

# Bearing Witness as an Act of Love, Resistance, Hope, and Healing

NEOTEC

*New England Occupational Therapy Education Council*

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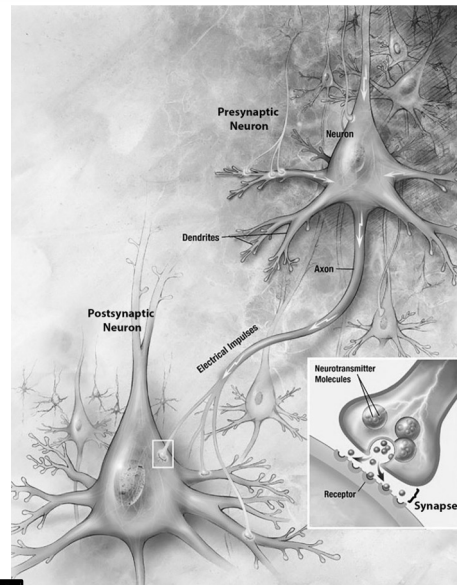
1. Examine the impact of toxic stress on our ability to engage and learn.
2. Examine practical strategies of equity-minded trauma-informed pedagogy.

## Teaching as Brain Changing: Exploring Connections between Neuroscience and Innovative Teaching

Melinda T. Owens and Kimberly D. Tanner\*

Science Education Partnership and Assessment Laboratory, San Francisco State University,  
San Francisco, CA 94132

**H**ow do you conceptualize learning? Do you think of learning as a contractual agreement: the instructor performs certain actions to facilitate learning, and the student, in turn, explicitly or implicitly promises to behave in ways to receive that learning? Or do you think of learning in sociological terms: the learner, through what he or she learns, transforms his or her beliefs and becomes a more emancipated citizen of the world? Or perhaps you think of learning in psychological terms: learners are motivated, store facts in their minds, and create mental knowledge structures. All of these ways of conceptualizing learning can be beneficial in understanding how students learn and what makes teaching effective.



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## We Feel, Therefore We Learn: The Relevance of Affective and Social Neuroscience to Education

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang<sup>1</sup> and Antonio Damasio<sup>2</sup>

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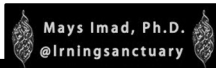
## REVIEW ARTICLE OPEN

# Learning and memory under stress: implications for the classroom

Susanne Vogel<sup>1</sup> and Lars Schwabe<sup>1</sup>

Exams, tight deadlines and interpersonal conflicts are just a few examples of the many events that may result in high levels of stress in both students and teachers. Research over the past two decades identified stress and the hormones and neurotransmitters released during and after a stressful event as major modulators of human learning and memory processes, with critical implications for educational contexts. While stress around the time of learning is thought to enhance memory formation, thus leading to robust memories, stress markedly impairs memory retrieval, bearing, for instance, the risk of underachieving at exams. Recent evidence further indicates that stress may hamper the updating of memories in the light of new information and induce a shift from a flexible, 'cognitive' form of learning towards rather rigid, 'habit'-like behaviour. Together, these stress-induced changes may explain some of the difficulties of learning and remembering under stress in the classroom. Taking these insights from psychology and neuroscience into account could bear the potential to facilitate processes of education for both students and teachers.

*npj Science of Learning* (2016) **1**, 16011; doi:10.1038/npjscilearn.2016.11; published online 29 June 2016

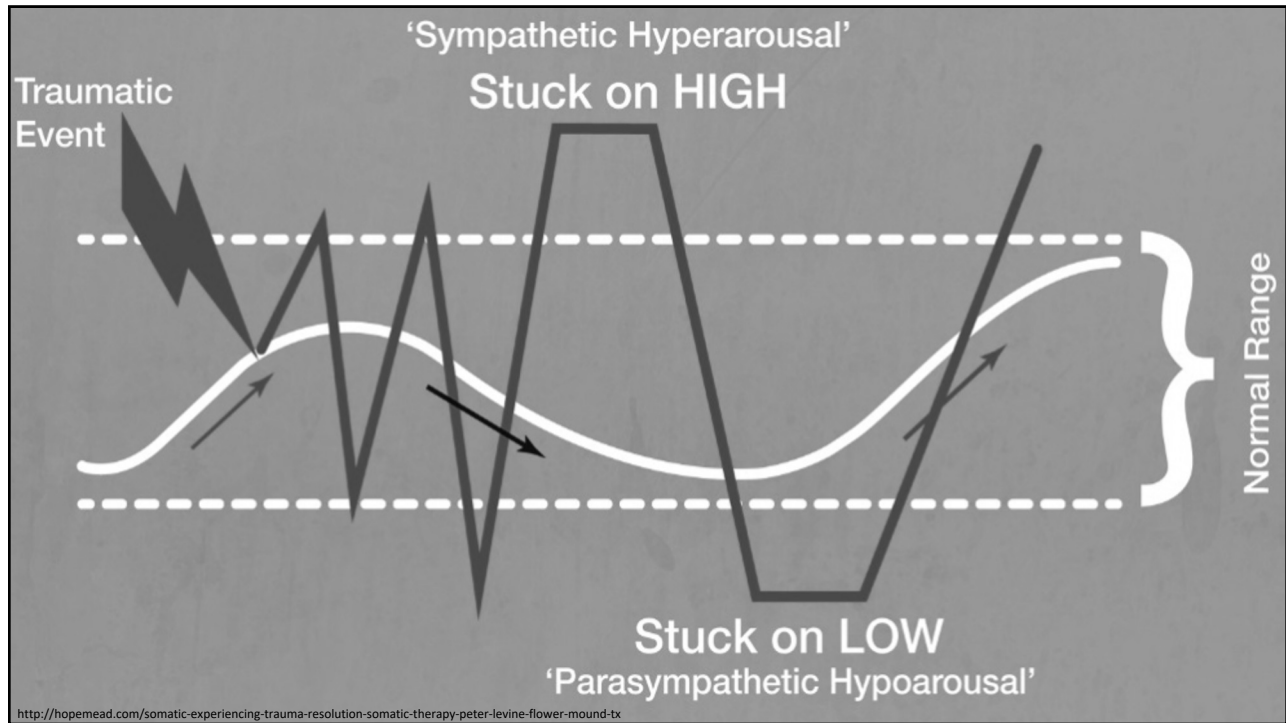


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# It's not typical stress. It's traumatic stress.



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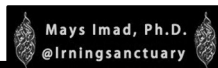
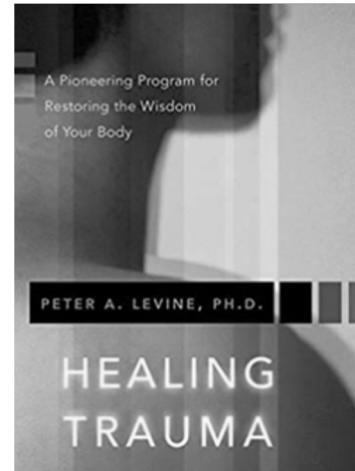
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## What is Trauma?

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# What is Trauma?

“It’s about being  
frightened or  
overwhelmed  
**beyond our capacity  
to rebound.”**

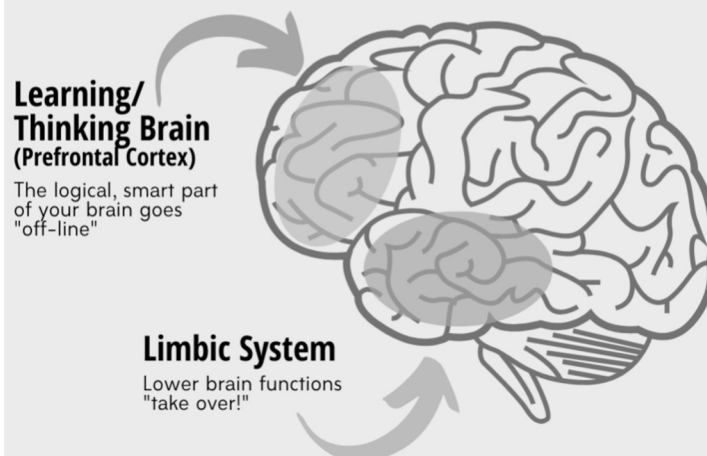


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## Fight - Flight - Freeze

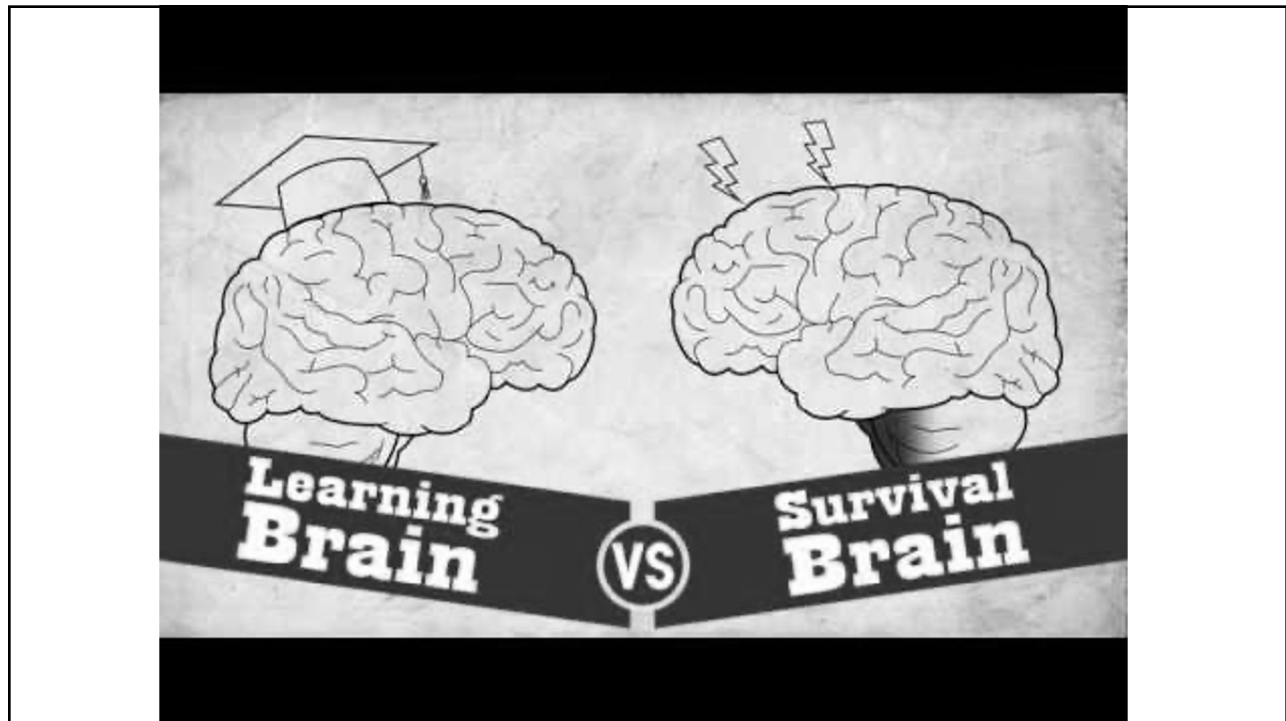
What's really happening when we go into..

**"SURVIVAL MODE"**



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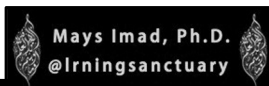
## Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

“It is the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person” (Figley, 1995).

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# How do you know if you are experiencing STS?



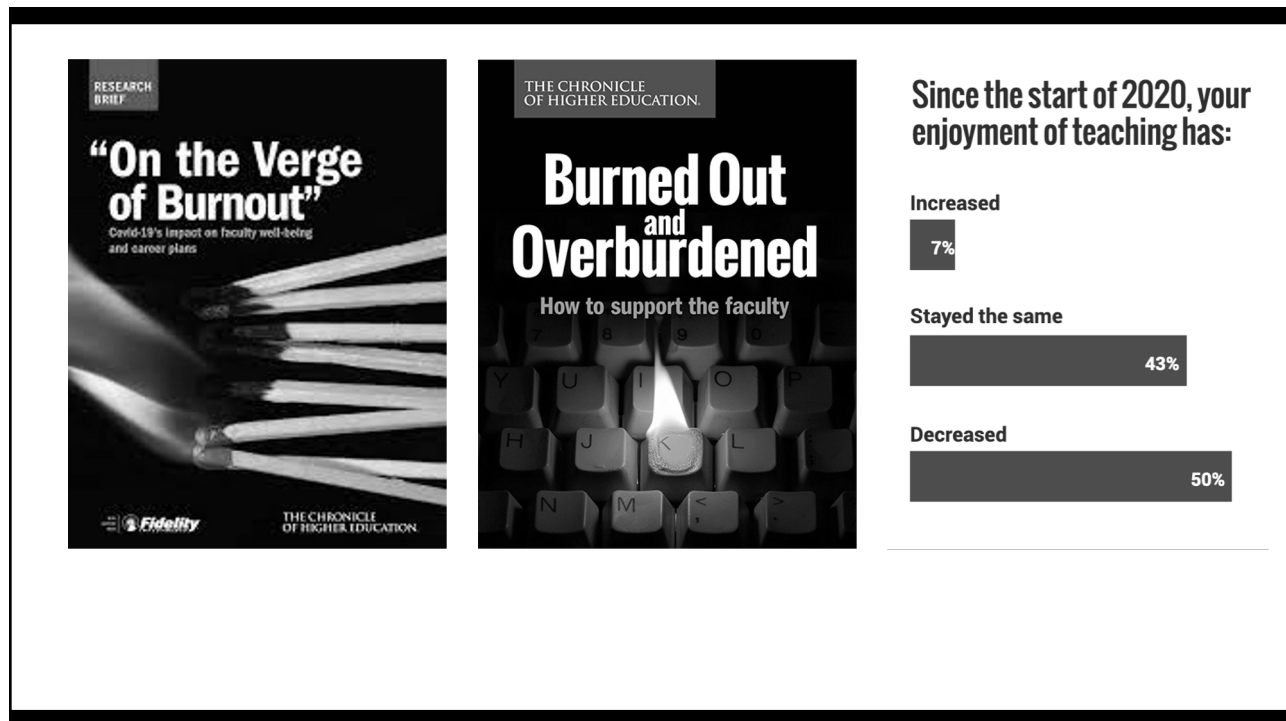
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## Risk Factors

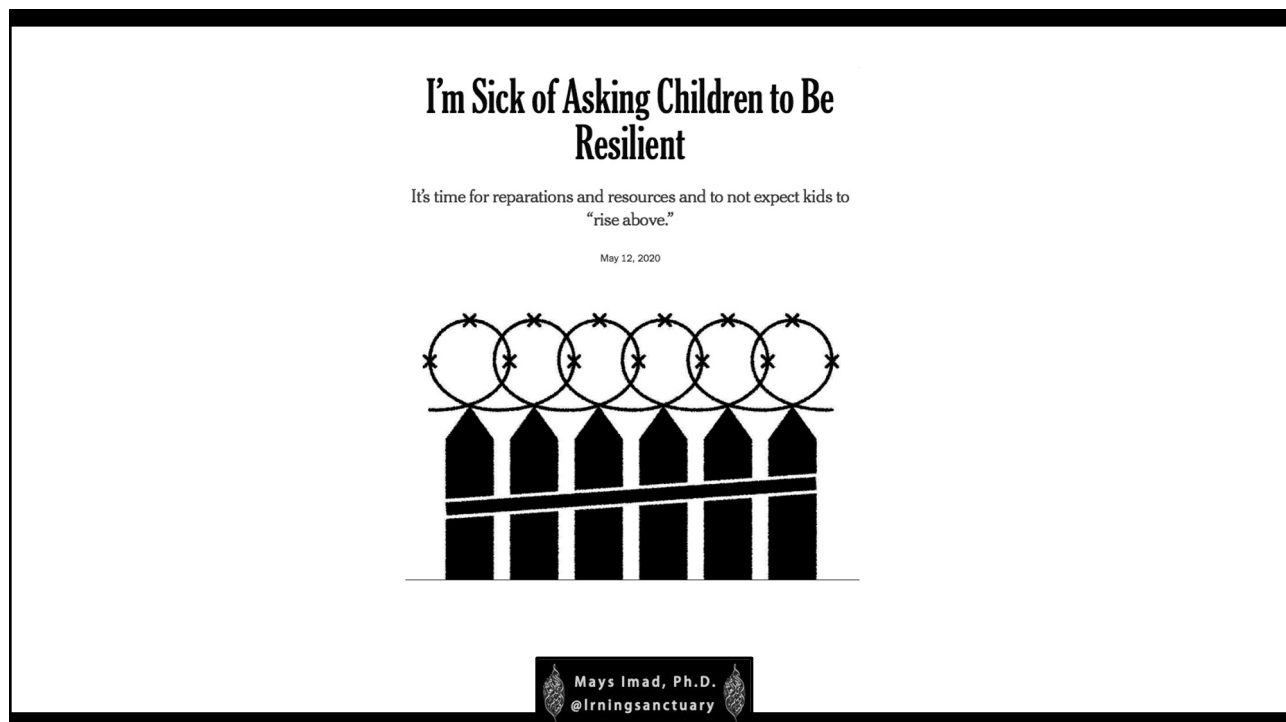
1. Repeated exposure to students' adversities and trauma.
2. Personal trauma.
3. Chronic stressors.
4. Workload.



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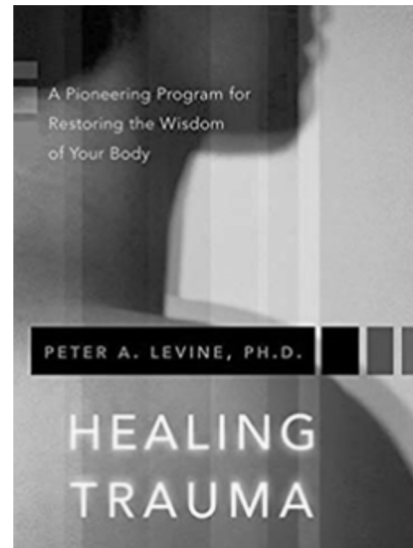


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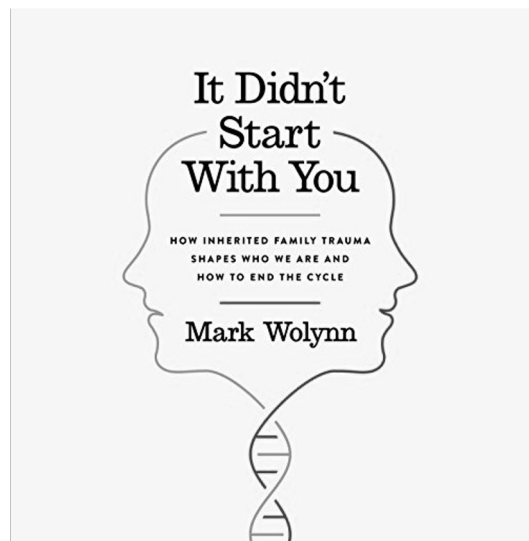
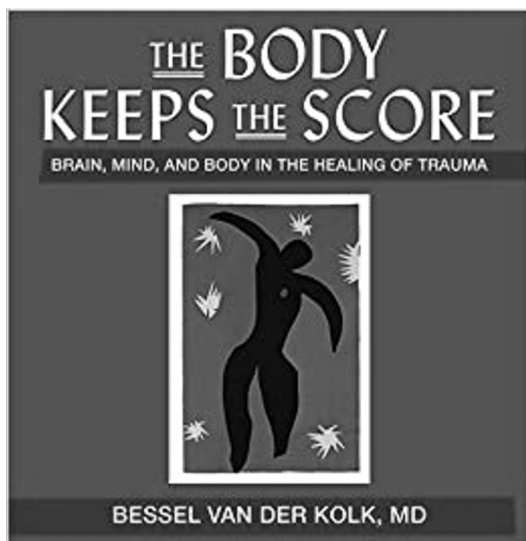
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# Our Sense of Resilience is Challenged



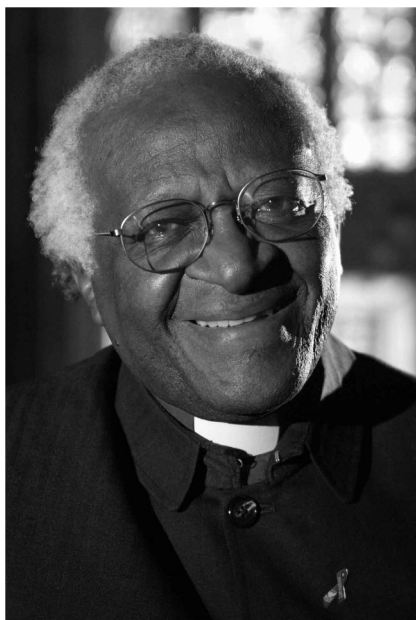
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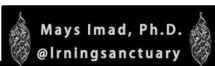
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## Desmond Tutu

"We have hardships without becoming hard. We have heartbreak without being broke."

— *The Book of Joy*



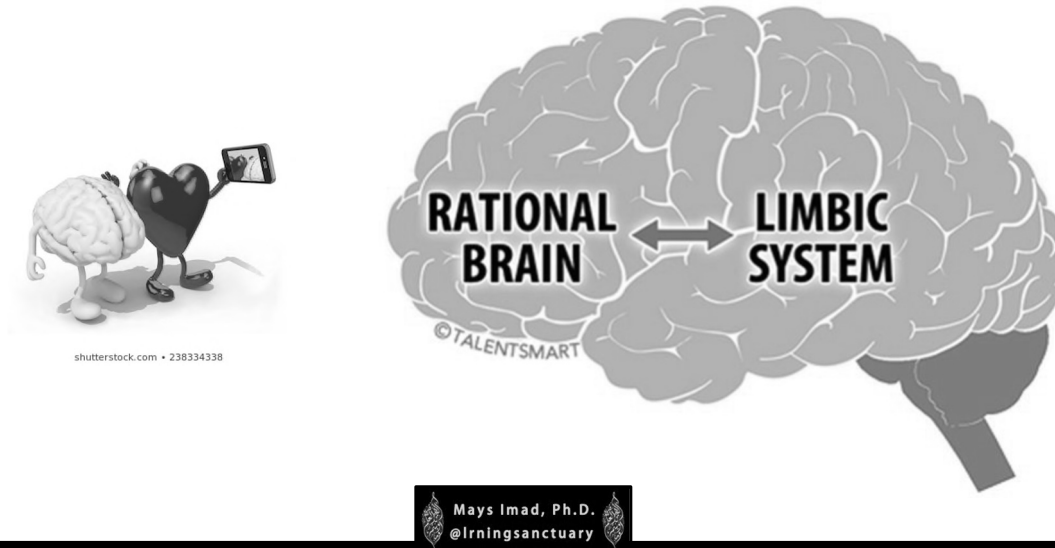
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**We don't just "get over it" and go on as business as usual—we need an intervention.**



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# Calming the Nervous System



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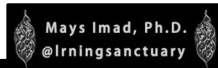
Trauma-Informed Teaching requires having an awareness of our students' past and present experiences and the effects of those experiences on students' well-being and their ability to engage with the materials and learn. We must be able to recognize trauma in ourselves and our students. We need to be intentional to promote safe environments that cultivates connectedness, empowerment, and recovery.

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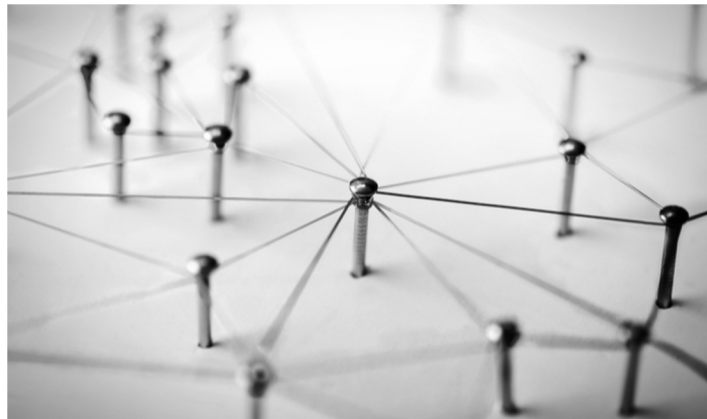
**Trauma shatters our assumptions about the  
benevolence of the world, the  
meaningfulness of the world, and our sense  
of self and self worth.**

**Trauma is Relational**



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### **Healing Through Relationships**



**Interdependent Relationships with the Earth &  
its Inhabitants**



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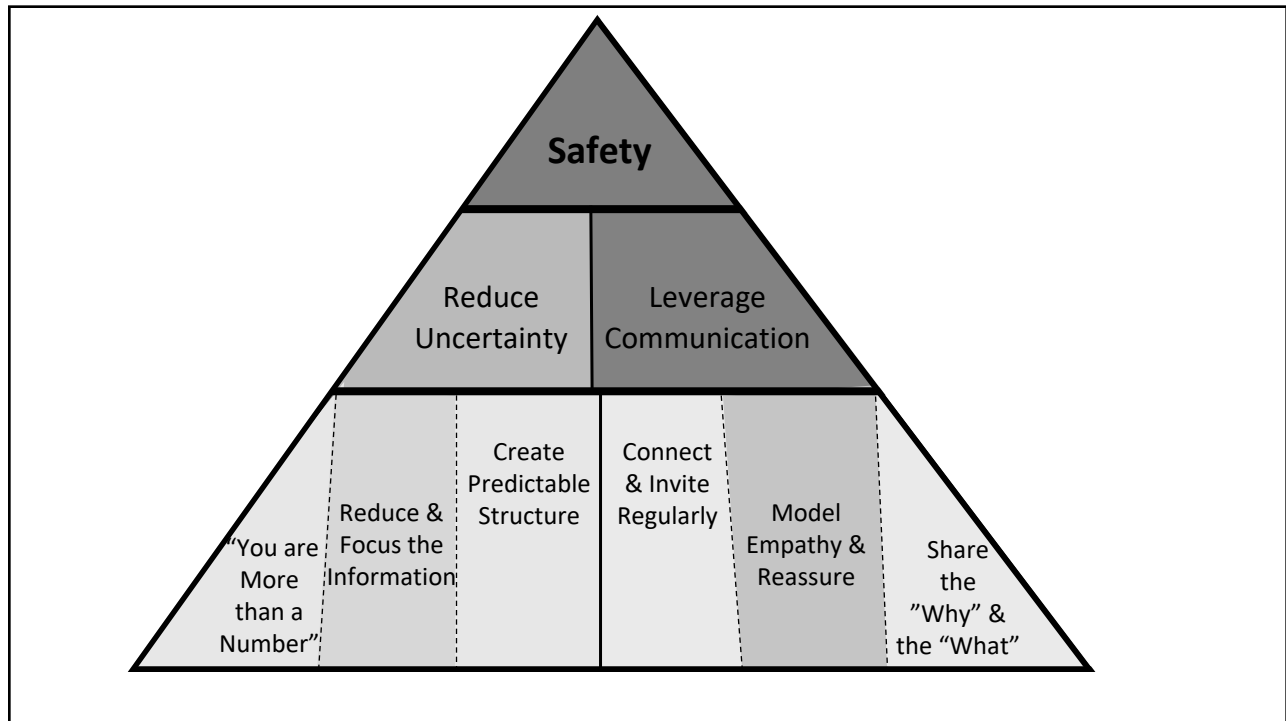


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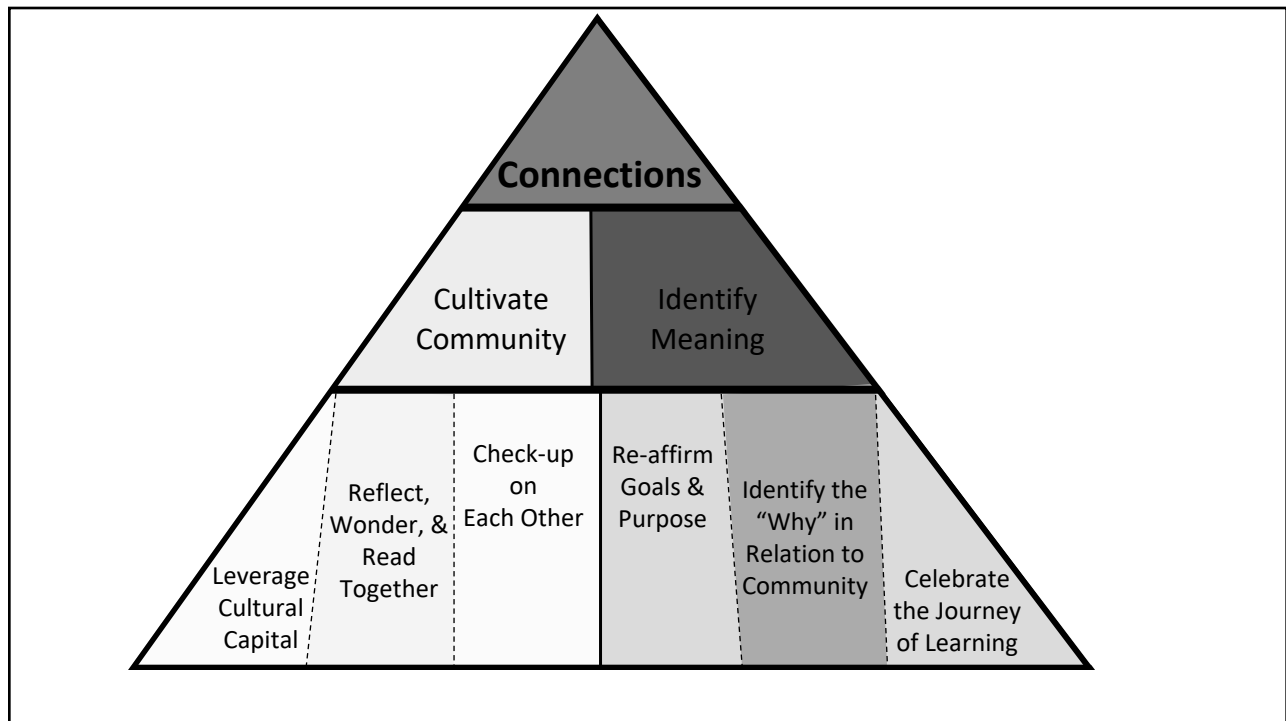
Three preconditions for every student to thrive in life: feeling safe, experiencing meaningful connections, and having support & resources.



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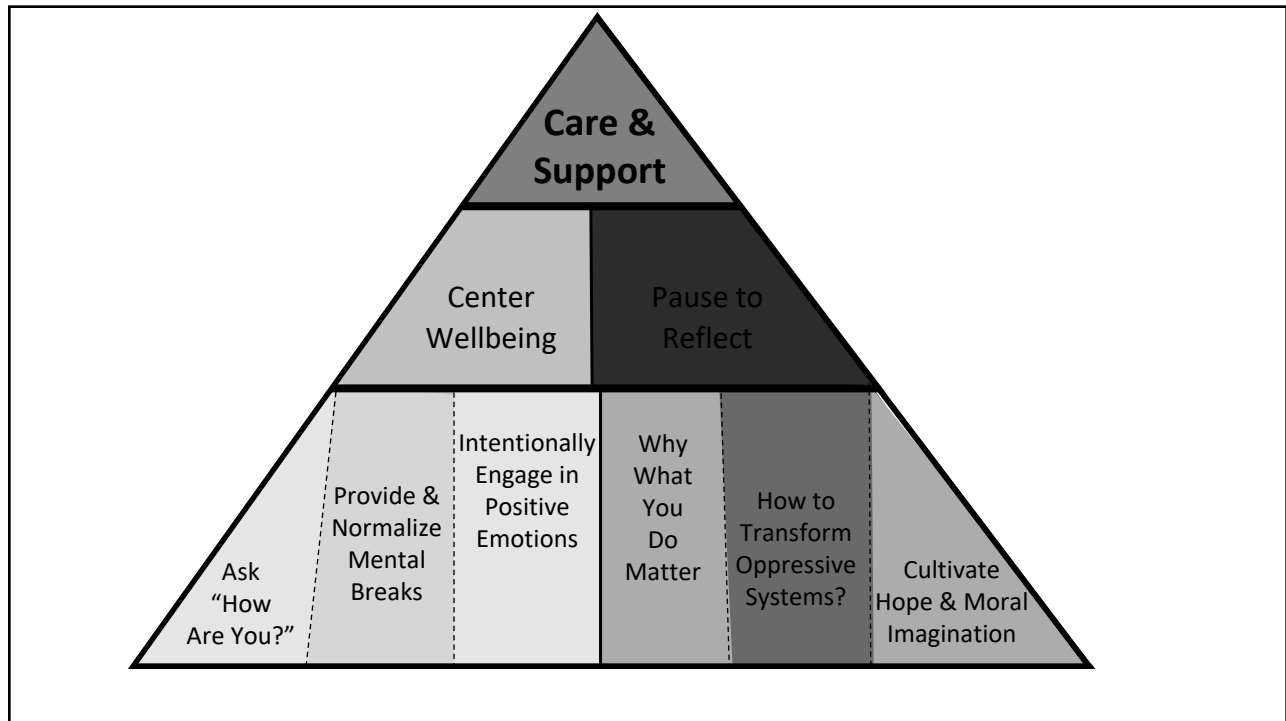


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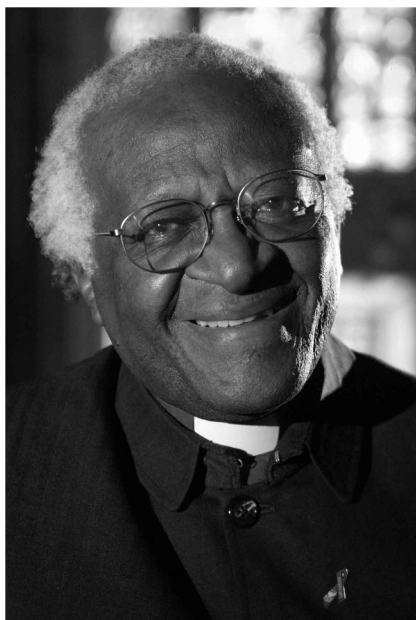
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"I live a hope despite my knowing better"



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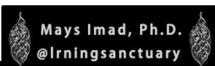


**Desmond Tutu**

**“I learned to be a human from  
other human beings.”**

“We are bound up together. We are  
bound up and can be human only  
together.”

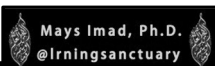
– *The Book of Joy*



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## Breakout Time (10 minutes)

1. What do you need to support your wellbeing this semester and beyond?
2. What can you do to support your colleagues?



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## Breakout Discussion (10 minutes)

What practical strategies do you utilize to foster a sense of **safety, connection, and empowerment**?

