

Supporting Staff in these Extraordinary Times

*New England MHTTC
July 1, 2020*



Description

As agency leaders, directors, and supervisors, how do we stay grounded and focused during these turbulent times? How do we bring forth our humanity and strengths to support employees? What challenges/learning opportunities are staff experiencing? What do they need? How do we listen and respond well? Join us in identifying principles and practices to help staff adapt and thrive in this extraordinary period of our lives.

Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Name two personal practices to stay grounded and focused
- Describe three challenges/learning opportunities staff are currently experiencing
- Name two guiding principles for best supporting staff
- Identify three specific practices to employ to help staff adapt and thrive



1796 painting "Death on a Pale Horse" artist depiction of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Apocalypse
"unveiling, uncovering, revealing"



“The construction of the relatively new racial identity that was ‘whiteness’—and its complement, white supremacy—took off as the African slave trade itself was reaching a new stage.”

Gerald Horne, *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism*



“As a Black woman, I can’t ever stop thinking of racism. It’s not a choice; it’s my reality.

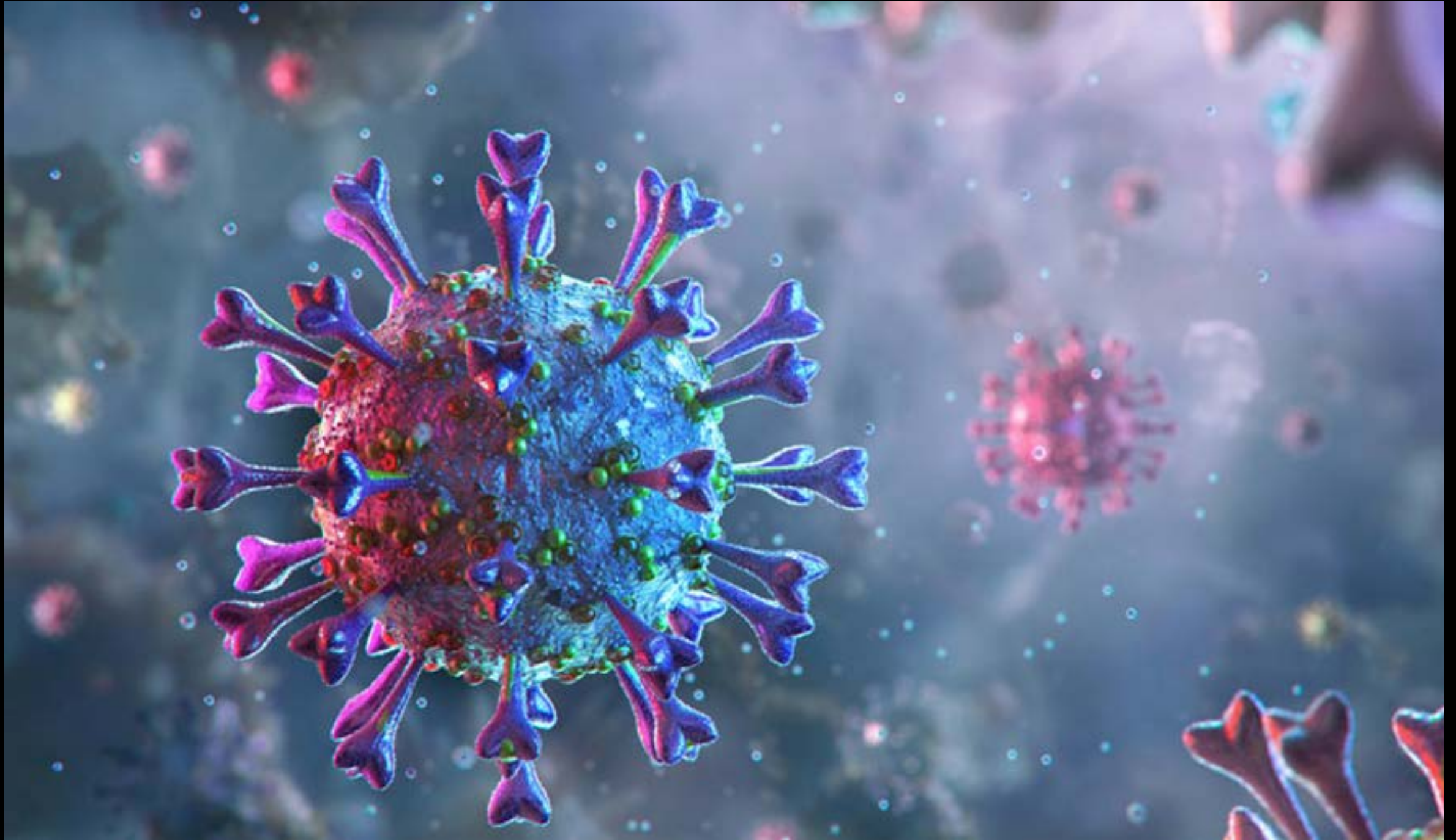
I think about the murder of Black people every morning. When I wake up, when I leave my house, when I jog around white neighborhoods, when I see the blue-red blur of a police car...

