, and process for the retreat itself. (See Appendix I for selected resources and Appendix J for a sample outline for a daylong retreat.)

## **Choosing a facilitator**

A critical early decision in the planning process is to determine who will facilitate the retreat. This might be an individual or a team who share the facilitation role.



The word *facilitator* literally means “one who makes things easier.” Thus, it is the facilitator’s primary responsibility to pay attention to the group dynamics present in the room and to help the agenda move along smoothly. The facilitator seeks to set a positive tone and to create an atmosphere that encourages dialogue. In addition, the facilitator monitors the group’s energy, makes adaptations to the agenda as needed, and works creatively with issues that come up unexpectedly. (See Appendices A, B, C for tips for facilitators, icebreaker ideas, and group discussion methods.)

It is desirable to assemble a small group of individuals, perhaps the retreat planning committee, to assist throughout the day with logistical details. These can include tasks such as setting up the room, distributing handouts/supplies, monitoring room temperature and lighting, writing on flipcharts, calling people back from breaks, and serving as time-keeper. It is also recommended that this group meet briefly with the facilitator(s) midway through the retreat to review the process up to that point and make revisions as needed.

### **Selecting a retreat location**

It is optimal to hold retreats in a location away from the agency in a casual, relaxed environment. Programs may want to hold retreats in a non-urban setting accessible to nature.

Take into consideration such matters as:

- adequacy and appropriateness of indoor and outdoor space for planned activities
- availability of basic amenities and equipment (water, heat, bathrooms, refrigeration, food preparation utensils, etc.)
- handicap accessibility
- affordability
- ease of transportation to the location
- aesthetics
- need for lighting, sound system and audio-visual equipment
- facility policies regarding use of walls, smoking, noise, security, etc.

### **Promoting the retreat**

As soon as the date for the retreat is established, it is important to publicize it so that staff can arrange their schedules accordingly. Use various media such as written invitations, email, posters, and memoranda to remind everyone of the date. Clearly communicate details such as the retreat location and directions, starting and ending times, appropriate attire, what to bring, the purpose and expectations for participation. Start early and communicate frequently in order to build enthusiasm for the event.

### **Arranging the retreat space**

Set up the retreat space in a way that will best accommodate the kinds of activities being planned. In general, the use of round or rectangular tables that seat six to eight participants per table work very well. This arrangement is versatile, allowing for easy transitions between large and small group activities. Tables are also convenient for writing, holding food and drink, doing art projects, and other activities.

If tables are unavailable, use chairs that can be easily moved into circles for small group activities. For large group discussion, arrange the seating so participants can see one another to the extent possible, such as in a half-moon shape. This tends to engender livelier conversation than traditional theatre style seating.

Consider adding aesthetic touches such as fragrant, fresh-cut flowers, posters or pictures relevant to the retreat theme, special lighting, and background music. These sensory stimuli help people focus on the present and convey the sense that this is not business as usual.

### **Planning for food**

Be sure to give adequate attention to food, as it is something participants are certain to remember about the retreat! Request staff input about food preferences prior to the retreat and provide refreshments and meals that are appealing and nourishing. Ensure that carnivores, vegetarians, and persons with dietary restrictions all eat well.

Consider having the food catered by an organization that does culinary skills training and job placement for homeless or low-income people, if such a program exists in your area. Potlucks can also work well. Ask participants to bring a dish from their ethnic background or simply a favorite food.

### **Spicing up the retreat**

Below are ideas and activities that can be incorporated into the retreat to spark participants' interest and stimulate involvement. Be creative and generate additional ideas that would work in your setting.

#### Quiz questions with prizes

Enhance the retreat by intermittently posing quiz questions to participants (see Appendix D: Sample Quiz Questions). Award random prizes for correct answers or for good effort. Collect prizes ahead of time. They can range from silly to serious, from inexpensive to valuable. Consider toys, gift certificates, books, lunch with the executive director, tickets to an event, use of a cabin, and other ideas.

### Outside recognitions

Request community leaders or government officials from your city, county, region, or state to officially recognize and express appreciation for your organization's work. Invite them to come to the retreat to deliver their statement in person. Ask for a printed certificate or proclamation that can be displayed in your agency. A copy can also be given to each staff person.

Allow plenty of lead time to negotiate the bureaucracy to obtain these recognitions. Be prepared to provide the basic script. Consider inviting the media and sending a press release regarding any outside recognitions.

### In-house recognitions

Healthy organizations tend to foster an environment in which recognition and gratitude is freely expressed. They regularly take opportunities to publicly recognize staff and volunteers for high quality work, meeting program goals, special accomplishments, providing assistance on special projects, for significant personal events and milestones, and so forth.

Retreats provide an excellent venue for providing public recognition. These expressions can be given verbally or perhaps accompanied with a tangible certificate or award. Though it is often the domain of administrators to offer recognitions, they can rightfully be provided by anyone in the organization.

Healthy organizations also create space for employees to extend recognition and support to others who might be facing illness, a personal or family crisis, or other stressful circumstances. While not always appropriate to do so publicly, it is often helpful to acknowledge such events with the employee's permission to do so.

### Pipe cleaners, finger puppets, and squiggly things

Provide a supply of different colored pipe cleaners and small, non-noise-making toys to give participants something to do with their hands. Paradoxically, this helps many people maintain attention throughout the course of the day. Pipe cleaners are especially fun and are inexpensive. Explain that these toys have no particular purpose other than for participants to amuse themselves.

### Silence

Consider incorporating one or more periods of silence into the retreat agenda. This can be an effective way for participants to focus their attention and energy, "let go" of distractions, take calming breaths, and set or maintain a positive tone. Herman Melville wrote, "All profound things and emotions of things are preceded and attended by silence."

Sitting in silence as a group may be an unusual experience for many people. It can be a rather powerful experience but also unsettling, often at the same time.

It is recommended to limit these periods to several minutes unless there is a meditation activity occurring that specifically calls for an extended period of silence. It is helpful to state the length of time and what signal will mark the end of the silence.

#### Free time

Allow for unstructured time and space during the retreat. This provides an opportunity for participants to get to know one another, take walks, or play together. Free time may be incorporated by extending the lunch period or taking longer breaks than usual.

#### Simple yoga

Ask someone in your organization who is familiar with yoga practice to lead the group in simple postures coupled with deep breathing. This can be introduced as a "stretch break" or as part of addressing self-care. Yoga postures, breathing techniques and stretching are simple practices that can be used in the workplace and at home.

#### Massage

Invite massage therapists or students from a local massage school to provide brief chair massages or teach participants how to practice self-massage to reduce stress.

#### Humor

Look for and encourage the spontaneous humor that inevitably emerges whenever a group of people gets together. The facilitator should be encouraged to maintain a light touch throughout the day. Perhaps a staff person who has comedic skills can be asked to provide a "ten minute workshop" during the retreat on how to tell a joke! Invite staff to share humorous stories from their work. Consider inviting a humorist or comedian from the outside to entertain the group and make people laugh.

#### Art, music, dance

Employ the artistic talents of staff or bring in people from outside the agency to perform or involve the group in creative activities. For example, singing, making music, acting out skits, performing interpretive dance, and creating visual art pieces is fun and contributes to enhancing staff relationships.

#### Video

Consider showing a videotape or video clip related to the retreat theme. This can provide variety to the day's activities.

### **Documenting the main points**

It is important to document the key content and ideas that are raised or discussed in the retreat. Having a written record can ensure that these ideas are not forgotten in the weeks and months ahead.

This record can serve as a valuable source to inform on-going program planning and implementation. It can also be useful as a reference for future retreat planning. In addition, it is advisable to distribute the record to all of the retreat participants to serve as a reminder of the issues and ideas raised.

It is best to invite someone who is familiar with but is not an employee of the agency to attend the retreat and act as recorder. If this is not feasible, consider having a number of people share the documentation responsibility so that everyone can participate in the retreat as fully as possible.

### **Evaluating the retreat**

Ensure that an evaluation component is built into the retreat. The purpose of the evaluation is twofold: 1) to discern issues within the organization that require both immediate and ongoing attention, and 2) to plan for future retreats. Elicit both verbal and written feedback. Consider obtaining some immediate feedback at the end of the day by asking questions such as "What worked?" and "What didn't work?" Have the recorder document these responses for later review.

It is recommended that participants complete a written evaluation whether or not one is done verbally. Written responses will likely be more detailed and useful overall. Include questions that ask for objective ratings as well as questions that invite subjective responses. (See Appendix K for sample retreat evaluation form.)

