

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



Mays Imad, PhD :: mimad@conncoll.edu :: [@Irningsanctuary](https://www.instagram.com/Irningsanctuary)

1



Wear gratitude like a cloak and it will feed every corner of your life.

– Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī

2

Intersecting Crises

3

COLLECTIVE

4

Tempting to Despair

5

[illegible]

6

Today, we will:

1. Reflect back on the last three years.
2. Consider how we will move forward.
3. Interrogate what centering equity-minded and collective well-being entails.

7

How are you? Where are you?

8

(menti.com CODE 5788 3943)



9

**With your colleagues at your table,
please discuss:**

1. Reflect (If you have not introduced yourselves yet, please do that briefly now.)
2. What brings you here today?
3. What are your hopes for the remaining semester and next year?

10

**With your colleagues at your table,
examine the menti results and discuss:**

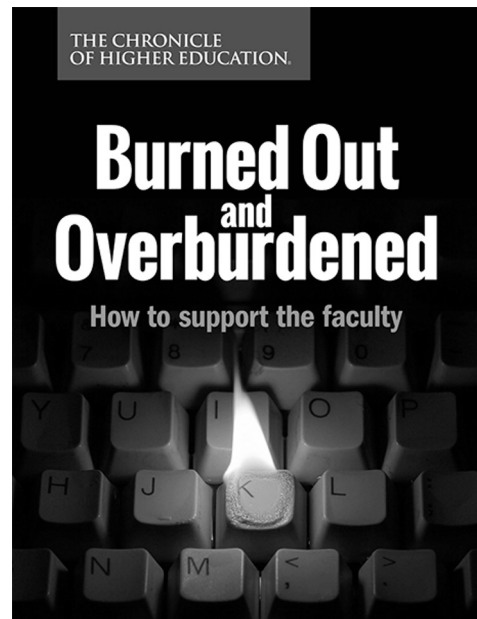
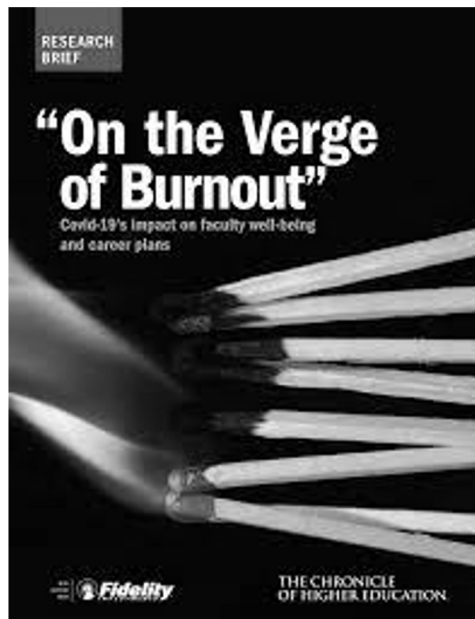
1. What do you have in common?
2. What surprises you?

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“[Higher education] expects students and professors to drop everything when in the classroom but their personal lives are a part of them because daily lives are [filled with] emotional events that represent them.”

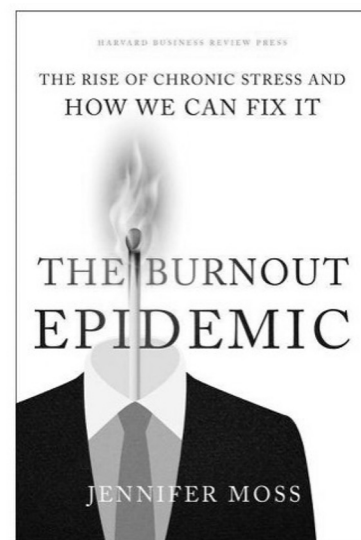
PCC Student, 2020

12



13

1. Excessive workload.
2. Actual or perceived lack of control & agency.
3. Lack of meaningful connections & relationships.
4. Lack of recognition.
5. Lack of fairness.
6. Values & skills mismatch.



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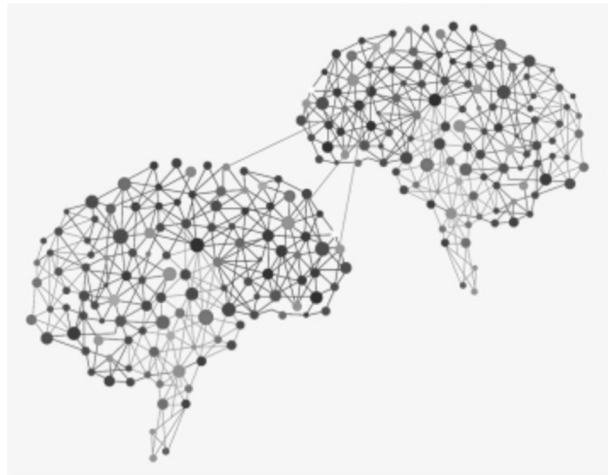
What Makes the Brain Feel Overwhelmed?

18

We are Relational

19

Our Brains Evolved to Connect



20

Learning is Relational

21

Learning is Relational

We connect new information to what we know, who we are, what we value, and to the larger community and the world.

22

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FROM OUR EXPERTS

The Unequal Cost of Social Distancing

Stefanie DeLuca, *James Coleman Professor of Sociology & Social Policy*
Nick Papageorge, *Broadus Mitchell Associate Professor of Economics*
Emma Kalish, *PhD student in Economics*

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23

In one word, describe what you are struggling with most this year:

24

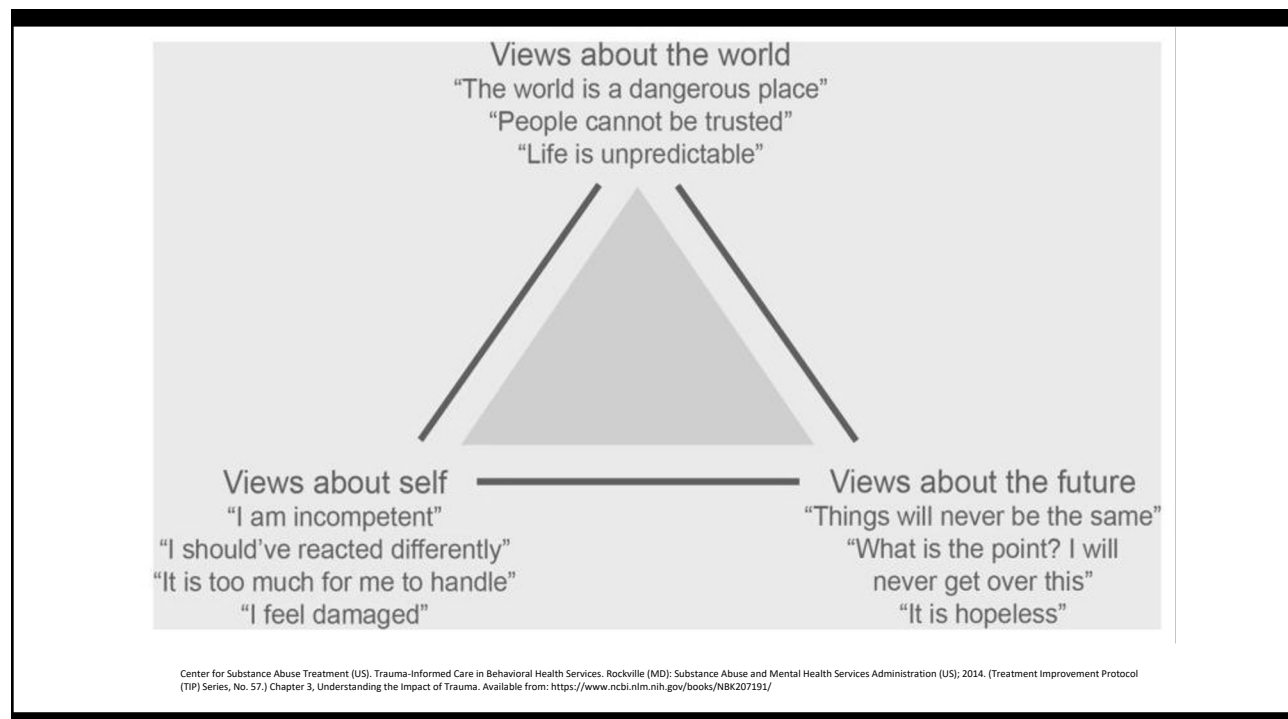
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Persistent uncertainty can be overwhelming on the brain.

