



Layers of Loss: Structural Racism and Intergenerational Trauma

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Session description

This interactive community healing circle webinar invites participants to explore the layered experiences of grief, trauma, and loss through an ecological trauma framework. Moving beyond traditional understandings of grief as death-related, this session examines non-death losses connected to identity, culture, safety, belonging, opportunity, and collective experiences across generations. Participants will explore how the legacy of chattel slavery and structural racism has shaped historical, intergenerational, and community experiences of loss and resilience.



Through guided reflection, dialogue, and shared learning, participants will engage in a healing-centered space to examine how trauma is experienced at the individual, family, community, institutional, and societal levels. This interactive experience will explore historical trauma, collective grief, ambiguous loss, and pathways toward healing and resilience. Participants will also leave with a deeper understanding of the connection between systemic inequities, generational experiences of loss, and the importance of culturally responsive approaches to healing.



Session learning objectives

Be

- Upon completion of this interactive community healing circle session, participants will be able to:

Describe

- Describe the ecological framework of trauma and how historical and ongoing experiences of structural racism influence individuals, families, communities, and systems.

Examine

- Examine the impact of chattel slavery, historical trauma, and intergenerational loss on experiences of identity, culture, safety, opportunity, and belonging across generations.

Apply

- Apply trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches that support healing, resilience, and connection within communities impacted by historical and systemic inequities.

The background of the slide features a stack of several books resting on a light-colored wooden surface. The books are slightly out of focus, with their spines and edges visible. The background is a warm, golden-yellow color with a soft, blurred light effect, suggesting a bright, sunny environment. The overall mood is calm and scholarly.

Welcoming and Grounding Message



How I got over?

“Historians insists that a knowledge of the past is essential for understanding the present.”

(Pinkney, 1969)

What is Your STORY?

Your story shapes how you show up.

Their story shapes what they may be carrying.

**Identity • Culture • Family • Community •
Loss • Resilience**

Historical events & chattel slavery

Stripping

- Stripping people of freedom, family, and autonomy

Separating

- Separating families and disrupting generations

Suppressing

- Suppressing culture, language, and identity

Exploiting

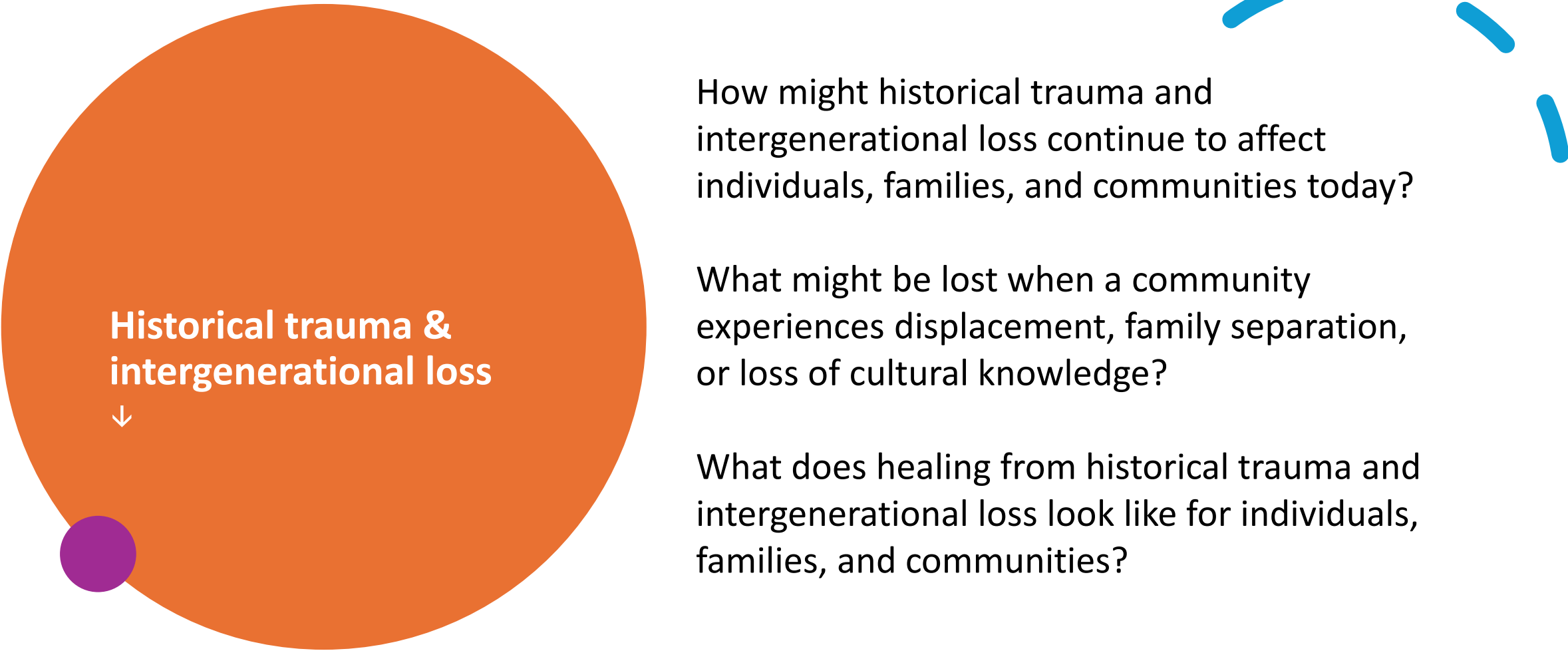
- Exploiting labor and denying economic opportunity