If I wasn’t thinking about being Black I don’t know what I would think about. Maybe fresh air or freedom. Something light. I’d think of jogging or walking or shopping. Maybe babysitting a loved one or falling asleep. Nothing violent, nothing worthy of death.”

Natachi Onwuamaegbu, Seattle Times, June 10, 2020













In times like these, self-care *and* team-care are vital to our well-being.



What do you do in times of despair?"
Archbishop Desmond Tutu was asked.
"You show your humanity."

Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, The Age of Overwhelm

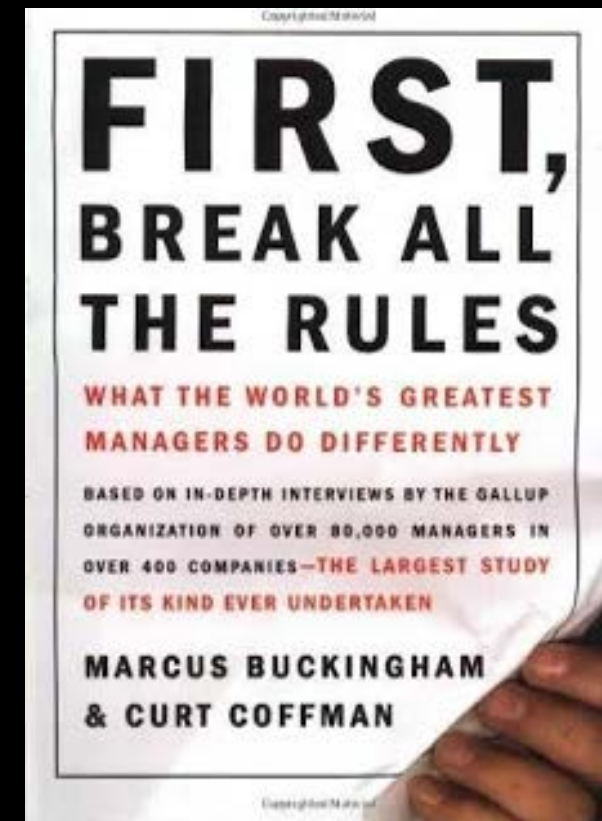
Being human is given.
But keeping our humanity
is a choice.

Leadership IS NOT
A POSITION OR A TITLE,
IT IS action and
example.

-Cory Booker

**Your challenges in supporting staff
in these extraordinary times?**

What staff need



What staff need



Contemporary Women Artists from Aboriginal Australia

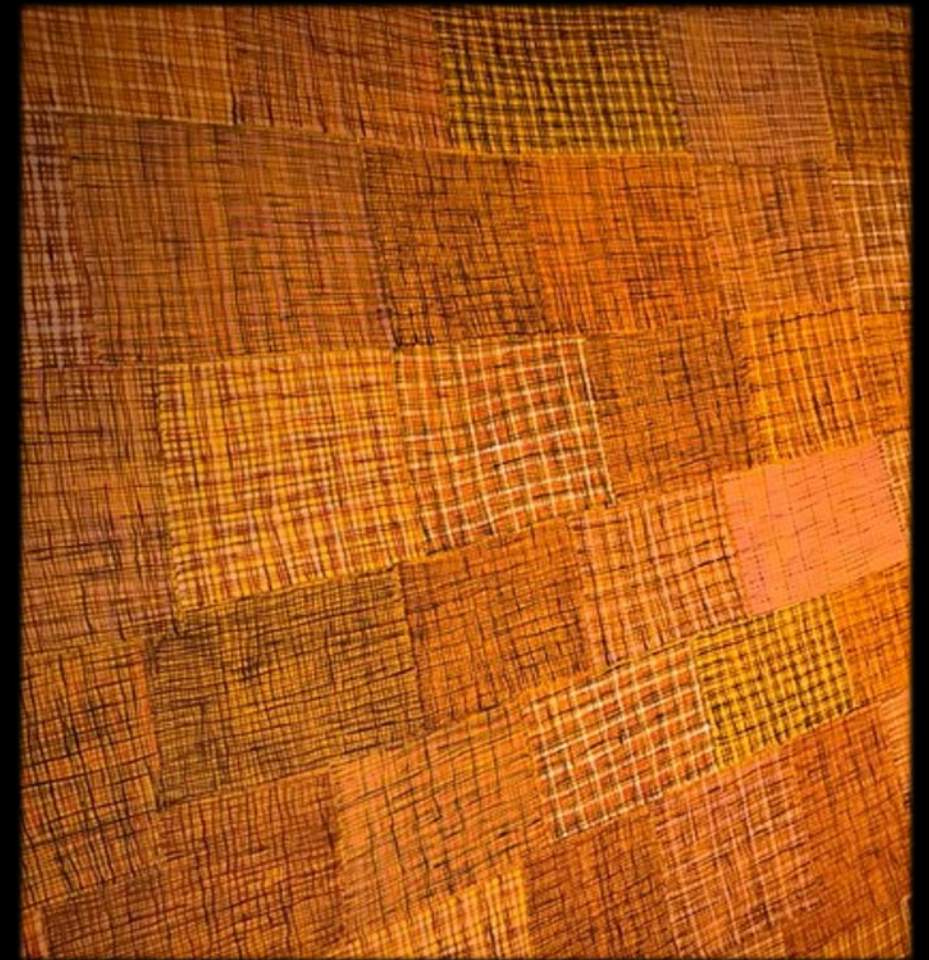
Key question: What do I get?

