

# Mindful Moment

# Newsletter



This February, remember that it's okay to lean on those outside the center, your family, friends, and loved ones. While the work you do is vital, it's important to recharge by spending time with the people who lift you up. Whether it's a phone call, a walk together, or simply sharing a moment of laughter, these connections are key to maintaining your own well-being. Take this month to nurture those relationships, and remember a strong support system outside of work helps you be the best version of yourself inside the center.





# Navigating Relationships

## Healthy Relationships

Relationships are connections between two or more people and can be familial, romantic, friendly, or professional. They bring joy, support, and companionship. Relationships require effort and understanding, and being together for the right reasons. Focusing on having positive relationships allows for us to be positive and productive.



## Relationships at Home

Home is our safe haven and we need to make sure that we are harnessing the relationships with our family members. We can do this by creating and agreeing on new routines, making time for each other, reaching out with an open line of communication, and understanding that conflict is ok. People in your life can be one of the most important aspects to your healing journey.



## Co-Worker Relationships

When it comes to shift work, our co-workers often become like a second family. Just like with relationships at home, we need to have active listening, empathy, communication, boundaries, and collaboration.

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# Navigating Through Shift Work



## Prioritize

Being the core of a striving and thriving relationship, you need to make sure that you are putting a focus on each other. Some things that need to be done around the house can be put on hold if it allows for you to have time with your partner.



## Manage Expectations

You both have to see what the other is capable of doing and how they may perform certain tasks. Coming off of night shift, you may not be able to think clearly to complete different tasks that your partner can handle. You may have to adapt to new routines.



## Find Empathy

Have compassion and empathy when you may not see each other as often as you would like. Sending messages like "I miss you" or "Can't wait to see you" can have a major impact on each others moods.



## Appreciate Each Other

Recognize when your partner does something for you. Let them know that they feel valued. Simple hugs and kisses can go a long way to show a gesture of love, or giving small gifts, or having dinner ready when they get home, will show that you are thinking of them and seeing the hard work that they are putting in at work.

## A Shift Work Mindset

Working shift work can be hard on people, especially if only one is on shift work. A relationship needs to be fulfilling and foster growth and to do this there needs to be a conscious effort from both people involved and making the relationship a priority. This can include making daily gestures whether they are verbal or non-verbal and knowing that the little things can go a long way.

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# BREAKING THE CYCLE OF BULLYING AND NEGATIVITY IN THE EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

*The ECC environment is a high-stress workplace where teamwork and collaboration are essential to ensure public safety. Unfortunately, bullying, favoritism, and persistent negativity can create a toxic atmosphere that undermines both morale and productivity. Addressing these behaviors is crucial for creating a supportive and effective workplace. Let's explore the causes, consequences, and steps leadership and employees can take to foster a positive work environment*

## Causes of Negativity and Bullying in the Call Center

- 1. Favoritism:** Leadership's perceived favoritism toward certain subordinates can create walls of bias and discrimination. When leaders consistently favor some individuals over others, it sends a message to the rest of the team that fairness and equality are not priorities. This can discourage employees from bringing up issues or trusting their leaders.
- 2. Gossip:** Persistent gossiping about colleagues fosters division and distrust. This "mean girl" behavior while reminiscent of high school dynamics has no place in a professional environment. It erodes the team's cohesion and respect for one another.
- 3. Unaddressed Miscommunication:** Miscommunication, if left unchecked, can escalate into resentment and negativity. The fast-paced nature of 911 work often leaves little time for resolution, allowing misunderstandings to fester.
- 4. Stressful Work Conditions:** Long shifts and high-pressure situations make employees more vulnerable to stress-induced behaviors, including irritability and impatience with one another. This can lead to unnecessary conflict.

## The Role of Leadership

Leadership plays a pivotal role in setting the tone for a respectful and inclusive workplace. Here are key steps leaders can take to curb bullying and negativity:

1. **Be Aware of Bias:** Leaders must actively self-reflect to identify any favoritism they may be showing. Equal treatment of all team members fosters trust and encourages open communication.
2. **Establish Clear Policies:** Implement and enforce policies that address workplace bullying, gossip, and discrimination. Make it clear that such behaviors will not be tolerated.
3. **Model Respectful Behavior:** Leadership must lead by example. Treating everyone with respect and dignity sets the standard for how employees should treat each other.
4. **Encourage Open Communication:** Create a safe space where employees feel comfortable voicing concerns without fear of retaliation. Regularly check in with team members to identify and address issues early.
5. **Offer Training:** Provide training on conflict resolution, communication skills, and the impact of workplace bullying. This equips employees and leaders with tools to navigate difficult situations effectively.

