



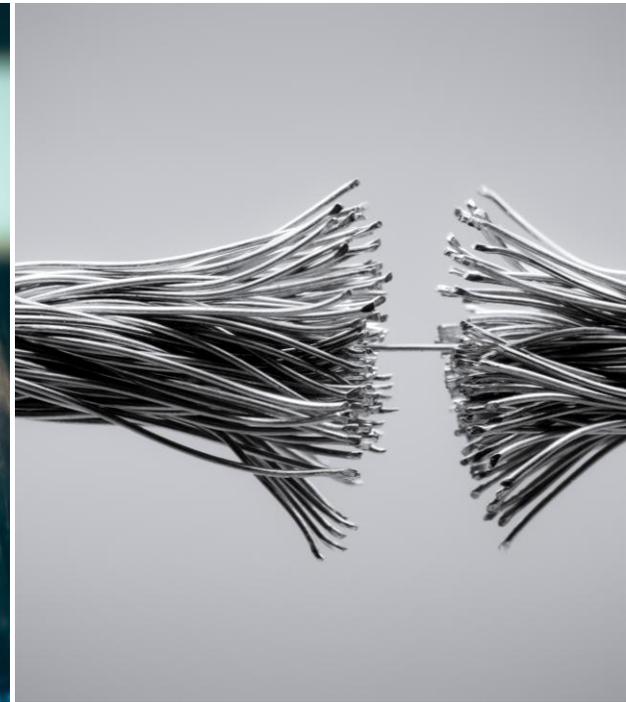
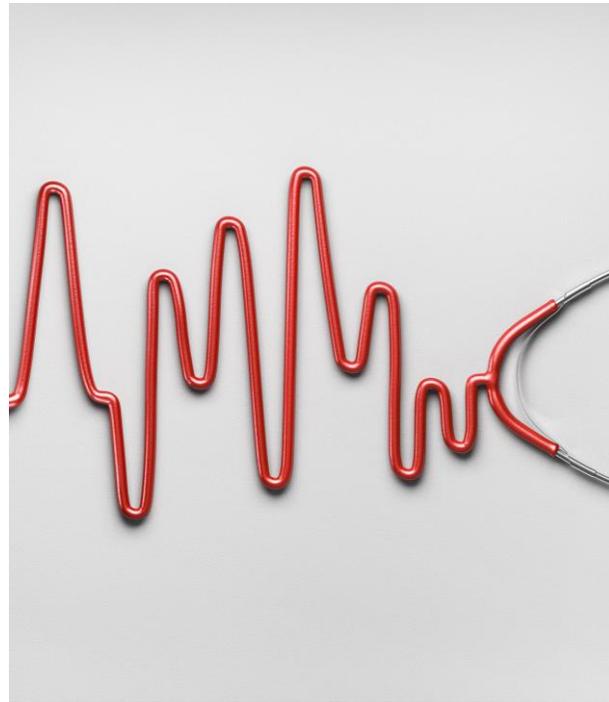
Navigating Uncertainty With Hope

Maintaining Inclusive Spaces for all

Sept. 22, 2025

A story

Mom, Spouse, Educator, Advocate



Light shines in the darkness

- I can't control the actions of the federal government, but I can work on how I respond
- I can't control the actions of others, but I can continue to show love, kindness, and empathy to those around me
- I might not know where this is all going, but I can choose hope in the midst of uncertainty



Indigenous Culture Infusion

7 Grandfather Teachings: Bravery

Hold firm in your thoughts and stand strong even when you don't know what will happen right now.



They are still here

- Regardless of leadership...
- Regardless of policy...
- Regardless of harmful rhetoric...
- Regardless of my personal feelings...

So...what are you going to do?



Maintaining inclusive spaces for all

- Practical reminders
- Smart shifts
- The long game



Practical reminders

Local and state protections



Go local: request your strategic plan

- What is the mission?
- What is the vision?
- What are the values?
- What are the believe statements?



Activity: Strategic plans

- Read sample language from regional schools
- Which words or statements indicate a commitment to inclusivity?



Activity: Strategic plans

- Choose 1 or 2 examples you highlighted
- What are some activities, practices or policies that would support this commitment?
- Who, specifically would be included?
- How does your local mission/vision/values/belief statements support all?