Dehumanizing

- Dehumanizing people through law and social systems

Creating

- Creating lasting patterns of inequality and loss



Historical trauma & intergenerational loss



How might historical trauma and intergenerational loss continue to affect individuals, families, and communities today?

What might be lost when a community experiences displacement, family separation, or loss of cultural knowledge?

What does healing from historical trauma and intergenerational loss look like for individuals, families, and communities?

From historical trauma to present-day experience

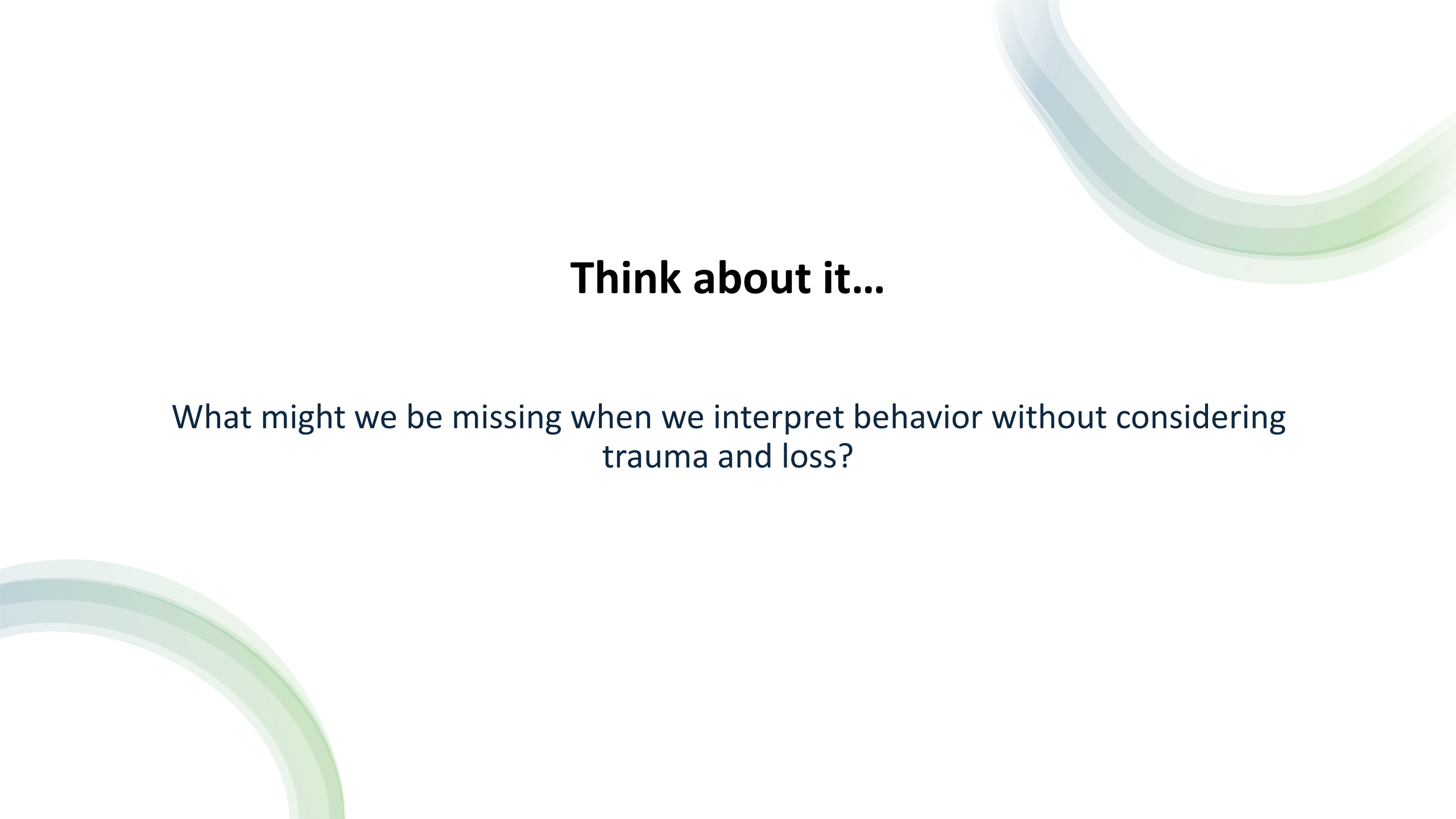
- **Carrying** trauma across generations
- **Shaping** how people experience the present
- **Creating** ongoing health and social challenges
- **Affecting** cultural identity and community connections
- **Influencing** how families and communities heal





