



# **Prioritizing Joy and Showing Grace:**

## *A Small Museum Call to Action*

**Lindsey Baker (she/her)**

**Executive Director, Maryland Humanities**

**Co-Founder, Baker Cruz Services**

# STORYTIME...





# INTRODUCING...ME






# **WHAT IS THIS PRESENTATION?**

## **A CALL TO ACTION**

What would it look like if we took steps daily to care for ourselves and our colleagues in the same way as we care for the objects in our care?





# WHAT THIS PRESENTATION IS NOT.

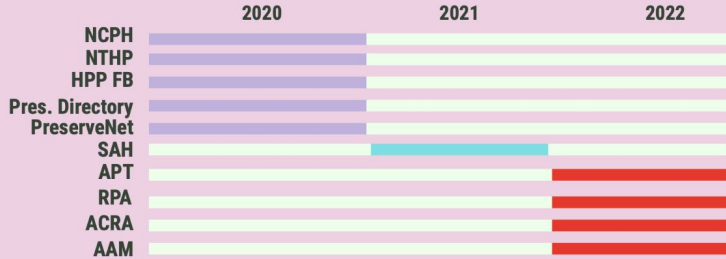


A toxic positivity talk.

Toxic Positivity: as the excessive and ineffective overgeneralization of a happy, optimistic state across all situations. The process of toxic positivity results in the denial, minimization, and invalidation of the authentic human emotional experience.

## Labor Equity Campaign

Changing one job board at a time



**Sarah Marsom:** @SarahMarsom  
<https://www.sarahmarsom.com/>

**Sierra Van Ryck deGroot :**@sierra\_vrd

## Tomorrow's Plenary:

Collective Care and Shared Leadership:  
Frontline Stories from the Philadelphia Museum of  
Art Union Strike  
with Nicole Elizabeth Cook



*Small museums trying to find examples of treating staff well  
so they can convince their board to treat them well*



# An intro (maybe)...

# CHARACTERISTICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY CULTURE

Adapted from "white supremacy culture" by Tema Okun, @works, www.dismantlingracism.org



*This website is conceived and designed by Tema Okun with support by and from many genius colleagues and friends.*