27



28

scientific reports

Check for updates

OPEN **Zoomed out: digital media use and depersonalization experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown**

Anna Ciaunica^{1,2,3,11}, Luke McEllin^{4,5,11}, Julian Kiverstein^{6,7}, Vittorio Gallese⁸, Jakob Hohwy^{9,10} & Mateusz Woźniak^{5,9}

Depersonalisation is a common dissociative experience characterised by distressing feelings of being detached or 'estranged' from one's self and body and/or the world. The COVID-19 pandemic forcing millions of people to socially distance themselves from others and to change their lifestyle habits. We have conducted an online study of 622 participants worldwide to investigate the relationship between digital media-based activities, distal social interactions and peoples' sense of self during the lockdown as contrasted with before the pandemic. We found that increased use of digital media-based activities and online social e-meetings correlated with higher feelings of depersonalisation. We also found that the participants reporting higher experiences of depersonalisation, also reported enhanced vividness of negative emotions (as opposed to positive emotions). Finally, participants who reported that lockdown influenced their life to a greater extent had higher occurrences of depersonalisation experiences. Our findings may help to address key questions regarding well-being during a lockdown, in the general population. Our study points to potential risks related to overly sedentary, and hyper-digitalised lifestyle habits that may induce feelings of living in one's 'head' (mind), disconnected from one's body, self and the world.

(menti.com CODE 5788 3943)



From this list, consider what you might do to help support your colleagues' wellbeing?

31

In one word, what do you need to support your wellbeing?

32



(Jane Tompkins, *Pedagogy of the Distressed*, 1990, pp. 653-660)



35



36

We don't just "get over it" and go on as business as usual. We don't simply turn on a "resilience" switch.

37

I'm Sick of Asking Children to Be Resilient

It's time for reparations and resources and to not expect kids to
"rise above."

May 12, 2020



38

We can choose to:

1. Do Nothing.

39

We can choose to:

1. Do Nothing: Remain passive, ambivalent, romanticize hopelessness.

40

We can choose to:

1. Do Nothing: Remain passive, ambivalent, romanticize hopelessness.
2. Do Something.

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We can choose to:

1. Do Nothing: Remain passive, ambivalent, romanticize hopelessness.
2. Do Something: (a) repeat what we've been doing

42

We can choose to:

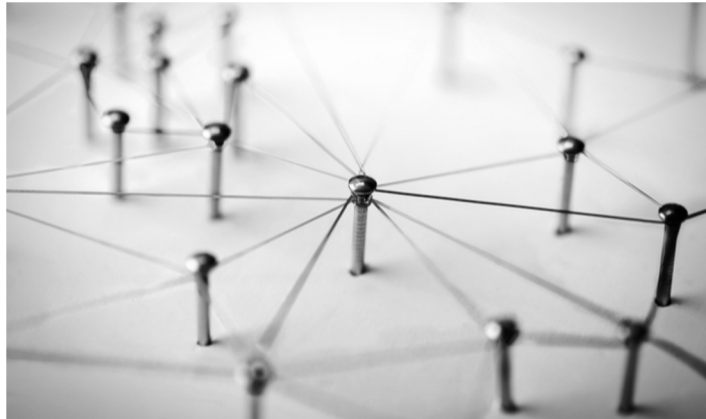
1. Do Nothing: Remain passive, ambivalent, romanticize hopelessness.
2. Do Something: (a) repeat what we've been doing, or (b) **forge a new way.**

43

We need a paradigm shift.

44

Healing Through Relationships



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

45

Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice (2019), 92, 224–237
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www.wileyonlinelibrary.com

Special issue paper

The mind in psychotherapy: An interpersonal neurobiology framework for understanding and cultivating mental health

Daniel J. Siegel* 

Mindsight Institute, Santa Monica, California, USA

In this brief overview, I offer a conceptual approach to the mind that can support whatever clinical, research, public policy, or other approach you may be involved with. It seeks to

46

Toxic Stress and Learning

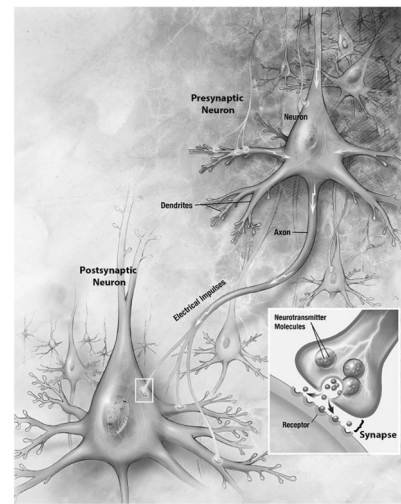
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Teaching as Brain Changing: Exploring Connections between Neuroscience and Innovative Teaching

Melinda T. Owens and Kimberly D. Tanner*

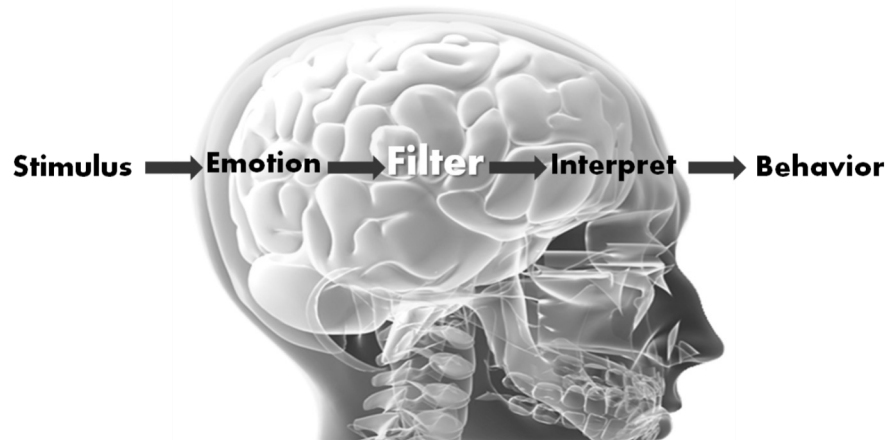
Science Education Partnership and Assessment Laboratory, San Francisco State University,
San Francisco, CA 94132

How 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.



48

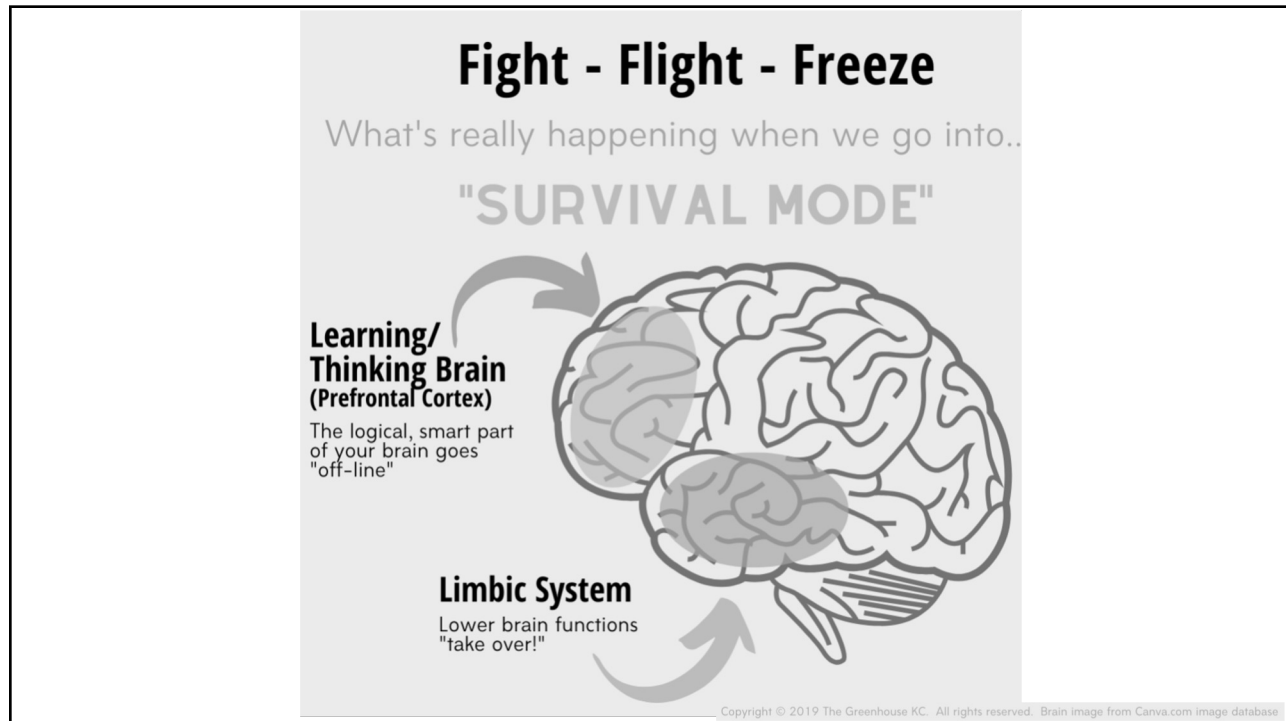
We Feel, Then We Assign Meaning, Then We Act



