Legacy of Trauma: The African American Experience

By Brandon Jones, M.A.

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Trainer:
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- B.A. in Sociology from the University of Minnesota, a Masters in Community Psychology from Metropolitan State University, and a Masters in Psychotherapy (MFT) from Adler Graduate School

- 2013 Bush Foundation Leadership Fellow

My Goal for Today

- My only Goal of the day is to get you to **Shift** your **Lens**

- Expand your **Worldview**

- **Disrupt** Your Current Thought Process.
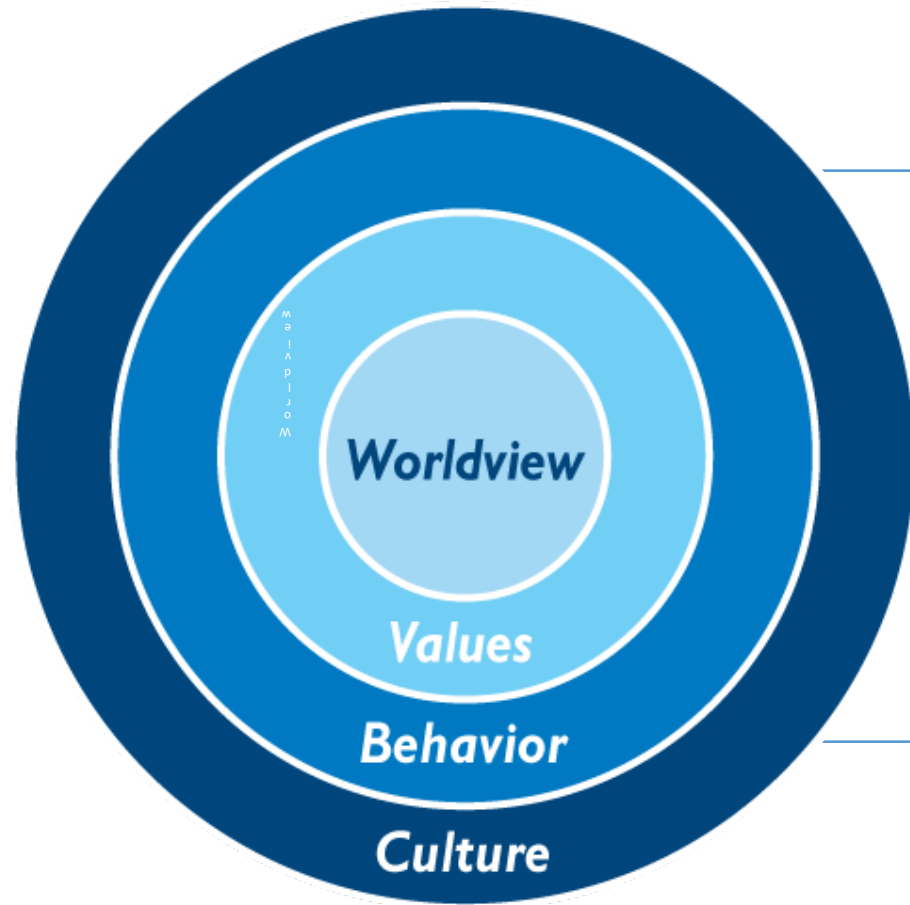
- Provide some **Context**
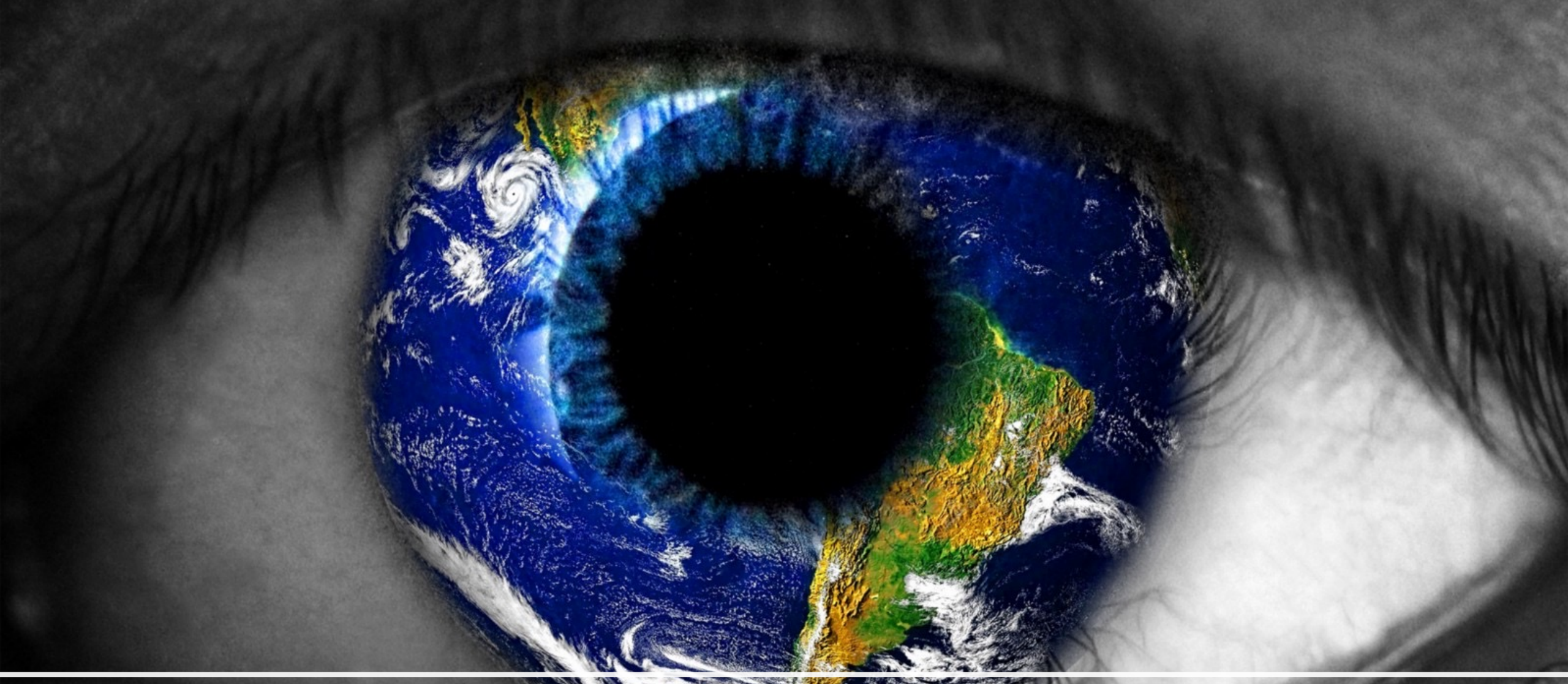
UNDERSTANDING YOUR WORLDVIEW

Worldview Dynamics

Worldview

Values

Behavior

Culture

Influences
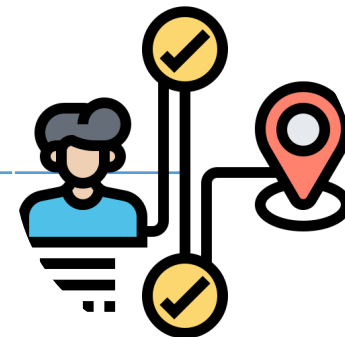
Experiences

What is Cultural Intelligence?

The Ability To Adapt To New Cultural Settings

Capability To Cooperate Effectively With Other People From A Dissimilar Cultural Background And Understanding

Ability To Function In Culturally Diverse Situations

BEING AMERICAN IS MORE THAN A PRIDE WE INHERIT. IT'S THE PAST WE STEP INTO AND HOW WE REPAIR IT.

-AMANDA GORMAN

Terminology

- **Individual racism** refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.

