



# Unpacking and navigating microaggressions

*Helping people and organizations build relational bridges*

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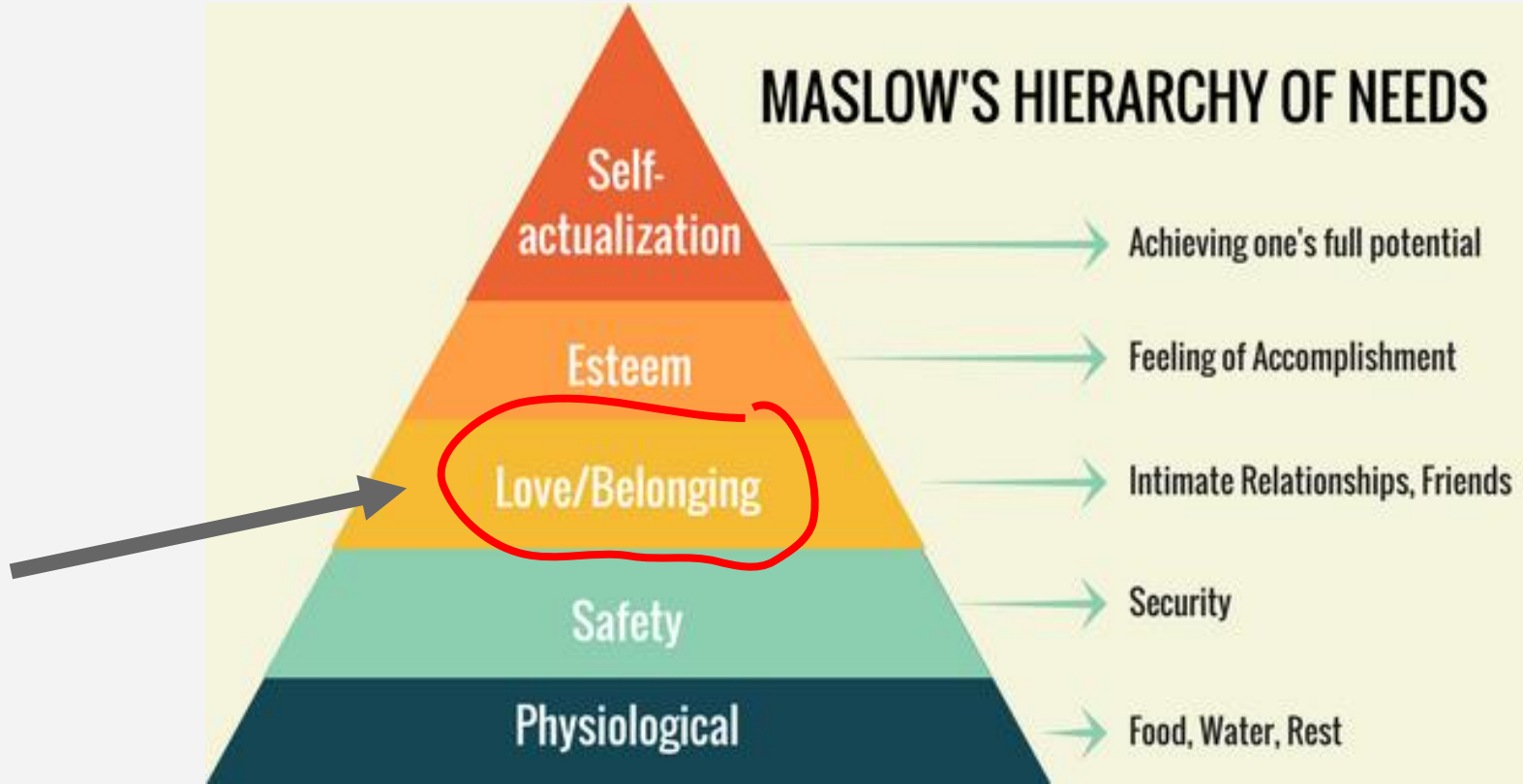
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# Goals for today...

