CHAPTER 12

Practicing OD for Social Justice

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To be human you must bear witness to justice. Justice is what love looks like in public – to be human is to love and be loved.
—Cornell West (2015)

We five colleagues have spent decades working within and consulting with highly mission-driven organizations, organizations that have compelling purposes and deeply moving values.[1] They remind us of the important work that is needed to serve our communities and protect society and its members. Our motivation to serve these organizations ignites our passion and focuses our calling in the world. We have worked in and for human

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service and first-responder agencies, healthcare systems, tribal communities, higher education, community-based nonprofits, and grassroots organizing groups. Among our many roles, advocacy has been central to our professional background; all of us have demonstrated practical dedication to social change and social justice and making society a more humane place.

Our love and concern for our world and our dedication to social justice have fueled our work with marginalized individuals and organizations for many decades. In return, that work has deeply influenced our understanding of organization development (OD) and the values that support it. OD with its open system of ideas draws from the fields of family systems theory, general systems theory, change management, sociology, organizational psychology, and leadership and management development. Its principles and practices have enabled us to create unique paths of consultation while identifying with both the world of OD and social change movements. Our group's dedication to supporting mission-driven entities is possible because of this interconnection.

In our group discussions over the years, we have identified the core identity of our practice and the elements that support our work and help us to sustain ourselves. In this chapter, we explore the values undergirding our efforts by addressing:

- Love as motivation and value in consultation practice
- Characteristics of highly mission-driven organizations
- Organization development practices for mission-driven organizations
- Our values-based consultation approach
- Key principles for sustainable practice

Love as Motivation and Value in Consultation Practice

Recently, one of the authors was in conversation with OD colleagues who provide pro bono consultation to nonprofit clients. They worked to articulate the core of their approach—hanging in there with clients, helping clients to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and deep commitment to support clients through challenging times. They talked about persistence, staying with clients as they learned to thrive and are able to continue on their own. "We are with them until they are over 'the hump' of change." They also emphasized a spirit of generosity as the underlying value of their pro bono efforts.

Later the same day, she facilitated a conversation for a grassroots nonprofit devoted to serving marginalized communities of color. In a discussion to discern unique agency qualities, staff and community allies contributed phrases such as "We see you," "You are valuable human beings," "You are always part of our family," "We offer dignity to those left without it by society," "Once you come in the door, you can always return."

Not said in this discussion, but meant implicitly was "We love you."

Both of these examples demonstrate love at its essence, a deep honoring of the humanity of individuals and their organizations. Love is the primary motivator for our work. It provides the basis and support for other values, for our dedication, and for our energy and persistence. Love in our work comes from our deep wellspring of concern for our neighbors and community. We also realize that our commitment as practitioners mirrors the commitment of our clients whose missions show concern for others and their place in society. We are especially cognizant of the vulnerability of these highly mission-driven entities to being traumatized because of the nature of their work with traumatized populations.[2]

Each of us would say "I love groups and organizations for themselves." We like working with complex systems of human beings and are delighted by the mysteries that unfold as we enter these systems. We are motivated to help heal and strengthen entities that have been impaired by dysfunction or wounded by trauma. We offer our humanity—we are all in this together—as a mechanism for accessing hope and sharing it with others.

Our experiences as social justice/social change advocates embolden us to bring our values and passions into our consultation. However, we do not enter looking for people to blame nor do we decide who is right and who is wrong. Howard F. Stein captures this idea when he describes, "a framework of emotional inclusiveness in which the therapist, consultant… in effect becomes an advocate not for one member…or subunit, but for the maturity of the whole system" (1987, p. 364). We bring compassion that enables clients to feel secure in our commitments to them and loving, hopeful energy to the whole group.

We believe that love, acceptance, and forgiveness enable organizations to move forward and heal. We avoid entering as experts to fix anything; rather we see ourselves as vehicles of compassion. We join feminist author bell hooks, who states, "All healing is the work of love, a combination of six ingredients: care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, because all healing takes place in a context where we wish to promote growth" (2004). Not only is healing the work of love, but enabling an organization to gain hope and clarity for its future is an act of love. We also

acknowledge the spiritual aspects of our efforts. We tap into something deeper than self-renewal by connecting with a collective energy we believe is necessary for helping organizations and society.