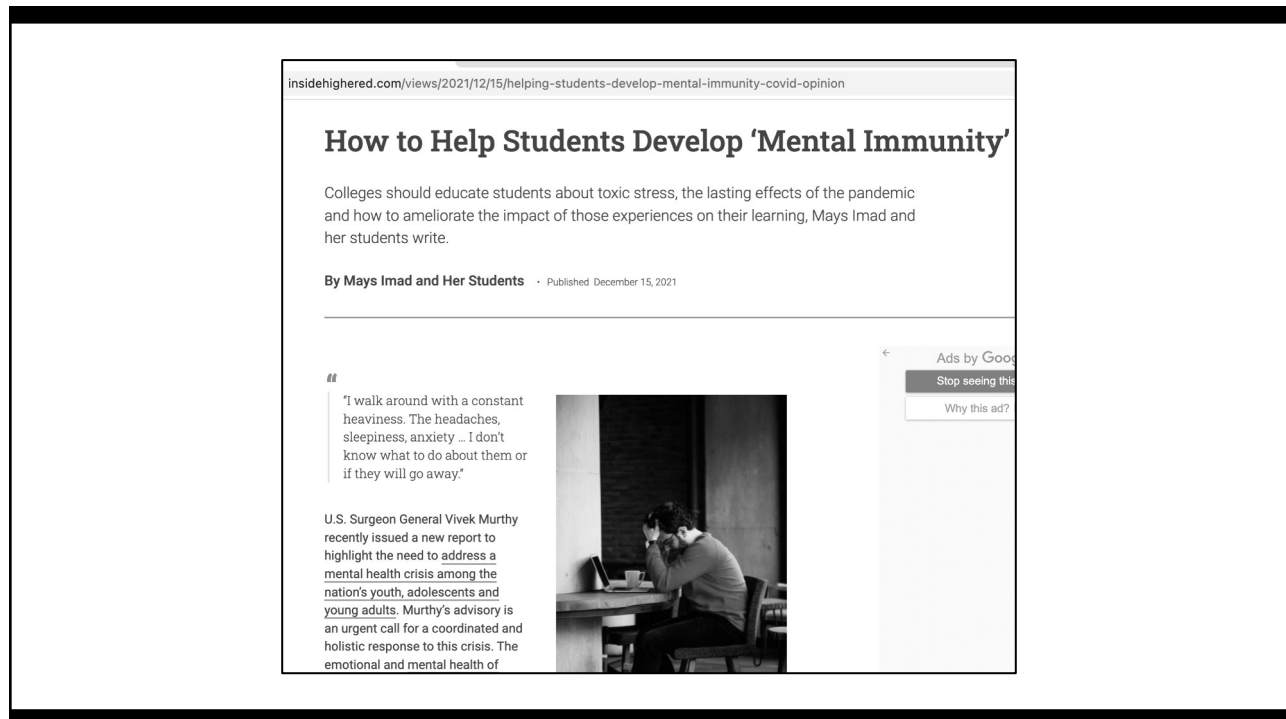
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**When stress becomes unmanageable,
the brain will prioritize survival over
engagement and learning.**

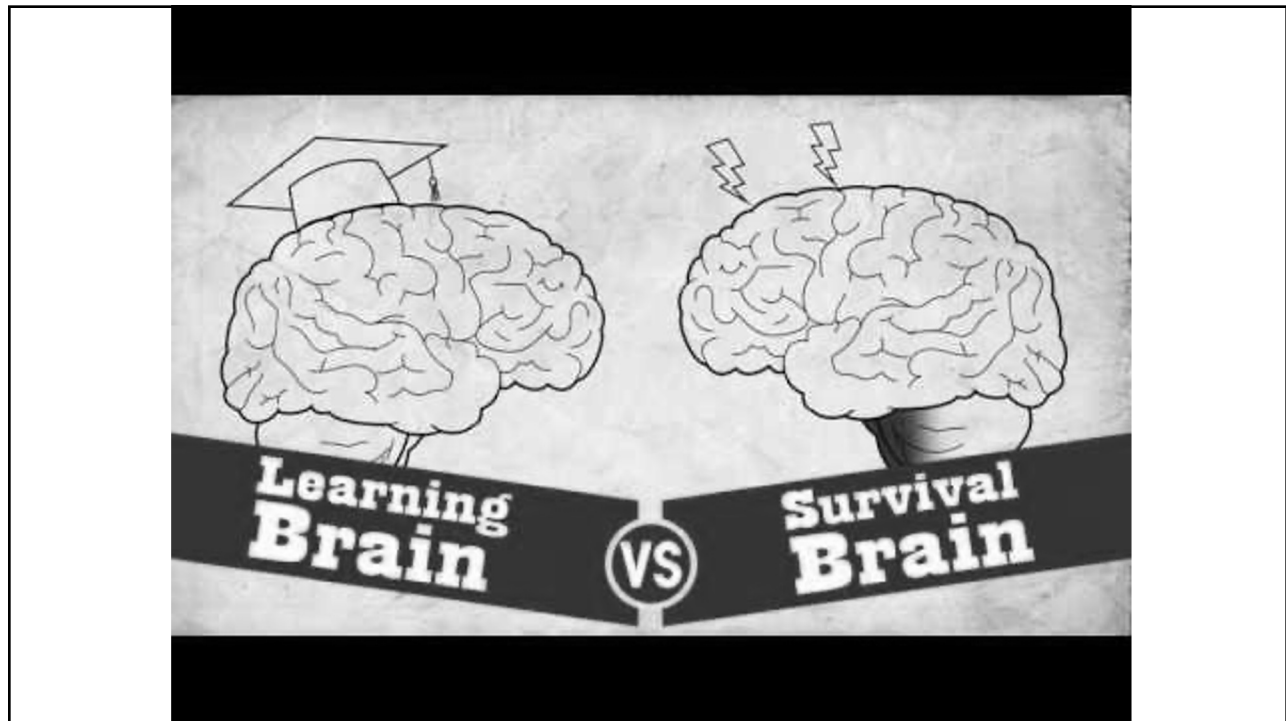
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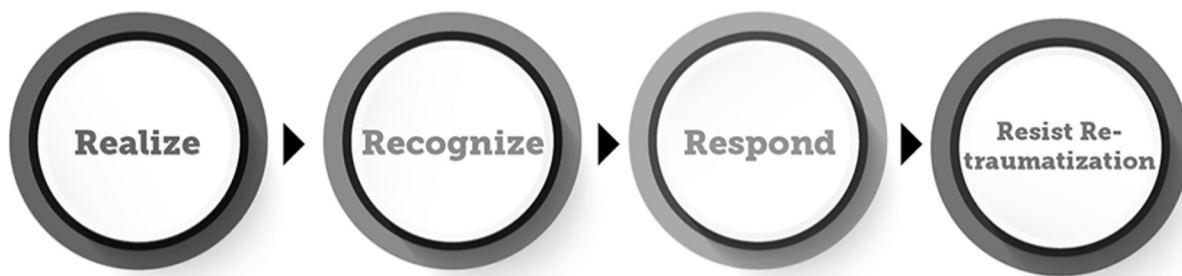
What are you noticing among your students with respect to their engagement and learning?