- Define microaggressions and their impact on target groups
- Develop strategies to show up authentically while being aware and sensitive to marginalized populations
- Practice strategies to effectively interrupt microaggressions when they happen

# What is this about?



# A Quest for Belonging



# Who are you in the story?

The unaware participant?

Others

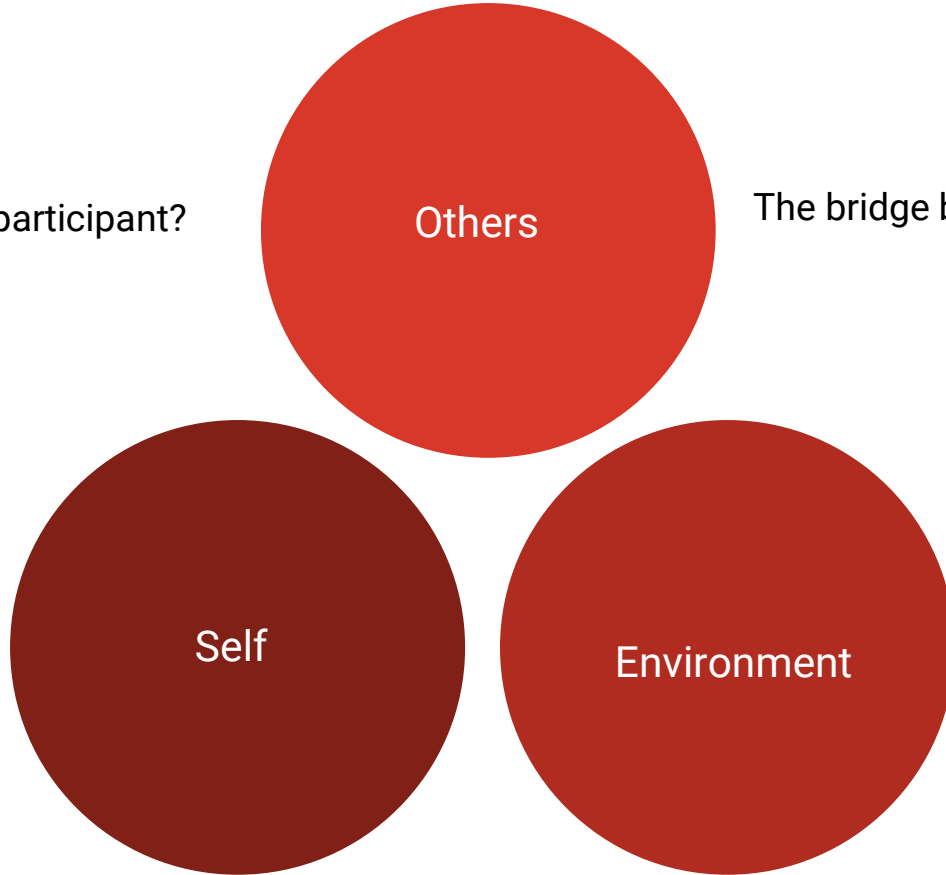
The bridge builder?

The one standing at the  
door?