*"The respect that leadership must have requires that one's ethics be without question. A leader not only stays above the line between right and wrong, but they also stay well clear of the gray areas."*

*John C. Maxwell*

## The Importance of Self-Reflection

As adults, many of us expect our children to have a safe school environment free from bullying. It is ironic, then, that we often fail to hold ourselves to the same standard in the workplace. To break the cycle of negativity, each individual must:

1. **Analyze Their Own Behavior:** Regularly assess how their actions and words impact their colleagues. Are they contributing to gossip or exclusionary behavior?
2. **Commit to Respect:** Make a conscious effort to treat coworkers with dignity, even in stressful situations.
3. **Support One Another:** Recognize that a divided workplace only harms the team. By building each other up, employees create a stronger, more resilient group.
- 4.

## Consequences of a Toxic Workplace

Failing to address bullying and negativity can have far-reaching consequences:

- **High Turnover:** Toxic environments drive employees away. When coworkers leave, it creates staffing shortages, increasing the burden on remaining employees.
- **Increased Overtime:** Short staffing leads to mandatory overtime, which contributes to burnout and further dissatisfaction.
- **Decreased Morale:** Negative behaviors lower morale, making the workplace even more stressful and unproductive.
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## Building a Better Workplace

911 dispatchers often spend more time with their coworkers than their own families. Failing to foster a respectful environment ultimately harms everyone. By addressing favoritism, curbing gossip, and practicing self-reflection, we can create a workplace where everyone feels valued and supported.

Let's commit to leaving high school behaviors behind and focus on building a professional, respectful environment. After all, the success of our mission depends on it and so does our own well-being.

# SANCTUARY TRAUMA

## WHAT IS IT AND HOW CAN IT AFFECT OUR RELATIONSHIPS

The term, “sanctuary trauma” was first coined by Dr. Steven Silver and occurs when an individual who has experienced a traumatic event goes to somewhere they expect to be supportive and healing, only to discover more trauma and stress. An example, described by Dr. Steve Rose, is when a Veteran who has faced either physical or mental injuries find themselves battling stacks of paperwork, endless wait times, and sometimes wrongful denials of initial applications when trying to get services.

Sanctuary trauma not only impacts the people being served, but also the staff, and the organization itself. Bloom & Farragher (2013) describe organizations as living complex systems that are vulnerable to trauma and chronic stress. They discovered seven relevant ways that organizations destroy sanctuary:

- 1. Organizational Stress** – When an organization is under constant stress, repetitive trauma and prolonged crisis, the people within the organization are left feeling unsafe (with their clients and even at times with their colleagues). Perceived lack of safety (both physical and psychological) can result in a highly reactive organization that sees threat rather than opportunity, pathology rather than strength, and risk rather than reward. This could result in physical violence, abusive behavior, or pervasive mistrust within the organization.
- 2. Loss of emotional management** – When an environment is constantly in crisis, staff may not have the space or capacity to acknowledge and manage their own emotions, which can lead to difficulty in providing a healing environment. When experiencing overwhelming stress and burnout, staff members may have little left to give. As such they may struggle with providing empathy, care, concern, and tolerance for the people they serve. Since research shows that emotions are contagious, this can have a negative impact on client outcomes.
- 3. Organizational Learning Disabilities and Organizational Amnesia** – The impact of stress on cognitive abilities is well documented. When chronic stress is rampant within an organization, decision-making abilities are compromised and often result in short-sighted policy decisions. In addition, organizational memory may be lost, and organizational amnesia may impact services which can become fragmented.
- 4. Miscommunication, Conflict, and Organization Alexithymia** – When a lack of communication persists in an organization, and people are unable to talk about the things that are bothering them, this can often result in chronic unresolved conflict, and unproductive communication (petty arguments, gossip, unresolved feelings of anger, and frustration), which ultimately lowers morale.

5. **The Uses and Abuses of Power** – As a result of communication breakdown, compounding errors, and continual crisis, organizational leaders often become more controlling and authoritarian. This can result in employees losing a sense of self-efficacy and autonomy

6. **Punishment, Revenge, and Organizational Injustice** – As communication continues to breakdown, and power over continues, organizations often become more punitive in an effort to maintain control. The result can be a group of people who are chronically stressed, and feel chronic shame, guilt, and anger.

