

Practices which celebrate our common humanity and break the walls of indignity and isolation

"Being human is given, but keeping our humanity is a choice."

- Moumita Das

Common humanity can be defined as, "recognizing that pain and failure are unavoidable aspects of the shared human experience (Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrick, 2007) and is not used to devalue an individual's story, experience or voice for the sake that "we're all human". By celebrating our common humanity we uplift each other's story, experience and voice *because* "we *are* all human". Being human means we are *feeling beings* and *social beings* and yearn to feel a sense of belonging. In each and every story there is love, loss and a sense of hope. By engaging in practices which celebrates our common humanity we seek to understand multiple perspectives in honor to construct a third narrative that honors every individuals' experience.

While humans are wired for connection and compassion, we are also (as our histories show) capable of committing horrific atrocities. By nature we are a tribal species and are in closest connection and community to "those like us". These relationships are vital for our survival, shaping individual identity and establishing/maintaining a culture. Therefore, we tend to associate ourselves with those of similar beliefs and backgrounds. In turn this creates a system of "in groups: and "out groups" which can create dignity violations. "As soon as you place anyone outside of the circle of "us" the mind/brain automatically begins to devalue that person and justify poor treatment of him (Efferson, Lalive, and Feh, 2008)... Pay attention to the number of times a day you categorize someone as "not like me," particularly in subtle ways: not my social background, not my style, and so on. It's startling how routine it is. See what happens to your mind when you consciously release this distinction and focus instead on what you have in common with that person, on what makes you both an "us." – Rick Hansen, [The Buddha's Brain](#).

We can decrease the frequency of establish groups/out groups tendency by applying a dignity lens to how we navigate our personal experience. In [Dignity The Essential Role it Plays in Resolving Conflict](#), Donna Hicks describes dignity as an internal state of peace that comes with recognition and acceptance of the value and vulnerability of all living things. With dignity as the baseline for human interactions we see the value and inherent worth of everyone. Despite the stark difference, dignity and respect are often used interchangeably. As aforementioned, dignity is an "internal state" while respect is typically given/earned (denied/subtracted) due to an individual's behavior. Therefore, it's possible to see everyone's inherent value as living/breathing beings and not respecting an individual due to their actions/behaviors. By engaging in practices which celebrate our common humanity we remove barriers that divide us amongst religious, political, racial, socio-economical and ideological lines.



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Honoring the inherent worth within us all,, we can co-construct a compassionate solution-focused narrative.

Dignity is honored in groups when all are seen and heard. Part of being seen and heard is intentionally and candidly discussing and adhering to the answers to the following questions:

1. How do we celebrate each other?
2. How do we support each other?
3. How do we collaborate with each other?
4. How do we repair harm and restore balance with each other?

Removing barriers of difference decreases the impact of “in group” vs. “out group” behaviors and opportunity for joy, widen our network of support and are collaborative in building a hopeful tomorrow. If dignity violations are the root cause of harm and injustice, practices which celebrates our common humanity is the antidote to harm and injustice. Examples of Practices that celebrate our common humanity and break the walls of indignity and isolation, are:

- Community building circles
- Demonstrating vulnerability
- Seek out and validate other perspectives
- Acknowledge unique contributions of all individuals
- Create opportunities to share and listen to each other’s story

As human beings we all feel joy, need support, experience difficulties and desire a “better tomorrow.” With a core belief of interconnectedness, identifying and celebrating our common humanity strengthens this connection, increases opportunities for joy, softens the impact of loss and the likelihood of a “better tomorrow is greater.

