



**Alia**

Innovations for people and systems  
impacted by childhood trauma

# Creating a trauma competent organization: role of leadership and healing

**Debi A. Grebenik, Ph.D., LCSW**

*Managing Director, Healing & Belonging*

[www.aliainnovations.org](http://www.aliainnovations.org)

[debi@aliainnovations.org](mailto:debi@aliainnovations.org)

What one **word** do you think of when we say trauma competent?



**FedEx**®



# Three E's

- Events: ACEs
- Experiences: that overwhelm
- Effects: positive, tolerable, toxic stress & impact of brain, body, behavior & health

# Focus on healing

- Systems are built around compliance
- When we focus on compliance, we respond with punishment
- When we focus on healing, we respond relationally



# Kotter's 8 Steps



# How can we create the environment for **healing**?

- It starts with us
- Healing must be a priority
- What are the stories we tell ourselves? About the families and youth we work with? With our co-workers? About ourselves?







## Healing comes from connection

- Our greatest **need** is to be seen and heard
- Our greatest **fear** is to be seen and heard
- We can't heal if we don't belong
- *How do we create belonging?*



## 4 “R’s” of a Trauma-Informed Approach

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma AND paths to recovery
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma
- Responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into all aspects of the organization/system
- Resists re-traumatizing individuals

## Building blocks of trauma competence



# Resists re-traumatizing individuals



- Create **safe** and **supportive** environments
- Be consistent & **predictable**
- Create a sense of **community collaboration**
- Teach social-emotional skills
- Safe **physical environments**—avoid boxing in or creating claustrophobic spaces
- Create **calming** spaces

# Create Safe Spaces for Staff

- To share and process **difficult cases**
- To share and process **emotional stressors**
- To share and process **mistakes without judgment**



# Trauma competent care

- Sensory modulation—what do your offices look like?
- How do they smell and feel?



Let's add an



- **Rhythms** and **routines** ---create felt safety through predictability
- **How can you create these?**



# Regulation

Not so much what you know or do—**it's how you show up!**

The role of your autonomic system (be aware of your **physiological** systems)

What does your body say?



# Challenges of trauma in the workplace



Increases  
opportunity  
for staff to  
experience  
**vicarious  
trauma**

Clients  
may not  
**cooperate**  
thus  
appearing  
**resistant**

Interventions  
can be  
perceived as  
**'soft'**

- Making the error of attributing **intentionality** to the family or child's **behavior**.
- Lack of **trauma competence**



# We must view families through a **trauma lens**



Staff can move from being an activator by using a **non-threatening voice** and demeanor to becoming a bridge to **hope** and **healing**

Must understand that parents' **anger, fear, or avoidance** may be a reaction to their own past trauma (can't vilify them)

Key for parents is to connect their **past experiences** and their **present reactions** which will pave the road for them to become the healing support their child needs and craves.

