

## Stressful Morning Script

Kerry Makin-Byrd , PhD

For ACBS WC 2022 Presentation

### INTRO

In this exercise, a participant is guided through a visualization of a friend describing a stressful morning ending with them spilling coffee all over their front. This exercise is useful for helping participants notice the ease of having an open, compassionate response to a friend and contrasting that with the way they show up for themselves. This exercise begins a discussion of how we can practice openness, acceptance, and self compassion. Reflections from this exercise can also provide values clarification on how participants would like to show up for self and others.

### SCRIPT

Welcome to the stressful morning exercise. Let's begin with just settling into our seat, inhaling through our nose...and exhaling through our mouth. Let's do this a few more times, noticing the broadening of your torso as you inhale. As you're ready, allowing your breathing to return to its normal pace.

Maybe closing your eyes or resting your gaze just a few feet in front of you. Take a moment to just listen to the sound of your breath and any sounds that you notice around you. Now, we're going to visualize an experience in our mind.

First, imagine a friend that you may run into on a day to day basis. Maybe not someone you know well, but someone you feel warmly toward. Maybe it's another parent at school or at work or in the neighborhood. (And if you notice yourself grasping around for the perfect person, no worries. Just select whoever floats up.)

First, take a moment to imagine this person in your mind, Noticing their hair, their face, what they might be wearing. And next, imagine the place that you are likely to cross paths with them. Taking a moment to set the scene. Noticing the ground under your feet, the sounds around you.

Imagine that you ran into this person and they began telling you about the stressful morning that they had had...there was a work emergency...a family member needed something, and one of the children was sick...They were managing so many different things at once.

The toast was burning, the dog vomited on the rug, take a moment to really flesh out what are all the things that could collide and go wrong in the morning together.

Notice any changes in your body. As you imagine, listening to the hard morning they've had notice any pulls of warmth, tenderness...Noticing any interest, curiosity...maybe wanting to

Kerry  
Makin-  
Byrd

PSYCHOLOGIST &  
EXECUTIVE COACH



**LIVING ACT**  
learn - do - grow

help.

And as your friend continues to tell you about their morning, you see their eyes begin to get wet, to well up just a little as they describe the mounting of so many different problems. And then with a half laugh, but also close to tears they tell you about spilling coffee down their front...

Again, noticing what emotions are you feeling now? What are your thoughts? What are your urges to do? Noticing any physical sensations that come up as you hear your friend's story.

Beautiful. Now play out the rest of this Scene. Maybe you offer to help or give your friend a hug. Maybe you buy them another cup of coffee. Do what you most wish. Imagining you are rested and full.

[Exercise can end here or continue.]

Notice the way you showed up for this friend. What emotions came up...what did you feel pulled to do? How did you want to respond? ...How is this the same or different to how you would show up for yourself in your own stressful morning? ...Either you can speak aloud or even take a minute to write down if it was your own stressful morning, what emotions would you feel? How would you talk to yourself? How would you respond?

Reflect on any differences between the way you show up for yourself in a stressful morning and the way you may show up for a friend you care for? And with that, we'll stop this exercise.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What did you notice?
- What could you offer to your friend?
- How was this the same or different from what you offered yourself?
- If you made a bold move in the direction of your dreams, how would you show up for yourself?

## TAKE HOME

This exercise can be a jumping off point for caregivers to reflect on how they are showing up for themselves in hard times and what they would like to change. From here you can talk with participants about regular parts of the day that are stressful such as the morning, hour before dinner, or bedtime routine. How would they like these times to go? What small changes could they make to be compassionate and warm with themselves during these times?

*Special thanks to the work of Drs. Lisa Coyne and Amy Murrell; this exercise is minimally adapted from the Stressful Morning exercise in their book "The Joy of Parenting: An Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Guide to Effective Parenting in the Early Years."*

