

Change, Hope, and Confidence

Living Mission toolkits are provided \ to help you facilitate formation experiences. Use whatever combination of behaviors, discussion questions, activities or talking points that will create a meaningful formation experience for your team.

OBJECTIVES

- To express faith in God's goodness and confidence in the Mercy tradition as we meet contemporary challenges.
- To address difficult decisions with realistic optimism.
- To understand the responsibility of stewardship for every Mercy co-worker.
- To adopt techniques for stress reduction, mindfulness, and mutual support.

FORMATION52: Mercy Values on Deck

Mercy Formation cards Stewardship 3, Justice 8, Service 6, and Excellence 8 align with this month's Mercy Formation: Path to Excellence content.

Pray

Use this or another prayer with your team

Our prayer today speaks of confidence. It is from the ancient and beloved Psalm 23:1-4. *The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I lack. In green pastures you let me graze; to safe waters you lead me; you restore my strength. You guide me along the right path for the sake of your name. Even when I walk through a dark valley, I fear no harm for you are at my side, your rod and staff give me courage.*

Reflect

Use the talking points below to introduce the concept to your team

- Catherine McAuley continually responded positively to change in her life. She founded the House of Mercy in Dublin in 1827, but she and the lay women who worked with her received backlash and criticism. She adapted in order to continue her ministry, and on December 12, 1831, she and two companions became the first Sisters of Mercy.
- Within a few decades of their founding and facing many hardships, Sisters of Mercy carried their ministry to poor and vulnerable populations beyond Ireland.
- In the 20th Century, the Sisters of Mercy of the St. Louis region sponsored health facilities in several states, and in 1986 the Sisters of Mercy Health System was created. In just over three decades, Mercy has grown to be one of the largest health systems in the United States.
- Once again, the pace of change at Mercy has accelerated, and that naturally produces stress in the work environment. Because it is hard to predict the future, we become more anxious and less able to focus on the ordinary activities of our work—activities which in ordinary times are easily practiced. It's at times like this we need to contemplate our mission and ministry, to focus on the future, and to maintain our own well-being in order to enhance the health and lives of those we serve.

Share

Use these questions to explore Mercy Culture with your team

1. What major changes have we been a part of in the past? What innovations do we take for granted now that caused upheaval when they were introduced?
2. In the present time, what can we do as a team to influence change?
3. Going forward, what can we do personally and as a team to adapt to change?
4. How can realistic optimism and faith help us to accept and build on change?

Serve

Use these behaviors to bring Mercy Culture to life with your team

- Offer constructive ideas to improve processes and practices.
- Respond to conflict with quiet confidence and a calm demeanor.
- When patients and co-workers express anxiety, respond in a non-anxious manner.
- Practice breathing techniques to reduce feelings of stress.
- Be mindful of the value and dignity of ordinary daily tasks.
- Practice gratitude and prayer. Take time to reflect on the things we appreciate in our life and work, including our own gifts and positive qualities.

Optional Activities

Optional Activity 1: Self-Care and Stewardship (Stewardship 3)

- Ask: Would a volunteer please read the first two paragraphs on the card?
- Say: Even though we can't actually withdraw to deserted places to pray during a busy shift, we can rejuvenate our spirits with simple actions that give energy and relief. As you know, the word *respiration* is another word for breathing. It comes from the same word as *inspire* and *spirit*. Simply put, breathing inspires us.
- Say: You don't have to get into any particular position, although sitting with both feet flat on the floor is good. Standing is OK too.
- Say: When I say "breathe in" take a deep-healing breath through the nose and hold it about 3 - 4 seconds, thinking "I am calm." Then when I say "exhale" let the breath out through your mouth and think "I am peaceful." We will do three or four repetitions.
- Ask: (after three or four repetitions) How do you feel? Could you do this in the midst of a work shift? (Take time for responses.)

Optional Activity 2: Dissolving Tension (Justice 8)

- Ask: What do you do to cope or recharge in the face of obstacles and stress? Think about this for a minute.
- Ask: Would a volunteer read the first paragraph on the card?
- Say: Here's one proven technique for relieving tension and stress and getting energized. It's helpful in that it asks us to stop briefly and to be consciously in tune with our bodies.
 - Hold your hands out in front of you. As you breathe in, tighten your hands into fists like you are crunching golf balls.
 - After holding just a few seconds, breathe out and let your hands relax.
 - We will do this once and then repeat it two more times.
- Ask: What do you feel? Do you feel a wave of energy and release of tension? (Take time for responses.)
- Say: You may want to vary this technique by tightening your neck muscles, arms, eyes, or raising your shoulders and holding them before releasing the tension.
- Ask: "Where do you hold your tension?" Do you have other techniques for letting go of tension?

Optional Activity 3: Mindfulness, Mantras and Prayers (Service 6)

- Say: Catherine McAuley wrote in "Our Holy Rule" instructions for those who entered into the community of the Sisters of Mercy: "There is nothing of greater consequence than the perfect discharge of our daily ordinary duties."
- Ask: Would a volunteer please read the first two paragraphs on the card?
- Ask: What stands out to you in Catherine's personal prayer? (Pause for responses.)
- Say: Think of one of your ordinary daily duties, one that you perform almost unconsciously (examples could be hand-washing, opening the postal mail, putting on your uniform, signing-on to your computer, or making a bed). In your mind's eye, look at yourself performing that task and think consciously how that simple activity may be broken down into a few even simpler steps. (Pause for people to think and consider.)
- Ask: Would it be possible to combine this regular, mindful activity with a short prayer or mantra?
- Ask: Who would share with the group the activity you thought of?
- Ask: Who has a simple prayer or mantra that helps them through the day? (Pause for responses. Encourage feedback from the group.)

Optional Activity 4: Gifts, Talents, and Gratitude (Excellence 8)

- Say: It's important to take moments in time to reflect on the things and people we truly appreciate in our life and work, including our own gifts and positive qualities.
- Ask: Would a volunteer please read the first three paragraphs on the card?
- Ask: (after the card is read) For what gifts and talents of your team members are you most grateful? (Pause for responses.)
- Ask: Think about a gift or talent you have that helps you get through stressful times. What is it? (Pause for responses. Encourage discussion.)

*The simplest and most practical lesson I know is to resolve to be good today and better tomorrow.
Catherine McAuley*