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?

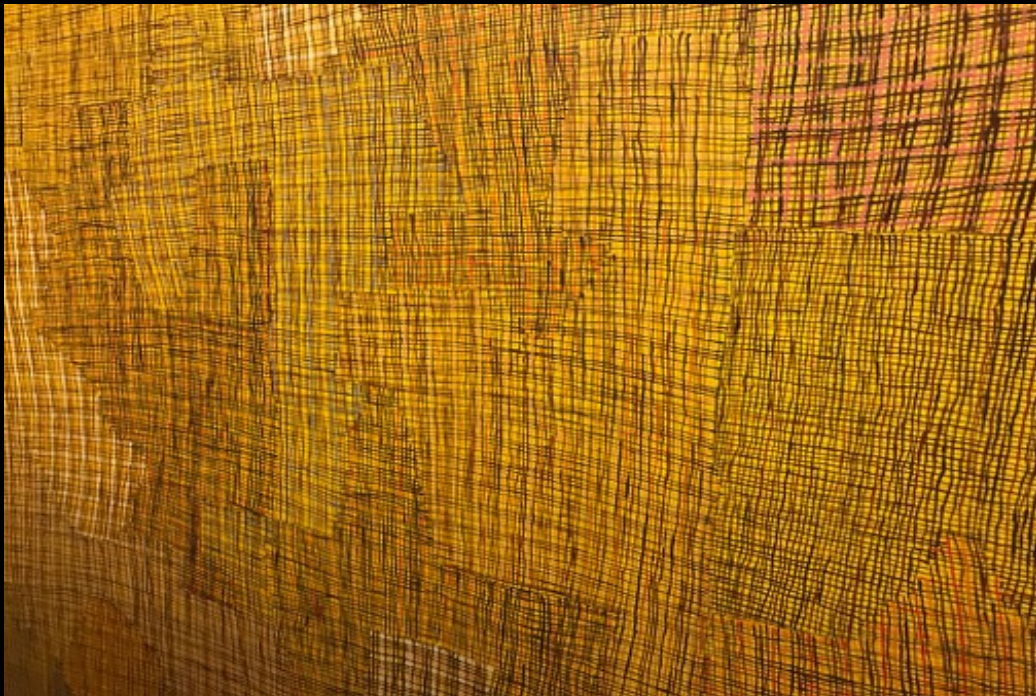
What staff need

Key question: What do I give?

3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?



What staff need



Key question: Do I belong here?

7. At work, do my opinions count?

8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?

What staff need

Key question: How can we all grow?

- 9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
- 10. Do I have a best friend at work?
- 11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked about me about my progress?
- 12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?



