

compassionate activism

Healing from Toxic Whiteness

Transcript for Practice Session 1 - October 18, 2016

Sandra: Hey, everyone. Thank you for showing up. This is actually our first practice session for Healing from Toxic Whiteness on October 18th and this is really exciting because this is kind of where you get more into the nitty gritty of the step by step processes. What we covered in the beginning and the first training was really the framework about, what does it mean when I say that white supremacy has been emotionally harmful for white folks? That really gets to the three core pains that we talked about, which is often not discussed in a lot of the conversations around racial justice and it's really looking at the three core pains.

One, is how white people are disconnected from the reality of the system that graces them and its impact on people of color. The second core pain point is around how racism in white people from being disconnected from themselves and emotional systems in order to be able to witness acts of racism and not do anything about it and not be compelled to do anything to stop it. The third one is around the disconnect from people of different levels and degrees of social consciousness of different types of analysis around anti-oppression or around racism and what happens is when we meet with somebody who has a different understanding, a different level of analysis, we often feel like we can't connect. We either want to push them away or we want to argue over them and so this creates a pain of disconnection.

The reason why I focus a lot on disconnection is because, I think under girding all of this, is the belief that we want to belong, that we have this very strong sense of wanting to be in community, wanting to be part of something greater than ourselves and that we also are naturally whole people. Systemic oppression, including white supremacy, severs us from that. It takes us away from the natural wholeness that we have. It wants us to only present and manifest around parts of ourselves that fit within this model what white person should do and be like in order to be acceptable in a racist society. It also disconnects us from each other as white people and people of color and then from people who have different types of consciousness, whether that be white people or

people of color. Really talking about how we have become disconnected is incredibly important because only when we name the disconnection can we actually restore it.

In our society we often just want the easy quick trick, let's call it the "magic pill" that will ... A Placebo, I don't know what it's called. You know, the thing that you just take, eat this thing, this pill, it's magic, I can answer all of your problems. That's not how this works, though. We can't jump from a deeply racist society and just become anti-racist because we want to, because we believe racism is wrong. We have to do all this unpacking work to understand how we ourselves have absorbed these implicit biases and how they're showing up in the ways that we think and in the ways we behave and in connecting our existence with the larger structure of systemic racism and how what we can do to change this goes for ourselves as well as working with in solidarity with people of color.

That was the first session. The second training session was about the compassion activism model and the five practices that help you achieve the model of compassion activism. If you haven't watched either one of those, I highly recommend that you go back, obviously, and make sure that you watch them just so that you get the larger framework. Today I'm going to be talking about the first half of the five practices, actually. Even if you missed the training session where we covered compassion activism, that's okay. We're going to be moving through it step by step and focusing really on what concrete new action steps you need to be taking because I want to be basically giving you the full version of it.

I understand that this is something that's new for folks and since it's new, giving, I think, detailed instructions are helpful. In the future, this will come much more quickly to you and you will not need to lean on it as much. There will be times when you do, times when you don't. It all changes. You just need to remember the five practices and that's it. Really, I'm providing just different levels of understanding for folks depending on what [inaudible 00:05:34]. Before I get started in all of that, I wanted just to take a second to also introduce [Breasha 00:05:42] who's here supporting me and is going to be monitoring the chat box. I knew that there have been a number of people who shared where they're coming from and where [inaudible 00:05:53] from the first two trainings that I wanted us to share a little bit. Hey.

Breasha: Hey,

Sandra: [inaudible 00:06:02]. Let me go grab my ear piece.

Breasha: Should I continue or wait?

Sandra: Go for it.

Breasha: Okay. A shout out to Rainbow County in Raleigh North Carolina. I have someone who's trying to understand the disconnect by white people who live and perpetuate a lack of deep reflection. The person is feeling transformed by the change to pay real attention, their ability to feel compassion. Let's see, what's good, Saint Louis? Someone references perfectionism as white supremacy plus vulnerability as anti-racism work and self compassion and mindfulness have really stood out for them. They are humble and curious and willing to ask questions and accepting that a thing is happening does not mean acceptance of that thing. That's something they learned.

Let's see. I see Waupaca, Wisconsin. I'm not sure if I pronounced that correctly. What stood out for this person is a sense of community, a safe space for talking about painful, important things and they're grateful to have access to the sessions for as long as the internet exists. We have Detroit. Someone's amazed at the shift in focus from POC to white pain, the guilt, shame, amazing to think racists are hurting, have disconnected from their Buddha nature, though I know Sandra would not use those terms. We have Silver Spring. Someone says, "Thanks for the workshop. I have experiences that the thought processes offer ways to manage themselves and those situations would have been more comfortable for the other person involved."

Sandra: Great, awesome. Thank you so much for sharing. One of the things I want to discuss, I want to give you some framing around the processes. The five practices, as we talked about in the first session, they're kind of guide posts to you keep in mind and what I decided to ... I thought they were pretty concrete. I thought about it and I was like, "Maybe they need something a little more concrete." Then I created these step by step processes and divided them out into the first one being restoring internal justice with compassion. That's to help people take the time to really focus on where they're coming from or what is coming up for them. To separate that from the second process, which is restoring external justice with compassion, I notice that a lot of folks are getting really stuck in wanting to move into that conversation with somebody else before they have taken care of their own pain and that doesn't work. That doesn't work. You can try, that's what most people do. I assume that you're here because it didn't really turn out the way you wanted it to.

This experiment's something different and the reason for that is, as I said in other sessions, when you have been wounded, to go after the person who wounded you in that process, when you're still hurt, bleeding and whatnot, you're not going to be very effective. You're just not going to be, right? You're blinded by pain or you're being confused by pain. Your ability to be in that conversation, to really hold the space for somebody else goes down. Being able to hold a space for yourself and take care of your own pain, your emotional wounds, is as important as taking care of your physical wounds. It's also really painful for somebody to realize that they themselves have hurt somebody. That's one of the dynamics that we see when people have it pointed out to them that they've done something unintentionally harmful to somebody else and

they're like, "No, I didn't mean to, though." Or, "Well, you're blowing it out of proportion, nothing really happened." It's kind of baffling to understand why someone might do that.

