



# HEART-CENTERED LEADERSHIP & SELF-CARE

A Free Session for Leaders and Managers in the Non-Profit and Youth Services Field  
**For Adults | Ideally 6-8 Participants**

*This session is written for delivery live-online. However, it can be adapted for in-person delivery.*

**Recommended time:** 90-120 minutes.

## ACTIVITY

- The Leadership Vessel:
  - Guided Reflection
  - Personal Writing
  - Pair-Share
  - Group Discussion
  - Word Cloud Collective Support Board
- Open Floor Resources Discussion

## MATERIALS

- Candle
- Lighter or matches
- Notebook or paper
- Pen or pencil
- Relaxing Instrumental Music
- Word Cloud platform ([Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) recommended – Free) or Whiteboard

## PURPOSE

- To laugh and have fun together
- To spend time in self-reflection and sharing with others, examining what drains us and what fills us
- To share resources and build community and relationships within our field
- To make an actionable self-care commitment

## FACILITATOR PREPARATION

- 1 Before Circle: Ask all participants to have the following items during Circle. Make sure to share that they can still participate without any of these things (adaptions are included in the agenda):
  - Candle
  - Lighter or matches
  - Notebook or paper
  - Pen or pencil
- 2 Test and ensure you are comfortable using breakout rooms on your meeting platform.
- 3 Test and ensure you are comfortable sharing audio on your meeting platform.
- 4 Have your music playlist open and ready for use.
- 5 Have your Word Cloud platform open and ready for use. Recommendation: [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com). See instructions [here](#).
  - Alternatively, you can use another Word Cloud platform of your choice, or use the Whiteboard feature within your meeting platform. Adaptions are included in the agenda below.

## OPENING RITUAL

(4 minutes)

Either use the established opening ritual for your Circle or use the included ritual below.

- One at a time, each person will light their candle (or imagine doing so if they don't have a candle) and say one word that describes how they are feeling coming into the Circle.
- Once they do so, they pass it to someone else by saying, "I pass it [Name]." If people don't know each other's names, the facilitator can call on people until everyone has had the chance to light their candle and say one word.

## THEME INTRO

(1 minute)

*Say: The theme for our Circle is heart-centered leadership and self-care. As leaders, we hold a lot of space for other people. Today, we will focus on what sustains us and how we can stay heart-centered and connected in our leadership roles, even amid.*

## WARM-UP

(15 minutes)

- 1 *Say: Let's have some fun with a low-pressure and fun warm-up activity called Would You Rather — Leadership/Self-Care Edition. I'll ask someone a question like, "Would you rather watch a movie at home or at a movie theater?" Then, you'll answer, and share why you chose that answer so we can get to know you better. Who's feeling ready to play and would like to start?*
- 2 Start with the first person and then either have them pass it to someone, ask for volunteers, or call on the next person until everyone has had a chance to answer one question. Choose from the questions below and repeat a question or make up your own if you run out.
  - Would you rather have a full-time assistant or a full-time wellness coach?
  - Would you rather have a weekend alone to recharge or a weekend retreat with close friends?
  - Would you rather have a personal chef or a personal masseuse?
  - Would you rather have an afternoon each week just for reflection or weekly 1:1 coaching with a mentor?
  - Would you rather go for a long walk in nature or curl up with a good book indoors?
  - Would you rather attend a conference with amazing speakers or a retreat with deep, small-group discussions?
  - Would you rather have an entire day to catch up on emails or a whole day of back-to-back meaningful conversations?
  - Would you rather have a spontaneous day off or a perfectly planned self-care day?
  - Would you rather take a yoga class or a dance class to unwind?

## CHECK-IN

(20 minutes)

- 1 *Say: We're going to check-in. During this time, each person gets to share, one at a time, with no interruptions; we just share deeply, and everyone else gets to listen intently and let go of the need to fix anything or comment. When you're done sharing, pass it to another person. We'll take 2-3 minutes per person."*

**2 Paste into the chat and say:**

- Share your name, title, and organization (if there are people who don't know each other).
- You can expound on the word that you shared during our opening.
- Also, how are you today, personally and/or professionally? What's on your heart and mind?