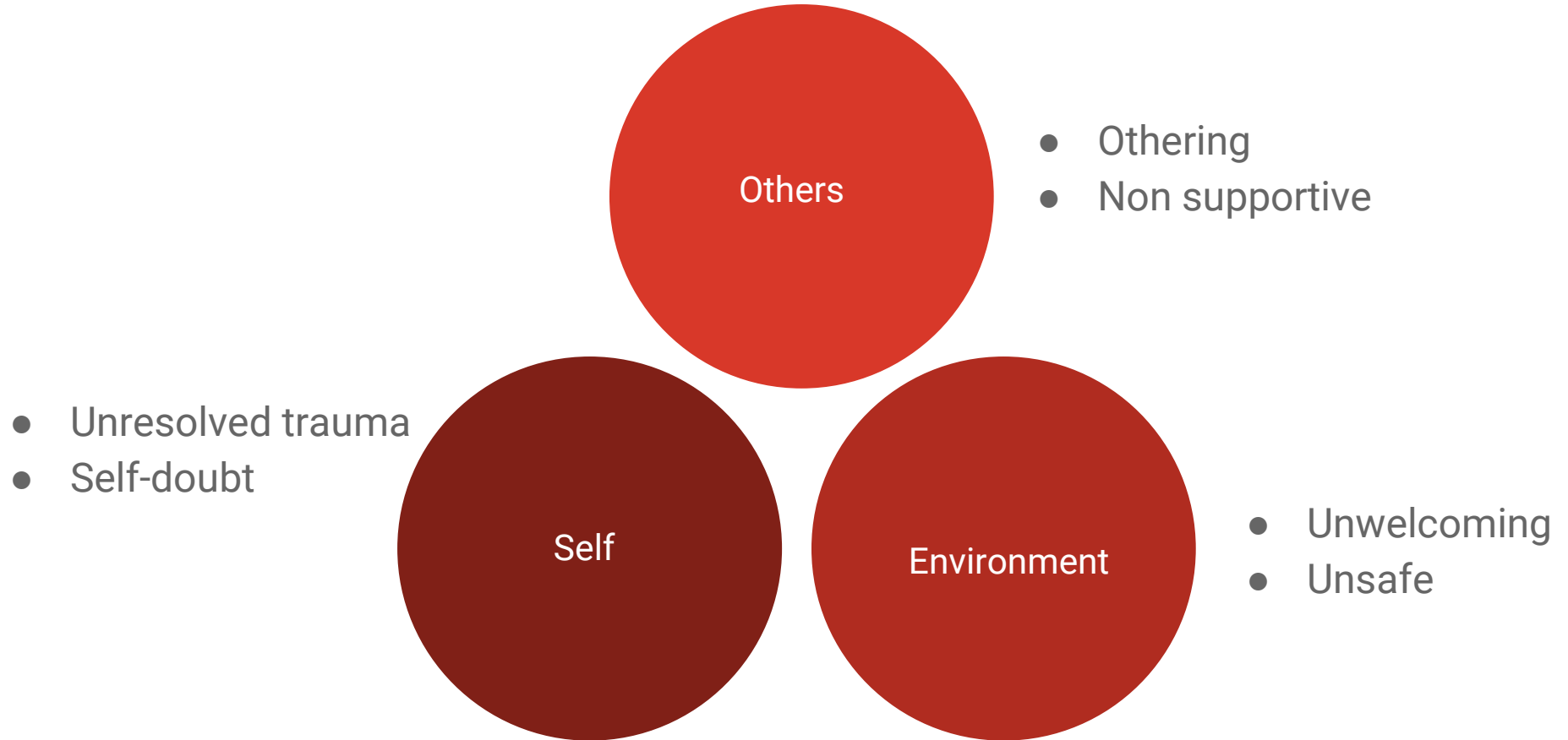
Self

Environment

The gatekeeper?



