

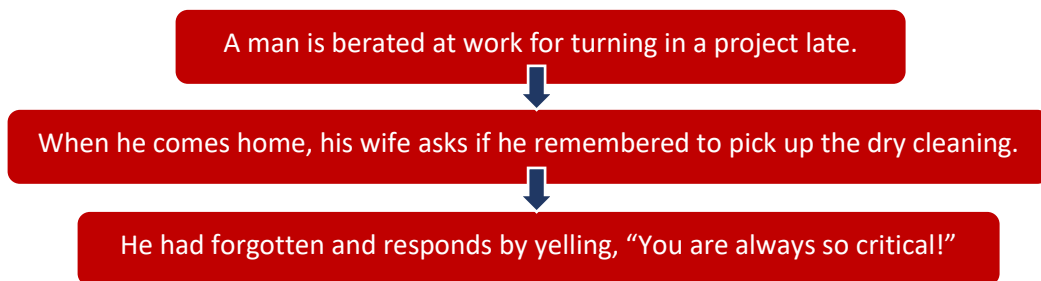
October Ice Breaker: **Tall Tales**

- Designate a person to start the game or read the story starter provided below. End with the word “suddenly...”
- The next person picks up the story and tells three more sentences, taking the story in any direction they’d like. After three sentences, they end with the word, “suddenly...”
- The game continues until every player gets a turn.

Story Starter: *“Jane liked to help her parents on the family’s farm, and caring for the chickens was her favorite chore. Every morning she would feed the chickens and collect fresh eggs as soon as she got out of bed and before she had eaten breakfast. But this morning, she heard a strange noise before she entered the chicken coop. Suddenly...”*

**COLLECTIVE DISTURBANCE:** In organizations, it is possible that the effects of organizational stress can show up in unexpected places. This is particularly common within groups when unresolved conflict at a high level in the hierarchy plays out in the lower levels of the hierarchy. This is known as a Collective Disturbance. It is a kind of parallel process – one that helps us look at the symptoms of stress in our organizational relationships in the same way stress can influence individual habits.

What is it? A collective disturbance is a situation in which strong feelings get disconnected from their source and becomes attached to unrelated events or interactions.



The man’s emotional response to his work came out in his interaction with his wife. What might have happened when the kids came home?

When groups of people come together, they can pick up each other’s feelings and act them out. Feelings can be contagious. Often this contagion of feelings is outside of our awareness, but the feelings may be driving our behavior.

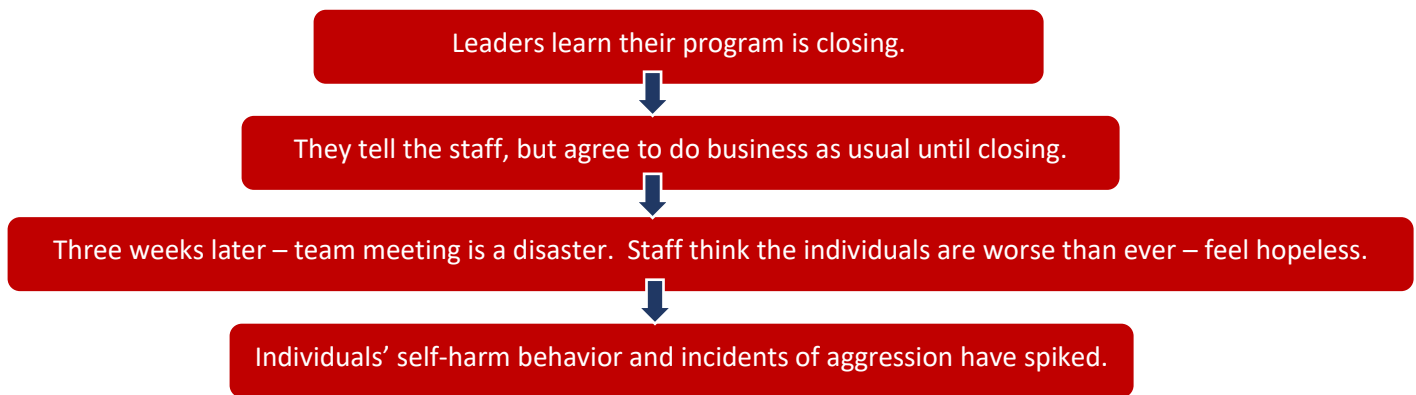
A collective disturbance may or may not be easy to identify. Some possible symptoms include:

- People are generally disgruntled...
- Are frustrated with each other...treat each other badly.
- Make “stupid” mistakes...blame the individuals.
- Forget to pass on information or messages...miss meetings.

## Sanctuary Monthly Training October 2023: Collective Disturbance and Open Communication

- Ignore “little” rules and procedures.

An example on a system level:



A visiting intern asked if their feelings about the individuals might have something to do with their feelings about the unit closing.

The staff took the time to acknowledge the LOSS. They were able to connect the feelings to their true place – they were feeling hopeless about their own futures and the futures of a program that they loved and felt connected to. The next week there was another team meeting and the staff reported they were the best individuals ever!

**OPEN COMMUNICATION:** The goal is to bridge the gap that naturally exists between others by learning how to negotiate boundaries, develop the ability to use words for feelings, and resolve conflict.

Why it's so important in trauma-informed care: Secrecy is often a component of prolonged exposure to traumatic experiences (i.e.: sexual abuse, parental alcoholism). This commitment creates a community that tolerates expression of emotions and interpersonal and organizational issues.

Open Communication Do's & Don'ts	
Do	Don't
Develop a feeling vocabulary.	Ignore or minimize conflict
Encourage awareness and communication of feelings (Ask others how they are feeling. Recognize and reflect feelings back to co-workers and clients)	Allow emotions to impact your ability to listen and learn.
Create a safe environment for feeling expression.	Invalidate the other person's experience.