- **Institutional racism** refers to discriminatory treatments, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for whites over people of color and extend considerably beyond prejudice.

- **Systemic Racism** refers to whites' historical and systematic oppression of non- European groups that manifests in the structure and operations of racist societies like the United States. It is reflected in disparities regarding wealth, income, criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, and education, among other factors.

Defining Diversity, Belonging, Equity, and Inclusion

- **Diversity:** includes all the ways in which people differ, and it encompasses all the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

- **Belonging:** Centers around the individual's experience of feeling accepted in spaces. Every member of the group should feel that their perspectives are valued and adds something useful.

- **Equity** is the condition that would be achieved if one's identities no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of justice, and thus we also include work to address the root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation.

- **Inclusion:** Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policymaking in a way that shares power.

https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary

Anti-blackness

Refers to our society's hatred of blackness

"It's a theoretical framework that illuminates society's inability to recognize our humanity — the disdain, disregard and disgust for our existence." -Dr. Kihana Ross

- It includes Colorism
- It can permeate through ALL races/ethnicities

Anti-racism

Refers to the conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily.

These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life.

Race is a Social Construction

This is what we have been taught and told to make us feel better about discussing it.
What are some other Social constructions????
How about time????
How about colors???
However, we usually give them more validation than we do Race...but why???

■ October 20, 2020, 4:00 AM CDT

Economist Found $16 Trillion When She Tallied Cost of Racial Bias

● Dana Peterson, who was a Citigroup global economist, recalled her own experiences of bigotry while researching how gaps between Black and White Americans eat into economic output.

By Saijel Kishan

What is culture?

Culture is typically described as the totality of learned behaviors of a people that emerges from their interpersonal interactions.

Culture includes the ideals, values, and assumptions about life that are widely shared and that guide specific behaviors.

Objective culture

• Visible: artifacts, food, clothing

Subjective culture

• Invisible: values, attitudes, norms

Two types of bias

Explicit bias

Expressed directly

Aware of bias / operates consciously

Example – Sign in the window of an apartment building – "whites only"

Implicit bias

Expressed indirectly

Unaware of bias / operates sub-consciously

Example – a property manager doing more criminal background checks on African Americans than whites.

Implicit Bias Defined

An implicit bias, or implicit stereotype, is the unconscious attribution of qualities to a member of a certain social group.

Implicit stereotypes are shaped by experience and based on learned associations between qualities and social categories, including race and/or gender.

Unconscious Manner?

- The human brain receives **11 million bits** of information from our senses **every second**.

- It is estimated we can consciously process approximately **50 bits of information per second**.

The Efficiency Solution:

- **Schemas**: the mental "frames" through which our brains help us understand and navigate the world:

  - Sort into categories

  - Create associations between things

  - Fill in the gaps when we only receive partial information
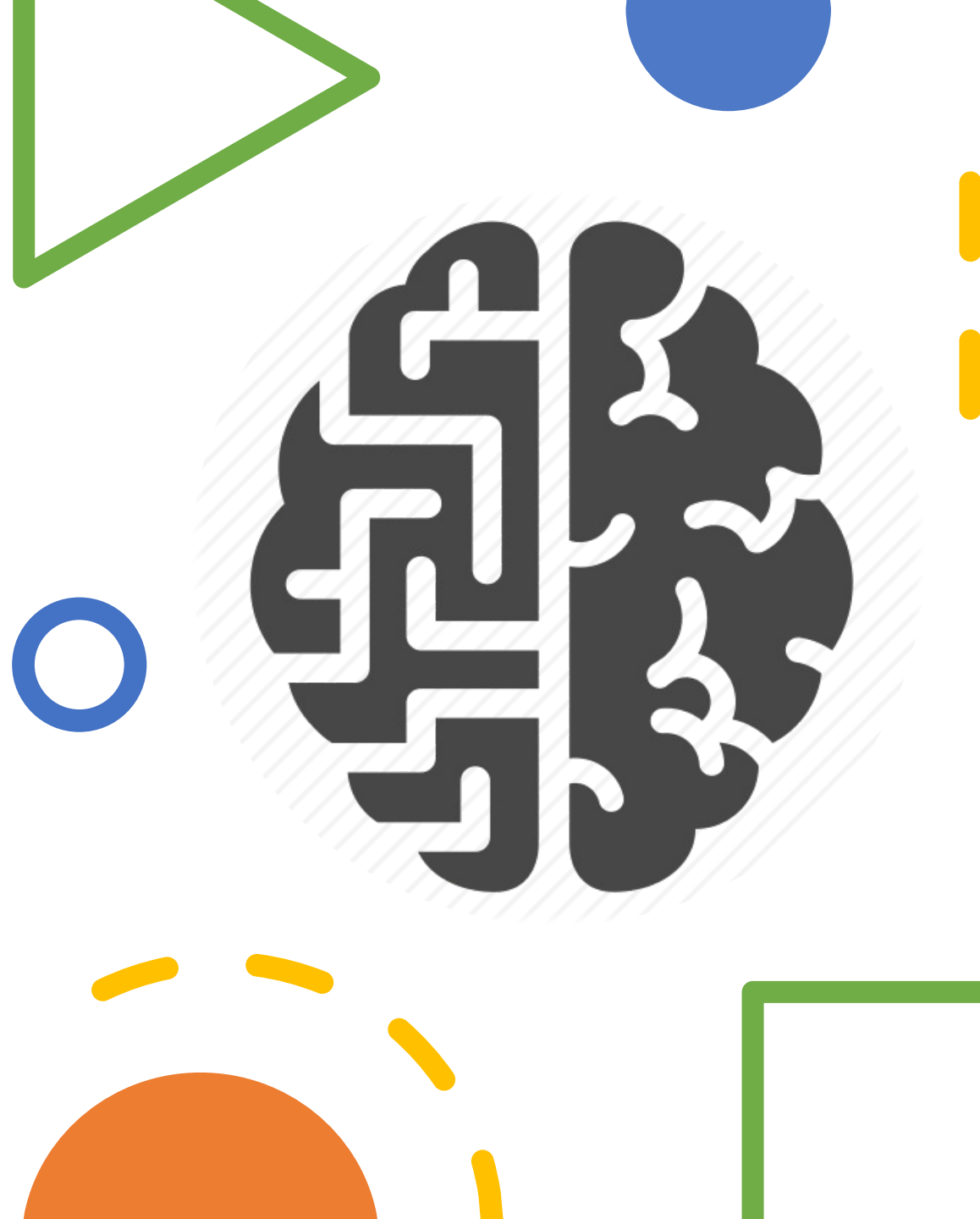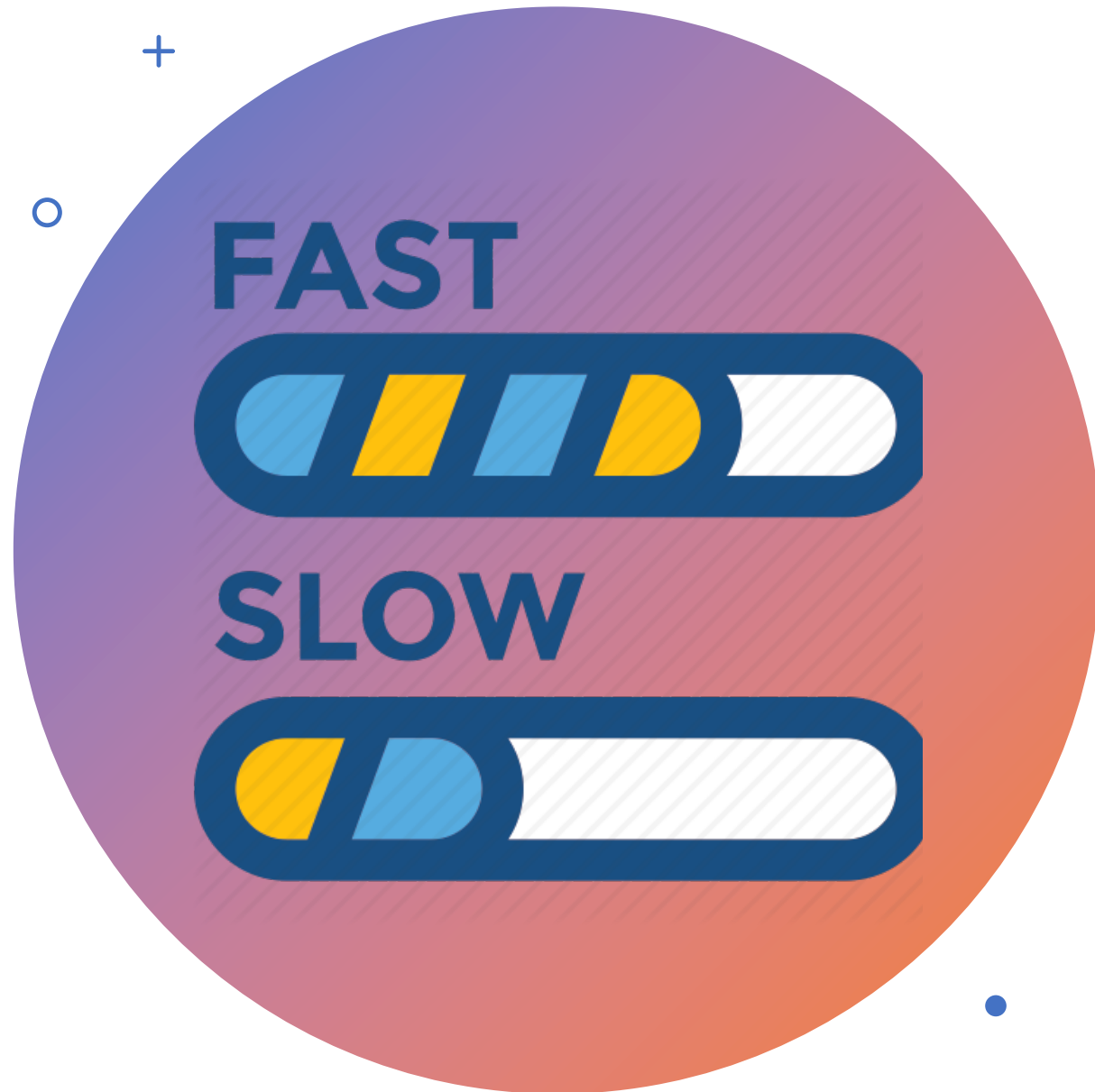
Fast and Slow Processing

