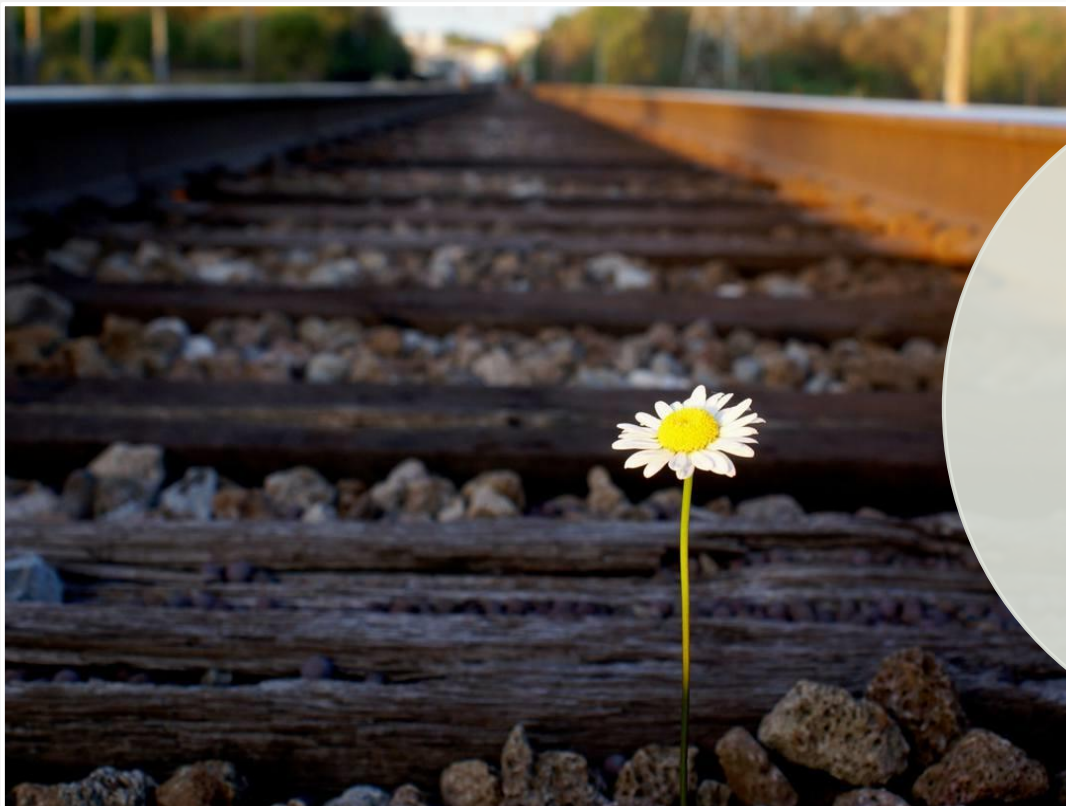


Trauma Informed Supervision

Rebecca Nickels, MSW | RPN Strategies

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Explore ways that supervisors can create healthy workplaces while supporting their co-workers
- ▶ Encourage supervision that is based on empowerment, trust, and kindness
- ▶ Provide tangible tools so that supervisors impact their teams in ways that make everyone more effective in their advocacy
- ▶ Create tools that mitigate vicarious trauma, including trauma that is a result of lived experiences of oppressions



**Being
Trauma
Informed
means...**



A Trauma Informed Approach

- ▶ **REALIZES** the prevalence of trauma
- ▶ **RECOGNIZES** how it affects all individuals involved with the program, organization or system
- ▶ **RESISTS** re-traumatization
- ▶ **RESPONDS** by putting this knowledge into practice



Trauma Informed Supervision Sees the Whole Person

Personal, past experience
with violence

Current Relationship
Instability

Lived experience of
oppressions and systemic
violence

Health
Concerns –
chronic and/or
unexpected

Housing
and/or
Financial
Instability



“ Vicarious Resilience is the positive effects on helping professionals who witness the healing, recovery, and resilience of persons who have survived severe traumas in their lives. ”

