Questions for Further Discussion

1. Sarcasm often comes out when people are upset, frustrated or feel as if they are repeating a pattern they have seen before. We also know that sarcasm isn’t the best approach to customer service and front office staff. What are some times you have struggled with sarcasm? What’s worked to keep from being sarcastic with a student, faculty or staff member?

2. What are some of the “hot button” issues in your office that cause the most disruption on a day-to-day basis? What are some proactive things your office can do to “get out ahead” of these and address the problem before it starts pushing your buttons?

3. Think about the miracle question. What one or two things that could change around the office make your life easier (and no, you can’t turn off the phones and lock the doors)? What are some of the barriers to changing these? What creative measures could you take on to try to make these situations better?

4. When are the busiest times of the year for your office? What kind of extra supports would make these busy times more manageable?

5. Having a chance to “vent” can make anyone feel better. Who are the people in your office that you can vent to about a difficult situation? Do you have enough opportunity to vent and decompress from a difficult situation? How can you schedule more time?

6. No one likes to be yelled at. What are some positive ways you can explain to the person who is upset and yelling that they need to stop there behavior? One that works for me is “I’m glad that you came in to talk to me about this. When people get upset, they rarely come talk to the person or office they are upset with. I want to be able to help you with this. So let’s talk about what we can do together to make this better for you.”

7. Despite what our bosses think, we don’t eat, breathe and live at work. Talk about how family, friends and outside stress can impact our ability to work patiently with students, faculty and staff. What are some ways we can try to center ourselves at work when our home life is hectic, chaotic and out of control? (Hint: for me, I know getting away from the office, even just for a quick five minute walk can help me get my focus back.)

8. Sometimes, the use of humor and self-disclosure can be helpful to calm down and de-escalate an upset student (e.g. I had something similar happen to me and I know how frustrating it can be). These techniques can also be tricky to apply well in a situation. What are some of the good ways you have used humor or self-disclosure in the office to calm down a student, faculty or staff member? What are some of the ways it can go bad?