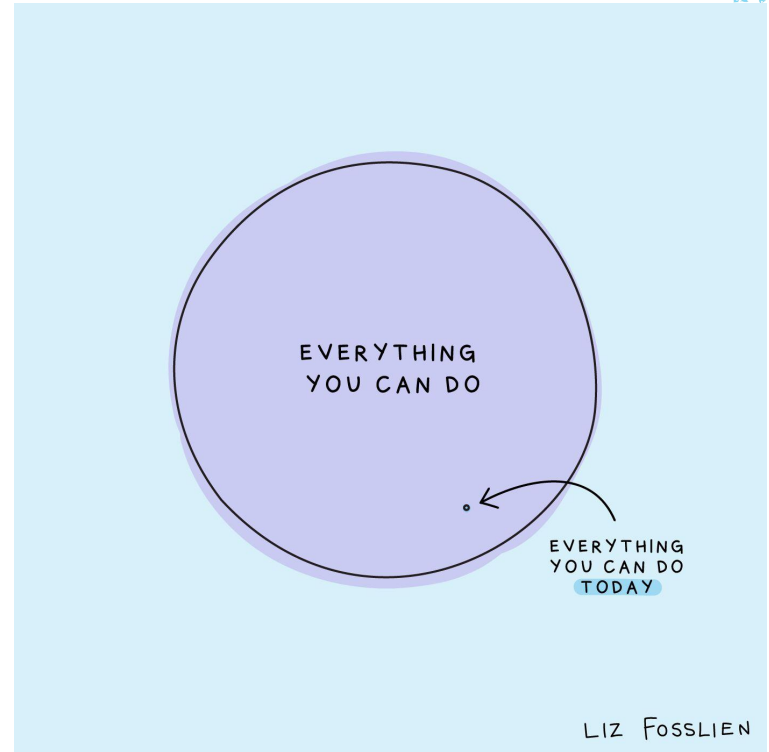
<b>Perfectionism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little appreciation expressed for others' work</li><li>• Criticism more common</li><li>• Criticism of person or their work is their absence even more common</li><li>• Mistakes seen as personal failings</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Develop a culture of appreciation; develop a learning organization, where it's expected that everyone makes mistakes and those mistakes offer opportunities for learning</li></ul>	<b>Sense of Urgency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continuous sense of little time</li><li>• Little understanding inclusively, and democratically, and thoughtful decision-making</li><li>• The deadline pressure often is based on quick or highly visible results</li><li>• Rushed by funding agencies that set strict (and funder's) deadlines</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Include workshops, teaching that understands that things take longer than they seem; make decisions and plan for ways it means to set goals of inclusivity and diversity, particularly in terms of time, who makes funding proposals</li></ul>	<b>Defensiveness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organization and energy focused on preventing abuse and protecting those in power</li><li>• Criticism of those with power viewed as inappropriate</li><li>• Difficult to raise new or challenging ideas</li><li>• Energy devoted to avoiding hurt feelings and tension around defensive people</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Understand how defensiveness is linked to fear (of losing power, face, comfort, privilege); name defensiveness as a problem when it is one</li></ul>	<b>Quantity Over Quality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Measurable things are most valued</li><li>• Little value attached to process</li><li>• Discomfort with emotion and feelings</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Include process goals in planning; develop a values statement about how work will be done in the organization; develop methods for measuring process; recognize when you need to get off the agenda to address people's feelings and underlying concerns</li></ul>	<b>Worship of the Written Word</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Those with strong documentation and writing skills are more highly valued, even in orgs where ability to relate to others is key</li><li>• The org doesn't value other ways in which information gets shared</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Include other ways people get and share information; come up with alternative ways to document what is happening; work to recognize the contributions and skills that every person brings to the organization; make sure anything written can be clearly understood (in jargon-free)</li></ul>	<b>Only One Right Way</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Belief there is one right way to do things and that people will learn and adopt it when they do not, then something is wrong with them</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Accept that there are many ways to get to the same goal; notice and name behavior when folks/groups push "one right way"; acknowledge you have a lot to learn from community partners' way of doing; be willing to adapt; never assume you're organization knows what's best for others</li></ul>
<b>Paternalism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decision-making clear to those with power; unclear to those without it</li><li>• Those with power feel capable of making decisions for and in the interests of those without power</li><li>• Those with power don't view as important or necessary understanding the views/experiences of those for whom they decide</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Engage transparency about decision-making; include people affected by decisions in the process</li></ul>	<b>Either/Or Thinking</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Things are either/or, good/bad, right/wrong, with no in-between</li><li>• No sense that things can be both/and</li><li>• Reliance on oversimplifying complex things</li><li>• Increases sense of urgency that we must do this or that, without time to consider a middle way</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> When people use "either/or" language, push for more than two alternatives; when people simplify complex issues, encourage deeper analysis; with urgent decisions, make sure people have time to think creatively</li></ul>	<b>Power Hoarding</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little value around sharing and</li><li>• Those with power feel threatened when change is suggested or even receive the suggestion as an insult</li><li>• They also assume they have everyone's best interests at heart, and that their own feelings are the most important</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Include power-sharing in your org's values statement; identify that good leaders, develop the power and skills of others; understand that change is inevitable and that challenges to leadership can be productive and healthy</li></ul>	<b>Fear of Open Conflict</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People in power try to ignore or run from conflict</li><li>• When someone raises an "issue," responses to be blame that person rather than look at the issue</li><li>• Emphasis on being polite, so raising difficult issues is being impolite, rude, or out-of-line</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Role play ways to handle conflict; create a healthy, safe space made to given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders; practice group (not individual) accountability; use meetings to solve problems, not just report activities</li></ul>	<b>Individualism</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little experience or comfort working as part of a team</li><li>• People feel responsible for solving problems alone</li><li>• Accountability goes up and down, not sideways to peers or those whom the organization serves</li><li>• Desire for individual recognition and credit</li><li>• Competition valued over collaboration</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Role play teamwork in your org values statement; make sure credit is made to given to all those who participate in an effort, not just the leaders; practice group (not individual) accountability; use meetings to solve problems, not just report activities</li></ul>	<b>I'm the Only One</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Connected to individualism, the belief that if something is going to get done right, I have to do it</li><li>• Little or no ability to delegate work to others</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Evaluate people based on their ability to delegate to others; evaluate people based on their ability to work as part of a team to accomplish shared goals</li></ul>
<b>Progress is Bigger, More</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observed in systems of accountability and success measurements</li><li>• Progress is an org that expands (adds staff, projects, etc.) or serves more people (regardless of quality of service)</li><li>• Gives no value, not even negative value, to the costs of this so-called progress</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Ask how actions today will affect people seven generations from now; ensure that any community analysis includes all costs, not just financial ones; ask those you work with and for to evaluate your own performance</li></ul>	<b>Objectivity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Belief that objectivity is possible</li><li>• That emotions should not play a role in decision-making or group processes</li><li>• Removing people who think in a kinder fashion and ignoring those who think in other ways</li><li>• Inconsistency with any thinking that does not appear logical</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Realize that everybody's perspective is shaped by their worldview; realize this means you, too, push yourself to all with discretion when people express themselves in ways unfamiliar to you; assume that everybody has a valid point and your job is to understand it</li></ul>	<b>Right to Comfort</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Belief that those with power have a right to emotional and psychological comfort</li><li>• Socializing those who cause discomfort</li><li>• Equating individual acts of unkindness against white people with systemic racism that targets people of color</li><li>• <b>ANTIDOTES:</b> Understand that discomfort is at the root of all growth and learning; don't take everything personally</li></ul>	<h2>WE CAN DO BETTER!</h2> <h3>ANTIDOTES QUICK-START GUIDE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Create a culture of appreciation:</b> publicly express gratitude for people's work and contributions</li><li>• <b>Choose integrity</b> and actively refuse to participate in gossip</li><li>• <b>Foster a culture of learning</b> where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities</li><li>• <b>Understand that defensiveness is linked to fear</b> (of losing power, face, privilege, comfort)</li><li>• <b>Identify other antidotes already in place</b> within the organization and seek ways to highlight and build upon them</li></ul> <p><small>Go to <a href="http://bit.ly/HSOC">http://bit.ly/HSOC</a>, check out resources to access to an editable and printable copy of this page for your own use.</small></p>		