The retreat planning group should reconvene as soon after the retreat as possible to review the evaluative responses. It is worthwhile to provide a summary report of the evaluation to everyone in the organization.

## **Retreat Content – Key Questions & Activities**

For purposes of this resource guide, the main retreat theme has been identified as “creating and maintaining a healthy work environment.” The retreat goals, broadly stated, are to increase 1) staff morale, 2) commitment to mission, 3) mutual understanding, and 4) staff retention. HCH projects can adapt the theme and goals as needed.

Resist the temptation to make the retreat into a staff meeting in disguise. Retreats need to be different in structure, content, and tone than what happens in the usual course of work. Avoid lots of information sharing or didactic presentations, especially from the leadership in the organization. Instead, create the kind of space that allows for participants to be reflective, interactive, and to generate the content of the retreat.

Based on the retreat goals, the planning group and facilitator need to discern which open-ended questions are most relevant. What follow in this section are recommended questions to pursue. These are accompanied by various activity options intended to lead participants into deeper exploration of a healthy work environment. Use or adapt these questions and activities as you wish or create ones that will work best for your setting. Also be aware that the time length noted for each activity is an approximation only.

## What is the “essence” of this organization?

The activities that follow allow participants to reflect on the organization, its mission, how it is perceived, its role in the larger community, its strengths, and participants’ relationship to the agency.

### **Activity 1: Perceptions**

Purpose: To gain a broad appreciation of how the organization is perceived from different points of view

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: none

Procedure:

1. In the large group, pose the question: “What is (name of organization)?” Ask participants to identify the different ways they think certain groups (listed below) might describe the organization. Note that the responses might not always be in a positive light.
  - agency employees/staff
  - patients/clients of the agency
  - local homeowners/residential neighborhoods
  - local businesses
  - other social service agencies
  - police and other protective services
  - hospitals, clinics
  - local, regional, and state government and politicians
  - potential funding entities
  - other
2. Facilitate a discussion with participants about the reasons why various constituent groups might view the agency differently and the implications this has for the organization.

### **Activity 2: Headlines**

Purpose: To explore the benefits and contributions of the organization to the larger community

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: flipchart paper and markers

Procedure:

1. Ask small groups to create headlines for the following “news

scenarios" in your city/region:

- What would the papers say if (name of agency) didn't even exist?
  - What would the papers say if (name of agency) had to shut down for a month?
  - What would the papers say if (name of agency) were completely successful in accomplishing its mission?
  - What would the papers say if ...
2. The small group writes each headline on a half-sheet of flipchart paper and then verbally presents the headlines to the large group.
  3. After all the groups have presented their headlines, follow up with discussion. What common themes were mentioned? What would be the main gist of the story below certain headlines? Which headlines are especially compelling, creative, or clever?

### **Activity 3: Wall of Wonder**

Purpose: To think about the organization from a "strengths-based" perspective – to identify the characteristics that staff appreciate most and are most proud of about the agency

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: index cards, different colored markers

Procedure:

1. In small groups, discuss for 10-15 minutes what you appreciate most and what makes you most proud to be part of this organization. People in the group use colored markers to write down their responses on blank index cards. Each idea needs to be expressed succinctly and written legibly in large letters.
2. The groups bring their index cards to place on a wall designated as the "Wall of Wonder." Use large sheets of paper, tape, or push pins as needed.
3. Follow up with discussion in the large group. What themes keep coming up? What surprises? What did you learn from doing this activity?
4. Encourage participants to look at the various expressions on the wall during the remainder of the retreat.



#### **Activity 4: Metaphors**

Purpose: To examine participants' relationship to the agency using common objects as metaphors

Time: 30-45 minutes

Materials: none, except objects to be found by participants

Procedure:

1. Each person is instructed to find an object – in the room, in one's belongings, outside, in one's vehicle – that represents the "essence" of (name of agency) for that person.
2. Using the object for illustrative purposes, consider the following questions and share your responses in small groups:
  - Why do you remain committed to this agency?
  - What motivates you most to continue doing this work?
  - How do you define the essence of this agency?
  - Which parts of the work of this agency do you see having the most effect on our community?
3. Follow up with discussion in the large group.

(Adapted from an activity created by Jenny Metzler and Cheryl Gooding)

## What are the key characteristics of a healthy work environment?

For the purpose of facilitating the activities below, a healthy work environment refers to an organization in which people are valued and priority is given to the multiple aspects of the workplace that affect employees' ability to function well in order to accomplish the goals of the organization. These aspects of the workplace include:

- the organizational culture
- relationships with other agencies and the larger community
- personnel policies including salaries & benefits
- clinical and administrative supervision
- quality and structure of decision-making
- communication methods and effectiveness
- conflict resolution
- cultural diversity and sensitivity
- opportunities for systems and political advocacy
- safety concerns
- practical and aesthetic features of the physical work setting
- support of personal wellness
- other

For additional ideas about the characteristics of a healthy work environment, review the materials in Appendix E: "Creating Healthy Organizations" and "Nine Tips for Fostering a Respectful Work Environment." These can also be used as handouts.

### **Activity 1: Top Ten Characteristics of a Healthy Work Environment**

Purpose: To have participants identify and examine the key characteristics of a healthy work environment

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials: flipchart sheets for each small group

Procedure:

1. Break into small groups of 5-8. Ask each group to brainstorm and jot down as many characteristics of a healthy/well-functioning work environment as they can.
2. Next, ask them to identify their "Top Ten List" of most important characteristics and to rank order these items from #1- most important to #10- least important. These should be written legibly on one or more pieces of flipchart paper.

3. Have one or several persons from each group verbally present their list to the large group starting with the least important characteristic and finishing with the most important. Post these sheets around the room.
4. Follow up with discussion in the large group. "What themes/characteristics stand out? Any surprises? In what ways are various characteristics inter-dependent with others? What made your group choose X characteristic as being more important than characteristic Y?"
5. If possible, try to identify the top ten characteristics that the group can collectively agree upon without getting too bogged down in the details. This will be useful for later activities.

### **Activity 2: Keeping Staff Engaged**

Purpose: To identify and explore the main aspects of HCH organizations that require attention in order to "keep staff engaged and clients coming back for care"

Time: 30-60 minutes

Materials: flipchart paper for each small group

Procedure:

1. Break into "consultant teams" of 5-8 participants.
2. Explain that the Bureau of Primary Health Care has made a decision (hypothetically) to require all HCH projects to develop and implement a detailed plan focused on "keeping staff engaged in their work and clients coming back for care." Consultant teams are needed to travel around the country (or Hawaii, if you like!) to assist projects in designing these plans. Your consultant team has decided to apply for these funds, which is a competitive bid process.
3. To demonstrate its expertise, each team is required to create a draft plan that outlines the key issues (e.g. communication, safety, organizational culture, policies) that need to be addressed to "keep staff engaged in their work and clients coming back for care." In addition, specific examples are to be cited for each general issue/area.
4. Have each consultant team then "make their pitch" verbally to the large group (representing the BPHC) in a 3-5 minute presentation. Let them know that creativity will be awarded extra points. (As an alternative, have two

teams meet and present to one another.) Follow up with discussion in the large group regarding common themes that emerged.

## **What difference does a healthy work environment make?**

### **Activity 1: What are the Benefits?**

Purpose: To examine how a healthy work environment provides benefit to patients/clients, to clinical and support staff, to leadership in the organization, and to the larger community

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: flipchart, markers

#### Procedure:

1. Invite the group to brainstorm response to the questions below. Devote up to five minutes for each. Have someone record the responses on flipchart paper.
  - What are the ways that clients/patients benefit when we operate in a healthy manner as an organization?
  - What are the ways that clinical and support staff benefit when we operate in a healthy manner as an organization?
  - What are the ways that the leadership benefits when we operate in a healthy manner as an organization?
  - What are the ways that the community at large benefits when we operate in a healthy manner as an organization?
2. Invite comments and discussion. Summarize the key points to bring closure to the activity.

## **Whose responsibility is it to create a healthy workplace?**

An underlying premise of this resource guide is that every individual, team, committee, program, and division in the organization shares responsibility in creating and maintaining a healthy work environment. Each has various levels and arenas of responsibility in this regard. For example, paying heed to self-care and one's role in interpersonal communication is everyone's duty. It is the particular task of leadership to pay attention to and promote organizational wellness through creating appropriate structures and policies, seeking feedback, and consistently acting in a respectful and exemplary manner. The activity below seeks to raise awareness about the various aspects of these responsibilities.

### **Activity 1: "Whose responsibility is it?"**

Purpose: To focus on "who is responsible and what are each person's responsibilities to create a healthy organization?"

Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials: none, unless adapting the activity (see below)

#### Procedure:

1. Divide into small groups. Ask each person from their own point of view to write down what "percentage of responsibility" that each of the following groups has for ensuring organizational wellness in the organization overall: 1) administration, 2) middle management/supervisors, 3) staff. The three percentages should add up to 100%. Acknowledge that this is an arbitrary rating to be used for the purpose of fostering discussion.
2. Next ask each person to write down the main areas of responsibility for each of these groups in regard to creating a healthy work environment.
3. Within each group have each person discuss their reasons for their ratings and to talk about the areas of responsibility they listed. Allow time for groups to compare and discuss the various responses and to note where there are similarities and differences.
4. In the large group, invite discussion about the "findings" of the small groups. Summarize the key points especially where there seems to be a fair amount of agreement.

Note that this activity can also be done in a more visual, hands-on manner by having participants portray their percentages by drawing a pie chart, cutting a circle of paper (pie) into three pieces, cutting a foot-long piece of yarn into three representative lengths, dividing ten jellybeans into three piles, and so forth.

## How healthy is this organization?

Retreats provide an opportunity for staff to collectively reflect on how the organization is functioning overall from their point of view. The intent of the activities that follow is to allow for open dialogue among staff. These activities are designed to invite affirmation of what's working well in the organization as well as to allow for constructive suggestions for improvement. Note that these activities might also be applied more specifically to programs or teams rather than to the organization as a whole.

### **Activity 1: Health Status Report Card**

Purpose: To allow for dialogue among staff regarding perceptions about how well the organization is functioning

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials: none

Procedure:

1. Break into small groups comprised preferably of individuals representing different teams or programs in the agency. Each group needs to select someone as the recorder.
2. The task of each group is to produce a "report card" that indicates their perception of how the organization measures up in comparison to the top ten characteristics of a healthy work environment identified earlier in the retreat. See "Top Ten Characteristics" activity. (Alternatively, the large group could generate a list of top ten characteristics as the initial part of this activity.)
3. Instruct each small group to discuss and then *rate* how they believe the organization is functioning in relation to each of the ten characteristics. Decide on a numerical or letter rating scale for participants to use. Groups are encouraged to add comments for each item that balance expressions of commendation and of concern. These comments are not to be directed at individuals but about the program in general.
4. Have each small group present their report card to the large group with their comments. After each group has presented, follow up with large group discussion.

Alternatively, if the organization already uses a staff satisfaction survey tool and has recent results, use this activity time to present and discuss these findings.

## **Activity 2: Organizational Wellness Checkup**

Purpose: To collectively develop a tool to be used to assess organizational or team wellness

Time: 60 minutes

Materials: flipchart, markers

### Procedure:

Note that if your organization already makes use of a survey tool to assess organizational wellness on a regular basis, this activity could be adapted to evaluate and possibly revise the tool or, use the Staff Satisfaction Survey Tool found in Appendix F as a template.

1. Break into small groups. The task for each small group is to create a survey tool to assess the wellness of the organization.
2. Each group is to build a seven to ten item survey that includes a mix of open-ended questions and multiple choice or ranking exercises, with space for comments. The content should cover the various operational and program areas in the agency. Refer back to the Top Ten Characteristics activity to generate ideas for the survey items.
3. Next, have each group exchange its survey instrument with another group for the purpose of "field testing" it. Each group then responds collectively to the survey items.
4. The two groups that exchanged tools then come together to report on 1) their ratings and responses to the survey items, and 2) comments regarding which questions were particularly useful.
5. Hold a large group discussion about the various issues that came up. It may be worthwhile to collect copies of all the survey tools that were created to use as a beginning point for creating a more standard tool for use on an ongoing basis in the organization.

## What difference do structural issues make?

Just as healthy, vital organizations are dependent on employees who attend to their own wellbeing, likewise, employees are dependent on organizations that function in a healthy manner. The activities in this section explore the structural aspects that affect organizational wellness such as administrative and supervisory structures, agency policies, decision-making, communication, and so forth.

### **Activity 1: Structures**

Purpose: To examine the structural aspects of the organization and their relationship to maintaining a healthy workplace

Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials: none

Procedure:

1. In the large group, invite participants to think about and respond to selected questions from those listed below:
  - Generally speaking, do you think the overall structure of the organization allows it to operate at its maximum effectiveness?
  - What structures in the organization have the most effect on organizational wellness?
  - In what ways do each of these structures support a healthy work environment?
  - What concerns, if any, do participants have regarding each of these structures?
  - If you had the opportunity to build this organization from scratch, how would you design it structurally?
2. Conclude the activity by summarizing the key points that emerged.



## How important is communication?

A significant aspect of organizational wellness is directly related to the issue of communication. The activities that follow attempt to raise awareness about the role, importance and the challenges of communicating well.

### **Activity 1: Communication: The Organizational Cardiovascular System**

Purpose: To develop a renewed awareness of the importance of communication in the workplace

Time: 30-45 minutes

Materials: none

Procedure:

1. Introduce the activity by reading aloud the following quote:  
“Think of communication as the organizational cardiovascular system. The lifeblood of an entity is nothing without the heart, lungs, arteries, and veins to transport it to its destination. Departure from regular and effective communication can eventually atrophy the creative engine of [an] organization.” (Wanda Shumaker, WJS Consulting Group)
2. Hold a broad, open-ended discussion about the importance of communication in organizations in general, and in your agency specifically. Below are some suggested questions for conversation starters. It may be helpful to break into smaller discussion groups.
  - Why or why not is the cardiovascular system a useful metaphor for the role and importance of communication in an organization?
  - What other metaphors come to mind?
  - What are the key characteristics of communication in a healthy organization?
  - What is the directional flow of communication in a healthy organization?
  - What are all the different ways that communication happens in this agency?
  - What aspects are working well?
  - What aspects need improvement?
  - What are some of the common causes for communication breaking down?
  - What are some suggestions for improving communication in the agency?

### **Activity 2: Communication “Eye-Opener”**

Purpose: To illustrate the challenges of interpersonal communication and the importance of “closing the loop” of communication

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials: Blank sheets of paper, pencils

Procedure:

1. Explain that the purpose of this simple exercise is to illustrate the challenges and complexities of interpersonal communication.
2. Break into pairs with each partner sitting in chairs back-to-back.
3. Be sure everyone has a blank sheet of paper and pen or pencil. Each should have a hard surface on which to draw. One partner will be the communicator and the other the sketcher. No artistic skills are required!
4. Have the communicators initially draw a fairly simple design on their sheet of paper. It should not be representative of anything or anyone in particular. This should take less than a minute.
5. Then the communicator gives detailed verbal instructions to the drawing partner in order to replicate as closely as possible what the communicator has drawn. The one doing the drawing may only listen to the instructions. He or she is not permitted to ask questions or respond verbally in any way. Obviously, neither is permitted to look at each other's paper during the exercise.
6. Allow time for the drawing partners to complete their efforts, and then signal everyone to stop. Have the partners compare their two drawings.
7. In the large group, ask participants to talk about their experience of doing this exercise. How closely did the drawings resemble one another? What were the challenges? How attentive to detail was the person who was giving instructions to size, dimensions, shading, position of objects on the page, etc.? How helpful would it have been if the drawing partner had been permitted to close the communication loop by asking clarifying questions? How does this illustrate the importance of checking out our interpretations of what is communicated with one another?

### **Activity 3: Six Habits of Highly Ineffective Listeners**

Purpose: To increase awareness of the importance of listening well to others

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Handout: Six Habits of Highly Ineffective Listeners (see Appendix G)

Procedure:

1. Explain with “tongue-in-cheek” that this activity is designed to help participants improve their ineffective listening “skills” so they won’t get rusty.
2. Distribute the “Six Habits of Highly Ineffective Listeners” handouts and briefly review each of the habits. Instruct participants to ignore the parenthetical comments on the handout for the time being.
3. Divide into pairs. Instruct one partner to talk about something they care about deeply. The listener is instructed to practice the six different ineffective listening skills, e.g. on-off listening, glassy-eyed listening, on the handout. After a minute or two have them switch roles and repeat the exercise.
4. Invite comments about what this exercise was like from both the speaker’s and the listener’s perspectives.
5. Now ask each person to take turns speaking on the same topic noted above but this time with the listener being engaged and interested in the conversation. Encourage listeners to pay attention to the parenthetical comments on the handout. After each has taken their respective turns, invite comments about the effect of being listened to well.
6. Conclude the activity by emphasizing that how we listen to others has a profound influence on them. By listening well we can contribute to others feeling more empowered, creative, and passionate. Conversely, by listening poorly or not at all, we create the conditions by which the other person may feel diminished and frustrated.

