

**Day 1, Tuesday**  
**May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026**



**MAY 5 - 8, 2026**

**MENTAL  
HEALTH**

**ACTION WEEK**

**THE SUSTAINED SELF**  
**DAY 1, TUESDAY MAY 5<sup>TH</sup>, 2026**



## **WELCOME AND SETTLING IN**



Your purpose is not  
the thing you do. It is  
the thing that happens  
in others when you  
do what you do.

*-Dr. Caroline Leaf*

# Our Flow

- **Welcome & orientation to the 2026 MHAW and the session**
- **Why the “Sustained Self”?**
- **Teach-Ins!**
  - Dr. Laurie Vázquez Scolari
  - Gil Perez
  - Dr. Stephanie Cariaga
- **Discussion + Q & A**
- **Closing the main session**
- **Breathwork practice with Dr. Parisa Soltani**



# Creating a Supportive Learning Space



Create digital safety by using camera **or** chat when possible. If you're moving around, please be off camera. All participants will be muted except on Day 4 (May 8<sup>th</sup>).



Click on "CC" on the bar at the bottom of the screen for **auto captioning**.



Use reactions, raise hand feature to speak and chat to share, affirm, pose question, engage.



Share resources you want to offer or questions you have in the Q & A box



If you have audio or technical issues during the session, the chat box is open for you to communicate with our team so they may assist you. **Please private chat "TECH SUPPORT."**



The session recording will be posted on our event page by **the end of the month**.

# What is Mental Health Action Week?

## Statewide Purpose

- Established by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors to:
  - Strengthen trauma-informed practices across the system
  - Improve campus climate and culture
  - Reduce structural barriers to care
  - Advocate for expanded mental health resources for students and employees

## Focus

- Designed for California Community College professionals — including faculty, staff, administrators, and mental health providers
- Focused on practical tools and system level strategies

# 2026 Mental Health Action Week

<https://www.cccstudentmentalhealth.org/e-series/2026-mental-health-action-week/>

<b>Day 1 - TODAY!</b> <b>Tuesday May 5th</b>	<b>Day 2</b> <b>Wednesday May 6<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Day 3</b> <b>Thursday, May 7<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Day 4</b> <b>Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup></b>
<b>Focus:</b> The Sustained Self	<b>Focus:</b> New Directions in Student Mental Health	<b>Focus:</b> Systems & Services	<b>Focus:</b> Integration & Metabolization
<b>Main Session:</b> 10:00 am – 11:00 am	<b>Main Session:</b> 10:00 am – 11:00 am	<b>Main Session:</b> 10:00 am – 11:00 am	<b>Processing the week:</b> 10:00 am – 10:45 am
<b>Breathwork Session:</b> 11:05 am – 11:15 am	<b>Breathwork Session:</b> 11:05 am – 11:15 am	<b>Breathwork Session:</b> 11:05 am – 11:15 am	<b>Processing our work:</b> 11:00 am – 11:45am



# ***SETTLING INWARD***

**Take the next sixty seconds to engage in any of the following practices:**

Drop your shoulders.

Exhale deeply. Audibly.

Unclench your jaw.

Your belly.

Take a big stretch.

Sip water.

Shake it out a little.

Find a warm tone in your body. Offer gratitude.

Feel into your feet. wiggle your toes.