54

Trauma-Informed Care

55

Trauma-Informed Care



This figure is adapted from: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and Guidance for a trauma-informed approach. HHS publication no. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health

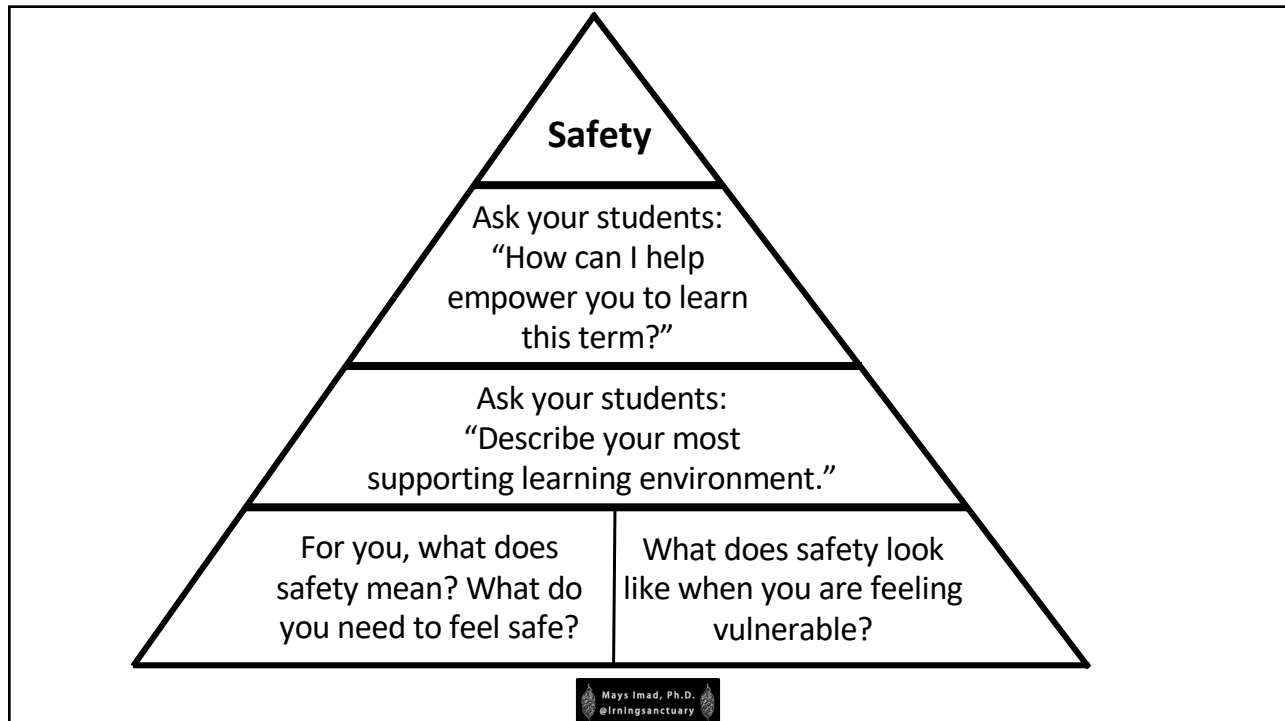
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Three preconditions are necessary for every human being to thrive in life: feeling safe, experiencing meaningful connections, and having agency, support & resources.