If I was walking across the room and I accidentally stepped on somebody and then they tell me that I stepped on their foot and it hurt, and me to be like, "Well, I didn't mean to step on your foot so your foot shouldn't hurt." That doesn't make any sense, obviously. It's appropriate to be like, "Oh, I didn't mean to, I'm sorry." You can still say that "I didn't mean to" but, "I'm sorry, I hurt you. Do you need anything? Can I help you?" You can acknowledge all of that. That gets really hard when we talk about systemic oppression, particularly racism and sexism and homophobia and trans ... Actually, really everything but we're focusing on racism here, obviously. We have all been taught that what is racist is not racist. We've been taught all these ways ... I'm sorry. You can mute them, Breesha, by going to their name and hitting "mute".

Breesha: I don't know who it is. Should I give a remind now?

Sandra: Actually, just mute everybody. You're muted, too, so now you have to unmute yourself. Okay. Sorry. Technical difficulties every now and then. Because we have been taught to view people as inferior and superior, as normal and as different, different in a way that's bad, and that's all very normalized for us, we don't often realize that we're actually walking around flailing and hitting each other and hitting ourselves and there's just a lot of smacking happening, but it is happening. I think that's part of the reason why when somebody points out that we have privilege or that we've done something that's been harmful, that has been racist, we want to just be like, "No, it didn't happen," because we actually are in touch with the fact that we did something and that's painful. We do something harmful and if that wasn't our intention, that's even more painful because maybe it's somebody we care about, even. It doesn't need to be somebody you care about, it could be about a stranger, too.

What happens is that we want to resist that pain and so we deny it. That is probably one of the biggest things. If we could just have white folks acknowledge the experiences that people of color have been talking about forever round how racism is impacting them, that would be transformation. That would be a game changer, actually. If we could just have that happen ... Obviously we want to move beyond that but even that is such an incredible starting point that isn't happening for a lot of white folks and, also, for some people of color to varying degrees because we've all been bombarded with these messages. If we can't name what's happening then how can we shift anything?

Really we want to understand that there are these two components to the ways that we experience a situation. We are constantly co-creating out situation. What that means is that there are two parties or two entities happening. One is how I relate to a situation and then what the situation is that's being done to me. Most folks want to focus on one

or the other. If you're somebody who tends to focus on, "How am I relating to the situation, what am I doing, how am I showing up?" There may be a lot of self blaming, there might be a lot of judgment, shaming, beating yourself up. If it's somebody who's focused purely on the situation that's happening it's a lot of, oftentimes, anger, frustration, resentment and trying to change the external situation.

What needs to happen is that both need to be working together. One without the other doesn't work, actually. What this model for compassion activism is trying to bring together is the two different components because while we are constantly co-creating situations, usually we are not consciously relating to the situation. We are just coming from our default, from our unconscious conditioning, from our trauma, from our personalities but we're not really holding space for all the different ways that people are experiencing what's going on and what's happening. Everything is coming through our filter so we're not intentionally choosing how we're going to relate to a situation. We're just more flailing, you know?

On the other side of the situation, it's something that we haven't agreed to. It's not consensual, actually. By dancing between the two, how I'm relating to it and talking about how other people are relating to it, we can start to shift that situation so it becomes more consensual. It becomes something that we co-create intentionally, consciously, we invite people. That's kind of another way of framing this model.

I want to take a couple minutes to answer any questions around that in case anything wasn't clear before I move into the actual step by step process. We're going to be doing this live in real time. Breesha, were there any questions that came up? Are people ...

Breesha: So far, there's nothing.

Sandra: Okay. Sometimes I wonder if I'm very clear or if maybe [inaudible 00:16:37], I don't know.

Breesha: I think you're good.

Sandra: Excellent.

Breesha: Oh, we have a question. Someone asked if you could please explain a little more about the difference between the two ways of relating.

Sandra: Two ways of relating.

Breesha: Someone else said, "Yes."

Sandra: Thank you, I try.

Breasha: Oh, and just feedback, "You're very clear and easy to follow."

Sandra: The difference between the two ways of relating, there's ... Maybe if you could tell me a little bit more about what's unclear about that, that could be helpful.

Breasha: Okay. While that person types, would you like to answer another question?

Sandra: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, sure.

Breasha: Someone asked if you can talk about how the external situation becomes more consensual.

Sandra: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yes. One, the first thing is to, after you've done the work yourself and you've taken care of yourself, you invite somebody else to have that conversation. That would be the second half of the five practices and the other restoring external justice with compassion process, I'll be showing next practice session.

What that is is that we name the disconnection that happened that made it not consensual. That means bringing forth your own experiences, because you've gotten in touch with it so you can do that now, and inviting the other person to share their experience, their truth and unpacking more about what that is. We oftentimes, like I said, we're unconsciously moving around the world and we don't really know why we're doing what we're doing. We don't know why we think the way we do. That's how implicit bias is, that's how prejudices operate is that ... If we're really, truly in touch with it and the history and the impact of those stereotypes, we would oftentimes not want to act in accordance with it. We don't. We're not usually in touch with it so it's just kind of floating around in our heads.

Through conversation, we take that stuff that's unconscious for people and we bring it to people's consciousness so they can actually make a choice around whether or not they want to follow it. From there, you can start to co-create something different. It calls upon you to name what is problematic in the situation and that's what makes us different from how I think a lot of people want to behave in this conversation because they just kind of want to get to the point where they're moving forward. They've got this new great thing where they're all anti-racist and they've all addressed inequities and you have to talk about why you even need to do this in the first place. You've got to talk about how it's been messed up so far and what's the impact of that and who's been excluded and where has this come from, right? That's how you start to create more consensual situations with other parties. Like I said, you'll get the whole ... In the next practice session, the step by step direction.