- **Fast Processing:** Occurs automatically – using schemas and mental mapping for efficiency – think of riding a bike.

- **Slow Processing:** Occurs deliberately – completing a complex task that requires concentration – filling out forms.
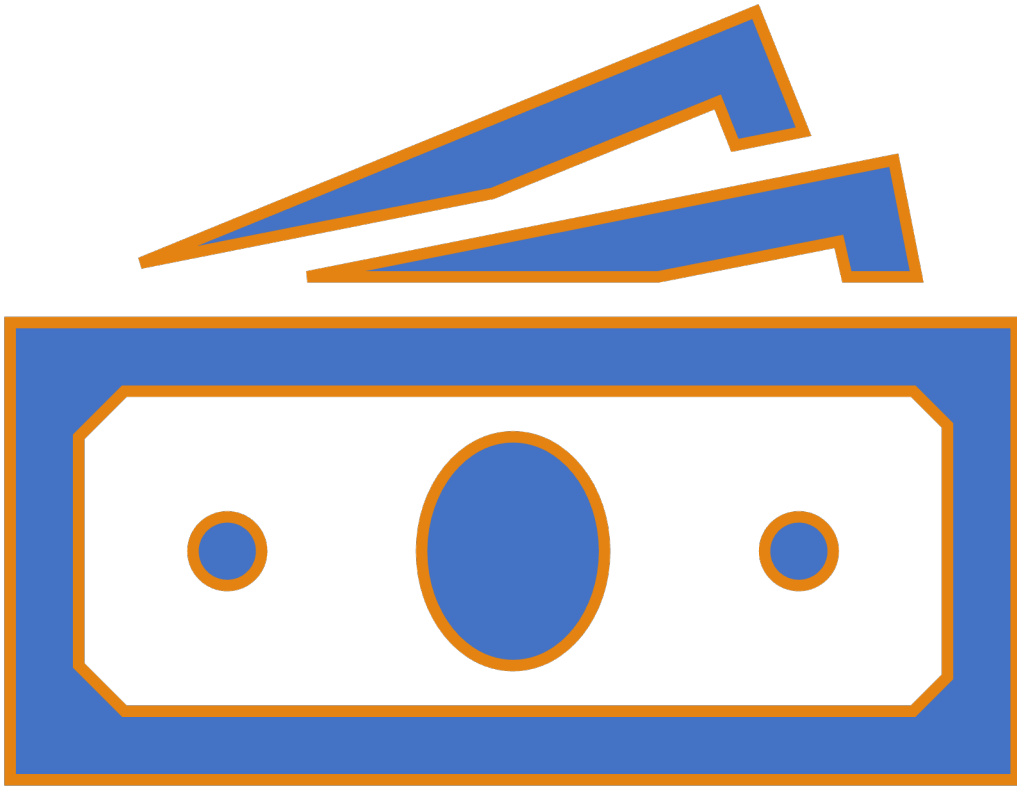
$25 Dollar Challenge

Can you name the months of the year...in Alphabetical Order????

April

August

December

February

January

July

June

March

May

November

October

September

Implications

The same schemas (mental frames) that help us efficiently navigate our world are responsible for our stereotypes of others.

When we are stressed, time pressed, or faced with ambiguity, our behavior is likely to be heavily influenced by our stereotypes.

Reflection Question

How old where you when you first realized you were different from someone else racially?

The Stress of Race
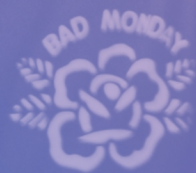
Languishing

Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels as if you're muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield. And it might be the dominant emotion of 2021.

- According to the New Times

What is Trauma?

A Deep Emotional Wound!

A DEEP EMOTIONAL WOUND!

closely connected to Toxic Stress or Toxic Environments

Types of stress responses

POSITIVE

TOLERABLE

TOXIC

A normal and essential part of healthy development

Response to a more severe stressor, limited in duration

Experiencing strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity

Race Related Stress

- Stress is the body's physiological and cognitive response to situations perceived as threats or challenges. It is a normal and natural response.

- Most stress individuals encounter on a day-to-day basis is tolerable, because individuals have coping skills and supportive relationships to help them endure it.

- However, exposure to stressful and adverse experiences over a long period without positive mitigating factors can become toxic.

Racial Trauma

Racial trauma or race-based stress comes from dealing with racial harassment, racial violence, or institutional racism.

It is often compared to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as the symptoms are similar with irritability, hypervigilance, anxiety, and depression.

Racial Trauma

- **Race-based traumatic stress** is the cumulative effects of experiencing and witnessing discrimination and even death of another person of same race.
  - **Institutional racism**
  - **Microaggressions**
  - **Historical or personal memory of racism**

Racial Trauma

Race-based trauma wounds often **go unnoticed and are worn like invisible weights**.

It can lead to the feeling voicelessness and **impairs the ability to advocate for oneself**.

The emotional response to experiences of degradation and devaluation as human being can result in **Wounds of Rage**.

Rage is a very complex emotion that can **appear as anger, explosiveness, sadness, and depression**.

