

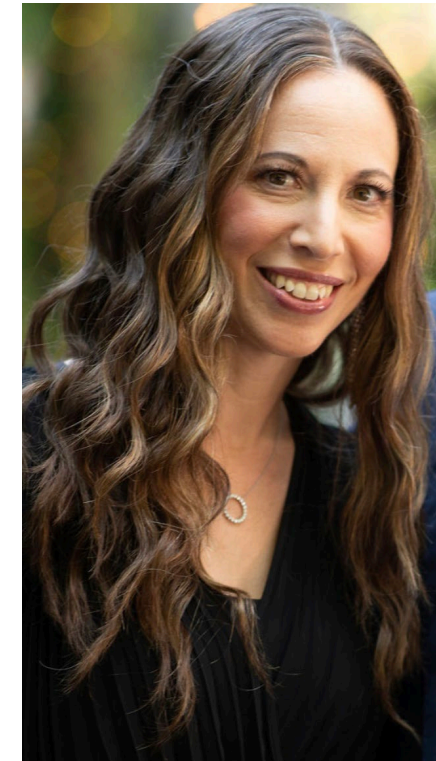
# Supporting MENA, Muslim & Jewish Students: Empathy, Education & Safety



**Brian Van Brunt, Ed.D.**



**Jacques Whitfield, JD**



**Brielle Stark-Adler, Ph.D.**

# PROGRAM GOALS:

- Understand the nature of the conflict and why Jewish, Muslim, and MENA students are at particular risk during this time.
- Address some ways to engage students in crucial conversations about recent events to help them express their frustrations and understand productive ways to channel their actions.
- Understand how to offer support related to stress reduction and how to better ensure personal safety for students.
- Learn the importance of practical situational awareness, preparedness, and how to stay safe during a time when a student's faith, nationality or political ideas carry with them an actual increase in potential violence.
- Decide when to refer students to counseling services, organizations, student conduct or the campus BIT/CARE teams.
- Learn some common techniques used by those in crisis communications to avoid potential escalations and pivot from being boxed into a commitment or single response.

# RESOURCE:



*How to Engage in Difficult Conversations on Identity, Race, and Politics in Higher Education* addresses the polarized political and racialized climate in the United States. This practical resource offers faculty and staff much needed direction related to hosting difficult conversations as they occur in the classroom, residence halls, orientation events, and coffee shops around college and university campuses.

Chapters provide insights, case examples, interactive exercises, and "how-to" tools and tips to hosting these conversations, covering issues such as immigration, White supremacy in academia, women's rights, the Black Lives Matter movement, trans rights, reproductive rights, and cancel culture, among many others.

This resource is designed to better prepare instructors, faculty, higher education staff and administrators to enter into these hard conversations with an improved awareness of contentious issues and how to facilitate, and potentially de-escalate, discussions that are already occurring.



**Tammy Hodo, PhD**  
All Things Diverse, LLC



**Jacques Whitfield, JD**  
CPS HR Consulting



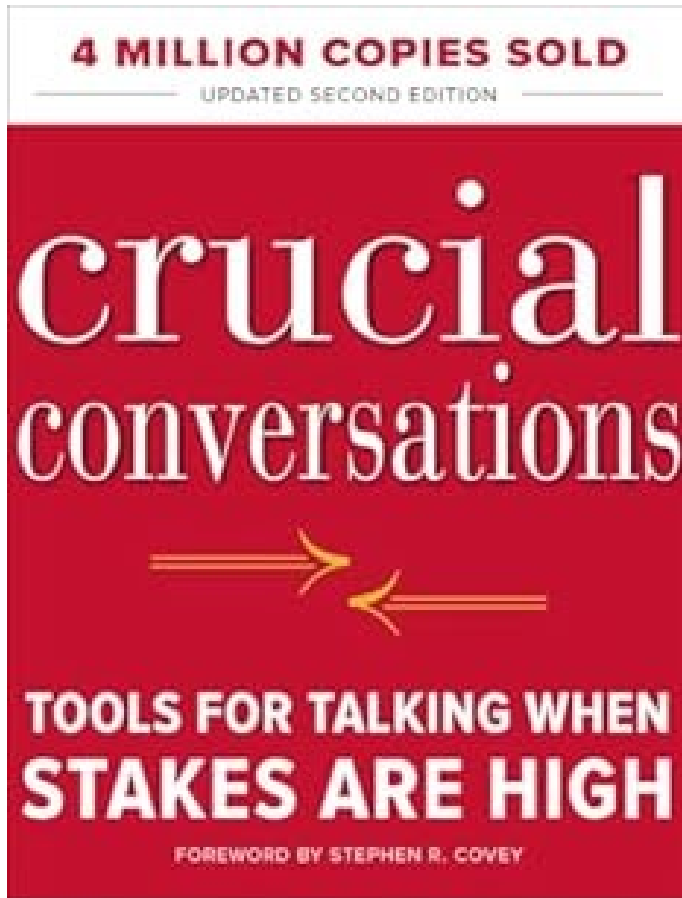
**Brian Van Brunt, EdD**  
D-Prep, Inc.



**Poppy Fitch, EdD**  
San Diego Community  
College District



# RESOURCE:



<https://training.vitalsmarts.com/courses/dialogue>

# **WHAT'S HAPPENING ON YOUR CAMPUS?**

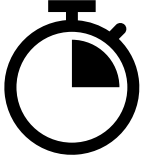

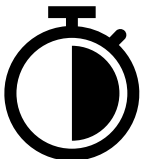
Take a moment and type in the chat some of the challenges you are experiencing on your campus



# WHAT WE SEE

- It's a complicated issue with powerful currents that threaten the existence of entire groups of people. Many feel a deep connection to the topic.
- Silence is equated with acquiescence or a failure to take the threats to existence seriously.
- Family, friends, social groups have exerted both direct and indirect pressures for students to speak and act. Many are deep in grief over the violence they have seen.
- It is difficult to find a “middle of the road” place to voice opinions because of the violence and threats of non-existence of both groups. It is a deeply polarizing topic.
- With the extreme violence taking place, balanced discussions to find areas of agreements can devolve and flair up.
- There is a cumulative stress in the daily visuals and on-going nature of the war.

