

ELO Podcast Showing Up Episode 2

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: Please note that Showing Up features themes of trauma, mental health, and resilience, which may be triggering for some. So please, listen to your body's cues, take breaks, and use self-regulation strategies. Don't hesitate to ask for help. No issue is too big or too small.

REBECCA: You can always reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 for support. They will be available to talk with you and connect you to local mental health resources.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: Hi, everyone. Welcome to Showing Up. I'm Sophie, and I use she/her pronouns.

REBECCA: I'm Rebecca, and I also use she/her pronouns.

SOPHIE: We are both part of the trauma-informed care team at Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington. Welcome to Showing Up. This is a time where we talk about trauma-informed care practices for Expanded Learning Opportunities or ELO programs. ELO programs include basically anywhere young people spend time outside of the school day classroom setting, like after-school care, summer camps, and skill-based programs.

REBECCA: Sophie, before we jump in today, I'm wondering if you have an update for me about Monty.

SOPHIE: I would love to give you an update about Monty. So for those of you who might not know, my puppy is named Monty. He is a little labradoodle Spaniel hybrid mix situation. And I learned this week that the little bit of lab in him might be why he has some growing pains.

REBECCA: Oh.

SOPHIE: I know, it was very sad. I mean, it was a little convenient to have him be a little bit more mellow than normal. But I felt quite bad for him. And it took us a little while to figure out why he was limping. But we got him some puppy ibuprofen, and he is definitely feeling better and resting a lot. He's extra snuggly, so it's kind of nice.

REBECCA: I'm glad he's feeling better.

SOPHIE: Yeah, I know. He recovered pretty quick after a couple of hours on ibuprofen-- back to normal.

REBECCA: Good, good.

SOPHIE: How about you, Rebecca? How's Gus?

REBECCA: Gus-- for those of you who don't know, he is my five-year-old little poodle mix also. And lately, I think he's been starting-- it's funny when he starts to notice what we do, me and my partner. And lately, he's noticed when we go to our bedroom and put on real pants that's not sweat pants. Then he'll know that we're about to leave.

[LAUGHTER]

And so he'll recognize that. So when we go put on jeans or something more presentable, then he'll know that we're about to leave. And he'll get all cute and do all his little cute things to try to make us stay. So he'll just go belly up and flop on our feet so that we can't walk anymore. And we have to pet him because how do you not pet a dog that's exposing their belly to you?

SOPHIE: Yeah, I mean it's a rule. You have to pet the tummy.

REBECCA: So that's just a little fun quarantine quirk that he's developed.

[LAUGHTER]

SOPHIE: You've successfully trained your dog to recognize the meaning behind different types of pants.

REBECCA: Right? Like hard pants and soft pants. And if it's the hard pants, then we're going to leave.

SOPHIE: Thank you for that spectacular "pupdate." So today we are talking about intersectionality, racial identity, and trauma-informed care. This episode was developed based on our current understandings of the topics presented within it. Concepts, terms, and definitions do change as we all learn more and do better. We want to name most of the language and examples used to discuss racial bias or racism are based on the cultural and historical context of the United States. We'll have several resources in the show notes that you can explore if you'd like to dive deeper into being an anti-racist care provider.

REBECCA: Today we'll be chatting with Elaine from the Service Board, Dr. Stacey Patton from the Institute of Urban Research at Morgan State University, and Mylinh and Robert from APA Chaya.

SOPHIE: Let's jump in with our Youth Voice interview with Elaine from the Service Board.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Hi, Elaine. Welcome.

ELAINE: Hi, my name is Elaine. I use she/her pronouns, and I am currently a senior at Lindbergh High School in Renton. And I learned about this opportunity through a tSB mentor. I am a tSB since freshman year, so they have really watched me grow up.

REBECCA: How so? Can you tell us what tSB is?

ELAINE: So tSB is a youth-led program but it's actually a non-profit organization that started roughly 26 years ago. The program that we offer throughout the year from January to June is called our Core Program, where we create these accessible moments for youth all over Seattle and the greater Seattle area. We do provide community service hours as well as opportunities.

