

# US DISASTER PROGRAM

## Maintaining Resilience During Uncertain Times



### INTRODUCTION

This training is a digital adaptation of a post-disaster resilience training. It was developed specifically to address individuals' spiritual, emotional and physical needs during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

This training originally was designed for a session held in the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida following the hurricanes of 2017 and 2018. It utilizes research from practitioners and policy makers out of John Hopkins University who developed the [COPEWELL Model](#). The model seeks to outline the various elements that support or limit a community's ability to recover after a disaster. While these include some obvious elements like infrastructure and governance, the ability to nurture and care for the most vulnerable is also essential to community resilience. This training is designed specifically for those who care for others during this time—in particular for church leaders of all stripes, lay and ordained.

### PREPARATION AND SETUP

#### SPACE + TECHNOLOGY

This training was written for a Zoom\* meeting, but please use whatever digital platform is most convenient for you. Features that are useful:

- The ability for the host to mute or unmute participants
- The ability to have breakout rooms for small-group conversation
- The ability to share your screen
- Chat features or access to feedback that can't be read by everyone else

We also use [Google Slides](#) to increase participation. To adjust the slides to your needs, make a copy and edit freely. Participants can write on note paper and orally share their thoughts as an alternative to using Google Slides.

### AUDIENCE

People experiencing a disaster need to explore techniques for maintaining and developing emotional resilience.

### FACILITATOR NOTE

If you are facilitating this training, please make sure that you can lead the conversation. Your feelings shouldn't be center stage. This does not mean that you should have no emotional reaction, but you want to hold a safe place for the participants to express themselves. Because this is an online training, it is best to have at least two facilitators: one who can monitor the "chat" comments and technical issues of the online platform while the other facilitates activities.

\*Learn more about how to create and use a Zoom account here: [zoom.us](https://zoom.us)

## BREAKOUT ROOMS

You can pre organize these groups. You should limit groups to no more than 3-4 people to allow at least 3-5 minutes for each person to share.

## TIMING

The time of this training can vary depending on your needs. You can pick just one or two activities for a quick experience or do the entire activity which takes about 60-75 minutes. The script below will take between 45-60 minutes depending on the size of the group and the group's comfort with technology. Plan for a longer session with groups larger than 15 people.

## MATERIALS

[Google Slides](#) edited to your specifications (simply click File, make a copy and then edit). Participants should have paper, pen and stable Internet access.

## HOMEWORK

This 17-minute video on compassion fatigue <https://youtu.be/7keppA8XRas> is helpful for homework before or after the gathering. It can help give participants a common language.

## TRAINING NORMS

- Try to sign on at least 5 minutes before the training. Have slide 1 up as participants join the meeting.
- As participants enter the room, invite them to rename themselves if needed to make sure they get to use the name they want during the session.
- Point out Zoom features and allow extra time to get activities done, as there may be technical issues. Most important: Everyone should remain muted unless speaking. And if people attend via phone, be mindful that they can't see the screen.
- Encourage everyone to join via video and send out any links or presentation materials before the meeting starts so that everyone can reference any visuals that are presented in the meeting.
- Before the meeting, you may want to review these helpful tools about facilitating online meetings from [Training For Change](#).
- When the training is complete, be sure to follow up with an email. You can link the Google Slides to the email so that participants have a record of the tools provided.

## REMEMBER POWER DYNAMICS AND COMFORTABILITY

It is important to think about the power dynamics among participants when you set up breakout groups and engage in conversation. For example, it would be hard to share openly with your boss in a small group. You could create affinity groups around race, gender, congregation type, etc. Be mindful of the emotional safety and security of participants. Unlike during in-person gatherings, it will be much harder to follow up with individual people if they are triggered during a digital training experience. Those living alone may not be able to receive a hug or shoulder to cry on if they are forced to share beyond their comfort level.

## WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

*Frame the day's conversation by letting participants know that you will be talking about ways to support each other's physical, emotional and spiritual health. This will not just be a conversation about bubble baths, but also a way to look at how we build up our resilience even while we are being affected by this health and economic crisis. Using Google Slides, invite participants to write in their names and pull themselves up to the "table" (slide 3). They can double click on a box, write their names and drag themselves to the table. This will be your order when checking in. If you have the time, invite participants to say their names and one hope for this training as they enter.*

### BEGIN WITH AN INTERACTIVE OPENING PRAYER

(2 Minutes) (Choose this or offer your own)

**Facilitator:** Blessed are you, Lord, God of mercy, who through your Son gave us a marvelous example of charity and the great commandment of love for one another. Send down your blessings on us your servants, who so generously devote ourselves to helping others. Grant us courage when we are afraid, wisdom when we must make quick decisions, strength when we are weary and compassion in all our work. When the alarm sounds and we are called to aid both friend and stranger, let us faithfully serve you in our neighbors.

