



**Designing Space  
for Joy  
in  
Equity Leadership**



# HELLO!

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- Current Educational Consultant / Coach at National Equity Project
- Former Exec Director of Equity, Partnerships & Engagement, Madison Metro School District



  
Heidi LaMassa  
PHOTOGRAPHY

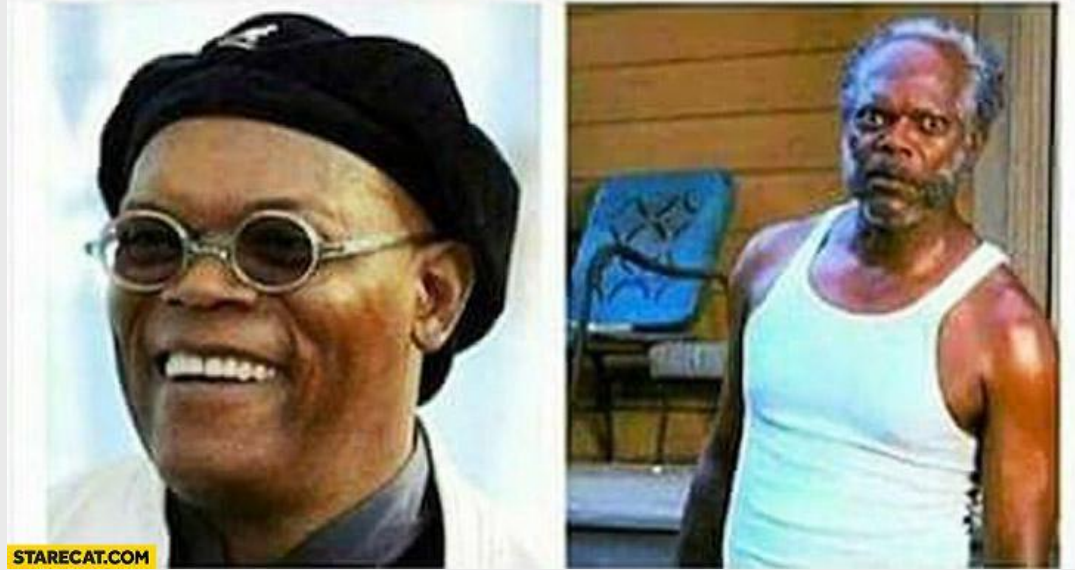


## Remember When...

- You saw THIS job posting and thought to yourself, “YES! I CAN DO THAT!”
- Imagined yourself in THIS role
- Felt like you were up to the challenge
- Prayed and hoped you would be the one
- Got the offer, “YES, I AM THE ONE!”
- Showed up ready to go.....

**And then....**

When you first started your job vs you  
at your job now...





“

***"Relationships are all there is. Everything in the universe only exists because it is in relationship to everything else. Nothing exists in isolation. We have to stop pretending we are individuals that can go it alone" ~ Margaret J. Wheatley***