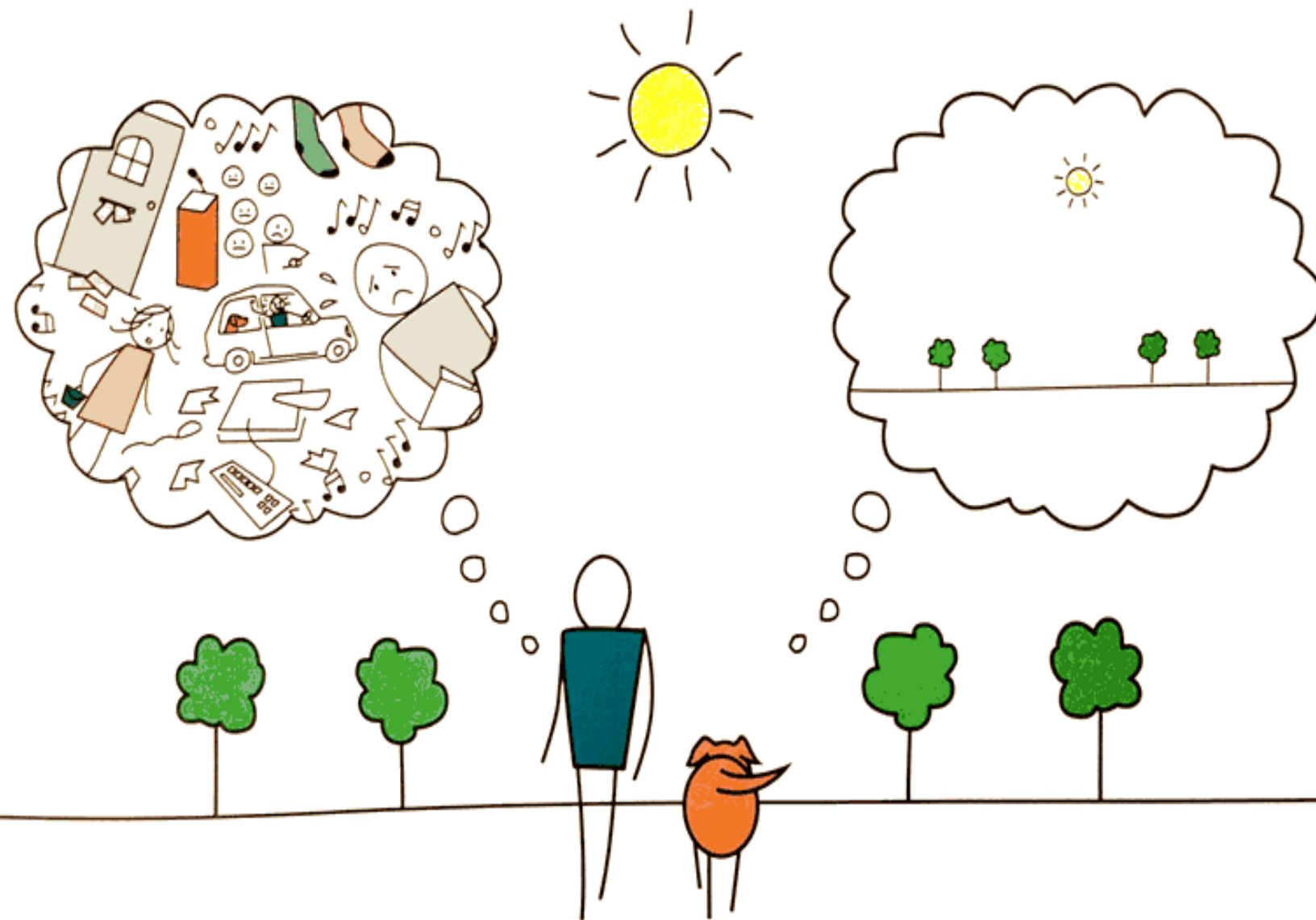
Preparing ourselves for leading and
supporting others in these times

mindfulness



“The awareness that arises from paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally”

Jon Kabat-Zinn



Mind Full, or Mindful?

mindfulness



be here now

Ram Dass



“Mindfulness shows us what is happening in our bodies, our emotions, our minds, and in the world. Through mindfulness, we avoid harming ourselves and others.”

Thich Nhat Hanh

Principles for Leading and Supporting Teams

1. Acknowledge, affirm, create safe and supportive spaces
2. Share your own vulnerability
3. Promote flexibility and gentleness with ourselves and others
4. Hold the long view, while examining what should change



1. Acknowledge, affirm, create safe and supportive spaces

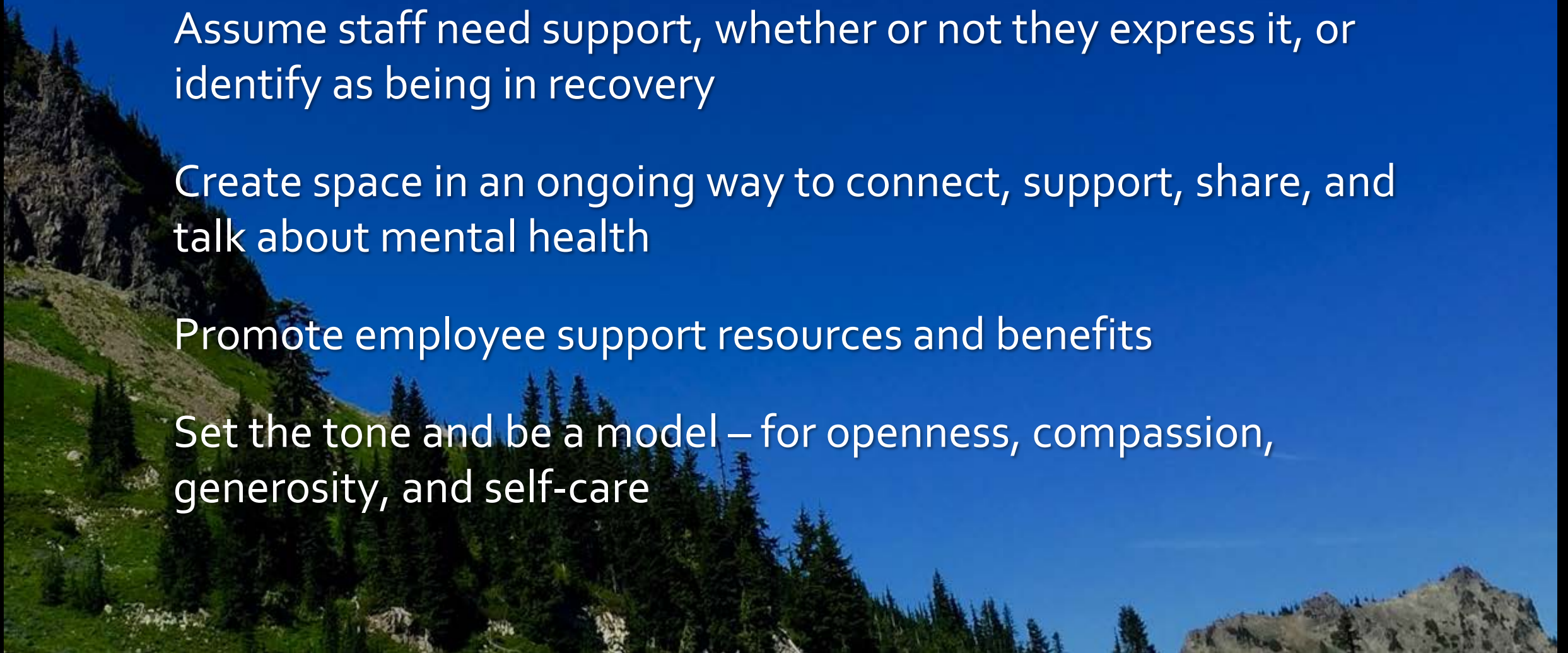
Recognize the neurobiological effect of collective trauma, and its impact on concentration, productivity

