Building Trauma-Informed Organizations: Key Takeaways from a talk by Dr. Alisha Moreland-Capuia Transcript

(Transcripts are generated by AI and may contain errors)

Introduction to Dr. Alicia Moreland-Capuya

Hi, the second speaker at the 2024 Institute of Coaching Conference was Dr. Alicia Moreland-Capuya, who is from my hometown of Portland. If you get to see this, Alicia, hey, let's have coffee.

She gave us an amazing talk about building trauma-informed organizations and people, why healing must be the way forward, and I am just so enthusiastically aligned with all that she shared in this talk.

So I'm going to give you some of my notes and takeaways. First, I want to mention that Dr. Morelin Capuya I wrote a book called The Trauma of Racism, The People and Systems Fear Built.

I am excited to find that book. Excited. First, she introduced us to the concept and idea that won't be new to you, that safety is the first thing that we appraise in any new setting.

Seeking, being, feeling safe. And it's something that everyone deserves to feel.

Safety as the Foundation for Thriving

Am I safe? Am i loved? am I cared for? Then I can do my work. Then i can be productive. then I Can thrive then i Can actually be creative call back to the creativity from tomorrow mind I love this quote she shared the work of a lifetime is regulating our emotions and considering others and those are things that are important to create a container the causes and conditions of safety for everyone involved fear is a universal neurobiological response experience.

Fear that never turns off or that doesn't turn off in a reasonable time frame is trauma. She showed us a slide. This is your brain on fear. It was fantastic.

And then traumatization occurs when the resources internally and externally are not A reflection question, are our systems and organizations built on our greatest hopes and aspirations, or are they built from our biggest fears?

I would say that we say we're built by our aspirations but we act as if we are built with our great fears. Something to ponder and reflect on deeply, I think for all people leading in organizations and building organizations.

Next, Dr. Morellin Capuya shared isolation and sensory deprivation dysregulate our stress response.

Fear, Trauma, and Organizational Systems

She shared a Gabor Mate quote that the opposite of addiction is connection. So instead of asking why is this person in addiction, we should be asking, why the deep emotional pain that resulted in the addiction?

Why stress manifests sometimes as addiction. I love this pearl too. We are designed to be interdependent, not independent, codependent or fully dependent.

So a little more on the trauma of exclusion. She asked us to imagine when we were kids playing kickball, being afraid that we weren't gonna be picked for the team, right?

Everybody was probably there at some point or at least feared being there. When we are excluded or we simply have the internal story the narrative, the perception that we're being excluded.

Three minutes of simulated experience resulted in negative affect that was detectable months later in an experiment where somebody had a simulated exclusionary.

So everybody wants to, needs to belong. They want to belonging and they need to matter. And that is why healing organizations and people in this way is critical and urgent.

Belonging, Exclusion, and Intergenerational Healing

We talked about intergenerational, transgeneratorial trauma and healing and I loved that she brought forward the concept that not only can trauma be passed on generationally, so can healing.

These are like, we can create these new environments, memory markers in our DNA and RNA as part of our embodiment experience to move forward and to contribute our healing in the arc of human history.

Signs of suffering, SOS, my brain made it. Racism and phobias, transphobia, homophobia, xenophobia. These are all needless stress, trauma, and suffering.

She called out an article I have not read. looked up yet, but I will mention it for you, an article about hate and counter-transference, which sounds fascinating, and racism consciously denied but subconsciously applied.

When she's explaining this to folks who have a question mark over their head, she says, have you ever had someone tell you that you were amazing but they didn't treat you like it?

Love it, love it so much. She talked about burnout and secondary trauma, which are always co-occurring. And I like this definition of occupational-specific dysphoria as burnout.

Burnout, occupational specific dysphoria. A protracted psychological and physical exhaustion as it relates to work. Here are some sub points to that. One, emptying the tank continuously is not sustainable.

It makes completely logical sense and having it framed in that succinct language is so good. And then she reached to these prolonged responses to chronic interpersonal stressors on the job.

Burnout, Secondary Trauma, and Compassion

I love this list. Unresolved conflict. Work overload. more to do than there is time or resources to it. Lack of control, AKA autonomy. Insufficient recognition or reward, including but not limited to financial reward.

Decisions that are perceived as fair and equitable versus unfair and unequitable. And when there's a values conflict on the job, so moral distress, you're being asked to something outside of your moral boundary set.

She also shared that secondary trauma presents a lot like PTSD. We have a a of the same neurobiological responses. That was fascinating. And she shared with us a book by Lipski named Trauma Stewardship that Dr.

Moreland Capuya says is so important to her that she reads it every year. Traum exposure changes us fundamentally. It sounds like this book is just super, super rich.

And then we talked a bit about the science of compassion, how compassion is beneficial not only to the recipient, but especially to The Giver of Compassion, and that compassion increases vicarious optimism.

She recommends that we find ways to brush up against joy at least daily. And I love this so much. Just so many beautiful one line takeaways. She recommend in our orienting to healing from trauma in organizations and individuals that reorient and reimagine that intentionally shift from transactional to relational.

I think this is especially interesting because the transactional relational spectrum, especially in organizations, is a complex area where I there's so much thinking and working and writing to do.

Listening is the form of love.

Relational Leadership and Trauma-Informed Organizations

Success versus mastery. So this having grace for our failures again. Success versus mastery. So success is hitting the arrow or the dart at the bullseye.

One time that is success. But mastery is grouping, a tight grouping. When you are able to hit near the mark repeatedly because you have practiced. Sometimes success it's just a lucky shot, but when you're mad, when have a mastery, there's more reliability in the system and important that we do have grace for missing the work.

We have to have grace for missing the mark in trauma-informed spaces because we will. And we need to focus on the effort as well as the impact. She shared this concept of power circles and it comes from 360s where, where do you see yourself in relationship to the power source versus how do other people see you?

Because oftentimes we are in leadership positions even when we deny to ourselves that we're in a leadership position. So this is an interesting way to have a conversation about our localization of power in a less threatening way.

Organizations like people can be traumatized. Organization like can heal. They can grieve. They can be treated as living things that need nurturing, not just machines.

So I love that. And she left us with this question, what do you require to feel safe enough to do your job? That we can ask ourselves that and that we ask those that are in connection with in work to start there.

Start from at least what you feel you need in order to be safe. And then take that information and do something with it and then pay it forward and ask somebody else so that we have an ongoing ripple of how can I help you feel safe enough to do your job?

Thank you, Dr. Alicia Moreland-Cafuia for this wisdom. I'll see you later.