We recognize that our work takes us into the unknown. "We do not enter safe, well-determined spaces; we go in accepting uncertainty and knowing at the essence we bring only ourselves" (Vivian, Hormann, Cox, & Murphy-Kangas, 2017, unpublished). Exposure to OD values and principles taught us to appreciate "self as tool" (Jamieson, Auron, & Shechtman, 2010). Our sense of "self" includes our minds, physical selves, experiences, hearts, souls, and spirits. We introduce ourselves into a system by deeply honoring the work of that group. We commit to doing no harm and beyond that to building the esteem of the system. We pay attention to what we see, feel, and sense, and we share our insights. We endeavor to bring loving energy to systems without being swept up in dynamics. We honor systems and their members by "telling the truth without blame or judgment" (Arrien, 1993, p. 82).

We show profound respect for process and those who are engaged in it by being present and offering ourselves as containers to hold the experiences of our clients. To act at sufficient depth, we must bring our full selves into our efforts. Our clear boundaries—informed by our core identities and values—help us in intense circumstances. Unless we feel secure in being close to others in those moments, we risk being overwhelmed by their experiences or staying too distant to be effective. Use of reflective frameworks and conversations with each other allow us to step away from the immediate emotional influence in encounters with environments fraught with dysfunction, pain, or trauma.

None of us believes we could last in our practices without our foundation of love. Nor could we persist if we did not depend on others—colleagues, families, friends, community members—for a collective experience of love. We recognize the importance of staying centered, building our reserve capacity, and nurturing our ability to respond. We are intentional about fostering sources of love, grace, spaciousness, and acceptance in our lives. Our ability to respect and nurture our own capacity leads directly to our ability to be healers in moments fraught with despair and fear. Our commitment to loving relationships with our colleagues enables us to build trusting environments with our clients.

As we have offered our assistance in these efforts, we have recognized our shared dedication to making the world a better place. In the next section, we describe the unique characteristics of groups whose mission is to uplift, protect, and heal those who have been marginalized, oppressed, or harmed.

Characteristics of Highly Mission-driven Organizations

We have worked with mission-driven groups in all sectors—public, private, and nonprofit—and with tribal groups. We have worked with the military, nurses and doctors, women's healthcare providers, social workers, chaplains, domestic violence and sexual assault advocates and caseworkers, activists, LGBTQ advocates, pastors, educators, aid workers, and first responders. Though the kind of work and organizational structure may be quite diverse, we have identified common characteristics of mission-driven groups.

Emotionally Intense and Personal

Highly mission-driven groups seek to make the world a more just and humane place. This demanding work touches members' personal values and experiences. Individuals are motivated to join these organizations because of political activism, personal experience, influential relationships in their lives, witnessing harm done to others, their faith, or altruistic values. We see and hear staff members' passion for mission, vision, and purpose as well as their personal rewards for being part of the effort. We witness conversations about their identification with larger struggles for human rights. Individual commitments meet compelling missions to create an intense organizational culture. Inevitably, the emotional life of the organization is impacted by the nature of its work (Obholzer & Zagier Roberts, 2000, p. 66).

Empathic Work

Empathy is highly valued, taught and expected directly, and socialized in indirect ways in cultures of many highly mission-driven organizations. Its value and use add to the already emotionally intense atmospheres of these workplaces.

Empathy is a foundational approach for relating to individuals or groups who have been harmed or whose needs have been unaddressed. It is critically important in the efforts of organizations serving traumatized individuals. The expectation that staff be empathic and constant use of empathy in the work itself create risks for organizational members. Figley describes the impact as compassion fatigue, "the emotional and physical

exhaustion that can affect helping professionals and caregivers over time" (2012, p. 4). We have also seen the effects of trauma contagion, in which the stress and turmoil experienced by one staff member is spread among colleagues and amplified (Vivian & Hormann, 2013, p. 62).