Assume staff need support, whether or not they express it, or identify as being in recovery

Create space in an ongoing way to connect, support, share, and talk about mental health

Promote employee support resources and benefits

Set the tone and be a model – for openness, compassion, generosity, and self-care

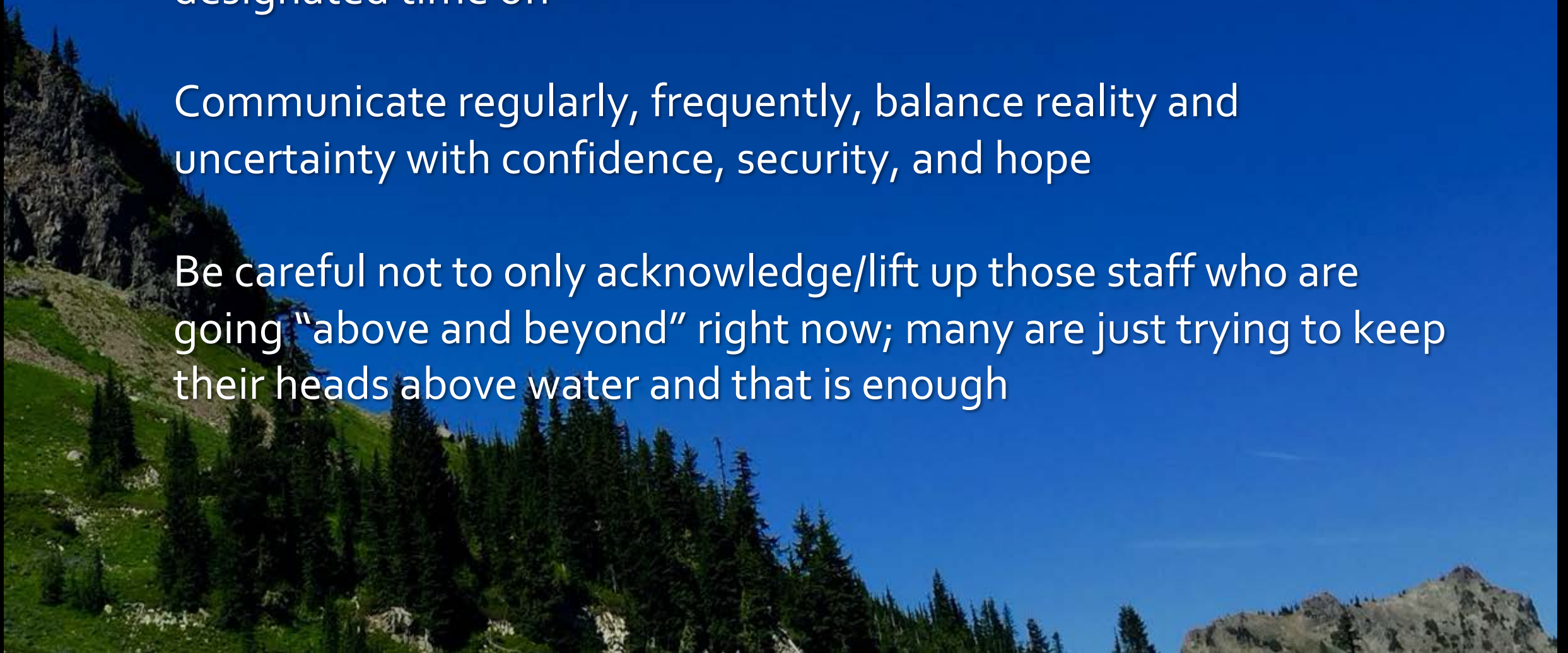


1. Acknowledge, affirm, create safe and supportive spaces

Encourage people to make the most of weekends or other designated time off

Communicate regularly, frequently, balance reality and uncertainty with confidence, security, and hope

