

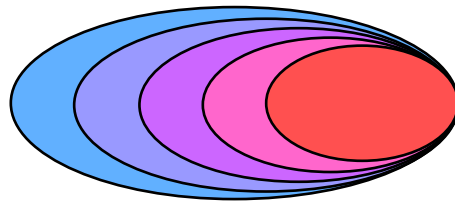
SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

for Campus Violence Preventionists + Professionals

We're all at risk for burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue—so how do we keep going and sustain ourselves?

This sustainability plan is designed specifically for individuals who work in campus violence prevention, but can be used by anyone who works in violence prevention or response, or really any professional who engages in work that intersects with social justice and trauma.

This plan recognizes that most of us cannot survive and sustain ourselves through only individual “self-care” actions; our society needs to acknowledge the role of our relationships, communities, and systems/structures in health and wellbeing. The concept of **community care** has been brought forward by POC and disability activists (among others) as a response to issues of privilege, accessibility, and bootstrap-ism in the modern conception of self-care*. Community care acknowledges that most of us need to care for and connect with each other to sustain ourselves, and that is incumbent on our communities to care for us—and for us to care for our communities. We use ideas and strategies of both self-care and community care in this plan.



In recognition of this, and of recognizing one of the theoretical grounding of prevention work, we utilize the social-ecological model as framework. The social-ecological model commonly consists of four or five levels. Here we use a five-level model: individual, relationship, institutional, community, and societal. Page 2 has more information.

**Violence prevention work is important, and difficult.
We're grateful for you!**

ABOUT SATF

The Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF) is a private, non-profit, non-governmental statewide agency. Our mission is to facilitate and support a collaborative, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence. We accomplish our mission by advancing primary prevention and providing multi-disciplinary training and technical assistance to responders in Oregon and nationally.

SATF's Campus Program provides training and technical assistance to campus-based professionals who are engaged in sexual violence prevention, advocacy, and response. SATF works to support the efforts of campuses across Oregon and nationally in making their communities safe and free from violence, and in supporting students, staff, and faculty who experience violence and harassment.

You can contact SATF by calling 503-990-6541 or by emailing taskforce@oregonsatf.org.

The attached resource is meant to provide a framework for addressing and planning for sustainability within campus violence prevention roles (and related professional roles). Please be advised that although we update materials on a continual basis, as research, professional guidelines, or case law changes, certain portions of content (including statistics) may become temporarily outdated. This resource is not intended as legal advice, nor should it be treated as such.

*For more information on critiques of self-care and visions of community care, check out: Abeni Jones on Autostraddle, “Beyond Self-Care Bubble Baths: A Vision for Community Care,” <https://www.autostraddle.com/on-being-a-burden-whats-missing-from-the-conversation-around-self-care-385525/> or Laurie Penny in The Baffler, “Life-Hacks of the Poor and Aimless,” <https://thebaffler.com/latest/laurie-penny-self-care> or Heather Dockray in Mashable, “Self Care Isn't Enough. We Need Community Care to Thrive,” <https://mashable.com/article/community-care-versus-self-care/>

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

Vicarious Trauma, Compassion Fatigue, & Burnout

This sustainability plan is grounded in the belief that all of us working in sexual violence prevention (and activism and trauma work in general) can be impacted by our work. We also believe that there are ways we can work to prevent the worst effects of these impacts and respond when we start to experience them, which this plan is designed to help you do.

Vicarious Trauma is the profound shift in worldview that occurs in helping professionals when they work with individuals who have experienced trauma: helpers notice that their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995).

Burnout is the physical and emotional exhaustion that workers can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed at work.

Compassion Fatigue is the “cost of caring” for others in emotional pain; the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate (Figley, 1980).

Activist Burnout is “a chronic condition in which activism-related stress becomes so overwhelming it debilitates activists’ abilities to perform their activism effectively or to remain engaged in activism” (Gorski, 2019).

If you think you might be experiencing any of these, one way to further explore is to conduct a self assessment, like the PROQOL (<https://www.proqol.org/>). We encourage you to take care of yourself and/or to seek support in ways that are most meaningful and accessible for you, regardless of whether that includes this sustainability plan.