We provide adult mentorship hours. We also educate on social and environmental justice, which is super cool, because I had no idea what that was before tSB. And we do outdoor adventure, which is one of our Core things through snowboarding in our Core Program. And then in the summer, we have skateboarding as well.

REBECCA: So today's episode is about intersectionality and basically how different aspects of one's identity interact and overlap. And there are so many things that make up one's identity like age, disability, race, gender, and so much more. Elaine, how would you describe your own identity?

ELAINE: My identity is pretty complex. I think I always struggle with categorizing all of them. But some of the main ones are I do identify as Asian-American. I am more specifically Vietnamese-American. I am female-identifying. I'm also Catholic-identifying in the sense that I understand my own definition of it. And I feel comfortable tussling with all these different things.

Also, because of tSB, I have grown interest in that spark for social and environmental justice activism. Yeah, but right now, I think my strongest one is being a student. Yeah. There's a lot of values and beliefs that tie into all of my identities and just the concept of all the three. Values, belief, and identity are always mixed for me, so.

REBECCA: Thank you for sharing that. I'm curious to hear about how you talk about your own identity with your friends and then also how you talk about your identity with adults in your life.

ELAINE: I don't necessarily talk about my identity with my friends or any adults in my life that are not part of tSB, where it's almost taboo for me. And I don't know if it's because I just grew up in a space where it's not the best thing to talk about, or because a lot of people tend to have surface-level conversations, and I tend to really more for the deep one, like just jump into it. But it's always weird or a not-normal thing for people to talk about.

Yeah, it's also really hard because sometimes whenever I do mention an identity that I do identify with, and then I told them another one, they'd be like, well, that doesn't make sense, because those two clash with each other. And so then it makes me question, do I actually identify with that or the way that people see my identities? Or the way that people take in what I say is really different, too.

I think the biggest thing is just the uncomfortable feeling of vulnerability because you can get really deep when you go into intersectionality and just talking about what you do identify with and how that creates you or the fear of talking about that for people. And I personally really like challenging that. But I know that a lot of people don't or feel very uncomfortable around that.

REBECCA: I think that was a very insightful reflection that you've had because a lot of different aspects of identity do clash on the exterior. But I think you have a very good understanding of what those core things are to you and how that makes up who you are. I can definitely relate as an Asian-American women, also not growing up in spaces that really give you open space to explore that identity. So I'm glad you're getting that through tSB, though. I'm curious how adults in your life, maybe at tSB, have made different aspects of your identity. Do you feel safe and supported?

ELAINE: I think it was really weird for me to feel supported and seen when I was talking about my identity, just because I'd never felt it before, or I never knew how to identify that or define that feeling. And so when I did go to tSB, all the mentors around me, even if they weren't in a specific group that I constantly was with, they always gave me that space and the capacity to explore different identities that I might identify with or help me define this feeling or define this certain identity and then claim it as my own. But also, I think they really challenged me to really think if this was what I really identified with, or if it was something that I just felt like I should be identifying with. Yeah, the whole idea of not being judged and not having adults look down on you or doubt what you say was really nice.

SOPHIE: I think that's a really great insight about ways that we can show up for young people in our lives, but also just for any people in our lives-- the importance of truly listening.

REBECCA: Thank you for just being so vulnerable and open and sharing your journey through finding your own identity. And I know it'll continue into the future. But, yeah, thank you.

SOPHIE: Thank you so much, Elaine.

ELAINE: Thank you for having me.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: All right, it's time for our word of the week. We're going to share a vocabulary word every episode to help build a shared terminology for talking about trauma-informed care practices. Today we'll share a definition for the term "intersectionality." Intersectionality is the complex cumulative way in which the affects of multiple forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and classism, combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. Individuals with multiple marginalized identities experience compounded oppression.

REBECCA: Intersectionality just means that, depending on our identities, our experiences in the world affect us differently. So for example, I identify as an Asian woman. And my experiences and the way that I interact with the world would be different from Sophie, who's a white woman.