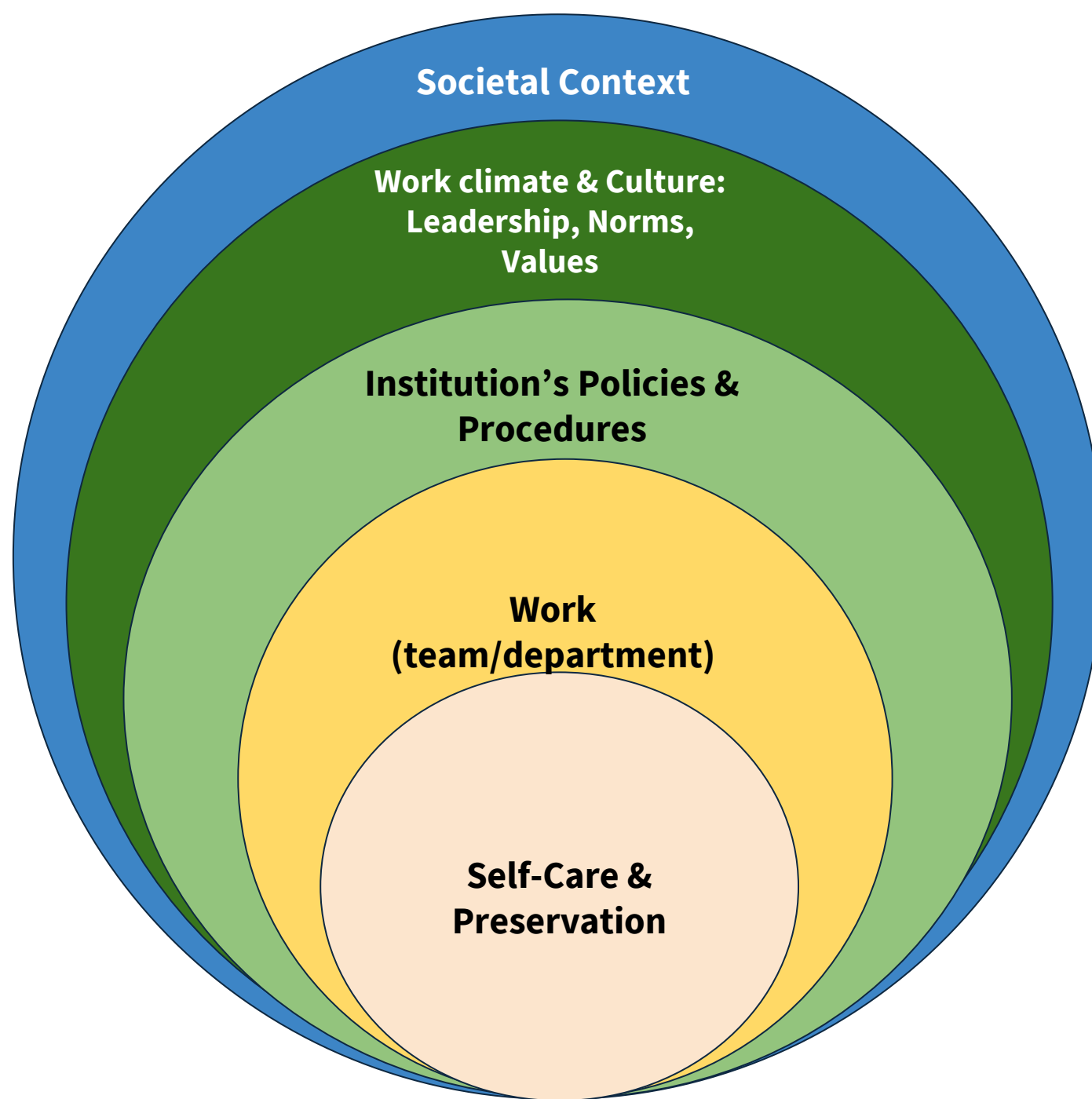
Look around the room, find exits, notice light, signs of life



***Our Focus Today: The Sustained Self***

**“Before you ask, ‘How do I reach them?’ ask, ‘How do I hold myself?’”**

— Zaretta Hammond



# WHAT IS HOLDING, GUIDING AND SUSTAINING ME?

## Inner Knowings and Values

- Without minimizing the moment, what do I know to be true about who I am — as a human, educator, caregiver, or community member — that I can stand on right now?
- When I listen inwardly, what values, emotions, or bodily sensations are quietly reminding me of my strength, care, or capacity to contribute

## Pedagogical Wisdom & Daily Practice

- What teaching instincts, routines, or ways of being with students have carried me — and them — through hard moments before?
- Where do I notice glimmers of effectiveness, meaning, or connection in my daily practice, even when conditions are heavy?