# STRESS DEFINED

-  Stressors are those collective feelings that impact our emotions.
-  Stress impacts both our mind and body in a variety of ways. This is unique to each person.
-  Stress can come in terms of crisis events, daily hassles and the build up of cumulative stress.









# STRESS IMPACTING BODY AND MIND

## BODY

Stomach aches

Headaches

Sleeping more/less

Lack of energy

Pain and soreness

Easily startled

## MIND

Irritability

Racing thoughts

Poor concentration

Obsessive thoughts

Anger and rage

Hopelessness



# TOXIC STRESS



# TRAUMA

**“An exceptional experience in which powerful and dangerous events overwhelm a person’s capacity to cope.”**

Kathleen Fitzgerald Rice and Betsy McAlister Groves (2005)



T R A U M A

N

G

S T R E S S

T

# Trauma & the Mind-Body Connection





**Mental health  
issues have  
increased**

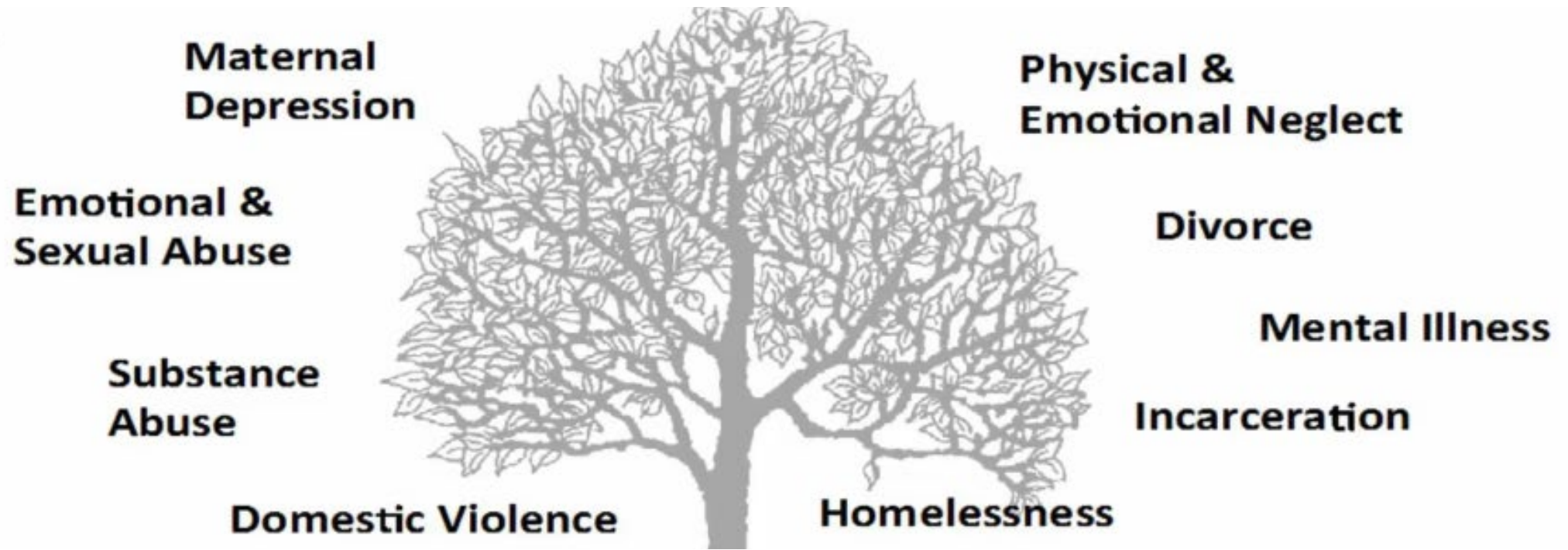
**There are not  
always visible  
signs of mental  
health  
concerns**

.