## What does self-care have to do with organizational wellness?

Healthy, vital organizations are dependent on employees who attend to their own wellbeing. The activities in this section explore attitudes and practices that can enhance personal wellness within and outside of the workplace.

### **Activity 1: Self-Care: The Great Debate (Skit)**

Purpose: To acknowledge the “mixed messages” we often hear about self-care in our work settings and within ourselves

Time: 15-25 minutes

Materials: Two copies of the handout “Self-Care: The Great Debate” (see Appendix H)

#### Procedure

1. Choose two volunteers to give a brief reader’s theatre presentation. Give each a copy of the handout entitled “Self-Care: The Great Debate.” One stands in front of the group and leads a workshop on self-care using a gentle, caring voice.
2. The other volunteer stands in the back of the room, perhaps out of sight, and reads the lines of the “Voice of the Work” with a distant, condescending tone.
3. The skit begins with the “Voice of Self-Care Wisdom” welcoming the group to the workshop and then beginning to offer sage advice, “Stop denying. Listen to the wisdom of your body, etc.” From afar, the “Voice of the Work” intones: “Work until the physical pain forces you into unconsciousness.”
4. After the readers are finished, invite comments from the audience about the presence of these “mixed messages” and how they deal with them. Note that these “voices” come from both internal and external sources.
5. Acknowledge that individual staff as well as the organizations for which they work have legitimate needs that are sometimes at odds. Individuals need to find a healthy balance between the two and be aware that this balance may shift at different times. Helping one another to monitor this balance is beneficial.

### **Activity 2: Topics in Self-Care**

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to inspire participants to examine their own attitudes and practices in relation to self-care.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Materials:

Copies of the handouts listed below (see Appendix H):

- This work... (poem)
- Self-Assessment Tool: Self-Care (self-assessment tool)
- Finding Resiliency and Renewal in our Work (article)
- Mindfulness and Self-Care for HCH Staff (ideas for the workplace)
- Ten Ways to Care for the Soul (“wisdom for the journey”)

Procedure:

1. Divide into small groups of about 3-5 participants. Either assign or have each group select one of the handouts from the list above. Each person in the same small group should have a copy of the handout. It is fine if more than one group chooses the same topic or handout.
2. Instruct the small groups to read and discuss the content of their handout and to develop some key “take home” points from their reading and discussion. Each small group is then instructed to develop a presentation for the large group that communicates these 3-5 key points. All members of the group are urged to participate in the presentation. The presentation itself is to take less than five minutes.
3. The key points should be presented in an interesting and creative way. No dry, didactic reports or speeches are permitted! The performance of skits, songs, limericks, haiku, games, role-plays is highly encouraged.
4. As a wrap-up, encourage participants to look for ways to implement some of these ideas in the work environment.

**Activity 3: “Creating Self-Care Space”**

Purpose: To have participants reflect on how they “create space” for themselves in the work setting to provide a sense of re-orientation, inspiration, and renewal

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: none

Procedure:

1. Explain that this activity will focus on incorporating self-care into the workplace through “creating space” both physically and in non-tangible ways. Have participants interact within the large group or in small groups.

2. Initially, ask participants to share ideas about various ways they have created their physical workspace to be pleasant or inspiring. Examples might include use of furnishings, lighting, visual art forms, symbolic objects, plants, posters, personal photos, poetry, and so on.
3. After a period of time, ask how participants "create space" for self-care in the workplace in non-tangible ways such as through silence, simple yoga exercises, attitudinal stances, awareness, walking, music, and taking breaks.
4. Encourage participants to note the differences and the similarities among themselves of what inspires and renews. Suggest that everyone try to take three ideas from this discussion to consider for creating space for themselves.

## **What steps can organizations take to create a more vital workplace?**

The activity below works particularly well as a wrap-up to the retreat. It provides an excellent means for participants to think about various ideas raised during the day and to think of concrete steps to implement them in the workplace. This activity also tends to be energizing and fun, allowing participants to end the day on a positive note.

### **Activity 1: Performing the “next steps”**

Purpose: To generate specific ideas and “next steps” to implement in the workplace to promote a healthier work environment

Time: 1 to 1.5 hours

Materials: Markers, flipchart sheets, miscellaneous “props”

#### Procedure:

1. Comment that throughout the day the group has been examining various perspectives on how to “create and maintain a healthy work environment.” The intent of this activity is to reflect back on the day and to come up with some innovative and practical ideas that can be implemented in the workplace either individually, as teams, or agency-wide by the leadership.
2. Divide into groups of 5-8 people. Each group either chooses or is assigned a particular theme (or similar themes) from the following list:
  - organizational culture
  - relationships with other agencies and the larger community
  - personnel policies including salaries, benefits
  - clinical and administrative supervision
  - quality and structure of decision-making
  - communication
  - conflict resolution
  - cultural diversity and sensitivity
  - opportunities for systems and political advocacy
  - safety concerns
  - practical and aesthetic features of the physical work setting
  - support of personal wellness
  - other \_\_\_\_\_
3. The task of each group is to identify at least three key “take home” actions/strategies related to this theme for improving the work environment.

4. Next, each group is to plan a 3-5 minute presentation for the large group. The following ground rules apply:
  - The presentation must involve all members of the group.
  - The presentation must clearly communicate the three or more main actions/strategies that were decided upon
  - It must be creative and interesting, not dull or mind-numbing!
  - Presentations that include skits, songs, haiku, dance, mime, role-plays, etc. are strongly encouraged.
5. Have each group perform their presentation “on stage” while everyone else becomes the audience.



# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Tips for Retreat Facilitators

- Create an environment of dialogue and trust. This is perhaps the most important task for the facilitator. Dialogue involves people listening carefully to one another and sharing openly their own perceptions, ideas, and recommendations. Open dialogue engenders trust.
- Groups thrive when participants 1) feel accepted, 2) have the opportunity to share information and concerns, 3) can set goals, and 4) are able to organize for action. Try to incorporate these aspects into the retreat.
- Seek broad participation in group discussions. Don't permit individuals prone to "over-participation" to overshadow more reticent participants. Invite those "who haven't spoken yet" to contribute.
- Small group activities are a great way to promote interaction among participants who do not normally work with each other. Find ways to ensure that this intermingling occurs. (For example, group participants randomly by birth month, or in alphabetical order, or disallowing anyone to be from the same department/team at work, and so forth.)
- As the facilitator, delegate certain tasks. Do not try to do everything on your own. Ask others to help with writing on flipcharts, operating A/V equipment, adjusting heat and lighting, calling participants back from breaks, and so on.
- Be generous with breaks. Use short "stretch breaks" as well as longer ones.
- Use a bell or chime as a signal for people to gather after breaks or to end activities such as small group discussions. This is more inviting than trying to yell over people or whistle shrilly.
- Create a comfortable pace to the day. Keep things moving, but don't try to pack everything in if it won't fit.
- Be flexible. Balance keeping to the agenda with making exceptions as appropriate.
- Employ diverse activities that appeal to adults' various learning styles.
- Have fun. If you are enjoying yourself, others will too.

## Appendix B

# Ice-breakers and Energizers

### **What we have in Common**

Small groups have 5-10 minutes to come up with as many things as possible that they all have in common and are *not obvious* to the casual observer. The more interesting the responses, the better! Each group then tells the large group what they have in common.

### **Two Truths and a Lie**

Each person writes down two true things about themselves and one lie. Go around the room and have each person (or someone else) read the three things and have the group guess which is the lie. Competitive types may want to keep score!

### **Who am I?**

Everybody secretly prints in large letters the name of a famous person or fictional character on a peel-off nametag. The nametag is stuck on the back of a nearby person. Ensure all participants have a nametag on their back. Players mingle around the room trying to discover their new identity. They can ask *only* "yes" or "no" questions of one another. For example: Am I a woman? Am I a rock star? Am I still living? Do I write books? When players guess correctly, they place the nametag on their chest and continue playing by responding to others' questions. End the activity when everyone has either guessed correctly, or they are hopelessly stumped! Encourage people to wear their new identity throughout the day.

### **Mime**

Individuals pretend to be someone else and mime that person's actions or idiosyncrasies. The audience tries to guess who it is.

### **Map Making**

People stand at a place on an imaginary map on the floor that denotes where they were born, or live currently, or that represents their favorite place to vacation, and so forth. Participants take turns introducing themselves in relation to the location on which they are standing.

