



TOGETHER WE FLOURISH

# Healing Centered Engagement Toolkit

**"The question is not: What should we do?, but rather,  
Who should we become?"**

**Ben McBride**

Deputy Director PICO, CA

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## Who We Are

Flourish Agenda, Inc. is a national nonprofit consulting firm that works with youth of color, schools, youth serving organizations, foundations, and local governments to build and implement strategies that allow young people and the adults who serve them to flourish.

Our mission is to design strategies that unlock the power of healing and engage youth of color and adults in transforming institutions and communities.





# About This Guide

This guide has been designed to provide a framework for the Healing Centered Engagement (HCE) approach. It is a resource to use for your personal, professional and institutional development.

Within this toolkit you will find, the ideological framing of the Healing Centered Engagement approach, an evaluation tool and worksheets to document your HCE plan.



# Healing Centered Engagement Core Values

1

Healing Centered Engagement is culturally grounded and views healing as the restoration of identity.

2

Healing Centered Engagement is explicitly political, rather than clinical.

3

Healing Centered Engagement is asset driven and focuses on the well-being we want, rather than symptoms we want to suppress.

4

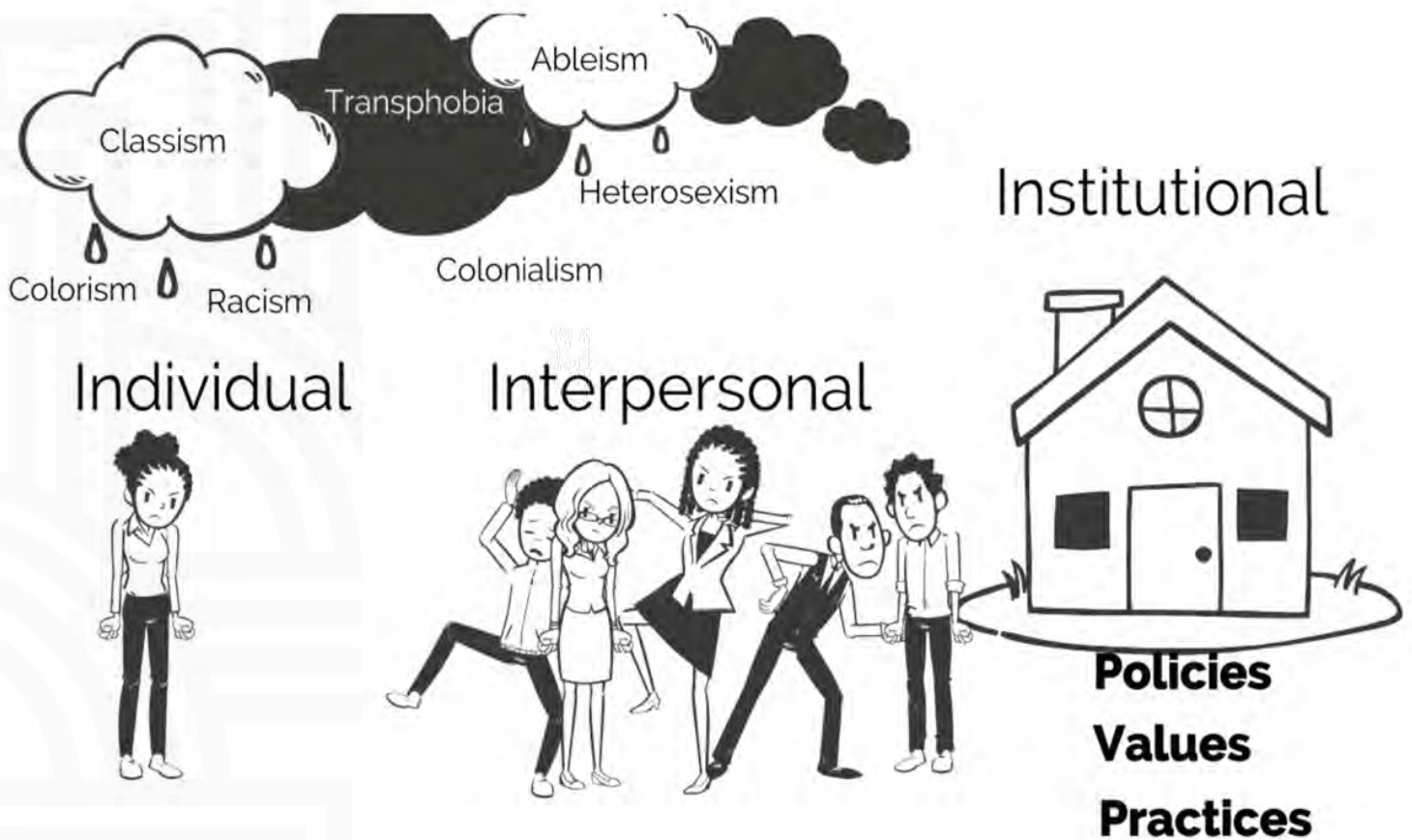
Healing Centered Engagement supports not only young people but adult providers with their own healing.