**Not everyone  
understands or  
acknowledges  
their own  
mental health  
needs**



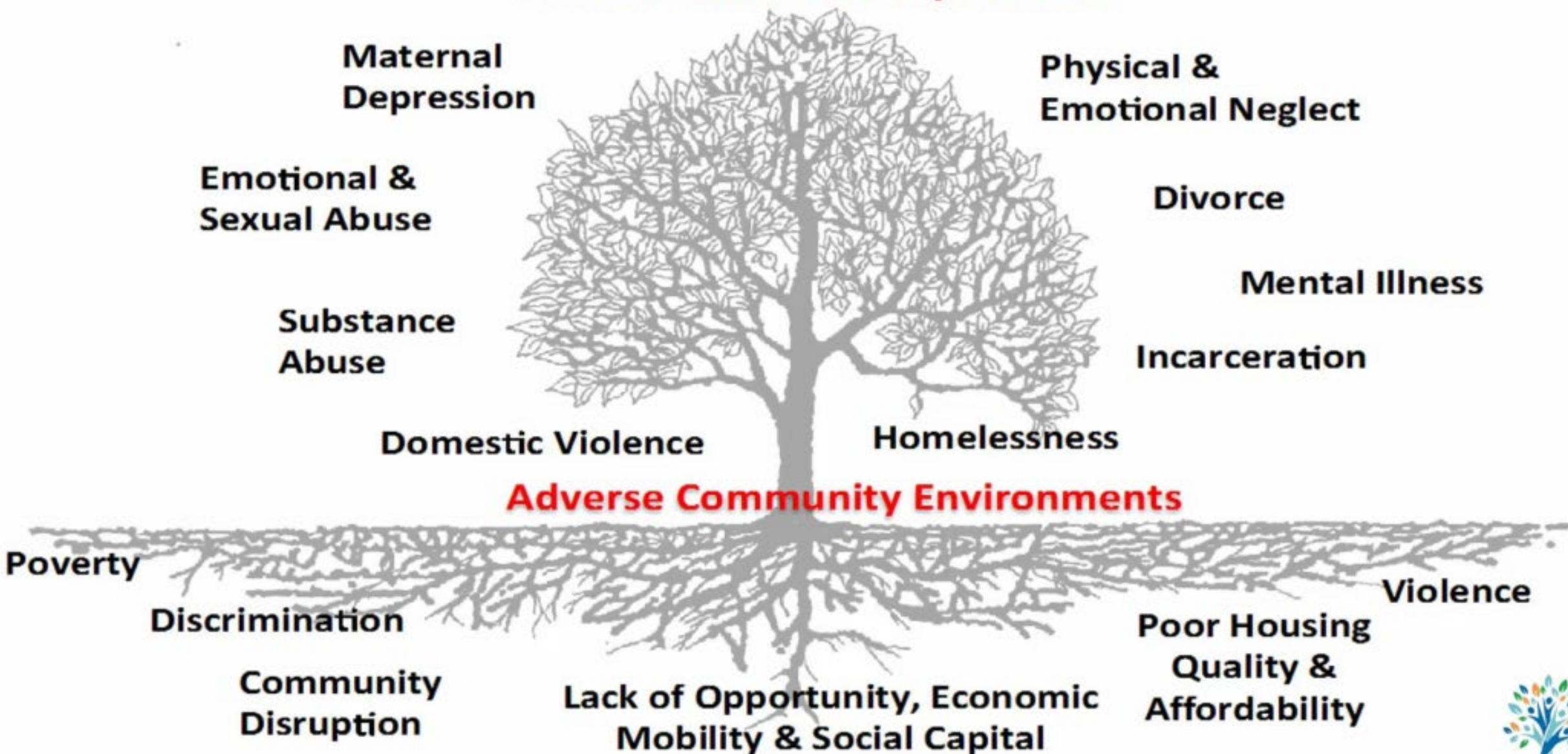




**Beyond ACEs...**

# The Pair of ACEs

## Adverse Childhood Experiences



**Racism**  
**Discrimination**  
**Generational and cultural trauma**  
**Bereavement or survivorship**  
**Adult responsibilities as a child**  
**Mental illness in the household**  
**Divorce**  
**Emotional or physical neglect**

## ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Abuse



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

Neglect



Physical



Emotional

Household Challenges



Mental Illness



Intimate Partner Violence



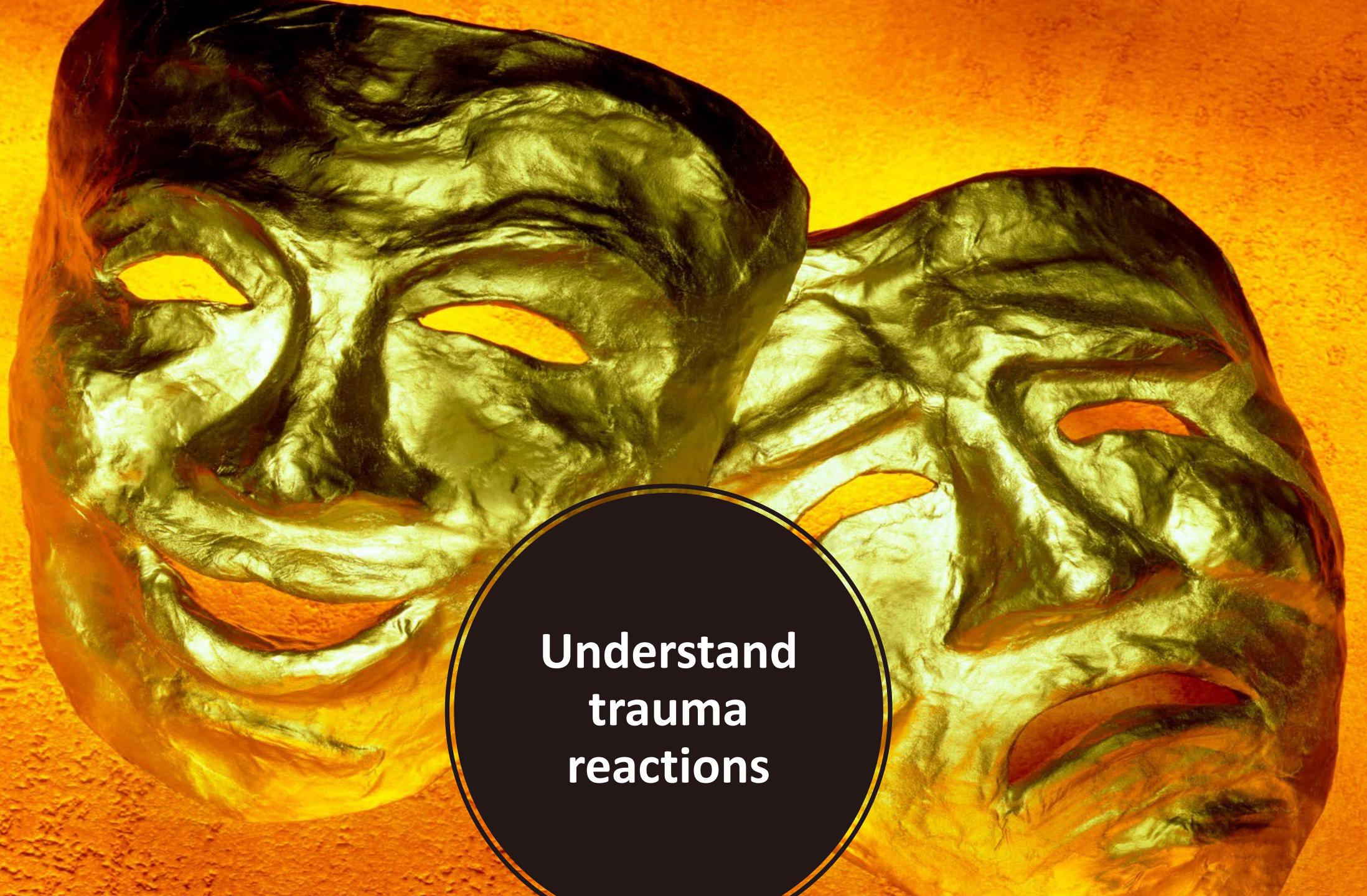
Parental Separation or Divorce



Incarceration



Substance Misuse or Dependence



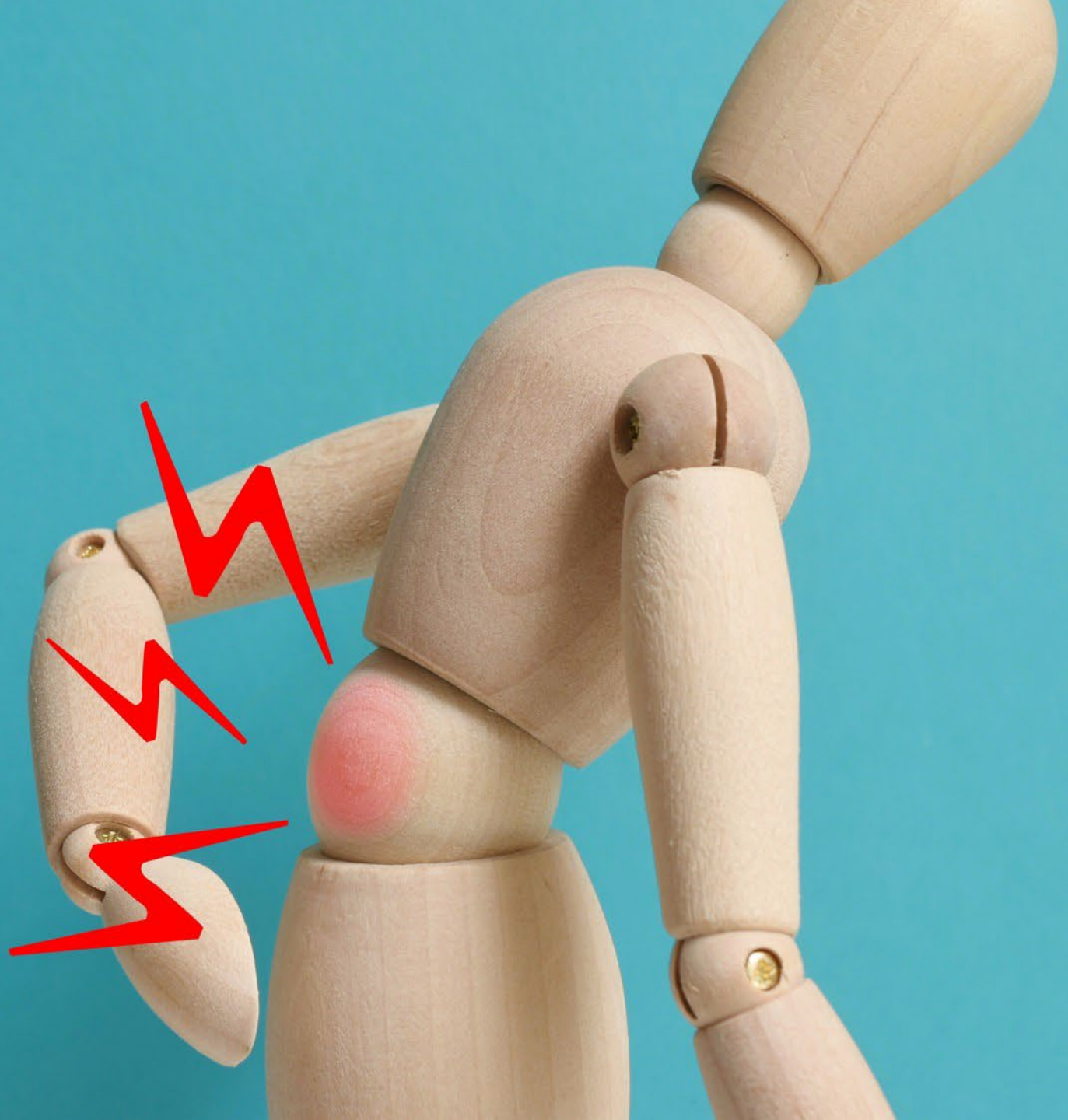
**Understand  
trauma  
reactions**



**Ripple  
effects of  
trauma**



**Recognize  
pain points**





# AWARENESS OF INTERNAL BIAS

- The challenge of our own strongly held beliefs
- The effects of our own generation collective, and personal trauma
- The impact of our own identities within our roles as campus support
- Being sure to help ourselves as we help our students

# WHEN TALKING WITH MENA STUDENTS

- **Allow students to self-identify their race.** Do not force incoming Arab students to select “White” on paperwork. MENA students may not feel welcome to join student organizations or apply for opportunities reserved for students of color if they are told they are “white.” Calling someone “white” does not universally afford them lived white privilege.
- **Do not presume all MENA students are Muslim.** MENA and South Asian non-Muslims are often asked to speak on Islam, but neither they nor their Muslim peers are spokespeople for Islam or historians of religious conflict.
- Do not presume all MENA students are comfortable being called Arab. People from Iraq, Israel, and Turkey do not typically speak Arabic. Many Moroccans grow up speaking more English, French, Spanish, or Tashelhit than Arabic.



