

Work Spaces as “Well-Spaces”

THE EQUITY-HOPE-RESILIENCE CONNECTION

Reduce harm, cultivate wellness and advance equitable outcomes that transform workplace culture and ensure that women of color feel supported, valued and connected.

Lucretia Robertson, Principal/Owner
Clarity Partnerships



Photo by Radomir Jordanovic from
Pexels

Work Spaces as “Well-Spaces”

Through a trauma-informed and hope centered framework, organizational leaders can advance equitable outcomes that transform workplace culture and ensure that women of color feel connected and supported.

This session will explore the equity-hope-resilience connection along with recommendations on institutional supports to reduce harm and cultivate wellness for women of color.

Learning goals:

1. Understand how workplace (and personal) relationships, self-confidence and ‘sustained productivity’ are undermined by compounding stress factors.
2. Explore the equity-hope-resilience connection; a generative process critical to employee well-being.
3. Identify strategies to develop institutional supports that reduce harm and cultivate wellness for women of color.

A Compounding Set of Factors

- Racism, sexism, gender stereotypes.
- Violence, abuse, coworker conflicts and bullying.
- Economic uncertainty. Poverty.
- Lack of power and resources to change outcomes.
- Lack of representation, particularly in leadership.



Photo by Godisable Jacob from Pexels

What's the Data Say?

Chronic exposure to racism and unfair treatment is linked to higher morbidity and mortality rates.

Source: The Impact of Structural Racism on Black Americans. Catalyst.org (Sep. 30, 2020)

Racism wears women of color out, literally and figuratively.

Source: GlassHammer (2022)

Women of color are more likely to experience microaggressions and to face disrespectful and "othering" treatment.

Source: Lean In, Women in the Workplace (2021)

66% of Black women report not feeling emotionally safe at work.

Source: Black Women Thriving (2022)

Women are stressed and exhausted. 51% of women of color will leave their job due to burnout.

Source: Catalyst (2022)

A Need for Safe and Welcoming Workplaces

- Only 8% of employed female BIPOC claim that their current employer would react to a discrimination claim with respect and attentiveness.
- 25% of employed Gen Z women say there have been instances where they felt uncomfortable wearing particular articles of clothing at work.
- 38% of employed women believe that if they filed a sexual harassment or assault claim at their current workplace, it would not be taken seriously.

Source: Deputy, Survey: Women and BIPOC Confidence in the Workplace (2023)

Three out of four BIPOC employees say they would leave a job where their employer does not prioritize mental and emotional health and well-being.

Source: Hue, State of Inequity: Building a Brighter Future for BIPOC at Work (2023)

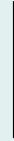
Black women are least likely to feel valued, treated with respect and that there's a climate of fair treatment among coworkers.

% Strongly agree	White men	White women	Black men	Black women	Hispanic men	Hispanic women
	%	%	%	%	%	%
I feel like a valued member of my team.	42	38	36	33	35	36
At work, I am treated with respect.	42	39	46	36	39	40
My coworkers treat everyone fairly at work.	34	29	32	26	30	32

Among U.S. Workers

GALLUP PANEL, 2020

TRAUMA-AWARE



“The past is always present.”

What We Know About Trauma

SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative

Physically or emotionally harmful or threatening event(s) that produces toxic stress

Anything that might undermine an individual's capacity to cope/adversely affects individual functioning
Produces a sense of fear, vulnerability, and helplessness

Affects people of every identity, families, communities and specific cultures and generations

Ignites the “fight, flight, freeze or fawn” response

Impacts our sense of self - how one connects to other, identifies purpose and feelings of belonging

What We Know About Trauma

SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative

Physically or emotionally harmful or threatening event(s) that produces toxic stress

Anything that might undermine an individual's capacity to cope/adversely effects individual functioning
Produces a sense of fear, vulnerability, and helplessness

Affects people of every identity, families, communities and **specific cultures** and generations