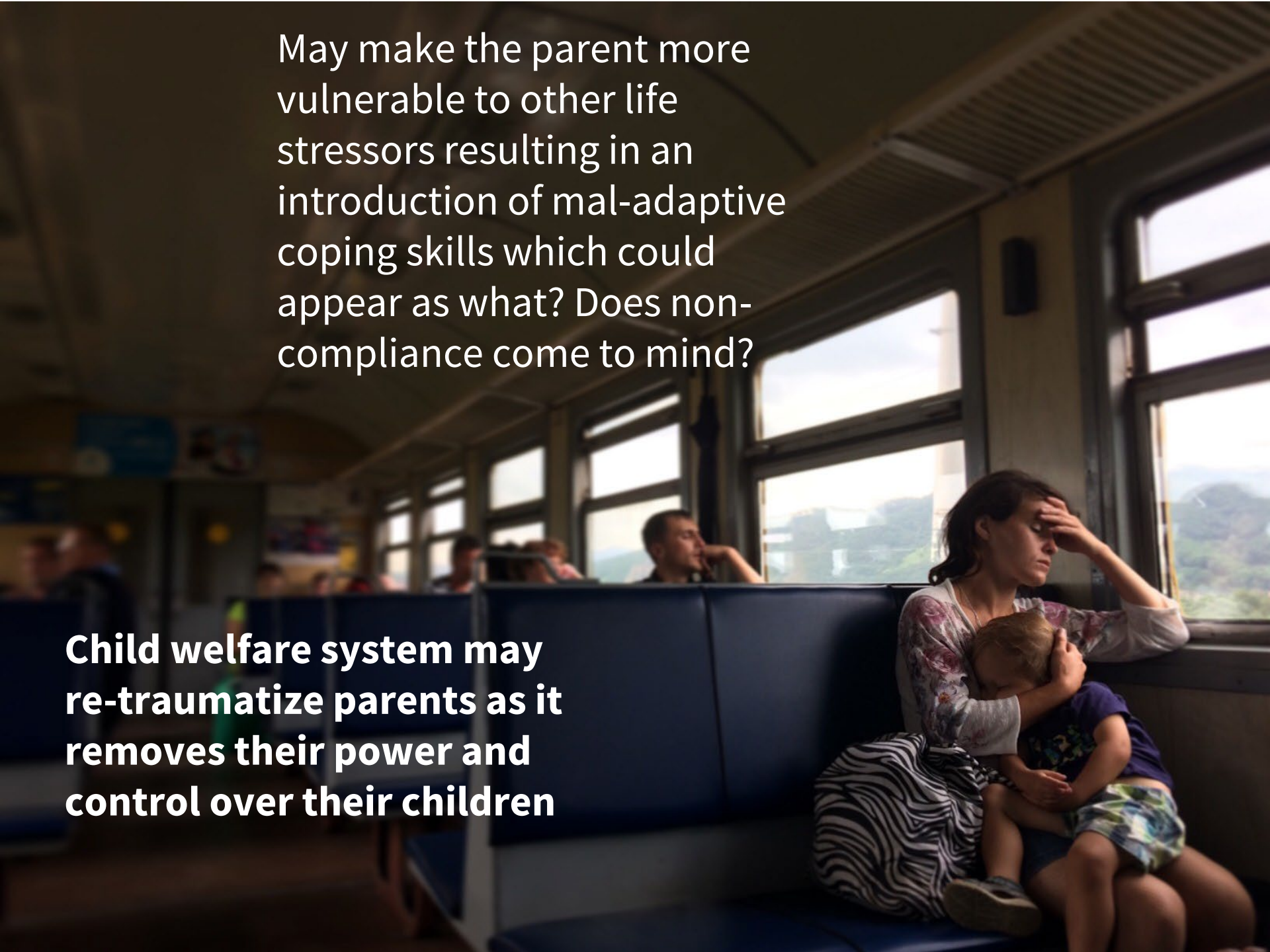




- Communication breaks down and team functioning becomes fragmented without a trauma informed approach (helloooo silos)
- Clients and staff are frequently chronically hyper-aroused and we walk around trying to find regulation
- Sea Biscuit—Trauma Informed Care movie!

May make the parent more vulnerable to other life stressors resulting in an introduction of mal-adaptive coping skills which could appear as what? Does non-compliance come to mind?

**Child welfare system may re-traumatize parents as it removes their power and control over their children**







The role of Emotional Intelligence  
can't be overlooked

- Self-awareness –most important element
- Self-regulation –vital to creating a healing environment
- Empathy –2<sup>nd</sup> most important
- Motivation
- Social skills



When we are **calm**  
and **regulated**, we can:

- **Listen** and ask good **questions**
- Listen to what is **not** said
- Take a **pause** and think
- Be **present**

And when we listen first and listen well,  
we create **safety** and build **trust**



Let's add an



- **Relationship** --- that's where healing occurs
- Worth the investment

# Practicing in the workplace

- The betrayal and relational damage as a result of trauma histories sets up lifetime patterns of fear and mistrust—thus impacting current functioning—**IT'S NOT ABOUT ME!**
- **Progress** can only take place within the context of **relationships**
- Look for the function of **behaviors**





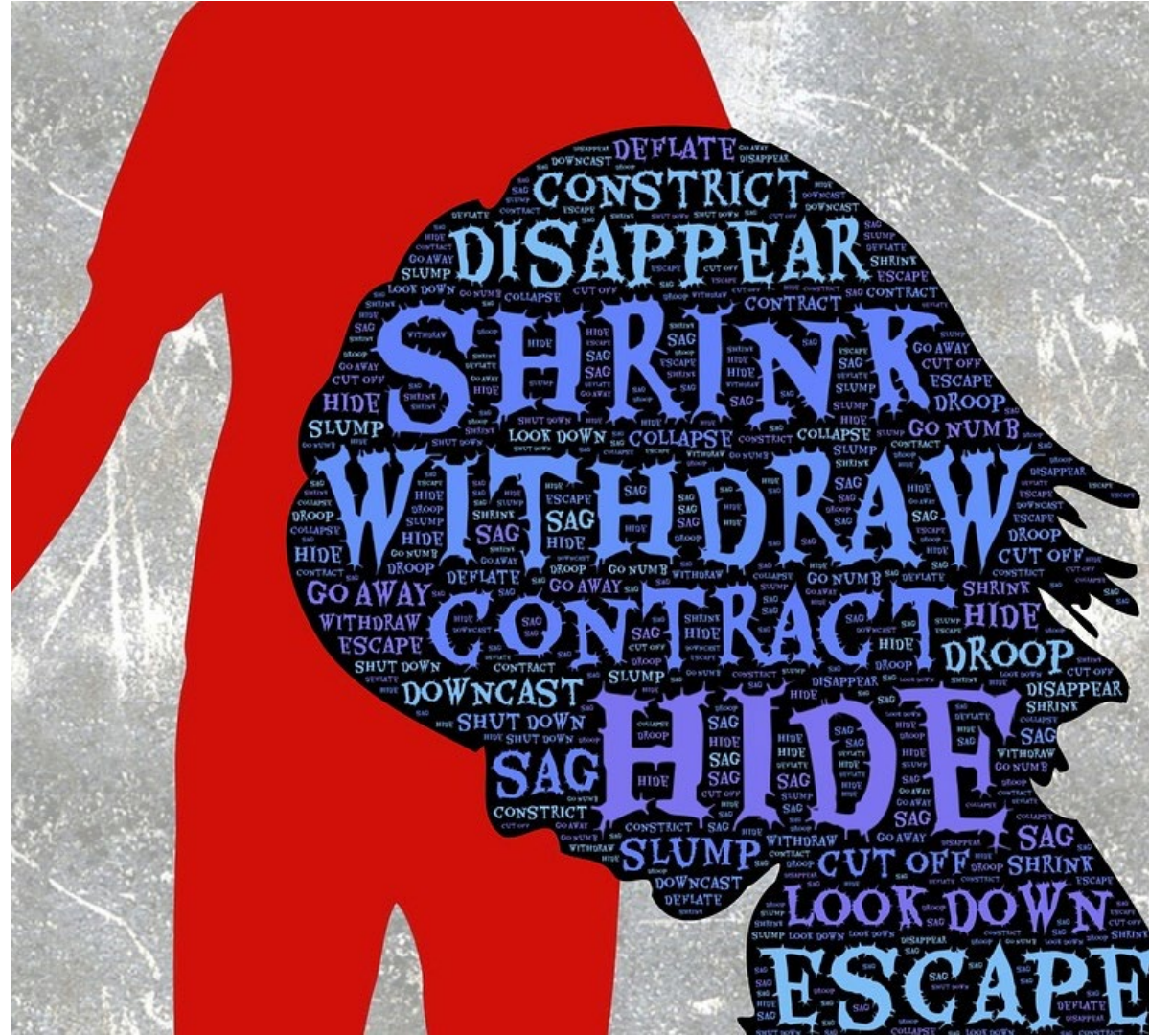
**Protection** from harm or any trauma activators