7. **Unresolved Grief, Reenactment and Decline** – When systems are broken, loss is inevitable. There is often a revolving door of staff and leaders, and grief can be experienced as people depart. In addition, people may feel worn down, exhausted, depressed, angry, demoralized, and hopeless. This results in staffing shortages, a decline in care delivery, and ultimately a loss of meaning and purpose in the work.

In addition to classifying ways that sanctuary has been destroyed within organizations, Bloom & Farragher (2013) have also identified a “parallel process”, which is a framework that aims to understand the interconnection of trauma among clients, staff, and the organization as outlined below.

<b>Clients</b>	<b>Staff</b>
Feel unsafe	Feel unsafe
Aggression	Punitive
Helpless	Helpless
Hopeless	Hopeless
Hyperarousal	Hyperarousal
Fragmented	Fragmented
Overwhelmed	Overwhelmed
Confused	Confused
Depressed	Demoralized

As you can see, organizations are not exempt from trauma and in many cases perpetuate trauma. Bloom & Farragher (2013) describe what a place of sanctuary would actually look like. It is described as a place where people:

- Feel a sense of safety (physically, psychologically, socially, and morally safe)
- Effectively solve problems as they arise and make wholesome decisions without becoming destructive
- Treat each other with respect and enhance emotional development
- Honor cultural diversity
- Continually learn how to peacefully resolve problems and conflicts
- Every person in the system has a voice and is expected to contribute to the well-being of the whole
- Contribute their own unique work AND have a sense of responsibility for the common good
- Adapt to the changing conditions without losing what is more important to them
- Have an established vision for a better future to determine what to do in the present
- Work towards a better vision of the future and uses that guiding vision to make decisions in the present moment.



In order to create a framework for how to create sanctuary within organizations, they have developed an organizational change model, known as, "The Sanctuary Model". They describe it as an organic guided process that helps to build a trauma-informed culture. This model adopts Seven Sanctuary Commitments which include a set of values that create sanctuary. They are defined as follows:

Commitment to Nonviolence: Modeling and building safety skills

Commitment to Emotional Intelligence: Modeling and teaching emotional intelligence

Commitment to Inquiry & Social Learning: Modeling and developing cognitive skills

Commitment to Democracy: Modeling and increasing skills of self-control, self-discipline, and self-efficacy.

Commitment to Open Communication: Modeling and creating a culture of health communication and healthy boundaries.

Commitment to Social Responsibility: Modeling and developing health relationships.

Commitment to Growth and Change: Restoring hope, meaning and purpose.

Other key components of the model include the sanctuary toolkit and the shared language of self. The tool kit includes practical interventions (i.e., community meetings and safety plans), that reinforce the overarching model and further support safety and connection within the organization. In addition, the helpful acronym SELF ( safety, emotion management, loss and future) are four important components that guide treatment planning, community conversations, and collaborative decision making in an effort to help heal trauma.

When we are experiencing sanctuary trauma, our relationships with our co-workers become strained and we can often bring this home causing distance to those that we love. Being able to talk about what we are experiencing is a great way to let it out and get it off of our shoulders. When we have someone who we can connect to that has a full understanding of what we could be experiencing, it is easier to have the conversation. Often times others outside of the industry do not always get what we are trying to convey to them or see different issues as a problem. With the growing recognition of mental health and the need to address it, there is a growing team for Peer Support. The FL-911 Peer Support team in collaboration with FL-TERT is a resource that is available to dispatchers across the state any time that they need to speak to someone who has an understanding of what the job entails and can have a positive relationship with the person who is seeking help. This team is growing quickly and is looking for members to join also to provide support for other dispatchers. Those that are looking for support can reach out to us at the email on the next page or through our Facebook page FL-911 Peer Support Network where you can send a private message and you will be connected to a team member for support.

As you will see in two different accounts of sanctuary trauma that was experienced by our Committee members, there are others that are going through these experiences and are able to overcome them with help. It is ok to ask for help and to want to speak to someone. It can be beneficial and allow for you to relieve stress allowing for relationships to be positive interactions.

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PEER SUPPORT NETWORK

Join the FL-911 Peer Support team in partnership with



This is a fantastic opportunity to provide invaluable support to telecommunicators across the state, addressing issues of all sizes. We are eager to welcome trained telecommunicators to our team.