Breasha: Back to the earlier question, more clarity, they said, "I'm not very clear on the external one. I get that how I relate to the situation and how that can cause self-blame because that's what happens for me but I don't get how people react in the second way you described the negative outcomes. Is that clear?"

Sandra: Let me read that. What's the second ... I'm sorry, I don't know what the second way.

Breasha: Also asks ... The same question so should we come back to that again?

Sandra: Okay. Sorry. I'm not quite sure what you're asking. I say a lot of things so if I said it, if I described them that way I'm just not remembering exactly that way right now.

Breasha: Okay. I will ask for more clarity on that question. There's another question. Do we have time for another one?

Sandra: I'll do one more.

Breasha: Okay. "How does that relate when you're a white person who has acted in racist ways? Would you still consider the external circumstances non-consensual?"

Sandra: Consensual is something that's created between multiple people. It's not just you by yourself. If it's just you by yourself, that's how you're relating to the situation. A situation that's not consensual means that there are parties involved that do not agree, who did not agree to this situation being what it is and the way they're impacted by it. Maybe what that's people are referring to as "the second one", I'm not sure. I think the ways that we have been indoctrinated by white supremacy and other forms of systemic oppression was a non-consensual conditioning that happened to us. That was something that was just imposed upon us, that we got bombarded with as children growing up. As adults, though, we have the ability to think critically and start to unpack that for ourselves and what does that mean? That's when we start to become intentional about how we live and how we live [inaudible 00:22:08] values.

Okay. Right now I'm going to move on to the other parts and maybe some things get clearer about some of the other things. There's only so much I can just talk to you about it. A lot of it is you just need to do it. The first steps is noticing the toxicity of resisting what's happened and then making someone or yourself wrong in terms of how you relate to that specific situation. As we had discussed in the training session last time, this is review if you still don't ... If you weren't there, that's all right.

When we talk about noticing toxicity, it's really about what we cannot be with what's happening, even though it happened. We say, "It shouldn't have happened. How could you think like that? How could I think like that?" You want to judge, shame, blame,

silence, minimize, deny, all of that is resisting trying to make somebody or yourself wrong for what happened, as opposed to just being like, "That happened," not that it's acceptable, not that we want to say, "Yay, let's do this all the time," but something happened. If we kind of focus on what I call a "toxic swirl of make believe", because that's what it is, make believe ... If we take something that happened and try to make it like it didn't happen, that's not real. It's literally make believe.

If you put all your time in make believe, your ability to actually handle what's happening is gone because you're not even focusing in what's actually happened. How can you change it in the present and create a different future? You can't. One of the ways to start ... This is where most people get stuck. This where most people just swirl around and around and around and it's really important to notice when it's happening. It's because that's your red flag saying, "Oh, something needs my attention." In this place, if you think about situations that you've been in, which may be about racism, may not be, but situations where you felt like it was emotionally charged for you and you just felt like, "Ah!" You're stuck behind a hard place and a rock and you felt like you're damned if you do, damned if you don't kind of situation and you couldn't do anything about it. There's a reason for that. There's a reason for that and some people just try to whip themselves to just keep moving on.

Other folks get kind of caught up in that swirl and don't know how to get out, in that vortex. People do various things when relationships are bad and what I say is just notice that's happening and shift our focus. It's saying there's something that needs your attention right now. There's a reason why you're stuck. One of the first moves to get out of that is just acknowledge that there's different realities happening at the same time and they all exist. They all exist and there's right or wrong to it. You don't have to like it or love it. You may obviously strongly disagree, especially if someone's coming from a really racist place but the fact that it's happening is true. It is happening. We don't want it to happen but it's happening and it happened in the past. That's what we're really addressing. Just kind of understanding that there's our internal experience, there's another person's internal experience and then there's just ... If somebody was recording it they could see some words being said or some actions being done and there's some energies being exchanged.

This starts to create a little bit of space for us to consider, "Oh, what's happening in these internal realities?" If you notice in step one when toxicity is operating, when we're caught up in the toxic swirl of make believe, it's actually a really dehumanizing place. When we blame, judge, shame, make wrong, deny what's going on, deny what's going on with them, don't care, that's actually dehumanizing. When you're there, that's understandable because it's oftentimes because there's been some pain that's been caused. We obviously are not in the most loving, caring place with the person who's done some stuff that's made us feel some things. That's understandable but it just means that we have some place to work with on ourselves, that's all. After you've taken

care of yourself, you'll be in a different place to have a conversation with them, and so always just kind of going back to yourself.

As I was saying in the last training session, all roads don't lead back to Rome but all roads do lead back to you because you actually only have your own internal reality. That's it. Everything is filtered. Your reality is the only thing that you have. Everything else is, even if somebody else shares with you what they're experiencing, that's being filtered through your senses, through your abilities, through your personality, through your past. Trying to create as much space for people to be in different places actually leads to us affirming people's humanity.

I want folks to think of a situation, and I want it to be a specific situation if possible, that they felt was really emotionally charged, related to racism. It could be anything or it could be related to another form of systemic oppression, if that's feeling more more salient to you right now because there's some more dynamics at play. I would request that it would be a situation where you had some sort of privilege because I think there's a different dynamic in place [inaudible 00:28:43], whether that's male privilege, gender privilege and also white privilege, also. Preferably you choose something around white privilege or about dealing with racism as a white person.

If you're not a white person, because I know we also have people of color, also asking you to do something that's around privilege as well. I want you to ... We're going to be splitting up into pairs, or two to three folks. Folks, I want you to kind of notice what are the signs of toxicity coming up for you in that situation? Like I said, there's a reason why you're caught up in this toxic swirl. This is not about judging yourself for being there in the first place, it's just noticing. It's just really noticing that you're there and what are the red flags for you.