State level protection

- We will maintain state level policies that protect every child's right to learn in a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment
- Title VI and Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Rights to educational excellence regardless of circumstances outside of their control (i.e. zip code)



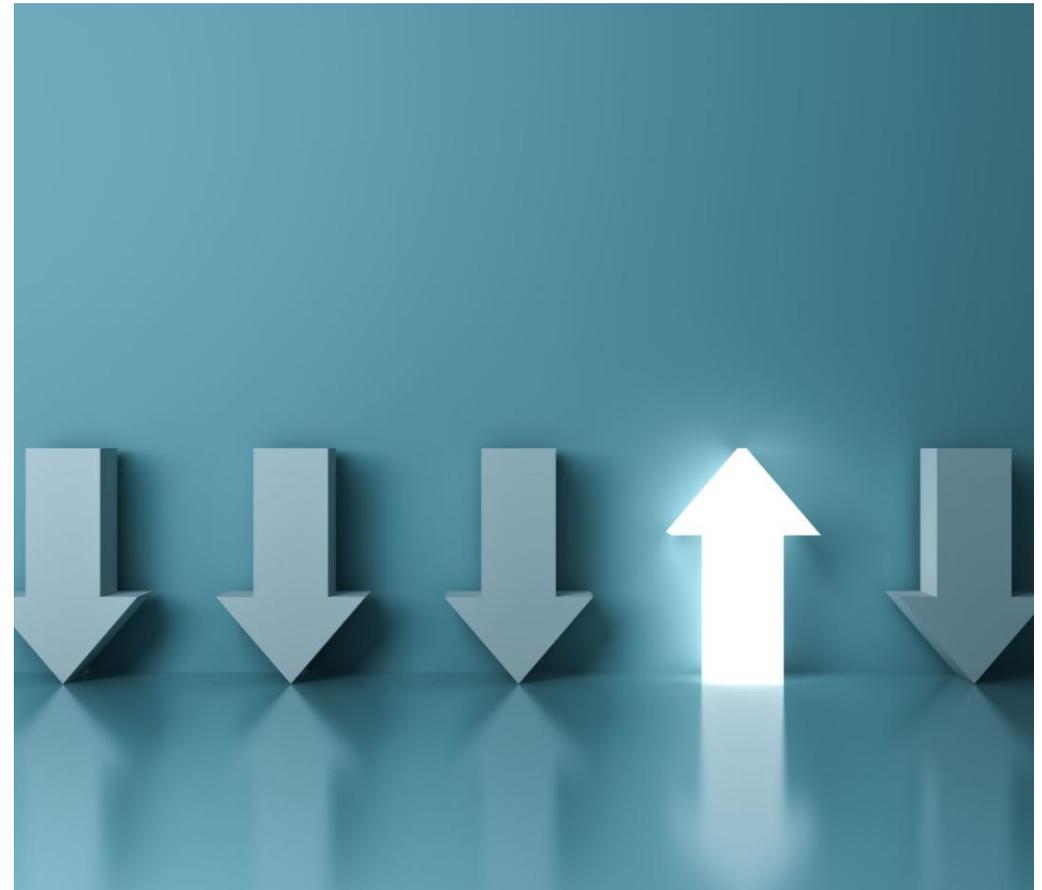
An aerial photograph of a suburban residential neighborhood during autumn. The trees are in various shades of yellow, orange, and green. Houses with grey roofs and green lawns are scattered throughout. A road runs vertically through the center-right of the image. A large, semi-transparent orange shape is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing white text.