The Social-Ecological Model

The social-ecological model is derived from the public health discipline and is sometimes used as a foundation to think about prevention work (and not just violence prevention—this model is often used to talk about diseases, chronic conditions, or experiences). The social-ecological model helps us visualize the complex interplay of different factors affecting a person’s experience of a phenomenon.



Individual-level factors typically include individual traits like biological characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors. In this plan, individual-level strategies are those you can do by and for yourself (or with a little help—like asking a friend or family member to watch the kids).



Relationship-level factors typically include the behaviors happening in your close relationships (like partners, family, and friends). In this plan we will think about how we give and receive care and support, and how we can use our relationships to help us sustain our work.



Institution-level factors, in this sustainability plan, will focus on the policies, norms, resources, and challenges at your specific institution. We’ll also use the level to think about professional goals and workplace sustainability.

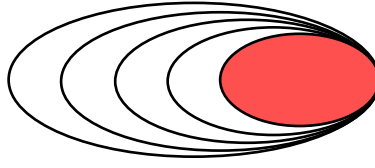


Community-level factors look at the communities and environments you are a part of (school, religious community, neighborhood, online forum, etc). Communities can offer resources that help sustain us in our work—and we’ll brainstorm ways to stay safe in communities that are more challenging than supportive.



Society-level factors include things like laws, policies, and social/cultural norms. While this is the hardest level to have control over, you can brainstorm ways to protect yourself and find support, and ways you can take action to support societal-level change.

SATF chose to use the social-ecological model because we want to acknowledge that experiences of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout are influenced not just by our own actions, but also (and often primarily) by other factors including the place we work (the institution), our communities, and society. This sustainability plan uses this model to help you develop a plan that acknowledges and takes advantages of all the levels you can—while also acknowledging that there are many things you alone cannot control (like society norms or national laws).



INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL STRATEGIES

Individual-level strategies focus on things you can do to take care of yourself and increase your personal sustainability in the work. Individual-level strategies encompass much of what we traditionally think of as self-care.

Under each topic, we suggest a few strategies and leave room for you to write your own in. This list is not exhaustive; your own individual strategies may look very different! For each column, try this:

- ✓ Put a check mark by strategies you already do well that help sustain you
- ~~Cross out strategies~~ you know aren't/won't be helpful for you, or aren't accessible for you
- Circle strategies you would like to try doing or focus on improving (try not to pick TOO many –start with a few!)

PHYSICAL

Eat regularly
Eat food that makes my body feel good
Enjoy a beverage, treat, or dessert I love
Drink enough water
Seek regular medical/dental/etc care
Take time off when I am sick
Move my body in a way that feels good regularly
(dance, walk, stretch, play outside, etc)
Wear clothing I like
Cut/style my hair in ways I like
Get regular/enough sleep
Honor my sexual needs with myself/my partner(s)
Allow myself “breaks” from my physical demands on myself (exercise, eating patterns, etc)

SPIRITUAL/PURPOSE

Spend time in nature
Spend time with my spiritual community
Be open to inspiration, and reflect on what inspires me
Be aware of the non-material aspects of life
Practice gratitude for what I have
Identify my values/what gives me meaning, and practice centering these things
Meditate or pray
Sing or enjoy music
Contribute to causes I believe in (with my time, money, or energy, etc)
Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music, etc
Allow myself to take breaks from spiritual practice

PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL

Make time away from screens, phones, etc
Write in a journal
Set aside time to sit with my thoughts and reflect
Talk to a therapist/counselor
Read books/blogs/poetry unrelated to activism/the work
Engage with media (movies, books, social media, etc) that values and validates me and my identities
Meditate or practice grounding activities
Say “no” to activities or extra responsibilities sometimes
Do an activity I am not an expert in or in charge of
Give myself affirmations and gratitude
Set aside and protect time for important relationships
Spend time with a companion animal
Allow myself to cry
Ask for help when I need it

WORKPLACE/PROFESSIONAL

Make time for breaks during my workday
Take time to chat with colleagues
Set and protect quiet time to complete needed tasks
Identify projects/tasks that are exciting or rewarding
Seek mentorship inside/outside my workplace, and regularly meet/talk with mentors
Set limits with students/colleagues
Set limits on when/where I will work, and hold myself accountable (weekends, evenings, at home, etc)
Arrange my workspace so it's comfortable and pleasant
Use the benefits provided by my workplace (healthcare, HRA, EAP, etc)
Use my vacation time/sick time/PTO to take breaks (vacation, wellness days, seeking medical care, caring for children, etc)



INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL STRATEGIES

FINANCIAL

- Track my spending to learn more about my expenses
- Create a budget
- Talk to my partner(s)/family about our financial goals and expenses
- Talk to a financial planner to get advice about reaching my financial goals/getting out of debt/etc
- Ask for a raise, or talk to my supervisor about how I can seek a promotion/increase wages in the future
- Put aside money each month for savings, a trip, educational goals, etc
- Allow myself joys by spending occasionally on things that make me happy or that will make life easier
- Remind myself that many external forces impact my finances; I will not shame myself for my financial limits, debt, crises, etc.

The previous strategies do not encompass all the aspects of your life you may need to attend to in order to sustain yourself. Here you can brainstorm what other strategies you might need for your own sustainability:

MAKING A PLAN

When identifying new strategies to help sustain yourself, it's helpful to make a plan. How will you make time? What does success look like? Identify one strategy you want to work on, and make a plan for how you can integrate it into your life.

I want to focus on _____

How will I know I've accomplished my goal? What will success look like? _____

I want to do this ___ times a day/week/month/_____.

In the short term (1-2 months), I want to _____

In the long term (1 year+), I want to _____

How will I track my progress? _____

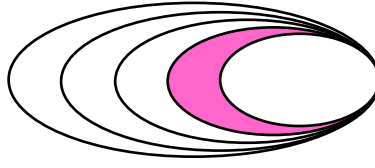
Person I can ask to help hold me accountable _____

I will ask them to do this by (some ideas—circle those that apply) asking about my progress periodically, doing this with me, asking if I can call them to talk when I'm struggling with my goal, or _____

I will celebrate my progress periodically by _____

How often? What do I celebrate? _____

I will give myself permission to change strategies/revise my goals if my plan isn't working, or if this strategy isn't meeting my needs. Cues that may tell me I need to revise my plan or try different strategies are: _____



RELATIONSHIP-LEVEL STRATEGIES



Relationship-level strategies acknowledge that we may need others to help sustain us, and that we owe it to those in our lives to help sustain them. Sustaining relationships can include partners, family members, friends or chosen family, colleagues, co-activists, and more.

ASSESSING MY NEEDS

First we need to think about what our needs are in relationships: what does a supportive relationship look like for you? What qualities do you look for in supportive relationships? How do you show care to others?

It might be useful to think about your needs in ways like introvert versus extrovert (i.e., how do you recharge best, with others or alone?), or love languages (i.e. ways that you give and receive love, enumerated in this case as words of affirmation, acts of service, physical touch, quality time, and gifts). For others, these aren't useful concepts! Use the guided prompts below to brainstorm what the most sustaining relationships look like for you.

WAYS I NEED CARE/SUPPORT

How do you prefer to be shown love, care, or support in your relationships? This could be qualities or characteristics you need in others (empathetically listens if I need to cry), activities (goes with me to my medical appointments), or something else.

WAYS I SHOW CARE/SUPPORT

How do you show love, care, or support for those in your life? This could be qualities or characteristics you demonstrate (I like to cheer people up by making them laugh if they're sad), activities (I love to bake for my friends), or something else.

Consider not just how you need or show care, but also when. Do you plan for time alone as well as time with others? How do you communicate your boundaries when it comes to the times you are able to give or receive support/care?

For each way you listed above that you prefer to be shown care/support, who fulfills that need for you?

Who are the primary relationships in your life? Who do you spend the most time with?

How do you show your primary relationships care/support?



RELATIONSHIP-LEVEL STRATEGIES

RELATIONSHIP-CARE STRATEGIES

Just like our strategies for individual care (or self-care), our relationships need care too—and we need others to help up prevent and respond to vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout. Some strategies are suggested below, or you can write in your own ideas. Try this:

✓ Put a check mark by strategies you already do that help sustain your relationships

~~Cross out strategies~~ you know aren't/won't be helpful for you

Circle strategies you would like to try doing or focus on improving (try not to pick TOO many —start with one or two!)