# The Impact of Social Toxins on Wellbeing

Social toxicity, a term coined by James Garbarino, refers to how individuals are impacted by poisonous or toxic social environments. Social toxins are issues such as racism, poverty, sexism, and transphobia which threaten the overall wellbeing of individuals and communities. Like physical toxins, social toxicity can cause physical and mental harm. In many cases, issues such as depression, anxiety, stress and violence can be linked to the impact of social toxins.

Social toxins are like toxic rain clouds, that rain on individuals, communities and institutions. A Healing Centered Engagement approach understands that most trauma stems from social oppression that impacts us at individual, interpersonal and institutional levels.







# Healing Centered Engagement Approach

Most approaches view trauma as an individual problem though most trauma stems from social oppression that impacts us at individual, interpersonal and institutional levels. Healing Centered Engagement offers an asset driven approach aimed at the holistic restoration of wellbeing. The approach comes from the idea that people are not harmed in a vacuum, and wellbeing comes from participating in transforming the root causes of the harm at each level.

Healing Centered Engagement is a process that transforms individual practices, advances healthy interpersonal connections and improves institutional culture, to create healthy outcomes for youth and the adults who serve them.

**The Healing Centered Engagement approach is operationalized through it's five CARMA principles:**

**C**

Culture and Identity

**A**

Agency

**R**

Relationships

**M**

Meaning

**A**

Aspirations

# CARMA Principles Defined

**The Healing Centered Engagement approach is operationalized through its five CARMA principles.**

**C**

Culture

The values and norms that connect us to a shared identity and community.

**A**

Agency

The individual and collective power to act, create, and change personal conditions and external systems.

**R**

Relationships

The capacity to create, sustain, and grow healthy connections with others.

**M**

Meaning

The profound discovery of who we are, why we are, and what purpose we were born to serve.

**A**

Aspirations

The capacity to imagine, set, and accomplish goals for personal and collective livelihood and advancement.





# Healing Centered Engagement Outcomes Matrix

Principle	Individual	Interpersonal	Institutional
<b>C</b> Culture and Identity	Appreciation of one's own racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of identity	Appreciation of individuals within one's own racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, and other forms of identity	Policies and practices that acknowledge, respect and celebrate all identities
<b>A</b> Agency	The ability to speak truth to power. The capacity to act to improve conditions	Collective power and teamwork leading to actions that address social justice issues	Bold policies and system changes that address inequality within institutions in ways that promote human dignity
<b>R</b> Relationships	Deep sense of appreciation and knowledge of one's self	Sense of belonging, and deep connections to others as a result of being part of a broader community	Strategies that promote critical reflection and deep connections across the system
<b>M</b> Meaning	Clarity of purpose, empathy towards others. Openness to others' perspectives	Collective values and purpose	Aligned values, organizational practices and activities that promote equity and expansion
<b>A</b> Aspirations	Ability to articulate a compelling vision for the future	Collectively shared compelling vision for the future	Vision that inspires and activates constant organizational improvement

# Why is CARMA Important?

## Culture and Identity

Culture and Identity are at the very foundation of all human interactions. Zaretta Hammond (2015) writes that “culture is the way that every brain makes sense of the world”. Culture informs how we eat, what we wear, how we interact with people and our environment, etc. Culture influences our spiritual practices as well as our worldview and is key to developing a successful academic/educational atmosphere that will allow individuals to thrive.

