



PHASE 3 — PRACTICUM

Week 27 of 36

Managing Your Own Reactions

Sessions 79–81

Tuesday • Wednesday • Thursday

FORGE — Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth & Empowerment

Dooly State Prison

FORGE Curriculum

Phase 3: Practicum — "Lead and Serve"

Week 27: Managing Your Own Reactions

Week 27 Overview

Purpose: Two weeks into field work, participants are beginning to discover something uncomfortable: mentoring activates their own stuff. A mentee's story triggers a memory. A resistant mentee makes them want to force compliance. A struggling mentee makes them want to rescue. The parallel process principle from Week 13 — "you can't give what you don't have" — becomes viscerally real. This week's supervision session tackles the hardest part of being a mentor: managing yourself while you're trying to help someone else.

Sessions This Week: - Session 79 (Tuesday): Supervision — Triggers, Reactions, and Secondary Stress - Session 80 (Wednesday): Field Work — Begin Leading with Observation - Session 81 (Thursday): Field Work — Mentee Meetings

Materials Needed: - Self-Care Assessment Worksheet (1 per participant) - Trigger Mapping Exercise (1 per participant) - Journals/notebooks - Talking piece for circle

Important Shift This Week: On Wednesday, the facilitation dynamic changes. Participants begin leading sessions with the experienced mentor observing but NOT co-leading. The participant is the primary facilitator. The observer is there for safety and feedback only — they do not step in unless there is a genuine safety concern. This is a significant step toward independence.

SESSION 79: Triggers, Reactions, and Secondary Stress

Day: Tuesday **Duration:** 2 hours **Facilitator(s):** Program Lead + Senior Mentor(s)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Identify their personal triggers in the mentoring context 2. Distinguish between their mentee's emotions and their own 3. Describe at least three signs of secondary stress 4. Name two practical self-care strategies they can use this week 5. Recognize the "savior trap" and the "mirror trap" in mentoring

Session Plan

Opening Circle (15 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Today's check-in is going to be a little different. I don't want to hear about your mentees yet. I want to hear about you.

*Talking piece. The question: **How are YOU doing — not how your mentoring is going, but how are you, as a person, doing right now?**"*

Send the talking piece. Facilitator goes first and models genuine self-reflection — not "I'm fine."

Facilitator (after the round):

"I asked about you on purpose. Because today's session isn't about what's happening with your mentees. It's about what's happening inside you. And if you can't answer that question honestly, you can't mentor effectively. Period."

The Parallel Process — Revisited (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"In Week 13, we talked about the parallel process: you can't give what you don't have. You studied it as a concept. Now you're living it.

*Two weeks into field work, some of you are discovering something that every mentor discovers: **this work brings your own stuff to the surface**. Not because you're doing it wrong. Because you're doing it right. When you listen deeply to another person's pain, your own pain wakes up. When you sit with someone who's struggling in ways you struggled, your body remembers.*

This isn't a defect. It's the cost of doing meaningful work with other human beings. The question is: what are you going to do about it?"

Trigger Mapping (20 minutes)

Purpose: Help participants identify what specifically activates them in their mentoring work.

Facilitator:

"A trigger is anything that causes a disproportionate emotional reaction — something that hits you harder than the situation warrants. In mentoring, triggers usually fall into three categories."

Three categories of mentoring triggers:

***Category 1: The Mirror.** Your mentee reminds you of yourself. His story sounds like your story. His thinking errors look like your old thinking errors. His pain is familiar. When this happens, you're not just mentoring him — you're reliving your own experience. And that can cloud your judgment. You might push too hard because you know where his path leads. You might avoid a topic because it's still raw for you. You might over-identify — and lose the boundary between his journey and yours.*

***Category 2: The Opposite.** Your mentee does something that violates your values. He disrespects someone the way you used to. He makes excuses you've worked hard to stop making. He reminds you of people who hurt you. The reaction is frustration, judgment, sometimes anger. You want to shake him and say, 'Can't you see what you're doing?' That's not mentoring. That's your own unfinished business talking.*

***Category 3: The Brick Wall.** Your mentee doesn't respond. Doesn't change. Doesn't seem to care. You pour energy into the relationship and get nothing back. And something inside you says: 'I'm not enough. I'm failing. I'm a fraud.' That's the deepest trigger of all — because it touches your worth, not just your skills."*

Trigger Mapping Exercise (10 min):

"In your journal, I want you to map your triggers. Be specific.