We both identify as women and experience sexism in a patriarchal society. But because I belong in a racial minority group-- specifically, in an Asian group-- my experience of sexism is inherently racialized, and my flavor of racism has sexist undertones to it. This would look different for the type of overt racism or microaggressions that an Asian man might experience or people who hold a different set of identities.

SOPHIE: Yeah. So these are really great examples of how just two aspects of identity overlap and shape our experiences in the world. Many other factors, like religion, disability, sexual orientation, body size, and socioeconomic class, just to name a few, also intersect and shape our experiences of both privilege and oppression.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

MYLINH: API Chaya is an organization that empowers survivors of gender-based violence and human trafficking to gain safety, connection, and wellness. Email that you can reach out to us on-- it's info@apichaya-- I-N-F-O at A-P-I-C-H-A-Y-A dot org. You can always call our office line. The phone number is 206-467-9976.

ROBERT: You can also contact us on Instagram and Facebook.

SOPHIE: So welcome back, Dr. Patton. Tell us a bit about you.

STACEY PATTON: Absolutely. So my name is Doctor Stacey Patton. My pronouns are she and her. I teach journalism at Howard University. I am an award-winning journalist and author and nationally recognized child advocate whose work focuses on the intersections of race and parenting, which means I talk a lot about how people treat children, particularly their bodies and their psychological development through parenting strategies and also teaching.

I am an anti-spanking activist. I believe that children should never be hit because it shapes the way their brains grow, how they see themselves. And so a lot of my activism focuses on decolonizing parenting and coming up with healthier, non-violent ways to raise children so that they can achieve their optimal potential.

REBECCA: I heard you mention intersectionality. And this whole episode is about intersectionality and trauma-informed care. So in your opinion, why is it important to consider intersectionality when talking about trauma-informed care?

STACEY PATTON: Intersectionality acknowledges that things like race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, even your body size are all these overlapping identities and experiences which intersect to produce manifold kinds of oppression. They can also be empowering, too. But when we talk about trauma and oppression, people are often disadvantaged by these multiple sources of oppression.

And these identity markers don't exist independently of each other. They inform the others, often creating a complex convergence of oppression. At the intersection is where the social, personal, and political context of trauma gets experienced by individuals-- so how people move through the world, how they're treated, the messages they receive about their humanity, their possibilities, their potential. And their personal and community history all matters in this equation.

I often hear people say, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." That's absolutely not true. What tries to kill you is a form of chronic stress, which can have wear and tear on your nervous system, on your

immune system, on how your brain operates. And so both trauma and oppression can impact the brain and body in similar ways and change your view of yourself and the world.

And so in my work, I'm often inviting people to acknowledge the centrality of the child when we talk about intersectionality. People often overlook childhood and child experiences when we talk about intersectionality-- so how we treat children, how we acknowledge childism as a foundational part of this intersection of trauma and oppression. So when we do we talk about intersectionality, at the root of any intersection of oppression is the psychological manipulation of children.

You can't perpetuate any of these macro forms of oppression that we always talk about without first destroying children as soon as they enter the world. The psychological manipulation of children is essentially the practical root of all forms of oppression. And so you can't accurately do intersectionality research, activism, therapy, teaching without fully understanding how children and childhood fits into different forms of oppression.

REBECCA: I loved how you framed the four F's of trauma responses. Can you give us a rundown of those?

STACEY PATTON: So fight, flight, freeze, and fawn. So fight is all about self-preservation. And it's about protection when we're faced with threat. So evolution has wired our bodies with something called an amygdala, which is essentially the body's built-in alarm system.

And you search for cues in your environment for any potential threat to your body, safety, survival. And so fighting is about defending ourselves. It's our desire to feel empowered at all costs. And sometimes this happens through maladaptive strategies. So if you've come from a stressful environment, where you always had to be in survival mode, always had to fight and defend yourselves, and then you change environments that are more peaceful, then it can be difficult to transition into a different kind of space. So then there's flight. This, too, is also about protection from pain or threats. And people achieve this through escaping. You see this with people who are constantly worrying, got a lot of anxiety. They're panicking.