Then, if you consider that everyone's coming to a situation from a different place and there's a reason for them to be in that position, to have that experience, does anything shift for you? Does anything open up for you? It's possible that there isn't. That's possible but I want you to take some time and be like, "Okay, that was my experience. They have their own experience that's different," and just notice if that feels easy for you or notice if that feels hard for you. Like I said, there's no right or wrong for this. It's just this is what you're experiencing. I'm going to give people ten minutes. It's 10:32 and I'm going to put you in groups of two or three and, folks, if you find yourself alone, that's okay. Just continue to answer the questions by yourself. You can write it out or just say it to yourself, out loud or silently, which ever one.

If you are on the phone, hit "mute six" to unmute yourself. If you're on the video, you look at the bottom and there should be a mute button on the left hand side on the black bar, if you're on video. We're going to ... This is also an invitation. If you find yourself not wanting to actually participate and talk with somebody else you can choose to decline

the invitation. All right. We're going to do breakout room. You've got ten minutes so we're going to go until 00:43, whatever time zone you're in.

Okay. For folks who are still here with me in the main room, if you wanted to be part of a breakout room, but for some reason I'm not seeing your invitation, I recommend downloading the Zoom update because that's basically seems to be the main issue who don't get an invitation, if they have an outdated Zoom version. If you want you can actually get out of here and then go to "Zoom.us" and you can just kind of Google "Zoom webinar download" and it'll take you to the link where you can just download it and then pop back in and that way you'll be able to participate in the future breakouts that's happen. You can always, as I said, we invite people to do this themselves if they happen to not be in a breakout room. Okay. I'm going to go and take a bathroom break right now. Okay.

Okay. We're back. Per usual, I would like folks to just share with us in the group chat as well as on the whiteboard just what came up for you as your exploring these questions with your partner in your breakout room and remembering that there's no white or wrong here, no feeling of good or bad. It's happening. It happened. If you want to share on the whiteboard if it's short. If you have something longer, we advise you to write it in the chat just to make sure there's enough space. Also, if you are unable to know how to do the whiteboard, I think if you click on ... Not sure that tells us. Breesha, do you know how to do this?

Breesha: Do I know how to ...

Sandra: How people access to annotation.

Breesha: That, I do not know.

Sandra: I know. This is what [Gizette 00:34:10] ... See, Gizette's normally with us and she is the one who does our tech information. Breesha's helping out while Gizette is traveling right now. There is something on annotation. Up top, somebody says. Up top, options, annotate.

Breesha: Awesome. Thank you, person.

Sandra: Yeah, thank you, and Jenny, too. As people are writing, can you share, Breesha, what people are sharing?

Breesha: Yeah. We have "Helping, giving help is complicated," someone expressed feelings of anger, judgment, wanting to change their own mind. Someone said they feel like a deer in the headlight. Someone said in quotations, "Hey, I think I'm whitesplaining." Someone explained feeling conflicted. Someone expressed concern,

what if it is not enough? In the chat we have, "There's so many instances that I'd imagine I don't notice, where words are very subtle but felt. My core questions, there seems to be a universal [inaudible 00:35:26] followed by what do I do." Someone is having a hard time coming up with emotionally charged situations to think about. Not sure if that's because they feel separated from them or because they've become comfortable and/or careful enough to get in super ... Sorry.

Sandra: I want to [crosstalk 00:35:49] charged situations. Let me step in a bit for this one because it's ... This is not uncommon when talking about something where you have privilege. It's also not uncommon for somebody who is so used to feeling a certain pain that they actually numb themselves out. In the first situation it's because you've been taught to not notice what's actually happening around you. That's that kind of disconnection from the reality of systemic racism as we discussed. If you're not listening to stories of people of color sharing about how it's impacted them, there's no friction. There's no friction being created for you. That's one possibility.

The other possibility is that we actually numb ourselves out to what is happening in order to survive the pain. Those are just two different options that might be happening right now. The thing to notice, when you feel like you can't say what's on your mind or you don't know how to respond when you feel kind of on a scale of helpless and powerless, where you don't feel like you can bring your whole self and everything and just be there, that's a different way of thinking about emotionally charged situations because sometimes we can make ourselves very small in order to not have it be emotionally charged. Just thinking about what might be relevant for you and think about where you don't feel like you can be more self expressive, where you feel like you have agency and ability to take actions that you want to.

Breasha, you want to continue?

Breasha: Sure. Someone mentioned how language of disconnection helps them understand emotional conversations with more compassion. Someone else mentioned frustration. Another person mentioned self hatred, how self hatred and shame are so easy. Someone said that one thing that came up for them is thinking about the situation after the fact, it seems obvious that the other person's coming from another place. They said, "I need to work on taking time to think about it in the moment, slow down."

Sandra: I'm a big fan of bathroom breaks when you need to take that moment, by the way. You can always be like, "I just need a bathroom break," and if you take ten minutes, sometimes that happens. Sometimes you need a little extra time.

Breasha: Another person mentioned that a flag for them is wanting to be white and the drive to be perfect and what shifts is seeing everyone along the journey and being more compassionate to self and others.

Sandra: Awesome. Lots of different things are coming up for folks. Like I said, there's no right or wrong to what you're experiencing. It just is what you're experience. Let's unpack what more is going on. Some folks, I think, are noticing more frustration or kind of getting more in touch with how they're being [inaudible 00:39:18]. Other folks were also noticing how it creates a little bit of an opening, a little more spaciousness for us to be curious and to explore.

Let me go back to the next step. What do we do now that we have a little more spaciousness? Fancy you should ask. I have a step for you. Okay. Sorry. I try to do animation and it kind of got a little funky on me. This next thing, now that we've got a little bit of an opening ... Mind you, this is just being able to shift away from the toxicity that we're engaging in of resisting or making ourselves or somebody else wrong and just kind of shifting, being like, "Okay, something is happening inside of me, something is creating this emotional charge in this situation. Let me deal with this side of the equation first." I said we're always co-creating our situations between how we related to it and what's the situation that is happening to us. What is happening to us? We don't control what is happening to us in that moment, though we can kind of shape in the future and that's the place where we're trying to move to through this model. We're gonna deal with the first part of that equation first just to be really clear, what am I bringing to the table, how am I relating to it?