1. **Mirror triggers:** *What in your mentees' stories or behaviors reminds you of your own past? Write at least two examples from the last two weeks.*
2. **Opposite triggers:** *What has a mentee done or said that made you feel frustrated, angry, or judgmental? What was really behind that reaction?*
3. **Brick wall triggers:** *When have you felt ineffective, like you're not making a difference? What does that feeling connect to in your history?*

Be honest. This isn't for sharing — unless you want to."

Optional sharing (5 min): Ask if anyone is willing to share one trigger they identified. Acknowledge courage. Do not probe or interpret.

The Savior Trap and the Fixer Trap (15 minutes)

Purpose: Address the two most common dysfunctional patterns in new mentors.

Facilitator:

"When your mentoring activates your own stuff, it usually shows up in one of two ways. I call them the Savior Trap and the Fixer Trap."

The Savior Trap:

"The Savior Trap sounds like this in your head: 'I have to save this person. If I don't help him, nobody will. His whole future depends on me.'

Sounds noble, right? It's not. It's ego wrapped in compassion. When you need to save someone, you're making their journey about you. You're putting yourself at the center of their story. And here's the dangerous part: when they don't get 'saved' — when they keep struggling, when they make bad choices, when they relapse — you either burn out or you blame them. Neither helps.

*The antidote to the Savior Trap is this truth: **You are not responsible for your mentee's choices. You are responsible for showing up consistently, being honest, and offering what you have. What they do with it is on them.***

That's not cold. That's respectful. It says, 'I trust you enough to let you make your own decisions — even the bad ones.'"

The Fixer Trap:

"The Fixer Trap is related but different. It sounds like: 'I can see the problem clearly. If he would just listen to me, if he would just do what I'm telling him, everything would be fine.'

The Fixer gives advice. Lots of advice. Unsolicited advice. The Fixer talks more than he listens. The Fixer gets frustrated when his advice isn't followed. The Fixer treats mentoring like a repair job — find the broken part, replace it, done.

The problem: people are not engines. You can't fix someone. You can walk alongside them while they figure it out. You can ask questions that help them see what they can't see. You can model a different way of living. But you cannot fix another human being. And trying to will exhaust you and alienate them.

The antidote to the Fixer Trap: **Ask, don't tell. Listen, don't lecture. Be curious, not certain.** Every time you feel the urge to give advice, ask a question instead. 'What do you think would happen if you tried ?' **is ten times more powerful than 'You should do .'**"

Quick reflection (3 min):

"Be honest with yourself right now. In the last two weeks — have you fallen into the Savior Trap, the Fixer Trap, or both? Write one sentence in your journal."

Secondary Stress: The Cost of Caring (15 minutes)

Purpose: Introduce the concept of secondary traumatic stress and normalize its presence in mentoring work.

Facilitator:

"There's a term used in social work and counseling: secondary traumatic stress. It means the stress you absorb from being close to someone else's pain. Counselors get it. Social workers get it. First responders get it. And mentors get it.

You're sitting with men who have been through hell. You're hearing about abuse, neglect, violence, loss, shame — things that would break most people. And because you're doing your job right — because you're actually listening, actually caring — some of that weight transfers to you.

This is not weakness. This is the occupational hazard of caring about other people."