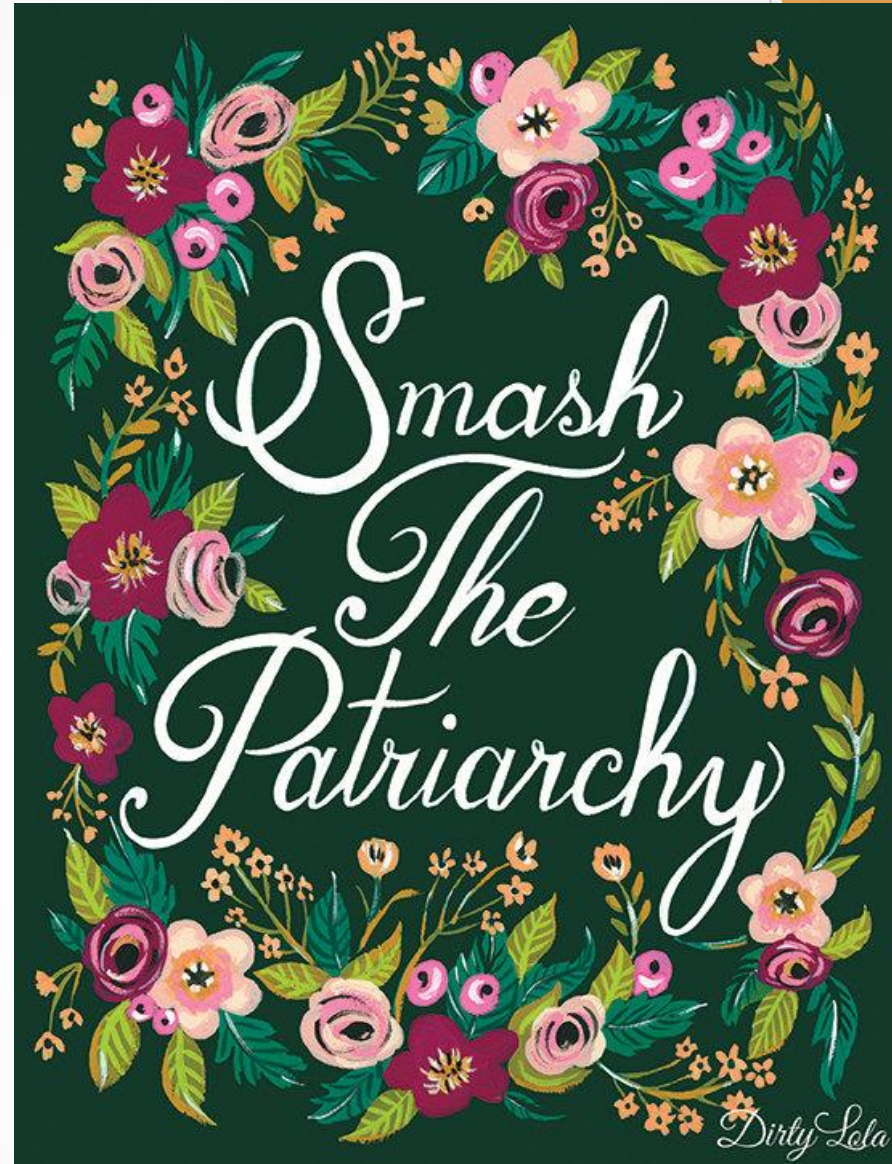
Kyle D. Killian PH.D, LMFT



Road Blocks Realities Realness

POWER is complicated

HEIRARCHY is an established,
required part of our
organizations



POWER

- ▶ We are constantly exposed to the impact of the misuse of power; the reality of power over
- ▶ We all hold some kind of power as we walk through the world

“

Power at its most pure, essential quality can be defined as energy or potency. Consider that power is simply a force within nature and humanity like love or joy...

”

“ One of the greatest calls to action for each of us is to embody our potency, allow it to flow toward the highest possibility for equity, and make space for every other person to be able to do the same. ”