Smart shifts

Avoiding activation

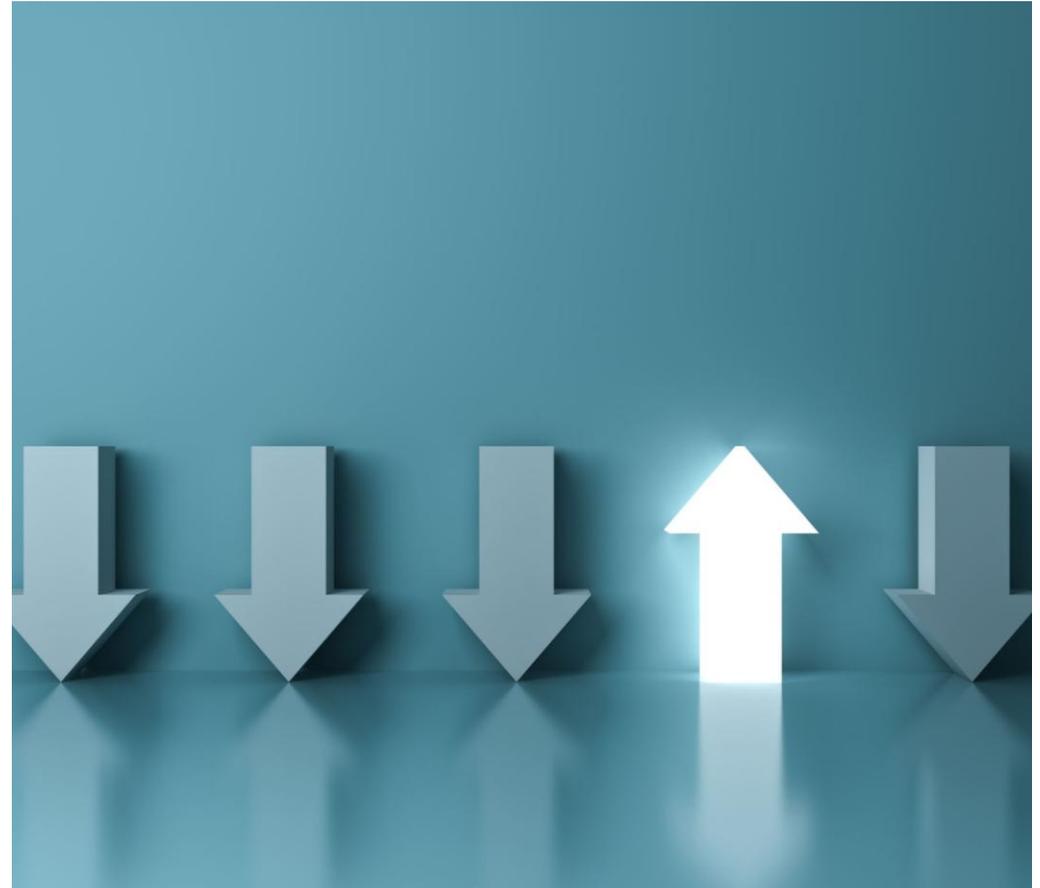
Smart shifts

- It is NOT: sneaky, coded or manipulative
- It IS: supportive of all students, protects students, helps others understand the true meaning behind phrases that have been co-opted to mean something negative