Racial oppression is a traumatic form of interpersonal violence which can lacerate the spirit, scar the soul, and puncture
the psyche.

- Dr. Kenneth Hardy
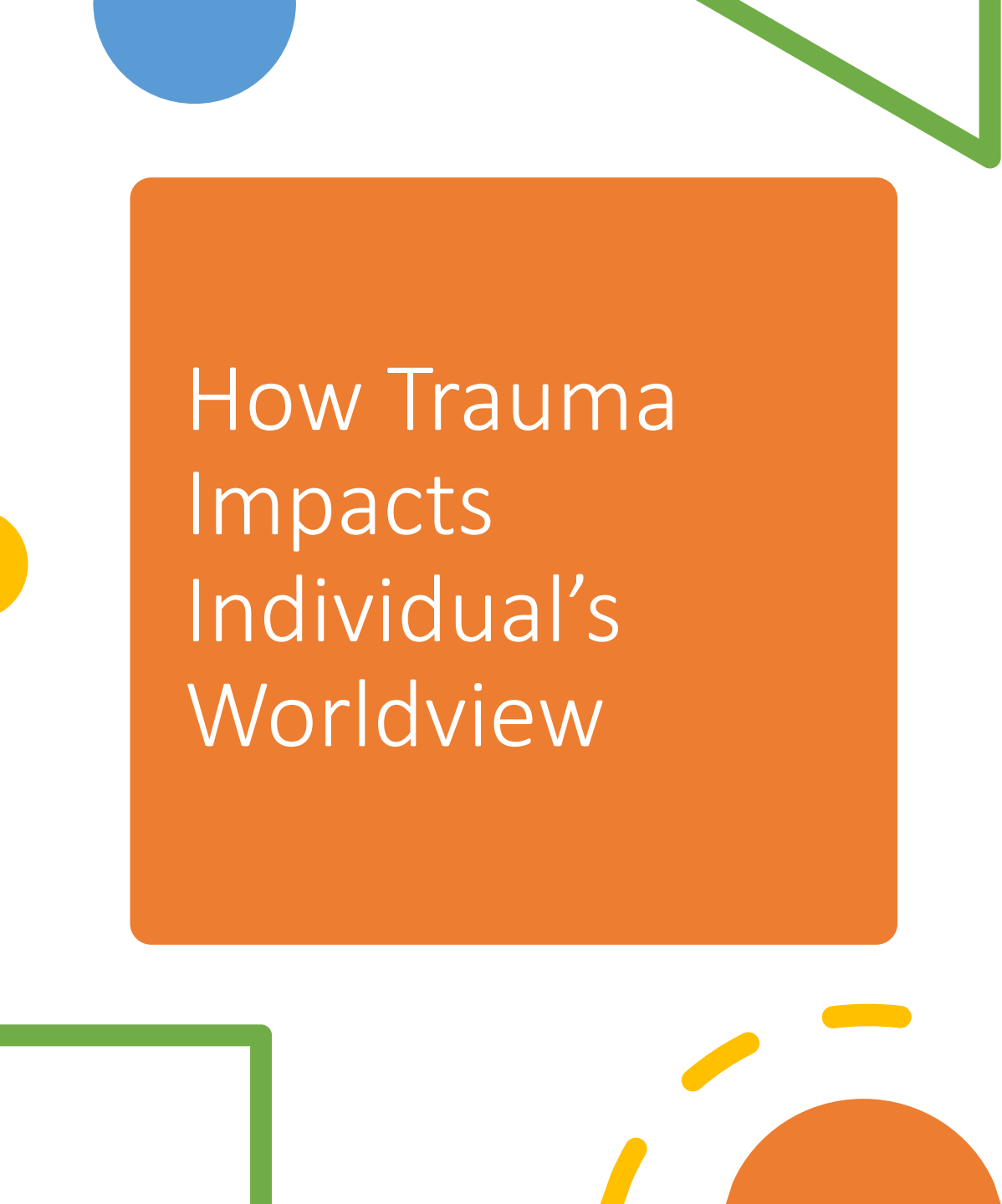
How Trauma makes an Impact

- Individuals who have survived trauma vary widely in how they experience and express traumatic stress reactions.

- Traumatic stress reactions vary in severity; they are often measured by the level of impairment or distress that clients report and are determined by the multiple factors that characterize the trauma itself, individual history and characteristics, developmental factors, sociocultural attributes, and available resources.

How Trauma Impacts Individual's Worldview

The characteristics of the trauma and the subsequent traumatic stress reactions can dramatically influence how individuals respond to the environment, relationships, interventions, and treatment services, and those same characteristics can also shape the assumptions that individual makes about:

- Their world (e.g., their view of others, sense of safety),

- Their future (e.g., hopefulness, fear of a foreshortened future),

- Themselves (e.g., feeling resilient, feeling incompetent in regulating emotions).

Racial Microaggressions

- <u>Racial microaggressions</u> are a form of psychological warfare and are defined as:
- 1) subtle verbal and nonverbal insults directed at people of Color, often automatically or unconsciously
- 2) layered insults, based on one's race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname
- 3) cumulative insults, which cause unnecessary stress to people of Color while privileging whites.

Interpersonal Racism

- Events that cause racial trauma occur in many different forms and may be direct or subtle and ambiguous.

- Although most racial encounters occur on an interpersonal level, they are usually the effect of structural or systemic racism like the examples listed above.

- Examples of interpersonal racism include (but are not limited to) physical and verbal assaults against a person of color, treating a person of color as a stereotype, such as assuming a person of color is criminal or dangerous.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership

IMPACT vs INTENT

Examples of Microaggression

- "You are so articulate"
- Assuming we are janitorial staff or secretaries
- Not learning to pronounce names
- "When I see you, I don't see race" or "I don't see color"
- "The most qualified people get the jobs/grants"
- Anything about affirmative action

How Does Racial Trauma Affect Individuals?

- Increased vigilance and suspicion – Suspicion of social institutions (schools, agencies, government), avoiding eye contact, only trusting persons within our social and family relationship networks

- Increased sensitivity to threat – Defensive postures, avoiding new situations, heightened sensitivity to being disrespected and shamed, and avoid taking risks

- Increased psychological and physiological symptoms – Unresolved traumas increase chronic stress and decrease immune system functioning, shift brains to limbic system dominance, increase risks for depression and anxiety disorders, and disrupt child development and quality of emotional attachment in family and social relationships

How Does Racial Trauma Affect Individuals? Cont.....

- Increased alcohol and drug usage – Drugs and alcohol are initially useful (real and perceived) in managing the pain and danger of unresolved traumas but become their own disease processes when dependency occurs

- Increased aggression – Street gangs, domestic violence, defiant behavior, and appearing tough and impenetrable are ways of coping with danger by attempting to control our physical and social environment

- Narrowing sense of time – Persons living in a chronic state of danger do not develop a sense of future; do not have long-term goals, and frequently view dying as an expected outcome