**ACTIVITY 1**  
(45 minutes)

**The Leadership Vessel**

**1** Say: *“We’re going to do an activity called Leadership Vessel to help us as leaders visualize what sustains and drains us and support each other. We’ll start with a guided reflection and then do some personal writing. Then, we’ll go into breakout rooms to share in pairs and come back for some collective conversation. Any questions?”*

**2 Guided Reflection (5 minutes)**

- Turn on your relaxing instrumental music.
- Guide them through a brief visualization provided below. Say each phrase, but then leave time after each statement for people to process and visualize internally:
- Say:
  - “Go ahead and get comfortable in your seat...
  - Either close your eyes if you're comfortable or soften your gaze...
  - relax your body... take a few deep breaths... (leave time for deep breathing)...
  - Take a moment to imagine your leadership as a vessel.
  - What does your leadership vessel look like? Is it a ceramic mug, a glass vase, or a bejeweled golden chalice?
  - What fills your vessel? What gives you energy, purpose, and joy in your work?
  - What drains it—what are the responsibilities, expectations, or challenges that take energy from you?
  - If your vessel is feeling low, what's one thing you need to replenish it?
  - Now, take one more deep breath in... and slowly exhale.
  - Picture your leadership vessel again, acknowledging its shape, what it holds, and what it needs.
  - Imagine gently filling it with what replenishes you. Let that feeling of renewal settle in.
  - As you're ready, begin to bring your awareness back to the space around you, wiggle your fingers and toes, feeling grounded in your body. When you're ready, open your eyes or refocus your gaze.

**3 Personal Reflection Writing (5 minutes)**

- Say: “Thank you for participating in that guided reflection. Now we’re going

to do some writing. Please get your paper and pen, or you can use your phone or device with any writing app. You're going to have 5 minutes to write the answers to three questions.

- Say and paste in the chat:
  - What Fills My Leadership Vessel? What sustains me in my work?
  - What Drains My Leadership Vessel? What takes my energy away?
  - What do I Need to Stay Full? What helps me maintain balance?

#### 4 **Pair-Share (10 minutes)**

- Once the writing time is complete, let everyone know that they are going into breakout rooms to share their writing in pairs of two.
- Each person will share what they wrote for each of the three items (*to the extent they're comfortable*).
  - > Let them know that if they aren't comfortable sharing exactly what they wrote, another option is to share a synopsis of what they wrote or talk about their experience writing.
- Then, the listening partner offers a positive affirmation or message of support based on what they heard.
- Then, switch roles. Each person gets 4-5 minutes to share and 1-2 minutes of partner affirmation – 12 minutes in total. Give them the exact time that they'll be brought back into the main room so they can monitor the time.
- *NOTE: If your meeting platform allows, send messages to the breakout rooms to keep them on track with the time at the halfway point so they know when to switch and when there's 1-minute remaining so they know to wrap up.*

## SHARING OF ACTIVITY

(25 minutes)

### 1 **Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

- Once everyone is back in the main room, ask a few people to share their experiences. Below are some questions to guide the conversation.
  - How was the guided reflection experience? Does anyone want to share what their vessel looks like?
  - During the personal writing, what were some of the things you came up with that fill and drain your vessel?
  - How was the pair-share experience? Did anything surprise you? Did you learn anything new from listening to your partners share? Did anyone get a particularly meaningful affirmation from your partner?

### 2 **Word Cloud Collective Support Board (10 minutes)**

- Use your chosen method for creating a Word Cloud.
- Say: *“So that we have a written reminder of our collective work here, please type phrases or affirmations that you want to remind yourself or others in this group in order to keep your vessels filled.”*

- Once everyone has finished typing in their words or phrases, the facilitator displays the Word Cloud on the screen for all to see.
- Reflect on a few affirmations from the board and let everyone know that you'll share this image with them after the meeting so they have a copy to look back on.
  - Adaption 1: Use the meeting platform Whiteboard feature for people to type onto the collective screen.
  - Adaption 2: Have people type into the chat.

### 3 *Application Question (5 minutes)*

- Go around the Circle and have each person share one at a time the following question: "What is one action you will take this week to fill your vessel?"

## OPTIONAL ACTIVITY 2

(5+ minutes)

### 1 *Open Floor Resources Discussion*

- Say: "As leaders, you have so much wisdom and many resources. Let's open the floor if there are any resources you'd like to share or possible collaboration ideas that have come up during our time together."
- Offer to share the attendees' contact information if they don't already have each other's details so they can follow up with each other afterward.

## CLOSING RITUAL

(5 minutes)

- 1 Say: "Before we close, I want to thank you for your time and contributions to our Circle. I have a reading to share from The Nap Ministry's Rest Deck. **"I will swaddle myself in rest. I will gather myself in rest.** Today, make time to care for your physical body. Wrap yourself in warmth. Notice where your body is tender or tired. Love yourself. Love your body. It does not belong to capitalism. You don't need to push, challenge, or force. Rest is your natural state. Rest is liberation. Return to you. Let rest hold you in this moment. Trust in what rest is waiting to offer you. Hold rest up like a guiding light."
- 2 Either use the established closing ritual for your Circle or use the included ritual below.
  - Go around one at a time and fill in the blanks with the statement below. Say it, blow out your candle, and then pass it to the next person until all have shared.
  - *I came into this Circle feeling \_\_\_\_\_, and I'm leaving feeling \_\_\_\_\_.*