## Relational & Collective Care- Who am I held by? Who do I help hold?

- Who are the people or communities that help me remember I am not alone in this work, and what do they make possible for me?
- When I recall moments of solidarity, laughter, or mutual care, what relational strengths can I draw on again now?

## Collective Power and Structural Support

- What systems, protections, or collective efforts — past or present — remind me that change, safety, and dignity have been fought for before and can be again?
- Where do I see signs of shared power, advocacy, or institutional care that I can draw strength from or help strengthen further?

# *Today's Teach Ins*



**Dr. Stephanie Cariaga**  
Ph.D



**Gil Perez** (he/him)  
LPCC, CST, NCC,  
CCMHC, BC-TMH



**Dr. Laurie  
Vázquez Scolari**  
M.A., Ed.D



California Community Colleges



# Being Free Inside the Modern Workplace

**DR. LAURIE VÁSQUEZ SCOLARI**

**M.A., Ed.D**

**VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT SERVICES AT FOOTHILL  
COLLEGE**



# The Hidden Cost

Belonging without erasure | The assimilation tax

of employees cover some aspect of identity at work

61%

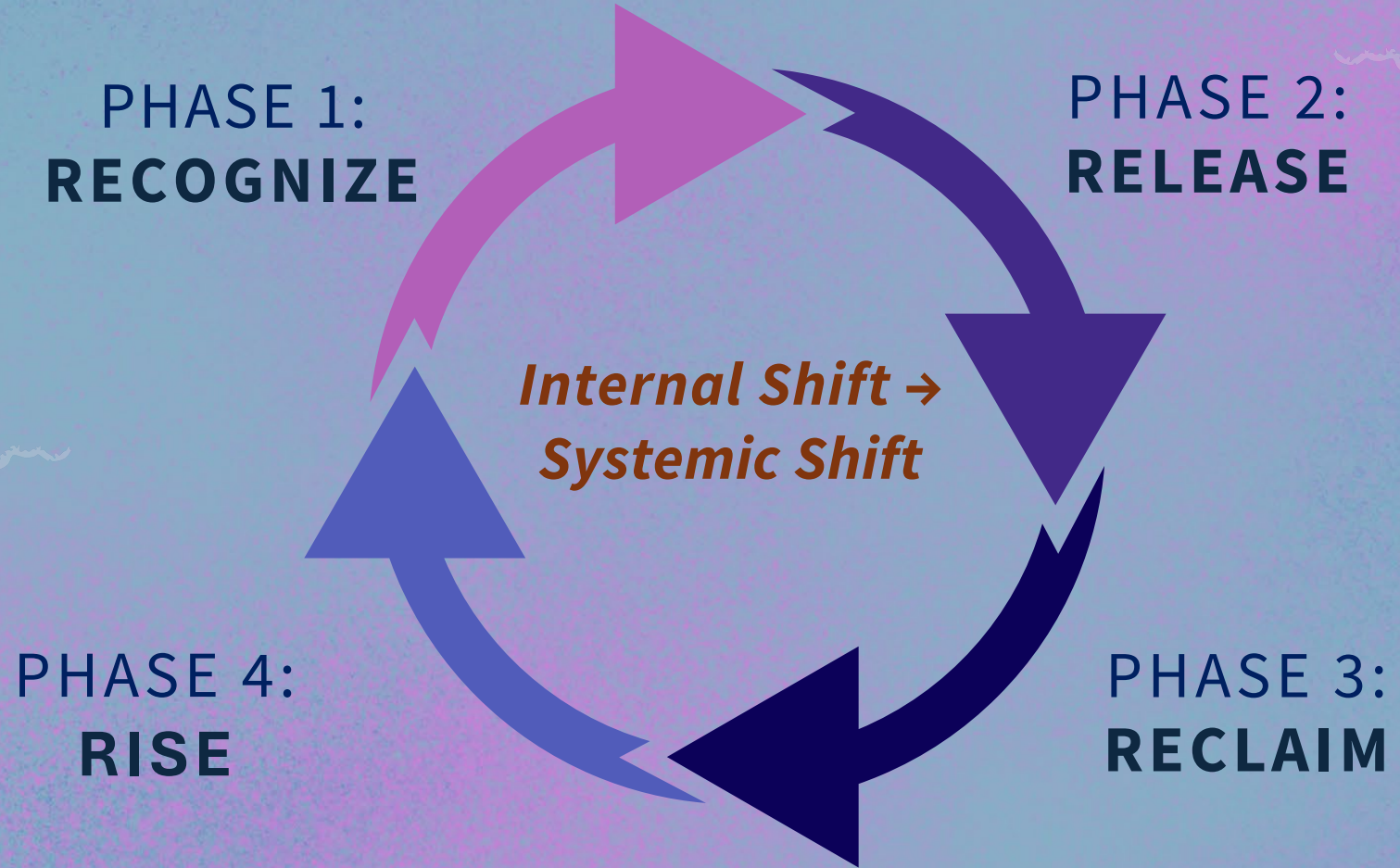
of Black employees report not feeling able to be fully themselves at work