# Barriers to belonging



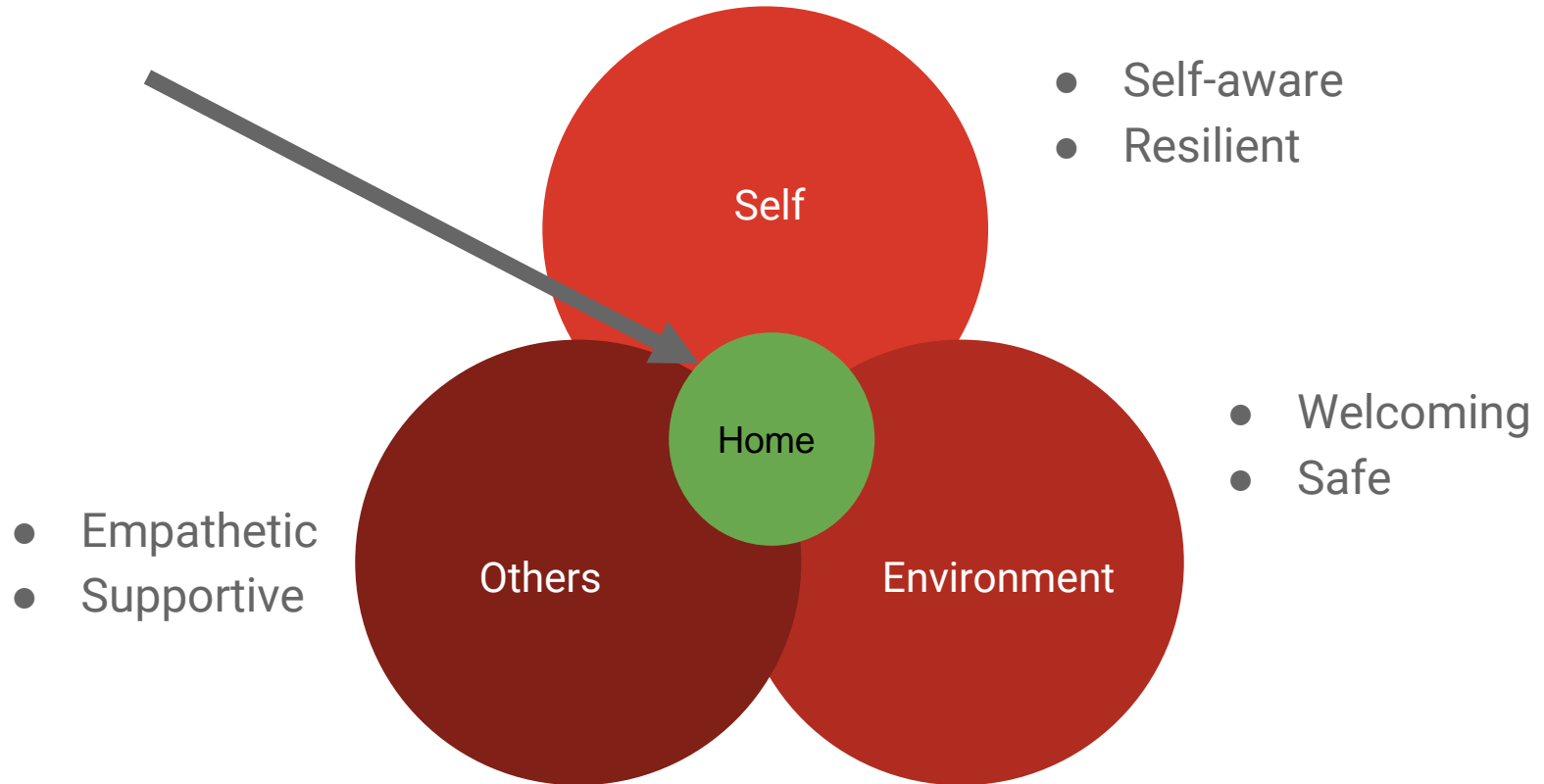
# Where do microaggressions fall?

- Unresolved trauma
- Self-doubt



- Othering
    - **Microaggressions**
  - Non supportive
- 
- Unwelcoming
  - Unsafe

