RAFT

**Resilience for
Advocates through
Foundational Training®**

Healing from Urgency Culture:
A Leadership Guide to Create
a Sustainable Organizational
Environment

TRAINING WORKBOOK

ABOUT RAFT

RAFT supports organizations and advocates to cultivate human-centered workspaces through foundational wellness practices, resources, and training to build resilience and promote a healthier gender-based violence advocacy ecosystem.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

This 90-minute workshop will help leaders in the advocacy field recognize the detrimental effect of an urgency culture. Along with provide them with strategies to heal and cultivate a healthier organizational environment.

You will have the opportunity to:
★ Practice Box Breathing
★ Be able to define urgency culture and categorize different tasks
★ Recognize how urgency culture manifests in the workplace
★ Learn about mindful leadership
★ Learn to "Name it, Flip it, Frame it"
★ Practice debrief process

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How Urgency Culture Manifests in the Workplace

Urgency Culture

Refers to the pervasive societal mindset that everything must be done immediately and that speed is always the most important factor.

Urgency creates a work environment where everything is treated as critical priority. It is a phenomenon that has developed over time fueled by both societal changes and organizational practices.

Unrealistic Deadlines: Advocates are frequently given task with very short turnaround times, often without considering the complexity of work required or the volume of their current workload.

Constant Connectivity: Often there is the expectation the advocates will respond to emails, messages, and calls immediately; even outside of work hours. This hallmark of urgency culture blurs the line between personal and professional life.

Overtime As The Norm: When advocates are regularly EXPECTED to work long hours, often without compensation or recognition. If overtime becomes a standard expectation rather than an occasional necessity, this is a tail-tail sign of urgency culture.

Micromanagement: Leaders are closely monitoring every detail of advocates work and pushing for immediate results without trusting them to manage their own time or task.

Decreased Quality of Work: Advocates may feel there isn't enough time to do their best work leading to mistakes, overlooked details, or lower quality outcomes.

Communication Breakdown: When we expect advocates to work at too fast of a pace important information can be lost in the shuffle. Misunderstandings, confusion, and lack of clarity become common.

Which of these show up in your workplace?

Reflect on specific examples of urgency culture in your organization below.

Urgency Culture Effects

Impact on Leadership:
★ **Decreased Decision-Making Quality:** Urgency leaves little room to fully consider the long-term implications of decisions. Being reactive rather than proactive can lead to poor choices and lack of strategic vision. Sidelining long-term planning and strategic thinking can hinder organizational growth and the ability to achieve its mission to help survivors

★ **Erosion of Trust and Morals:** When urgency becomes the norm relationships between leaders and their teams become strained. Leadership can become more authoritative, less approachable, and less empathetic to the stresses of advocates.

★ **Negative Impact on Organizational Culture:** Leaders who operate within an urgency culture may inadvertently reinforce it, creating a cycle where stress and pressure become the norm. This can lead to a toxic and non-human-centered work culture that affects everyone in the organization, from the top down.

★ **Increases Turnover:** Urgency culture contributes to a toxic work environment, driving advocates (and leaders) to leave organizations. This constant high turnover makes maintaining progress on key advocacy initiatives difficult to impossible.

★ **Burnout:** Leaders in urgency culture are often under relentless pressure to meet unrealistic deadlines, manage crises, and to push their team to work faster and harder. Maintaining this sense of constant urgency can take a toll on leaders mental and physical well-being, eventually leading to burnout

Impact on Advocates:
★ **Decreased Team Moral and Engagement:** Constantly working at a relentless pace can lead to feelings of exhaustion, frustration, and a sense that advocate's contributions are only as valuable as the speed at which they work. Over time, this can lead to disengagement, where advocates become detached from their work and the organization's mission.

★ **Compromised Quality of Care:** Urgency culture creates an environment that rushes through interaction with survivors, which can lead them feeling unheard and unsupported. The constant pressure to perform and meet unrealizable metrics can over time lead the advocates to compassion fatigue and without space to provide deep empathy and emotional support.

★ **Compromised Ethical Standards:** Under constant pressure of urgency, advocates can feel compelled to cut corners and make hasty decisions that could compromise their integrity of work. This emotional strain can leave advocates struggling to maintain their capacity to care for survivors.

★ **Burnout:** Advocates are already working in an emotionally intense environment that over time, without the right support, this often leads to burnout. The relentless pace urgency culture creates exacerbates physical and mental exhaustion, only accelerating burnout.

★ **Negative Impact on Survivors:** Pressure to address not just multiple cases but to also do it quickly will eventually lead to inconsistencies in the support we can provide to survivors. Advocates can lose their willingness to engage fully in the advocacy process and survivors can lose their trust in the system we have in place to support them and help in their healing process

Which repercussions of urgency culture have you witnessed within your organization?
Reflect on the consequences of urgency culture in your workplace below.

Types of Urgency

Real Urgency:
Truly time sensitive and critical events/tasks that require immediate attention.