This week is about getting really curious. Sometimes we're not there to come from a place of care and compassion. You can't force that to happen. What we can do is be curious. It's oftentimes a little bit easier and if you're not curious, if you find this hard to be curious, then you could be, "Well, why is it hard for me to be curious?" You see how this works? Just kind of deal with where you are and get curious about that, including if you're not curious and you don't want to go there. There's a reason for it. There's a reason for it.

Where does leave us? It's always about looking more deeply into what's going on and a great entry point is just being in touch with your body, just developing more mindfulness about what is coming up in your body. When you do that, and I'm going to guide you through an exercise, I'm going to give you the verbal version and then we're going to do the actual practicum. Just acknowledging what is coming up in your body and continue acknowledging, and this may take more time than we're going to do in this ten minute exercise in a second. It may take repeated sessions of acknowledging for you to understand the source of pain. That's fine. It's just what's coming up for you.

We kind of keep acknowledging until we get to a place where we feel the source pain and you'll know when you get there. You'll know. We invite the source pain to share with what it needs in order to be cared for. Here's the really important part. It's what I call "compassionate self accountability" where we acknowledge how we haven't been taking

care of that pain and how it's impacted yeah and other people. At this first connection, we were torn away from the connection that we had with other people, particularly between white people and people of color, and we were torn away from our connection to ourselves. Then, because that's what we've been taught to do, we just continue doing it. We didn't even have to have anybody tell us to do it. We just continue doing it and we're trying to notice that and then take responsibility for that having happened and for us, continue to do that, even unconsciously and how that's really hurt us and other folks along the way, that we've done accidental racist stuff, accident problematic stuff.

What happens then, you can notice if you're feeling called forth to actually take care of the pain. What I'd say, if you're not ready to do anything, you're not feeling called forth, that happens. Don't force it because there's a reason why you don't feel ready. There's a reason why you don't feel called forth, whether that's you're not sure how, whether you want to do some more reading, some more learning or it's like your emotional capacity is very low so your ability to actually execute that is very difficult, is very minimal, whether that's you don't feel like you have the skills yet to take care of it, that's all real. Just kind of notice what's coming up for you.

if you do feel called forth to take care of it in the ways that it's shared with you, the ways that feel resonant, name that. If you're not ready to do that, just name where you are. Just name where you are. There's a reason for that. There's a very good reason for that. We're going to go through an exercise right now. Let's stop sharing this. Mind you, this exercise is going to help you viscerally go through the process that I just outlined and this is a group process, meaning that we're all going to be in different places. That happens. If I'm moving on to a certain section and you feel like you still are in this other place, just keep repeating those affirmations to yourself. Don't feel like you have to stay with me throughout the exercise. If I'm saying something and it doesn't quite feel resonant with you, just notice what would feel resonant and say that to you instead. I'm trying to make this less confusing than more so I'm only going to stick a couple different things but it may not be what exactly you're feeling. That's okay. Really, as I said, just notice. Keep noticing, keep affirming, keep acknowledging.

Before I get started, let me mute everybody again. I want folks to get comfortable and close their eyes. First, I want to just take a deep breath. Breathe in and out and just notice what's coming up in your body. Just breathe in and out, in and out. I want you to bring your attention to your feet, not trying to change the way it feels but just notice. Is it tingly? Is it relaxed? Do you have some blisters? Move your attention gently out to your legs. Just notice if it's tired, if it's relaxed, anything else. Not trying to change it, make it go away, just noticing. Then I want you to move up to your torso. Just notice. Is their tension anywhere? Is there a pit? Does it feel opened anywhere? Just keep breathing. Then more your attention to your shoulders and your arms. Notice how it's feeling, what sensations are coming up. Then just bring your attention to your neck and

then your head. Notice if you want to stretch, you feel really still, you have a headache. Just notice.

I want you to think of the emotionally charged situation that you've been thinking about for today's session. I want you to remember it, what happened. As you think about what happened, just start noting what's coming up for you in your body. As you're playing out the situation, what was said, what was done, how you felt in that moment, there's no right or wrong to this, you don't have to be feeling critical or compassionate or anything, just wherever you are. Notice where in your body this is being expressed. Just put your hand, if you have a place, put your hand on that place, whether that's a pit in your stomach, your chest, your neck, wherever you feel it strongest. I just want you to notice and breathe in and out. Breathe into that sensation and breathe out. Just notice, how big is that sensation? Is it moving? Does it have a shape? Is an image coming up for you?

As you're noticing this, if you could give it a feeling, what feeling name would you give it? Maybe anger, frustration, stress, guilt, shame, pain, grief. I want you to keep your hand there and just breathe in and repeat. Breathe in, "I feel blank," breathe out, "And that's happening." Breathe in, "I feel guilt or whatever," breathe out, "And that's happening." Breathe in, "I feel blank," breathe out, "And that's happening." "I feel blank," breathe out, "And that's happening."

Just keep noticing. Notice if something has shifted, if something remains the same for you. Maybe it's in a different part of your body. Maybe you feel stronger now. Maybe this feels less. Keeping your hand wherever it's feeling strongest, notice how you're relating to that feeling. If you're going, "I feel guilt and I feel guilty about feeling guilty," right? How are you relating to it? Are you resisting it? Don't make yourself wrong for it. "I feel X and I don't want to feel X." Whatever way you're relating to it. I want you to feel both as happening at the same time and create that sentence. "I feel X and blank."