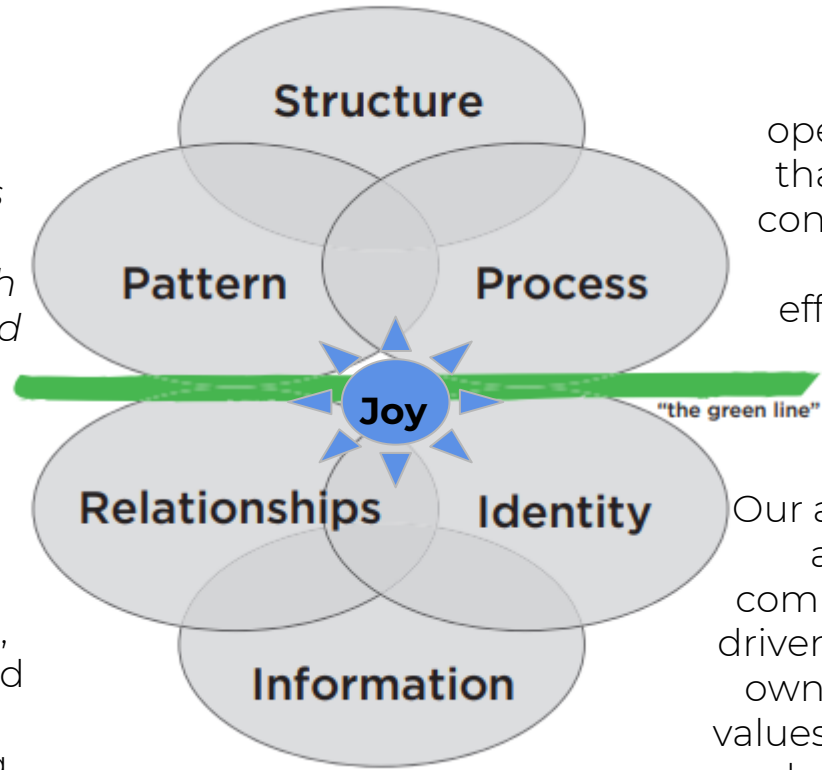
# DESIGN JOY INTO YOUR WORK

# Infuse Joy & Inspiration into spaces

The way we organize ourselves to conduct it's work

*Strategies to accomplish mission and goals*

values its people – their emotional, physical and spiritual well-being



The operations that build consistency and efficiency

Our actions are completely driven by our own set of values, beliefs and sense of identity.

Information is like oxygen in a system.

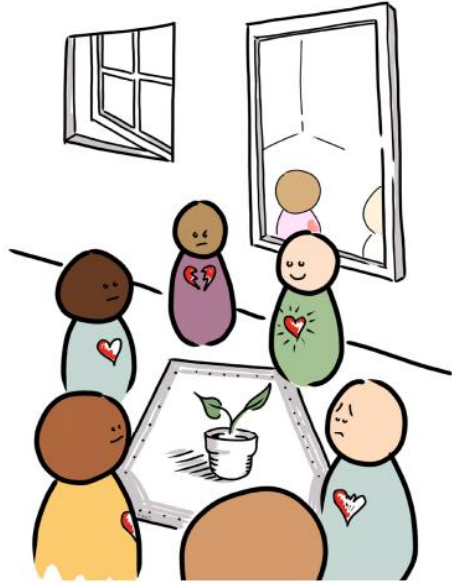




**In equity - the HOW  
is as important as the  
WHAT**

**Process and  
Outcomes**

# IDENTITY: ATTEND TO HEALING



## Attend to Healing

The effects of oppression are complex and often hinder our ability to take action. Integrate ongoing healing processes when designing for equity.

## Attend to Healing

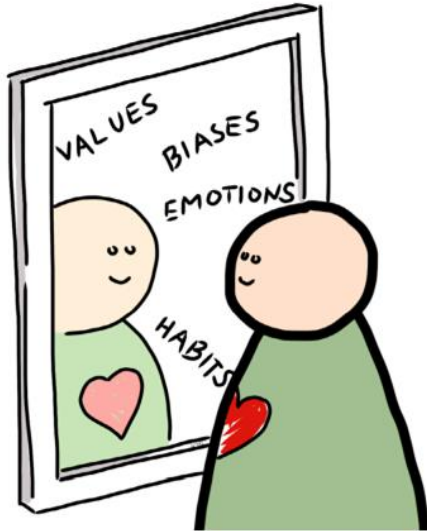
### Why?

As adrienne marie brown says, "We all have the capacity to heal each other." Equity work is challenging and emotional. Trauma, past and current, is often an unrecognized factor as we seek to collaborate and build trust within our teams. To be effective we must attend to our well-being and healing on an ongoing basis.

### How:

- Establish protocols to name situations when someone feels pain or when there is opportunity for healing.
- Practice healing in group and private settings. Consistent use of check-ins, somatic work, counseling, retreats, or creative outlets support team well-being.
- Make it a part of your design process, prioritizing healing in project planning.
- Explore existing frameworks for equitable conflict management. E.g. restorative justice practices.

# IDENTITY: PRACTICE SELF-AWARENESS



## Practice Self-Awareness

Who we are determines how we design. Looking in the "mirror" reveals what we see, how we relate, and how our perspectives impact our practice.

## Practice Self-Awareness

### Why?

Liberatory Design requires us to minimize the effects of our biases and maximize our potential for non-oppressive partnerships. Practicing self-awareness increases our capacity to work with humility, curiosity, and courage.

### How:

- Acknowledge and challenge our assumptions.
- To surface what we don't know, ask: "What is unfamiliar to me in this situation? Why?"
- Ask: "How does my identity – my race, class, gender, or another identifier – position me in society relative to privilege and oppression?"
- Ask: "How might my identity impact people and process?"
- Seek out new knowledge about privilege and oppression to expand our awareness and understanding of equity.