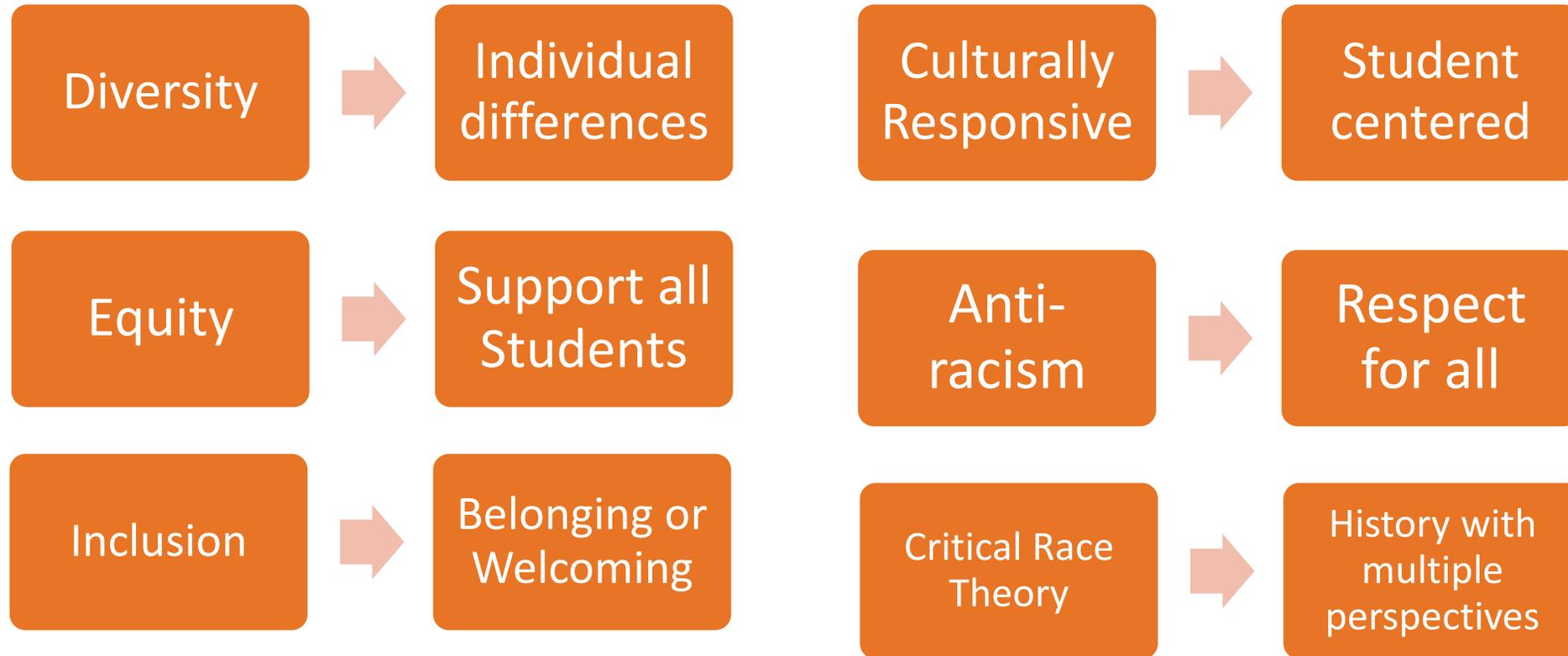


Activity: smart shifts

- Here are some common phrases that negatively activate some people.
- How could you shift these ideas and still maintain the true meaning behind the label?

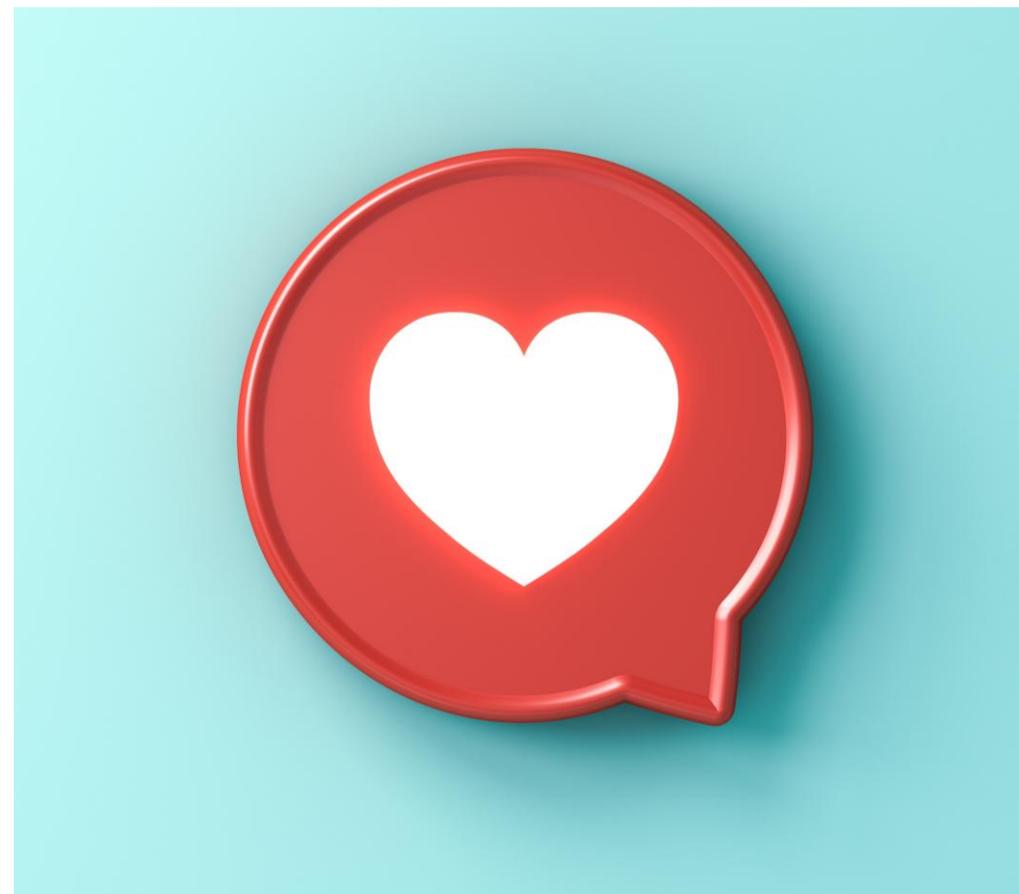


Activity: share smart shifts



Make sure the heart shifts with the label

- **Unpack what these concepts look like in practice**
 - What would we see?
 - How would it feel?
 - What would we do?
 - What would we hear?