Signs of secondary stress (go through each):

"Watch for these in yourself:

1. **Sleep changes.** *Trouble falling asleep, or sleeping too much. Nightmares — especially about situations your mentees described.*
2. **Irritability.** *Snapping at people over nothing. Being short-tempered in your dorm. Things that didn't bother you last month suddenly drive you crazy.*
3. **Emotional numbing.** *Feeling like you can't feel anything. Going through the motions. Not caring about things you used to care about.*
4. **Hypervigilance.** *Feeling on edge. Scanning for problems everywhere. Can't relax.*
5. **Avoidance.** *Not wanting to meet with your mentees. Dreading Thursday. Finding reasons to cancel or cut meetings short.*
6. **Cynicism.** *'This doesn't work.' 'Nobody really changes.' 'Why am I bothering?' — especially if you didn't feel this way before you started mentoring.*
7. **Physical symptoms.** *Headaches, stomach problems, tension in your body, fatigue.*

If you're experiencing two or more of these consistently, you're not just tired — you're carrying too much. And you need to address it before it affects your mentoring and your well-being."

Self-Care in a Prison: What's Actually Possible (15 minutes)

Purpose: Get practical. Self-care advice is often designed for people with freedom, money, and choices. This discussion is about what's available here.

Facilitator:

"I know what you're thinking: 'Self-care? In here?' I get it. You can't go for a hike. You can't take a spa day. You can't even close a door for privacy most of the time.

But self-care isn't about luxury. It's about intentionally doing things that restore you. And some of those things are available even here."

Practical self-care strategies (discuss each — ask participants for their own):

Physical: - Exercise. Whatever you have access to — push-ups, walking the yard, stretching. Movement processes stress better than thinking does. - Sleep discipline. Same time to bed, same time up. No exceptions. - Eating as well as you can with what's available.

Mental: - Journaling. You already do this — but be honest about what's weighing on you, not just your mentoring observations. - Reading. Books that feed your mind, not just pass time. - Learning something new. Languages, art, math — anything that engages a different part of your brain than mentoring does.

Relational: - Talking to someone. Not about mentoring — about you. A cohort member, a friend, a chaplain. - Writing letters home. Staying connected to people who care about you. - Asking for help when you need it. In this room. From me. From each other.

Spiritual (however you define that): - Prayer, meditation, mindfulness — whatever practice grounds you. - Time alone. Even 10 minutes of intentional silence. - Gratitude practice. Name three things. Every night. It sounds simple because it is — and it works.

Boundary-based: - Saying no to extra obligations when you're depleted. - Not processing mentoring problems after 8 PM. Give your brain a cutoff. - Reminding yourself: 'I am not my mentees' only resource. If I burn out, I help nobody.'"

Self-Care Assessment (5 min):

"Quick assessment. In your journal, rate yourself 1-5 on each area: physical self-care, mental self-care, relational self-care, spiritual self-care. Be honest. Where are you strongest? Where are you neglecting yourself?

Now pick one area where you scored lowest. Write down one specific thing you will do this week to address it. Not five things. One. Commit to it."

Case Presentations (15 minutes)

Purpose: Brief round of case presentations to maintain the weekly rhythm.

Facilitator:

"We have time for 1-2 quick case presentations. Who has something from the field that connects to what we talked about today — a moment where your own reactions got in the way, or where you noticed secondary stress showing up?"

Facilitate 1-2 case presentations using the standard format from Week 26.

Closing Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Today was about you — not your mentees. That's not selfish. It's essential. The best mentors in the world — therapists, counselors, coaches — they all have one thing in common: they take care of themselves so they can take care of others. You don't get a pass on that because you're incarcerated. If anything, it matters more, because you have fewer resources and higher stress.

This week on Wednesday, the dynamic changes. Your observer will not co-lead with you. You'll lead the session. They'll watch. This is a big step. You're ready — and you're going to feel like you're not. Both things can be true.

*Closing round. Talking piece: **What's one thing you're going to do this week to take care of yourself? Be specific.**"*

Send the talking piece.