They can be leaders who micromanage other people. These are folks who are always hyper vigilant, always danger-mapping, looking for signs of threats. And sometimes these people look like folks who are workaholics. They might be overachievers. And so in social situations, these are the kind of people that will physically remove themselves. And so they're really conflict-avoidant.

Then you've got freeze. Freezing, like the other two, fight and flight, is also about self-preservation. But this happens when you dissociate. So a lot of kids who experience abuse will disassociate, like take leave of your body. So it's a way you space out.

You detach from the world. You depersonalize. You detach from yourself. And this happens when stress becomes so much that you feel immobilized. These kind of folks will self-isolate, have a hard time making decisions. They might be passive. They don't take risks. And they have a hard time setting goals.

And then the last is fawning. So fawning is another way that people, particularly those in abusive situations, will try to self-preserve. So these are the kind of people who placate others. These folks don't know how to say no.

They feel afraid to share what they really think and how they really feel. They're always concerned with other people's perceptions of them. They're constantly anticipating the needs of other folks. They want to fit in.

So fawning really is like, if I can please you, if I can keep you happy, then that strategy is going to make me feel safe and keep me safe from being abandoned, rejected, hurt, feel any kind of conflict or pain. So I'm cognizant of the four F's when I'm teaching college students because I know that stressed-out brains in fight or flight mode have a difficult time learning. And far too many students are growing up in stressful family situations, neighborhoods, and also schools, which are unfortunately another zone of intimidation and violence.

They are facing teachers who use fear as a pedagogical strategy-- fear of failure, fear of an unwanted call home, fear of the teacher, fear of ridicule. And so I disagree with that because fear compromises the ability to learn. When we feel threatened in either one of these four F's and experience fear, we downshift to survival mode. And students are less able to learn effectively because their primary focus is on self-protection.

REBECCA: So what are some strategies that you use to create safe learning environments?

STACEY PATTON: I strive to be an amygdala whisperer. I try to picture that part of the brain. I try to also picture their ventral vagal-- vagus nerve, this thing that's running through the center of the body and really touches all the organs. I try to be careful with those areas of the body and realize that all my students come into my classroom with all of these histories. I'm careful about how I introduce myself to my students on day one.

I'm cognizant about my tone of voice, making eye contact with students-- just very basic things. I create tribal-- a tribal classroom, where we are family. We're a community. I'm sort of like auntie. And so I always do verbal check-ins, whether I'm teaching online or in person, to see how everybody is. I call names. So it lets my students know, I see you. You matter. I'm glad you're here. Physical check-ins as well-- sometimes we'll stretch, do little exercises to get the blood flow moving. I also do guided meditation at the beginning of class. So it's like five minutes of guided meditation and [? choral ?] music I'll play.

I keep juice boxes, snacks, things like that in the classroom because we have longer classrooms-- class sessions-- that are like three hours-- little stress balls, things that are tactile, sometimes adult coloring books. And so beyond these sorts of little things that you do, I try to take time to build relationships with my individual students. I give them directions and feedback in ways that they'll respond to well.

I always convey respect and transparency by giving them reasons behind why we're doing what we're doing, if there's any changes. I avoid power struggles with students and escalating behavior. And I provide predictability and use positive attention as well. So it's all about making my students feel heard and validated and safe in their own bodies. And then once they feel safe in their own bodies, then they take a risk of being vulnerable and being open to learning something new and committing to the journey.

SOPHIE: Wonderful. Doctor Patton, thank you so much for being here with us today.

STACEY PATTON: Well, thank you so much for having me. I really appreciate being invited to the conversation.

SINGER: (SINGING) Please don't let me drown. Please don't let me drown.

STACEY PATTON: The Ida B. Wells Textbook Fund provides textbooks to HBCU students who are cash-strapped. So if you'd like to make a donation to help the students, you can just go GoFundMe and enter the Ida B Wells Textbook Fund to support.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: So our next guests are from an organization called API Chaya. So welcome.