## Agency

Agency allows for us to make choices and decisions to impact our world. Every human, irrespective of age, needs and deserves a sense of agency. The lack of agency can lead to hopelessness and despair. It creates a sense of powerlessness in the ability to change personal or social conditions. To have agency is to feel empowered to change conditions.

## Relationships

Relationships are best described using the South African term, Ubuntu. Ubuntu translates to 'I am because we are' or 'humanity towards others'. Human beings are social by nature and yearn for interpersonal connection. Strong relationships promote safety (physical, mental, spiritual), compassion, confidence, healthy communication, and hope.

## Meaning

Meaning is what makes life worthwhile. A strong sense of meaning or purpose is necessary for an optimal lived experience. Very few people enjoy work that doesn't supply a clear or meaningful outcome. Meaning gives us the opportunity to fully invest in life.

## Aspirations

The ability to hope, dream, imagine, and manifest/create what we want to see around us is a very powerful tool in human development. Aspiration empowers us to actively participate in the transformation of self and the world in which we live. It is the process of exploring possibilities and accomplishing goals, grounded in our culture and purpose.





# Healing Centered Engagement Tools

The following pages are designed to assess where your organization is in terms of Healing Centered practices. Following the assessment is a sample plan for building a Healing Centered Engagement strategy and a blank form for you to create your own strategy.

# Healing Centered Engagement Assessment Tool

## What it is

A tool for assessing Healing Centered Engagement within institutions.

## What it can do

This tool can assist you to :

- Identify gaps and opportunities in strengthening an institutions commitment to healing, social justice and equity.
- Deepen the understanding and skills of staff, leadership and membership around healing, social justice and equity.

## When to use it

- When engaging an organization in strengthening their understanding and work in healing centered and social justice strategies
- To create beginning benchmarks and track progress in deepening a healing centered agenda
- Only when top leadership is committed to follow-up on the results of the assessment

## How it works

### Step 1

- ✓ Identify gaps and opportunities in strengthening an institutions commitment to healing, social justice and equity.
- ✓ Each person can complete the assessment individually, or it can be done collectively as a group. The group should decide which manner would yield the most authentic answers.
- ✓ Each question is ranked 0-4 either:
  - ☐ **0 = Not Engaged** - We have not gone there
  - ☐ **1 = Building Awareness** - We are beginning to think about this
  - ☐ **2 = Exploring**- We are creating plans about how to do this
  - ☐ **3 = Actively Engaging** - We are doing this
  - ☐ **4 = Approaching Mastery** - We are doing this very well.



## Step 2

Reflect on your answers. You may also debrief as a team.

- ☐ In which areas are you strong? is the organization strong?
- ☐ In which areas do you need to improve?
- ☐ In which areas does the organization need to do more work? Are there areas that the organization needs to improve.

## LET's BEGIN:

### Key

N/A=Not Applicable

0= Not Engaged: we have not gone there

1= Building Awareness: we are beginning to think about this

2= Exploring: we are creating plans about how to do this

3= Actively Engaging: **we are doing this**

4= Approaching Mastery: we are doing this very well

Sr. No.	Culture	Score
1.	Does your institution prioritize the participation of people-of-color, women, people with disabilities and LGBTQ groups ?	
2.	Are the full identities of people of color (sexual and gender identity, immigration status, ability status, age, languages spoken, etc) acknowledged and respected?	
3.	Are the staff and board trained in interrupting racism, equity and inclusion within your institution?	
4.	Are the full identities of all people integrated into the curriculum, and programming of your institution?	
5.	Does your institution talk about social justice and equity across program areas with all staff?	
6.	Are the cultures of the staff and constituents celebrated within your institution?	
7.	Does your institution provide meetings, materials and supports services in the first language of the constituents your institution serves ?	
Focus Area Score		

### KEY

N/A = Not Applicable  
2 = Exploring

0 = Oblivious/Not Engaged  
3 = Actively Engaging

1 = Building Awareness  
4 = Approaching Mastery

Sr. No.	Agency	Score
8.	Do people-of-color, women, LGBTQ members and people with disabilities have a voice and power in decision making within your institution?	
9.	Does your institution seek the leadership of people-of-color, women, LGBTQ and people with disabilities within the region?	
10.	Does your institution have folks of color, women, and LGBTQ individuals and people with disabilities as board members and director-level staff?	
11.	Are benchmarks around social justice incorporated into the annual evaluation of staff, and leadership?	
12.	Does your institution advocate for the inclusion of racial, gender, and social justice and healing when working in coalitions?	
13.	Does your institution have a process that staff can advocate for social and emotional healing support?	
Focus Area Score		