### **How's the Weather in There?**

Members of the group give a brief weather report describing how they are feeling. For example, sunny and warm, cloudy with a chance of tears, expecting all hail to break loose, etc.

### **Expression of Appreciation**

Individuals are invited to express a simple statement of appreciation for something or someone in the organization.

### **My Hope**

People tell something about their hope for the community, the world, the organization, the team, or themselves. For example " My hope for our organization is to be a place where...."

### **Hmm, Who Could That Be?**

On slips of paper people write something about themselves that no one else in the group knows about them, and may come as a surprise. The slips of paper are collected in a hat and then read aloud. The group tries to guess who it is.

### **Personal Revelations**

People reveal something about themselves such as their favorite food, leisure activities, most embarrassing moment, claim to fame, personality quirks, hopes, and so forth.

### **Pop-up Survey**

A question is asked and individuals stand up if it is true for them. For example: Who likes to watch Star Trek reruns? Who among us is a middle child? Likes chocolate? Is allergic to cats? Was born outside of the U.S.? Played organized sports in high school? Has worked here for less than a year?

### **Acronym.org**

Each small group is assigned a random three-letter acronym, for example LBH. The group must figure out what they want the acronym to stand for and decide what the organization does. The responses are shared with the large group.

### **Silent Castle Building**

Each small group is given a quantity of paper and some tape. Without speaking, each group has 10-15 minutes to build the highest tower that they can. At the end, participants might judge the castles according to beauty, creativity, durability, etc.

## Appendix C

### Group Discussion Methods

Large group discussion – a question or topic is discussed among group members – amount of structure provided by facilitator will vary

Brainstorming – participants are encouraged to bring up a wide-range of ideas or suggestions without being self-censoring – no discussion is permitted until all ideas have been expressed

Go-rounds – everyone in the group is given an opportunity to comment briefly on the topic of discussion – can go around the room sequentially or use a random “popcorn” approach – individuals can “pass” if they do not wish to comment

Small group discussion /pairs – the facilitator invites small groups to self-select or assigns participants to particular groups – a representative often summarizes the discussion and reports back to the large group

Fishbowl – several participants representing differing views meet in an inner circle to discuss a topic while the outer circle listens – outer circle members can periodically exchange places with those in the fishbowl

Human continuum – members physically place themselves in the room on a continuum representing a spectrum of viewpoints – time should be permitted for members to discuss relative to each other their place on the continuum

Caucusing – a caucus is composed of members with similar viewpoints who are convened to help bring greater clarity to a confusing or multi-faceted issue to better inform the larger group in its decision-making

## Appendix D

### Sample Quiz Questions

Below are some sample questions to spark ideas for questions appropriate to your organization. Some are intended to convey useful information; others are meant to be more trivial and light-hearted. Be creative. The facilitator might pose these questions to the audience at various times during the retreat. They are especially effective right after breaks, when energy is ebbing, or whenever the moment seems right! Rewarding participants with prizes of varying value adds to the fun of these mini-diversions during the day.

- How many subcontracting agencies does (your program) have that provide services throughout (your city and region)? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- HCH providers give care at approximately \_\_\_\_\_ sites throughout (your city/region)? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Who in HCH has the primary responsibility for writing grants? Budgeting? Monitoring contracts? Entering client data? Answers: \_\_\_\_\_
- The web address for the National Health Care for the Homeless Council is \_\_\_\_\_? Answer: nhchc.org
- The name of the Health Care for the Homeless Clinicians' Network newsletter is \_\_\_\_\_? Answer: Healing Hands
- True or false, contact forms for the previous year should be handed in all at once, April 15, the same day as the tax deadline? Answer: Nope
- What was the most recent one-night count of homeless people *surviving outside* in (your city/region)? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- Was the most recent one-night count an increase or decrease over the previous count in (year), and what percentage was the increase or decrease? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- What provider has worked for HCH the longest? The shortest amount of time? Answers: \_\_\_\_\_
- How many HCH projects are there in the U.S. currently? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

- True or false, health care is a right, not a privilege? Answer: It depends on one's point of view!
- Which two HCH staff are siblings? Went to high school together? Play the blues? Etc. Answers: \_\_\_\_\_
- In what year was (your organization) incorporated as a non-profit organization? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- What was the topic of the last year's retreat? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the meaning of the word *omphaloskepsis*? Answer: contemplation of one's navel as an aid to meditation
- Approximately how many Americans currently have no health insurance? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- In calendar year (most recent year), how many people in the U.S. were served through the system of federally funded health centers (this includes all community health centers, migrant, homeless, public housing, and other federally funded centers)? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- What is meant by the (your state's) Medicaid program's "homeless exemption?" Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- In the Governor's proposed budget for (budget year), what assistance programs for single adults does he/she propose to eliminate? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- When is "Housing Advocacy Day" in (your state capitol)? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_
- How many HCH projects are there in (your state)? Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E Healthy Organization Handouts

# Creating Healthy Organizations

Tanis Helliwell

### **1. Recognize that we are all in this together**

We need to break down the barriers that separate “them” and “us.” Not all large corporations are bad workplaces and all vegetarian restaurants, new age magazines and holistic health centers are good. I don’t care how many spiritual books and courses people have attended, the proof is in action and not talk.

### **2. Embrace diversity**

Diversity adds flexibility and additional perspectives, which add depth and breadth to a company’s structure, products and service. Lippman said, “When we all think alike there is no thinking.” To work with others of different racial, sexual, age, values and learning styles offers us an opportunity for growth.

### **3. Celebrate what was good in the past**

What are the best qualities from old style organizations that can be incorporated into new organizations? Let’s examine our achievements and find the positive lessons and creations that emerge. We don’t switch from old to new style organizations, or from old to new ways of thinking, overnight and we may spend years with a foot in each camp while this transition takes place.

### **4. Develop new criteria for success**

Success in traditional organizations has been a substantial annual profit. We now need to develop other criteria such as, “Does the organization benefit the world in the long as well as short term?” Companies should go broke to do this.

### **5. Empower ourselves and others**

People who are doing what they love sparkle. Rather than making individuals fit a set pattern we can help them use their strengths and talents to better both themselves and our organizations. “How much of your talents, interests and skills can you use in your work presently?” When you can bring 100%, instead of 25%, to your work you will have more creativity to solve the problems facing the organization.

### **6. Work in our sphere of influence**

Are we using our life energy railing about things we cannot influence? This leads to frustrations, anger and bitterness. Instead we need to identify an area where we can make a difference. As Gandhi said, “We must be the change we want in the world.” If our workplace does not support life-enhancing values we may



decide to change jobs so that we can be with others who are moving in a similar directions.

### **7. Share freely**

The fear of scarcity – that there is not enough money and power and that we have to guard against others who want to take everything from us – is an old paradigm thought. The best way to overcome the fear of scarcity, and all fears for that matter, is to do what we most fear. For example, if we hoard information, we could share our knowledge with others that would benefit from that information.

### **8. Support play, creativity and informality**

How many of us enjoy our work? Without joy there is no optimism. Without optimism there is not hope for solutions to our existing problems. Play will increase creativity, which in turn will allow us to see innovative solutions for complex problems.

### **9. Ask for authority to solve problems**

The hierarchical organizational structure where a few bright people with all the answers sit at the top telling all the less bright workers what to do no longer works. Research has proven that people work harder when they are involved in solving their own problems than when they are told what to do by others.

### **10. Recognize and develop vision**

One of the great problems among our leaders today is that long range vision is absent. We have all seen what the present vision of our society has brought us, and this is a time for all of us to share our ideas. All of us have part of the vision we need.

### **11. Practice ethics**

Native Americans say, "Do what is good unto seven generations." This is the kind of ethical vision around which our new organizations need to form. If we reward ethical people and penalize those that are not ethical we will build trust and commitment within our organizations.