ROBERT: Thank you. My name is Robert. I use they/them pronouns. I get to be one of the youth program coordinators and youth organizers at API Chaya.

MYLINH: Hi, everyone. My name is Mylinh. I use they/them pronouns, and I get to be the Youth and Family Advocate at API Chaya.

SOPHIE: I know that at API Chaya, you work really hard to dismantle violent systems, and understanding intersectionality is really key to that. I'm curious to hear, Mylinh, how do these topics of race and intersectionality show up in your work with youth?

MYLINH: Ooh. My answer to that question is always, how do they not show up, right? Race is such a huge topic within America, but it is a worldwide-- white supremacy is so pervasive within our world. And so I see it all the time, because within API Chaya, most of the folks that we work with are folks who identify as Asian, Pacific Islander, folks who identify as immigrants, because we have folks who have been in America for a while, for generations, and we have other folks who are coming in as newer generations, who have a different relationship to what racism looks like in America. In my work with youth what's important for me is to always name that race is very present in my work, modeling for them what accountability looks like when I talk about racism, when I talk about intersectionality-- that I'm seeing all their identities. Everything that they are is being witnessed and seen and highlighted, and so wanting to provide that space and container for youth to really identify and name what their identities are to themselves.

REBECCA: So, Robert, how do you approach these topics of race and identity when talking with youth?

ROBERT: A huge part is really naming and acknowledging it. As a Filipino-American person, I know I move through the world as a person of color, and then people will see me that way. I get the sense that a lot of young people are giving us a test of, can I trust you? As we all do as a typical human thing-- can I trust you with a certain part of me?

And because of the different conditions of the structures of white supremacy and racism, a lot of youth of color are going to be checking, is this part of me, this huge part of me, safe with you? And so for me, I model, I feel safe bringing this into our conversation and into our relationship. Oftentimes I find myself in my work sometimes bringing in the strange, awkward, hard topic that people aren't wanting to talk about. And often the adults in their lives are afraid or are unsure how to bring it up. It's OK that things are complicated around race. It's OK that that's actually-- might be a fun-- a funny thing to bring up in this space. Hiding it is actually a tactic of prolonging the violence in every case. And then the other piece is getting really curious.

And Mylinh is such a role model for me of showing excitement and curiosity for a young person's lived experience. And I really try to lean in in my growing edge of showing curiosity in a young person's experience and really asking them, can I bring this up with you? I'm curious about this in your life.

REBECCA: Yeah, I think that that respect for the individual person's dignity and giving all of that choice and curiosity is a really beautiful part of the work that you all do. I'm curious to hear different ways that you help make sure that the young people that you're working with feel this sense of safety and feeling seen and supported.

MYLINH: In my work, I do a lot of case management with young folks. And a lot of them are connecting with me because they're wanting to look for, let's say, a counselor, right? They're highlighting their mental health needs and are really wanting to seek support in finding someone.

And so often, the question that I ask them is, what therapist would you like? What identities would you like them to hold? And I think that that's one way that I really make sure that a young person's identity is seen and supported. The other thing I would name is that, yes, curiosity.

Yes, all information a young person tells you is sacred information. They are being vulnerable with you, a stranger. A person who they have not grown up with comes into their life and starts telling them this and this and this and this is what we should work on, right? That shouldn't be the case. It should be, what do you want to work on? What information do you feel is important for me in my work with you so that you are driving that steering wheel?

And so, yes, get curious. Get excited. When a young person is like, this is what my culture does, and I love it, hell, yeah, keep doing it, you know? Be in wonder. Be in curiosity with young people. I do know that, Robert, you have a really beautiful way of talking about the structural shifts that we discuss with youth. Do you want to share a little bit about that?

ROBERT: The realities of structural racism and white supremacy is that it shapes material conditions. I have worked with a lot of young Asian and young Black youth. There's a lot of ways in which their family life, their schools that they go to, the resources that they know that they can access are just-- are so different from a white young person.