Classroom activities

- Student inventories (example)
- Teacher/Parent & Caregiver/Student agreements (examples)
- Students see themselves in the room (pictures, their work, drawings, writing, etc.)
- Visuals that represent many kinds of people
- Books and materials representing many kinds of people both visually and in perspective
- Lessons and learning that connect to students' cultures

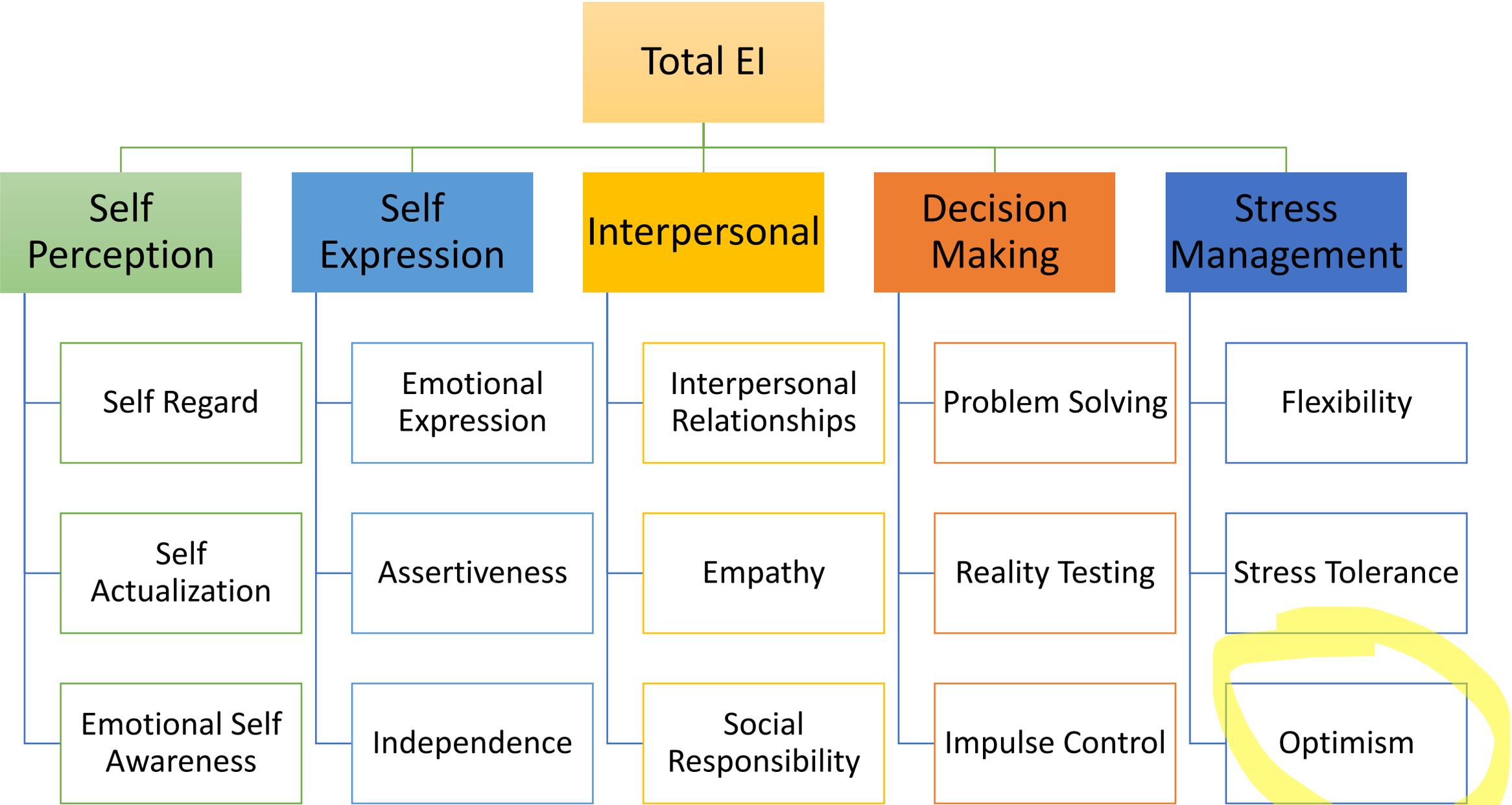
The long game

Optimism and hope

Maintaining inclusive spaces for all

- Practical reminders
- Smart shifts
- The long game





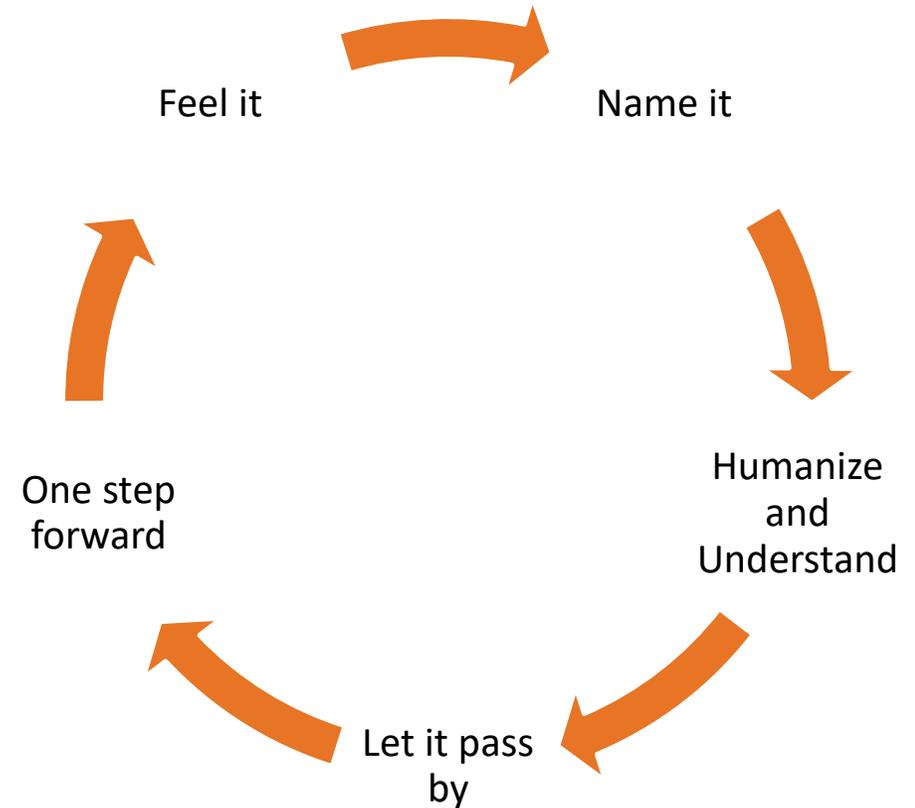
Optimism??

- But I'm mad!
- And I have a right to be mad.
- Why aren't **YOU** mad?!
- If you're not mad, you might be part of the problem!