Invite someone to participate in an activity I enjoy with me (cooking, exercising, crafting, watching movies, etc)

Ask someone to go with me to medical or other appointments

Spend time with a friend (or call someone) while I do needed errands or chores (go to the store, garden, watch movies while we pay bills)

Schedule a regular (monthly, weekly) “date” with a friend, family member, or partner

Celebrate the accomplishments and milestones of those I care about

Ask for help with a task or to learn something new

Send an unprompted card, text, etc telling someone that I'm thinking about them

Volunteer for a cause/event someone I love is helping to organize

Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust

Reach out to someone I haven't talked to in a long time who I miss

Ask a friend/family member/partner for a hug

Ask someone to listen when I need to vent

Cook a meal with or for someone I love

Step out of my comfort zone and do something someone I love cares about that is new to me

Set boundaries with someone I care about so that I can get the space/support/care that I need

Set aside time to email/video chat/call important people who live far away

PREVENTING VT, CF, & BURNOUT: ALLIES

When our work/activism is overwhelming, stressful, or traumatic, we may want to process what happened, or we may just want to distract ourselves and not think about it for a while. Most of us need both processing and distracting at some point, though *when* each person needs it can look very different.

Think about who your allies are when you need both of these. **Processing allies** are those who you can talk to about work situations; you usually feel a little bit better, or at least less alone, after you talk to them. **Distracting allies** help take your mind off the situation—maybe they tell funny stories that make you laugh, you can play a sport together, or you're both obsessed with the same tv show.

Brainstorm who your processing and distracting allies are. Be sure to list both on- and off-campus allies (or: folks in the movement as well as outside of it). Try to think of more than one person in each category.

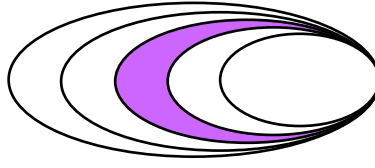
**ON-CAMPUS/
IN THE FIELD**

**OFF-CAMPUS/
NOT IN THE
FIELD**

PROCESSING

DISTRACTING

	PROCESSING	DISTRACTING
ON-CAMPUS/ IN THE FIELD		
OFF-CAMPUS/ NOT IN THE FIELD		



INSTITUTION-LEVEL STRATEGIES



Institution-level strategies focus on sustainability within your college/university. Our workplaces—the department, the structure and policies of the campus, the people who make up the campus and the department—can significantly impact whether we experience or are able to prevent vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Many institutions offer a variety of resources for staff. If you know your campus offers these resources, list them here (along with contact information or information about how to access) so you can access them when you need them. If you're not sure, now is the time to research!

EAP (Employee Assistance Program):

Counseling/Crisis Services (and/or Insurance Provider):

Human Resources contact info:

Union rep/help (if union-based job):

Where do I report harassment/discrimination?

Does your campus offer perks (gym access, free subscriptions/apps, financial planning resources)?

Does your campus offer free classes for staff? How do you access/enroll?

Are there ways for staff to be involved in policy/procedure change?

ALLIES ON CAMPUS

Who are your mentors in violence prevention work? How often and when are you in touch with them?

What other departments on your campus are aligned with your work? How do they support you, and how do you support them?



INSTITUTION-LEVEL STRATEGIES

MY CURRENT ROLE

We all have parts of our jobs and work environments that we like, and parts that we dislike. What about your role empowers you? What do you feel drained by? What about aspects of your departmental and institutional culture? Take some time to brainstorm those aspects here.

	JOB DUTIES/ROLES	DEPARTMENTAL POLICIES/ PROCEDURES/NORMS	INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES/ PROCEDURES/NORMS
I feel enriched or empowered by these aspects...			
I feel drained or disempowered by these aspects...			

What's one thing you wish were different about your role or your work environment? _____

What steps are within your control to take to make this change? _____

Set a timeline: when will you take a first step towards making change? When do you need to see change by in order to stay fulfilled in your role?

Who are your allies in making this change? Who can you seek support from?



INSTITUTION-LEVEL STRATEGIES

FOR SUPERVISORS

If you supervise other staff, students, or volunteers, you can play a critical role in their sustainability. Think of your supervision style as a VT, CF, and burnout prevention strategy!