79%

**1.5x** women of color are 1.5 times more likely than white women to change appearance to fit in

*Deloitte, Uncovering Talent: A New Model of Inclusion (2013) · Catalyst, Emotional Tax Among Women and Men of Color (2019) · Hewlett et al., Cracking the Code (2014), Center for Talent Innovation*

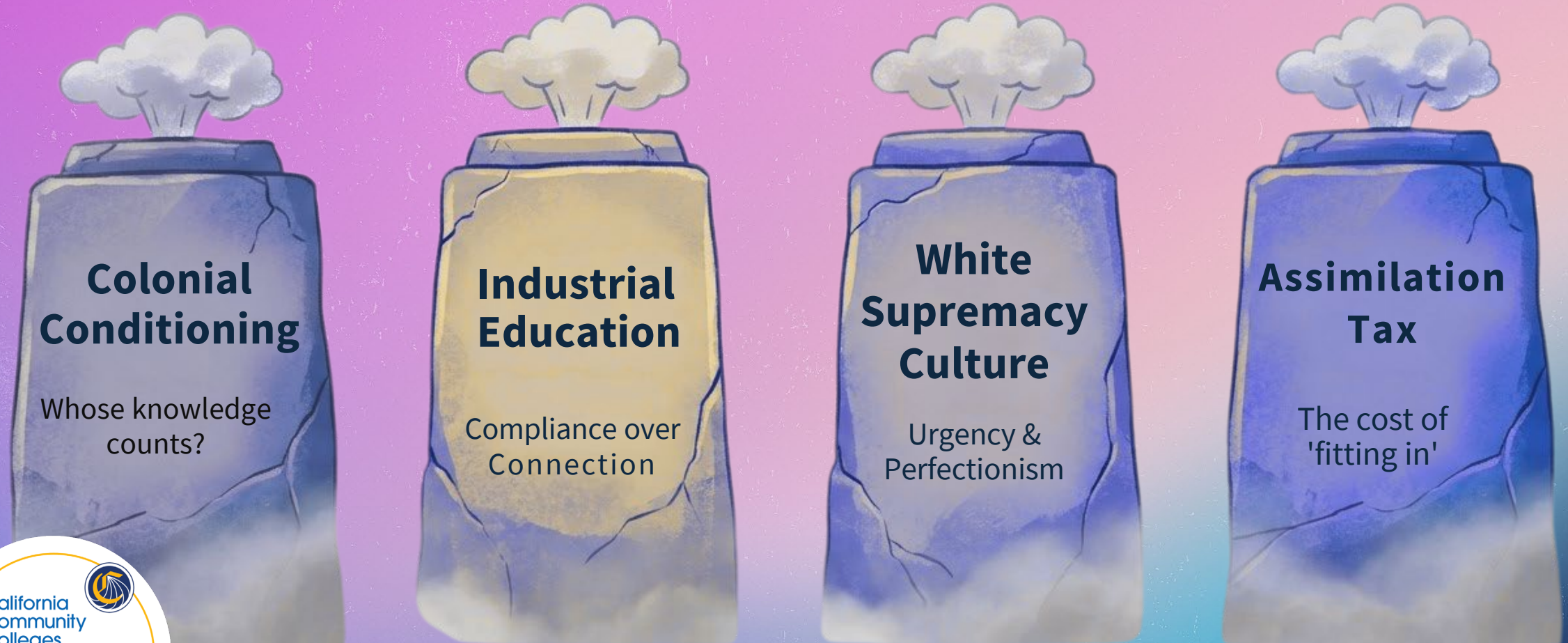
# *A Path Home:* THE LIBERATION FRAMEWORK



