

What You Do With What Lands On You

Support Worksheet for the article: Why difficulty has to travel up an organisation, not down

Every organisation produces difficulty. When it is not held, it does not dissolve. It travels down, and it concentrates with the people least able to carry it. In a service for vulnerable people, those are the people the organisation exists to help.

This worksheet is for the moment something difficult has landed on you and you have a choice about what happens next. It takes about twenty minutes, and it is meant to be done in writing, because writing slows you down enough to notice what you would otherwise simply act on.

Work through it in order. The order matters: the thinking steps near the end are ones most managers do perfectly well, but only once they are settled enough to think. Jumping straight to them is how difficulty gets passed on.

About the numbers beside each step

The references against each step, 8.2, 1.2, 4.4 and so on, are PsycheVita skills: named capacities that can be trained, rather than traits you either have or do not. You do not need to know anything about them to use this worksheet. They are here so that when a step is hard, you can see which skill it is asking for. A step you cannot complete is the most useful result this worksheet gives you, because it tells you what to go and practise.

1. Name what has landed

Plainly, in one or two sentences. Resist explaining yourself or justifying anybody. Just what happened and what it now sits on you to deal with.

2. Settle enough to look

8.4 Recovery and Decompression Practices

Before anything else. Not to feel better, and not to calm down for its own sake, but to be able to see straight. Whatever reliably takes you down by ten per cent: breath, a walk, cold water, putting it down for an hour. Do it now, then come back.

What did you do, and what changed?

3. Tune in to your body

8.2 Somatic Attunement

Where is this sitting? Chest, gut, throat, jaw, shoulders, the backs of the eyes. Is it tight, hot, hollow, heavy, buzzing, numb? Numb counts.

4. Name the emotion, then look underneath it

1.2 Adaptive Emotional Processing

The first layer is usually anger, frustration, irritation or contempt. Write that down without arguing with it.

Now underneath. Very often it is fear or sadness, and very often it is about something other than the thing that just happened. What is underneath yours?

5. Turn it towards yourself

3.4 Healthy Self-Worth

This is the step people skip. What do you notice in your body when you consider yourself, and your own part in this? Not your role. You.

If what turns up is shame, that is ordinary and it is information. Stay with it rather than arguing it away or rushing to fix it. Notice whether it eases as you sit with it.

If it does not ease, stop here. That is not a failure of the worksheet and it is not a failure of yours. Shame that will not shift on its own is exactly what supervision, therapy and skill practice are for. See the last page.

6. Now ask whose this is

4.4 Secure Relational Boundaries

You are settled enough to think clearly. These are the questions most managers answer well once they are no longer flooded, which is why they come sixth and not first.

Most organisations are clear about whose job a thing is. Very few are clear about whose job it is not. It is not the role of a service user to receive a manager's dysregulated anger, fear, sadness or shame. Nobody writes that down, and because nobody writes it down, the default holds.

What part of this genuinely belongs to my role?

What am I carrying because nobody else will, or because it is quicker than the conversation that would hand it back?

What would actually happen if I handed that second part back to where it belongs? Name the real cost, not the imagined one.

7. One thing you could be proud of

1.1 Self Regulation Under Stress

Small, specific, and doable this week. Not a resolution. A resolution is one more thing to fail at, and you have enough of those.

Proud here means: this was good for the people this organisation exists for. It does not mean you looked like a good leader. Self-image is part of what makes difficulty hard to hold.

A reflection to close

Think of a time somebody above you held something difficult rather than passing it to you. What did that make possible for you and for the people you were responsible for?

Holding something rather than passing it on is invisible work. Nobody thanks you for it, because nobody sees the thing that did not happen. It is still the most consequential thing you do.

Where you got stuck, and what it points to

The useful information in this worksheet is not the answers. It is the step you could not do.

If you could not settle at step 2, and went on regardless, the capacity in question is 8.4 Recovery and Decompression Practices. Difficulty gets passed on fastest by people who never came down from the last thing.

If step 3 was blank, or you could only think about it rather than feel it, that is 8.2 Somatic Attunement. The body registers this before the mind does, and if you cannot read it you are working with less information than you have.

If you could name the anger but nothing underneath it, that is 1.2 Adaptive Emotional Processing. The layer underneath is the one that tells you what this is really about.

If step 5 was unbearable, or you found yourself either collapsing into it or dismissing it briskly, that is 3.4 Healthy Self-Worth. Both moves are ways of not staying.

If you could not say what belonged to your role and what did not, or you could say it but not act on it, that is 4.4 Secure Relational Boundaries.

If you knew the right thing to do at step 7 and could not see yourself doing it, that is 1.1 Self Regulation Under Stress.

Each of those is a skill. Skills can be practised, which is a different proposition from being told to be more self-aware.

You are not failing because this is hard. It is hard. You are the place the difficulty stops, and that costs something every time. Symptoms are signals. You are not broken. You are adapting.

Keep building the skill

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