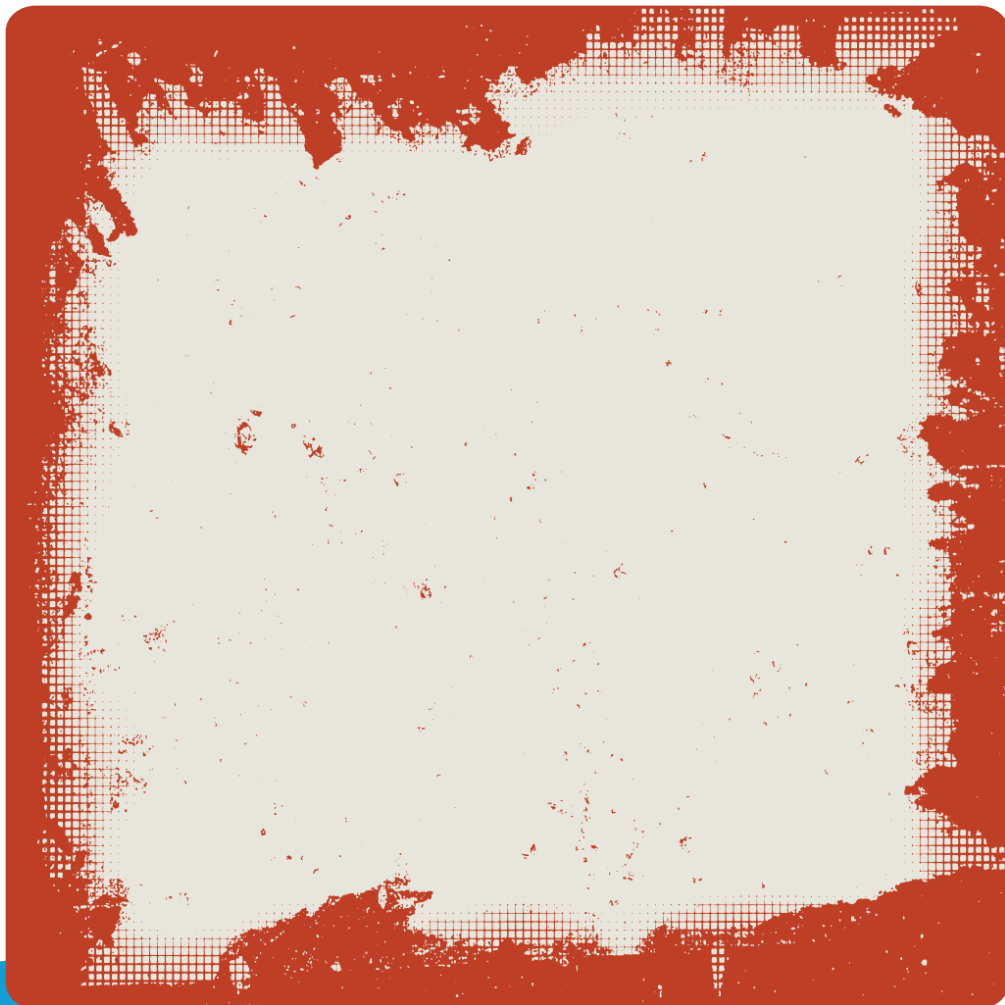
What we see vs. what we don't see

- Who do we see in our care settings?
- What do we notice first: behavior or context?
- What might we be missing beneath the presentation?
- How might trauma be showing up in this person's story?



Think about it...

What might we be missing when we interpret behavior without considering trauma and loss?



Framing the lens: Loss happens in context