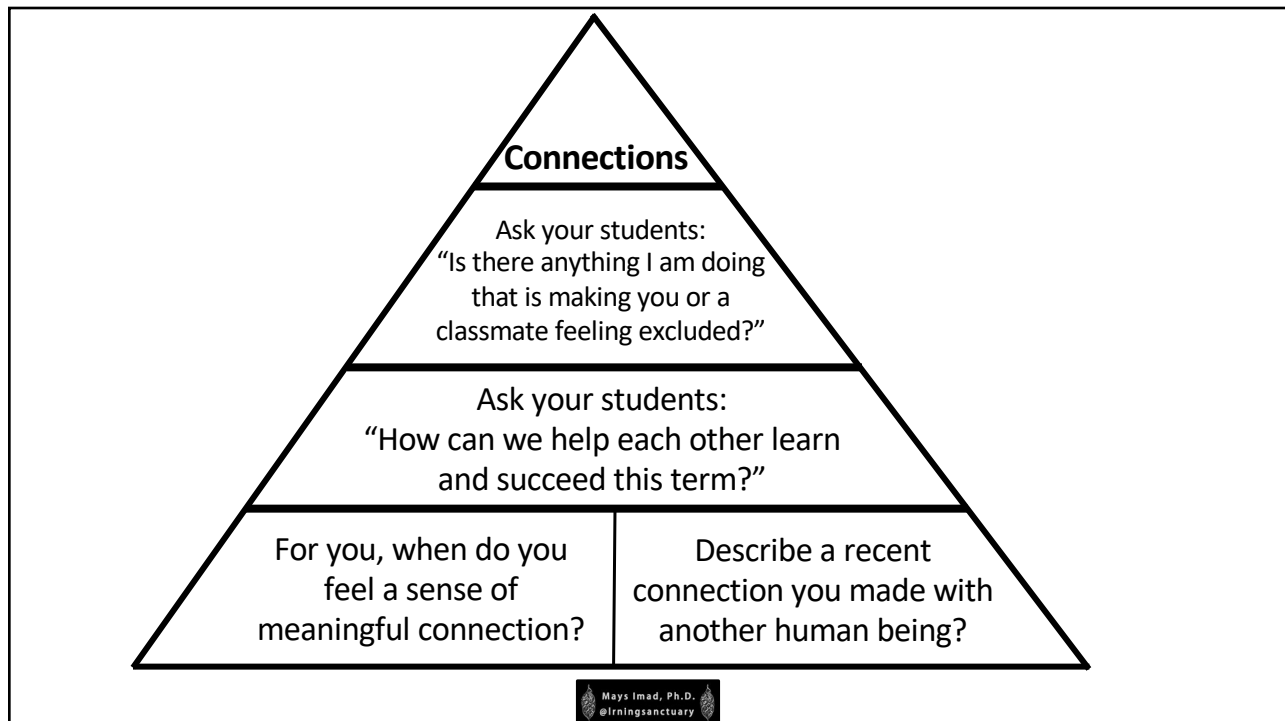
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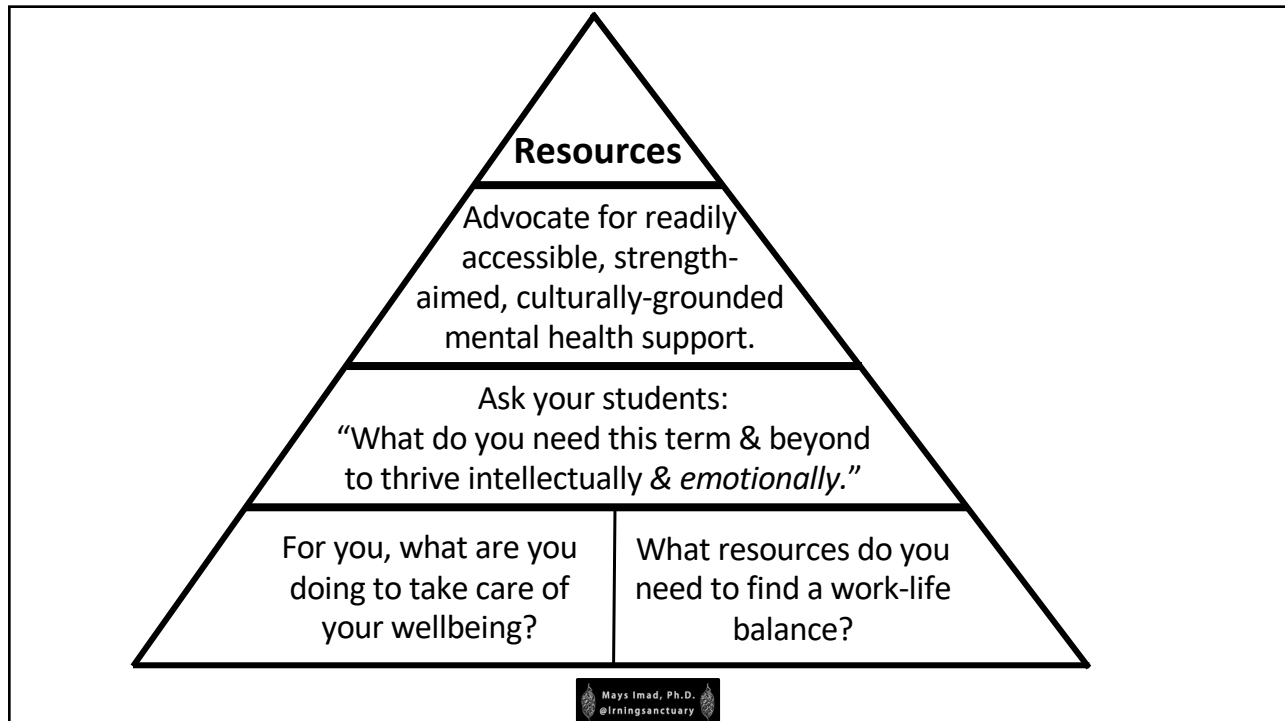
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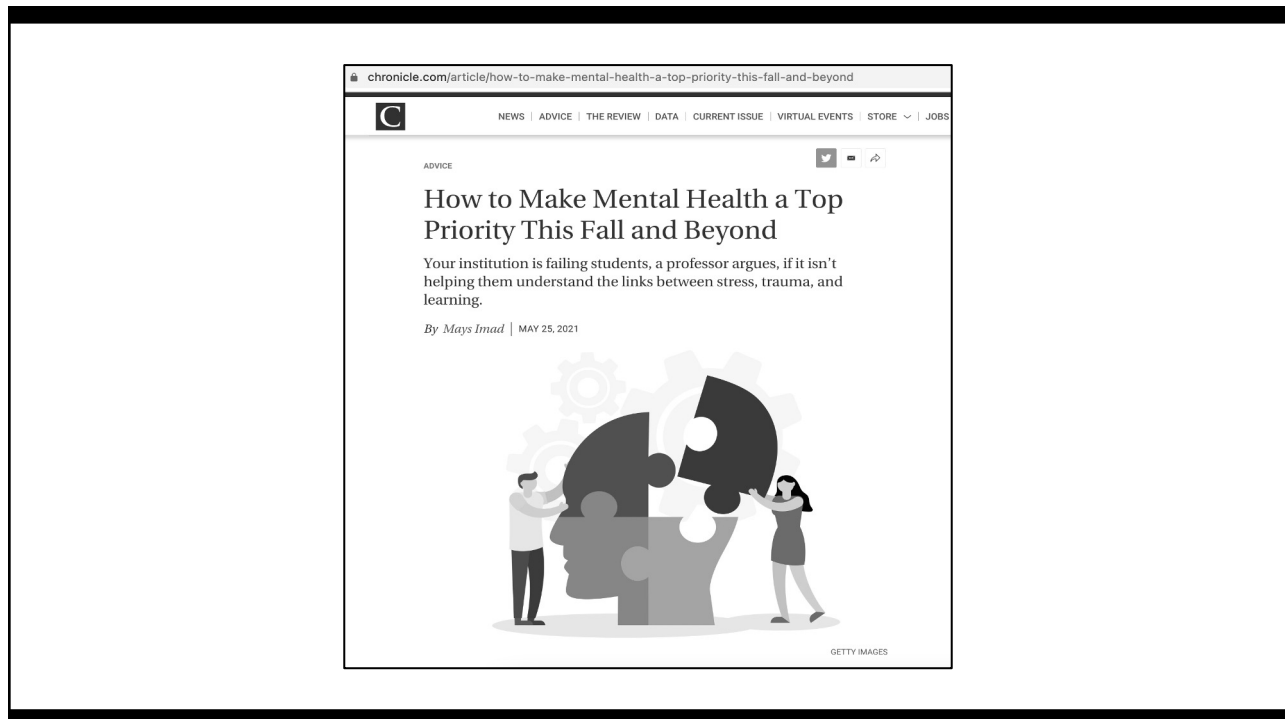
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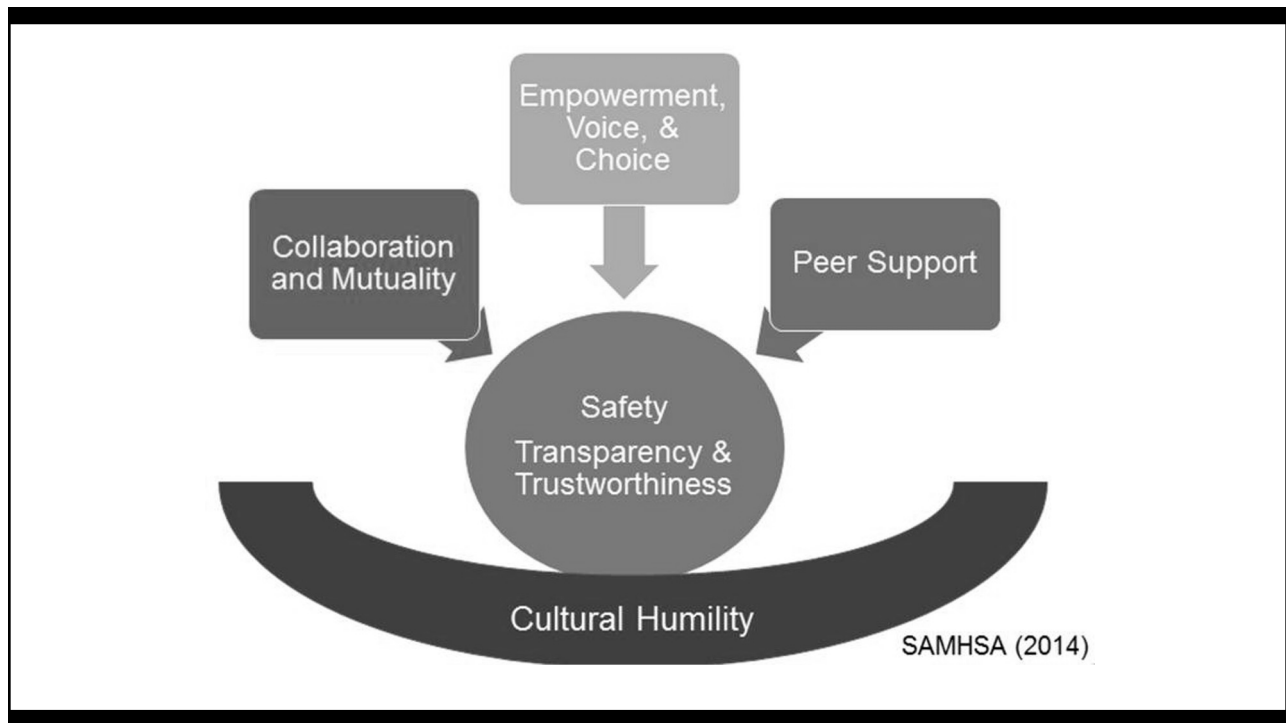
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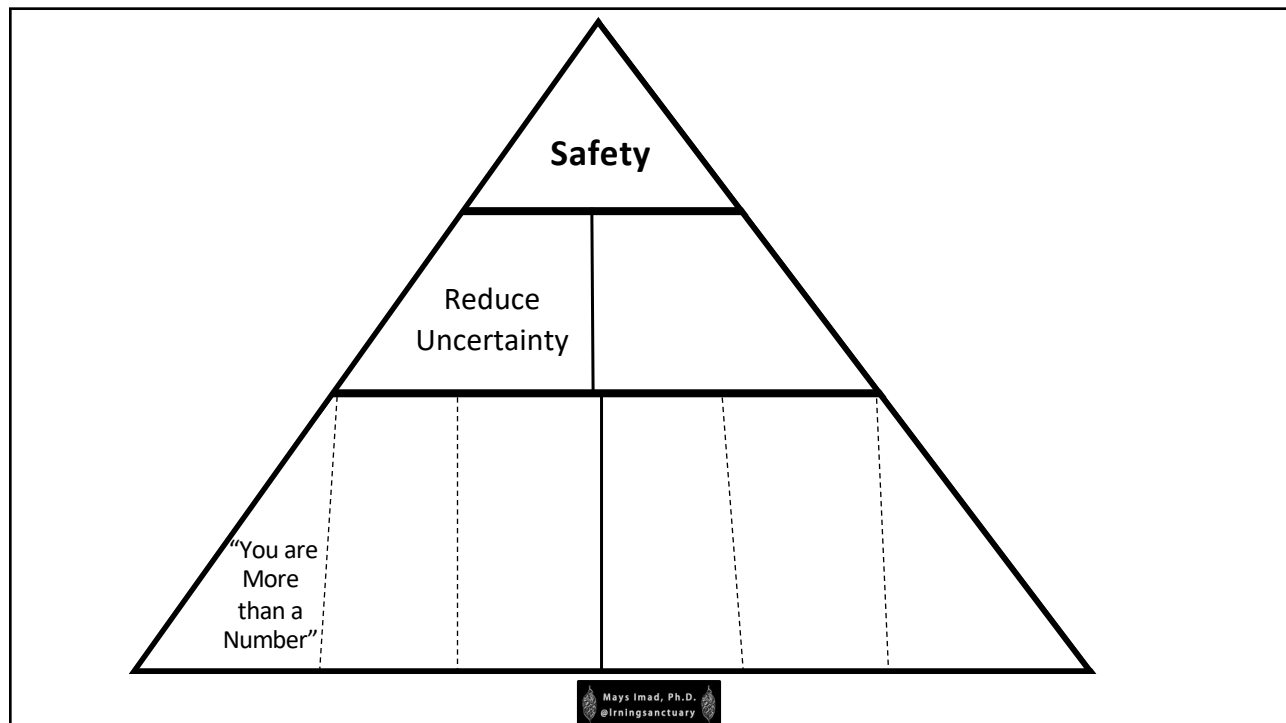
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63

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

64



65

**CONNECTICUT
COLLEGE**

Biofeedback, Self-Regulation, and Intergenerational Resilience
Course Syllabus for Biological Inquiry - BIO 120K / Fall 2022
Dr. Mays Imad, Ph.D. (mimad@conncoll.edu)

Welcome

Hello, brilliant minds. Welcome to our course. I invite you to come on a learning journey with me and your classmates. We will learn about biofeedback, a mind-body technique that gives you insights and helps you develop the skills to recognize and gain control of unconscious physical reactions.