Be careful not to only acknowledge/lift up those staff who are going “above and beyond” right now; many are just trying to keep their heads above water and that is enough



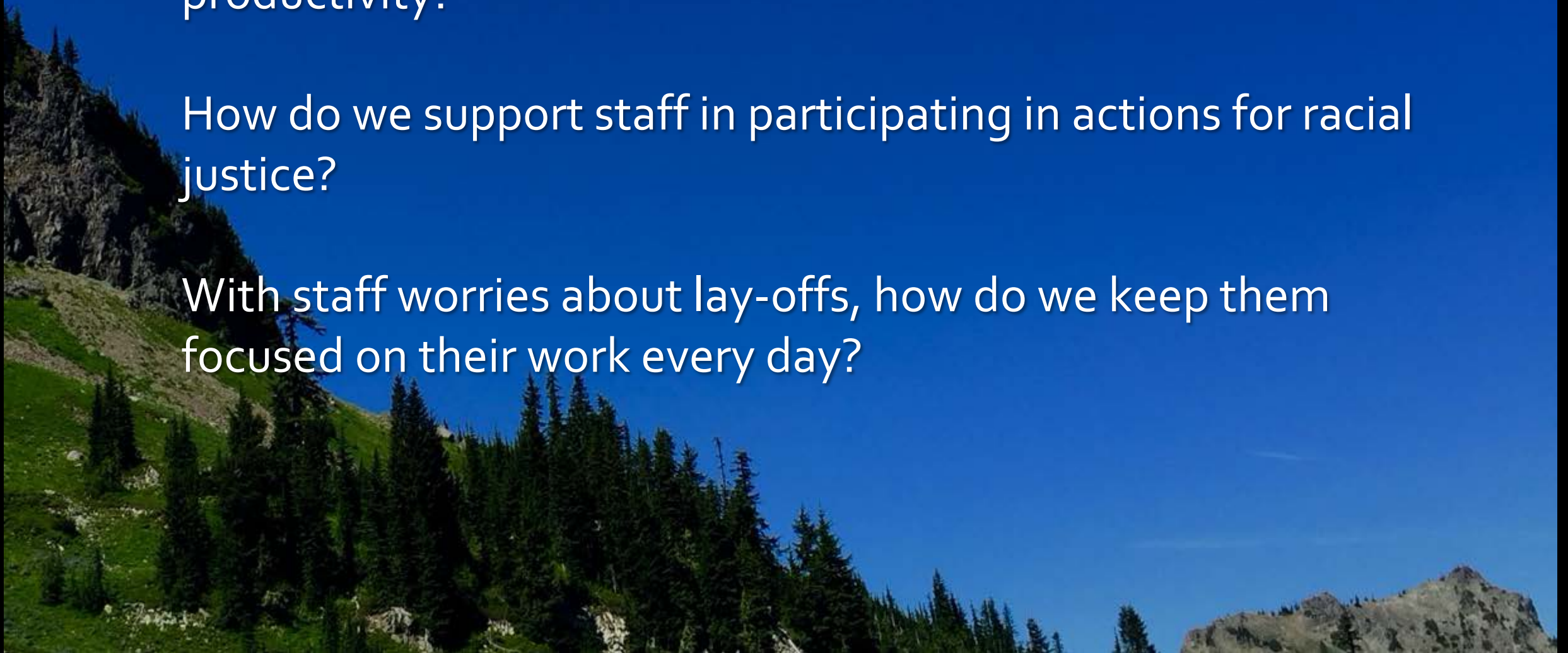
Your thoughts?

How do we support staff as we all process this trauma?

How do we create space while maintaining a focus on productivity?

How do we support staff in participating in actions for racial justice?

With staff worries about lay-offs, how do we keep them focused on their work every day?



2. Share your own vulnerability

Demonstrate compassionate, authentic leadership

Share your own challenges and how you are managing

Be transparent and open, especially about unknowns

Provide updates and corrections to information as new info is available, acknowledge the rapidly changing landscape



2. Share your own vulnerability

Acknowledge that we are all affected

“We are all peers in this”

Yet...