# SCHEDULE TIME FOR REFLECTION & INSPIRATION

1

**Block time on your  
calendar for “thinking”  
and reflection**

Start or end the week with Do  
Not Disturb time (reflect on the  
week, set intentions, journal)

2

**Go Back to Your  
“Why” Regularly**

Remember your own  
personal values, your  
mission and purpose for  
being here in this moment

3

**Surround yourself  
with motivating  
influences**

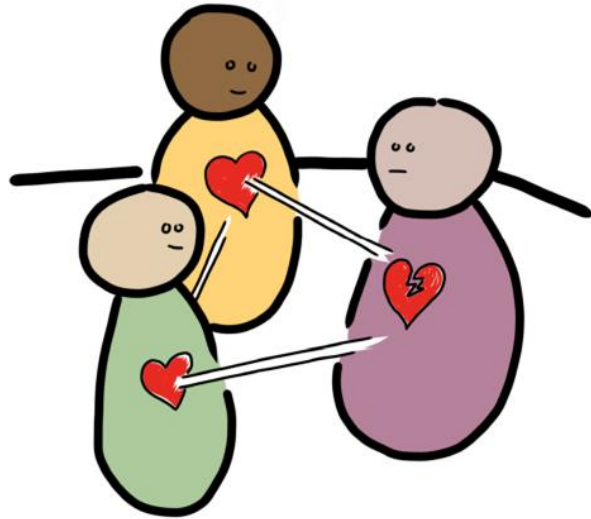
Seek out opportunities to  
stay inspired, motivated,  
joyful

**CARING FOR  
MYSELF IS NOT  
SELF-INDULGENCE,  
IT IS SELF-  
PRESERVATION  
AND THAT IS  
AN ACT OF  
POLITICAL  
WARFARE.**

**AUDRE LORDE**



# RELATIONSHIPS: BUILD RELATIONAL TRUST



## Build Relational Trust

Invest in relationships with intention, especially across difference. Honor stories. Practice empathetic listening.

## Build Relational Trust

### Why?

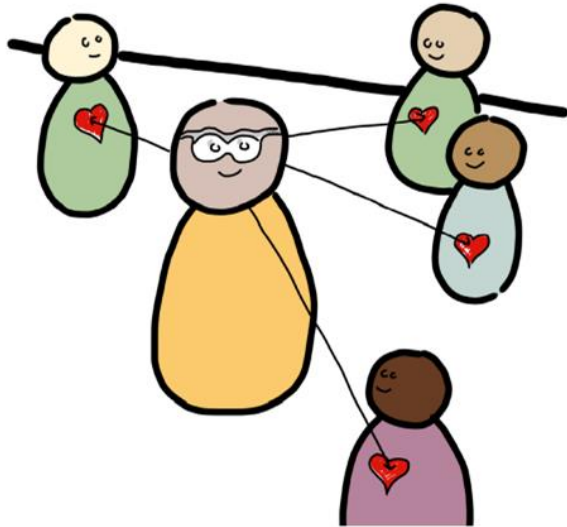
Relational trust is the glue in Liberatory Design work. When working across difference on difficult challenges, teams must invest in each other to develop trust, share openly, and collaborate authentically.

If we are courageous in identifying and processing emotions with our team, we create opportunities for healing and prevent distortion of our work.

### How:

- Facilitate personal connection by inviting people to share what matters to them.
- Dedicate time and space for people to bring forward their full selves and identities.
- Demonstrate the importance of nonjudgmental listening.
- Create space for community to reflect, express, and process thoughts and emotions.
- Cultivate a culture that invites dialogue and collective sense-making.

# RELATIONSHIPS: FOCUS ON HUMAN VALUES



## Focus on Human Values

Get to know the community we are designing with in as many different ways as possible. Anchor all of our decision-making in human values.

## Focus on Human Values

### Why?

In order to design for genuine shared power across communities, place relationships at the center of our work.

To do this, invest in the work necessary to know a community and recognize the expertise of the people who are closest to the issues being addressed in the design challenge.

Listen attentively and honor the stories that are shared with us. Honor the humanity of our design teams and create space for reflection.

### How:

- Listen from a place of love. Be humble and acknowledge that we are not the expert.
- Honor the stories, experiences, and emotions that community members share.
- Stay connected to the community we are working with through every phase of the project.
- Be a participant in collective sense-making.