Gretchen Steidle, *Leading from Within*

HIERARCHY

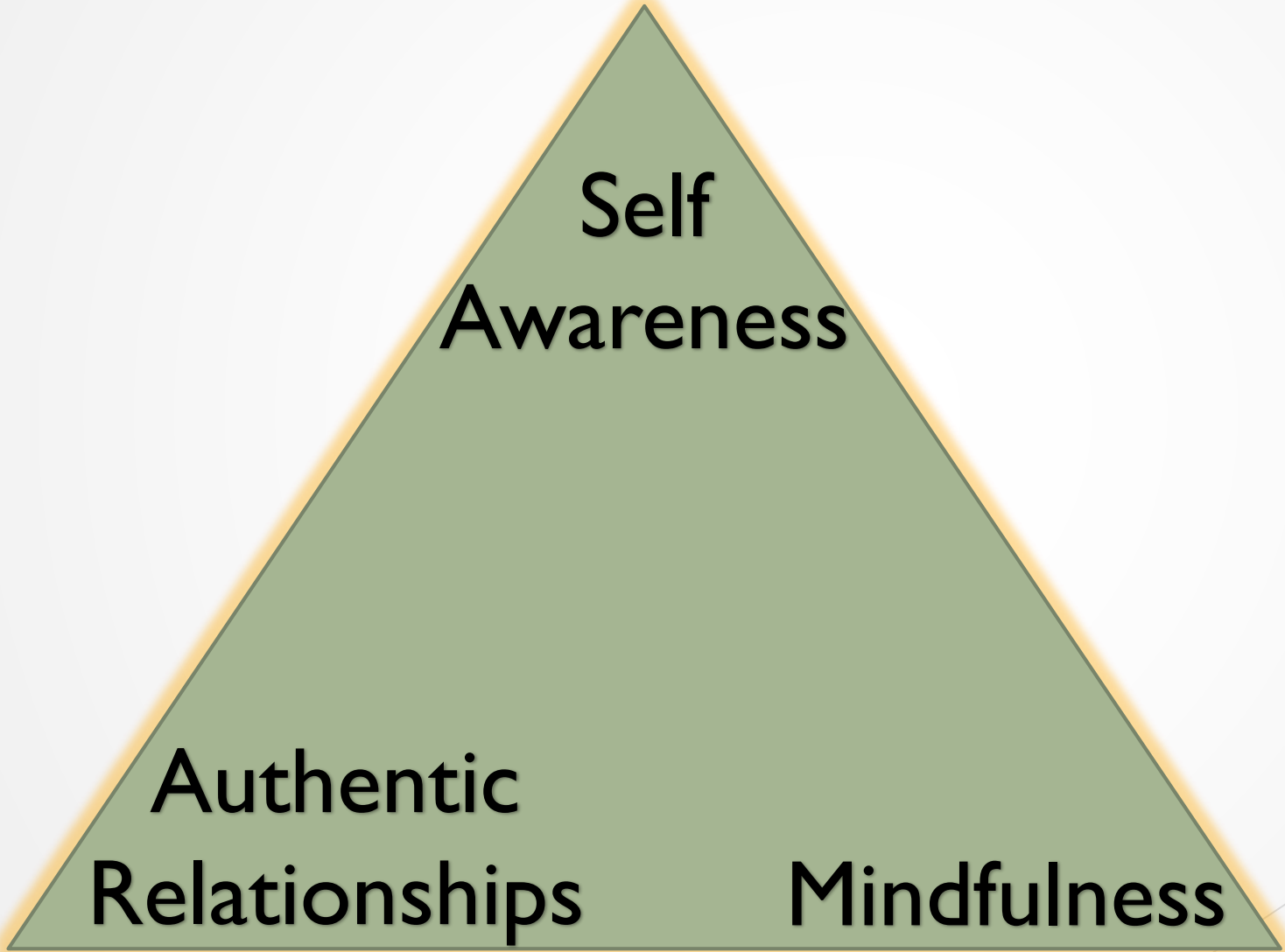
- ▶ Dominant, white supremacy culture is dependent on strict rules of hierarchy
- ▶ We learn hierarchy within our families - *Guadalupe Guajardo*
- ▶ There is no hierarchy to the value of each person's position in an organization



Small Group Discussion

- ▶ How have you seen discomfort with power and hierarchy play out within organizations you've been part of?
- ▶ What are proactive ways you've seen this addressed? Or wish they had been?

Foundations of Good Supervision



Supervision Requires a Set of Values

Review | Revise | Remember



My values:

This work gives me a **PERSONAL CONNECTION**

I want to **STAY IN THE PRESENT MOMENT**

I am amazed by our capacity for **RESILIENCE**

My work is an expression of my belief in our **SHARED HUMANITY**

Supervisors Need Their Own Self Care Plan



Find Support in the Organization

Find Support from Colleagues

Recognize your own Vicarious
Trauma

Use your role as a reason to have
good behavior; walk the talk

Time for Reflection...