False Urgency:
Events/tasks that are not truly urgent but become urgent due to incorrect priorities, unrealistic timelines, high workloads, understaffing, broken systems, missing policies.

Accepted Urgency:
Events/tasks that are not truly urgent, and everyone knows this, but over time the culture of the organization has accepted that these tasks will always be urgent and changes cannot be made.

Create a list of urgent tasks below, and cateorgize them as
Real urgency, False urgency, and Accepted urgency.

R   F   A

Using your list of tasks that you identified as "Real Urgency" on the previous page, identify the general criteria that makes an event or task truly urgent in your organization below.

Pick a task from your real urgency list. List all of the steps in that task below. Which of these steps are truly urgent?

Strategies for Change

Mindful Leadership

Mindful leadership involves leaders who practice self-awareness, empathy, and reflection. These leaders are conscious of their own emotions, biases, and stressors, and they actively manage them to create a more balanced and compassionate workplace.

A **mindful leadership style** prioritizes the well-being of both advocates and the organization, fostering an environment where thoughtful decision-making and emotional intelligence take precedence over knee-jerk reactions and constant rush. Mindful leaders encourage a culture of calm, clarity, and intentionality.

Practicing Mindful Leadership

★ **Lead by example:** Prioritize your own well-being and demonstrate the importance of self-care. Set boundaries, take regular breaks, create an organizational system to manage workloads effectively.

★ **Foster a Culture of Thoughtful Decision-Making:** Urgency often leads to rushed decision making. Leaders can counteract this by encouraging advocates to pause, taking a moment to assess situations thoroughly before responding.

★ **Promote a Balanced Workload:** Set realistic expectations by ensuring that workloads are manageable and that advocates are overwhelmed by too many task at once. Then periodically review the distribution od work within the team to ensure that no one is taking on too much at once.

★ **Create an Open and Supportive Environment:** Foster an environment where advocates feel comfortable discussing their workload and stress levels. Offer regular check-in and create a safe space where advocates can express their concerns and emotions without fear or repercussions or judgement.

★ **Align Actions with Core Values:** Pause to reflect on if your decisions and actions are guided by the organizations core values rather than the pressures of immediate demands. Keep your team focused on the bigger picture and long-term goals by reminding them not every situation requires immediate attention.

★ **Encourage Collaborative Problem-Solving:** Rather than responding to crisis individually, encourage advocates to use team-based problem-solving. Create opportunities for advocates to support one another, share strategies, and learn from one another's experiences.

★ **Provide Ongoing Training:** Offer workshops and training sessions that build long-term skills that encourage wellbeing, boundary setting, mindfulness, and stress management. Incorporate trainings quarterly or bi-annually for reminders to continue to use these tools.

★ **Recognize and Reward Balanced Efforts:** Celebrate thoughtful work by rewarding advocates who take a balanced approach to their work, emphasizing quality over speed. Acknowledge milestones that are reached through sustained, consistent effort rather than last-minute pushes.
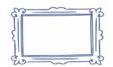
Name it, Flip it, Frame it

Name it
Clearly state what happened, what was challenging, and any undesired results.

Flip it
Turn the issue into a positive opposite. State what you want to happen and the ideal results.

Frame it
How can the organization respond to this event/task to achieve the ideal result? What positive impact with this ideal result have?

Name it
Provide a summary of what happened with as much detail as possible.
Apply your urgency criteria: Does this event/task meet the criteria for real urgency?

Flip it
What would you like to happen in this situation?
What is the ideal result?

Frame it
How can the organization respond to this event/task to achieve the ideal result?
What could we do differently next time to achieve the ideal results in this situation?
Consider:
★ What strengths could we use?
★ What actions could we take?
★ What systems need to added/changed?
★ What resources are needed?
★ What communication additions/changes could we make?

★ Is there anything else we can do to achieve the ideal result next time?
What impact would this new way of doing things, and the ideal result have on our organization?

Final Thoughts on Urgency Culture

When approaching urgency culture from a positive perspective people will have more ideas. The appreciative inquiry research shows that if you focus on the positive, people tend to focus on the positive, what can be done and what changes can be made. Talking about these positive ideas makes them more likely to happen, and your org heads in a positive direction.

Set Yourself Up for Success
★ Start small when addressing urgency culture.
★ Be transparent with your staff and leadership.
★ Be patient because culture shifts can take longer than expected.

Thank you for joining RAFT for this workshop.
Your participation and shared experiences are truly appreciated.

You can download all the workbooks and check out
RAFT's other resources at: https://www.raftcares.org/advocate-resources-2/

We encourage you to stay in touch and keep the conversation going:
Sign up for our newsletter and follow our social media at:
https://linktr.ee/raftcaresorg

Join the RAFT community for our support calls:
Advocate Support Call – 1st Wednesday & 4th Friday of every month.
Survivor-Advocate Support Calls - 3rd Wednesday of each month
Leadership Support Calls – 2nd Tuesday & Last Wednesday of each month
Sign up to join and be reminded of support calls at:
https://www.raftcares.org/support-calls-2/

Interested in our Leadership resources?
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