

CONVERSATION GUIDE: ACTIVITIES FOR STAFF MEETINGS AND IN-SERVICE TRAININGS

Reflective Practice Activities: Reflecting on Unexpected Successes

There are successes we expect and successes that surprise us. The successes that surprise us offer many moments of learning. Focusing on what went well—beyond our expectations—can help staff in your agency begin to think about successes as a resource for reflection. Remember, though, that introducing reflective practice into any program is an ongoing process. The two exercises in this handout simply offer an opportunity to introduce the concept of learning from *unexpected successes* to your organization.

Additional Resources:

- *Reflective Leadership as a Strategy for Accountability*, by Terri Pease, PhD, available by request.

Materials:

- Glass vase or jar, stones, and writing materials
- Copies of instructions of Critical Success Analysis

Activity #1: The unexpected success jar

Suggested Time: Ongoing

This first exercise, *the unexpected success jar*, has two goals: to encourage individual staff members to reflect on their own successes and to offer silent evidence to other staff members that these moments do, in fact, occur.

Start with an empty glass jar or vase and a box of bright stones of different sizes. Begin your meetings by placing this box of stones and the glass jar in the center of the conference table or at the room's entrance. Before the meeting begins, anyone who has had an *unexpected success*, large or small, may select a stone to represent that success and place it in the jar. No comment is needed. A success may be as small as smiling at a survivor who was scowling and getting a smile in return or as momentous as a survivor getting an exciting job or a promotion.

The jar can be filled over a period of weeks or months and saved as a reminder of the skills you bring, the caring you offer, and gifts you are to survivors of domestic violence. Over time, each person who participates in this activity may begin to reflect individually about what contributes to her or his success. You can also use additional reflective practices in conjunction with this exercise, such as sharing the

successes in meetings, using the Critical Success Analysis tool (below), or using unexpected successes as a writing prompt or as tool in supervision.

Activity #2: Steps for conducting a Critical Success Analysis

Suggested Time: 20 minutes to 1 hour

1. Pick a shared experience of unexpected success.
2. Build a timeline. Agree together on the starting point of the success (day/time) and the ending point (day/time). Draw this timeline across a wide piece of paper or white board.
3. Each person who is aware of or who participated in the success uses individual Post-it squares to write each activity, event, or interaction that occurred on the way to (or may have affected) the success. Agree as a group on the order of these events. Then arrange these notes, placing positives (contributions to the success) above the line and negatives (obstacles to the success) under the line (or alternatively placing those events that were routine below the line and innovations in practice or moments of artistry above the line).
4. Use this timeline and success analysis to begin to discuss these questions:
 - a. How did each item contribute to the overall successful outcome?
 - b. What assumptions did we make in our work toward this success? They might be beliefs we had or actions we took that we were unaware of at the time but that made a difference (e.g., consistent communication with someone leads to positive outcomes, home visits are the best form of contact, my willingness to be flexible about my schedule makes a difference, etc).
 - c. Are there lessons we can take from these items? Can we replicate this success? How?
 - d. Are there practices that we want to incorporate into our regular practice?

If you've used **this conversation guide** in your work, we would love to hear from you. Let us know: How did you use it? What worked well? What can we revise or improve? What did you learn? What suggestions would you have for other people who want to use this idea in their work?

Send us your feedback at info@nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org.