

Belonging Begins In The Body

We Belong To Each Other

With Dr. Krista Robinson-Lyles

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adrienne marie brown invites us to remember:

- We are exactly the right people to be having this conversation (even if we can think of other people who need to be here!)
- Tonight's conversation is a way to engage with belonging, it is not the only way
- To release perfectionism (in order to open our hearts to what we can offer and learn)



What does the world need now and what is your role in creating/allowing/reviving that?

What does belonging have to do with it?



3 essences of belonging

1) “I welcome you by putting my most valuable organ, my heart, next to yours.”

(Wisdom from Australian Aboriginal Elder)



3 Essences of Belonging

2) What does it mean if we don't throw anyone away? (Cynthia Brown)

- What do you notice in your body when you read that?
- What makes that challenging?
- What makes it possible?



3 Essences of Belonging

3) At the root of belonging is the absence of fear, and where there is fear held in the body we realize it, acknowledge it, accept that is what we are sensing and decide how to metabolize it.

- Otherwise, if fear is not dealt with, released and reimagined, it gets recycled as othering that leads to verbal dismissal, psychic differentiating, physical distancing and rationalized violence
- Belonging offers individual and collective expansion in the body, in the heart and in the mind. Othering offers contraction in the body, heart and mind.



“Hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice.” Paulo Freire

Who gets to decide who belongs, who makes the rules? If humans made the rules, why can't we remake them? This requires engaging the imaginal, the not yet seen or the long forgotten. If we don't engage in visioning, in the imaginal, we live in the “never will be”.

One challenging reality is we may not see the change we are working so fervently for. And yet, we get to decide if we want to work for it anyway...as many of our ancestors did. Hope alone is not enough to honor the cultures of belonging we desire.



“We have a choice. We can embrace our humanness, which means embracing our broken natures and the compassion that remains our best hope for healing. Or we can deny our brokenness, forswear compassion, and, as a result, deny our own humanity.”
Bryan Stevenson



Belonging is Personal

- I don't think it's so much about *creating* belonging so much as it is *remembering and honoring* belonging...starting with what is already. We already belong to each other. We are on this earth at the same time together sharing a human experience, even with vastly different experiences. We are interconnected and interdependent.
- A question is what do we belong to? What do we give up to belong, what do we gain? What are we inviting others into or excluding them from?



Belonging is Personal

“Peace in ourselves, Peace in the world.” Thich Nhat Hanh

- Identify a time, place, space, group or person with whom you had/have a felt sense of belonging. What does your body tell you about this belonging? What does your mind tell you?
- Identify a time, place, space, group or person with whom you did not have a felt sense of belonging. What does your body tell you about not belonging? What thoughts arise about not belonging?
- What do you want to belong to?

How are you that already, living into that already?

What gets in the way? How do you get in the way of that?



Belonging is Collective

“The heart sends more signals to the brain than the brain sends to the heart. The electromagnetic field generated by the heart is the most powerful rhythmic energy field produced by the body.” (heartmath.com)

Feelings of anger, sadness, fear, etc. create incoherent heart rhythm patterns. When the heart gets the message that these emotions are present, triggered by a stimulus (e.g. othering, isolation) our heart and entire body system operates less rhythmically and less harmoniously.

Conversely, appreciation, joy, love, etc. create a coherent heart rhythm pattern. When the heart gets the message that these emotions are present, triggered by a stimulus (e.g. belonging) our heart and our body system operates more efficiently, effectively and harmoniously.



Belonging is Collective

- “The heart’s electromagnetic field can be detected by other individuals and can produce measurable effects in a person 5 feet away. Our data show that the heart’s electromagnetic field becomes more organized during positive emotional – heart-coherent – states.” (heartmath.com)
- So, what happens if we place our most valuable organs next to each others, if we don’t throw anyone away, and if we deal with fear?
- We unearth pathways to cultures of collective belonging



3 wishes for belonging

- Name 3 wishes or hopes you have for cultures of belonging (could be individual or collective).
- Who is at the core of those wishes and are they on short, medium or long bridges of connection?
- What's standing in the way and how do we move forward anyway?
(i.e., what is your “next most elegant step” Gibran Rivera)



Essential Questions to ask ourselves about cultures of belonging

- What does the world need now and what is your role in creating/allowing/reviving that? What does belonging have to do with that?
- How is it possible to courageously place our hearts next to other humans' hearts?
 - How is it possible to share, rather than hoard, coherent heart rhythm patterns?
- What does it mean to not throw anyone away?
- What do you want to belong to? How are you living into that already? What gets in the way?
- How can we say yes to belonging that honors our interconnectedness, our uniqueness and liberates us individually and collectively...making space for who we are, where we have been and how we want to be?



Some Guiding Principles for honoring cultures of belonging

(aka racial equity principles from drworks)

- Know Ourselves–What we know, don't know, where we have expertise, where we need help, our strengths, our challenges and struggles
- Use Organizing Mind–What we care about, where we have influence, agency and power (power with, not power over), consideration of short, medium and long bridges of connection
- Think & Act Collectively–connecting with others to combine influence, agency and power, considering how we connect our bridges with others
- Take Risks & Learn From Mistakes–thinking and acting collectively with others to consider how we can engage thoughtfully where we might not have otherwise; understanding that intention is not necessarily the same as impact; realizing, acknowledging, accepting when we make mistakes and learning to do better
- Seek Connection & Choose Love Over Fear–taking risks (see above) and examining embodied wisdom to understand and disrupt fear



May we all be well,



Krista

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