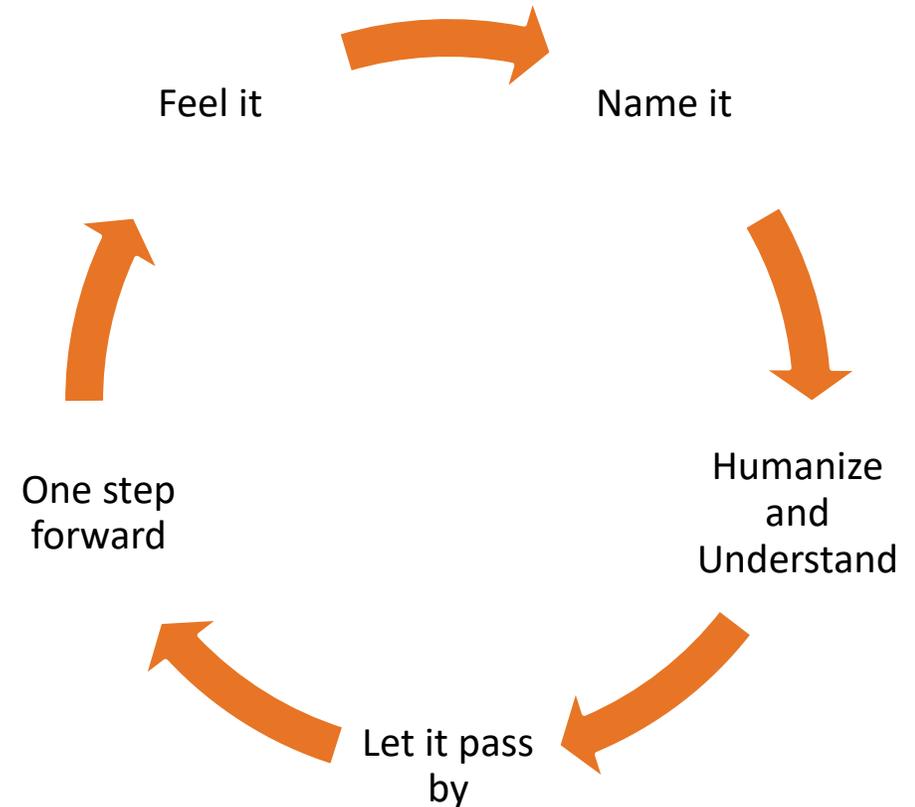
Moving through uncomfortable emotions

- **Feel it:** Feelings are meant to be felt. Noticing what is happening in your body as the first step.
- **Name it:** Name the feeling; this can be hard! (Emotion wheels can help)
- **Humanize and Understand:** No judgement zone! This is a “typical” human reaction.



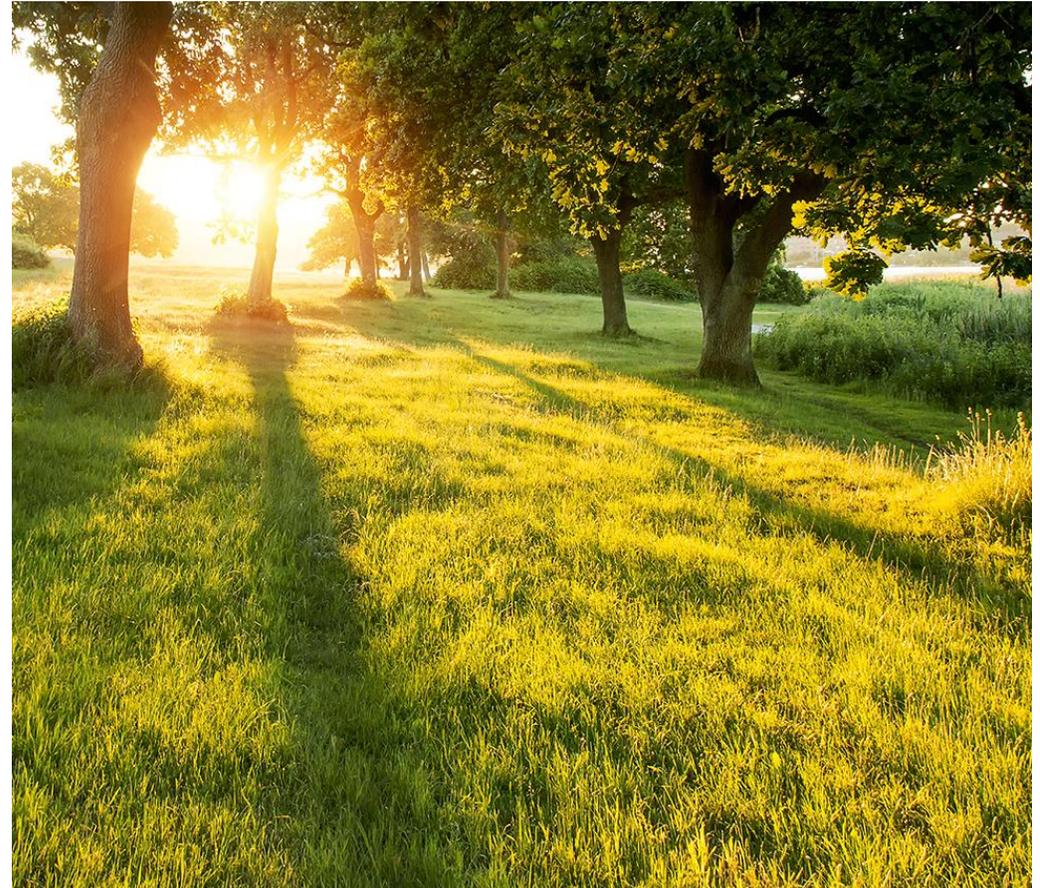
Moving through uncomfortable emotions

- **Let it pass by:** After you've spent some time feeling it, naming it, and understanding where it came from, just let it move on through. A visual might help (moving water or a gentle breeze)
- **One step forward:** What is the next small move forward towards optimism and hope?