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Research shows that talking the talk of self-care and sustainability is helpful, but that it's more important to model it yourself. If you tell folks you supervise that you don't expect them to work on weekends, for example, but you send weekend emails yourself, they might feel pressure to do the same.

Think about it: what do you set as expectations about work boundaries, self-care, and sustainable practices to those you supervise? How do you convey those expectations—verbally? In emails? In policy? If you don't do this already, how do you plan to? How do you support your supervisees in setting work boundaries that fit their personal needs?

How do you model the expectations you just wrote?

PROCESSING & DISTRACTING

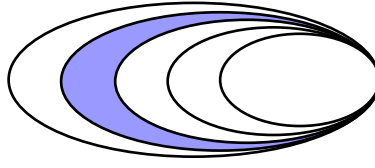
If those you supervise also engage in prevention work, activism, or trauma-response, you can also support them by providing them opportunities to process their experiences, or time and ideas to help them distract themselves. Circle some of the ideas below to try, or write in your own below.

PROCESSING

- Set aside/schedule in processing time as a team; set aside a different time than used for staff meetings, case reviews, trainings, or other regular events.
- Discuss compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout as a staff, and brainstorm ways you can support each other.
- Incorporate different kinds of processing options with staff, such as writing, painting, etc.
- Allow for processing in one-on-one meetings.
- Review EAP/resources at your next staff meeting; set and clarify procedures for staff/students who want to seek counseling/therapy and may need work time off to do so.

DISTRACTING

- Encourage staff to use vacation and sick time, and use your own.
- Engage in fun, creative projects as a team—there is research to support that creativity is helpful in preventing vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue!
- If giving staff appreciation/birthday/end-of-year gifts, give gifts that encourage sustainability and self-care practices (like gift cards for places or experiences).
- Offer to take a walk or go get coffee with staff who are experiencing a period of stress.
- Share your (appropriate) distraction strategies with your staff, and model using them as needed.



COMMUNITY-LEVEL STRATEGIES



What is a community? Community means a lot of different things to different people. One definition might be that communities are groups that share something in common, like a location (such as a neighborhood or school) or experience (such as fans of an athletic team or people in recovery) or identity (like an LGBT/queer support group or a family), and whose members are tied to the wellbeing of the community in some way.

Most of us belong to a number of different communities, including communities within communities (like a campus within a town, for example). List out some of the communities you belong to here:

Some of the communities you belong to may be sources of joy and safety; others may be stressful or even unsafe at times. Of the communities you listed above, circle a few that you feel the safest in.

STAYING SAFE

Sometimes for reasons beyond our control, or because we've made strategic and informed choices, we have to continue to engage in communities that are stressful or even harmful. Consider ways you can keep yourself safe and set appropriate boundaries in those kinds of communities. If by choice or by circumstance you are currently living in, working with, or otherwise engaged with a harmful community, you may consider the tools of safety planning to support your work. Consider some of the safety planning questions listed here:

List a few safe people within any stressful or harmful communities you belong to.

List a few safe people outside any stressful/harmful communities you belong to who you can talk to about your experiences.

Are there any safe spaces within these communities? This could be physical spaces, meet-ups, online spaces, etc.

Who can you call if you are feeling unsafe and need help (such as a ride home, someone to accompany you to a doctor's appointment, etc)?

Who can you ask for emotional support when one of your communities is taking a toll on you?

What boundaries would you like to set regarding how you engage with harmful/stressful communities?



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

What resources available in your community can help you sustain yourself in this work? In this section it might be helpful to think about physical communities you belong to (such as a town) as well as the larger communities you belong to that offer specific resources (such as support available from a national network or organization).

Local/national crisis/violence/suicide, etc hotlines:

Where are your safe spaces in your physical community:

Community or identify-based resource centers in your community that you could access:

What outdoor spaces are accessible for you to spend time in nature:

Free or cheap community locations/assets you can access for distracting sustainability (i.e. fun, intellectual engagement, etc):

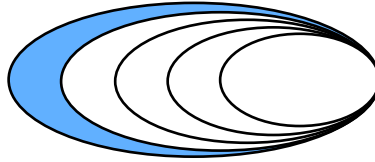
What other resources are available in your community that could support your sustainability:

GIVING BACK

Being a part of a community means that you both give to and receive from that community. Giving back in ways that keep the communities you belong to alive and thriving help with your sustainability—you'll feel good knowing you're contributing, and you'll receive love from the community in turn.