# Keys to belonging





# What can be done?

## KEYS TO TRANSFORMATION, HEALING & RESTORATION



Know your role in  
the story



Understand  
your story



Accept  
your story



Reclaim  
the ending



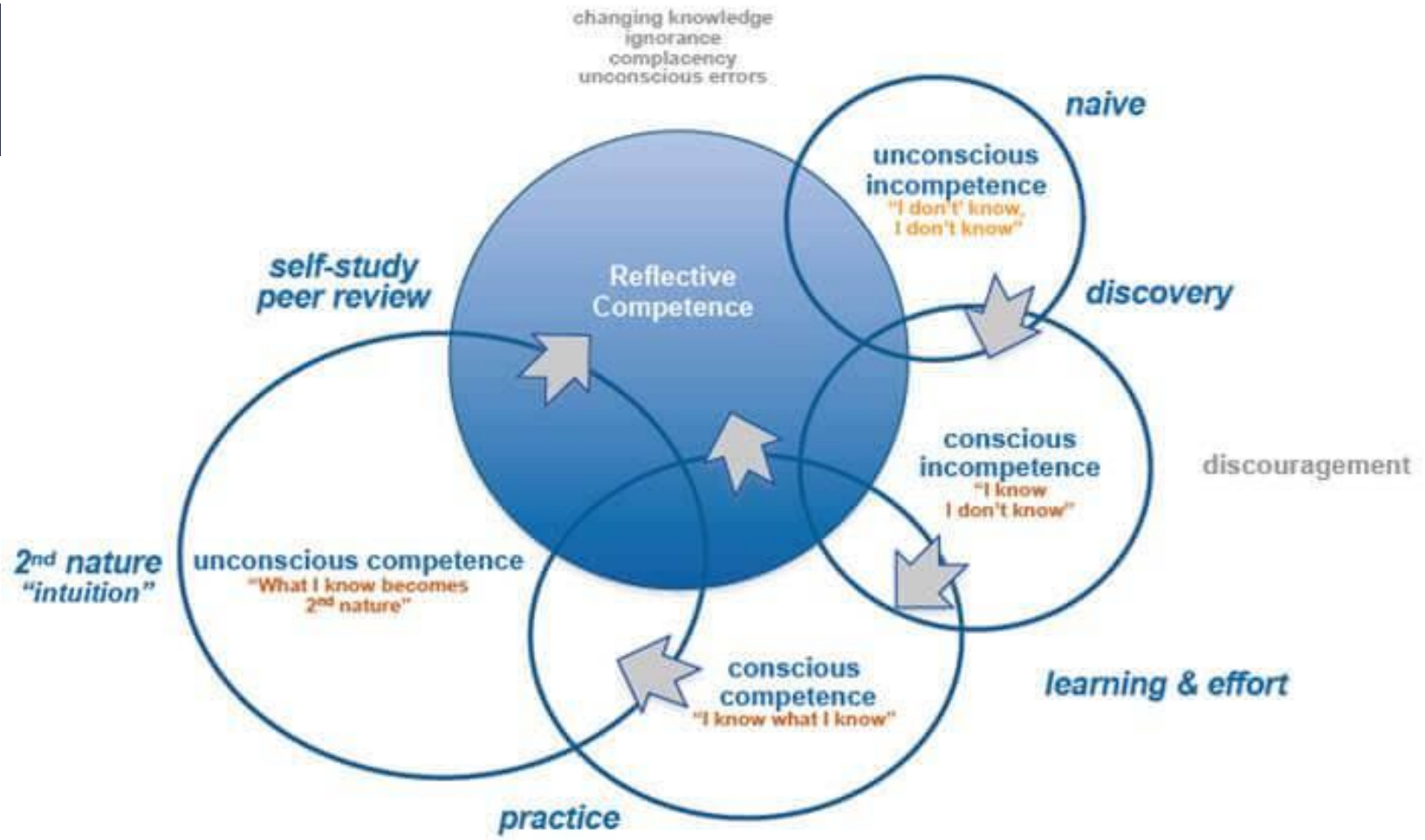
# Goals of today...

- What are microaggressions and what's the big deal?
- What to do?
  - Prevention
  - Self-Advocacy
  - Intervention
- Practice

# Listening activity

1. Choose one person to be **Phenomenal** and another to be **Awesome**.
2. For one minute:  
**Phenomenal** people talk about your shoes  
**Awesome** people do everything you can to show you are NOT listening.
3. “What did you notice?”
4. For one minute:  
**Phenomenal** people talk about your hair.  
**Awesome** people do everything you can to show you ARE listening.
5. “What did you notice?”

# Growing through our mistakes William Taylor Reflective competence model



## **Working Definitions: a stereotype**

A generalization about a group in which identical characteristics are assigned to all members of the group, regardless of actual variation among the members (e.g., gender, elderly, professors, mexicans, black women...)