Racing ACEs: Ensuring Racial Justice is a Central Tenet of Trauma-informed Care

Adverse Childhood Experiences*

Historical Trauma

Death

Conception

Implicit bias, epigenetics

Adverse Childhood Experiences* pyramid (left):
- Early Death
- Disease, Disability, and Social Problems
- Adoption of Health-risk Behaviours
- Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Impairment
- Adverse Childhood Experiences
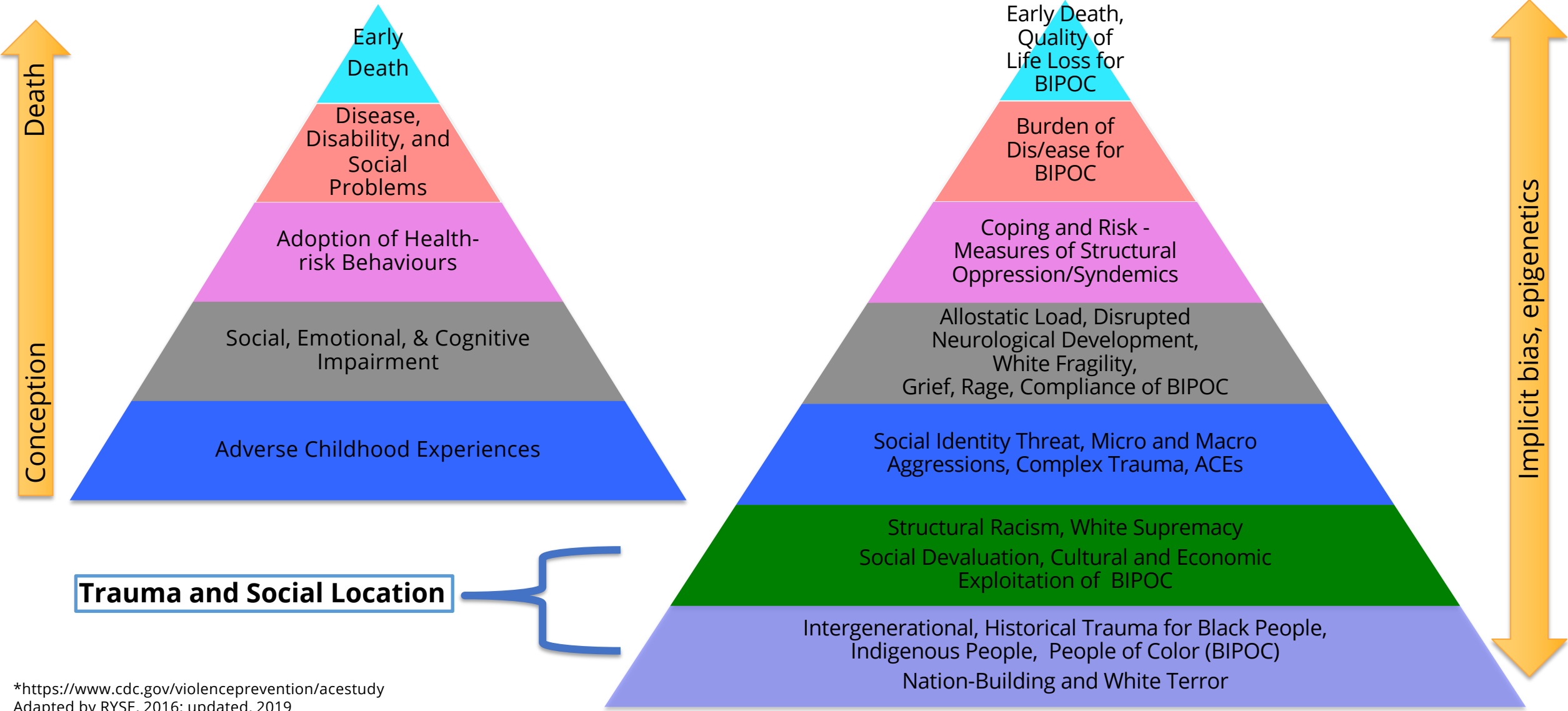
Trauma and Social Location

Historical Trauma pyramid (right):
- Early Death, Quality of Life Loss for BIPOC
- Burden of Dis/ease for BIPOC
- Coping and Risk - Measures of Structural Oppression/Syndemics
- Allostatic Load, Disrupted Neurological Development, White Fragility, Grief, Rage, Compliance of BIPOC
- Social Identity Threat, Micro and Macro Aggressions, Complex Trauma, ACEs
- Structural Racism, White Supremacy Social Devaluation, Cultural and Economic Exploitation of BIPOC
- Intergenerational, Historical Trauma for Black People, Indigenous People, People of Color (BIPOC) Nation-Building and White Terror

*https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy
Adapted by RYSE, 2016; updated, 2019

The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal Depression

Physical & Emotional Neglect

Emotional & Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Mental Illness

Substance Abuse

Incarceration

Domestic Violence

Homelessness

Adverse Community Environments

erty

Violence

Discrimination

Poor Housing Quality & Affordability

Community Disruption

Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital

Survival Stress Management

A process of adapting to stressful situations by **acting or reacting without thinking of the consequences of our choices**; immediate satisfaction or instant self-gratification; resulting in increased stress and/or depression:

Judgmental and distorted thoughts and feelings, impatience, exploitation, aggression, abuse and violence directed against oneself or others.

Addictive substances and behavior (i.e., **drugs, alcohol**, sex, shopping, **fast money**, gambling, food, video games, etc.) produces a limited sense of relief requires repetitions.

Historical Trauma

"History is not about the past. It's about the present!"

– Dr. El-Kati

What is Historical Trauma?

- Historical trauma is most easily described as multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural group.

- Historical trauma is cumulative and collective. The impact of this type of trauma manifests itself, emotionally and psychologically, in members of different cultural groups (Brave Heart, 2011).

- As a collective phenomenon, those who never even experienced the traumatic stressor, such as children and descendants, can still exhibit signs and symptoms of trauma.

Historical Unresolved Grief

Grief as the result of historical trauma that has not been adequately expressed, acknowledged, or otherwise resolved. Examples include Holocaust survivors; lack of acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide and the mass murder of other ethnic groups in World War II.

Disenfranchised Grief

- Grief as the result of historical trauma when loss cannot be voiced publicly or that loss is not openly acknowledged by the public.

- For example, the lack of recognition of the generations of loss of American Indians from colonialism, disease and other factors, and the corresponding lack of recognition of their right to grieve these collective experiences.

Internalized Oppression

- As the result of historical trauma, traumatized people may begin to internalize the views of the oppressor and perpetuate a cycle of self-hatred that manifests itself in negative behaviors.

- Emotions such as anger, hatred, and aggression are self-inflicted, as well as inflicted on members of one's own group. For example, self- hatred among Blacks/African Americans who act out their aggression on people who look like them.

Intergenerational Trauma

Is the transmission of historical oppression, toxic stress, and its negative consequences across generations.

There is evidence of the impact of **intergenerational trauma** on the health/well-being and on the health and/or social disparities facing a collective of people.

WHAT IS EPIGENETICS?

AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

"Epigenetics" is an emerging area of scientific research that shows how environmental influences—children's experiences—actually affect the expression of their genes.
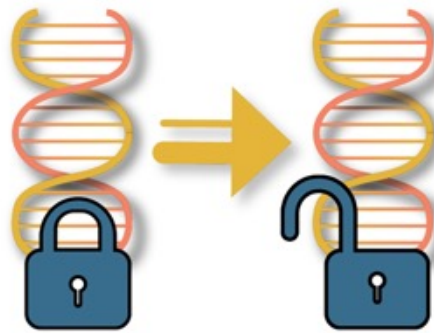
This means the old idea that genes are "set in stone" has been disproven. Nature vs. Nurture is no longer a debate. It's nearly always both!

During development, the DNA that makes up our genes accumulates chemical marks that determine how much or little of the genes is expressed. This collection of chemical marks is known as the "epigenome." The different experiences children have rearrange those chemical marks. This explains why genetically identical twins can exhibit different behaviors, skills, health, and achievement.

AMERICAN CHATTEL SLAVERY (1619-1865)

Chattel Slavery (personal property, bought and sold as commodities or like cattle)

1808 importing Africans as slaves was banned.

A typical slave family was matriarchal in form, for the mother's role was far more important than the father's and many times fathers' names was omitted from birth records.