**FREE**  
Dr. Laurie Vázquez Scolari  
**INSIDE**

*A **four-phase** path to  
creating systemic shifts from the inside out.*

# Phase 1: The Four Fog Machines



The fog isn't just happening to students.  
**It's happening inside the rooms where staff design the plans.**

# PHASE 2: Release

UNHOOK THE  
*Mind*



FREE  
Dr. Laurie Vázquez Scolari  
INSIDE

Rumination is unpaid overtime of the mind.  
And the **system profits from your exhaustion.**

# Your Authenticity *IS* the Equity Work.

You **cannot**  
**design belonging**  
from the outside.



You **cannot**  
create inclusion  
through ***compliance***.

When you show up whole,  
**you give others permission** to do the same.



FREE

Dr. Laurie Vázquez Scolari

INSIDE

# MICRO-REBELLIONS

A micro-rebellion isn't leaving the system. It's one small, deliberate choice that says: I'm not donating my soul to the system today.

It could be 2 minutes or 30 minutes. It could be visible or invisible. But it interrupts the fog — and reminds your nervous system that you still belong to yourself.

Small acts of *inner*  
**sovereignty**



**FREE**  
Dr. Laurie Vázquez Scolari  
**INSIDE**

# The Mariachi Intervention

*"It happened because  
I showed up as who I truly am."*

**The Norm:** Pomp and Circumstance (Edward Elgar, King Edward VII Coronation).

**The Reclaim:** Mariachi music for a 35% Latino student body.





California Community Colleges



# HONORING OUR NEEDS: *"I NEEDED THIS"*

**GIL PEREZ** (HE/HIM)

LPCC, CST, NCC, CCMHC, BC-TMH

COUNSELOR & FACULTY, COLLEGE OF SAN MATEO

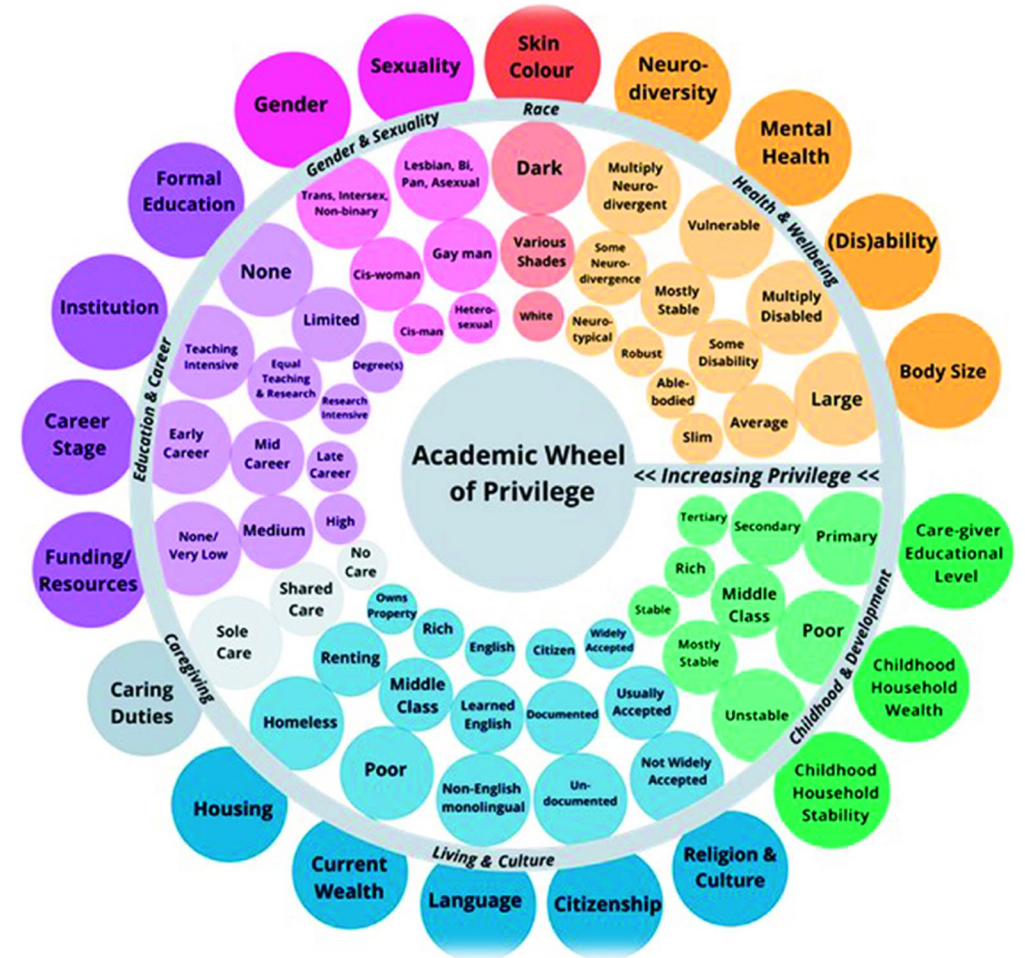
CCC MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT-ELECT 2025-PRESENT

# Our social location + our relationship to rest

Your social location may connect to one or multiple power structures, contributing to feelings of unworthiness or inability regarding care, rest, and similar activities.

Said differently, must you educate/counsel a certain amount to feel worthy of rest, or has frequent exploitation and devaluation contributed to your inability to rest?



# The Real: We Are Not Ok

- Large class sizes