Sr. No.	Relationships	Score
14.	Does your institution spend time and money on building relationships among staff, parents, students and other members of the community?	
15.	Does your institution encourage staff to understand and respond with compassion to the realities of constituents served?	
16.	Does your institution's leadership have meaningful relationships with the staff?	
17.	Is the quality of relationships within your institution assessed regularly?	
18.	Are there standards for the way in which co-workers interact that promotes understanding, respect, healing and peace?	
19.	Does the institution have a restorative practice in resolving conflicts between co-workers?	
20.	Does your institution intentionally create a climate of trust and mutual respect within the space?	
Focus Area Score		

## KEY

N/A = Not Applicable  
2 = Exploring

0 = Oblivious/Not Engaged  
3 = Actively Engaging

1 = Building Awareness  
4 = Approaching Mastery

Sr. No.	Meaning	Score
21.	Are staff clear about the mission and values of the institution?	
22.	Does the institution provide opportunities for employees to share their talents and experiences to forward the work of the institution in an authentic way?	
23.	Does the institution provide resources for staff and employees for their own personal development?	
24.	Are there practices integrated into the daily operations of the institution that allow for staff and/or leadership to reflect and plan?	
25.	Does the institution build in time during the work week for staff to implement self-care and rejuvenation on a regular basis?	
26.	Does the institution allow for employees to work on projects aligned with their passion and interest?	
Focus Area Score		

Sr. No.	Aspiration	Score
27.	Does the institution aspire to create social justice, racial equity and community wellness in its policies and practices?	
28.	Does the institution's leadership articulate the vision of the work to the staff on a regular basis?	
29.	Are there plans and benchmarks to guide the institution toward its future goals?	
30.	Are the practices, policies and procedures consistent with the institution's future direction?	
Focus Area Score		

## KEY

N/A = Not Applicable  
2 = Exploring

0 = Oblivious/Not Engaged  
3 = Actively Engaging

1 = Building Awareness  
4 = Approaching Mastery



Focus Area	Total Score	Thoughts for Growth & Improvement
Culture		
Agency		
Relationships		
Meaning		
Aspirations		
Total		

## KEY

N/A = Not Applicable  
2 = Exploring

0 = Oblivious/Not Engaged  
3 = Actively Engaging

1 = Building Awareness  
4 = Approaching Mastery

# Sample Implementation

Building a healing centered environment requires that the CARMA principles be implemented at 3-levels, individual, interpersonal and institutional. These levels make-up what we refer to as the ecosystem. You will find a template to create your healing centered engagement plan. For organization's, please note this is not a strategic plan rather it should be used to document broad goals and guide a more detailed plan.

## Sample Organization Plan

Principle	
<b>C</b> Culture and Identity	Over the next year, our agency will have all leadership and staff engage in quarterly, diversity equity and inclusion trainings
<b>A</b> Agency	During this fiscal year the leadership team will review policy's that create barriers for our constituents
<b>R</b> Relationships	We will create a quarterly organizational social outings for the staff
<b>M</b> Meaning	We will create a space for reflection and quiet time within our office space.
<b>A</b> Aspirations	We will engage all staff in creating a vision board for the organization

# Implementation Plan

Building a healing centered environment requires that the CARMA principles be implemented at 3-levels, individual, interpersonal and institutional. These levels make-up what we refer to as the ecosystem. You will find a template to create your healing centered engagement plan. For organization's, please note this is not a strategic plan rather it should be used to document broad goals and guide a more detailed plan.

This plan is for (circle one):      **individual**      **interpersonal/community**      **institution**

Principle	Please create a plan to implement Healing Centered Engagement based upon the HCE outcomes.
<b>C</b> Culture and Identity	
<b>A</b> Agency	
<b>R</b> Relationships	
<b>M</b> Meaning	
<b>A</b> Aspirations	



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