Self Care Plan or Values Statement

Cultural Responsiveness

- ▶ Provide supervision that honors, respects, and values a person's lived experiences
- ▶ Put tools and resources in the hands of others to facilitate their leadership in guiding and informing their own work
- ▶ Proactively be reflective of a person's culture, beliefs, and traditions
- ▶ Be open, flexible, and responsive to expressed needs

Transparency

- ▶ Share what information you can
- ▶ Acknowledge when there is information you can't share
- ▶ Name what is hard, even when you can't provide details



Communication

- ▶ Language is critical – be aware of what language you choose
- ▶ Be authentic and yourself while mirroring the culture you're trying to create
- ▶ Be open to being corrected
- ▶ Tell the truth
- ▶ Be aware of indirect and direct communication styles

Decision Making

- ▶ People within the organization should know what to expect when a decision is made.
- ▶ Sometimes decisions need to be made quickly and/or by a limited number of people.
- ▶ For significant changes, map out the expected outcomes and guiding values of process:
 - What will be maintained?
 - What will be improved?
 - What will be changed?

Decision Making options

1. Full group process - If using consensus, make sure to define it first!
2. Small group process – specific team within organization
3. Group informs leader's decision
4. Decision made by leader



When a Decision is Made

- ▶ Demonstrate how the information sought was used to make the decision
- ▶ Never ask for information that you're not going to use – it will feel like a waste of time to those you've asked
- ▶ Don't ask a question you don't want to know the answer to
- ▶ Be clear as to why the decision was made the way it was, and speak to specifics of what informed it

Righting a Relationship that Needs Improvement



- ▶ Acknowledge conflict or need for repair while paying attention to differences in communication styles
- ▶ Ask for feedback before giving your own
- ▶ Map out shared expectations for improving relationship
- ▶ Strive for positive regard in all interactions
- ▶ Be consistent and don't ignore setbacks
- ▶ Give it time

Supervision Meetings

- ▶ What are your short term goals for the week/month?
- ▶ Is there additional support or clarification needed for these tasks?
- ▶ How is Vicarious Trauma impacting your work right now?
- ▶ Are there any workload or workplace issues causing you concern?
- ▶ Do you have any plans in place to address these concerns? What can I do to support you in reducing these concerns?

Providing Feedback to a Co-Worker

You can't do this too often!

- ▶ The people you work with want to hear it!
- ▶ It should be authentic, but find the rhythm to do it a lot
- ▶ Do it for everyone, with a focus on those you supervise directly

The 3 Tiered Approach ~ ~ The Positive

1. Name the behavior you observed; be specific
2. Explain the way you felt when you observed the behavior
3. Say something, related to the behavior you observed, that you value about the person



I was walking through the crisis line room yesterday afternoon, and I heard you supporting a survivor who wasn't sure whether they wanted to tell their friend about the assault. You were doing such a good job talking about options without any judgement, and I felt so impressed that you were able to reflect the caller's feelings in such a concise, loving way. You have really strong active listening skills and I'm sure the people you support feel really respected because of that.

The 3 Tiered Approach ~ ~ The Constructive

1. Name the behavior you observed; be specific
2. Explain the way you felt when you observed the behavior
3. Say something, related to the behavior you observed, that you value about the person

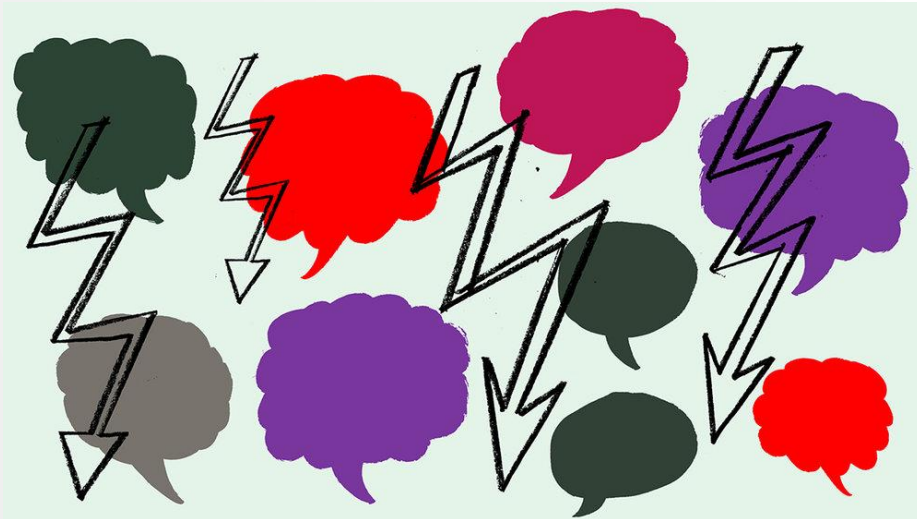
The other day, I overheard you talking with a participant who must have been frustrated with something you had said. When you got off the call, you said that you “weren’t in the mood for stupid people” that day. It made me really uncomfortable to hear someone being called a name, and it felt even worse because there was a volunteer right next to you. I know you work hard during your shifts, and I was surprised to hear that level of frustration come out in that manner. What was going on for you at that moment?