- High caseloads
- Productivity demands
- Inadequate pay/benefits
- Vicarious trauma
- Compassion fatigue
- Sociopolitical climate
- Bureaucracy/constraints
- Activist and other burnout
- Content censorship
- Oppression
- Stigma and silence
- You “made it” but you still feel like you don’t belong in the room
- Lack of community
- Moral injury
- What else?

# What do I need right now?

Ask yourself: “**What do I need right now?**”

The answer may not be regulation, but instead:

Connection

**Inquire. Sense. Feel.**

Feeling seen

Slowing down

Pleasure



Rather than trying to ‘stay calm’ or bypass your body’s needs, explore them as you use regulation practices to create capacity in your system to be with the activation or tension.

# The Takeaway

If you are in a season where things feel heavy... uncertain... or even like they are falling apart,

I want you to consider a different possibility.

You are not failing. You are being formed.

Formed into someone who does not just survive systems but reshapes them, BUILDS them.

Formed into someone who does not just carry everything but chooses what is worthy to carry.

Formed into someone who understands that resilience got you here... but wholeness is what will sustain you.

**What is this season trying to form in you... and what is it asking you to release?**

- Dr. Shawnte Elbert, EdD



California Community Colleges



# TENDING TO OUR WELLNESS & GRIEF

**DR. STEPHANIE CARIAGA, PH.D.**

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

CSU DOMINGUEZ HILLS

# MY JOURNEY TOWARDS CENTERING WELLNESS



- 6 years teaching high school English in Los Angeles
- Secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, and teacher of color pushout
- Research: Trauma and Healing-Informed Teaching and Educator Sustainability
- CrEW as a space of refuge, restoration, and resistance

# GRIEF: PAUSING, NOTICING, BEING WITH, & RELEASING



*“In Spanish we have this term, desahogar, which means to release big feelings so we do not figuratively drown in them. In CrEW, the water ceremony was our collective practice of desahogo.”*