Can't view trauma as a discrete event (occurs as though it is **present** tense)

Focus is on **connection**, not compliance (must connect before we correct!)



Now let's talk  
about shame-  
--favorite  
subject for  
trainings

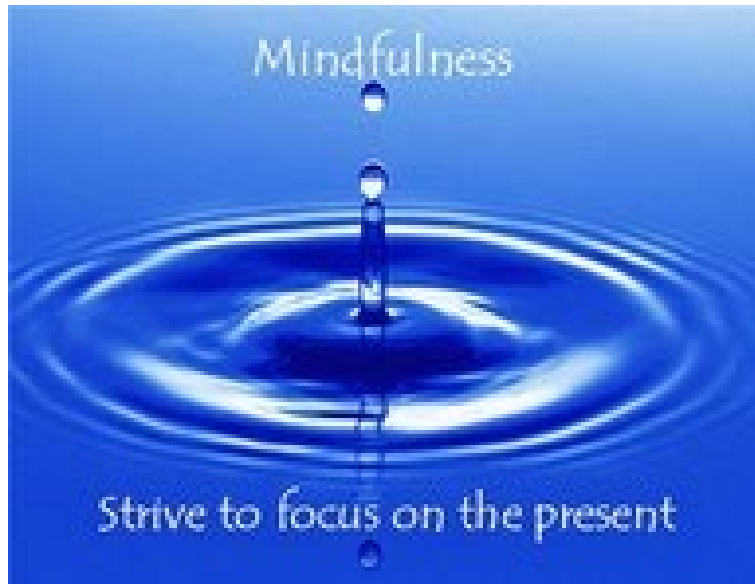




If shame were a  
petri dish, it would  
grow by **silence**,  
**secrecy** and  
**judgment**

The antidote to **shame** is **empathy**





Practicing in the workplace:

A trauma informed system uses the understanding of the role trauma plays in our clients to design systems that accommodate the vulnerabilities of trauma survivors which will facilitate their participation in treatment.

Show up with **curiosity** instead of **judgment**

Curiosity





“VULNERABILITY IS THE  
BIRTHPLACE OF LOVE,  
BELONGING, JOY,  
COURAGE, EMPATHY,  
ACCOUNTABILITY,  
AND AUTHENTICITY.”

Show up with  
**vulnerability**  
(does not  
mean over-  
sharing)