Breathe in, "I feel X," and breathe out how you're relating to it like, "I don't want to feel the way," or, "I feel bad about feeling that way," whatever it may be. Keep repeating that sentence. Breathe in, "I feel X," breathe out, "Blank." Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. Just kind of keep noticing what's coming up for you as you say that. Is anything shifting? Anything's opening up? Maybe something's intensifying. I want you to say the same sentence again and add "and that's okay" to it. Or you say, "And that's okay," actually. Just breathe in, "And that's okay," breathe out, "And that's okay." Breathe in, "That's happening," breathe out, "That's okay." Breathe in, "That's happening," breathe out, "That's okay."

I want to have people just kind of check in again and ask the feeling in their body, "Is there something that you need? Is there something that I can give you?" If it tells you something, if it doesn't, either one's fine. If it did tell you something, that's something that you haven't been doing. If it told you something, you can tell it whether to not you

want to do that or not. This may be too fast and that's fine. You may want some more time with it.

Just kind of keep noticing. Notice where you are. Notice what's coming up for you, if you want to move somewhere, you don't want to move somewhere with this. Wherever you may be, that's just where you are. If you came to a place where you got something, you know you want to do something, you're being called forth, you can name that. Say, "I commit to doing X." If you don't have anything to admit to, that's fine, too. I want you to take a moment just to thank the place in your body that's been telling you all this wonderful wisdom and say you'll be back to talk some more. I want you to take a deep breath, in and out, and come back to here and open up your eyes and wiggle your feet and move your hand and stretch a little bit.

I would like for people to share, once again, on the whiteboard as well as in the chat box what that was like for you. As I keep saying over and over again and I will be just a broken record on this, there is not right or wrong to it. It is just whatever came up for you, what did you notice? Did anything shift for you? Did you learn anything? Knowing that this may be something some people are not familiar with, this may be something people are less familiar with, it just happens. I'm guiding you through something and if you didn't get all the way through the entire exercise because you got stopped somewhere, that's fine. I don't expect actually most people to go on to the end but I wanted to give that as an opportunity for folks who were there and to really practice being okay with where you got to. That's actually really great because as we talked about perfection and perfectionism is one of the ways that white supremacy and patriarchy really manifest themselves. We're not trying to be perfectionists, whatever that may mean in this program. Breesha, if you want to share what people noticed as they did this exercise.

Breesha: Yeah. Someone noticed that there were layers. Under the panic was shame, under the shame was grief. People mentioned self forgiveness, tension, denial, asked for acknowledgement, shame about what I did and shame about having feelings, wanting to understand the person's position. Someone mentioned being impatient with their anxiety and wanting courage and confidence. Self doubt, listen to what is helping us heal. Another mentioned that it was good to think about how they wanted to deny that they could ever hurt their friends and how they need to accept their reality based on how they have been raised, accepting that they could very well hurt their friends. Someone felt shamed, humiliated, like the work they had done wasn't enough yet and that there was still more work to do. At the same time, it felt like a smack in the face but reflecting on the experience, they noticed that it was an opportunity to be gentle with themselves, something they are working on in all aspects of life and accepting their current reality.

Someone mentioned it's hard to figure out what to call the feeling. It feels like aggression. They tried rage and sadness, most obviously it's pain that they can't ignore. Someone mentioned that they felt disgusted at this [inaudible 01:00:14] white man, then under that both guilt and self righteousness, then the need to accept it all. Someone mentioned that they noticed they are carrying their feelings in their body and was wondering if the pain and feeling they carry contributes to bodily pain and tension. They were called forth to stretch and decided to do that.

Sandra: Yeah. It seems like a lot of folks were able to shift their understanding of what was going on as they were able to acknowledge more and more and more and that is something that is generally true in this work and that's why I say the initial reaction is not right or wrong and what's problematic is if we just stay there and we don't look more deeply as to what's going on. As you're realizing, there's just so much happening because we have layers upon layers of disconnection with ourselves and with other people, with reality. It takes some time to sift through all of that and it manifests. It does manifest in our bodies so our bodies can really tell us so much. I want to take some time to coach somebody who found this process, this exercise a little bit difficult and that way we can see what is it like and I can help support somebody in an individual customized way versus trying to do something for the entire group, which is a little bit hard, I've got to say. I do my best but it's easier if I have one person in front of me.

This person, obviously, will be sharing what was going on so I invite them to be vulnerable with us and [inaudible 01:02:11] of their healing and how that healing is a part of liberation from racial injustice. There are no "shoulds". You don't have to. It is an invitation and if there's anybody who wants to, if they're on a telephone it's "star six", we can start talking. If you are on video, you can also just start talking. If we have multiple people talking at the same time, we'll just go with one. You could also do it without the video if you feel a little bit more comfortable with that.

Kayla: I'll share if no one else is.

Sandra: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kayla: Okay. Hi, guys. I'm Kayla.

Sandra: Hey, Kayla.

Kayla: Yeah. I guess maybe it'll help if I share my situation. I think no matter how long I've been doing work along these lines, personally and professionally and academically, I still find myself doing those behaviors and those kind of micro-aggressions. You know, when you're walking down the street and you cross to the other side or you grab your purse a little bit. I think it's come to the point where I'm just doing it unconsciously but it still frustrates me every time. I still feel very disappointed in myself whenever it happens

and very angered that I still do it and that I still have that compulsion to do those things. During this experiment, it was mostly frustration, a little bit of anger. I'm feeling a lot of pain in my back and was stretching that a little bit and then I got stuck at the anger part.

Sandra: Where do you notice that anger showing up in your body?

Kayla: In my back, honestly, mostly, which is very strange.

Sandra: That happens. There's no right or wrong to where it shows up, I want you to put your hand on your back where you feel it the most, if you're that flexible, depending on where it is.

Kayla: Yeah.

Sandra: Right now, just noticing what it's like right now. Is it, from a scale of one to ten, ten being most extreme, how strongly do you feel that?

Kayla: Probably like a seven.

Sandra: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Tell me a little bit more about how that's showing up in your back.