New Yorkers = Rude



## **Working Definitions: a microaggression:**

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership

*(Diversity in the Classroom, UCLA Diversity & Faculty Development, 2014).*

## Activity

1. Identify a stereotype
2. Formulate a microaggression based on the stereotype

### Example:

Stereotype: Immigrants with certain accents speak poor english

Microaggression: you speak pretty good english!

1:00

## What is the big deal?

- Frequent
- Accumulated impact
- Based on stereotype
- Often unintended
- Triggering
- Safety
- Numbing
- Distrust
- Outing
- Self-Esteem



What is the big deal?

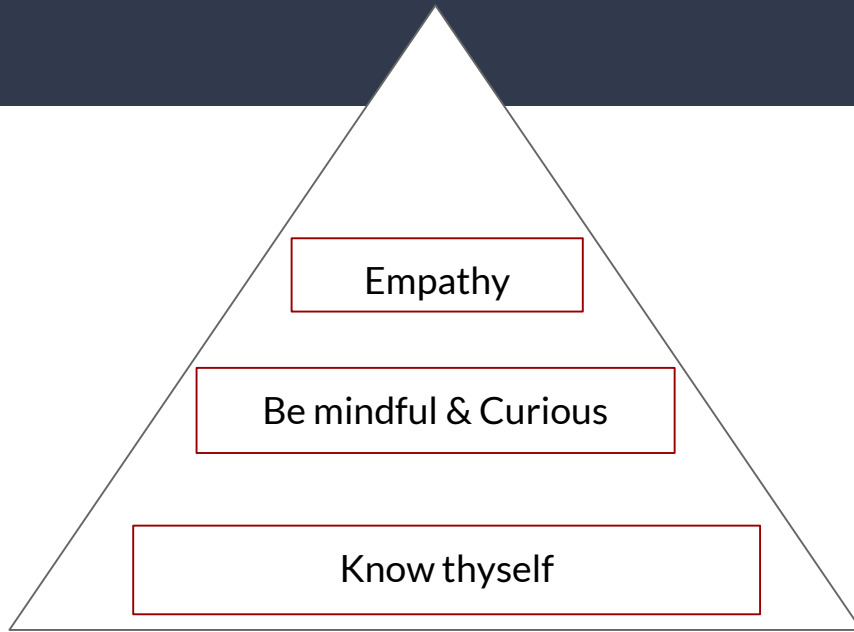


What is the big deal ?

It is personal...



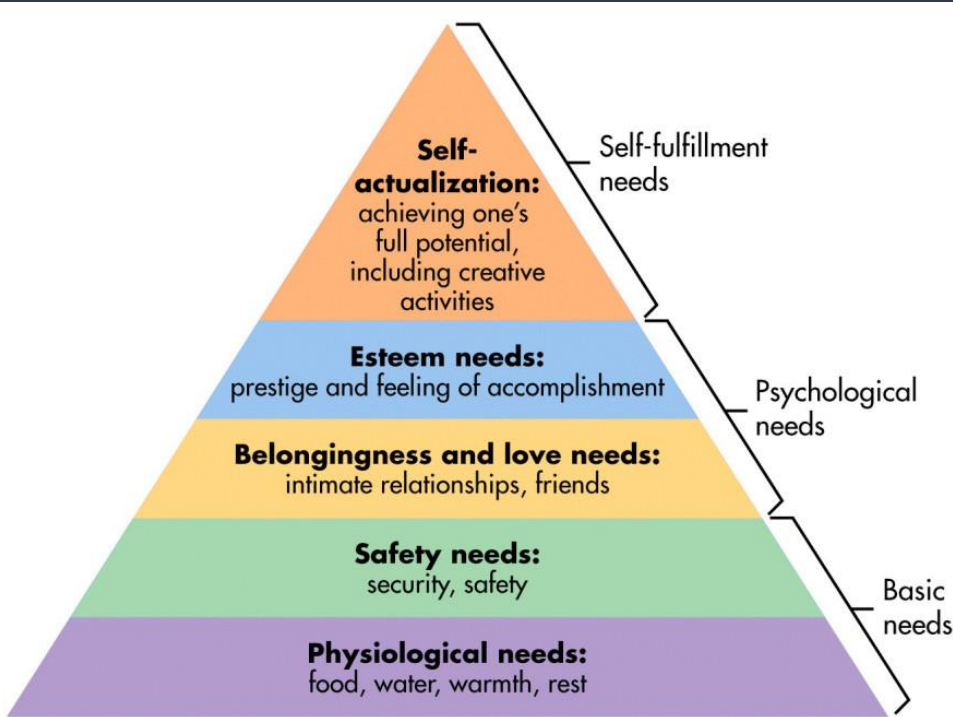
# Prevention - How to show up authentically?