# A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT WSC


“...it is necessary to call out the ways in which white supremacy is not in the best interest of anyone, including white folks, forcing us to trade in our humanity for power and privilege.”

“My intention *is* to say that **white supremacy culture trains us all to internalize attitudes and behaviors that do not serve any of us...**To think we can or should be perfect, to worship the written word, to insist on one right way, to demand comfort when we are causing harm - any and all of the characteristics on the list are designed to make us forget that we have access to multiple ways of being and knowing, ways that white supremacy has suppressed and oppressed for the purpose of creating confusion about what is important while encouraging us to forget what we already know.”


*What does it mean to show grace?*







# **WHEN WE CHOSE TO SHOW GRACE, WE PUSH BACK ON SOME OF WSC'S KEY CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Fear
  - One Right Way Either/Or & The Binary
  - Individualism Progress is more & Quantity  
over Quality
  - Urgency
- 

# SHOWING GRACE: A FUNDER AND BOARD MEMBER CALL TO ACTION

How many people have heard of the terms:

- “make work”
- “re-prove”



# SHOWING GRACE: AN INDIVIDUAL'S CALL TO ACTION

What are some ways you showed yourself humanity recently?

**Being patient and flexible**

Ordering from my favorite restaurant for lunch and taking things one day at a time.

**Taking little breaks with Raina (my dog) outside when I realize I need a break.**

went to Barnes & Noble and took part in their "Book Haul" (new hardcovers 50% off!)

I bought myself some earrings I really don't need! But they made me happy.

Not forcing myself to feel 100% emotionally if I don't. Allowing feelings tiredness, sadness, whatever may come.

saying "I don't know" when I didn't know

realizing I may not meet every deadline in Asana and ask for flexibility on them

**using positive self-talk**

**Remaining curious about why I feel the way I do**

Asking to move deadlines/reschedule meetings when I was feeling stressed/too busy

**Taking a nap**

Being open with/recharging using my non-work support system

**aggressively resting when needed**

Turning off slack notifications and sitting outside to enjoy my lunch break

logging in 30 mins later than usual to have my coffee on the couch

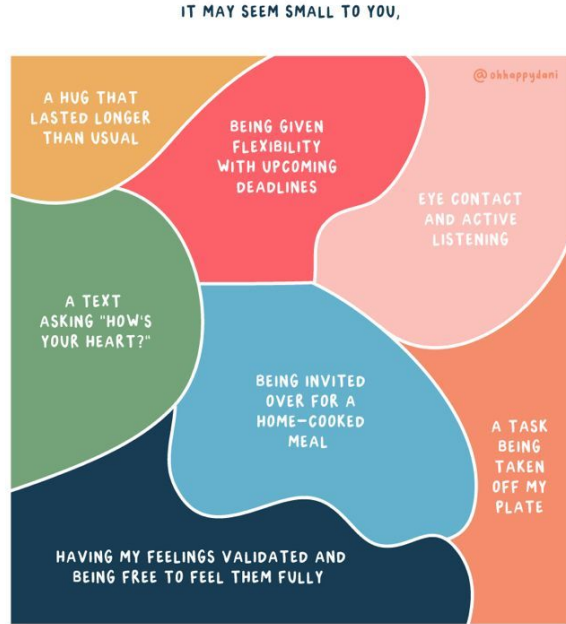
asking for what I need when I need it.