Kayla: It feels like a knot, a very, very complicated knot, very inflamed and frustrated. I think it's one of those things that the more you notice it, the most inflamed it gets or the more painful it gets, right?

Sandra: Yeah. You're getting in touch with that.

Kayla: Yeah.

Sandra: How big is that knot?

Kayla: Baseball, softball sized.

Sandra: Baseball, softball sized. Does it have a color?

Kayla: I would say probably very purple and orange.

Sandra: Is it moving, pulsating?

Kayla: Pulsating, for sure, yeah. Definitely not moving.

Sandra: Is it pulsing rapidly, kind of slowly?

Kayla: Slower, yeah.

Sandra: Okay. You have this slowly pulsating, purple, orangey baseball-sized knot and how do you feel [crosstalk 01:06:00] this knot?

Kayla: Angry.

Sandra: You're angry at the anger knot?

Kayla: Yes.

Sandra: That happens.

Kayla: Very frustrated and angry.

Sandra: Yeah. You're frustrated and angry with the anger knot.

Kayla: Yeah.

Sandra: I want you to just take a moment and ... Are you somewhere where you can just sit quietly?

Kayla: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Sandra: Okay. I want you to just breathe in, "I feel anger," breathe out.

Kayla: I feel anger.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And I'm angry that I'm angry."

Kayla: I'm angry that I'm angry.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I feel anger."

Kayla: I feel anger.

Sandra: Breathe out, "I'm angry that I'm angry."

Kayla: I'm angry that I'm angry.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I'm angry that I'm angry."

Kayla: I'm angry that I'm angry.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And that's happening."

Kayla: And that's happening.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I'm angry that I'm angry."

Kayla: I'm angry that I'm angry.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And that's happening."

Kayla: And that's happening.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I'm angry that I'm angry."

Kayla: I'm angry that I'm angry.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And that matters."

Kayla: And that matters.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I'm angry that I'm angry."

Kayla: I'm angry that I'm angry.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And that matters."

Kayla: And that matters.

Sandra: What do you notice coming up for you now?

Kayla: Sadness.

Sandra: Where are you feeling sadness in your body?

Kayla: In my stomach.

Sandra: Move your hand to your stomach and tell me a little bit about that.

Kayla: It's hard to say. It's empty feeling.

Sandra: How big is the empty feeling?

Kayla: Quiet large, like a CD or DVD.

Sandra: Is it round? Is it a box? What shape is that?

Kayla: Round, yeah.

Sandra: Does it have a color or is it moving?

Kayla: Not moving and I don't think it has a color.

Sandra: So it's this round, CD-sized just gaping hole, emptiness.

Kayla: Yeah.

Sandra: How are you relating to this sadness?

Kayla: Still angry.

Sandra: That happens.

Kayla: Yeah.

Sandra: I want you to breathe in, "I feel sadness."

Kayla: I feel sadness.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And I don't want to feel sadness."

Kayla: And I don't want to feel sadness.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I feel sadness."

Kayla: I feel sadness.

Sandra: Breathe out, "I don't want to feel sadness."

Kayla: And I don't want to feel sadness.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I feel sadness."

Kayla: I feel sadness.

Sandra: Breathe out, "I don't want to feel sadness."

Kayla: I don't want to feel sadness.

Sandra: "I feel sadness."

Kayla: I feel sadness.

Sandra: "And that matters."

Kayla: And that matters.

Sandra: What are you noticing now?

Kayla: It's going away a little bit.

Sandra: How are you relating to the sadness now?

Kayla: Trying to make peace with it.

Sandra: Don't try. If it's not there, it's not there. I want you to breathe in. "I see you. I see your sadness." So breathe in ...

Kayla: I see your sadness.

Sandra: Breathe out, "You exist."

Kayla: You exist.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I see your sadness."

Kayla: I see your sadness.

Sandra: Breathe out, "You exist."

Kayla: You exist.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I see your sadness."

Kayla: I see your sadness.

Sandra: Breathe out, "You exist."

Kayla: You exist.

Sandra: What are you noticing now?

Kayla: Back to the back pain but it's not as bad anymore, calmed down a little bit but that's the main focus now.

Sandra: From one to ten, what is it at?

Kayla: Probably a four.

Sandra: Okay. Are we still with the same knot as before then or is it different?

Kayla: Now it feels more like less of a knot and just more of a bump or like a mound. It's still pulsating a little bit, just not as much.

Sandra: Can you tell me a little bit about how it looks, that bump.

Kayla: Closest to a pitcher's mound, I guess, is the best thing I can visualize, but much smaller.

Sandra: How are you relating to this ...

Kayla: Smaller than before.

Sandra: How are you relating to this bump?

Kayla: Less angry than before, still a little bit of that frustration though, too. Yeah.

Sandra: Is it more anger or is it more frustration, if you had to name the stronger one?

Kayla: Frustration.

Sandra: I want you to breathe in, "I feel frustration."

Kayla: I feel frustration.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And it's happening."

Kayla: And it's happening.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I feel frustration."

Kayla: I feel frustration.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And that's happening."

Kayla: And that's happening.

Sandra: Breathe in, "I feel frustration."

Kayla: I feel frustration.

Sandra: Breathe out, "And that's happening."

Kayla: And that's happening.

Sandra: I want you to ask it, does it have a message for you? Does it want you to know something?

Kayla: Yeah. It's telling me to be patient and to stay open and to give it time.

Sandra: What do you notice coming up for you as you receive that message?

Kayla: Just acknowledgement, those all seem very true things.

Sandra: They can be true. We can not like them, too. They can be true and we [crosstalk 01:15:44]. How are you relating to that message?

Kayla: Still a little bit frustrated, a different frustration I guess. Frustration that we had to go through this to get to that, that I didn't get there naturally.