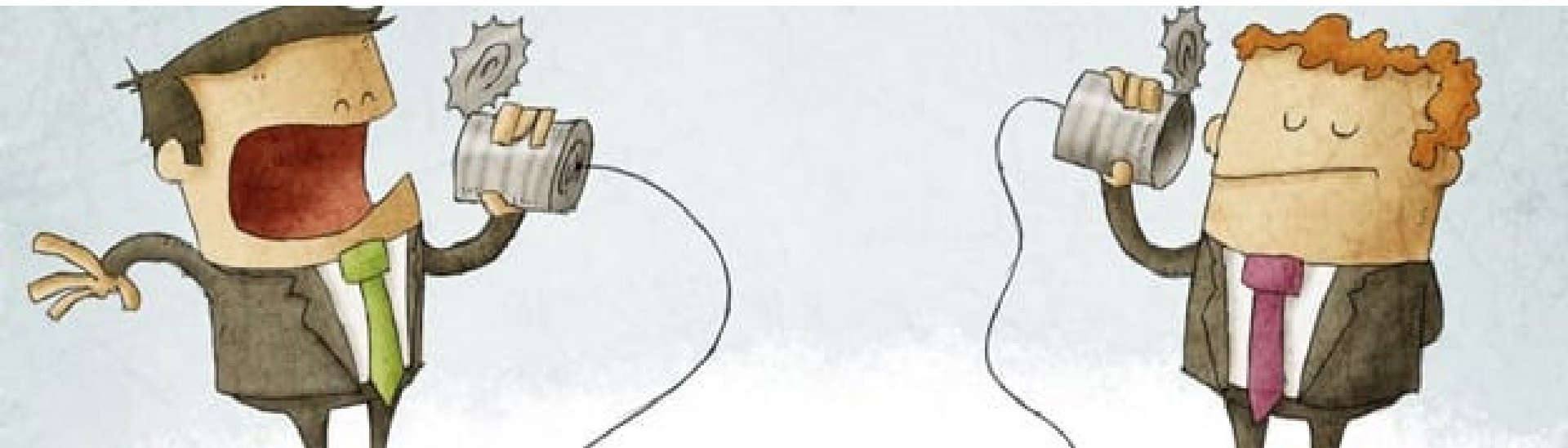
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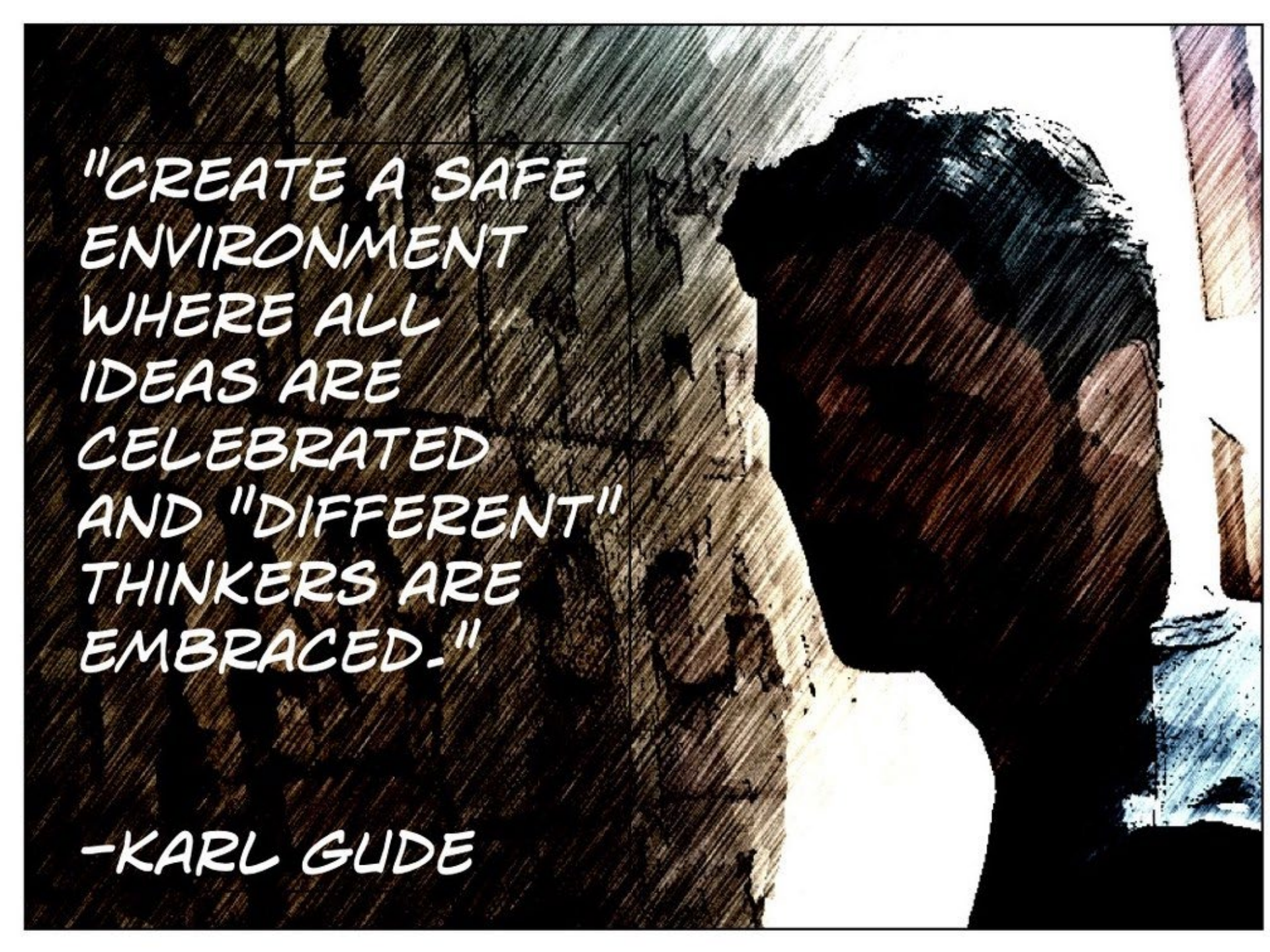


- **Reflection** --- cultivate the ability to be curious

# Collaboration and Communication

We want to feel purposefully **connected**, consistently **informed** and we want our voices sought out, valued, and **acknowledged**.





"CREATE A SAFE  
ENVIRONMENT  
WHERE ALL  
IDEAS ARE  
CELEBRATED  
AND "DIFFERENT"  
THINKERS ARE  
EMBRACED."

-KARL GLIDE

Leading change requires  
extra doses of  
**communication,**  
**empathy, listening,** and  
**self-awareness**