**Sleeping in!**

Allowed myself to start later when I knew I needed rest



# SHOWING GRACE: A TEAM'S CALL TO ACTION



BUT IT ADDS UP FOR ME.

*Trigger warning: next slide discusses gun violence*

First of all, I hope you're all enjoying your week off.

I wanted to say something about the news out of Colorado. I know many of us at Maryland Humanities are a part of the LGBTQ+ community and/or have friends and family we care about deeply who are a part of this group.

I'm thinking about this weekend's major tragedy in the context of a conversation I had with someone on staff recently. They said to me something like "You really took the news at Uvalde hard. It sounds bad, but I couldn't really understand why. And then I remembered you have kids."

Since this was said, I've been thinking so much about it.

There are tragedies in the American experience that most of us have become a little bit numb to. Mass shootings, police brutality and murder, hate crimes... It shouldn't be, but it's become a part of our everyday consumption of news.

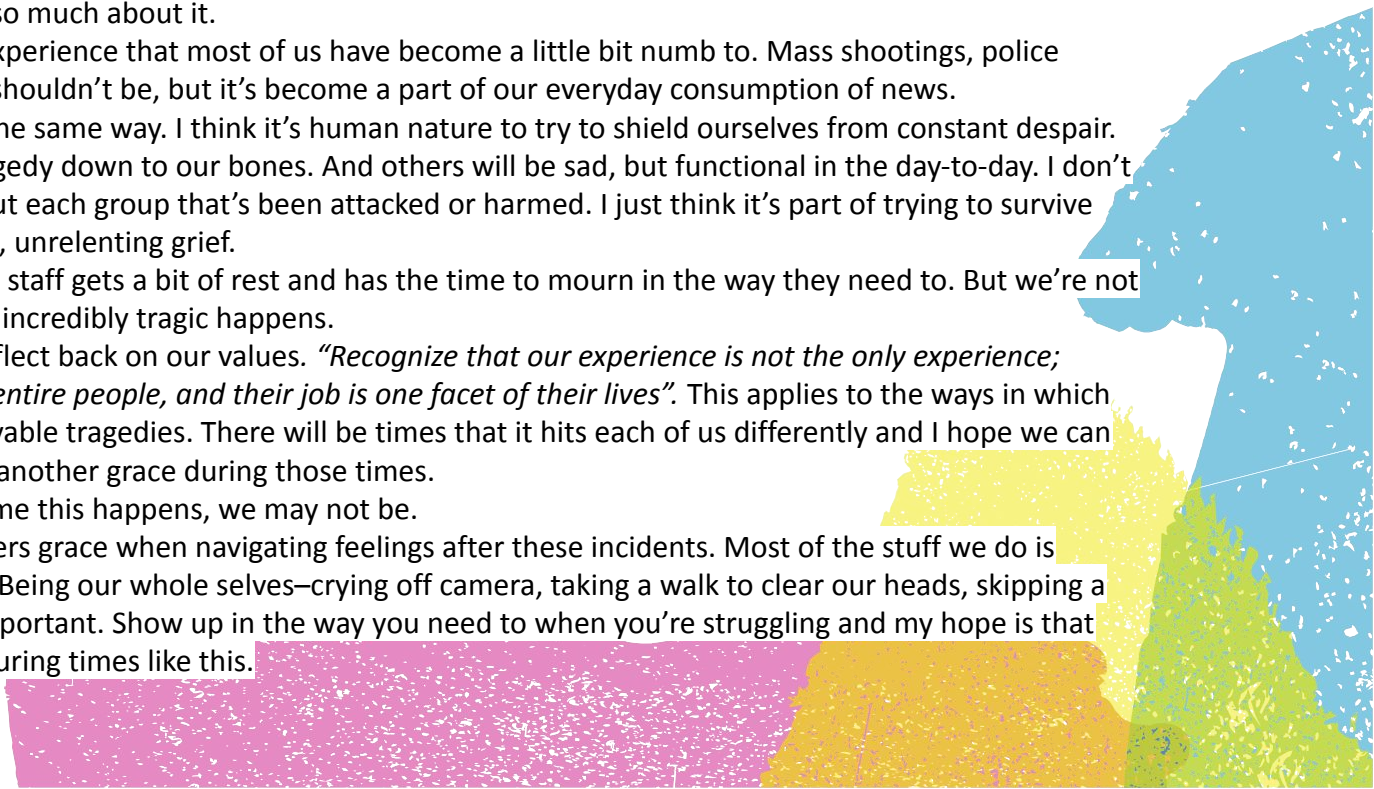
And we won't all feel each tragedy in the same way. I think it's human nature to try to shield ourselves from constant despair. So at times some of us will feel the tragedy down to our bones. And others will be sad, but functional in the day-to-day. I don't think that means we care any less about each group that's been attacked or harmed. I just think it's part of trying to survive without being overcome with constant, unrelenting grief.