P.T.S.S.

o <u>Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome</u> is a condition that exists because of centuries of chattel slavery followed by institutionalized racism and oppression have resulted in multigenerational adaptive behavior, some positive reflecting resilience, and others that are harmful and destructive.

o Theory of **P.T.S.S.** was developed by Dr. Joy DeGruy as a result of twelve years of quantitative and qualitative research.

DR. JOY DeGRUY
BE THE HEALING

POST TRAUMATIC SLAVE SYNDROME

America's Legacy Of Enduring Injury and Healing

by
Joy DeGruy, Ph.D.

Foreword by Randall Robinson

JIM CROWism, 1865-1965)

- 1865 - **13th Amendment /Slavery Abolished**
  - either slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime…
- 1866 - **Convict Leasing**
- **Sharecropping:** attempted to reimpose a thinly disguised form of slavery.
- 1866 - **Ku Klux Klan**
- **Lynching (often included castration)** 1882 to 1964, at least 4,742 in southern states and 219 in northern state.

"GREAT MIGRATION" AND GHETTO (1915-68)

o They were leaving the farm, share cropping and the abuse.

o Menial and industrial manufacturing jobs; segregated housing and employment.

o **1919 "Red Summer"** 13 days of racial violence on the South Side of Chicago, 23 blacks and 15 whites dead, 537 people injured, and 1,000 black families homeless.

THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS

THE EPIC STORY OF AMERICA'S GREAT MIGRATION

ISABEL WILKERSON
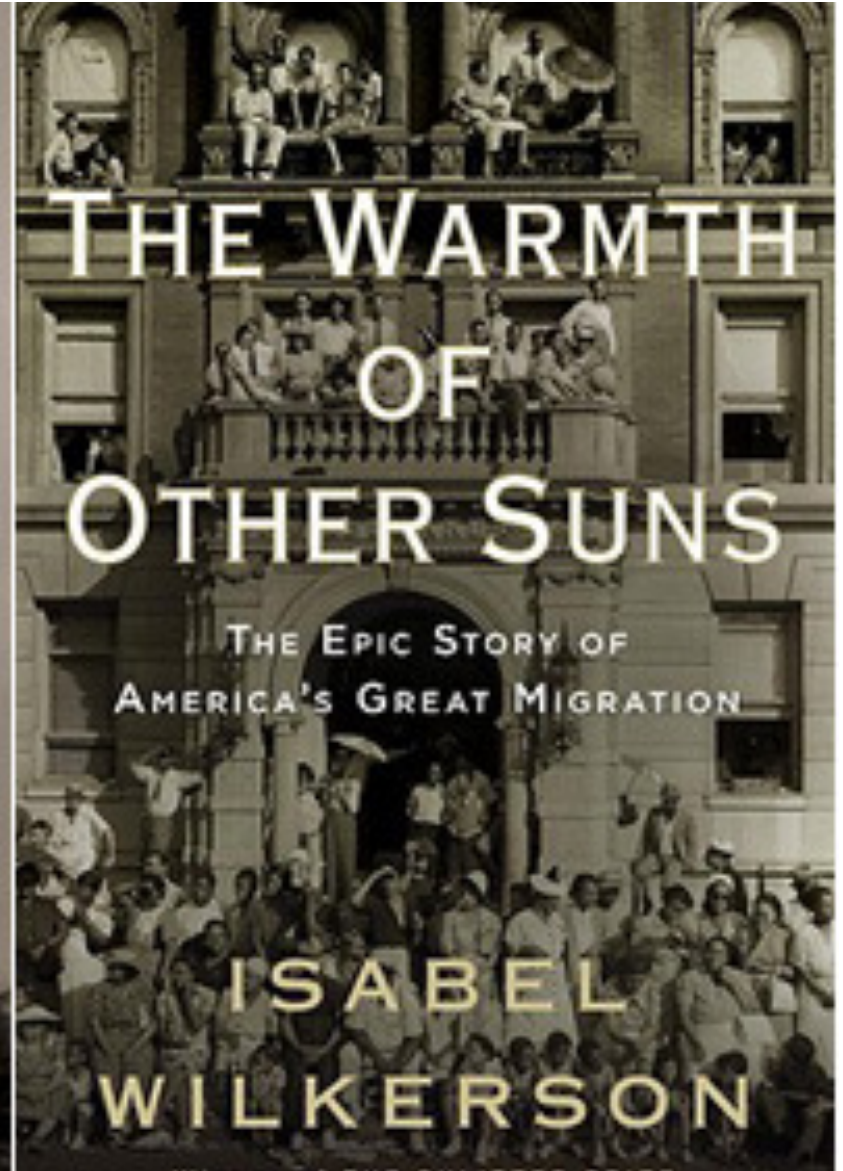
THE GREAT MIGRATION

About six million African Americans moved from the South to the North and West between 1916 and 1970, particularly during World Wars I and II. Most of the migrants moved from rural communities to large cities.
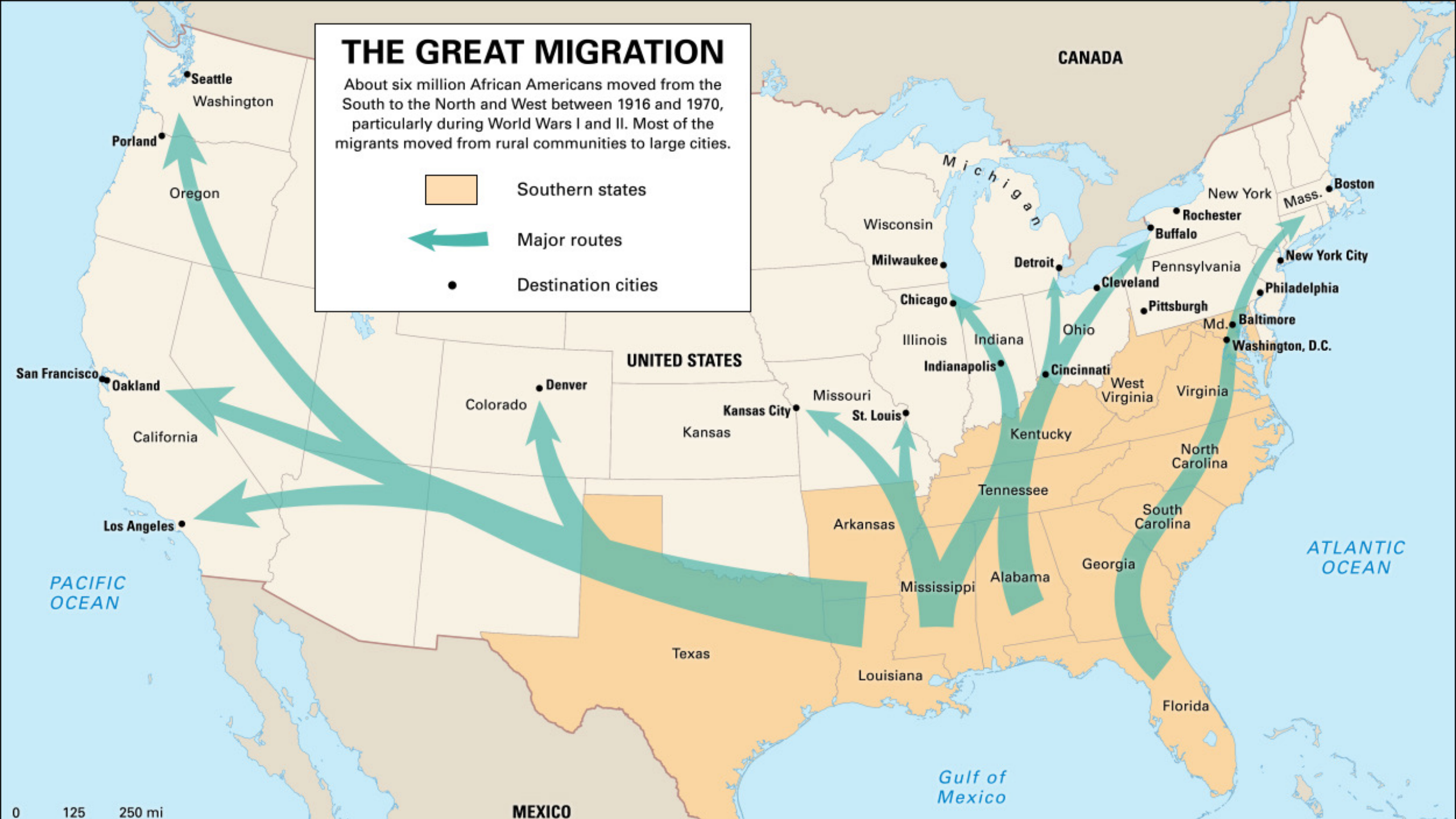
Southern states