# WHEN TALKING WITH MENA STUDENTS

- **Discuss race in orientation programming.** While campuswide orientation programming for first-year students often discusses issues of race and colorism in the United States, they often presume a shared language and a common history or understanding of American history: this is not true for most international students. American racial constructs are not universal as other countries do not subscribe to Western values because they have their own unique histories and social hierarchies. International Student Services should assist in explaining how race, privilege, and identity are talked about in the U.S. These conversations should familiarize international students with appropriate language and how to identify, report, and heal discrimination.



# INSIDE HIGHER ED ARTICLE

As a Muslim woman working in a Jewish center at a Catholic institution, Mehnaz Afridi, director of the Holocaust, Genocide & Interfaith Education Center at Manhattan College, sees campus conflict over the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas through a different lens than most.

While the violence has reignited long-standing tensions between pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli groups on campus, Afridi hopes to create spaces where students “can actually talk about their feelings, and I can help them navigate [without] demonizing people because of their religion,” she said. “I believe that conflict is about land, it’s about politics. Of course, it has a historical religious lens for Jews as well as Palestinians.”

“Even in the most volatile situations of war and conflict, one must not forget the human reality of other people and other faiths,” she added.



# Taking Care of Yourself in Tough Times

[www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/](http://www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/)

# ONE APPROACH TO DIALOGUE

At the urging of students, Schwartz plans to hold a student-led dialogue on the Israel-Hamas war at some point in the future. But it will follow the same protocols the Project on Civic Dialogue has established for all discussions:

- a student facilitator will prompt other students to come up with an answer to a specific question about the situation,
- with the goal of helping them better understand their own opinions as well as their peers'
- where those views come from
- why they hold them
- and whether they understand the situation well enough to think that way.

But just because students with opposing viewpoints are invited to share their thoughts and feelings doesn't mean they will.

# SAMPLE SCRIPTS FOR JEWISH STUDENTS:

- “I’m deeply impacted by the events of the last two weeks, and ask for your empathy and kindness, even if you don’t understand how I’m feeling.”
- “I may be slower to respond than usual, but appreciate you checking in.”
- “What’s happening in Israel is deeply personal to me and many other Jewish students. We’re in pain and mourning for the lives that have been lost, and that’s where my attention and emotions are.”
- “I need support in this moment, and not able to reciprocate right now.”

[www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/](http://www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/)



# SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHEN STRESSED:

- **Feeling hungry, but don't have much of an appetite?** That can happen when our systems are in shock. Hydrate and focus on nutrition for nourishment. Ask someone to join you for lunch or bring you something to eat.
- **Feeling angry, overwhelmed, or at your limit?** Focus on the next right thing that you need. Not *everything*, just the first step. Ask a professor for an extension, call a friend, or start simply by taking a break.
- **Feeling isolated?** Ask a friend to come over and hang out, watch a movie, or study. Nothing has to be “wrong” for you to want comfort or connection.

[www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/](http://www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/)

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHEN STRESSED:

- **Feeling tired but can't sleep?** This can happen during times of stress. You can use your brain to calm your body (find a sleep meditation that you can listen to) or your body to help calm your brain (like soothing yourself with your senses by taking a shower or drinking herbal tea). Hugs also help.
- **Doom-scrolling?** Quiet alerts, set limits, or put your phone on airplane mode.
- **Having difficulty concentrating?** Take a break and move your body. Make sure you're resting your brain. If you're not sleeping, everything else is harder. If you continue to struggle, make an appointment with a medical professional.
- **Experiencing physical discomfort or unexplained symptoms?** Seek medical care. Go to your campus medical center or an urgent care as needed.

[www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/](http://www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/)

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHEN STRESSED:

- Be gentle with yourself and others. **Notice your feelings without judgment.**
- Make sure you're covering at least the basics for your body: **eat food, drink water, wash yourself, and rest.** When we're in shock our physical instincts may not work as usual, so set reminders as needed.
- **Let yourself cry.** There is a Jewish proverb that says, "What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul."
- Check in on people you care about. Offer to listen. **Say "I love you."**
- **Spend time with people you can be yourself with,** without needing to be "on."
- Get cozy. Wear sweatpants, eat soup, and watch your favorite movie. **Taking a break from engaging with current events is ok, and important.**

[www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/](http://www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/)

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHEN STRESSED:

- Hug a friend, dog, or pillow.
- Gently move your body — walk, run, swim, dance, stretch, practice yoga, play. Bonus: this can help release tension so you can sleep.
- Look for opportunities to be of service to others. **Do a random act of kindness.** Volunteer, or donate blood. Visit someone who could use support.
- **Take breaks from news and social media.** Set app limits. Silence your alerts.
- Spend time outside, looking at the sky, mountains, or stars. **Put your feet in the grass.** Plant something.
- Pray, however you feel called. **Sing, read, meditate, or express gratitude.**
- Take a break to relax, even if you think it won't "work." **Your brain needs to rest.**

[www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/](http://www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/)

# CAMPUS COUNSELING CENTER



# REPORT CONCERNS:

If you have witnessed or experienced an **antisemitic or other hate incident/attack**:

- First, be sure you and those around you are safe. **Call 911 or Campus Safety/Police if you need immediate help**
- **Report it to your university.** Go to your university's main home page. Put "bias incident" in the search bar. You should find a link to a form that is called "Report a Bias Incident" or something similar. Report the incident there.
- **Report it at [reportcampushate.org](https://reportcampushate.org),** a resource established by Hillel International in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League and Secure Communities Network

[www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/](https://www.hillel.org/taking-care-of-yourself-in-tough-times/)

# WAYS TO SUPPORT MUSLIM STUDENTS

1. Accommodate daily prayer year-round. One or two daily prayer times will typically occur during school hours, depending on the time of year. It usually takes less than 15 minutes to accomplish the religious requirements of the prayer.
2. Provide clean, quiet, and appropriate places to pray on campus.
3. Add major Islamic holidays such as Ramadan, Eid Al-Fitr, and Eid Al-Adha to your school's calendar.
4. Inform and/or remind students and families that excused absences are allowed under federal law for religious holidays.
5. Provide modifications to any uniform requirements or "no-hat" policies that allow accommodation for religiously mandated dress, including head scarves.