My hope is that this week everyone on staff gets a bit of rest and has the time to mourn in the way they need to. But we're not off for the week every time something incredibly tragic happens.

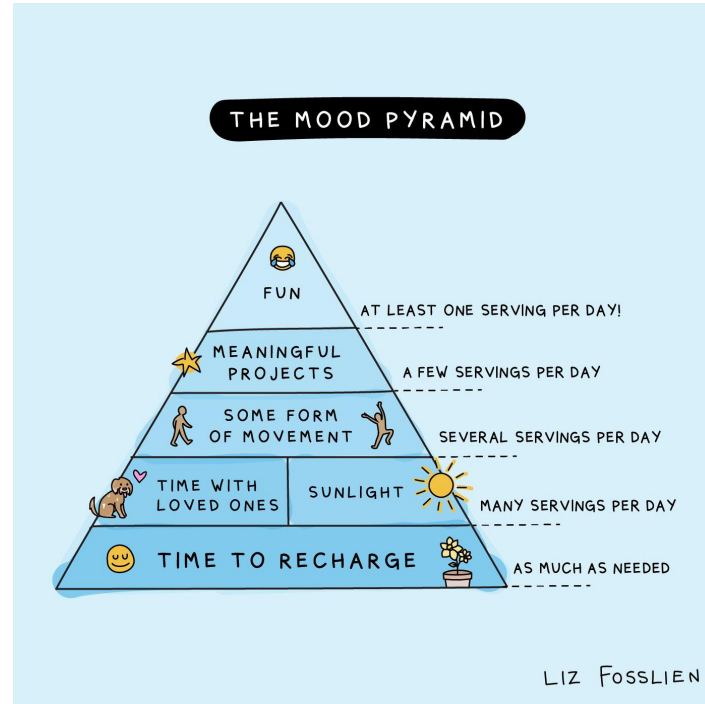
So I'm sending this as a reminder to reflect back on our values. *"Recognize that our experience is not the only experience; understand that members of staff are entire people, and their job is one facet of their lives"*. This applies to the ways in which we each need to mourn these unbelievable tragedies. There will be times that it hits each of us differently and I hope we can remember to show ourselves and one another grace during those times.

So this week, we're off. But the next time this happens, we may not be.

Please show yourself and your coworkers grace when navigating feelings after these incidents. Most of the stuff we do is important. But rarely is it truly urgent. Being our whole selves—crying off camera, taking a walk to clear our heads, skipping a meeting, taking time off—this is also important. Show up in the way you need to when you're struggling and my hope is that we'll be able to care for one another during times like this.



# *What does it mean to prioritize joy?*





# WHEN WE CHOOSE TO PRIORITIZE JOY, WE PUSH BACK ON SOME OF WSC'S KEY CHARACTERISTICS:

- Urgency
- Progress is more & Quantity over Quality
- Either/Or & Binary Thinking
- Fear
- Perfectionism



# PRIORITIZING JOY:

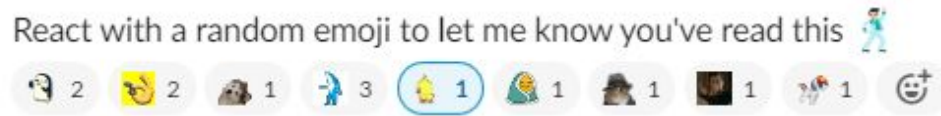
## A FUNDER AND BOARD MEMBER CALL TO ACTION