- How will this transform/inform the way I engage with this person/group/the world (community)?
- Other than this behavior/trait, what else can I learn/find out about this person/group? What insight is missing? How can the observation be a basis for additional inquiry?
- How does being “me” impact my...? (Assumptions, expectations, fears, language, exposure to experiences, humor?)

The Empathy Engagement Framework (EEF)

# Know Thyself



- How does being \_\_\_ impact my\_\_\_.? (assumptions, expectations, fears, use of language, exposure to experiences, humor, triggers)
- Able, heterosexual, male, female, religious/agnostic, educated, white, US citizen, employed, insured, assertive, extrovert, black, hispanic, single/married, parent...

# Activity

1. Pick one item from **list A** (1 min)
2. Answer the prompt  
How does being \_\_\_\_ impact my **expectations of others**? (1 min)
3. Share in pairs (3 min)

## List A

Able bodied, heterosexual, male, female, religious/agnostic, educated, white, US citizen, employed, insured, assertive, extrovert, black, hispanic, Native, African, 1st generation immigrant, single/married, parent, with No criminal records, with a Driver license...

1:00

# How we feel when it happens

Did this really happen?  
Do they realize?  
I am hurt, confused  
I want to trust but can't



# How we respond when it happens



That was so  
offensive!  
I can't believe you  
did that!  
You are \*\*\*\*





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# Be A. D.E.A.R



1. Affirm person & relationship
2. Describe behavior without judgment
3. Explain the emotion/impact and your filters
4. Assume Positive Intent
5. Request or suggest different behavior



I really appreciate having you as a friend. I have so much fun with you, and I can tell you anything. Earlier today, when I got my math test back and I got 98%, I heard you say, “well of course you got a 98% - you’re Asian!”. I was pretty hurt when I heard that. I work hard in all my classes to get good grades, but when you assume it’s because of my race. It’s sad that I don’t get to own my hard work and accomplishments like everyone else. I am pretty sure you didn’t mean for me to feel that way. Can I ask that you please don’t say things like that anymore,? Insinuate that my good grades have anything to do with my race?

An Example

I know you value respect in this community. When we were disagreeing about budgets earlier today, you said, “you’re being overdramatic,” and later you called me a “drama queen.” Statements like this make it sound like I’m being too emotional and that my concerns are not real. It makes me feel belittled. I am assuming it isn’t your intention. I would appreciate you not saying things like this anymore. Is it possible?

An Example

# Self Advocacy

1. Affirm person & relationship
2. Describe behavior without judgment
3. Explain the emotion/impact and your filters
4. Assume Positive Intent
5. Request or suggest different behavior

Key Points: Timing, Actions not adjectives, I statements, Inside feelings

3:00

# Intervention

- Reduce Defensiveness
  - Tone
  - Body language
  - Respect
- Keep the conversation going
  - Hear them out
  - Ask Open-Ended Questions
  - Set aside your feeling for the moment
  - Dialogue
- Build Relationship
- Stop behavior
- Win an Ally

# Intervention

- **Ask open ended questions**
  - “He looked suspicious”
  - How did he look? How was he acting? How was that suspicious?
- **Found out the experience motivating the comment**
  - Why can’t they just speak English here?”
  - “It must be hard not to understand what people are saying around you.”
- **Use exaggerated humor to highlight what’s going on (be cautious)**
  - “You’re gay - what do gay people think about this issue?”
  - “I’m not sure - I’ll go ask. It may take a while, since there are so many of us.”
- **Join the person and do not make yourself superior**
  - She got the award because she’s Black and female”
  - “You know, I hear that a lot. I’ve been trying to figure out why we seem to think when a black woman gets recognized it must be because of “diversity or “affirmative Action reasons rather than their merit.