AN ACTION PLAN FROM THE WORLD'S  
FOREMOST EXPERT ON BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

# Leading Change



John P. Kotter

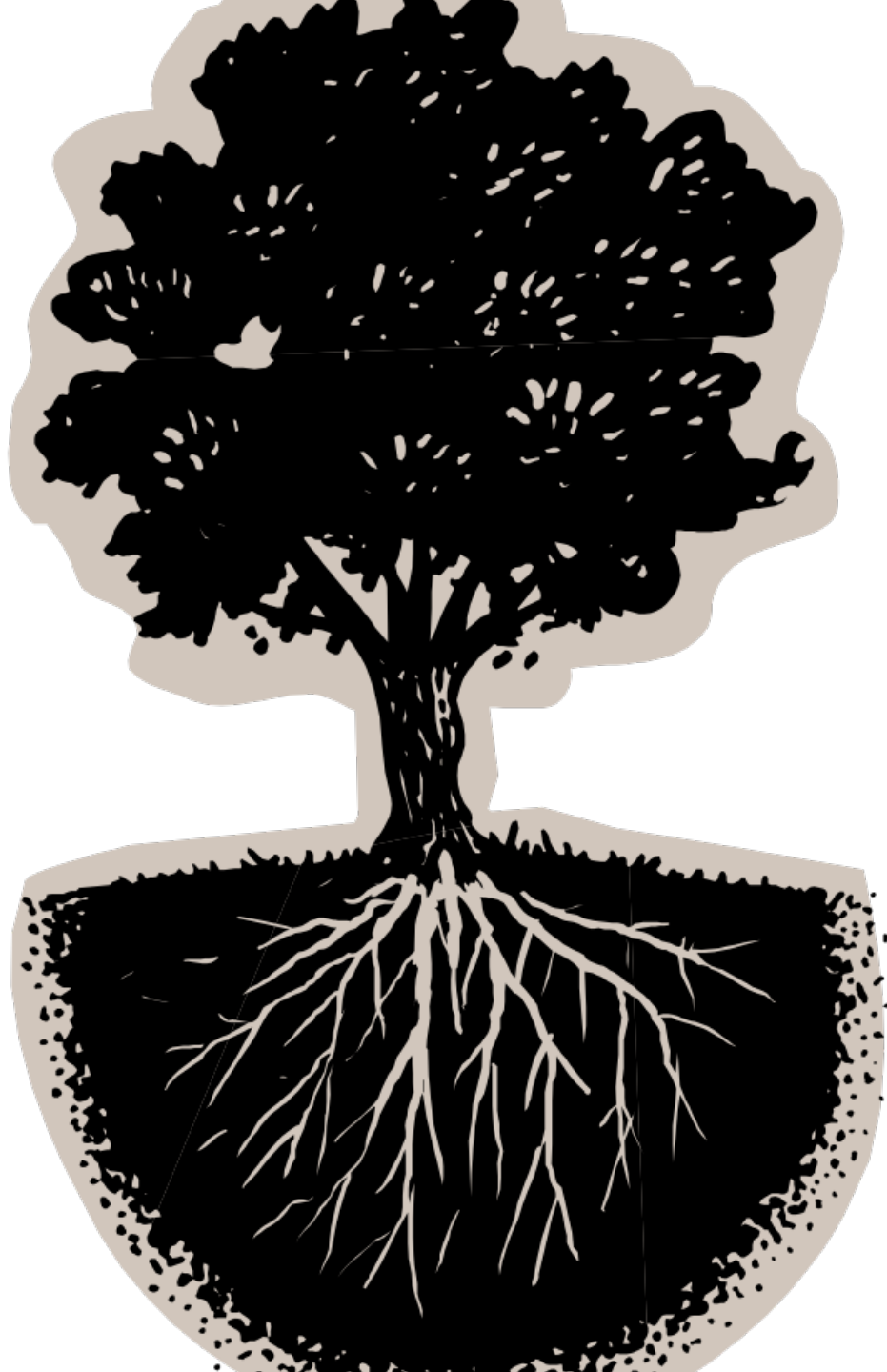
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PRESS



# Practicing in the workplace

- **Behaviors** are the language of our clients
- Staff view clients in context
- Responses are based on an understanding of the clients' history—the **whys**, not the whats



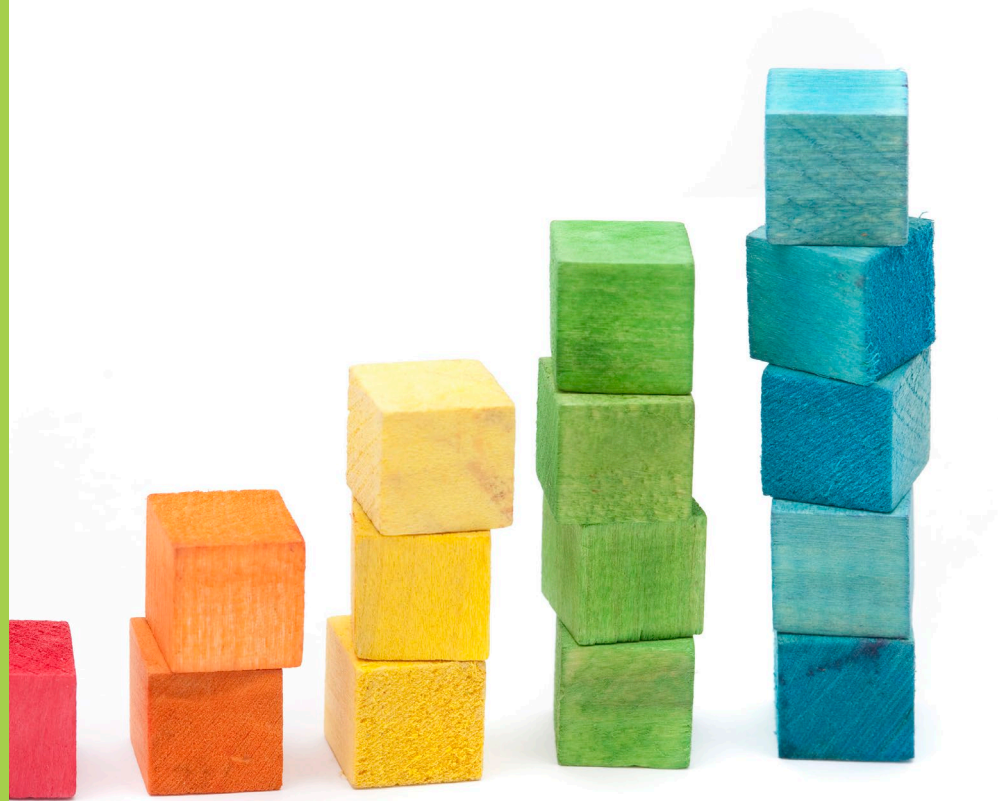


- Understanding **traumatic reminders** (echoes—current behavior is experienced within context of previous trauma)
- Understanding of **my own responses** and what they are rooted in