If you're interested in making a difference, please reach out to  
Brittany McGary, RPL,  
FL-911 Peer Support Member Coordinator, at  
[Bmcg1023@outlook.com](mailto:Bmcg1023@outlook.com) or at 561-371-9653.

Discover more about us at [www.fl-tert.org/peersupport](http://www.fl-tert.org/peersupport)

Become part of a community dedicated to support and collaboration!



## Here are a few accounts of Sanctuary Trauma that has been experienced at different agencies

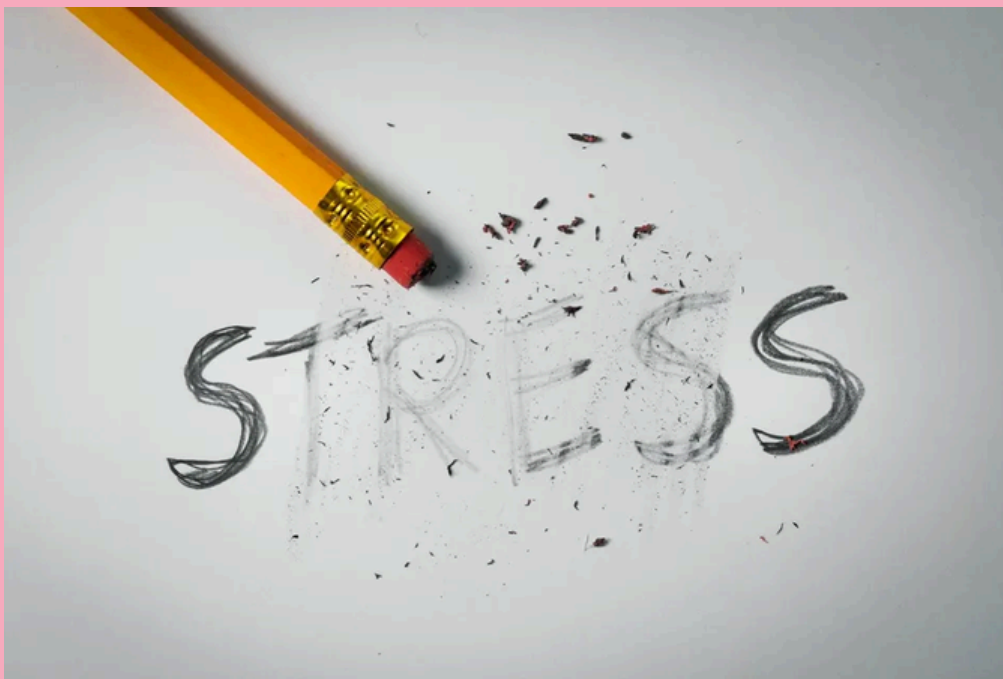
Throughout my career as a 911 dispatcher, I have encountered both Sanctuary Trauma and Moral Injury. I have been with the same agency for nearly a decade, and after five years of service, I decided to apply for an open supervisor position. Having already served as a lead trainer, I was motivated by the desire to lead and positively influence my peers. I believed my ambition and leadership would inspire others.

However, my promotion did not unfold as I had anticipated. During my two years as a supervisor, while I took pride in my role, my mental health began to suffer due to resistance and pushback from my shift and staff. I soon realized that much of the communication within the dispatch center was fueled by gossip and rumors. This was compounded by challenges in my personal life, particularly when I came out as bisexual and my colleagues discovered I was in a relationship with a woman. The environment grew increasingly hostile, and at times, I felt as though I was working in a toxic atmosphere. As a result, I found myself growing disillusioned with a job I had once loved. I learned that confiding in colleagues could backfire, with private conversations being distorted to create negative narratives about me.

After two years, I made the decision to step down from my role as supervisor and, shortly thereafter, resigned from my position as a 911 dispatcher. I took a year and a half off to focus on my mental health and reevaluate my career. After regaining my well-being, I chose to return to the field. However, my previous experience has left me with reservations about pursuing a supervisory role again.

This experience has significantly influenced my perspective on workplace dynamics and leadership. It has highlighted the critical importance of prioritizing health and wellness within our centers. These resources and tools are invaluable, both for individual well-being and for fostering a stronger, more supportive team environment.

~Anonymous~



Being at my agency for almost 10 years, this center has become my home away from home. My coworkers have become my extra family.