While staff do an exemplary job of caring for their clients or patients, they are often less practiced at caring for one another. Staff may not see themselves or each other as needing care because they are the helpers and are supposed to be able to manage on their own. Workers may adopt a service-rationing mentality because of feeling so depleted, and begin withholding care from one another and sometimes from clients (Van Dernoot Lipsky, 2007). For example, one of us noted that a group of hospital chaplains displayed less care and empathy for one another than other teams she'd worked with in less intense organizational atmospheres.

Likewise, the organization as a whole can suffer. Unrecognized collective emotion accumulates and drains the vitality of the whole entity. As with individuals, the organization misses the need to nurture itself. The drain results in an inability to care for the whole system; organizational planning, engagement with vision and effectiveness, accountability, and organizational health all suffer. Example: One of us noticed that a group serving homeless youth was very effective at caring for clients in crisis but was unable to create a strategic plan for the agency.

Redemptive Work

Commitment to redemptive work—seeking to change or redeem society—"creates an expectation of struggle for achievement of broad and far-reaching goals…the struggle is fraught with high expectations and high chance of failure" (Vivian & Hormann, 2013, p. 33). Often the redemptive goals of a social justice organization are insurmountably large and influenced by forces outside the organization's control. For example, one of the authors noticed the exhaustion and despair of advocates for victims of violent crimes as they commented that despite their efforts the community did not seem to be changing in attitude or behavior.

Furthermore, in redemptive work staff become particularly attuned to living up to the espoused values of the organization's mission. They pay attention to issues of inclusion, oppression, and justice within their own walls. "Redemptive organizations have unique internal characteristics… they stress a personal commitment to personal and social transformation… [and] they remind us of our aspirations and point out that our practice contradicts them" (Couto, 1989, p. 69, p. 77).

Given both the enormity of the tasks and the attention to internal dynamics, sometimes the challenges and struggles to change an unresponsive society are turned inward. For example, one client organization had a feminist foundation that enabled staff to feel pride and efficacy in organizational efforts against domestic and sexual violence over decades. With staff turnover, the leadership decided to explore feminism to create unity and support throughout the whole agency. When everyone could not agree on a common definition of feminism, conflict and distrust among staff erupted, and the internal environment turned hostile and unproductive. More conversations only deepened the scrutiny and distrust.

Emphasis on Democracy in the Workplace

Many mission-driven organizations—and almost all social justice groups—value participatory decision-making. Organizations that are redemptive in nature demand respect, inclusion, and dignity in the work environment. The emotionally intense environment and personal nature of the work reinforce a desire to be heard and have input. However, in many social change organizations, dysfunctional and unacknowledged power dynamics exist and get in the way of respect and inclusion. This dysfunction arises from many sources, including oppression. "Hierarchy, racism, and sexism within their organizations often undermine the ideals they pursue" (Couto, 1989, p. 74). The tension between the desire to be heard and the covert dynamics plays out over time. For example, in one youth-serving organization a 20-person staff debated for an hour about which kitchen faucet should be installed. Hearing everyone's input on this trivial matter became one of the ways the group could have control over something. They certainly couldn't control all the homelessness, loneliness, and addiction they encountered in their clients every day.

Separation and Isolation from the Wider Community

Highly mission-driven organizations, especially those working for social justice, may experience themselves as apart from the wider community, feeling marginalized as their clients are marginalized. They describe themselves as invisible and unappreciated. The organization as a whole expects others to disregard, betray, or not understand its mission and importance. When championing causes not embraced by the wider community, the entity experiences injustice and betrayal from the larger society and may also face hostility and danger.

These relational dynamics with the wider community influence the entity's internal dynamics. Skilled employees, who work for very modest salaries, justify their overwork and overextension by saying no one else cares enough to do this work (Kanter & Sherman, 2017). Staff remain energized by the mission and collective pride in the organization's scrappiness of doing more with less. However, organizational members often feel misunderstood, alone, and distrustful of external environments—"no one can possibly understand us." Consequences of this isolation can include close-mindedness, exclusivity, inattention to a changing environment, and inability to ask for help.

These characteristics, endemic to mission-driven clients, influence our approach to consultation. Basic OD skills and practices, which we take up in the next section, enable us to act effectively and creatively in a variety of challenging situations.