What else are you praying for today? Please type your answers using the chat feature. *[If it is a small group—fewer than 5 people—they may add their prayers aloud]*

God, we thank you for the gift of prayer and raise up all intercessions offered today. We thank you for the time today to be present to ourselves so that we may find points of rest and renewal in the life-giving spirit of your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

— Adapted from the Book of Blessings, #587

### WARM-UP ACTIVITY

(10 Minutes)

**Facilitator:** As we begin the conversation today, we want to get a sense of how folks are feeling. So either through the chat function or using slide 5, on a scale from "I feel terrible" to "I feel amazing," where do you fall? Feel free to use the star or the sticky notes located on the bottom corners of the slide to place yourself on the scale. You can do so anonymously.

## A CONTAINER OF TRUST

Thoughtful introductions and an opening prayer are very important to help build a container of trust that allows the participants to share freely later on.

## INCLUDE MOMENTS OF SILENCE

As participants add their stars or say in the chat how they are doing, feel free to allow holy silence and state that you will allow some silence for this activity. Allowing time means that participants won't feel rushed if they have difficulty navigating technology. Once several folks have participated, thank them for sharing. Add any comments on the response trends.

## OBJECTIVES FOR THE WORKSHOP

**Facilitator:** Our goal today is to provide space for reflection and learning so that we can build strategies together that can help us get through this time. A lot of things have happened in the past [add time period]: COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the globe and our community, [and - add anything else that is relevant in local/diocesan news]—all on top of the everyday stresses of life. Today we will utilize an activity created by Episcopal Relief & Development to take stock of our emotional, physical and spiritual reservoir in order to build more resilience. The focus for our time together is on you, so please ask questions and let us know what you want to talk more about. It's your time.

## PARKING LOT

**Facilitator:** If you have a question that isn't related to one of our activities, write it in the chat or on the parking lot slide (slide 12). We will address them throughout our time or in follow-up conversations.

## CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

**Facilitator:** We are not recording today's meeting because we want to allow space for you to be present to your needs and as honest and vulnerable as is helpful. We are mindful that you are isolated and may not have access to your usual emotional support systems. So please go as deep as you can handle based on your current access to people and places of healing. Also, we will honor the rules of confidentiality. [Include diocesan rules or guidance about how to deal with those who threaten to harm themselves or others.] Finally, we are here to honor the dignity of each person as part of one body in Christ.

## WATER TANK FRAMEWORK FOR RESILIENCE

(4 Minutes)

**Facilitator:** Today we will be talking about how we build our personal resilience as we move through this disaster. We all have been through and continue to be going through a difficult time. This has brought transformation in routines and relationships, some more difficult than others. We can think about understanding resilience as a water tank.

*[Screen share water tank slide]*

- The water level in the tank represents resilience, an individual's overall ability to respond to difficulties and support others. If there's water in your tank, you have that energy to devote to a sudden new potentially draining task, but if you're already drained when something like a disaster happens, you will have a really difficult time.
- Over time, the level in our tank varies. Water comes in, and water goes out.
- Healthy food, community connections, economic growth, exercise, sleep: These all are "springs" that help to fill up your tank. That's the good stuff!
- Other things drain your tank—"holes" like having to suddenly homeschool your children, not having access to your favorite restaurant, stressful work experiences, bad weather, poverty, illness, isolation, loss of a job, a disaster, caring for a lot of people in pain.
- Sleeplessness and irritability are all normal reactions to abnormal events making you feel more incapable of finishing tasks like reading, writing or checking email. This can drain the tank.
- Springs and drains vary for each person. For example, Twitter may be an energizing source of connection to one person but really draining for another.
- As clergy and caregivers, we may experience a lot of shame about our respective water levels. It takes strength to say that you need help filling your tank.

*[Pause for questions about the tank]*

If you only spend your energy concentrating on filling your tank or spend a lot of time trying to plug drains, you can become internally focused in a way that isn't healthy. The goal isn't to simply maintain and hold on to the water. Stagnant water gets stale. We have to figure out ways to balance our care for ourselves and support of others.

## H.A.L.T.S.S. REFLECTION

(7 Minutes)

**Facilitator:** Using this frame, I would like you to reflect briefly on those things that might be draining your tank. I am going to give you 5 minutes to either write or draw, reflecting on the following questions (share slide 7).

**Facilitator:** 12-Step communities and other recovery programs use the acronym H.A.L.T. It reminds those in recovery to stop when they are too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired. For our session, we are using H.A.L.T.S.S, which stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired, Sad or Shameful as a guide for self-care. Ask yourself:

- What are you **H**ungry for?
- What are you **A**ngry about?
- When do you feel **L**onely?
- How are you **T**ired?
- Why are you **S**ad?
- Have you felt **S**hame? When?

**Facilitator:** Everyone will be muted during this exercise, but please know that I am here if you have any questions. You can send a message privately through the chat feature. Please be sure to remain muted. We know this isn't going to be enough time for some of you to answer all the questions, but see it as a starting point for later reflection. Please be back in 5 minutes.

*[Set a silent alarm for yourself. Keep the journal slide up in screen share. About 4 minutes in, give a 1-minute warning.]*

**Facilitator:** Welcome back. We want to give you time now to speak with each other. If you have turned off your video for the journaling section, please turn it back on so that I know that you all are present.