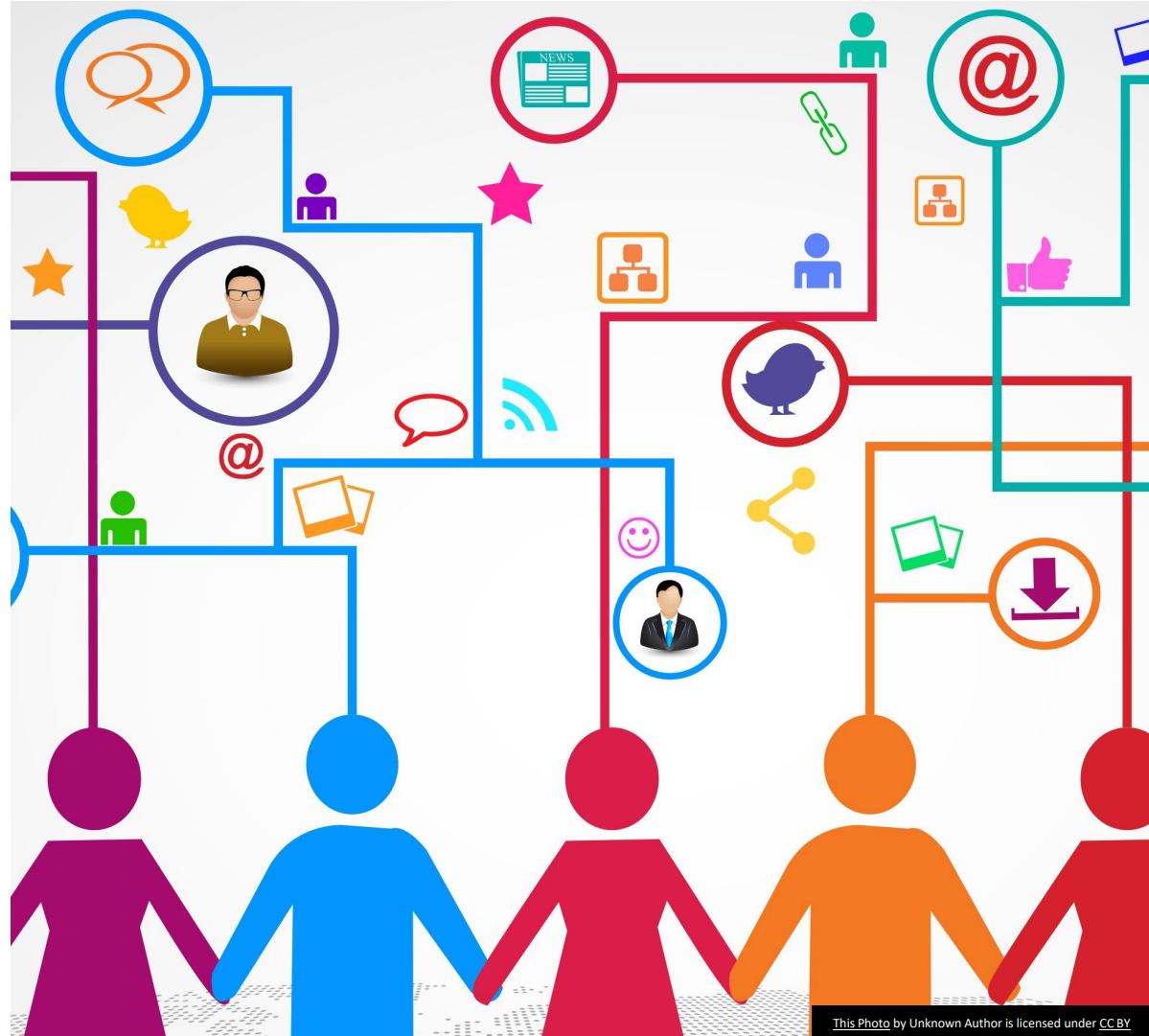


# Other **building blocks**


- **Cultural responsiveness**—  
look at healing from cultural connections, program responsiveness to racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals served (staff too)
- Be aware of impact of **historical trauma**
- **Crisis planning**



We want consistent, respectful, transparent internal communication at all levels of the organization that keeps us current, provides ongoing clear access to information, and makes us feel included and heard.



# When trauma goes to work



Irritability may  
be due to stress  
(at home)

Stress creates  
impaired  
memory

Respond with  
concern and  
support

Compassionate leaders uniformly provide two things: a "context for meaning"--creating an environment in which people can freely express and discuss how they feel.

A "context for action"--creating an environment in which those who experience or witness pain can find ways to alleviate their own and others' suffering.

A leader's competence in demonstrating and fostering compassion is vital to nourishing the very humanity that can make people--and organizations--great.