Sandra: [crosstalk 01:16:16] doing all it can to make sure you don't get here. If you look into the future and you come from this place of being patient with yourself, being gentle with yourself, as you continue to do this work of unpacking and releasing these implicit biases that you have or these biases in general that you have, if you were able to do that, who would you be?

Kayla: Let's see. I would be ... That's a good question. I mean ... I don't know.

Sandra: Yeah. Who would you be in the world?

Kayla: Just be me but a better me, hopefully.

Sandra: What will be possible for you if this was the norm for you?

Kayla: Just peace, I guess, happiness.

Sandra: If you could be this way in doing racial justice work, what would the difference be?

Kayla: So much. It would be like night and day.

Sandra: Yeah, tell me a little bit more.

Kayla: I just think the more at peace or comfortable someone can become with themselves, the better that they can lead or help others. The fewer barriers to make those things happen, the more it kind of comes undone.

Sandra: Yeah. It's a game changer.

Kayla: Totally, yeah.

Sandra: I want to thank you for sharing all of that. You can leave ... Perhaps close the coaching on this now and just ...

Kayla: Thank you.

Sandra: I invite you to consider that. Consider that it actually is a game changer. Perhaps a little bit of motivation to continue doing this work of acceptance, acknowledging where you're at. Thank you. Thank you for sharing.

Kayla: Yeah, thank you so much.

Sandra: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. I'm noticing that we only have one minute left in the session. I want to just take a second for folks to share, as always, about what that was like as you're witnessing that coaching and witnessing the process that she was going through. What was coming up for you? I don't want you to comment on her and what she was doing. I want you to think about what your experience was as you were doing it. What did you learn from it? What came up for you? What did you notice as you were witnessing that? If you need some help with staying in your own experience, use "I" statements. You can say that in a chat box or in the whiteboard. Breesha, if you want to be sharing.

Breesha: Feeling less alone, like I could relate. It's so obvious how destructive racism is for all of us. Someone mentioned emotions under emotions. Relief, relaxation and ready to work. Someone mentioned anger on anger. Again, layers of pain. Someone mentioned that staying with it helped really work through it. Feeling more compassion

towards other white folks doing this work together and how to be there for each other in the process. It was difficult to stay engaged during the experience. [inaudible 01:21:18] Sandra, another participant shared together. This person said they think they are still trying to identify their core pains every day but today they are not in the best state to engage.

Sandra: That happens and that's good awareness and just kind of being curious about what is happening that you're not in a place where you can engage. Then you know how you can take care of yourself.

Breasha: Someone said they think more healing is possible from acknowledging their pain. Another noticed a familiar struggle, different words, but nevertheless listening to the exchange felt familiar. They felt less alone. They want to keep in touch with these lessons. It hit in a very deep, vulnerable place when Sandra asked, "Who would you be if you let go of these judgments?" I would absolutely be a more confident woman. Another mentioned that they never let themselves sit with this long enough to dig through all the layers of feelings and thoughts they have around this. They're noticing difficulty staying engaged. Another person ... Excuse me ... Has respect for being honest, even when it is difficult, awkward and tedious.

Sandra: Is your voice okay? Do you want me to read?

Breasha: Actually, yeah. Could you?

Sandra: Yeah. [inaudible 01:23:05]. Okay. "In my experience I shifted from blame or shame to guilt, to anger, to self compassion. I perceived a shift in resistance to sadness and with that I felt my heart burst forth with feeling. That feeling was so different than what normally comes up for me in somebody else's topic. I see how I can [inaudible 01:23:24] more understanding than others if I could express the root sadness as opposed to the shells I built around it. Respect for being honest even when it was awkward, difficult and tedious."

I really want you to consider that this, what we are doing right now is what I mean by "we need white folks to be emotionally honest about what the impact of racism has been on them". It is from there that we can actually start to do something different because much of what makes it difficult for people of color to work with white people around addressing racial injustice is because that work is not being done. That emotional honesty is not there and without that, how can we build trust? How can we trust that when something happens, you will do this deep looking to understand what has happened? If you don't do that, then how can we come together to work around racial justice? It is not merely signing a petition. It is not merely showing up at a protest. It is not merely taking some form of action. That's simply a manifestation of this deeper work

that we're asking for white folks to be doing. We do it, obviously, so that we can work together to change the system but it's also a service of your own liberation.

As you can see, there's tremendous pain that white folks have been running away from and layered upon that is so much anger and frustration that you ran away from it, too. You never really knew how to deal with it either because that got torn away from you because of white supremacy. This happened and if we could just start to focus on acknowledging, acknowledging, acknowledging, we start to move into a different space of being able to share experiences because we actually know what they are. Until we can name our own experiences and the disconnect between our experience and the experience of other folks, particularly people of color, white folks with less consciousness, then we can create something different. We have to be able to own our own experience. We have to be in touch with it. We can't share something we don't know. This is how all this feeds into the larger goal of racial justice work. It starts, like I said, all roads lead back to you. I want to leave just on that note. I know I'm a little bit over.

Really, remember that you have access to this for ... Like I said, as long as the internet is around this website is. You can keep repeating, watching the videos. We'll be continuing to do this work for the next several weeks. Next week, we will be doing restoring external justice and then we'll go back and forth between the two, that way you get more facility built in them. I also want to ... Let's see. I also will be sharing this PowerPoint with folks so you'll be getting all the steps in it. I just want to note that next session, that we are not going to be reading next week. It will be happening on November third, actually, because I am going on vacation, a much deserved vacation. I can show and do this work with you. I'm actually going to a ten-day silent meditation retreat, which I'm very excited about, the longest I've ever done. We'll send out emails reminding folks as well and, as always, it's on the online portal with the schedules.

I want to thank everybody for showing up. In particular, the person who got some coaching. That was very, very brave and, as you can tell, so many people got so much out of that. That's the power of doing this work in community. You're not alone in this and when we can start sharing that vulnerability, that's when we start creating something different. That's when you start creating that love and community. Thank you, everyone. Take care and I'll see you in two weeks.