



SHIELD Mental Health Series: Session Two

Cultivating Regulation & Resilience Amid Ongoing Uncertainties & Inequities

[End Part 2 – Begin Part 3]

Erin Sivak: This is the introduction for Part 3. Welcome back. We are now moving to the portion of our presentation where we discuss equity, and Courtney guides us through another activity. We hope you will enjoy.

Courtney Tucker: All right, everyone. Welcome back. One of the things you'll notice right now is a slide that I put up, and it just talks about equity goal. And the reason I'm putting it up, and it's following a conversation about the need for building resilience, and the need for regulation is because one of the things that influences regulation is just what have our life experiences been?

And based on how the world interacts with us, it makes it easier or harder for regulation and resilience to occur. And so, when we think about this from a standpoint, and you've probably heard the word "equity," and everyone is like, "You know what, if we can get an equity of experiences, people say we can level the playing field a little bit, where everybody will be able to play the game, and participate."

And there won't be such a vastness or differences in the ways in which people are able to exhibit resiliency, or dysregulation, or who is dysregulated, and who is regulated. And so, one of the things I'd just like to emphasize when we use this word, or we think about equity, is this idea that we want to say, "You know what? The equity goal is not just to eliminate a gap," because some people will be like, "You know what? Equity means I just want to decrease the gap."

No! Equity is about doing things that increase the success for everybody, for all groups, for all people that are apart. Right? And so, one of the things is I'm showing you a diagram, and it's not perfect, but it kind of gives us an idea of what this means. And so, when you look at it, you'll see, "You know what they say, reality is some people are standing on lots of boxes, and they can see the field of light. Some people have one. And some people have none; they're actually in a deficit."

And so, then, when we think about equality, we're like, "Oh, we give everyone the same, but we don't take into account the people that are of different builds, different make-ups, different statures. People are bringing different things with them." Equity attempts to acknowledge



that, as like, “Look, we want to make it that everybody can see at the same level.”

And then, there’s this concept that some people are like, “Look, I don’t want to make sure everybody can see; I just want to eliminate all the obstacles and barriers in the way. And that’s where we get at liberation. And so, one of the things that’s important is thinking about how do we move through each of these phases, as we begin to cultivate liberation? Cultivate equity? How do we begin to address that, right?

And again, I just want to show inequities cause us to be at different levels on this chart. And it causes things to hit us, and when things hit us, it causes us to jump to different spaces. And that has to do with the effects of inequities that some of us experience in life. And I tell everyone, when we think about it, change is happening, and we’re like, “Come on, let’s transition to the word “equity.” Let’s move toward it.

We hear a lot of people saying that, and so, one of the things that we have to remember is what makes it hard? Some people, “My mama says,” “My mom tells me this.” My mom was like, “You know what? I sat at lunch counters, and got spit on, because I didn’t think you would still have to deal with these same issues today.” And she’s like, “It’s amazing that I don’t feel like what I did changed anything.”

And so, when she said that, it hit me when I think about William Bridges’ transition, part of the reason that we’re still dealing with it, as I’m saying my mom feels like what she did in the ‘60s hasn’t had an effect, it’s because we didn’t transition to something different. We rearranged the furniture, and it looked good, but did we really transition where there was a complete ending, there was this unknown area, and a new beginning?

And what makes that hard is because there has to be an ending; there has to be a letting go of pieces of things that might have brought us control, might have given us power. It has to be pieces that brought us comfort. And so, that’s what makes leaning into equity really hard. So, what I want you all to do for a moment is I’m going to give you an invitation, and I just want you to relax. I want you to just close your eyes, put your feet on the ground.

And I just want us to take a moment, and I want us to reflect on difference. I just want you to pause. I just want you to think when you hear the word “difference,” what does that do for your body? What comes up for you?

And as you’re thinking about, and holding onto the word “different,” or “difference,” I want you to think about what was your first experience feeling, and noticing that you were different? When did this happen? How old were you? Is it a source of pride? Was your difference



celebrated? Was it a source of pain? Was it criticized or critiqued? What was it like to be different? Knowing that you're different, what does that do to your body? Do you tense up? Do you relax? Do you pause? Do you cry?

What is it like to be different? One of the things to hold onto is a lot of times, when we realize, or the world tells us we're different, it's a source of pain. It's not a source of pleasure. Eighty-five percent of people, when they think about the moment that someone told them they were different, it's a source of pain. What you see here, now, is I did this thing, and I just said, "You know what? What does it mean to be inclusive or exclusive?"