Providing Constructive Feedback

- Prepare what you're going to say before you have the conversation
- The tool of curiosity
 - ▶ Ask questions
 - ▶ Invite a conversation
 - ▶ Be willing to be corrected



Providing Constructive Feedback



- Be direct, specific, and kind
- Consider differences in cultural styles of communication
- Don't talk to fill space; allow for silence
- After the conversation, follow up with an email summary



Time to Practice

1:1 exercise

1. Name the behavior you observed; be specific
 2. Explain the way you felt when you observed the behavior
 3. Say something, related to the behavior you observed, that you value about the person
-

Formal Feedback

Annual Evaluations

- Be specific in your feedback; provide examples
- No suprises about work performance issues!
- Acknowledge how you interpret the system being used
- Strive to always be clear with your/organization's expectations



Formal Feedback

- Possible categories for narrative:
 - Regular duties that the employee does well
 - Projects completed since the last evaluation
 - Ways that they represent the organization with stakeholders
 - New skills, expertise gained since last evaluation

Annual Work Plans

- ▶ Projects that will be advanced within the year
- ▶ Regular tasks that will get special attention and/or be adjusted
- ▶ Networking opportunities
- ▶ Training and/or professional development needs
- ▶ Goals that will help meet the organization's values and/or strategic plan
- ▶ Self care plan and activities



Addressing Work Performance Issues

TRAUMA RESPONSE CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ Do you know how vicarious trauma may be impacting this employee right now?
- ▶ Do you have a sense for how the scenario may be impacting the employee based on their own lived experiences?
- ▶ Are there parts of this scenario that may be bringing up feelings of hopelessness and/or helplessness?

Addressing Work Performance Issues

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CONSIDERATIONS

- ▶ Is your expectation or response based on what dominant culture tells you?
- ▶ What are the differences in your communication? Could some of those differences be based on being from different cultures?
- ▶ What dynamics exist in your organization that may put a burden on this employee?
- ▶ What dynamics exist in this scenario that may be grounded in racism, ableism, homophobia, etc?

Where is This Reaction Coming From?



- ▶ I'm noticing that _____. Does this seem accurate to you?
- ▶ Would you tell me where you're coming from?
- ▶ It seems like you think that _____ is happening. Has something like this happened where you've worked before?
- ▶ What are you hoping I do in this situation?
- ▶ Is there way I can support you to handle this directly?

Time for Practice...

Your Scenario or Role Play

- *What needs to be said?*
- *What change is needed?*
- *What will you watch for and/or address in the future?*