# Nine Tips for Fostering A Respectful Work Environment

- **Schedule regular meetings.** Whether weekly or bimonthly, set aside individual time with each employee, and employees as a group. You might opt for a formal meeting, a casual in-office chat or a discussion over lunch or morning coffee. Regardless of the format you choose, set a consistent timeframe that lets employees know the meetings are important to you. Take hand-written notes for future reference and follow up on agreed-upon actions.
- **Allow for question-and-answer opportunities.** Q & A opportunities can take many forms, including: one-on-one meetings, staff meetings (with varying participants), suggestion boxes (with appropriate follow-up), employee representative panels, graffiti walls or posters, e-mail communication and bulletin boards. By offering multiple formats, you help ensure that all employees have an opportunity to inquire about subjects of importance to them, in a way that suits their comfort zone.
- **Provide speedy and complete information.** Timely responses to inquiries can mean a lot to your employees and will help to bolster their trust in you. The second half of the equation is knowing the most effective ways to share the information; always consider the type of information, its relevance to your staff and their preferred mode of receiving information.
- **Be honest to build trust.** If you don't know the answer, say so. If you have a tough question, ask it. If you think employees are mulling a question that they're unsure of how to raise, bring it up yourself. If you say you're going to do something, do it, or provide an update as to why the schedule has changed. Such behavior will encourage your employees to submit questions, ideas, problems and difficulties.
- **Help employees make commitments.** Provide employees with calendars to help keep track of commitments and plans, and consider sending them to a good time management workshop. Ask for deadlines for task completion, and clearly identify priorities. If planning is a new area for some employees, talk them through those tasks they think will move their assignment from start to finish (don't give them the answers, help them find the answers). Check with employees on their accomplishments and possible information needs.
- **Invite participation.** Hold meetings that include employees from different groups and try to encourage everyone to speak. If someone is a bit shy or unsure, simply start with a question such as, "John, we'd love your perspective

as well. What do you think of what we've talked about so far?" This will provide the group with different perspectives of the issues discussed, and help ensure that a few individuals don't dominate every discussion. It will also help the more reserved participants get comfortable sharing their views.

- **Create diverse teams.** Create teams across levels and divisions to improve the communication flow and to demonstrate your commitment to effective communication. Another benefit of pairing employees who don't usually work together? Increased awareness for the responsibilities and contributions of others in the organization. It's harder to perpetuate the "Us versus Them" gossip mill when you know that "Them" is really Jim, Ann and Ryan.

- **Welcome (and ask for) suggestions.** Get suggestions from employees on a regular basis, either through widespread communication vehicles or by asking them individually. When you follow up on a suggestion, complaint, idea, or question, be sure to let the person who brought up the issue know that you addressed it. Don't just let the issue drop, or you'll teach employees that it's not worth participating.

- **Keep information flowing.** Use multiple avenues of communication to help ensure you're keeping people informed. Don't assume that everyone knows what's going on, even in a small group. Also, remember that not everyone processes information the same way, so face-to-face, electronic, print and other formats allow more people to really tune in to your message. For example, follow up memos with a check-in voicemail message, open discussions at staff meetings or during one-on-one meetings. Don't assume that just because a memo has gone out that it's been understood and accepted—instead ask questions to confirm results.

(Ivy Sea Online Leadership and Communication Center - [www.ivysea.com](http://www.ivysea.com))

## Appendix F

# Sample Staff Satisfaction Survey

Health Care for the Homeless Project  
Staff Satisfaction Survey  
Date

**Purpose:** This survey is being used to obtain information that will help Health Care for the Homeless identify the wants and needs of its employees.

**Instructions:** Each statement is followed by a choice of responses. Please check the response that corresponds to how you feel about each statement. There is also space provided for any comments you may have about each statement. All information provided is strictly confidential. Now on to the survey!

**A. I have input into organizational decisions.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree  
Comments:

**B. There is a good deal of teamwork and cooperation at HCH.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree  
Comments:

**C. Employees in my team cooperate with each other to get the job done.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree  
Comments:

**D. I have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of HCH.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree  
Comments:

**E. The pay raises at HCH are satisfactory.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree  
Comments:

**F. My present salary is satisfactory.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**G. The fringe benefit package at HCH meets my needs.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**H. There is no doubt in my mind that what I do on my job at HCH is really important.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**I. In my experience at HCH, there are non-financial incentives for high quality work.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**J. There are opportunities for me to learn and do other things at HCH.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**K. In my experience at HCH, there are opportunities for career advancement.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**L. HCH encourages professional growth.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**M. I have the freedom to make important decisions as I see fit and can count on my supervisor to back me up.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**N. My personal job performance is important to the success of HCH.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**O. I have a challenging and fulfilling job at HCH.**

strongly agree agree sometimes agree disagree strongly disagree

Comments:

**Do you have any additional comments?**

**Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the work environment at HCH?**

**Do you have any suggestions to improve this questionnaire?**

Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out our Staff Satisfaction Survey!

(Adapted from online staff satisfaction tool used by  
Health Care for the Homeless, Inc., Baltimore, MD)

## Appendix G Communication Handout

### Six Habits of Highly Ineffective Listeners

#### 1) On-Off Listening

Occurs because most of us think about four times as fast as the average person can speak. Thus, the listener has  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a minute of "spare thinking time" in each listening minute to think about such things as personal affairs, concerns, and troubles.

*One can overcome this by paying attention to more than the words, watching non-verbal signs like gestures, eye contact, hesitation, voice tone to pick up the feeling level.*

#### 2) Red Flag Listening

Sometimes, when we hear certain words, ideas, or opinions expressed, we become upset and stop listening. These expressions, often cultural, political, or religious in nature, become "like a red flag to a bull." We find ourselves reacting and thus, tuning out the speaker.

*The first step to overcome this barrier is to discover our personal red flags. Also, try listening attentively to someone more sympathetic to the issue.*

#### 3) Open Ears – Closed Mind Listening

Sometimes we decide rather quickly that either the subject or the speaker is boring, and what is being said makes no sense. We decide we can predict what the person knows or will say; thus, we conclude there is no reason to listen because we will hear nothing new.

*Better to listen and find out for sure if our predictions are accurate, rather than assume so.*

#### 4) Glassy-eyed Listening

Sometimes we look at a person intently and seem to be listening. However, our minds are far away absorbed in our own thoughts. We get glassy-eyed with a dreamy expression on our faces. We can tell when other people look this way, and they can see the same in us.

*Postpone daydreaming till another time. If others appear glassy-eyed, suggest a change of pace or break.*

### **5) Too-Complicated-For-Me Listening**

When we are listening to ideas that are too detailed, wandering, or complex, we often stop paying attention and “give up” trying to understand. Our thoughts then go elsewhere.

*It's important to keep trying to understand by asking clarifying questions.*

### **6) Don't Rock the Boat Listening**

We don't like to have our favorite ideas, prejudices, and points of view challenged or overturned. So, when someone says something that clashes with what we believe, we may unconsciously stop listening or even become defensive and plan a counterattack.

*Best to keep listening carefully and non-defensively, so we can do a better job of responding constructively.*

(Adapted from *Strength to Your Sword Arm: Selected Writings*,  
Brenda Ireland, Holy Cow Press, 1992)



## Appendix H Self-care Handouts

### Self-Care: The Great Debate

#### “The Voice of Self-Care Wisdom” vs. “The Voice of the Work”

**Wisdom:** “Stop denying. Listen to the wisdom of your body. Begin to freely admit the stresses and pressures that reveal themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally.”

**Work:** *“Work until the physical pain forces you into unconsciousness.”*

**Wisdom:** “Avoid isolation. Don't do everything alone! Develop or renew relationships with friends and loved ones. Closeness not only brings new insights, but also can help relieve feelings of agitation and depression.”

**Work:** *“Shut your office door and lock it from the inside so no one will distract you. They are just trying to keep you from catching up on your paperwork.”*

**Wisdom:** “Change your circumstances. If your job, your relationship, a situation, or a person is dragging you under, try to change your circumstance, or if necessary, leave.”

**Work:** *“If you feel something is dragging you down, suppress those thoughts. Drink stronger coffee.”*

**Wisdom:** “Pinpoint those areas that are creating difficulties for you and work towards alleviating that pressure.”

**Work:** *“Increase intensity. Work harder. The harder you work the more people you can help! If you find yourself working at a relaxed pace and enjoying your work, you probably need closer supervision.”*

**Wisdom:** “Stop over-nurturing. If you routinely take on other people's problems and responsibilities, learn to gracefully disengage. Try to get some nurturing for yourself.”

**Work:** *“Try to be everything to all people. You exist to solve other people's problems. Perhaps you haven't thoroughly read your job description.”*

**Wisdom:** “Learn to say *No*. Speak up for yourself. This means refusing additional requests or demands on your time or emotions.”

**Work:** *“Never say no to anything. It shows weakness, and makes you look like a slacker. Never put off until tomorrow what you can do by working late today.”*

**Wisdom:** "Begin to back off and detach. Learn to delegate, not only at work, but also at home and with friends. In this case, detachment means rescuing yourself for yourself."