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Trauma is a harmful personal experience:

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Unexpected losses

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Economic strife

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Increased domestic violence

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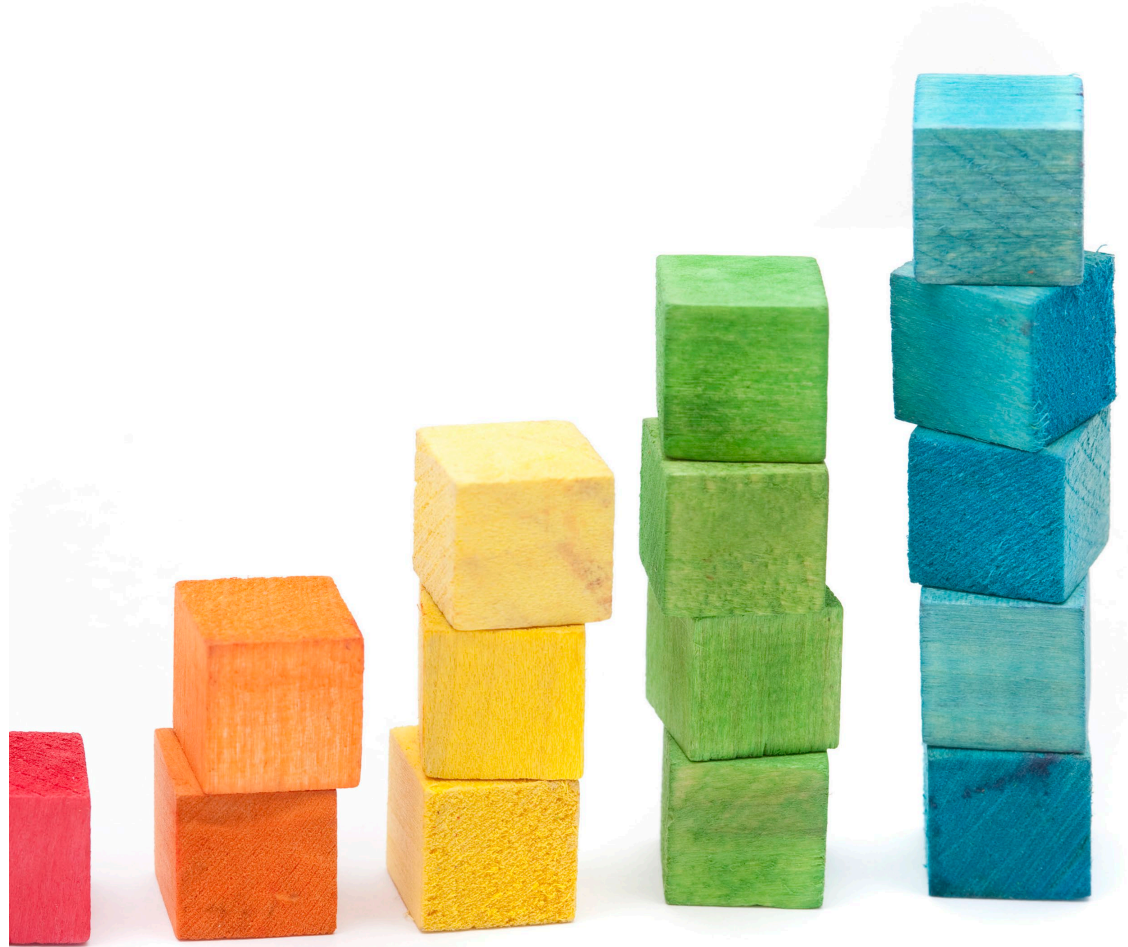
Increased risk for BIPOC

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Uncertainty—present-day and long-term

## OTHER BUILDING BLOCKS

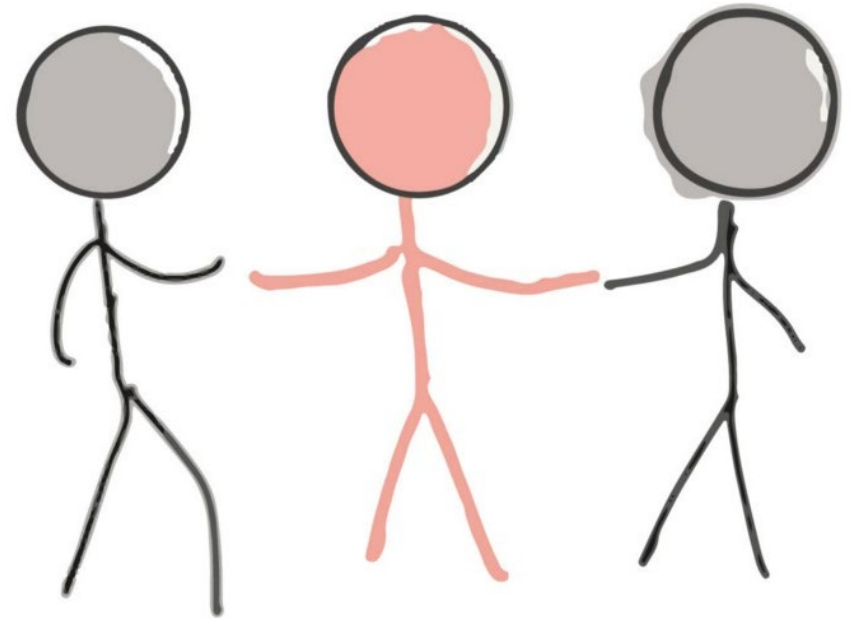
- Cultural responsiveness—look at healing from cultural connections, program responsiveness to racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals served (staff too)
- Be aware of impact of historical trauma
- Crisis planning





# Six Key Principles

1. Safety-as defined by those served
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support (persons with lived experience)
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice & choice
6. Cultural, historical and gender