## THE HOLINESS OF WRITING

Sometimes people will refuse to do a written reflection; that is ok. However, try to get participants to put something down on paper. You can point out the benefits of writing: "There is something holy that happens when we put pen to paper. It requires our brains and body to do something different than speaking to someone else."

## SMALL GROUP DEBRIEF

(17 Minutes)

**Facilitator:** I am now going to send you into breakout rooms. In each room, please choose someone to keep track of time. You will have 15 minutes in small groups to discuss your reflection [slide 8]: What surprised you or stands out from your reflection time? You should now see a popup window inviting you to join a breakout room. We will see you back here in 15 minutes.

*[after 15 minutes runs out]*

**Facilitator:** Thank you so much for sharing with your groups. Use the chat function or raise your hand so that we call on you (slide 9 shows how to use that function). Once people are participating, you should stop doing a screen share.

### POSSIBLE DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- How did that activity feel?
- Being aware of confidentiality, what stood out from your conversation or resonated most for your group?
- Were there any surprises?

## FACILITATOR NOTES

Allow a set number of participants to share. The co-facilitator can watch the chat to raise any particularly relevant points.

This might be a moment for people to express strong feelings. Be sure to affirm their emotions and try to keep the group from falling into despair by doing a reframe or repeat back: "It sounds like this process makes you angry, I would be happy for us to talk more at another time"; or, "Thank you for raising that concern."

After a few participants share, wrap up with a reflective sentence that honors the variety of feelings that were presented. For example, you might say: "I am so grateful for the diversity of voices that have been added to this conversation. It shows that there is never one way of expressing our resilience."

## FACILITATOR NOTE

You can pre organize these groups. You should limit groups to no more than 3-4 people to allow at least 3-5 minutes for each person to share.

### FACILITATOR TIP

Be sure to give the participants a 5-minute warning before ending the breakout sessions. It is helpful to go into the rooms just to warn participants about time and make sure that everyone has shared. NOTE: If you are in a position of power, it may disrupt group safety and vulnerability to have you listen to the conversation.



## BRAINSTORMING

(15 Minutes)

**Facilitator:** Now we want to move towards identifying small achievable steps that will fill our tanks and slow our drains. I want to give you a couple of minutes on your own to think of one thing you can do to fill your tank and one thing you can do to plug a drain. (Allow 2-3 minutes for personal reflection) In your breakout groups, you will have about 5 minutes to brainstorm. Please add your suggestions to slide 10 or chat about them to [facilitator name], and we can add them to the list.

*[Send groups into their breakout rooms. After 4 minutes, check in with the groups and bring them back with a 1-minute warning. Highlight some of the suggestions that you saw on the brainstorm slide and add the following:]*

**Facilitator:** Much of the popular discourse around self care focuses on additional activities like sleeping more, journaling more, eating more vegetables. But, as you know, self care when you care for people is most importantly about managing your energy. What can you put down or delegate to limit the drain on your emotional and physical energy? Self care in this case may look like asking for help, bringing up your concerns to diocesan leadership or taking a break. Take a moment to look at the list we generated and add any that you think are missing.

*[Give the group another minute or two to add any other thoughts either in the chat or Google Slides. The co-facilitator can copy from chat to the slides.]*

**Facilitator:** As we come to the end of our time, know that this isn't the last time that you can talk with each other or with us about ways that we can support you moving forward. [Address any relevant questions that may have come up.] You will be sent into your breakout groups one last time to share with each other your two self-care strategies [Slide 13] You will have 5 minutes as a group to:

- Exchange contact information if you don't already have it.
- Share your two activities - one to minimize drains, one to maximize springs
- You are now accountability partners. You can pray for each other and check in to see how those self-care actions are going.

*[Send them to their final break-out groups. As you did earlier, provide a 1-minute warning and bring them back with a convening song or ritual.]*

## SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

Once more ideas are generated, give the group some journaling/thinking time. When the time is up, invite participants to pick one activity that they could realistically do in the next week to fill their tanks. Give the example: If you have never written in a journal in your life, don't pick "write for 30 minutes every day;" try starting your journaling practice with 5 minutes a day.



## CONCLUSION/TRAINING WRAP UP

(5 Minutes)

**Facilitator:** Thank you for taking the time to enter this conversation. As a closing activity, we invite you to slide 14, our virtual altar. In the box, type one word or short phrase that you give as an offering. It can either be an appreciation or something that you need Jesus to carry for you. Place it at the altar. If you don't have access to the slides, please feel free to write in the chat.

*[If you can, play a 2-3 minute song that is important to your community. You might try the Doxology, or Let Peace Begin with Me or another ritual way of doing the offering that will provide a time limit for the activity. Once complete, invite someone to pray for the group. Then you can end this way or some other way that works for your group (slide 15):]*

**Facilitator:** "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord, knowing that God and this community are here to hold and share in your mourning, breaking and rejoicing."

[Participants: "Thanks be to God."]