



Fostering Supportive Workplaces in Overwhelming Times

A Keynote for The Rest of Us

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Expectations

What this will be	What this won't be
Considerations that have helped me form and maintain workable relationships	Medical advice
Life hacks and big picture thoughts	The sole solution to your every problem
Small examples	Excuses for a toxic work environment
Relatable mental health memes from the Internet	Advice for diagnosing or monitoring your coworkers
And invitation to personal reflection	A framework for people in power to enforce on others

I implore you to be here for yourself and take away what you can.



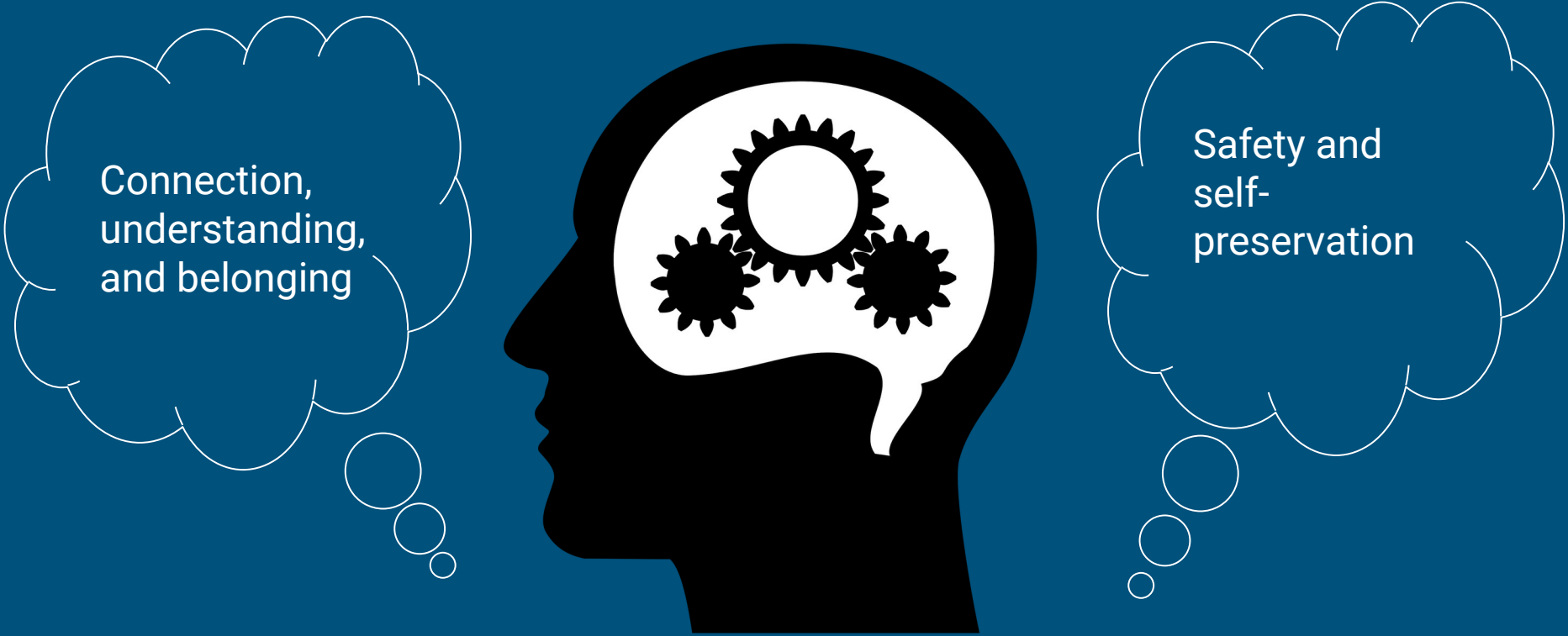
Who here's ever been stressed?

Recognizing Overwhelm/Stress: Stages

1. In ourselves
2. In our intimate relationships
- 3. In work relationships**
4. In working with patrons and the public

Our brains have two seemingly
contradicting goals

Connection,
understanding,
and belonging



Safety and
self-
preservation





reductress



Sad! This Woman Achieved
Everything She Aspired to and
Now She Has to Do It Forever



Reductress



pixeloccult



Morgz



@moviemorgz@la... · 6 days ago

Them: Are you going to be part of the problem or part of the solu—

Me: Oh problem, definitely

Them: That wasn't...it was a rhetorica
—

Me: I have some ideas on how to make the problem even funnier than it is



The Library Louse 🇺🇦

@TheLibraryLouse



"Are you ok?"