When we consider structural racism and intergenerational trauma, we can ask:

- What has been lost?
- Who or what contributed to that loss?
- How does loss move across generations?
- How do systems and environments shape the experience of loss?
- What continues to be carried, disrupted, or rebuilt?

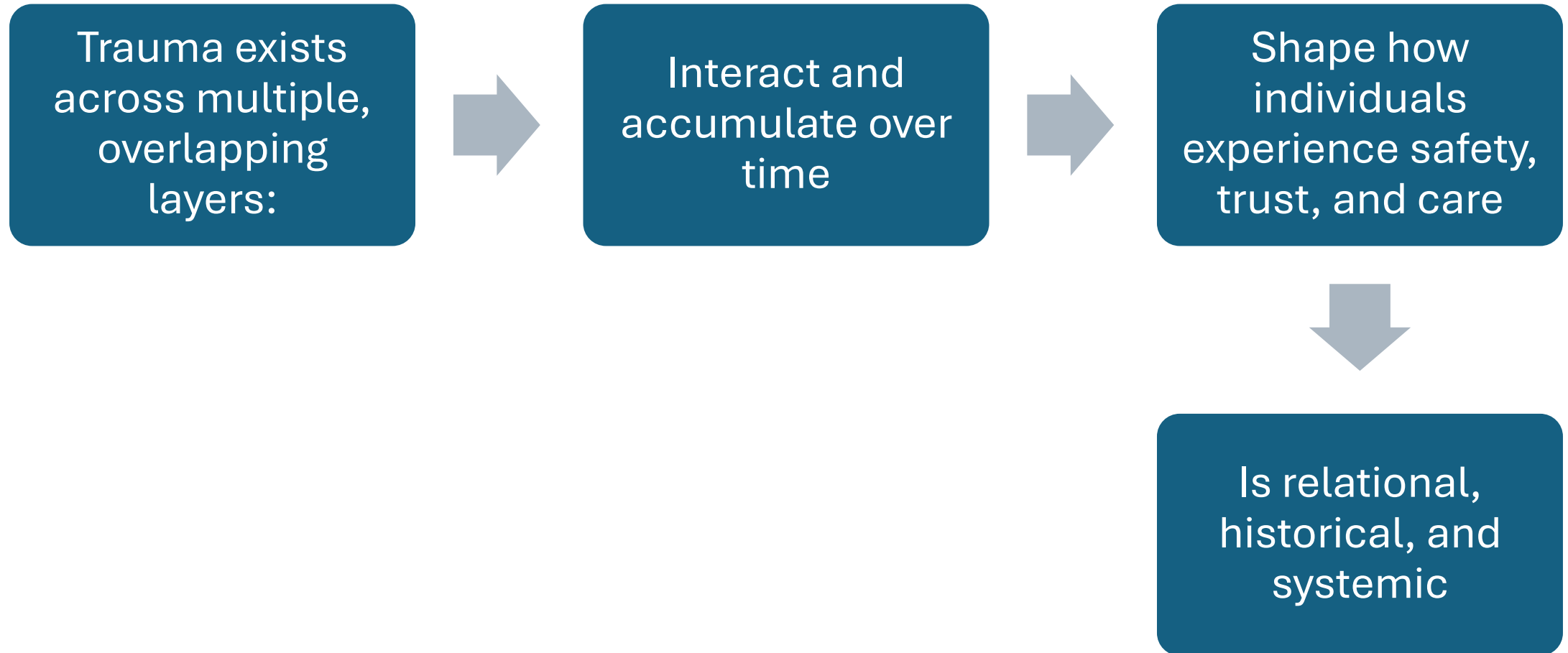
Loss is not only an individual experience. It can be personal, relational, community-based, historical, and structural: often at the same time.