Major routes

Destination cities

GHETTO AND WELFARE (1968-1975)

o **Welfare rules** "no adult men in the home.

o Decrease in low education industrial manufacturing jobs.

o Drugs, crime and family disintegration (all inter-related) took a heavy toll on the inhabitants of the inner city.

o The exodus of jobs and middle class

HYPERGHETTO AND PRISON (1975-1990)

○ **Hyperghetto** extreme concentration of poverty and underprivileged groups.

○ Blacks and whites use and sell drugs at about the same rate, but blacks are 20 times more likely going to Jail.

○ **Drugs had major impact on the women and children.**

○ Concentrated police presence.
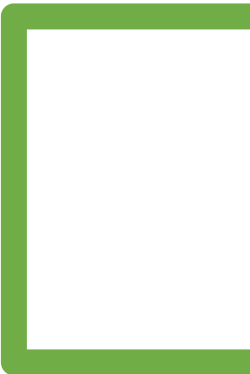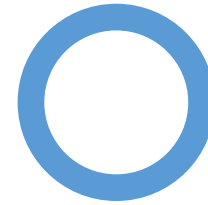
INSTITUTIONALIZED GENERATION (1985 –Now)

o Generation developed after the crack era. Born from the mid 1980's to present.

o Enriched with services providers external to family members.

o Creating an **inferiority** and **dependent** Culture.

o Element of internalized oppression and extreme level of learned helplessness.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Growth Needs

Self-fulfillment Needs

Self-Actualization

Self-Esteem Needs

Psychological Needs

Deficiency Needs

Social Needs

Safety Needs

Basic Needs

Physiological Needs

African American Citizenship
1619- 2022

Chattel Slavery
1619-1865
246 Years

Jim Crow and Segregation
1865-1965
100 Years
no (south) or limited (north) rights

Citizenship Rights
1965-2022
54 Years
Struggle for full inclusion

403

What Does All of This Mean?

- An awareness of unconscious bias requires us to fundamentally rethink the way we approach diversity work on several different levels.

- We have focused a great deal of attention on trying to find ways for people, especially those in the dominant groups, to "get" diversity. The challenge is that "getting it," on a conscious level, may have little or no impact on our unconscious beliefs and, more importantly, behavior.

What Is Healing?

Healing is...

A consistent process of efforts to create peace, balance, and justice.

Healing Wounds

- A commitment to healing is essential to facing history, making connections and taking effective action.

- The impact of historical harms, their aftermaths and their legacies continue to cause pain and create limitations for individuals and groups.

- If left unhealed, trauma is destructive to both the individual and the community, as it impacts people on emotional, cognitive, behavioral, physical, and spiritual levels.

- Cooperative efforts among historically divided groups are limited by the unhealed harm, while distrust, suspicion, fear and lack of comfort with one another can present obstacles to potentially constructive projects.

resilience:

"[t]he capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to challenges that threaten the function, survival, or future development of the system."

—**Ann Masten**, Professor, University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development

**Defining Community Resilience**

1) The ability of community systems to prepare for, withstand, and recover from acute shocks while also addressing and preventing the adverse effects of structural racism.

2) A community's ability to cope, strive, and be supported through equitable access to buffers that address and relieve sources of chronic stress and acute adversity.

Developing Our Cultural Intelligence!

- **Cultural Intelligence**…Maybe as important as EQ (Emotional Intelligence) for educators.

- Cultural intelligence measures a person's capacity to function effectively in a multicultural environment.

- Employers and organizations apply CQ to foster tolerance and enhance cross-cultural interactions.
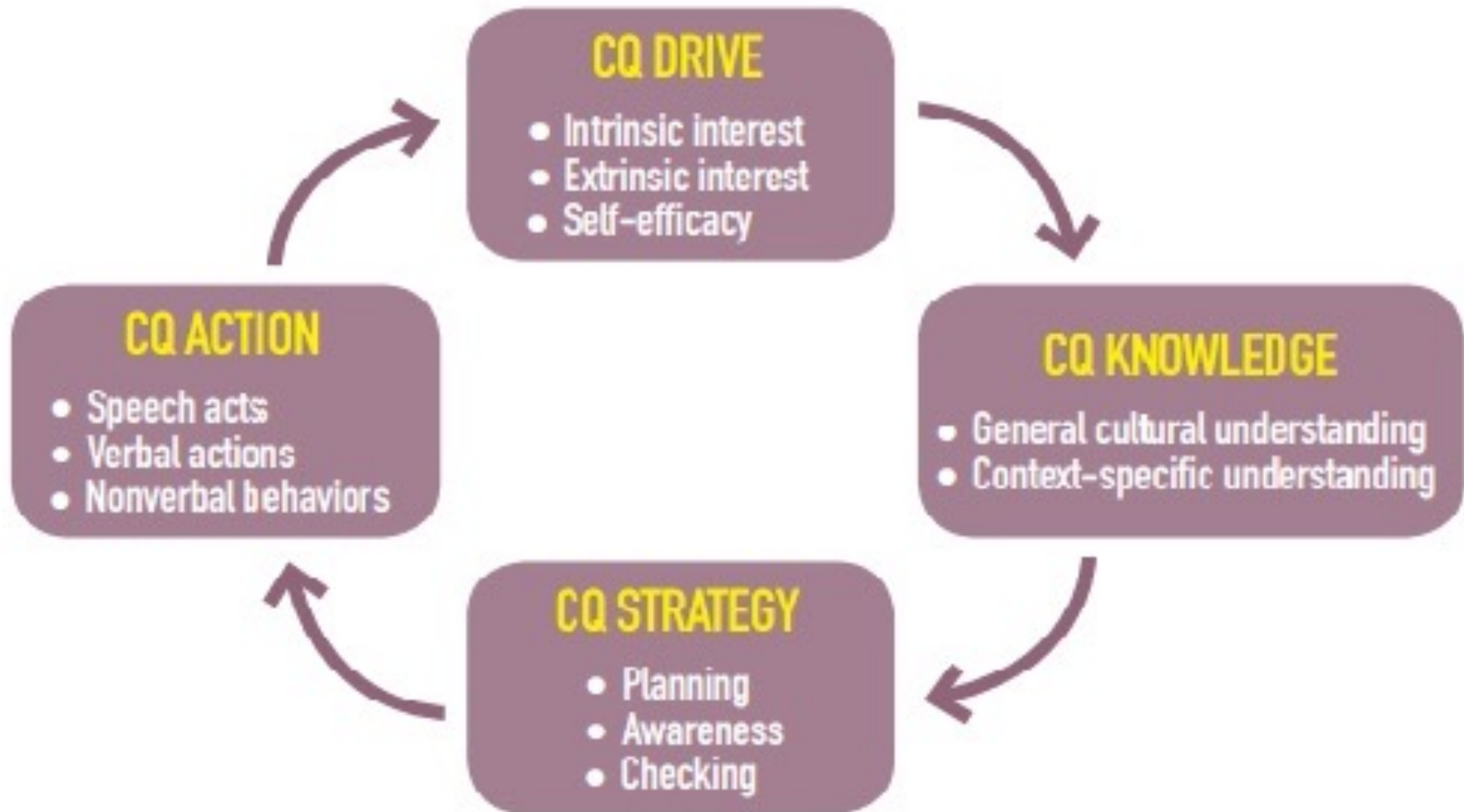
Following the Framework

One way to develop cultural intelligence is to focus first on the motivation to engage with different cultures (CQ Drive).