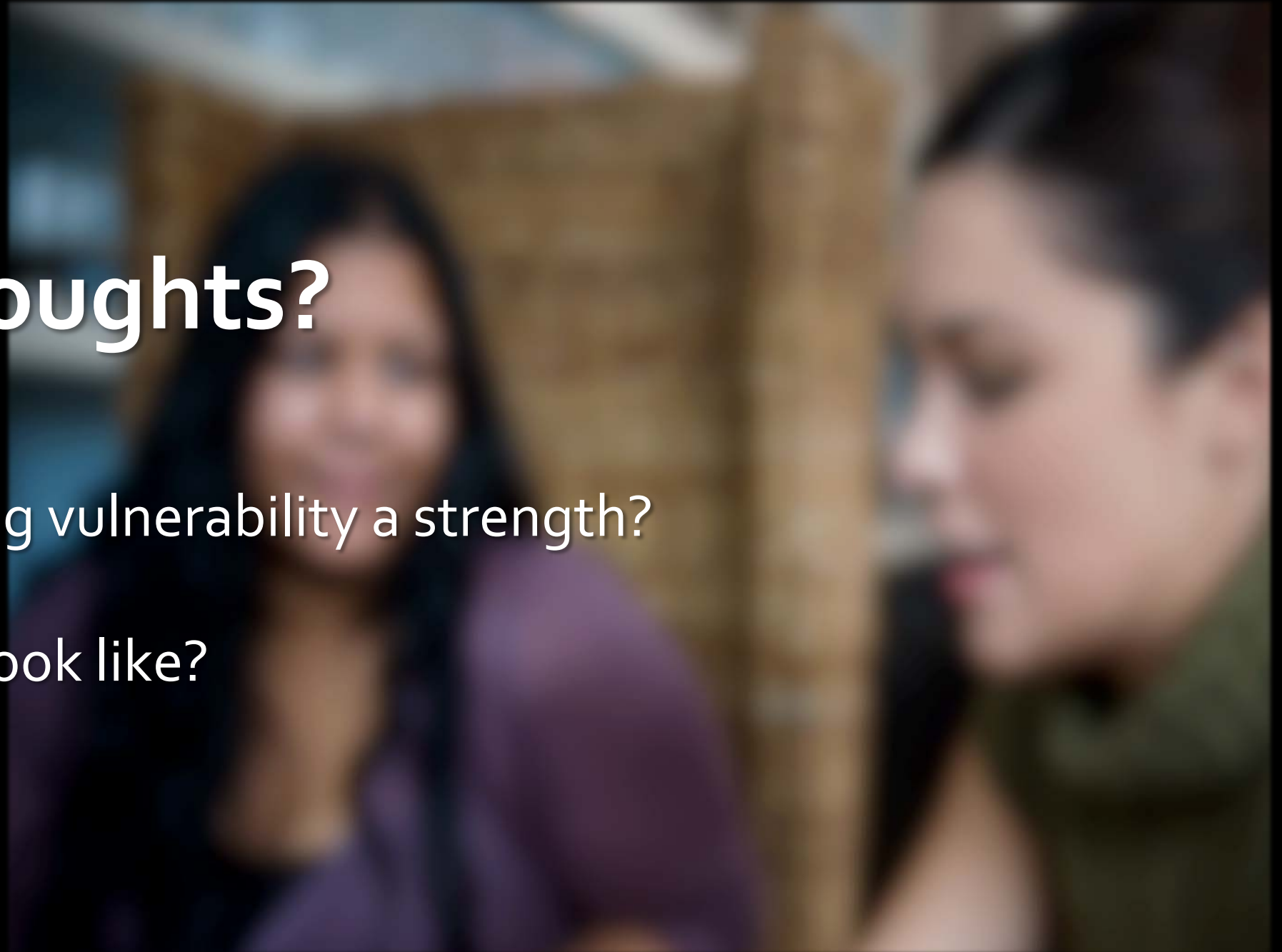
It is important to acknowledge
the privilege that many of us have
even while affected



Your thoughts?

Why is showing vulnerability a strength?

What does it look like?





3. Promote flexibility and gentleness with ourselves and others

Support staff to work alternative schedules and manage family and household responsibilities

Encourage remote work when possible

Seek ways to equip staff to be productive at home (e.g., set up virtual phone/meeting systems, survey staff about home office needs, ship equipment)



3. Promote flexibility and gentleness with ourselves and others

Continuously evaluate priorities and reset expectations

Allow extra space for supervision and support

Use a person-centered approach to support employees, in balance with adherence to current protocols



Your thoughts?

What are the benefits of being more flexible and gentle?

How do we balance flexibility with productivity, especially in these times?

How can we be intentional about continuing to be more flexible and gentle in the future?