Ecological trauma framework

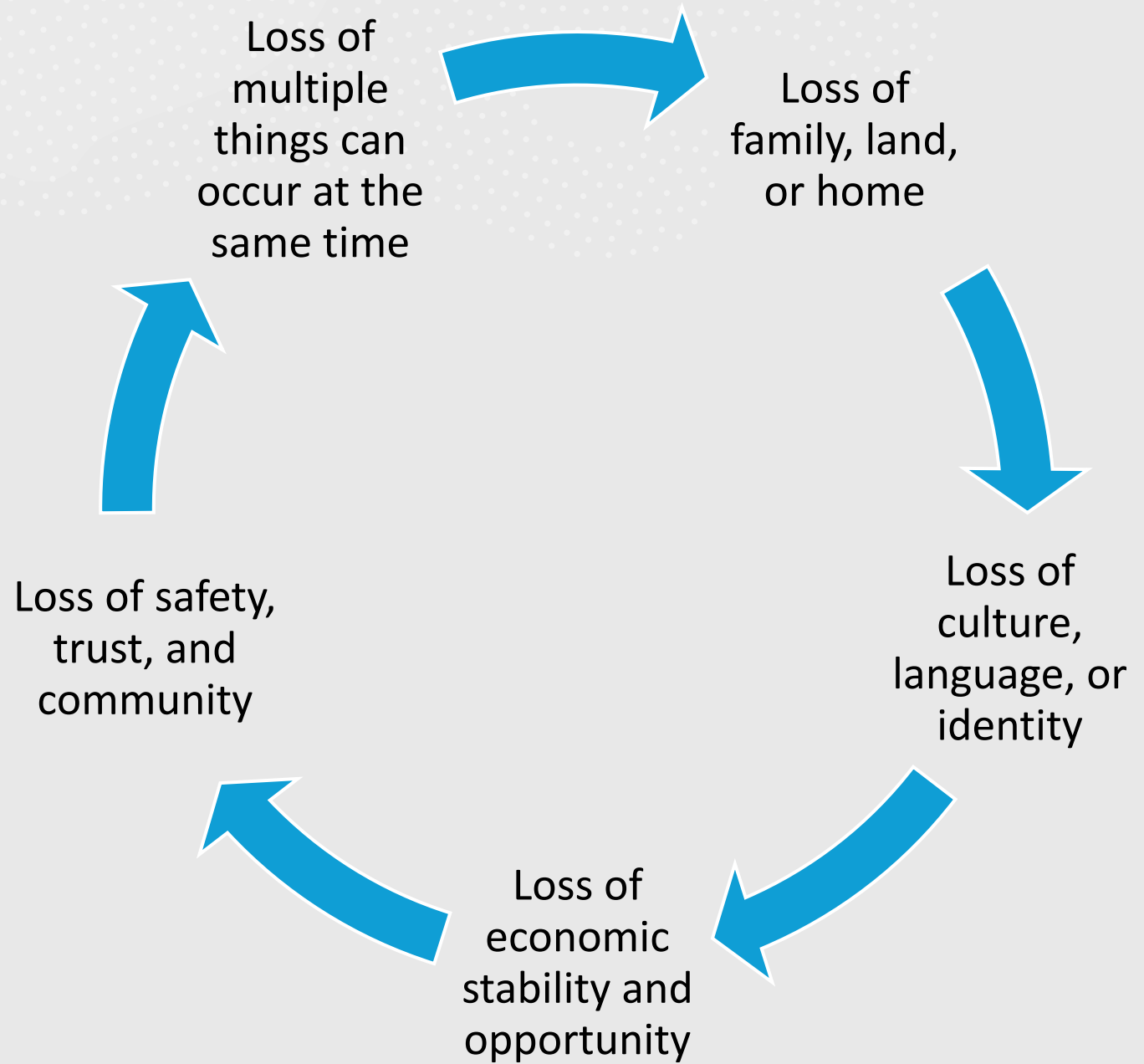
- Individual Trauma
- Interpersonal/Community Trauma
- Historical & Intergenerational Trauma
- Structural, Racial & Systemic Trauma
- Spiritual/Existential Trauma