<https://cairseattle.org/20-ways-to-support-muslim-students>



# WAYS TO SUPPORT MUSLIM STUDENTS

6. Teachers should prevent classmates from pulling on or removing a Muslim student's scarf. Such an action is a serious act of bullying and harassment that must be addressed by school staff and administration under state law.
7. In school cafeterias and at school-related functions with food, provide options that don't include pork or pork by-products, such as vegetarian options. In cafeterias, mark any items including pork with a red dot or a picture of a pig.
8. In physical education classes that require specific clothing, modest options should be available, such as long-sleeved tops and full-length pants.

<https://cairseattle.org/20-ways-to-support-muslim-students>





# WAYS TO SUPPORT MUSLIM STUDENTS

9. Be sensitive to gender relations and modesty issues that may arise in a mixed-gender exercise environment, particularly for students who have reached the age of puberty. Provide students with alternate activities if they cannot participate.
10. Avoid touching when comforting students of the opposite gender (after they have reached or are around the age of puberty), and when interacting with parents of the opposite gender. Respect students' boundaries and allow them to choose whether they wish to hug or hold hands with classmates of different genders.
11. Check textbooks and curricula for religious bias.
12. Invite Muslim speakers to social studies and world religion classes.

<https://cairseattle.org/20-ways-to-support-muslim-students>



# WAYS TO SUPPORT MUSLIM STUDENTS

13. Encourage class discussion that embraces diversity, tolerance, and an inclusive classroom environment. Avoid using language of collective blame or tropes rooted in bias when discussing themes like terrorism, global conflict or the 9/11 attacks.
14. Send greetings! A common greeting is "Ramadan Kareem" or "Ramadan Mubarak," which is an Arabic greeting meaning, "May you have a blessed Ramadan." Let your classmates or students know that you recognize the significance of this time.
15. Teachers can accommodate Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha by not scheduling tests or important assignments on those days. If tests or assignments are scheduled on these days, we ask that teachers allow students to complete them before or after the student's excused holiday absence.
16. Be mindful that some Muslim students might fast while others might not, depending on their age, faith-involvement, or health considerations.
17. Allow students to study in the library or elsewhere during lunch.

# WAYS TO SUPPORT JEWISH STUDENTS

Awareness of what many Jewish students are experiencing, including...

- Feeling that their grief and suffering are being invalidated
- Shock and revulsion due to the sense that they are being personally characterized as oppressors
- Feeling conflict between their identities, their beliefs, and community dynamics
- Loss of friendships due to differing perspectives
- Fear of repercussions for expressing their Jewish identities and practices
- Fear of repercussions for voicing grief over lost Israeli lives
- Reemergence of generational trauma related to the Holocaust

**WHAT DOESN'T WORK**

# Shaming



# Forced Change

A black and white photograph of a railway track. The tracks are made of metal rails on wooden sleepers, set on a bed of gravel. A switch or crossing is visible in the middle ground, where the tracks diverge and then cross each other. In the background, there are some structures, possibly part of a station or industrial facility, and a utility pole. The overall scene is somewhat desolate and industrial. The text "Forced Change" is overlaid in the upper left quadrant in a large, white, sans-serif font.



**Demanded Agreement**

**WAR ON CAMPUS**

Jewish students are under attack.

**THEY NEED  
US NOW!**

**Fear Tactics**

**DONATE NOW**



CSULB Students United Against Apartheid

# DAY OF RESISTANCE

Protest for Palestine

Tuesday, Oct. 10

1:30-4:30

The Quad @ CSULB

# Incitements to Violence



**WHAT DOES WORK**

A top-down view of a desk with various office supplies. A magnifying glass with a black handle is on the left. In the center, a yellow sticky note is on top of a pink one, with a green one underneath. The words "BE PREPARED" are written in black marker on the yellow note. A magnifying glass is positioned over the top left corner of the sticky notes. Scattered around are several paper clips in blue, green, and pink, and pushpins in blue, red, and green. A black pen and a black marker are also visible on the right side of the desk. The desk surface is light-colored wood grain.