Foundational OD Practices for Consulting in Mission-Driven Organizations

The core identity of OD emphasizes the intentionality of change processes, the widespread inclusion of those impacted by the change in the process, and the attention given to the larger systems context. OD practitioners use a variety of behavioral science interventions to help organizations become healthier and more effective. We rely on this foundation and its tenets to guide and support our basic approaches as consultants. We also count on creative ideas and practices from the world of OD to help us navigate moments when usual approaches are not sufficient for our work with mission-driven organizations. What follows are key elements that we use in consultation.

Do No Harm

Consistent with our foundational value of love, we follow OD's ethical guidelines to avoid doing harm and to work for the good of the whole (International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes, 2010). We start with a profound commitment to "do no harm." Many of our client organizations are suffering from sudden or cumulative trauma,[3] so we are keenly aware of our responsibility to avoid increasing distress.

We are dedicated to helping organizations change, but, even more, we want to help them heal and flourish. We feel an obligation to design and facilitate interventions that bring stability, containment, and hope to our clients. This often means avoiding prescribed approaches. Instead, we build trust with leaders and other staff members, listen with curiosity, patience, and kindness, and set the stage for more candid conversations. We take seriously Schein's injunction to "become better at asking and do less telling in a culture that overvalues telling" (2013, p. 3). By asking good questions in a compassionate way, we join with our clients and assure them that, while the process may be hard and painful, we will use our knowledge and skills to help.

Intentional Process

Given what we have learned about highly mission-driven organizations, especially if they have been traumatized, we know it is especially important to help clients understand that we are following a process. They can rely on that process and us to provide security amidst high anxiety. By showing our intention and being transparent, we add to their sense of safety and hope. We practice iterations of Block's (2000) five-phase consulting model:

- Entry and contracting
- Discovery and dialogue
- Feedback and decision to act
- Engagement and implementation
- Extension, recycle, or termination

Entry and contracting are both important. Clients often express feeling overwhelmed, confused, and unsure about what is wrong. We demonstrate immediate helpfulness to them by bringing containment strategies for emotional distress and stability to chaos or confusion. Our actions are an invitation for them to begin trusting us. With intensity diminished, we then use the consulting model to explain the steps, our role as consultants, and possible intervention strategies to address their situation.

The discovery process is a key intervention in itself as we reinforce the containment of organizational anxiety and help members name and describe what has been going on. We provide critical language for clients

to gain control over their experiences, and we reinforce the support of staff at all levels in the organization. We learn about the conditions that brought us into the client system and help surface covert dynamics in the culture. Consistent with our commitment to lifting the organization's esteem, we find ways in each consulting step to focus on organizational strengths.

In smaller mission-driven groups, we often encounter undue focus on interpersonal relationships and not enough structure. This lack of structure creates challenges for the organization in the long run and increases the difficulty to pursue intentional change objectives. We use concepts such as Johnson's (2014) "both/and" dynamic from polarity management to support adding just enough structure to enable work to continue. We draw from models such as Bridges' Change and Transition (1991) and the Waterline Model (Leadership Institute of Seattle, 2001) to offer frameworks of understanding and security.

By referring to the consulting process model, we point to the progress made and future actions still to be taken. We explain the iterative nature of any change process to clients so they see that returning to an earlier issue does not mean failure. Because our clients often feel overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control, we offer reminders of what they have accomplished and encourage them to name their achievements. We remain relentlessly positive in our service. Lastly, we recognize we are in client–consultant relationships with an end. We pay close attention to the realities of "two steps forward, one step back" in healing and to noticing that moment when the organization is over its change "hump."

Client–Consultant Collaboration

Peter Block emphasizes two principles in consultation: honesty and purpose. "Be who you are and tell the truth, so you develop an authentic partnership with your client, and let the client know what you want to create" (2000, p. xvii). Because of our clients' vulnerability and separation from wider society, we know there might be mistrust among staff or between the organization and outsiders. We build trust and transparency by bringing our full selves and modeling generosity, caring, kindness, and positivity. We demonstrate commitment to the organization's survival even as we acknowledge difficult realities.