Facilitator (closing):

"Take care of yourselves. That's not optional — it's part of the job. A burnt-out mentor is no good to anyone, especially himself.

Service Over Self doesn't mean destroying yourself in the process. It means being healthy enough to serve. See you in the field."

Session 79 Checklist

- Opening circle completed — focus on personal well-being, not mentoring updates
- Parallel process revisited and connected to field experience
- Trigger mapping exercise completed (mirror, opposite, brick wall)
- Savior Trap and Fixer Trap discussed with reflection
- Secondary stress signs reviewed (7 signs)
- Self-care strategies discussed — specific to prison environment
- Self-care assessment completed — one commitment made
- 1-2 case presentations completed
- Wednesday transition explained (leading with observation, not co-facilitation)
- Closing circle completed — self-care commitment shared

SESSION 80: Field Work — Leading with Observation

Day: Wednesday **Duration:** 2 hours (session) + preparation and debrief time **Structure:** Participant leads the session independently. Experienced FORGE mentor observes but does NOT co-facilitate.

Field Work Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will have: 1. Led a full session as the primary and sole facilitator 2. Made real-time decisions without a co-facilitator to lean on 3. Managed their anxiety about leading alone 4. Received feedback from their observer on independent facilitation skills

Pre-Session Preparation Checklist

- Session plan prepared FULLY — you don't have a co-facilitator to cover gaps this week
 - All materials ready before you enter the room
 - Reviewed the session plan at least twice — know the flow, not just the content
 - Prepared for "what if" moments: What if no one talks? What if someone gets emotional? What if there's a disruption?
 - Discussed with your observer: When will they step in? (Answer: only if there's a safety concern)
 - 4-4-4 breathing completed
 - Self-care strategy from Tuesday's session practiced at least once today
 - Reminded yourself: "I've been trained. I've practiced. I know how to do this."
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During the Session

This week is different. You're alone up there. Your observer is in the room, but they are invisible. They will not help you transition between activities. They will not rescue a quiet moment. They will not manage a difficult participant. That's all you.

Remember: - Own the room. You set the tone when you walk in. Stand tall. Speak clearly. Make eye contact. - Use silence intentionally. When no one responds to a question, don't panic and fill the space. Count to ten in your head. Someone will speak. - If you lose your place, breathe. Glance at your session plan. Take a sip of water. Nobody notices a 5-second pause as much as you think they do. - If something goes sideways — a disruption, an emotional moment, a conflict — remember your training. You've simulated this. Trust your skills. - It will feel harder than co-facilitation. That's normal. You're growing.

Post-Session Debrief (with observer)

Observer gives feedback with special attention to: 1. How did the participant manage the room alone? Confidence, presence, authority? 2. How did they handle transitions without a co-facilitator cuing them? 3. Were there moments where they struggled? How did they recover? 4. What is their biggest strength as an independent facilitator? 5. What is the one thing that would most improve their independent facilitation?

Participant reflects: 1. How did it feel to lead alone? What was different from co-facilitation? 2. What moment are you most proud of? 3. What moment do you wish you could redo? 4. On a scale of 1-10, how confident do you feel about leading again next week?

Field Work Reflection Prompts

Complete in your journal after the session:

1. **Describe the moment you realized you were on your own — that your co-facilitator wasn't going to step in. How did that feel? What did you do with that feeling?**
 2. **What did you do well that you didn't know you could do until you had to?**
 3. **Were there any moments where your own reactions (triggers, frustration, anxiety) affected how you facilitated? How did you manage them?**
 4. **What's one thing you want to practice or prepare differently for next Wednesday?**
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SESSION 81: Field Work — Mentee Meetings

Day: Thursday **Duration:** 45-60 minutes per mentee **Structure:** Continued 1-on-1 meetings with assigned mentees