We all know that every center has its ups and downs and this was all too true to me. I became a supervisor two years into the job as there was no interest from anyone inside the center. I should have looked more into why this was not a desired position. Initially the hardest things I came across was learning to go from the role of a friend and co-worker to overseeing the people that I had personal relationships with. From there, I was not accepted as a supervisor due to me being so new into the profession, especially from one of the senior supervisors. I had quickly caught onto the role and was recognized for the work that I did in the center, including being named Telecommunicator of the Year after one year of service. I was confident in the work that I was doing and knew that I was knowledgeable. The senior supervisor did not see this and was doing everything that she could to make it hard for me to succeed. This made me constantly think about the choice that I had made to be in this position. With being the newest supervisor, it also fell on me to fill the seat on what ever shift needed assistance. This caused me to work 3 different shifts in a 6 month time frame. I have a family at home – that time having 2 young children and adding a third later on – and the constant change was making it hard for me to focus on them and being there for them. This was causing a lot of stress on me and my husband creating a strain in our relationship as well. It was not only me that was needing to move shifts, but my husband as well so that we could have the proper childcare.

I took everything that was thrown at me and did my best to manage everything. A few years after taking the position, the strain in lack of communication, inconsistency in the day to day tasks and operations, and the negativity that was in the air from everyone in the center became a lot to handle and it was sending me to be someone that I did not like. I was spiraling into a depression, unable to focus on anything that I needed to both at work and at home. I had finally made a decision that I needed to step down from the position and was able to seek out the necessary help to get me out of my mindset. When I made the decision, there was no outreach from my agency to check on me and understand why I did what I did. It was about a week later that someone not even associated with the communications center directly that reached out to me. There was no support offered and it was just as though nothing had happened. No one knew what I was going through or the pain that I was facing mentally. Because of this, it made me feel like my family at work had no care for me as a person especially after all the efforts that I made and the acceptance of all the changes that they threw at me. I had done a lot for them and received nothing in return when I needed it the most. I ended up seeking my own help outside of work and it was the best decision that I made. Now, I have taken up the supervisor position again, but this time with a better understanding of how to manage my emotions, my time, and to prioritize my needs. I am able to have more of a voice for myself and for those that I supervise because I do not want any of them to have to go through what I did.

~Anonymous~



During my time as a 911 dispatcher, fresh out of training, I faced numerous high-pressure situations. One cold December evening, just a few days before Christmas, I got a call from a distraught mother whose child was choking. She was screaming and panicking, and I had to stay composed to guide her through the life-saving steps. I instructed her on performing the Heimlich maneuver, and after what felt like an eternity, she said her child was breathing again. Relief washed over me, but so did an intense wave of fear and self-doubt—what if things had gone differently?

Once the call ended, the weight of the situation hit me hard. I found myself crying and freaking out in the break room, overwhelmed by the emotional toll of what had just happened. The fear and guilt of possibly making a mistake were almost too much to bear. Thankfully, a colleague noticed my distress and provided much-needed comfort and reassurance.

That night left me with a mix of guilt and uncertainty, even though the outcome was positive. Recognizing I needed support, I contacted a counselor who specialized in helping first responders. Therapy provided a space for me to understand and process my emotions. I also began practicing self-care and relying more on my colleagues for support.