We are careful to be unequivocally supportive of the leader. Block advocates a 50/50 balance of responsibility between client and consultant as they take on a project together. That balance is a reminder to avoid

overfunctioning or taking on more than is appropriate. The client organization ultimately has the responsibility for its future. In organizations that feel a lack of efficacy in their environment, this sensibility is especially important. We don't want to create the conditions for dependency instead of supporting organizational confidence.

We have found this balance may shift with traumatized systems, requiring that we bring more energy and more hope than our client has, at least initially. For example, we have learned that one manifestation of client distress is lack of response to the consultant's communication. While under usual circumstances a consultant might refrain from multiple attempts to contact a client without getting a response, we choose to continue. We are trying to alleviate the hopelessness that comes from ongoing isolation, and we are committed to making sure clients know we care deeply about them and their future/success.

The Pivotal Role of Leader

Leaders always play a highly influential role in their organization's culture—the whole complex system of stated and overt qualities and values as well as the hidden and complex patterns (Schein, 1992). Leaders create culture through modeling behavior that reinforces overt and covert dynamics, consciously direct attention to those aspects of culture they value, and actively work to change characteristics they see as unhelpful or unhealthy. They need support to succeed in their role. We recognize the relationship we build with leaders is crucial to our success in bringing stability and beginning the change or healing process. Example: One of the authors conducted consultation with a leader by telephone. The executive director would begin with a litany of what was happening. After a couple of phone sessions, the consultant was able to say, "I just noticed you are using the exact language today that you've previously used to describe your relationship with another staff person. What do you think is going on?" The leader was startled by this but spent time reflecting aloud. Going forward, she noticed this pattern herself and explored more deeply how she was influencing the organization's culture.

We coach leaders using Edwin Friedman's ideas about a differentiated leader, "someone who will define his or her own goals and self, while staying in touch with the rest of the [organization], and therefore can maintain a non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence" (1985, p. 229). We understand that in mission-driven organizations leaders come under fire in intense and unexpected ways. If the group is suffering from anxiety,

confusion, and fatigue, it needs a leader who can be strong enough to provide containment, wise enough to know her limits, and confident enough to ask for help. When organizational realities threaten the viability of a group, it is critical that we, in a compassionate coaching role, help the leader to show up in a calm and differentiated way.

Whole Systems View

We are advocates for the whole system. We rely on OD concepts that support learning about the totality of organizations and appreciating the interdependence of the parts (Block, 2000). Mission-driven organizations are often relationship oriented and appreciative of participatory decision-making. They are at risk in times of turmoil and instability of abandoning meetings and other structures that serve to maintain trust and foster connections throughout the system. Highlighting organizational strengths (Vivian & Hormann, 2013) and systems purpose (Block, 2000) can help alleviate this pitfall.

Knowledge of groups, how they function, and how they change is critical to our work as facilitators of healing or change processes. Understanding lifecycles of groups (Tuchman, 1965), ways norms are developed (Schwarz, 1994), various functions and roles in groups (Benne & Sheats, 1948), and inherent tension in group life (Smith & Berg, 1987) are essential for the roles we play. Our skills in groups, combined with our appreciation for using ourselves as tools, enable us to lead groups into tender areas.

Leaders are at risk of isolating themselves and making decisions with no or little input. Richard Axelrod (2000) describes widening the circle of involvement, connecting people to each other, creating communities of action, and embracing democracy as systems change strategies. These principles are also healing strategies since harm to the whole needs to be healed in a holistic way. We facilitate collective meaning making, helping groups understand history and covert dynamics without blaming, retriggering, and retraumatizing each other. We anchor them in their strengths and identity, and we support their moving forward.

Our Values-Based Consultation Approach

In the two previous sections, we explored characteristics of our client systems and our OD framework. With these sections as backdrop, we next describe our approach, including dilemmas we encounter.