Progressive Disciplinary Process

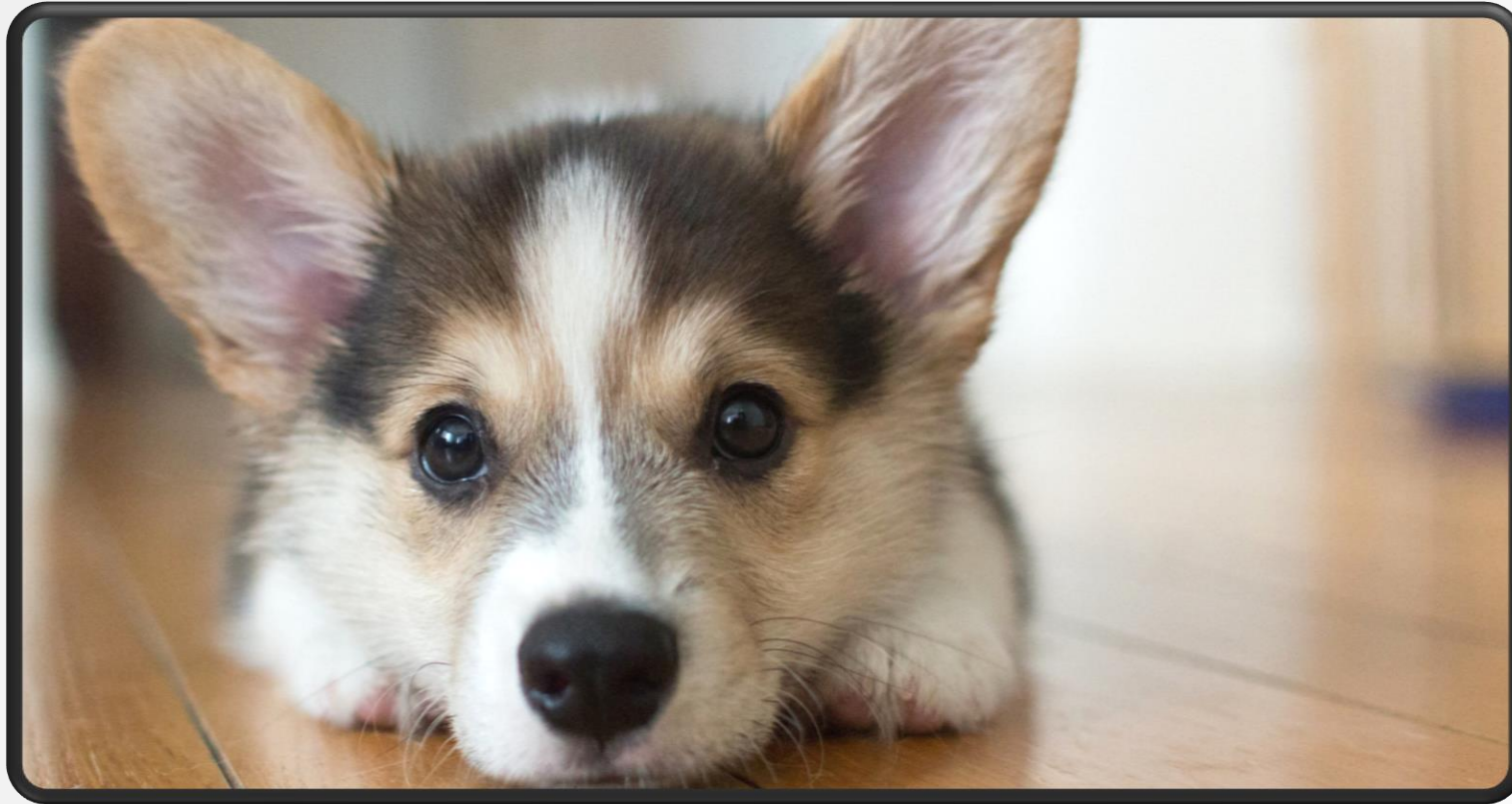
- ▶ Verbal Coaching
 - Informal conversation
- ▶ Verbal Warning
 - 3 Tiered Approach
 - Write it out first
 - Follow up with an email
- ▶ Written Warning
 - Be explicit with expectations, timelines, consequences
- ▶ Termination

Terminating an Employee

- ▶ Ensure that the work performance issue has been well documented
- ▶ Prepare the employee's last paycheck
- ▶ Ensure you get back organization property
- ▶ Remember that, regardless of what you say, the employee will experience the conversation in a negative way

Terminating an Employee

- ▶ Start with what's happening – “Today is your last day here.”
- ▶ Be direct and use minimal, simple language
- ▶ Be kind and empathetic, even when your own emotions and/or tension are present
- ▶ Talk to the rest of the team as soon as possible, but do not disclose any specifics about the decision – “If you have suggestions for minimizing the impact of their absence, please let me know.”



And then... prepare for your own self care

Team Building

- ▶ Find opportunities to share time outside of service delivery and/or organization business
- ▶ Continued learning
- ▶ Focus on root causes of mission, social justice
- ▶ Celebrate accomplishments or organization
- ▶ Honor losses within the work



Small Group Exercise

What activities have you seen work in your organizations and/or teams?

What works for you to create stronger connections with others?

What kind of resources do you have and/or need to create these opportunities?

Next Steps and Take Aways





Any Questions?

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Resources | References

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<https://www.breakthecycle.org/blog/culturally-responsive-advocacy-diverse-young-survivors-dating-abuse-or-sexual-assault>
- ▶ *Trauma Stewardship*, Laura van Dernoot Lipsky
- ▶ *Leading from Within*, Gretchen Ki Steidle
- ▶ *The Body Keeps the Score*, Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.
- ▶ “Core Principles of Trauma Informed Care: Key Learnings,”
<https://www.socialwork.career/2014/05/core-principles-of-trauma-informed-care-key-learnings-1-of-3.html>
- ▶ “Vicarious Trauma Toolkit,” <https://vtt.ovc.ojp.gov/>