Trauma is layered and interconnected



Layers of loss





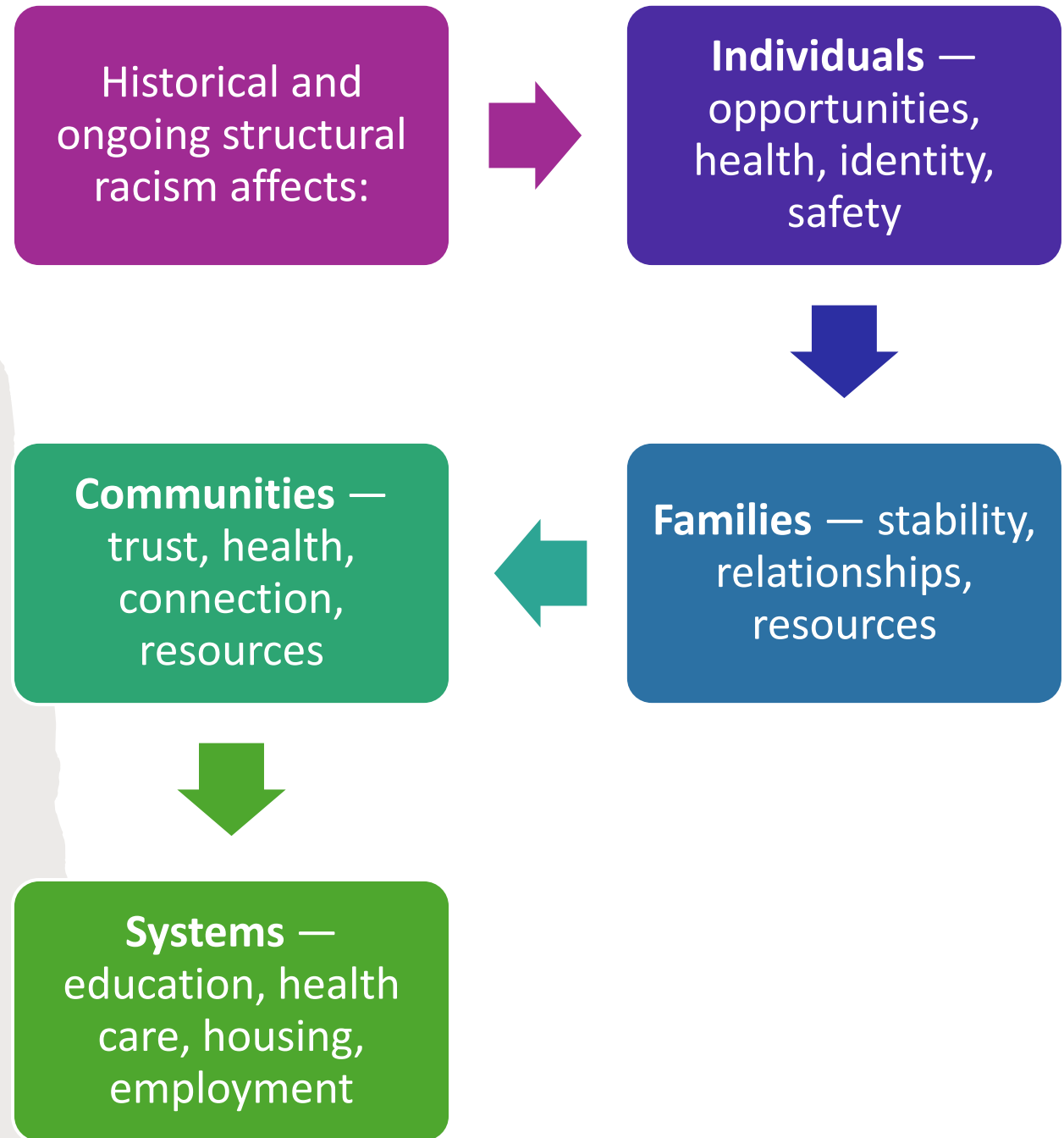
Historical & ongoing structural racism

- Shapes individual experiences and opportunities
- Affects family well-being and stability
- Creates unequal access to resources and support
- Influences community health, safety, and trust
- Reinforces inequities within social systems

Intergenerational loss

- The effects of loss can extend across generations
- Family, culture, and community can be disrupted
- Land and economic resources can be lost
- Mistrust of institutions can continue
- Past inequities can shape present opportunities

Impact across levels



Grief → Hope

