

SWORD workbook:

KFP 2 Sense of Appreciation Tasks



Box 2.1: Walking the floor

Managing via email and formal meetings is the norm in many organisations. Staff surveys often indicate that managers are not sufficiently visible, and this can be a strong source of dissatisfaction. KFP1 Secure Base includes tips on introducing an effective open-door policy, but another way to encourage spontaneous questions and feedback is to walk the floor. Put simply, this is the habit of stopping to talk to people face to face. Research for *Community Care* (Schraer, 2014) found social workers would value opportunities to engage in open dialogue with managers on a regular basis. Walking the floor helps managers be more visible, connect with practitioners, share ideas, and invite suggestions for how things could be improved. It also allows them to express their appreciation to workers in a personalised way.

Make walking the floor part of your routine:

If you can, ring-fence some time in your diary each day to drop in on people for an informal chat. This doesn't have to take long: even 30 minutes will do, and you can visit different teams on a rotating basis. It's best to schedule your walkabouts at different times of the day to avoid them becoming too predictable.

Do it alone:

Walking the floor works best when it involves one-to-one conversations. Praise and gratitude are often best expressed to people individually to avoid them becoming self-conscious and embarrassed.

Visit everybody:

Dropping in on only some people regularly may be seen as favouritism and can lead to gossip and resentment. So try to spend roughly the same amount of time with each person.

Listen more than you talk:

Take the opportunity to get to know people. Ask about their accomplishments; say something positive and offer praise.

Take the rough with the smooth:

As well as providing feedback and praise, it's important to be receptive and open to criticism. The Community Care survey found that social work managers needed to 'dig deep' to establish how people actually feel about working for the organisation (Schraer, 2014).

Be persistent:

During your first walkabouts, you might find that people feel awkward and don't communicate freely. Don't be discouraged; repeated visits will eventually pay off. When done well, simple gestures of appreciation can be hugely motivating and replenishing for employees; they can increase morale and enhance workers' ability to manage setbacks.

Go beyond work:

Knowing people as individuals doesn't only mean being aware of their strengths in relation to the job they do. Managers need to be aware of employees' personal circumstances and any challenges they face (while ensuring their privacy is not invaded). When handled sensitively and in confidence, this can help people feel understood and appreciated, and any necessary accommodations can be put in place.

Box 2.2: Tips to help you listen more mindfully

Be fully present:

Focus on the person you're listening to, without any disturbance. Simplify your surroundings; avoid multi-tasking and other distractions. Before you meet, take a few moments to clear your mind to make room for the other person's point of view. You could practise a few relaxation exercises to help you 'focus on the moment' during the forthcoming conversation (e.g. try the breathing exercise suggested in KFP1 Secure Base).

Cultivate empathy:

We tend to see the world through the lens of our own experiences, beliefs and personality. So, try to understand the situation from the other person's perspective. You don't have to agree with them but validate their perspective by acknowledging their views.

Listen to your own cues:

Be aware of the thoughts, feelings and physical reactions that you experience during a conversation, and how they can divert your attention from the other person. Several things – e.g. our past experiences, our motives, our preconceptions, negative self-talk – can make us focus more on ourselves than who we're talking to. Feeling impatient or frustrated (particularly if our 'inner chimp' makes an appearance – see KFP1 Secure Base) can make us interrupt or dominate the conversation. Thinking about what we're going to say next can also prevent us listening carefully and attentively.

Consider doing a mindfulness course:

The Kinman et al (2019) research with social workers from different contexts found that mindfulness training can improve social workers' listening skills and ability to determine what people are really saying. They also found that mindfulness had wide-ranging positive effects for wellbeing and job performance.

Box 2.3: Using Appreciative Inquiry to implement change

This approach to planning change involves engaging with people to consider how good work can be built upon. This may seem a simple exercise, but AI can be a powerful tool in helping people move from being 'stuck in a rut' and lacking motivation, to a position from which a new future can be imagined and then realised.

The approach involves working in pairs, at first, to discover strengths. These are then shared, and small groups begin to imagine and plan for the future of a service. The four key steps to using AI are outlined using the example below:

1. Discovery

What has been your best experience of social work practice? Think of a time when you felt:

- > Most engaged, alive and enthused by your work
- > That it worked well for people

Now think:

- > What made this possible?
- > What did 'good' look like?
- > What was important to its success?

2. Dream for the future

Imagine it's a year from now, and your team or service is working very well. It may have achieved recognition for its work – e.g. best team working, partnerships with families, or enablement-based practice with adults.

- > What are you doing differently that enabled this change?
- > What is it like to work in this team?
- > What does 'good' look like?

3. Strategising

To move from dreaming about the future to a more concrete strategy and plan, you should now consider the steps you need to take to achieve this goal. These need to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely).

- > What is going to make this possible?
- > What will you have to do differently to make this work?
- > Who do you need to help you to get there?
- > What else might you need to pay attention to?
- > What might be the signs that you are moving in the right direction?

4. Implementation

- > How are you going to implement these plans?
- > How are you going to communicate your plans to others?
- > How will you know if you are continuing to move in the right direction – how will you measure success?