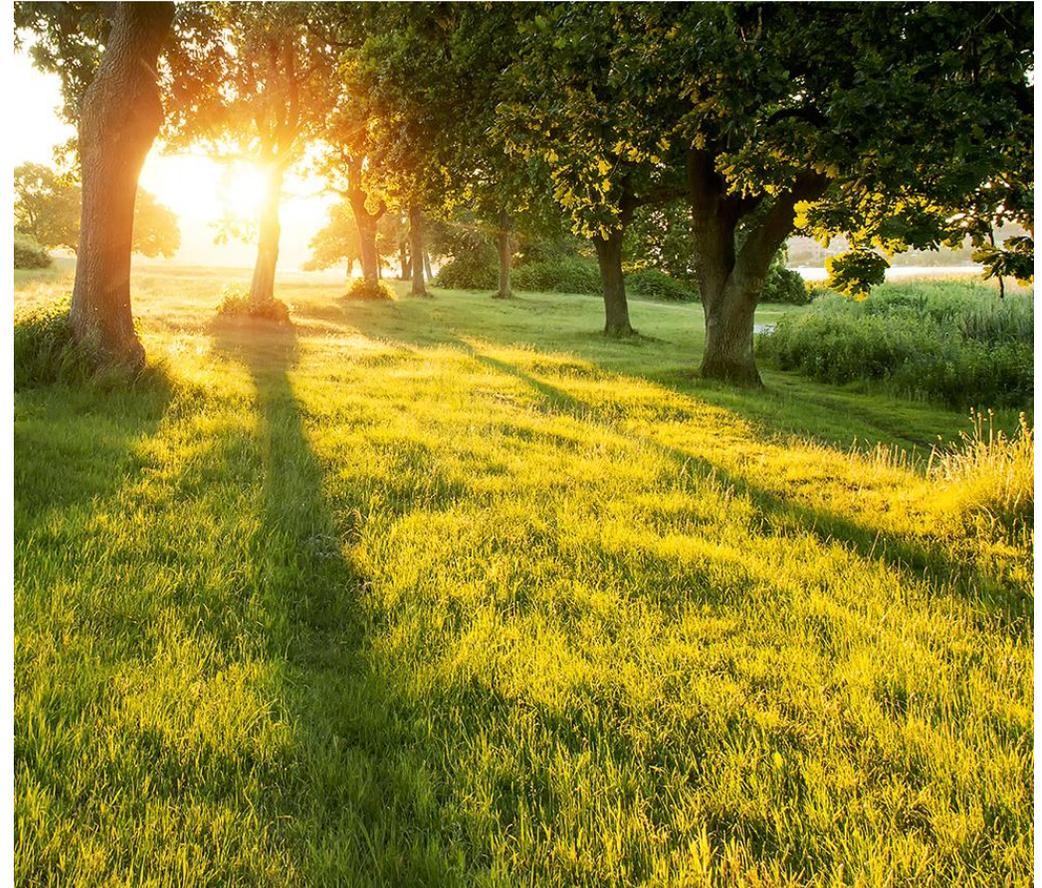
Why optimism?

- Fewer symptoms of depression
- Higher levels of wellbeing
- Better cardiovascular health and healthy aging



Optimism and hope

- Optimism is broad belief that the future holds positive outcomes for themselves, and others
- Hope is a positive motivational state and involving agency and pathways
- Hope is the feeling that follows action



Optimism

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”



Hope

- I CAN choose actions that build feelings of hope
- I CAN share and invite others to join in actions that build feelings of hope
- There IS a way forward, we must be willing to take the first steps



The long game

- Take breaks
- Remind yourself of the collective
- Ground yourself in small wins
- Get outside into nature
- Drink water
- Eat healthy foods
- Move your body



What about you?

- How will you lean into your own agency?
- What pathway will you take?
- What is your next step that will shine a light even in the darkness?



Thank you!



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