**Work:** *"Delegating is a bad idea. If you want it done right, do it yourself."*

**Wisdom:** "Reassess your values. Try to sort out the meaningful values from the temporary and fleeting, the essential from the nonessential. You'll conserve energy and time, and begin to feel more centered."

**Work:** *"Reflecting on such things is not only selfish but a waste of time. We will send you a memo explaining how to prioritize your values. Until then, if someone questions your priorities, tell them you are not able to comment and refer them to the Personnel Department. It will be taken care of."*

**Wisdom:** "Learn to pace yourself. Try to take life in moderation. You only have so much energy available. Decide on what is wanted and needed in your life, then balance your work with love, pleasure, and relaxation."

**Work:** "A balanced life is a myth perpetuated by so-called self-care experts trying to make a buck! They're just trying to undermine your commitment to your work. Don't be fooled by this."

**Wisdom:** "Take care of your body. Exercise regularly. Don't skip meals or disregard your need for sleep. Keep your medical appointments. Take care of yourself nutritionally."

**Work:** *"Yeah, whatever! Your body serves your mind; your mind serves the agency. Push the mind and the body will follow. Drink Mountain Dew."*

**Wisdom:** "Diminish worry and anxiety. Try to keep worrying to a minimum, it changes nothing. You'll have a better grip on your situation if you spend less time worrying and more time taking care of your real needs."

**Work:** *"If you're not worrying about work, you must not be very committed to it. We may have to find someone else who is."*

**Wisdom:** "Keep your sense of humor. Begin to bring joy and happy moments into your life. Very few people suffer burnout when they're having fun."

**Work:** *"So, you think your work is funny? We will be discussing this with you at a special meeting on Friday, at 6:00 P.M. Be there!"*

(Adapted from Massachusetts Institute of Technology website at <http://web.mit.edu/afs/athena.mit.edu/user/w/c/wchuang/News/college/MITviews.html>)

## **This work...**

exhilarating  
and exhausting

drives me up a wall  
and opens doors I never imagined

lays bare a wide range of emotions  
yet leaves me feeling numb beyond belief

provides tremendous satisfaction  
and leaves me feeling profoundly helpless

evokes genuine empathy  
and provokes a fearsome intolerance within me

puts me in touch with deep suffering  
and points me toward greater wholeness

brings me face to face with many poverties  
and enriches me encounter by encounter

renews my hope  
and leaves me grasping for faith

enables me to envision a future  
but with no ability to control it

breaks me apart emotionally  
and breaks me open spiritually

leaves me wounded  
and heals me

– Ken Kraybill

# Self-Assessment Tool: Self Care

How often do you do the following? (Rate, using the scale below):

5 = Frequently

4 = Occasionally

3 = Sometimes

2 = Never

1 = It never even occurred to me

## Physical Self Care

- Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast & lunch)
- Eat healthfully
- Exercise, or go to the gym
- Lift weights
- Practice martial arts
- Get regular medical care for prevention
- Get medical care when needed
- Take time off when you're sick
- Get massages or other body work
- Do physical activity that is fun for you
- Take time to be sexual
- Get enough sleep
- Wear clothes you like
- Take vacations
- Take day trips, or mini-vacations
- Get away from stressful technology such as pagers, faxes, telephones, e-mail
- Other:

## Psychological Self Care

- Make time for self-reflection
- Go to see a psychotherapist or counselor for yourself
- Write in a journal
- Read literature unrelated to work
- Do something at which you are a beginner
- Take a step to decrease stress in your life
- Notice your inner experience - your dreams, thoughts, imagery, feelings
- Let others know different aspects of you
- Engage your intelligence in a new area - go to an art museum, performance, sports event, exhibit, or other cultural event
- Practice receiving from others
- Be curious
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Spend time outdoors
- Other:

## Emotional Self Care

- Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- Stay in contact with important people in your life

- Treat yourself kindly (supportive inner dialogue or self-talk)
- Feel proud of yourself
- Reread favorite books, review favorite movies
- Identify and seek out comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places
- Allow yourself to cry
- Find things that make you laugh
- Express your outrage in a constructive way
- Play with children
- Other:

### **Spiritual Self Care**

- Make time for prayer, meditation, reflection
- Spend time in nature
- Participate in a spiritual gathering, community or group
- Be open to inspiration
- Cherish your optimism and hope
- Be aware of nontangible (nonmaterial) aspects of life
- Be open to mystery, not knowing
- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- Sing
- Express gratitude
- Celebrate milestones with rituals that are meaningful to you
- Remember and memorialize loved ones who are dead
- Nurture others
- Have awe-full experiences
- Contribute to or participate in causes you believe in
- Read inspirational literature
- Listen to inspiring music
- Other:

### **Workplace/Professional Self Care**

- Take time to eat lunch
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting, growth-promoting, and rewarding for you
- Set limits with clients and colleagues
- Balance your caseload so no one day is "too much!"
- Arrange your workspace so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)
- Have a peer support group
- Develop a non-trauma area of professional competence
- Other:

(Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, and Traumatic Stress Institute Staff, Transforming the Pain: A Workbook on Vicarious Traumatization, 1996)

# Finding Resiliency and Renewal in Our Work

*"In the event that oxygen masks may be needed,  
place the mask over your own face before assisting others."*

Health Care for the Homeless clinicians work under demanding circumstances, bearing witness to tremendous human suffering and wrestling with a multitude of agonizing and thorny issues on a daily basis. At the same time, we have the privilege of becoming partners in extraordinary relationships, marveling at the resiliency of the human spirit, and laying claim to small but significant victories. Such is the nature of this work that it can drain and inspire us all at once.

Despite the rewards inherent in the work, it inevitably exacts a personal toll. By listening to others' stories and providing a sense of deep caring, we walk a difficult path. Yet we do so willingly, knowing that first we must "enter into" another's suffering before we can offer hope and healing. It is interesting to note that the word *care* finds its roots in the Gothic "kara" which means "lament, mourning, to express sorrow."

Caring can become burdensome causing us to experience signs and symptoms of what the literature variously calls compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, or vicarious traumatization. This impact is compounded by the frustrations of trying to provide help in the face of multiple barriers to care, including inadequate resources and structural supports for homeless people such as housing, health care, and incomes. To feel weighed down by these circumstances is not unusual or pathological. It is in fact a quite normal response.

The "treatment of choice" for diminishing the negative impact of this stress is by seeking resiliency and renewal through the practice of healthy self-care. Self-care is most effective when approached with forethought, not as afterthought. In the same manner that we provide care to others, we care for ourselves by first acknowledging/assessing the realities of our condition, then creating a realistic plan of care, and acting upon it. Though many HCH clinicians practice self-care in creative and effective ways, we sometimes lose our sense of balance, and fail to provide the necessary care for ourselves with the same resoluteness that we offer care to others.

To better understand what self-care is, here are three things it is **not**:

**1) Self-care is not an "emergency response plan" to be activated when stress becomes overwhelming.** Instead, healthy self-care is an intentional way of living by which our values, attitudes, and actions are integrated into our day-to-day routines. The need for "emergency care" should be an exception to usual practice.

**2) Self-care is not about acting selfishly ("It's all about me!")** Instead, healthy self-care is about being a worthy steward of the self – body, mind and spirit – with which we've been entrusted. It is foolhardy to think we can be providers of care to others without being the recipients of proper nurture and sustenance ourselves.

**3) Self-care is not about doing more, or adding more tasks to an already overflowing "to do" list.** Instead, healthy self-care is as much about "letting go" as it

is about taking action. It has to do with taking time to be a human *being* as well as a human *doing*. It is about letting go of frenzied schedules and meaningless pursuits. It is also about letting go of detrimental attitudes and behaviors.

Self-care has been conceptualized in three related domains – awareness, balance, and connection – the “ABC’s” of self-care (Saakvitne & Pearlman, *Transforming the Pain*, 1996). It may be useful to reflect on the status of your own self-care in these realms.

**Awareness** Self-care begins in stillness. By quieting our busy lives and entering into a space of solitude, we can develop an awareness of our own true needs, and then act accordingly. This is the contemplative way of the desert, rather than the constant activity of the city. Thomas Merton suggests that the busyness of our lives can be a form of “violence” that robs us of inner wisdom. Too often we act first without true understanding and then wonder why we feel more burdened, and not relieved. Parker Palmer in *Let Your Life Speak* suggests reflection on the following question: “Is the life I am living the same as the life that wants to live in me?”

**Balance** Self-care is a balancing act. It includes balancing action and mindfulness. Balance guides decisions about embracing or relinquishing certain activities, behaviors, or attitudes. It also informs the degree to which we give attention to the physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, and social aspects of our being or, in other words, how much time we spend working, playing, and resting. Recently I heard it suggested that a helpful prescription for balanced daily living includes eight hours of work, eight hours of play, and eight hours of rest!