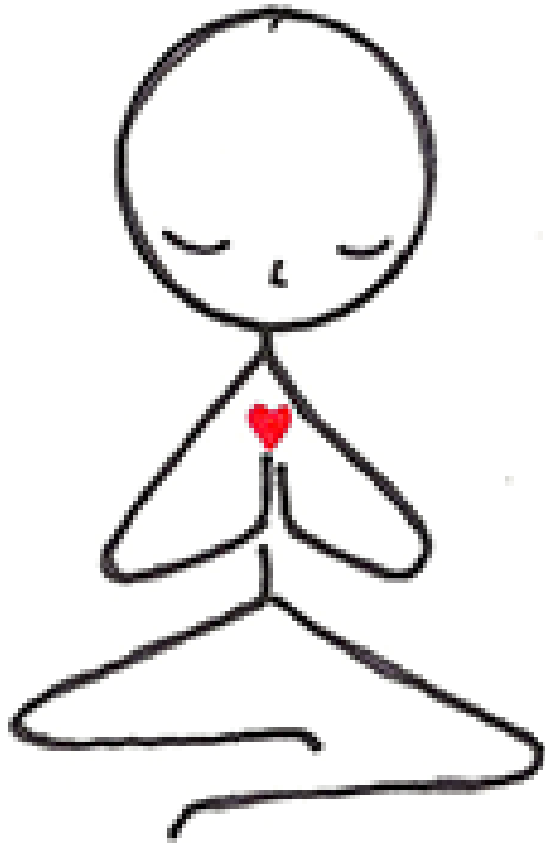
As a result of trauma experiences, increased anxiety and depressive symptoms rise:

- ✓ Sleep disruptions
- ✓ Isolation
- ✓ Heightened levels of discrimination for Blacks and Asians
- ✓ Resulting in cascading collective trauma
- ✓ Impacts functioning, impulse control, emotional regulation, learning and memory

# Trauma Stewardship

- Bearing witness to trauma without sacrificing our ability to live **fully**
- Understanding we are affected by the **suffering** of others
- Being **honest** about how we are doing
- Finding a way to work that is **sustainable**

# Self-care includes self-compassion



What is causing you stress?

Where do you feel it in your body?

- 1. Mindfulness:** Acknowledge that you are experiencing a moment of suffering/discomfort
- 2. A sense of common humanity:** Tell yourself-you are not alone
- 3. Inward-directed kindness:** Put your hands over your heart and say, “May I be kind to myself. May I give myself what I need.”

# Boundaries

- If you can't say yes without **resentment**, you need to say no
- Saying no leaves room for our **best** yes
- Not only do they guard what goes out (time, energy); they also guard what gets to **come in**



## **Role of mistakes**

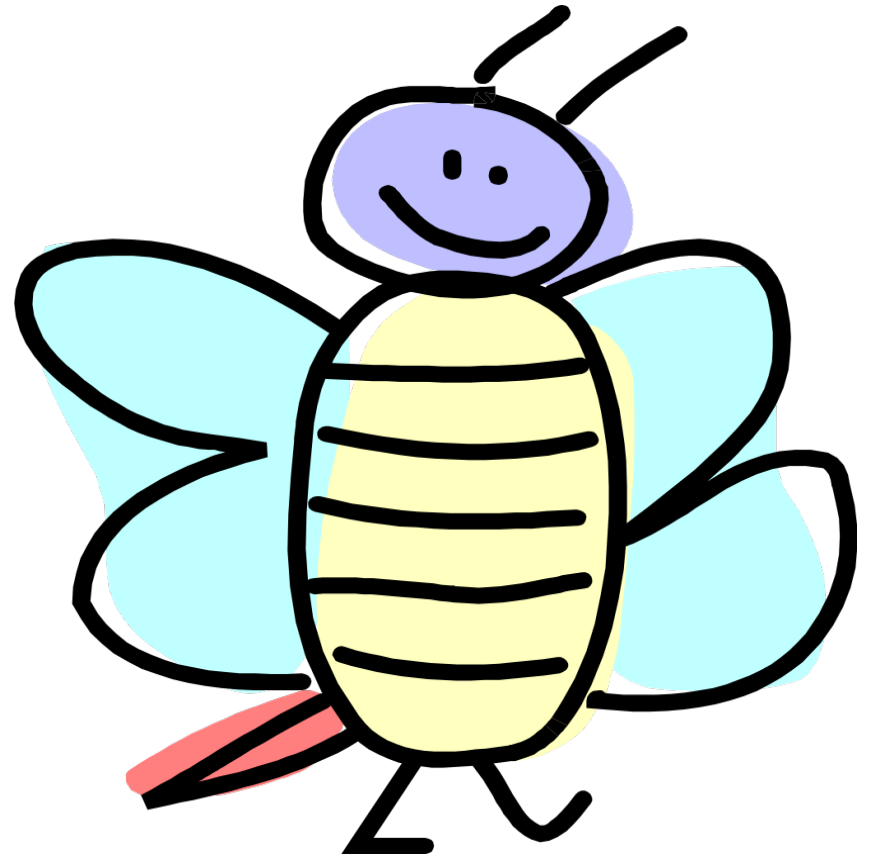
- Check out youtube—so many speak about leadership errors
- Does failure lead you or defeat you?





# To remember...

- Be self-aware!
- Be hopeful!
- Be mindful!
- Be present!
- Be patient!
- Be accepting!
- Be calm!



Don't  
Think  
too much.

you'll create a  
problem that  
wasn't even there  
in the first place.



DO WHAT  
LOVE  
WOULD  
DO

[debi@aliainnovations.org](mailto:debi@aliainnovations.org)

Facebook Page: Crossing the Deep Waters  
Trauma Training Institute