Have you ever been in a situation where the muscles in your neck are so tense it is difficult to turn your head sideways? Have you ever taken an exam and got to a question where you froze and couldn't come up with words to answer it? Have you ever felt butterflies in your stomach

66

Your Wellbeing

I will center your wellbeing in this course. After all, this is a course about how we can regulate and stabilize our nervous system.

I ask you to bring your own experience to enrich one another. As you read through this syllabus, think of what questions you have and bring them to class or to me. Specifically, I want to know:

- How I can help you succeed in this course? And,
- How can both you and I help our classmates succeed in this course?

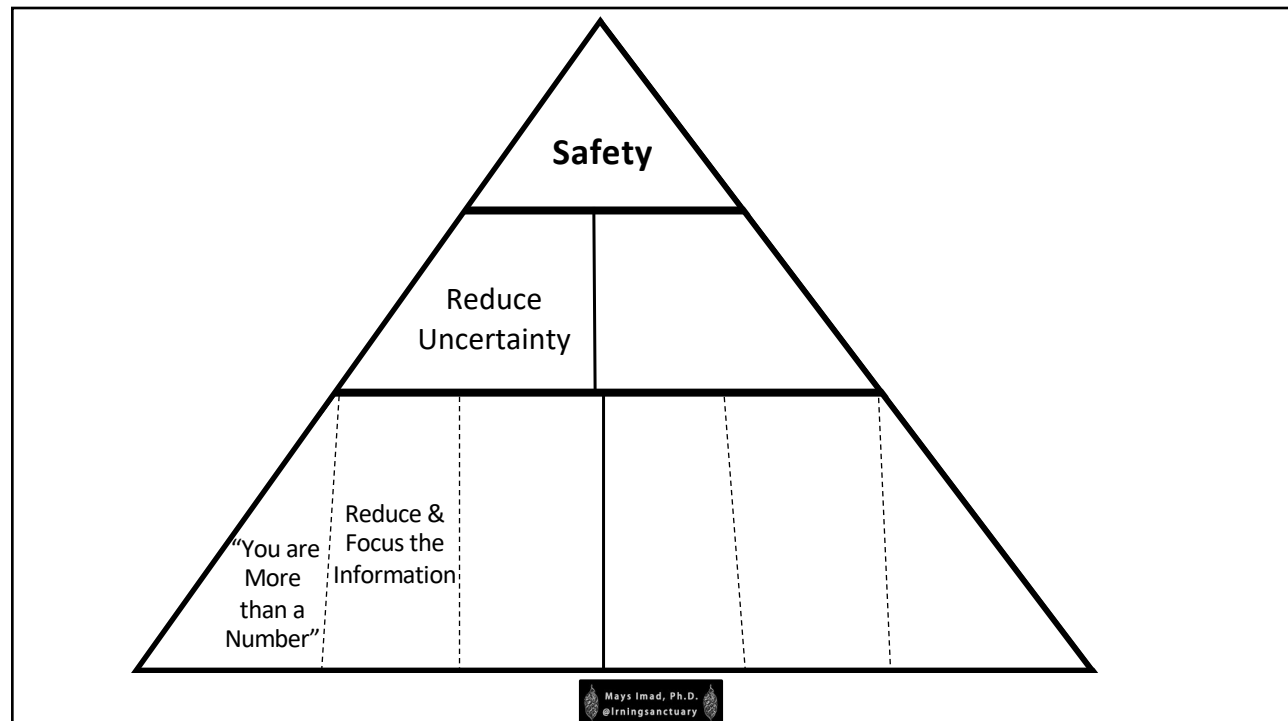
Learning is social and emotional. We will learn from and with each other. Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminds us what it means to be human: "[M]y humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other persons." In this class, we will center our collective wellbeing. Furthermore, know that in this course, I see you and you matter—and I will advocate for your success throughout the semester.

Course Information

Official Course Description: Biofeedback is a mind-body self-regulation technique through which individuals learn how to modify their physiology for the purpose of improving physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. In this course, students will encounter the theoretical and

2

67

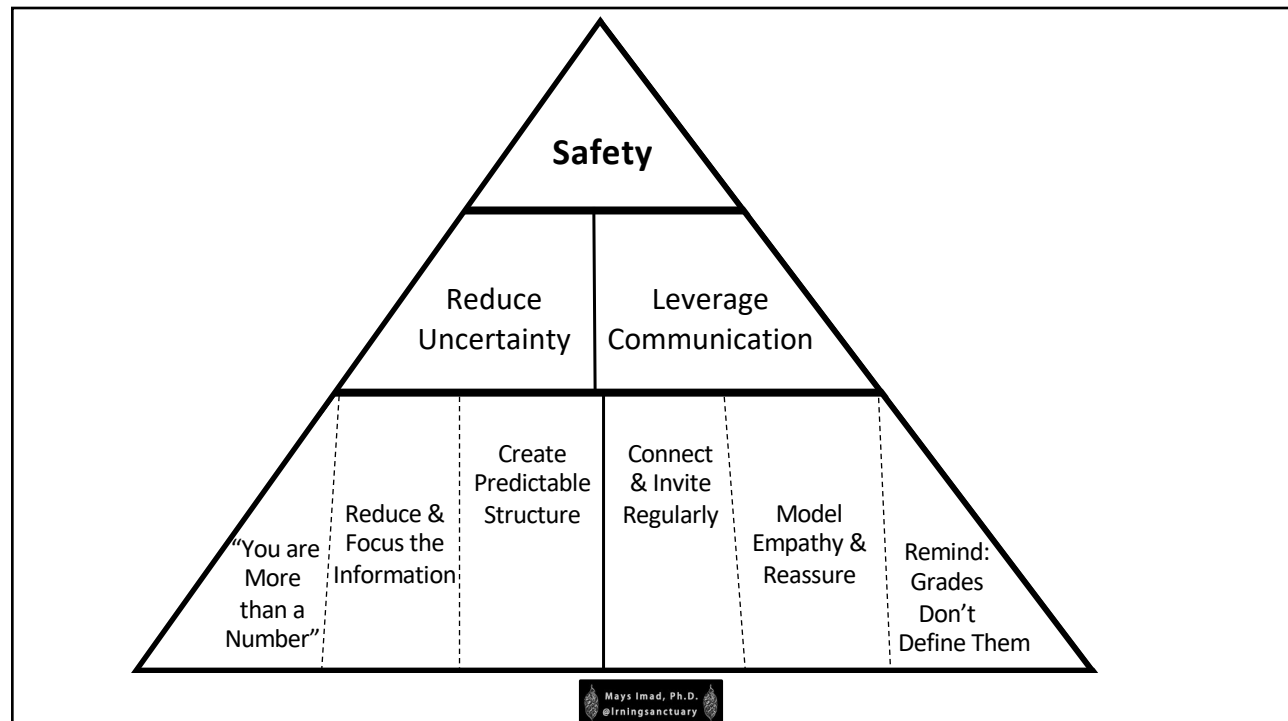


68

Deadlines

Sun, 9/4	Critical Consideration for materials for 9/6
Sun, 9/11	Critical Consideration for materials for 9/13
Sun, 9/18	Critical Consideration for materials for 9/20
Thu, 9/22	Research Paper Question and Design
Sun, 9/25	Critical Consideration for materials for 9/27
Thu, 9/29	Pick Group Articles
Tue, 10/11	Critical Consideration for materials for 10/13
Thu, 10/13	Research Paper Introduction
Tue, 10/18	Critical Consideration for materials for 10/20
Tue, 10/25	Critical Consideration for materials for 10/27
Thu, 10/27	Research Paper Methods
Tue, 11/1	Critical Consideration for materials for 11/3
Thu, 11/3	Mental Health Form
Tue, 11/8	Critical Consideration for materials for 11/10