Then it makes sense to gain an understanding of core cultural differences (CQ Knowledge).

Next, you can use your knowledge of how cultures are similar and different to consciously plan for multicultural interactions (CQ Strategy).

The final step is to make sure that your behavior is flexibly appropriate for different cultural settings (CQ Action). This is not the only way to develop CQ, but it provides one way of thinking about how you can enhance your CQ.

Post Traumatic Growth

Where do we go from here?

PTG definition

- Post-traumatic growth is positive psychological change experienced as a result of adversity and other challenges in order to rise to a higher level of functioning.

- Ultimately, Post Traumatic Growth highlights the benefits of emotional growth, stronger relationship bonds, and a different perspective on life.

5 Domains of PTG

Personal Strength

- Trauma often leads to Self-doubt

- Recognizing your ability to handle challenges

- Increase your sense of capacities to survive and prevail

- We must believe in our possibilities
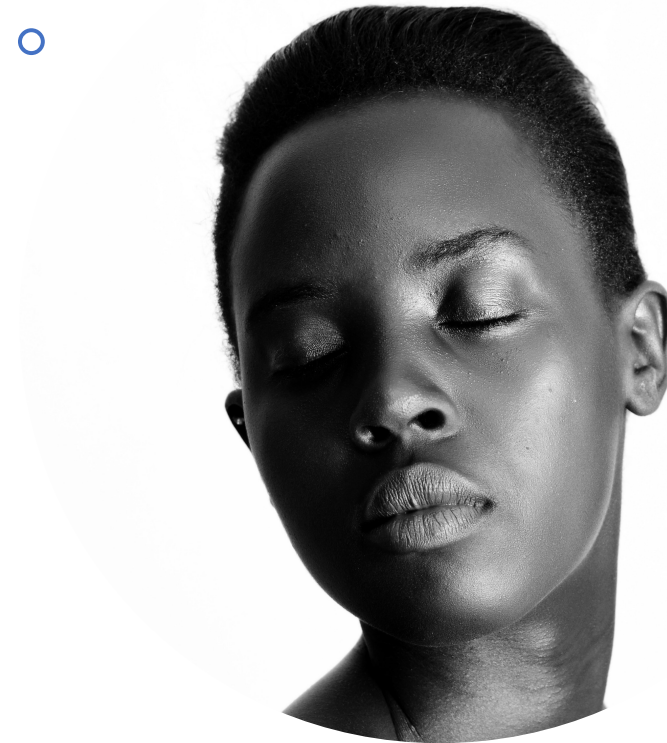
Healthy Relationships

- Finding supports and networks to help you move forward

- Set strong boundaries and let your expectations be known.

- Being afraid of being vulnerable is a major obstacle

Appreciation and Purpose of Life

- Understand what is important to you. What are the things you value and why?

- Do things that lead to a purpose.

- Small victories

Consecutive Constructive Choices

- Do not be afraid of new experiences. Explore new information, spaces, people

- Exposure and Consistency are key

- Have some compassion for yourself

Personal Development

- Do not be afraid of finding out who you truly are or who you want to be.

- What are you investing in yourself?

- Are you keeping it real with yourself?

Post Traumatic Growth

The process of post-traumatic growth can lead to improved relationships with others, more compassion, openness, appreciation for life, spiritual growth, personal strength, and a renewed sense of possibilities in the world.

Being a Racial Ally

- Being Brave in a Place of Discomfort
- Willing to Use Privilege to Make Systematic Differences
- Willingness to be open to listening without Defensiveness
- Having empathy for other's Pain
- Acknowledging your pain and that there is work for you to do also.

Being a Victim of the System...

- Understand that something has or is happening to you

- Have confidence and Pride in who you are

- Understand that you have value that does not need to be validated by anyone else

- Seek places and experiences to help you heal instead of places and experiences of acceptance.

- Stop trying to get others to get it...that is not your work. That is their work!
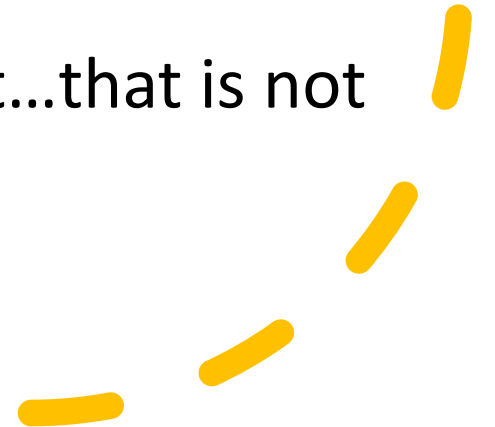
RESILIENCY

- Resiliency is a quality that can help you recover from early life experiences and deep emotional wounds

- The ability to "bounce back" or adapt in the face of adversity or major life stress

- Everyone has an ability to be resilient and to become *even more* resilient
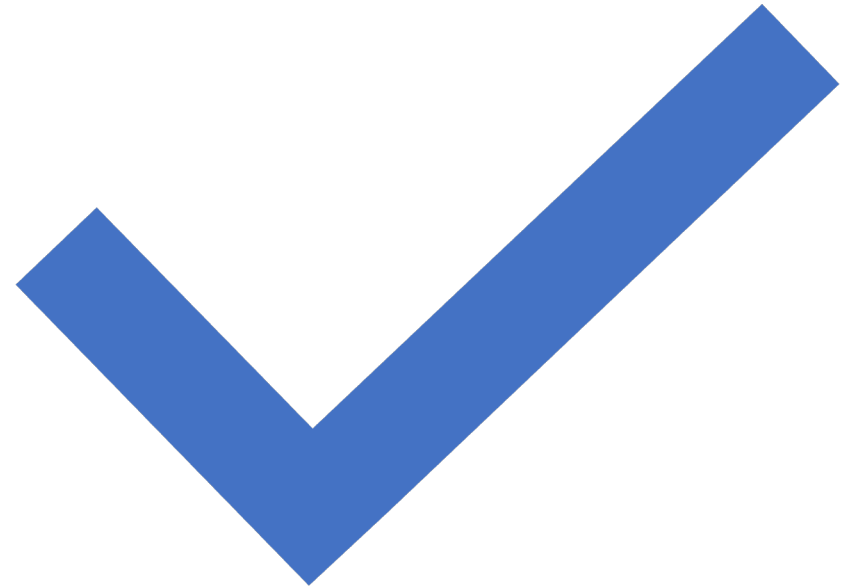
RESILIENCE VS. PTG

- **RESILIENCE**: THE ABILITY TO RECOVER READILY FROM ILLNESS, DEPRESSION, ADVERSITY OR THE LIKE. THE ABILITY TO REGAIN SHAPE.

- **PTG**: A NEW LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING AND PERSPECTIVE. IT IS A TRANSFORMATIVE RESPONSE TO ADVERSITY.

Please Remember

Healing is a Journey!

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Websites:

Somatic Experiencing®: www.traumahealing.com

SAMHSA's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (NCTIC): www.samhsa.gov/nctic/

The Suicide Prevention Resource Center (SPRC),http://www.sprc.org/library/black.am.facts.pdf

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