# FIND YOUR PEOPLE, GROW YOUR BASE

1

## Schedule time to connect with others

Decide how much time per week or how many connections you want to make in a month, prioritize relationships

2

## Center Humanity in your interactions

Model to everyone else that you center and value your humanity and theirs too

3

## Find “Your People”

You will be stronger by being in a community. You can find joy by building



A photograph of Bell Hooks speaking into a microphone. She is wearing glasses and a brown top. The background is dark and out of focus.

One of the most vital ways we **sustain ourselves**  
**is by building communities** of resistance,  
places where we know **we are not alone.**

*Bell Hooks*

AZ QUOTES



A large, abstract green brushstroke background that transitions from a darker green at the top to a lighter green at the bottom. A white rectangular frame is centered over the brushstroke, containing the text.

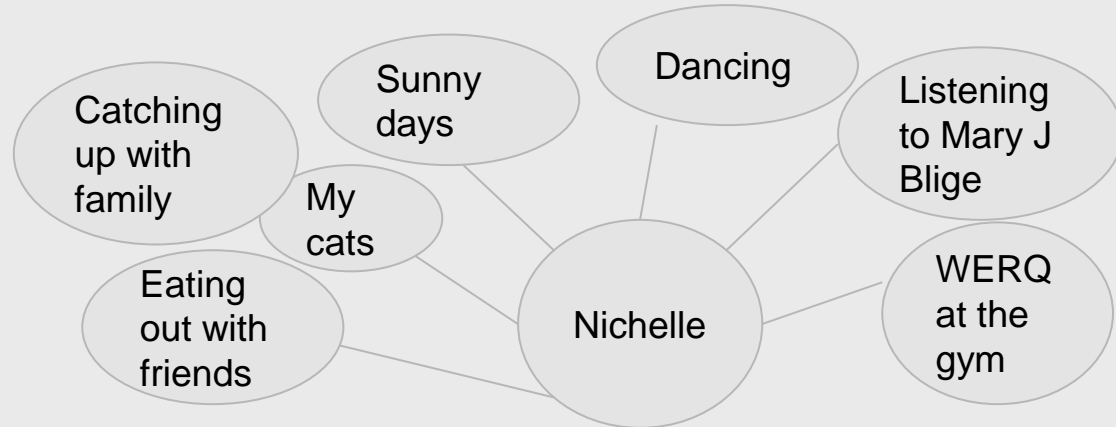
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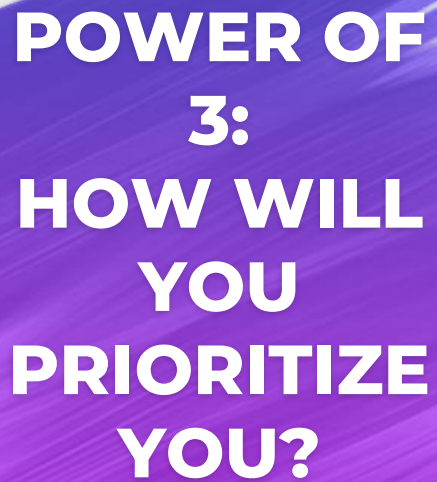
***"What we pay attention to grows, so I'm thinking about how we grow what we are all imagining and creating into something large enough and solid enough that it becomes a tipping point" - Adrienne Marie Brown***

***Emergent Strategy - 2017***

# What brings you joy?

- On a piece of paper
- Draw a circle with your name in the center
- Draw lines / circles that extend to things that bring you joy





**POWER OF  
3:  
HOW WILL  
YOU  
PRIORITIZE  
YOU?**

**PERSONAL  
JOY**

**What act of joy are you going to add to your calendar this week? month?**

**WORK  
RELATIONSHIP  
BUILDING**

**What upcoming meeting(s) or projects can you center and nurture relationships, human values and communication?**

**HEALING,  
MIRROR WORK**

**What can you do to make your healing and reflection a priority? What small daily acts can you practice? What more long-term commitment might you need to make?**

“I will not have my life  
narrowed down.

I will not bow down  
to somebody else’s whim

or to  
someone  
else’s  
ignorance.”

bell hooks





## **CREDITS**

### **LIBERATORY DESIGN CARDS**

<https://www.liberatorydesign.com/>

### **6 or 7 CIRCLE MODEL**

<https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/seven-circle-model>



**THANKS!**

Any questions?

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