BE  
PREPARED

# Engage Student Groups



**Civility**

**Respect**

**Intent**

**Agreement**

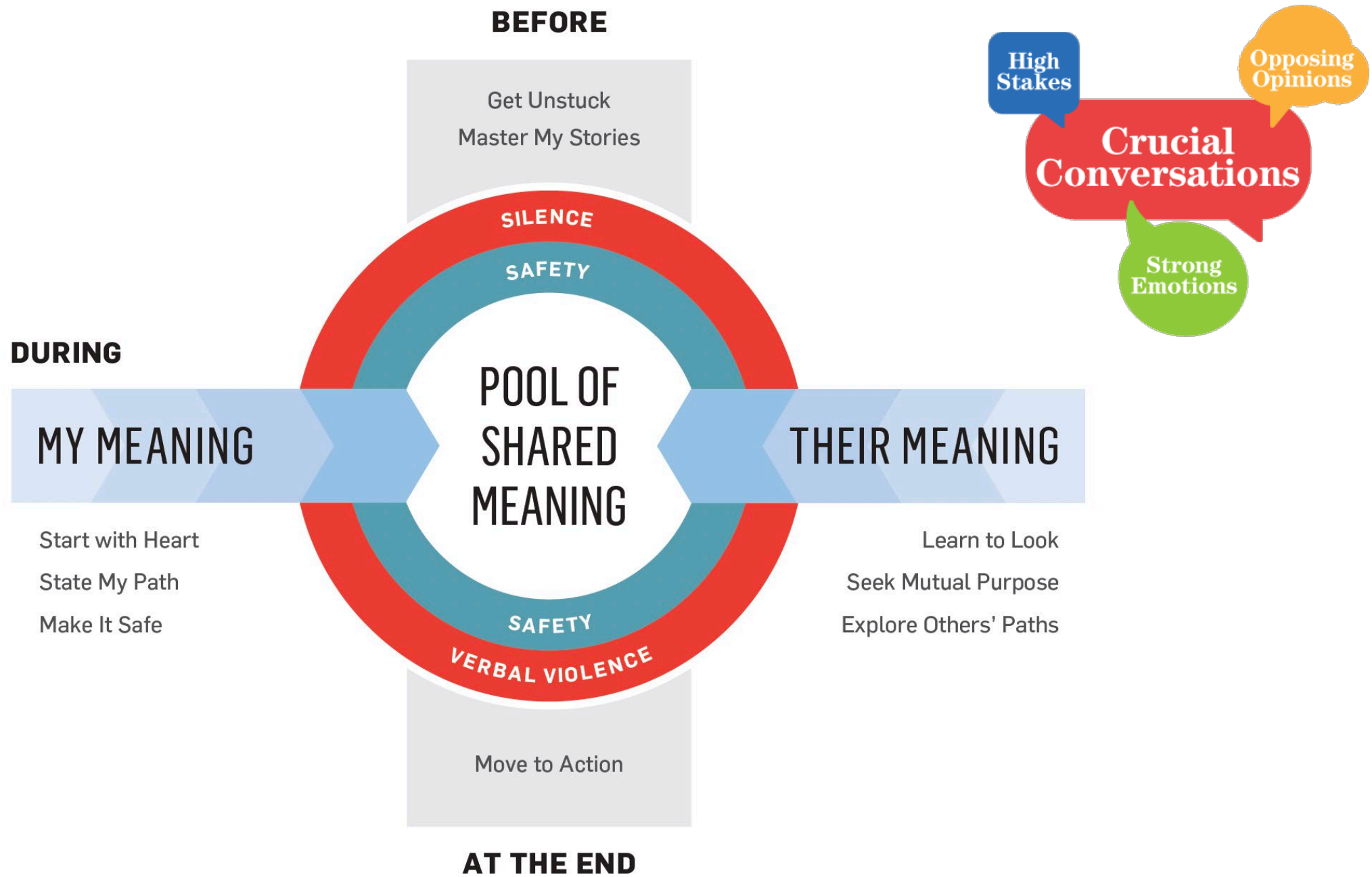
**Alignment**

# Start with Heart

You can't share good intent **if you don't have good intent.**

Motives can change fast.

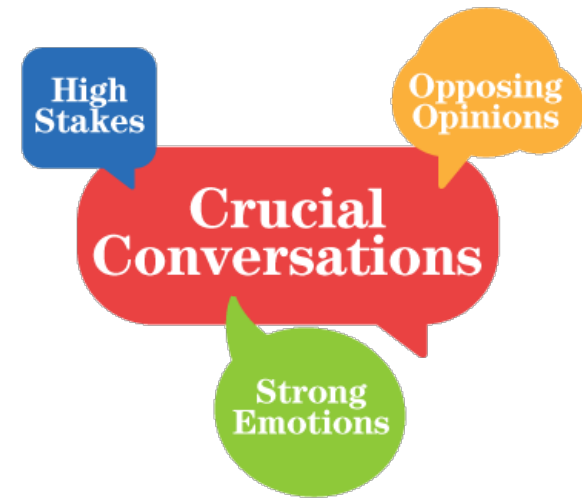
UNHELPFUL INTENT	INTENT OF DIALOGUE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be right</li><li>• Look good, save face</li><li>• Win</li><li>• Punish, blame</li><li>• Avoid conflict</li><li>• Be comfortable</li><li>• Control</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Find the truth</li><li>• Learn</li><li>• Find a win-win situation</li><li>• Produce long-term results</li><li>• Strengthen relationships</li></ul>



**When people don't feel safe,  
they move out of dialogue and  
into silence and verbal  
violence.**

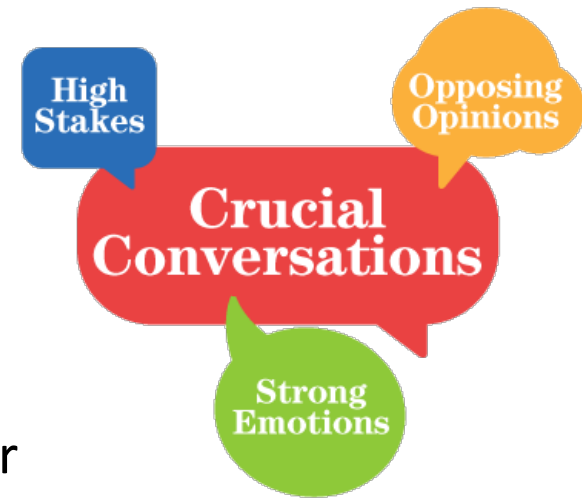


# SAMPLE SCRIPTS



- “When having this conversation, my intent is to come together to better understand each of our perspectives, emotions and thoughts on the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.”
- “Before we get into sharing with each other, let me tell you a little about our goals...”
- “We are hosting this talk because we care about all our students, and we want each of you to have access to a safe learning environment.”
- “I would like to know what you think about....”
- “By the tone of your voice, you seem reluctant. Are you sure you are ok with this?”
- “This has been a helpful conversation and it feels like we are in a good place. I’d like to recap some key points to make sure I have it right.

