Designing Space for Joy in Equity Leadership
HELLO!

I am Nichelle Nichols
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- Current Educational Consultant / Coach at National Equity Project
- Former Exec Director of Equity, Partnerships & Engagement, Madison Metro School District
● 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...

STARECAT.COM
"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 its work

Strategies to accomplish mission and goals

The operations that build consistency and efficiency

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

Information is like oxygen in a system.

Adapted from the Dalmau Network Group | www.dalmau.com
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.
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, and joyful.
CARING FOR MYSELF IS NOT SELF-INDULGENCE, IT IS SELF-PRESERVATION AND THAT IS AN ACT OF POLITICAL WARFARE.

AUDRE LORDE
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.
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 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.
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
“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

```plaintext
Nichelle
Dancing
Listening to Mary J Blige
WERQ at the gym
Catching up with family
Sunny days
My cats
Eating out with friends
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 Nichelle
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
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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