It's my charge to support young folks in mobilizing to change those material conditions and also do my part as an older person in their life to really advocate where I go, wherever is strategic and useful, to address those needs. If there's a need in a young person's life for their families to have culturally relevant and language-accessible health care and mental health care, then I-- then that's actually a charge for me to actually push for that and make sure that there are structures and institutions that are supporting that. If our work stays within direct one-on-one service and doesn't lead towards shifts in material conditions in our communities, then we're not working ourselves out of a job. And it's an endless loop that we're never going to really be able to address at the root.

REBECCA: Absolutely. So thank you both for being here today and for being part of our podcast. That was beautiful. Thank you.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Strategy Spotlight is a time for us to share something you could implement in your program or classroom. Our Strategy Spotlight today comes from Azure Savage. Azure is the author of the book, *You Failed Us-- Students of Color Talk Seattle Schools*. He also leads workshops for educators on creating safe classrooms for students of color. Let's listen as he describes the strategy of radical welcome, radical support, and radical empowerment.

AZURE SAVAGE: Radical welcome-- and all these are radical, because when you're fighting against such a strongly ingrained racist system, you have to be radical about it. It can't be halfway done. It has to be all in and do it radically. So radical welcome is the idea that from the moment a student walks in your door on the first day, you welcome them.

You ask them their name. You ask them how they are. You bring them into the room immediately. And you don't just do it that first day. You do it every day. You continue making sure that they know that they are in that room for a reason and that they belong in that room.

Radical support is really about building a relationship with your students, so you know how to support them. I get this question a lot from teachers who I talked to at my school about, how do I support a

student going through a hard time when I barely know them? I'm like, well, your first mistake is that you barely know them. You need to build some sort of foundational relationship with your student so that, one, they can feel comfortable coming to you, and, two, you feel comfortable coming to them.

And of course you're going to have a struggle with this if you don't know them. Another part of radical support is that it needs to be consensual. You can't force support on a student. And if they are clearly like, this is uncomfortable, you have got to take a step back, because if they don't want you in their business, you trying to get into their business is just going to make things a lot worse.

And the last piece of this-- radical empowerment. We've really worked in this workshop to reframe the idea of empowerment from giving someone power to giving someone a reason to see their own power and to understand that they already have the power, because you don't need to give them power, because they already have it. They just don't-- they might not see it, but they have it.

And this idea that teachers can do this in so many ways. They can do this through affirmations. They can do this through writing a little note on a test, like, "You did a great job." I love those notes.

And you feel empowered. And it's not like they're the ones needing to give you power, because you're like, oh, I just did that. I did it on my own, and I could continue doing that. Those, for me, I think are really great foundational tools to direct the way an educator educates to make sure that students of color especially feel like they have a power in the classroom.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

SOPHIE: As we wrap up this episode, we'll leave you with a few reflection questions. Part of building a trauma-informed care practice is building our own self-awareness, so we can better show up for the young people in our lives.

REBECCA: Our first question is, there are so many things that make up one's identity, like age, disability, race, gender, and more. How would you describe your own identity? Next, thinking about systemic racism and structural oppression and intersectionality, what identities, privileges, and positions of power do you hold? And lastly, what is something that you can do to make sure different aspects of young people's identities are seen and supported in your program?

SOPHIE: For those of you listening that are working directly with young people, either professionally or in your personal life, we know that it takes vulnerability and bravery to authentically show up to discussions about privilege, power, and identity. We hope that hearing from our guests today gives you the courage and additional vocabulary you need to feel empowered to engage in these discussions with young people. Remember, avoiding these topics doesn't make them go away. The more we can acknowledge and name these systems, the more we can create change and safety in our communities.

REBECCA: This podcast was produced by Cultivate Learning at the University of Washington with funding from The Bonner Group. We'd like to thank our media producers, Tifa Tomb and Ryan Henriksen, and our graphic designer, Tami Tolpa. You can find more of Cultivate Learning's work by going to cultivatelearning.uw.edu.

[MUSIC PLAYING]