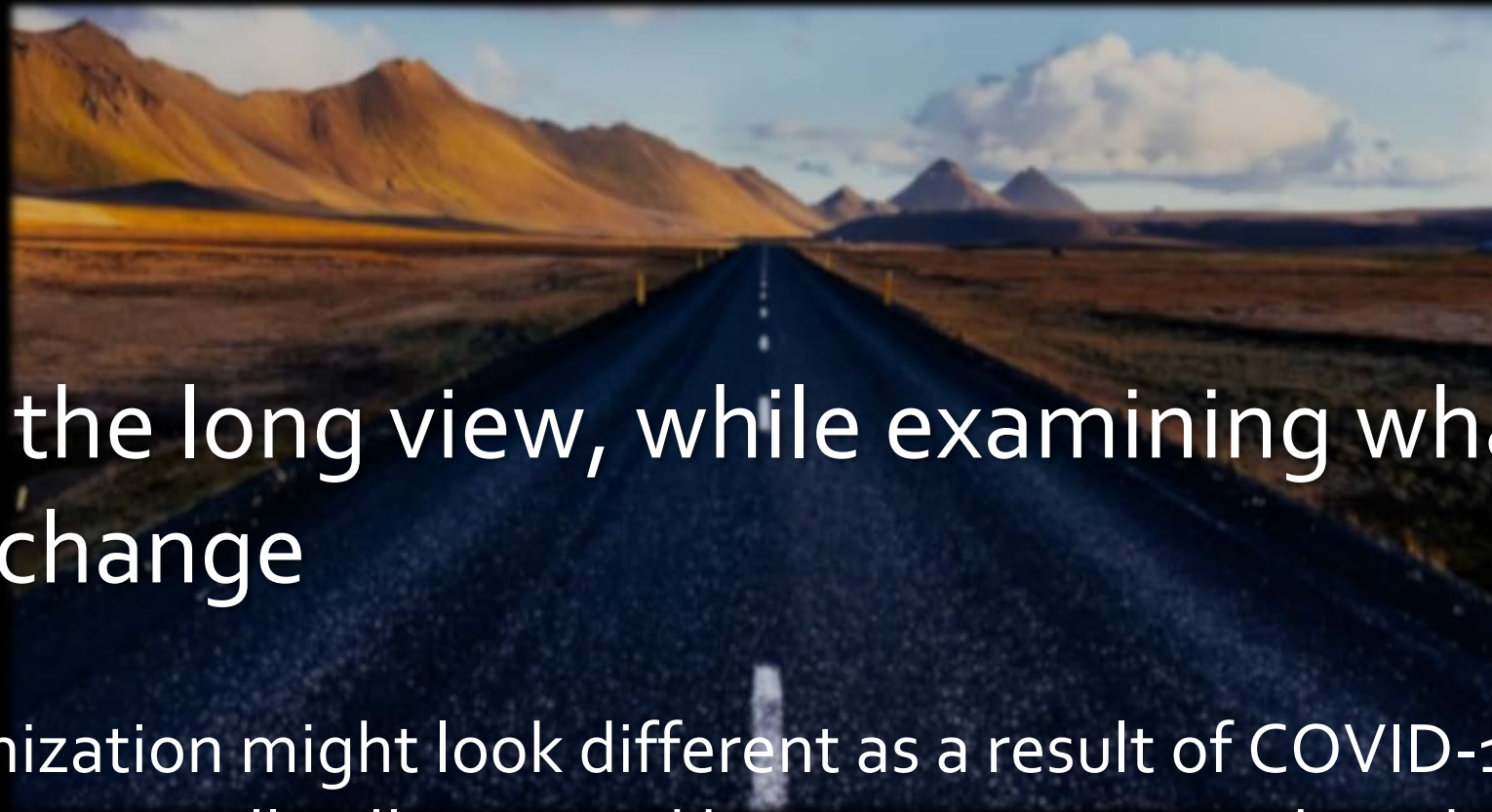


4. Hold the long view, while examining what should change

Things will continue to change week to week, expect that and navigate around it

And...

This too shall pass



4. Hold the long view, while examining what should change

Your organization might look different as a result of COVID-19 but chances are you will still exist and have important work to do over the long term

Yet...

It is important to examine whether going back to “normal” is good for everyone – use this time to examine policies, practices, programs for with a lens of equity, efficiency, innovation, renewal



Your thoughts?

What steps can we be taking to plan for life beyond COVID-19?

What are some things our agencies can do right now to counteract dominant, white culture tendencies?

How can we use this time to examine and make changes to organizational structures and processes that reinforce inequities?



Promoting healthy teams

Strategies to Support Teams

- Develop expectation of secondary trauma
- Address self-care and team-care in team meetings
- Encourage team members to use vacation/comp days in a timely manner



Strategies to Support Teams

- Hold virtual or social-distancing team retreats
- Offer flexible work schedules
- Develop practices/rituals to celebrate successes and accomplishments
- Plan virtual or social-distancing lunches, picnics, parties, yoga practice, etc.



Strategies to Support Teams

- Ensure ample opportunities for staff to provide input into practices and policies.
- Staff members have formal channels for addressing problems/grievances.
- Diversify caseloads
- Provide opportunities for participating in social change activities



Strategies to Support Teams

- Institute a staff recognition program
- Encourage individuals to “go home” early if they’ve had an unusually tough day
- Provide access to wellness programs as able
- Have an “open door” policy and be as available as possible
- Allow for an “administrative day” for staff to take work home or put up a “do not disturb” sign to catch up on paperwork



Strategies to Support Teams



- Develop a buddy system to pair newer staff with senior staff
- Equip supervisors to provide trauma-informed supervision
- Ensure supervisors are providing supervision on a regularly scheduled 1:1 basis
- Provide opportunities for staff development

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Next steps

Thank you!

Ken Kraybill
kkraybill@c4innovates.com





New England (HHS Region 1)

MHTTC

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Questions?

Visit: <http://www.mhttcnetwork.org/newengland>

E-mail: newengland@mhttcnetwork.org

Ken Kraybill, Senior Trainer, C4 Innovations
kkraybill@c4innovates.com