*We accumulate so much as ethnic studies and teacher educators, but desahogando asks us to pause and notice the feelings and sensations our bodies carry and to find ways to express our pent up anger, anxiety, and grief. I see desahogos as an intentional way to pause, release, and rest as a means of resourcing myself and my purpose.*

*These kinds of practice are a necessary form of release, metabolism, and restoration – that can prepare and strengthen us for the necessary work, struggles, and teaching to come.”*

# 4 I's OF WELLNESS

- 1) **Internal**: In what ways do I silence my own feelings? What is one feeling that wants to be acknowledged in this moment?
- 2) **Interpersonal**: Who can I build with to process the feelings and heaviness I feel as an educator, care-taker, and human being in these times?
- 3) **Instructional**: How might being with my feelings make me a better educator and supporter of students?
- 4) **Institutional**: How do we advocate for more time and resources to process what we are feeling and carrying?



## Grief as an Invitation to Heal:

Extending  
Trauma-Informed  
Pedagogies,  
Research,  
and Praxis

Special Issue of Journal of  
Trauma Studies in Education  
Edited by:  
Sharim Hannegan-Martinez &  
Stephanie Cariaga

Cover art: Alanna Hurd

CrEW for Educators: “Holding the Space for Big Feeling” in these Tumultuous Times (Cariaga & Merin, 2024): <https://schoolcrisishealing.org/crew-for-educators-holding-the-space-for-big-feeling-in-these-tumultuous-times/>

Dr. Cariaga’s 2021 keynote, “After the Labor Pains of Educating in the Pandemic: Fiercely Protecting Our Recovery & Renewal”  
<https://youtu.be/kq0G2HPXFVw>

“Grief Work: Being with and Moving Through a Resistance to Change in Teacher Education” (Cariaga)

Vol. 2 No. 3 (2023): Special Issue on Grief as an Invitation to Heal: Extending Trauma-Informed Pedagogies, Research, and Praxis  
<https://journals.library.appstate.edu/index.php/JTSE/issue/view/45>

<https://www.instagram.com/crew4ed/>

# *Discussion, Questions, and [Maybe] Answers*

*“Healing is a practice of  
imagination, accountability,  
and love.”*

-Dr. Shawn Ginwright





# CLOSING



# 2026 Mental Health Action Week

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## ***Closing Session Reflections***

- **1 connection (an already existing practice, person, or policy you want to learn more from/ adopt / adapt)**
- **1 inspiration (an idea, practice, exercise you experienced that energized you)**
- **1 aspiration (for our own selves, our work, for our collective work)**

**We'd love to hear from you. Please complete this short survey and let us know how we did.**



[https://bit.ly/Day1\\_TheSustainedSelf](https://bit.ly/Day1_TheSustainedSelf)

**Thank you-**

**For who you are. Who  
you are becoming. Who  
you are unbecoming.**

**And what that means  
for the people we love  
and serve.**

**On Days When**

you feel like a wilting garden,  
gather yourself, roll up your lawn,  
bouquet your flowers,  
embrace your weeds.

You are a wild thing playing  
at being tame.  
You are rich with life beneath  
the surface.

You don't have to show leaf  
and petal to be living.  
You are soil and insect and root.

- *Dean Atta*



We invite you to stay for **15 minutes** of breathwork led by **Dr. Parisa Soltani** (Irvine Valley College)

*If you can't stay, we'll see you tomorrow, Thursday, or Friday*

*Be well.*

# BREATH PRACTICE

## Recommendations before beginning a breath practice:

- Best done on an empty stomach.
- Clear sinuses.
- Best to breathe in and out of the nose.
- Slow and steady breath is best.

*Interested in more information? Join us for weekly practice!*

**Register  
Here:**



**Reach Out:**

**Dr. Parisa Soltani,**  
IVC Counseling Faculty  
(EOP&S/CARE/CalWORKs)

Breathwork Facilitator

*psoltani@ivc.edu*