And a lot of the different experiences, I'm going to say that some of all talked about, came in school. We all had to go to school, and school kind of separated us out, and let us know, as Karen said, she just stopped going to school, like school separated us out. And we have experiences that were both inclusive and exclusive, because of our differences.

And so, what you'll see here is just some ideas about when people felt included, as we think about, you'll see a lot of the things on this list are things that we said – wait a minute – bring about resilience, the validation, connectedness, accomplishment, affirmation. Exclusiveness are the things that build sensitivity and vulnerability, lack of connection, excluded, lack of control, religious indifference, harsh judgment, inflexible.

What it is like being the only one, a sense of not belonging. And a lot of shame coming up about what does it mean to be different? And the reason I talk about this inclusive and exclusive is sometimes we unintentionally offer these experiences to others, and they can be inclusive, or they can be exclusive, and so, with that in mind, we have to be the ones to interrogate – wait a minute – not just am I holding onto what was my intent, but I also have to acknowledge the impact of it. And I, also, have to be able to hold what it means when there are unequal opportunities.

Erin Sivak: Thank you for listening. Now, Courtney is going to read a quote, and we are asking that you will please reflect on which quote resonates with you. Then, you can listen in to some school nurses about what quotes resonated with them, and how they felt after hearing them.

Courtney Tucker: So, the first one says, "Being poor now leads to being more poor later. Can't pay to clean your teeth? Next year pay for a root canal. Can't pay for a new mattress? Next year, pay for back surgery. Can't pay to get that lump checked out? Next year, pay for stage three cancer. Poverty charges interest."



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“If you’ve never had a Supreme Court case decide if you have the same rights as others, you have privilege. Choosing not to care about politics is a privilege. It means that politics doesn’t affect your life enough to make you care. To marginalized people, politics is a matter of life and death.”

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I just want some people to share. Anyone want to share what quote their group was like, “Yes, this really resonated with us?” And I would love to hear your voices, even though I can’t see your faces, would love to hear anyone want to unmute and to share. What quotes resonated with you all?

Female: I can talk about our group. So, the poverty one. The one about if you can’t brush



your teeth, then the next year you have to get a root canal. In our group, we grew up poor. I live in a poor district, and our kids need so much, and it's hard to get all their needs met, like glasses, and clothing, and food, and if your teeth are hurting you, how can you learn? If you don't have appropriate glasses, or hearing aids, well, how can you be fully present, and learn? So, that kind of resonated in our group.

Courtney Tucker: And not just how can they be fully present, and learn, but then, people wonder like why are they going to sleep? And then they get in trouble for being disengaged, and they get labeled a behavioral problem, right?

Female: Yes, yes.

Courtney Tucker: And it dictates what people begin to expect of them. Poverty can also shift some; it will dictate what people expect of them. And it's hard.

Female: It is hard. Yes. We have a lot of homeless kids. It breaks your heart, but you do as much as you can for them.

Courtney Tucker: And sometimes the best thing you can do, and I don't want to negate what Karen said, it's have that positive interaction with them that feeds them a little bit of hope that they are good enough just the way they are. Others? One more group. [Long Pause]

Erin Sivak: No one else wants to say anything? Okay. Oh, we have something in the chat. Meg said their group had the same choice that poverty charges interest, and how do we deal with the interest that it charges? I tell everyone sometimes, it's easy in this situation when someone is stuck in poverty that they look for things to help them feel good.

They want something to makes them feel good, and so, I will see, to use in transparency in my family, I have a cousin that's on food stamps, and some other things, and one relative said something bad about her, because she wanted to use her food stamps to have a fabulous meal for her family. [Laughter] So, she's like, "Look, we deserve one really good meal."

So, she went, and she got some crab legs, and some corn, and sausage, and just like with this seafood feast for her family, and it was like, "That's really irresponsible." And if we can hold them both in, there's also this tension where she's like, "I wanted a moment where we didn't feel like we were just doing things to survive. I wanted a moment that we could enjoy and embrace."



Her mother is like, “Well, this is going to keep you from other moments.” So, how do we hold them both, and without judgment, and recognize that, you know what? I understand how she’s trying to cope, and it’s okay, but then, how do I help her see that she can have more moments like this in a different way than just doing this this one time?”

Erin Sivak: Thank you for listening to Part 3, and we hope you enjoyed the activity, and hearing from other school nurses. Please move on to Part 4, our final segment in this podcast.