# WHAT TO AVOID



- Hot Spot phrases like “some people” or the use of absolutes such as “all” or “everyone”
- Name calling, speaking for other’s perspectives or labeling other’s thoughts
- Monopolizing the conversation and not letting others speak
- Directed or hypothetical questions to create “gotcha” moments or control the dialogue
- Insulting, belittling or disregarding other people’s ideas
- Threatening, vague or otherwise to other groups or people
- Shifting or changing the topic when difficult ideas are brought up
- Pulling back from conversations and relationships

# AN EXAMPLE

At the urging of students, Schwartz plans to hold a student-led dialogue on the Israel-Hamas war at some point in the future. But it will follow the same protocols the Project on Civic Dialogue has established for all discussions:

- a student facilitator will prompt other students to come up with an answer to a specific question about the situation,
- with the goal of helping them better understand their own opinions as well as their peers'
- where those views come from
- why they hold them
- and whether they understand the situation well enough to think that way.

But just because students with opposing viewpoints are invited to share their thoughts and feelings doesn't mean they will.

A person with a large afro hairstyle is performing a yoga pose, likely a downward dog, on a patterned rug in a living room. The person is wearing a light blue t-shirt and red shorts. The room is dimly lit, with a lamp glowing in the background. A circular graphic with the text "Cultural humility" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Cultural  
humility**

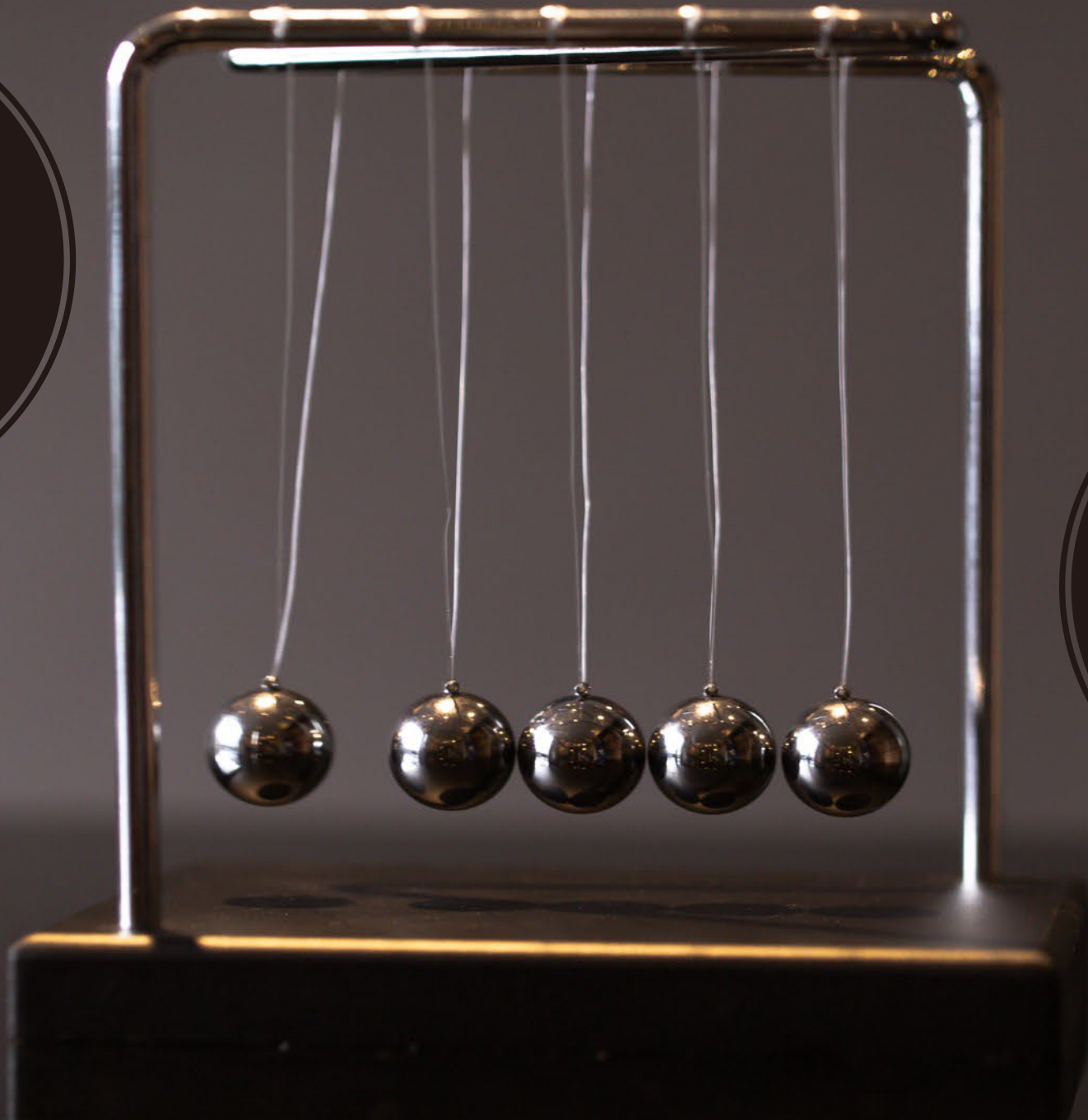


**Perspective  
Taking**

A photograph capturing a moment of emotional support. In the foreground, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a blue sweater, is crying and holding a white tissue to his eyes. He is looking down. To his right, another man with a beard, wearing a maroon sweater, is looking at him with a concerned expression. The man in maroon has his right hand on the shoulder of the man in blue, offering comfort. He is also holding a clear glass of water in his left hand. The background is slightly blurred, showing a person sitting at a desk in what appears to be a classroom or office setting. A dark circular graphic with a white border is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the word "Empathy" in white text.

**Empathy**

**Control  
actions**



**and  
reactions**



**Check in**



**Review  
messages**





**Help  
them feel  
heard**

**Engage in  
self-care**