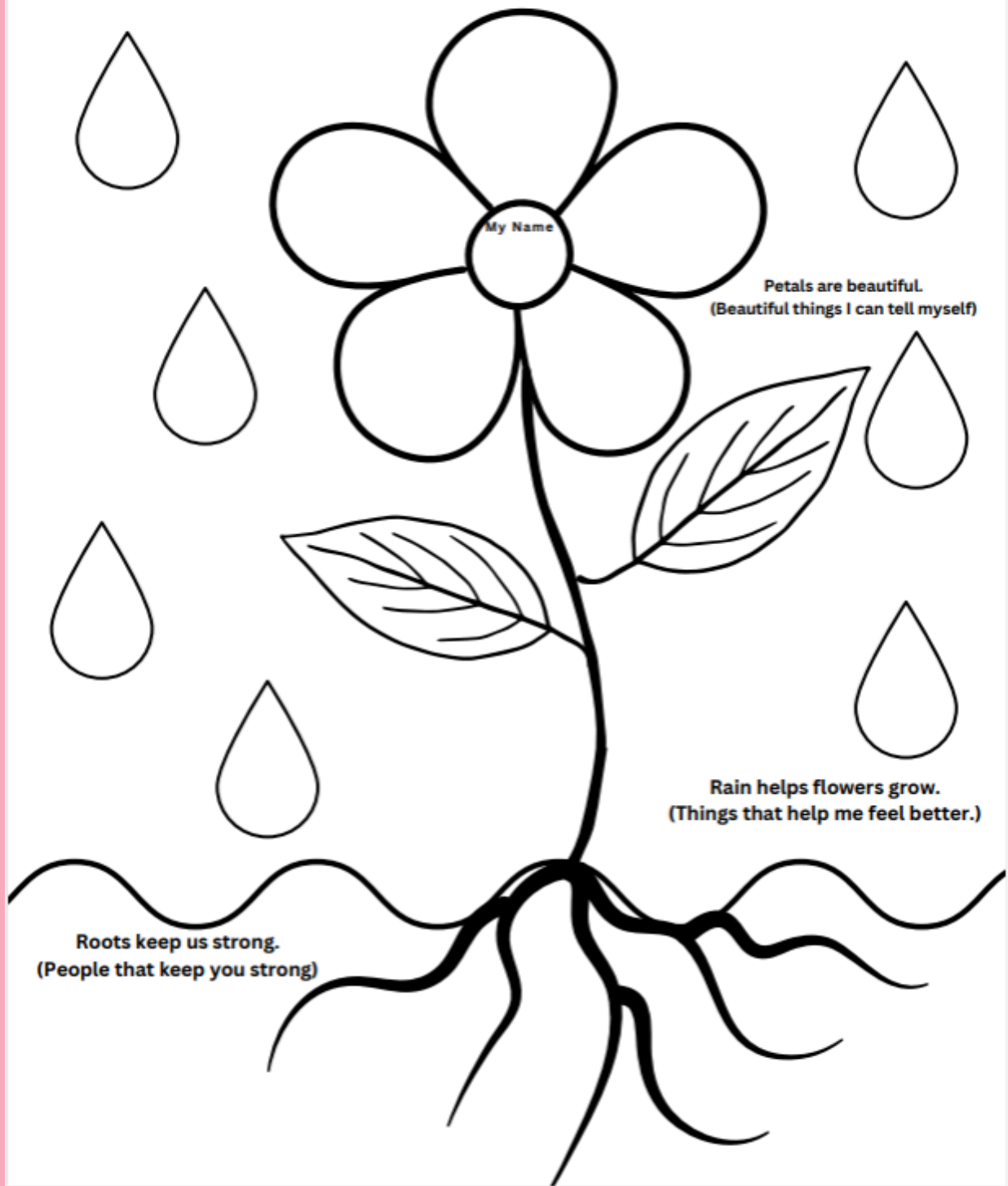
Looking back on this experience, I'm proud of the resilience I've built. This journey has not only shaped me professionally but also deepened my empathy and commitment to helping others in crises. I continue to push for better support systems for 911 dispatchers, knowing firsthand the impact they can have.

~Anonymous~



WE NEED TO LOOK AT OURSELVES AND SEE WHAT CAN WE FOCUS ON TO HELP OUR RELATIONSHIPS. LOOKING AT WHAT IS GOING TO MAKE US HAPPY CAN CHANGE OUR ATTITUDES AND HOW WE ARE GOING TO APPROACH THINGS.

# My Feel Happier Flower



# CHICKEN STIR FRY



For the stir-fry:

3 tablespoons oil (canola or peanut)  
2 chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch cubes  
Salt and pepper to taste  
1 bundle of broccolini florets (or broccoli florets)  
1 cup matchstick carrots  
1 cup red bell peppers, chopped  
1 cup crimini mushrooms  
2 baby bok choy, quartered lengthwise  
1 package yakisoba noodles

For the sauce:

1/2 cup low sodium soy sauce  
1/4 cup vegetable or chicken stock  
1 tablespoon honey  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
1/4 teaspoon ground ginger  
1 teaspoon minced garlic  
2 tablespoons cornstarch

You can find yakisoba noodles in the produce section of your grocery store. They're pre-cooked, which saves you time!

Combine all ingredients into a large pan, (a wok if you have one) and saute until vegetables are slightly softened and chicken is cooked thoroughly.

While vegetables and chicken are cooking, combine ingredients for sauce and mix to combine them all together.

Once the stir fry ingredients are cooked, toss in sauce and enjoy!

#### FL APCO WELLNESS COMMITTEE

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