**Connection** Healthy self-care cannot take place solely within oneself. It involves being connected in meaningful ways with others and to something larger. We are decidedly interdependent and social beings. We grow and thrive through our connections that occur in friendships, family, social groups, nature, recreational activities, spiritual practices, therapy, and myriad other ways. Often times, our most renewing connections can be found right in our midst in the workplace, with co-workers and with the individuals to whom we provide care.

There is no formula of course for self-care. Each of our “self-care plans” will be unique and change over time. We must listen well to our own bodies, hearts and minds, as well as to the counsel of trusted friends, as we seek resiliency and renewal in our lives and work.

*Fasten your seatbelts and enjoy the flight!*

(Ken Kraybill, *Healing Hands*, HCH Clinicians’ Network newsletter, January 2002)

## Mindfulness and Self-Care for HCH Staff

- ◆ When you awaken, express gratitude for having a home ... your health ... your work
- ◆ Enjoy the sight of fresh-cut flowers or fruit in your workspace
- ◆ Say “thank you” and “you’re welcome” often
- ◆ Practice hospitality with everyone you meet (“creating a free and friendly space for the stranger” – Henri Nouwen)
- ◆ Regard each client as a neighbor ... a beloved family member ... as your own self
- ◆ Place a post-it on your computer or desk that says “Breathe”
- ◆ When caught up in a stressful situation, ask yourself: “What is the most important thing right now?”
- ◆ Practice “seeing” from more than one point of view (“You can look at a scar and see hurt, or you can look at a scar and see healing.” – Sheri Reynolds)
- ◆ Be willing to say “I don’t know”
- ◆ Ask for help or support when you need it
- ◆ Try substituting water or fruit juice for carbonated beverages. Monitor your intake of alcohol, caffeine, salt, and sugar
- ◆ Take mini-stretch breaks several times a day
- ◆ Regularly express appreciation for the work of other staff, especially those in support roles
- ◆ Create a personal mission statement related to your work
- ◆ Reflect on the root meaning of the word “care” ... to lament, to grieve, to experience sorrow, to cry out with
- ◆ Identify ways in which your work serves you in various dimensions of personal growth
- ◆ Regard yourself as a biographer, telling a small but significant piece of a client’s story, when writing your clinical notes
- ◆ At a personal level, offer yourself to others in your “emptiness,” not your “fullness”



- ◆ Take a deep renewing breath before picking up the phone, responding to an email, opening a letter ...
- ◆ Place photographs or postcards in your workspace of the faces of people who inspire you
- ◆ Take a daily five-minute walk outside of your work setting
- ◆ Invite students from a local massage school to come practice their skills on staff and clients at your workplace
- ◆ Keep a “wit and wisdom” file
- ◆ Do one thing at a time
- ◆ Be silent ... even if only for a few moments
- ◆ Consider that a rose withholds its scent from no one ... a tree does not discriminate to whom it provides shade ...
- ◆ Forgive
- ◆ Remember, it's the little things that count
- ◆ Do something unrelated to work every week that feels nurturing just for you. Be creative. Try something new.
- ◆ If you feel a little too busy ...stop and take 10 conscious, deep, diaphragmatic breaths
- ◆ If you feel moderately busy ... stop and take 20 conscious, deep, diaphragmatic breaths
- ◆ If you are excessively busy and feel overwhelmed ... stop and take 30 conscious, deep, diaphragmatic breaths
- ◆ After taking deep breaths, pause when finished and feel the energy you have generated
- ◆ Create a rhythm of action and contemplation in your workday
- ◆ When you go to bed at night, express gratitude for the day you were given ... for having a home ... for your health ... friendships ... for your work ...

# Ten Ways to Care for the Soul

Thomas Moore

- *Nourish and educate your imagination.* The mind thinks; the soul imagines. Reading, listening to stories, exposing yourself to all the arts are ways of caring for the soul.
- *Respond to what asks to be dealt with.* Take what's most pressing at the moment. The most pressing thing can be as complicated as a relationship, but it can also be as simple as a door falling off a hinge. Soul is affected by the small details and tiny decisions of everyday life.
- *Listen to your heart.* We avoid caring for the soul when we have superficial, ready-made explanations for what's going on in our lives. The soul is poetic. There's never one story that will explain everything.
- *Learn to live with complexity.* We must live with complexity instead of running from it. Ask the question, "How do I distance myself from the problems and challenges in my life?" Care of the soul does not offer the illusion of a problem-free life.
- *Live an individual life.* Be willing to go against the grain of the establishment. Recognize that care of the soul results in an individual "I" that you may never have planned for.
- *Choose work that suits the soul, as well as the budget.* Explore the "soul values" of your potential workplace. What is its spirit? Will I be treated as a person here? Is there a feeling of community? Do people love their work? Are there any moral or ethical problems?
- *Be of service to others.* Recognize that the soul exists beyond your personal circumstances and conceptions.
- *Learn that the soul speaks through the simple things.* Recognize the soul speaking in your home furnishings, in architecture, in mountains and lakes, in boarded-up houses and crime-ridden streets – in *everything* around you.
- *Know your own mythology.* Mythology is a collection of stories that attempt to portray the myths, the deep patterns that we live out in our ordinary lives. As we reflect on our experiences and learn to express them artfully, we are making life more soulful.
- *Be exposed to spirituality in a soulful way.* Discover many different spiritual traditions and let them teach you how to make ritual part of your everyday life. Ritual is an action that speaks to the heart and soul but doesn't necessarily make sense in a literal way.

## Appendix I

# Selected Resources

Ivy Sea Online Leadership and Communication Center – numerous articles and tips about improving organizational culture, leadership, communication, conflict resolution, ethical behavior, renewal, motivation, and more.

<http://www.ivysea.com/index.html>

Organizational Diagnostics Online – take a 55-item survey that assesses attitudes towards work, organizational commitment, and organizational climate

[http://www.od-online.com/toxic\\_org.asp?redirect=htm](http://www.od-online.com/toxic_org.asp?redirect=htm)

National Quality Institute, Canada – website features a variety of healthy workplace articles and resources

<http://www.nqi.ca/english/healthyworkplace.htm>

Training for Transformation: 3 volumes by Ann Hope and Sally Timmel, illustrator: Chris Hodzi. (Gweru, Zimbabwe: Mambo Press, revised edition 2001). Available in the United States from the Grailville Art & Bookstore, Loveland, OH, 45140; 513-683-0202. Based on Paolo Freire's educational ideas. Not written specifically for retreats but has a wealth of ideas that can be readily adapted such as trust and dialogue in groups, leadership and participation, simple decision-making and action planning, and new forms of management and supervision.

## Appendix J

# Sample Outline for Day-long Staff Retreat

### Creating and Maintaining A Healthy Work Environment

Note: Spice up the retreat by inserting various events throughout the day such as quiz questions with prizes, stretching and breathing exercises, special recognitions, silence, humor, and so forth. Encourage use of pipe cleaners/toys for people who need something to do with their hands!

8:30 a.m. Welcome and introductory remarks

Purpose and goals, introductions, schedule for the day, recognition of planning committee, special instructions, etc.

8:45 Ice-breaker (see Appendix B)

9:00 What is the "essence" of this organization? (One or two of Activities 1-4)

9:45 Break

10:00 What are the key characteristics of a healthy work environment? (Activity 1 or 2)

11:00 What difference does a healthy work environment make? (Activity 1)

11:30 Whose responsibility is it to create a healthy work environment? (Activity 1)

12 noon Lunch

1:00 p.m. Energizer (see Appendix B)

1:10 How healthy is this organization? (Activity 1 or 2)

2:00 Choose among the following topics and related activities on which to focus:

- What difference do structural issues make?
- How important is communication?
- What does self-care have to do with organizational wellness?

2:45 Break

3:00 What steps can organizations take to create a more vital workplace? (Activity 1)

4:15 Evaluation and Closing

4:30 Adjourn

## Appendix K

# Sample Retreat Evaluation Form

Name of Organization  
Staff Retreat Evaluation Form  
Date

1. Please rate the retreat overall.

Ineffective

Fine

Great

1

2

3

4

5

Comments:

2. What worked best for you?

3. What didn't work for you?

4. What do you hope to "take with you" from today's retreat into your work setting?

5. Should we continue to hold a staff retreat annually? Yes No

Comments:

6. What suggestions do you have for future retreats?

7. Other comments or suggestions: