THE WHY OF OUR WORK

World of Dance 2018 - Jaxon Willard: The Duels (Full Performance)
MY WHY
THE HOW AND WHAT OF OUR WORK

TRAUMA and OPPRESSION:

We must be honest about HOW we do this work and under WHAT conditions we do this work.

Poverty is traumatic to those we serve. And it is created by the capitalist society in which we live.
"BEING POOR NOW JUST LEADS TO BEING MORE POOR LATER. CAN'T PAY TO CLEAN YOUR TEETH? NEXT YEAR, PAY FOR A ROOT CANAL... CAN'T PAY TO GET THAT LUMP CHECKED OUT? NEXT YEAR, PAY FOR STAGE 3 CANCER. POVERTY CHARGES INTEREST."

Twitter user @tayzonday
THE WHAT OF OUR WORK: TRAUMA

- Acute
  *One-time traumatic event*

- Chronic
  *Multiple, different traumatic events*

- Complex
  *Ongoing, repeated trauma*

- System-Induced*
  *Exposure to traumatic systems*
"Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning."

– Judith Herman, Trauma & Recovery
“Unprocessed trauma disturbs our sense of safety, belonging, dignity, and purpose. People come into organizations a lot of times to reconcile some of the things that they lost through their experience of trauma -- to find a space where they can belong, a space where they can be safe, a space where they can act out their purpose.”

- PRENTIS HEMPHILL

healingjustice.org
Caring vs. Carrying

- The definition of CARING is "displaying kindness and concern for others" and "the work or practice of looking after those unable to care for themselves..."

- The definition of CARRYING is "support the weight of"

The Steward Project Podcast: Episode 6
HOW WE CARRY THE WORK

Transferrence & Countertransferrence

Transference: unconsciously transferring feelings and attitudes from a person or situation in the past on to a person or situation in the present.

Countertransference: emotional reaction provoked in us by the unconscious communications of those we serve. "Emotional entanglement" with another.
HOW THE WORK IMPACTS US

- Burn Out
- Compassion Fatigue
- Vicarious Trauma
“Frank just up and exploded. I hope I never get that burned out.”
Vicarious trauma is the emotional residue of exposure... from working with people...

"Vicarious traumatization refers to a cumulative transformative effect or condition experienced by working with specific populations of survivors of traumatic life events."

(McCann & Pearlman, 1990, Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995.)
REGULATION AS SELF-CARE

**REPTILIAN BRAIN:**
Controls the body's vital functions

**LIMBIC SYSTEM:**
Controls emotions, judgements, behaviors

**NEOCORTEX:**
Controls imagination, consciousness, and abstract thought
REGULATION AS RESILIENCE

Co-regulation and Self-regulation

- Gives us a sense of safety in our bodies;
- Support the development of higher-level thinking;
- Allows us to appreciate our survival responses;
- Allows us to track our moment-to-moment experience in the present moment;
- Healthy neuroception (perception of safety and threat) develops in the context of healthy social engagement.
“RESILIENCE IS ALL ABOUT BEING ABLE TO OVERCOME THE UNEXPECTED. SUSTAINABILITY IS ABOUT SURVIVAL. THE GOAL OF RESILIENCE IS TO THRIVE.”

JAMAIS CASCIO
WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Surviving vs. Thriving

Resilience is "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness."

Surviving oppression and injustice is one thing, but in order to THRIVE, we must become resilient.

Radical Resilience is the moment-to-moment attuning to our experiences and employing protective practices to help us dis-identifying with those experiences while engaging fully in the present. This also allows us to help others do the same and hold space for their process.
“FROM THE TIME YOU WERE REALLY LITTLE, YOU HAVE HAD PEOPLE WHO HAVE SMILED YOU INTO SMILING, TALKED YOU INTO TALKING, SUNG YOU INTO SINGING, AND LOVED YOU INTO LOVING. ”

Mr. Fred Rogers
When I was about 6, the department of child protective services took me and my sister out of the home. Memory is fuzzy from this time, but we were picked up from school, taken to a big health type centre that I think was closed. My sister dared me to eat a smartie from the floor and I did. We were examined and interviewed. Somehow we were then sent to a motel with our mother before being placed in foster care, being pulled out of school and moving.

The time in the motel was an adventure. I remember having these small milks for the first time ever, and this was the most fantastic thing in the world. I looked forward to house keeping so that I could get more of these milks and drink them.

Now, every time I travel and I am reminded of that time in my life. I can’t drink these milks, but I can focus on my 6 year old excitement from that time rather than the situation I was in.
WHY DOES IT MATTER TO US?

The power of resilience

The goal is to THRIVE by overcoming the trauma and oppression in this work. This allows us to stay open, hold space for others, and buffer the vicarious trauma we absorb. Building up our resilience is key to that process.

To be resilient does not require us to relive nor erase our past traumas. It does require us to be honest about the conditions in which we do this work and understand how our residual trauma responses impact how we view and participate in the work.
"DON'T TURN YOUR HEAD. KEEP LOOKING AT THE BANDAGED PLACE. THAT'S WHERE THE LIGHT ENTERS YOU."

Rumi – Childhood Friend
WHAT IS IMPORTANT FOR RADICAL RESILIENCE?

CONTROL

Learning to cope with small threats and difficulties in our lives can give us a sense of control. These experiences encode in us the sense of agency (locus of control) and self-advocacy.

CONNECTION

In order to thrive we need a solid connection with our own body as well as connection with others. Interpersonal relationships and community are vital to connection.

MEANING

Pulling into a spiritual practice of some kind can connect us to a higher/macro sense of being. This also allows us to hold space for others as we work within oppressive systems.
"THROUGH OUR SENSE OF CONNECTEDNESS, WE GROW AND WE HEAL, WHICH IS EXACTLY WHAT HELPS DEVELOP RESILIENCE."

Nurturing Resilience; Helping Clients Move Forward from Developmental Trauma
Pay attention to HOW the work is showing up for us, in our brains & bodies.

Re-connect with the WHY of this work on a daily basis.

Commit to deep, courageous self-care...attending to our needs as they arise.

Remember that we gain Vicarious Resilience from those we serve (not just vicarious trauma...)
"IT IS OUR DUTY TO FIGHT FOR OUR FREEDOM. IT IS OUR DUTY TO WIN. WE MUST LOVE EACH OTHER AND SUPPORT EACH OTHER. WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS."

Assata Shakur
HOW WE CAN THRIVE

We thrive in community w/ healthy connections.

We thrive by being IN our bodies, even when its uncomfortable.

We thrive in supportive relationships.

We thrive by expanding our awareness and engaging in healing practices.

We thrive by remembering the goodness in the world and returning to LOVE.
LOVE ETHIC

WORK ETHIC
“IF YOU HAVE COME HERE TO HELP ME, YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME. BUT IF YOU HAVE COME BECAUSE YOUR LIBERATION IS BOUND UP WITH MINE, THEN LET US WORK TOGETHER.”

-LILLA WATSON

THANK YOU!

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