Field Work Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will have: 1. Conducted their third week of mentee meetings 2. Noticed and managed their own emotional reactions during meetings 3. Practiced self-awareness techniques from Session 79 4. Logged all meetings in the Mentoring Log (template from Week 25)

Pre-Session Preparation Checklist

- Reviewed Mentoring Log from last week's meeting with each mentee
 - Identified follow-up items from each previous meeting
 - Set a specific goal for each meeting
 - Reflected on Session 79: Am I falling into the Savior Trap or the Fixer Trap with any mentee?
 - Identified potential trigger points for today's meetings and planned how to manage them
 - Self-care practice completed before meetings
 - 4-4-4 breathing completed before each meeting
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Meeting Guidance for Week 3

This week's added focus: Self-awareness during the meeting.

In addition to the regular meeting structure (check-in, follow-up, focus, close), add one layer this week: notice yourself.

During each meeting, check in with yourself at least once: - What am I feeling right now? - Am I listening, or am I planning my response? - Is this reaction about my mentee, or about me? - Am I trying to fix something? Should I be asking instead of telling?

You don't need to share this self-check with your mentee. Just notice. And write about it in your log.

Field Work Reflection Prompts

Complete in your journal after all mentee meetings:

1. **Did you notice any trigger moments during today's meetings? What triggered you? How did you handle it?**
 2. **Were you in the Savior Trap or the Fixer Trap with any mentee today? What did that look like?**
 3. **How are you feeling after today's meetings — physically, emotionally, mentally? Use the secondary stress checklist from Session 79.**
 4. **What self-care will you do tonight?**
 5. **What do you want to bring to Tuesday's mid-point check-in?**
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FACILITATOR NOTES FOR WEEK 27

What to Watch For

Emotional responses during Session 79: This session can be heavy. Talking about triggers and secondary stress may activate the very things you're discussing. Watch for participants who go quiet, who get agitated, or who dismiss the topic ("I'm fine, I don't need self-care"). All of these are signals.

The dismissers: Some participants will resist the self-care conversation because it feels "soft" or because self-care is associated with vulnerability — which feels dangerous in prison. Don't argue with them. Just plant the seed: "The toughest men I've met are the ones who know when they need to stop. Pushing through everything isn't strength — sometimes it's just stubbornness."

Wednesday transition anxiety: Moving from co-facilitation to leading with observation is a major step. Some participants will be visibly anxious. Check in with them individually before Wednesday if possible. "You've been training for six months. You're not being thrown in — you're stepping up."

Over-functioning mentors: By Week 3, some participants may be doing too much for their mentees — running errands, intervening in disputes on their behalf, spending extra time. These are boundary issues and potential Savior Trap indicators. Address them in supervision or one-on-one.

Common Week 27 Challenges

"I can't separate my stuff from my mentee's stuff." This is the core challenge of mentoring. Coach: "You don't have to separate perfectly. You just have to notice. When you catch yourself thinking 'I felt the same way' — pause. Ask yourself: 'Am I responding to what he's feeling, or what I'm feeling?' That awareness is enough."

"I don't have time for self-care." Challenge this directly: "Self-care isn't an extra activity you add to your schedule. It's choosing to go to sleep on time instead of staying up worrying. It's taking three deep breaths between mentee meetings. It's talking to someone when you're struggling. You have time for all of those."

"My mentee told me something that really shook me." This will happen. If a participant is carrying something heavy from a mentee meeting, don't let it wait until Tuesday. Pull them aside: "Tell me what happened. Are you okay? Is your mentee safe? What do you need right now?" Determine if there's a referral need (mental health, safety) and provide support.

Preparation for Week 28

- Prepare Mid-Point Review forms for each participant
- Review all mentoring logs from Weeks 25-27 — prepare written feedback
- Review co-facilitation/observation notes from Weeks 25-27
- Identify areas of strength and areas for growth for each participant
- Prepare community circle introduction for Thursday of Week 28
- Calculate mentoring hours logged to date — are participants on track for the 60-hour requirement?