Silence → Voice

Shame → Compassion

Suppression → Expression

Severance → Reconnection

From trauma-informed to healing-centered

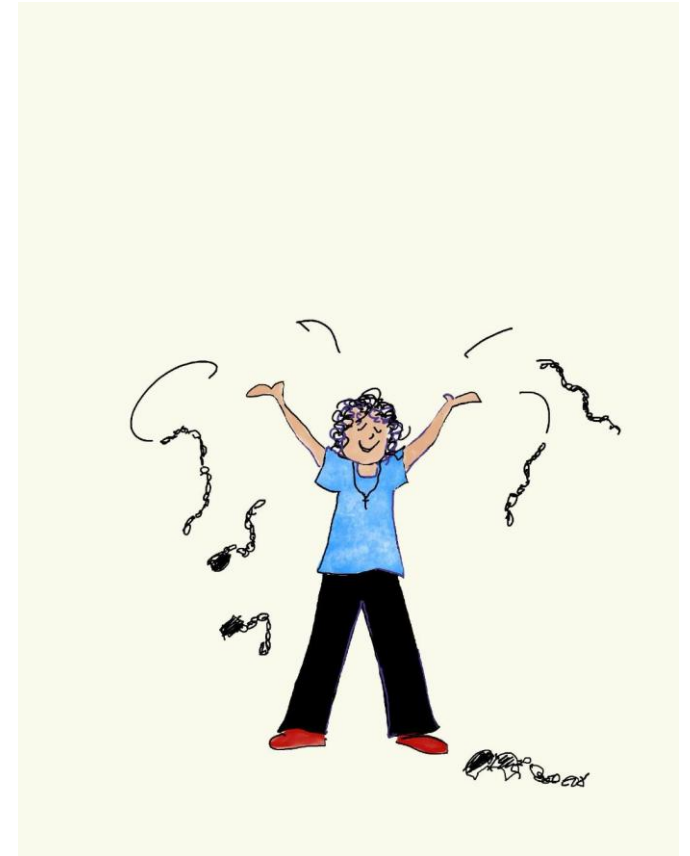


- **Seeing** the whole person, not just the trauma
- **Creating** safety, trust, and connection
- **Honoring** culture, identity, and lived experience
- **Building** on strengths, resilience, and community
- **Restoring** voice, choice, and agency
- **Supporting** healing, hope, and belonging

The greatest challenge of the day
is: how to bring about a revolution
of the heart, a revolution which
has to start with each one of us?



Closing Message



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