Consulting Without Remarginalizing

We seek to empower and support our clients while being careful to avoid remarginalizing them. We frequently enter organizations that are marginalized in society. We need to bring awareness of power dynamics and understanding of oppression to our consultation with these groups. We enter client systems with situational power, that is, influence that comes from perceptions of our consultant role or personal characteristics. Often clients assume we bring content expertise and therefore they should listen to us. A number of elements of our role reinforce our power as we design interventions, hold space, and choose how to capture and move the group's attention. Therefore, it is crucial that we share our values and priorities openly and show respect for the opinions, experiences, and realities of our clients.

In order to act with integrity in situations laden with overt and covert dynamics of power and privilege, we need to stay aware of our behaviors and their impacts. We work to understand our own privilege[4] and seek to uncover our blind spots so we do not retreat into that privilege and reinforce patterns of oppression.[5]

Caring Ally and Knowledgeable Outsider

As practitioners, we become caring allies to our clients because we ourselves have similar experiences and backgrounds. Shared experiences enable us to compassionately connect with and support organizational members. However, we cannot become so close that we lose our independent view, or create dependencies. Systems that are anxious and struggling need information and support, not rescuing (Everly, Strouse, & Everly, 2010). They need to be reminded of their strengths and urged to resurrect faith in their ability to move forward. We need to remain detached enough to keep our outsider sensibility and provide pragmatic help and a hopeful perspective.

Highly mission-driven organizations can have insular cultures, exacerbated by the impacts of oppression and rejection. Trust comes slowly from such groups, especially if consultants are privileged in areas where some or all of the members are marginalized by oppression. Though consultants might share similar experiences with clients, we need to respect the caution of a group in welcoming outsiders who have not shared their experiences.

Relating to Individuals While Keeping the Whole System in Mind

Our work is done through a series of interactions with members of the organization. We coach leaders, listen to individuals throughout the system, and engage with various groups. We do this in service of finding out what is happening in the system, guiding the system to see itself, and assisting the system to commit to change. We have found that the dynamics of a struggling system can create a gravitational pull toward a focus on individuals, parts of a system, or even entities outside the organization. We find individuals or groups mired in helplessness because their actions have not produced change. Frequently, we hear one person or entity blame some "other" in the system. They want us to take sides and champion their perspective. We listen empathically but we do not agree. As we have stated, we bring our focus to the whole system. We direct attention to the larger system to gain perspective and avoid blaming or shaming individuals. We employ tools and techniques that show staff and leaders that simple awareness and small interventions can create enough energy to drive a system change (Senge, 1990). By continually reminding leaders and staff that patterns thread throughout a system, we shift the perspective from the individual to the whole in order to engage collective responsibility for healing, resilience, and change.

Coach and Advisor

We believe in a leader's ability to enable healing and lead change. We do not do for the organization and its leaders what they can do themselves. We support leaders' differentiation by asking questions instead of telling them what to do, and help them see the ramifications of decisions they face. Admittedly, when leaders are in obvious distress, it is difficult to avoid the pull of giving answers to rescue them. It is important to distinguish between leaders' moments of distress or discouragement and persistent expressions of despair. When we witness extreme discouragement and a leader who cannot see a way forward, we need to offer immediate relief from the overwhelming feelings as well as concrete ways to think about the situation. We also respectfully offer insights and hunches about issues to surface and explore. It is important to us that leaders see accepting help as a sign of strength, not as a weakness (Hormann & Vivian, 2017; Vivian & Hormann, 2013).

Empathic Consultant and Rigorous Boundary Holder

We use our empathy to build trust and help clients feel safe enough to share their experiences (Everly et al., 2010). We listen deeply in order to understand at multiple levels what is going on and to communicate profound respect and honoring of the organizational realities (Stein, 1994). We are bringing our full selves and staying clear in our role to provide a strong container for the process. When this approach is accomplished effectively, outcomes are powerful for the client.

We may lose our balance when we face too many intense pieces of work at the same time, something in our history has been triggered, or we have been swept up emotionally and mentally into the system's dynamics. In some cases, we end up suffering from "trauma contagion," that is, taking on the symptoms described to us and compromising our effectiveness as consultants (Figley, 2002, p. 17). At other times, symptoms of distress signal that we need to pay closer attention to what is happening. When we notice, we can seek out colleagues for perspective and use the "holding" we give each other to understand and cope with what is happening (Kahn, 2005, p. 231).