69



70

ARTICLE**Teaching to Empower: Leveraging the Neuroscience of Now to Help Students Become Self-Regulated Learners****Mays Imad***Biology Department, Connecticut College. New London, CT 06320; Department of Life and Physical Science, Pima Community College. Tucson, AZ 85716.*

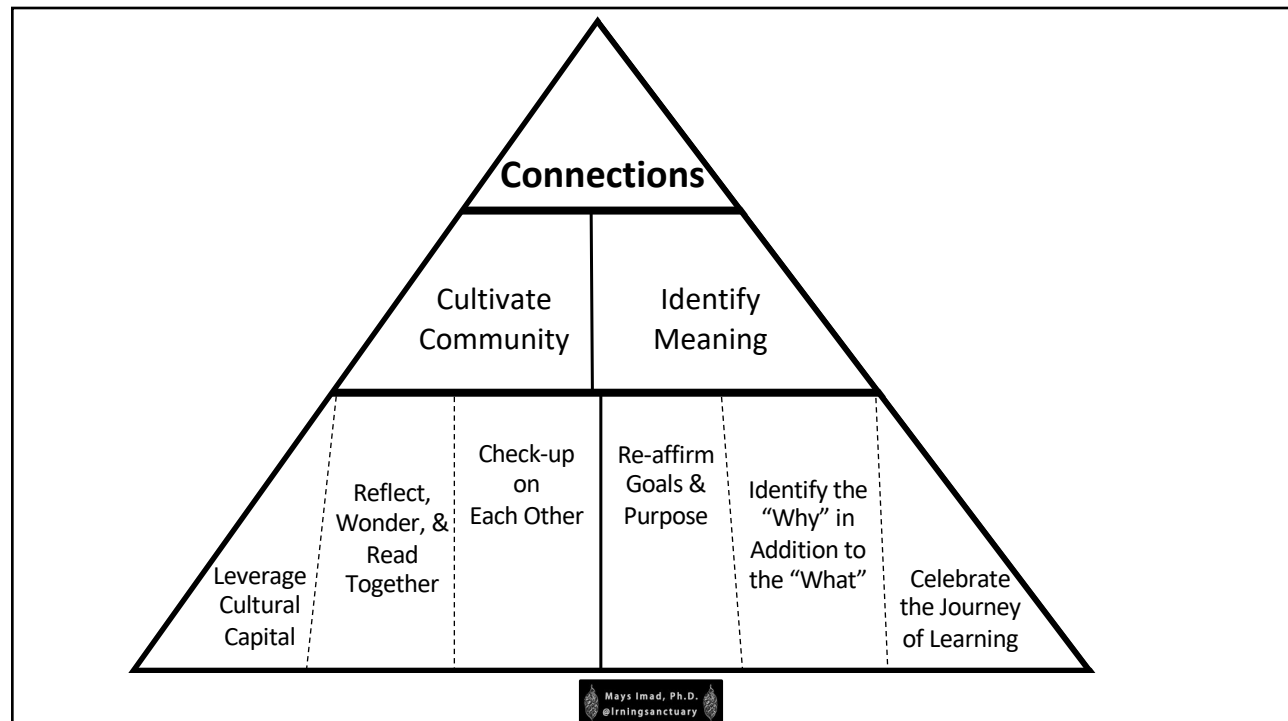
In his book *Descartes' Error*, neurologist Antonio Damasio argues that humans do not make decisions by relying exclusively on the rational or reason-oriented parts of their brain (2008). Evidence from patients with brain damage reveal that our abilities to reason and make decisions are greatly influenced by our emotions (Damasio et al., 1990; Saver and Damasio, 1991). In fact, our emotions and how we feel act as a gateway to our thinking and learning by providing "the bridge between rational [prefrontal cortex] and nonrational processes" [brainstem and limbic structures]." (Damasio, 2008). Understanding the ways in which our brain processes sensory inputs and integrates those inputs into our ongoing emotional state is critical for helping students become self-regulated, sophisticated learners.

In the following article, I will begin by briefly summarizing

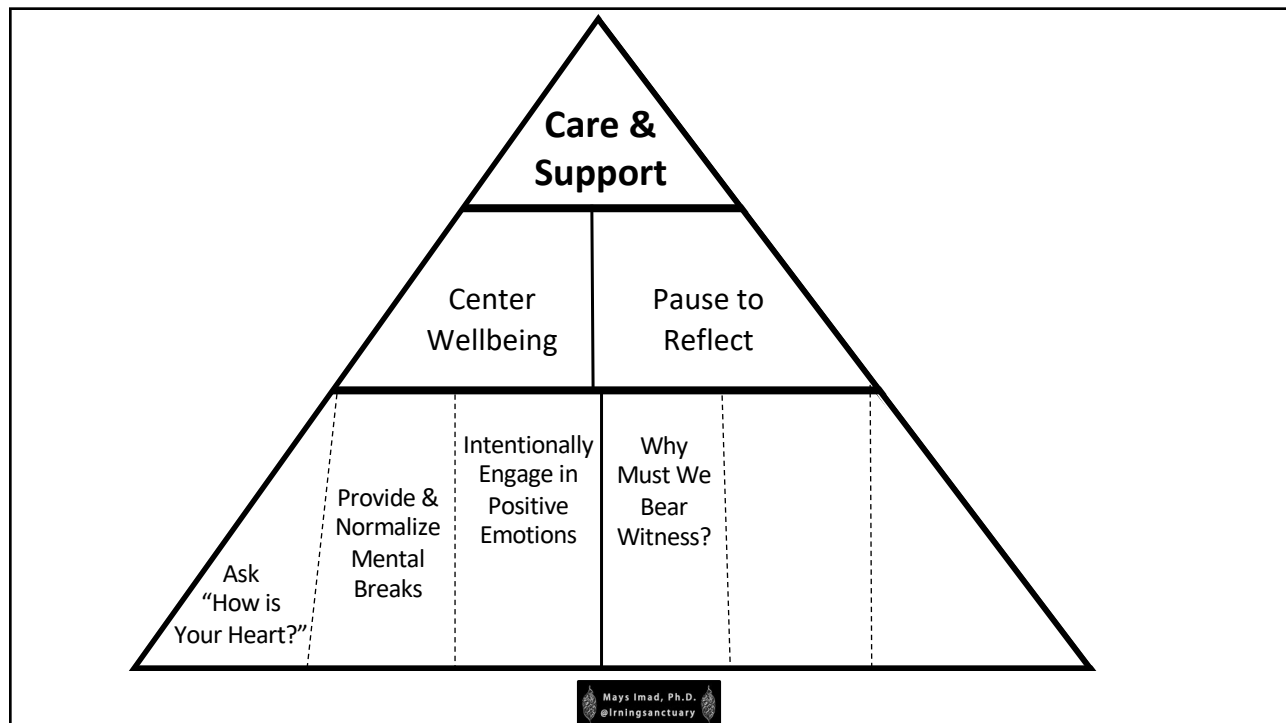
the role of emotions in learning and the impact of toxic stress on our students' ability to engage, learn, and thrive. I will then define and present a trauma-informed teaching and learning paradigm with practical strategies that empower students to continue to learn and succeed. I will address a few misconceptions about trauma-informed education. I will conclude by making a plea to you, members of the undergraduate neuroscience community, by presenting a case for the utility and moral imperative of educating our students about the basic functioning of their brains, especially as it relates to emotional regulation and learning.

Key words: toxic stress; emotional valance; trauma; trauma-informed education; amygdala hijack; limbic brake.