Oh my god no, but for the purposes of this conversation yes I'm fine.

Imagine...

...You are back from the 2024 OLA Conference

Now what?

Connecting after the conference

- Genuine appreciation and celebration
- In-person or virtually
- Share small things that resonate as a low-risk way to connect

The only way we'll really get anything done well is together.

In short:

- Connection and understand can make us content
- Contentedness is good
- When we are stressed: our main goal is not contentedness, but safety
- In pursuit of safety, we might isolate and disconnect

Our brains are trying really hard.

But they can be jerks when wanting to protect us.

Validation

- Being heard/feeling understood is validating
- When not validated, emotions can intensify
- Balance of emotion and logic in the workplace for a rounded experience

Invalidation and dysregulation

Signs of Emotional Dysregulation



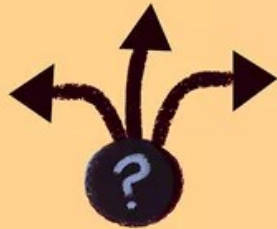
Overly intense emotions



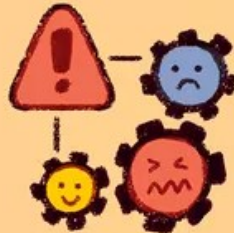
Impulsive behavior



Lack of emotional awareness



Trouble making decisions



Inability to manage behavior



Avoids difficult emotions

Verywell /
Theresa
Chiechi

Validation can be an Inside Job

“I feel sad/angry when I think about _____.

What can I do that is in my control to help myself feel better?”

Validation: Expectation vs Reality

It can feel like...	But really...
If your feelings are validated= your thoughts are valid= The urge you have is justified= ANY action you take is justified.	If your feelings are validated= your thoughts are worth examining= take a breath, and resist your first urge= You can make your next action a skillful one aligned with your values.

“Urge Surfing”: noticing and naming possibilities for yourself
without acting on them immediately

An absolutely hypothetical work example



EVERYONE is a person
in the EXACT SAME WAY
that you are a person.

Connecting when you're out of empathy

- Utilize mirror neurons
- Half smile (might want to practice in a mirror)
- Willing hands
- Opposite action
- Accept and Commit

Accept and Commit

“Safety” when stressed can look like:

- Ruminating on the past and worrying about the future
- Comparing us to others, which can be constant in this age of social media
- Going on autopilot in the present (so you can spend more time worrying about the past or future)
- Defaulting to whatever neuropath/course of action is familiar and feels safe (even if it is to our detriment)

Good News! Neuroplasticity is a Thing!

Accept and Commit (continued)

- Accept everything that has happened to this point
- Engage in the present moment
- Make informed and skilled decisions
- Let go of “should” and “would” when talking about things that have already happened

ACCEPTANCE only means to acknowledge things that have happened
as reality.

Building trust (practice with friends first)

- Recognize to yourself that they are human in the exact way you are.
- Turning the Mind: Accept and Commit about people
- “I cannot work with this person” turns to “This is my coworker and we need to work together.”

Turning the Mind at Work

- Charitable Interpretations
- Finding and Addressing the Facts
- Deliberate Connection

Imagine....

...increasing connection and belonging.

- Objective
- Relationship
- How we feel it went afterward

Nurturing All Parts of an Interaction:

- Referencing or boosting something another person said earlier in the interaction
- Dialectics to get closer to compromise
- Talking about shared values and working toward understanding through them
- Kinetic energy to mitigate stress

Wrapping up (??)

- Everyone is a person in the exact same way that you are a person.
- No one is a mind reader.
- Nothing I've said today will change your entire work culture overnight.
- More like a ripple effect that can increase creativity, collaboration, and belonging in your workplace that will get easier over time to maintain.

“Remember, it ain't too late to take a deep breath and throw yourself into it with everything you've got. It's great to be alive.” -Patterson Hood

Hang in there - I believe in you -
Be well - Thank you

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