Ignites the “**fight, flight, freeze or fawn**” response

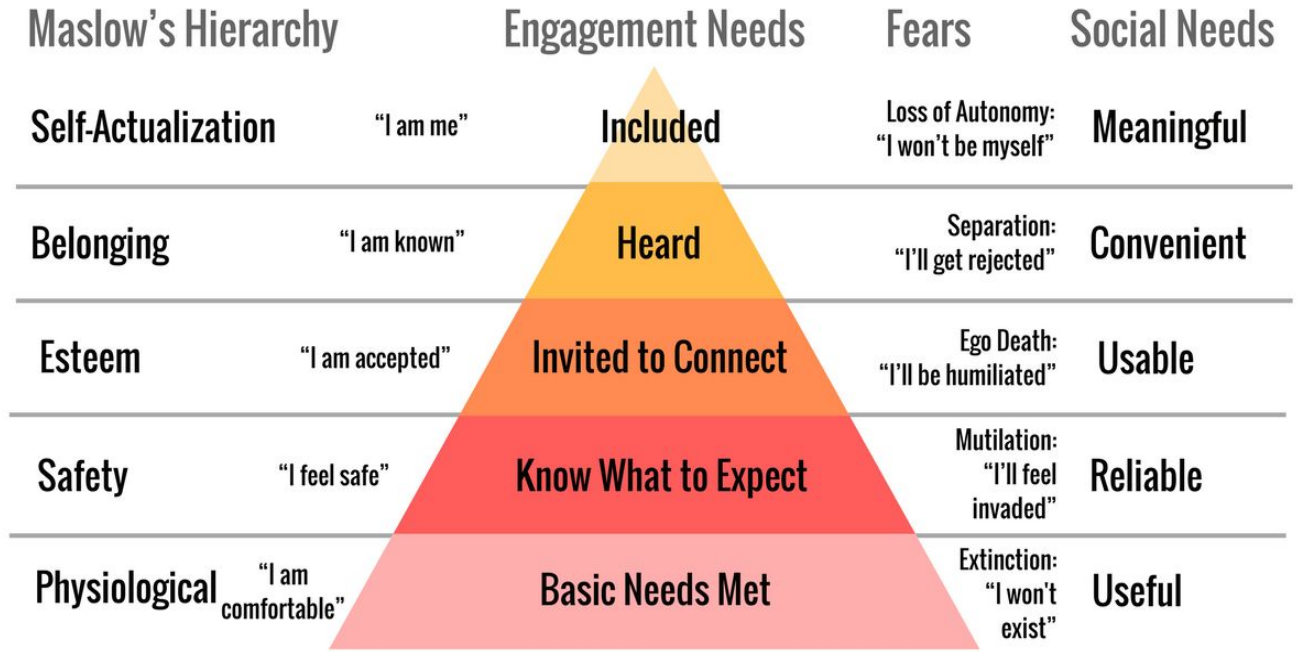
Impacts our **sense of self** - how one connects to others, identifies purpose and feelings of belonging

What Happens When Needs are Met or Unmet

Part 2 of 2

Grace LaConte's

Hierarchy of Needs, Fears, & Expectations



1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: Per Neel Burton MD in "Psychology Today" 2. Engagement Needs: "Patient Engagement Model" from UPMC
3. Fears: Karl Albrecht Ph.D. of BrainSnacks 4. Social Needs: Stephen Anderson's "Creating Pleasurable Interfaces"

Trauma Response at Work: Observed and Experienced

	FIGHT	FLIGHT	FREEZE	FAWN
Trauma response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Rage • Aggression • Irritable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety and fear • Anxious and overwhelm • Avoidance • Perfectionism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuck • Immobilization • Disengaged • Dissociation • Numb • Panic • Frustration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People-pleasing, look to others to express feelings • Poorly differentiated, the needs of others supercede their own • Lack boundaries and hard to say no • Compliant • Social world is important
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storming out • Bullying, angry outbursts • Impulsive • Blaming • Defense and defiance <p>Others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdraw - to focus on performance • Compulsive • Appears not to listen • Appears distracted • Over-achieve and over-analyze <p>Others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain fog/Zoned out (not listening) • Withdraw or avoid people • Daydreaming <p>Others?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid conflict • Co-dependent • Not taking responsibility • Concerned with fitting in and appeasing others <p>Others?</p>