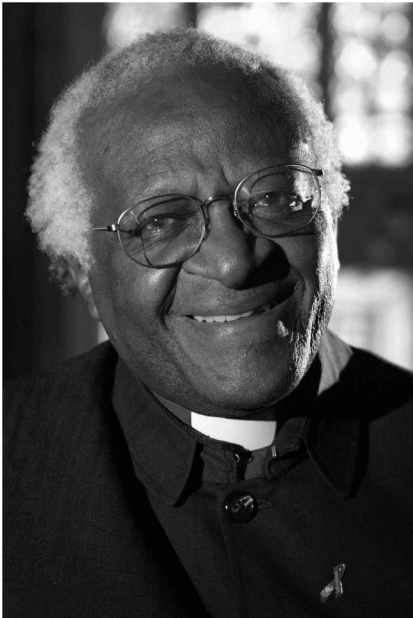
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72



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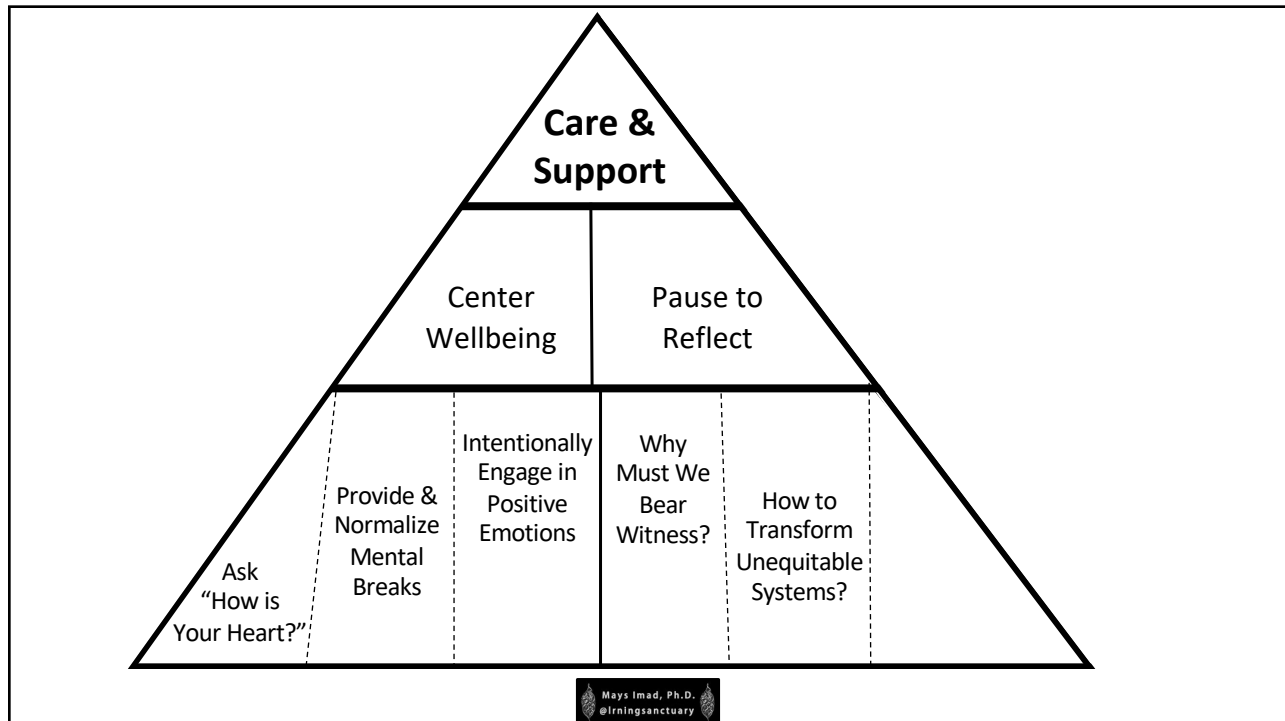


Desmond Tutu

"I learned to be a human from other human beings."

– *The Book of Joy*

74



75

"No Humans Involved": An Open Letter to My Colleagues
By Sylvia Wynter, 1994

76

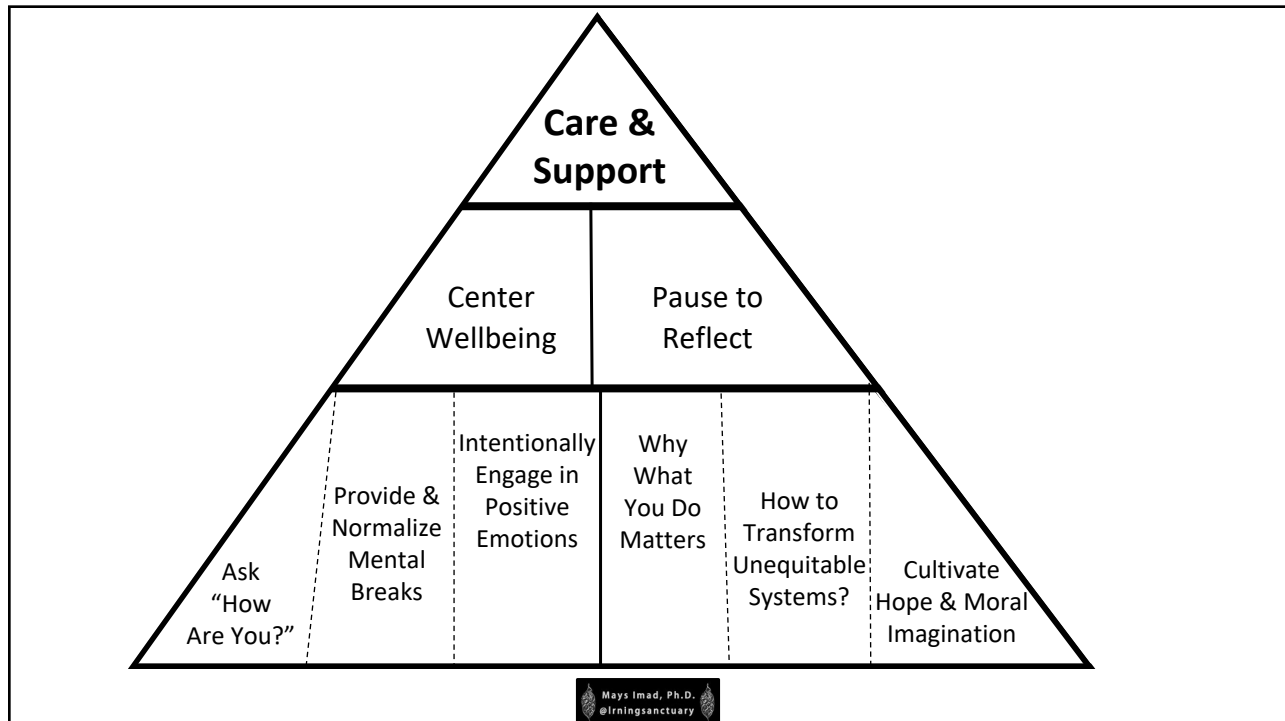
“How can we **marry our thoughts** so that we can now pose the questions whose answers can resolve the plight of the jobless archipelagos, the NHI categories, and the environment?”

77

[W]hat we do in the classroom is our politics. No matter what we may say about Third World this or feminist that, our actions and our interactions with our students week in week out prove what we are for and what we are against in the long run. There is no substitute for practice.

(Jane Tompkins, *Pedagogy of the Distressed*, 1990, pp. 653-660)

78



79

"I live a hope despite my knowing better"



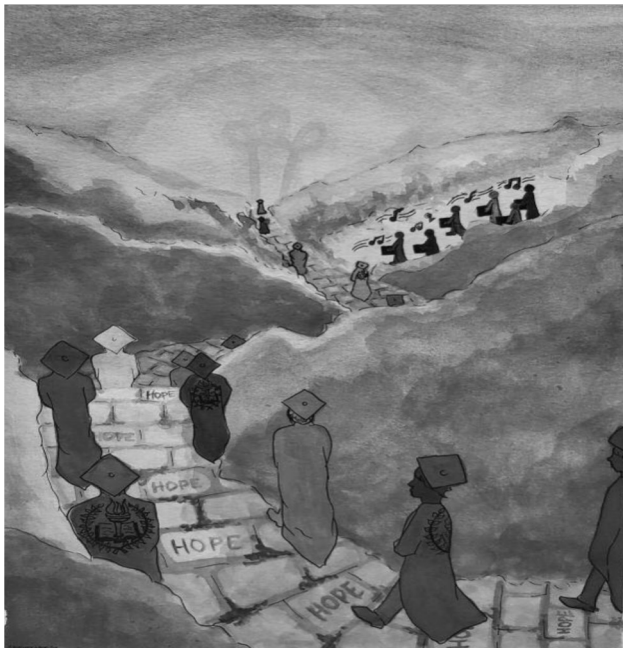
80

For you, what is the purpose of higher education?

- “To do something that you love and enjoy.”
- “To innovate and leave a meaningful impact on my community.”
- “To be able to do the things I love.”
- “To develop skills that can be useful in helping my community; to give back.”
- “To stand on my own and help my community.”
- “To help myself become a better person so I can help others.”
- “[T]o find something you love to learn about and then to learn about it.”

(PCC Students, 2017-19)

81



Come, come, whoever you
are.

Wonderer, worshipper,
lover of leaving.

It doesn't matter.

Ours is not a caravan of
despair.

Come, even if you have
broken your vow

a thousand times

Come, yet again, come,
come.

- Rumi

82