As consultants, we may enter some systems cautiously because of our own histories of suffering from oppression. These situations may leave us feeling powerless, angry, or anxious. It is important that we have avenues to address how we are feeling so that we can make good choices about support and limit setting.

Whatever influences are at play, our ability to maintain a balance of enough empathy without overidentifying with clients is central to our work. Our clients' missions leave them regularly susceptible to crossing or losing their boundaries. Modeling clear and confident limits for our clients helps them strengthen their organizational integrity and sustainability.

Key Principles for Sustainable Practice

Our approach to work is not for the faint of heart. Our principles for sustainable practice follow.

Invest in Self-Awareness and Self-Care

Engaging with systems that are in turmoil or wounded can be overwhelming. We are careful to practice what we preach in seeking to broaden our own awareness, especially in the realms of privilege, oppression, trauma,

healing, and credible practices. We invest in self-exploration in order to be precise about what we have to offer, how we will take care of ourselves in moments of distress, and how we can assure our integrity. Understanding our own history within social justice/social change movements, and how those have shaped and motivated us as practitioners, helps us be clear about our value and role in assisting organizations. Understanding our lives in terms of privilege and oppression as well as working to make systems of privilege visible allows us to find the edges of our comfort and learn ways to move beyond them.

Since working with mission-driven organizations brings opportunities that can be daunting, we seek ways to sharpen our abilities as mindful practitioners. We often discover our next challenge when we become defensive, angry, or scared by a client situation. When reacting to triggers, we risk being at best ineffective or at worst inflicting our feelings, beliefs, or wounds on others. We aim to maintain healthy boundaries through reflecting on our own histories of secondary trauma and taking steps to manage it (Stamm, 1999).

Cherish Your Loving Self

Since we aim for deep and powerful work in our practices, we know we need comparably deep and powerful nurturing. We seek multiple methods of honing our ability to stay focused and emotionally available during intense consultations. We want to be fully present in the face of conflict, trauma, and chaos without emotionally reacting. By searching out self-nurturing practices (physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, and spiritual), we engage in developing and nurturing our whole selves. We recognize that self-nurturing comes in many forms. We each have our favorite activities though we all say that regular routines are key. Our favorite activities include birding, daily meditation practice, playing with children and grandchildren, cooking, dancing, writing, and camping. For all of us, nature and its healing power play an important part.

Work Within a Community of Practice

We could not sustain our work without each other. Consulting on cases helps maintain our objectivity and perspective and prompts new idea generation that improves our consultation. Being able to debrief after a particularly challenging intervention with a client helps us steady our focus on

hope and growth. Supporting each other and bearing witness to our individual struggles assures we practice what we preach about compassionate self-care. Our collegiality enriches, supports, and challenges each of us to bring our best to our client organizations. Most importantly, our community of practice enhances our capacity as professionals to manage the contradictions and dilemmas inherent in our work.

Our love of the work, dedication, and commitment to making the world a better place anticipate our future and the future of OD. Nothing in our practices suggests this work is done. In fact, the opposite seems to be true. Our clients, now more than ever, need our compassion, commitment to justice, and the particular way we live out core OD values. It's a labor of love to keep supporting individuals and organizations working to make the world a better place.

Notes

1. We also use "social justice" as a descriptor of our client systems. We consider social justice organizations to be a subset of mission-driven entities. We also use "traumatized systems" when that is the most appropriate descriptor.
2. Trauma is an experience for which a group is emotionally and cognitively unprepared, one that overwhelms its defensive (self-protective) structure and leaves the entity vulnerable and at least temporarily helpless (H. F. Stein, Personal communication, September 9, 2004). Traumatization means enduring the ill effects of trauma embedded in the organizational culture.
3. Cumulative trauma is the impact of repeated trauma that eventually traumatizes the organization and makes it less productive and more self-protective.
4. Privilege, characteristically invisible, gives advantage, favors, or benefits to members of a dominant group at the expense of members of target groups, for example, white privilege or male privilege (Leaven, 2003).
5. Oppressed groups are subject to one or more of the following five conditions: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence (Young, 2000).

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