Trauma Response at Work: Observed and Experienced

	FIGHT	FLIGHT	FREEZE	FAWN
Trauma response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Rage • Aggression • Irritable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety and fear • Anxious and overwhelm • Avoidance • Perfectionism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stuck • Immobilization • Disengaged • Dissociation • Numb • Panic • Frustration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People-pleasing, look to others to express feelings • Poorly differentiated, the needs of others supercede their own • Lack boundaries and hard to say no • Compliant • Social world is important
Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storming out • Bullying, angry outbursts • Impulsive • Blaming • Defense and defiance • Critical • Control and self-preservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdraw - to focus on performance • Compulsive • Appears not to listen • Appears distracted • Over-achieve and over-analyze • Workaholic • Micromanage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain fog/Zoned out (not listening) • Withdraw or avoid people • Daydreaming • Give up quickly • Difficulty making decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid conflict • Co-dependent • Not taking responsibility • Concerned with fitting in and appeasing others • "Yes" + "Sorry" • Goes along (to get along) • Defers to others opinions

Trauma Response at Work: Observed and Experienced

The Hyper-Independent Superwoman

Hyper-Independence *is* a trauma response

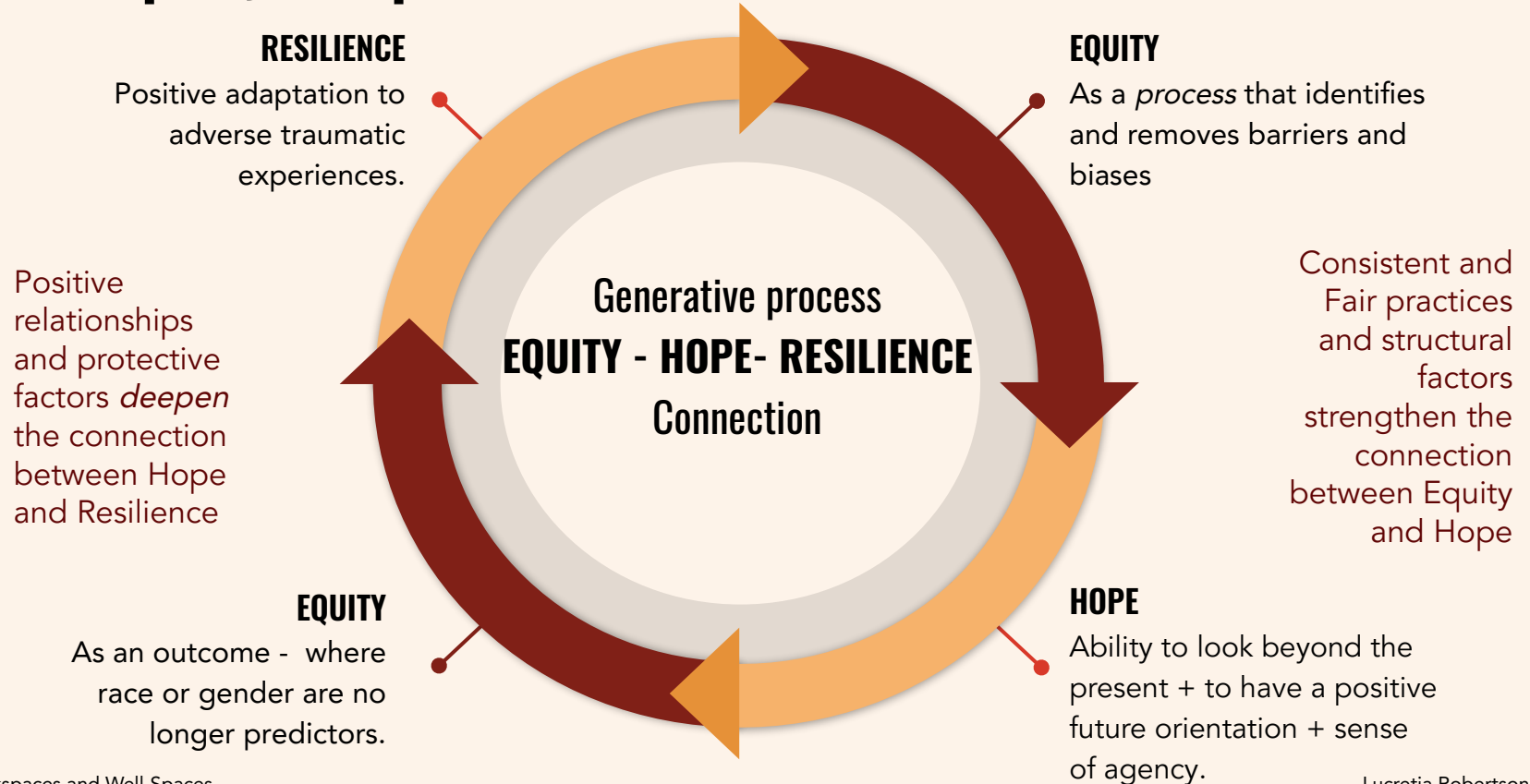
- Avoid relying on others/refuses to ask for help
- Determined to solve problems on their own
- Private
- Won't ask for input
- Expect independence from others
- Always busy, overworked and burnt out
- Overachiever