What skills or resources do you bring to the community? This could be something like: being a good listener, having the skills/tools to do home repairs, love kids and are willing to babysit, are familiar with legal resources to help connect folks to legal advice. Brainstorm here some things you are good at or enjoy—i.e., skills and resources you can contribute!

Write down at least one way you already do (or plan to) offer these skills/resources to one of your communities. How can you use these tools to support and help sustain others?



SOCIETAL-LEVEL STRATEGIES



Societal-level strategies help you think about the systems of structures we live in, and ways that you can live and protect yourself within those structures. This section will also have you think about ways you can advocate for societal change, and how to create a balance in your activism that fuels rather than drains you.

PRIVILEGE & OPPRESSION

Societal systems of privilege and oppression affect us every day. As preventionists, our work is grounded in this reality, and we work to dismantle these systems—because these are the systems that allow interpersonal violence to flourish. Because our work is inextricably linked with privilege and oppression, we are making an assumption that you have a basic understanding of privilege and oppression when filling out this plan, and that you've already begun to do some internal work around this. If you need a refresher, check out some of the resources at the end of this packet.

What are aspects of my identity or areas of my life that I have privilege?

How does my privilege intersect with my prevention work?

How can I use my privilege to help change the norms, traditions, laws, and policies that uphold violence and oppression?

How can I use my privilege to support other preventionists and my allies on campus?

What are aspects of my identity or areas of my life where I experience oppression or marginalization?

Who can I talk to when I need to process experiences of oppression, discrimination, or stress related to these identities?

When I experience oppression or discrimination on campus, who can I count on to support me or to take action with me?

When I experience oppression or discrimination in the context of prevention work, how do I take care of myself afterwards? What ideas can I use?

What boundaries (if any) have I drawn, or would I like to draw, around my prevention work so that I reduce my experiences of discrimination or oppression? For example, are there specific communities I need to limit contact with?



SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM

Sometimes societal and structural forces can feel overwhelming; it's hard to think about how we'll be able to change these massive systems. Engaging in activism can be an empowering way to make change and think about how your voice makes a difference. Different forms of activism are more or less life-enriching for different people.

- ✓ Put a check mark by forms of activism you already engage in that help sustain you
- ~~Cross out forms of~~ activism you know won't work for you
- Circle forms of activism you would like to try doing (try not to pick TOO many –start with one or two!)

Attend a community or organizational meeting for an organization I care about

Sign a petition for a cause important to me

Give a one-time donation to a cause I care about

Set up a monthly small (~\$5) donation to an organization I care about

Bring or cook food for an organizational event I care about

Volunteer my time to an organization I care about

Ask a friend to tell me about a cause that's important to them

Learn about legislative efforts in my state

Write a letter to a state or national legislator in support of/opposition to a bill

Attend a rally, protest, or demonstration

Research which local markets or shops are owned by people of color, women, or other marginalized groups and support them when possible

Sign up to canvass or block-walk for a candidate or a cause

Research current information and movements for a social cause I don't know much about yet

Use social media to raise awareness about a cause I care about

Make a donation on behalf of a friend/family member for their birthday or a holiday

Read a book about a historical movement for change

Get coffee or go on a walk with an activist friend I care about and tell them how much they mean to me

MAKING A PLAN

Engaging in activism can be enriching, but it can also be challenging or draining at times. How often can you sustainably engage? How will you make time? What clues will tell you that you need to change the type of activism you're engaging in, or the frequency?

My starting goal to sustainably engage in activism is ___ times a week/month/year.

How will I track my progress? _____

Person I can ask to help hold me accountable _____

I will give myself permission to revise my goal if I become overwhelmed or stressed with the types of activism I'm engaging in and the frequency. I also know that some types of activism may make me feel more fulfilled than others, so I may need to focus on different forms. Cues that may tell me I need to revise my plan or try different forms of activism:

SOURCES & RESOURCES



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