# Practice

1. Ask open ended questions
2. Find out the experience motivating the comment
3. Use exaggerated humor to highlight what's going on
4. Join the person and do not make yourself superior

1:00

# Practice

## Switch

3:00

# Receiving feedback

1. Listen with full attention
2. Don't try to defend or respond right away
3. Your mistakes don't define you
4. Be worthy of their trust and gift
5. Prioritize the impact over intent



1:00



# Practice

1. I really appreciate you telling me this
2. I am so embarrassed that I did that
3. I am very sorry my words and actions made you feel that way
4. I am overwhelmed right now, and i do not want to respond in a way i'd regret. Could you help me come up with a better way to handle that situation after I take a few minutes?
5. I wanted to go back to a moment I don't think i handled very well.. Do you have a moment?

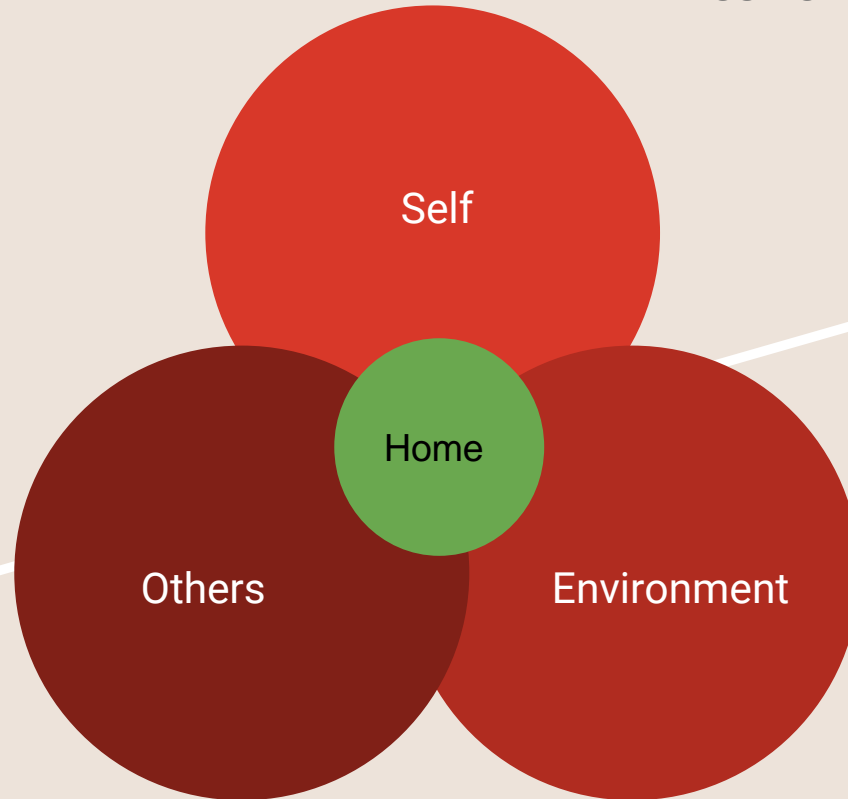
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# Ending advice

1. Know thyself
2. If you messed up and you know it, don't wait for an intervention. Apologize!
3. Build authentic relationships
4. Expand your communities

# Home

- Self-aware
- Resilient



- Empathetic
- Supportive

- Welcoming
- Safe



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# Comments/ Questions?

A photograph showing a group of people, likely a community or a group of students, sitting together and looking at a document. The image is partially obscured by a diagonal cut, with the top right portion missing. The people are of various ethnicities and are dressed in casual clothing. The lighting is warm and natural.

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