As leaders they struggle to delegate, be transparent or vulnerable, *to trust* or (constructively) interact with others.



Photo by Godisable Jacob from Pexels

The Equity-Hope-Resilience Connection



6 GUIDING PRINCIPLES TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

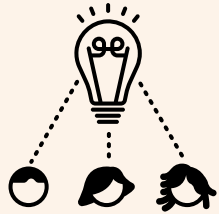
The CDC's [Center for Preparedness and Response \(CPR\)](#), in collaboration with SAMHSA's [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care \(NCTIC\)](#), developed and led a new training for CPR employees about the role of trauma-informed care during public health emergencies. The training aimed to increase responder awareness of the impact that trauma can have in the communities where they work.

Participants learned SAMHSA'S six principles that guide a trauma-informed approach, including:



CULTURE CREATES CONTEXT

Protective Factors that Forge Resilience



Partner to Set Goals

Align interests and aspirations with organization + emphasize flexibility



Affirm Sense of Self and Identity

Coaching and mentoring supports. Feedback draws from unique contributions



Resourced

Budget, staff, tools etc. to navigate structural conditions. Allies!



Peers and Support Circles

Affinity spaces to share past practices and success stories

Protective Factors that Forge Resilience

PURPOSE

- Clear standards and performance expectations
- Work-based opportunities to align interests, team membership, project management
- Shared values create strong connection and sense of purpose

PHYSICAL

- Create opportunities for movement, silence, and space.
- Promote wellness - food, rest, sleep, breaks, etc.

EMOTIONAL

- Communicate changes and decisions often and clearly.
- Address unresolved conflict as soon as possible.
- Listening sessions allow staff to share their experiences.
- Share expectations through open conversations and clear feedback.

Protective Factors that Forge Resilience

CONNECTION

- Create avenues for staff to support each other. (AGs or ERGs)
- Proactively gauge perception, engagement and their points of view
- Continue to foster inclusive (all perspectives and experiences welcome) and respectful workplaces

EXTERNAL

- Staff are familiar with their surroundings
- Monitor for external factors that contribute to anxiety

MENTAL

- Vary the levels of stress
- Provide support and benefits for quality mental health supports
- Regularly check-in with staff who show signs of distress, overwhelm or withdrawing

Institutional Supports

Recommended
Strategies

1

Safety

Ensure WoC feel safe - physically and psychologically (able to express opinions without retribution). Zero-tolerance policies, inclusive language guides, holiday celebration guidance, etc.

2

Trustworthiness + Transparency

Work to build trust through transparent, timely and reliable communications and decisions. Dedicate time to developing relationships (1:1s, "open door", follow up on commitments, etc.)

3

Peer Support + Mutual Help

Provide opportunities for WoC to share experiences and learn from and support each other. Rotating project teams, committees, etc.

Institutional Supports

Recommended
Strategies

4 Collaboration + Mutuality

Foster opportunities to share power and decision making. Healing and relationships are centered.

Empowerment, Voice + Choice

5 Provide platforms for feedback, input and participation, emphasizing unique perspectives and experiences.

Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues

6 Culture is seen as a source of resilience. Leaders are trauma-aware. They are familiar with the challenges of WoC and are intentional about addressing and resolving those issues. Leaders understand the role identity and culture play in their own lives.



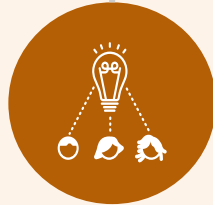
Well-Spaces

Our mission is to create workplaces that are well-spaces; where women feel seen, heard, welcomed, and valued.



Women of Color

We partner with Women of Color in leadership to sharpen their self-leadership skills and increase their visibility in the workplace.



Organizations

We work with organizations to build a supportive community to learn, reflect, and create change together.