# PRIORITIZING JOY: AN INDIVIDUAL'S CALL TO ACTION



# PRIORITIZING JOY: A TEAM'S CALL TO ACTION



**ME, EVERYDAY AT WORK.**

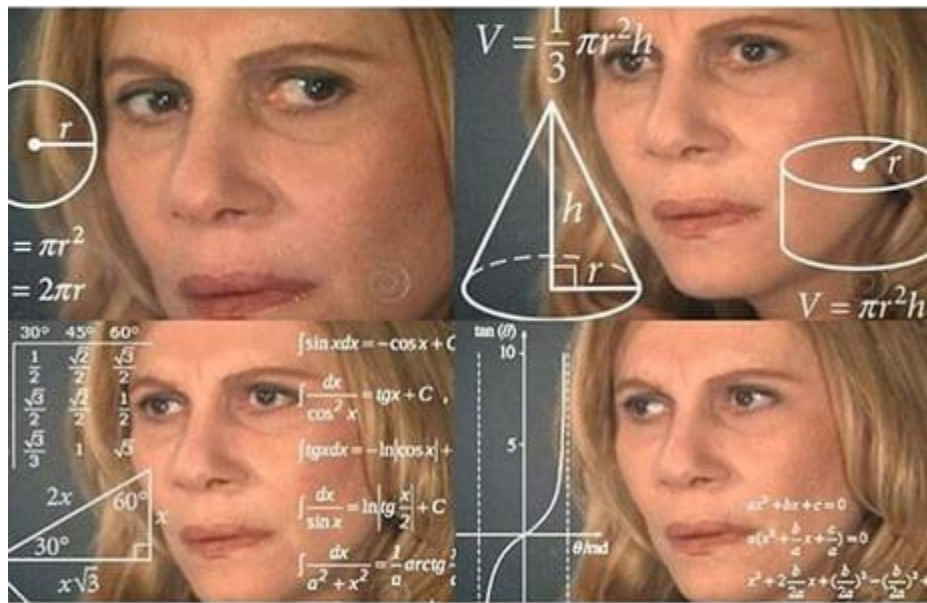




# Showing Grace and Prioritizing Joy IS A PRACTICE



# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



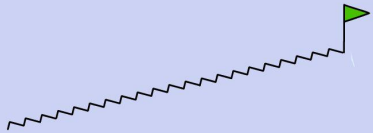
INTENTION WITHOUT ACTION



ACTION WITHOUT INTENTION

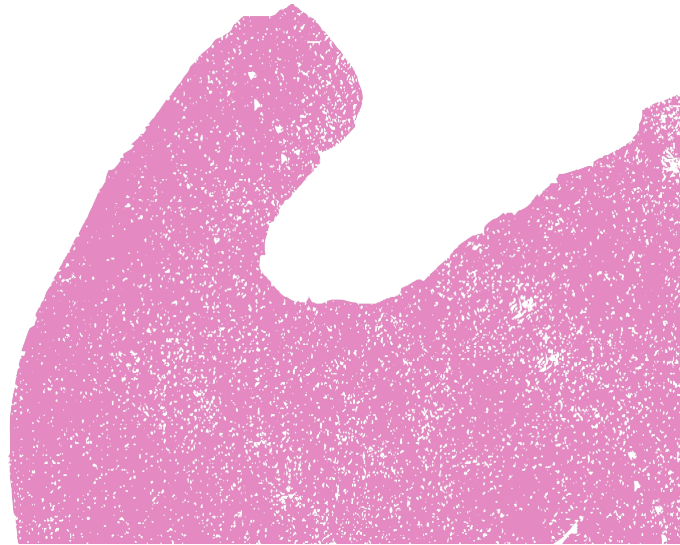


INTENTION WITH ACTION



LIZ FOSSLIE

# TAKEAWAYS?



# SOME OF MY FAVORITE RESOURCES:

<https://www.whitesupremacyculture.info/> by Tema Okun

*No Hard Feelings* by Liz Fosslien & Mollie West Duffy

Let's Take This Offline: The Podcast for Everyday Leaders with Kishshana Palmer (Podcast)

The Ethical Rainmaker with Michelle Shireen Muri (Podcast)

Nonprofit AF with Vu Le (blog)

Fakequity with Erin Okuno (blog)

Work Life with Adam Grant (Podcast)



## In Memory of Marilyn, Frances, and Jim



# Find me!

Maryland Humanities: [lbaker@mdhumanities.org](mailto:lbaker@mdhumanities.org)

Baker Cruz Services: [info@bakercruzservices.com](mailto:info@bakercruzservices.com)

Living my BEST LIFE on LinkedIn:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/lindseybaker22/>