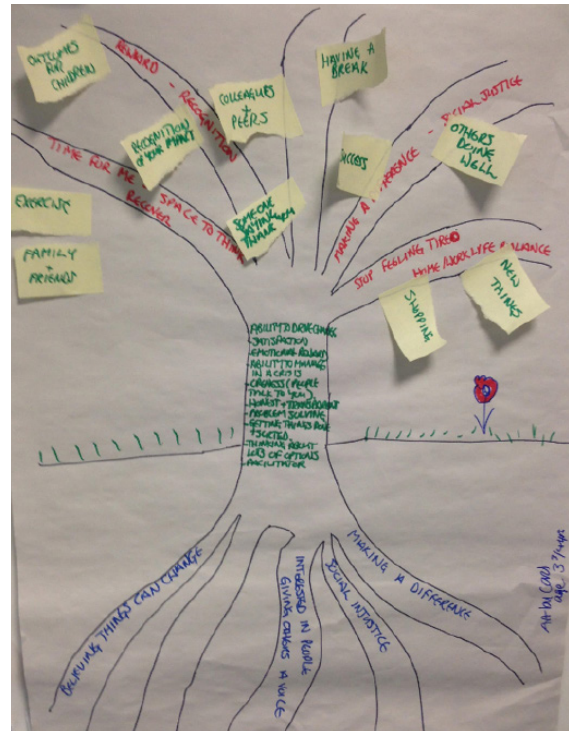
Box 2.4: The Tree of Life exercise

The Tree of Life is a narrative therapy tool, which was designed by Ncazelo Ncube and David Denborough (for more information see [here](#)) for young people with HIV. It aimed to encourage the children to believe in their own abilities, acknowledge their dreams and stand in a safer place from where they could talk about their difficult experiences in ways that were not re-traumatising, thereby enabling them to feel stronger in themselves.

The Tree of Life has since been adapted to various settings to help individuals and organisations recognise their strengths and create co-produced knowledge about how to respond to new opportunities. Here it is used as an exercise to help social workers reconnect with their professional identity and appreciate their values, strengths and resilience. It also enables practitioners to explore how strengths can be used to overcome potential difficulties or storms in their career.

The exercise may appear simple, but it can be a powerful tool. It can take several hours to do well or can be simplified if you only have a shorter period of time. Figure 2.1 shows examples of completed trees.

Figure 2.1: Examples of completed trees using the Tree of Life exercise



Box 2.4: The Tree of Life exercise

Materials needed:

All you need are brightly coloured felt-tip pens, Post-it notes and flipchart paper. Experience suggests that any initial reluctance to 'play' is usually quickly overcome, and senior leaders will soon engage in creating amazing and meaningful visual images.

Instructions:

Explain that participants should draw a tree – step-by-step – to represent themselves, their team or their organisation. This can be done individually, in pairs or in a group. Tell participants they can be as elaborate as they want. Let them know that they can share as little, or as much, as they want to in their drawing (but the content should be anonymised when sharing later). They should begin by drawing the roots of the tree, then the ground, the trunk, the branches and finally the leaves. Below are some questions to guide their drawing (these should be adapted for group work). Tell them when to move from section to section (allow about 10 minutes for each section).

Aim:

The aim of the exercise is to help people see that understanding individual and collective strengths can enable us to build a sense of individual, team and organisational resilience. This will also foster a sense of appreciation for our individual and collective skills, values and professional hopes and dreams.

Roots

- > What shaped your life and your decision to be a social worker?
- > What brought you into the work; who influenced and inspired you?
- > What aspects of your past influenced who you are today; what keeps you grounded?

Trunk

- > What are your skills and values?
- > What drives you in what you do?
- > What are the 'non-negotiable' codes that guide the way you act?
- > What values have you learned, or what do you appreciate from those who have influenced you?

Branches

- > What are your hopes, dreams and wishes for your career, your service and your organisation?
- > Throughout your time as a social worker, what have you contributed that has made you proud?
- > What do you want to achieve for your organisation?

Leaves

- > What brings you energy in your work?
- > Who and what helps keep you going when things get tough?
- > What brings you energy outside of work and are good things to focus on?

Feedback

Once people have done this individually or in their groups, ask them to share and discuss with the wider group. Facilitators have found that asking people to put their trees on the walls around the room is particularly effective. Describe this as a forest; remind people that an individual tree is more susceptible to storms, while a forest is far more resilient.

Storms and challenges ahead

Invite the group to think about the challenges or storms that are on the horizon:

- > What storms and hazards do you face?
- > What is the likely impact of the storms?
- > Are there ways of weathering the storms that will allow you to hold onto your values?
- > How can we use our collective strengths, visualised by the trees, to weather the storms?

Box 2.5: Celebrating success:

The Sparkling Moments technique

One person (A) asks the other person (B) a series of questions:

- > What did you do when you were you 'at your best'?
- > What skills, knowledge and attributes did you use?
- > How did you feel?

Person A listens carefully and notes down the skills, knowledge and attributes that Person B describes, as well as any key themes or behaviours that emerge from their description.

When Person B has finished speaking, Person A should provide feedback on the specific skills and attributes that have emerged. They then ask Person B:

- > What have you learnt about your key skills?
- > How could you use these to manage a problem you are experiencing right now?
- > What steps could you take to maximise the opportunity for more experiences like this?

Participants then swap roles, and Person B asks the same questions of Person A.