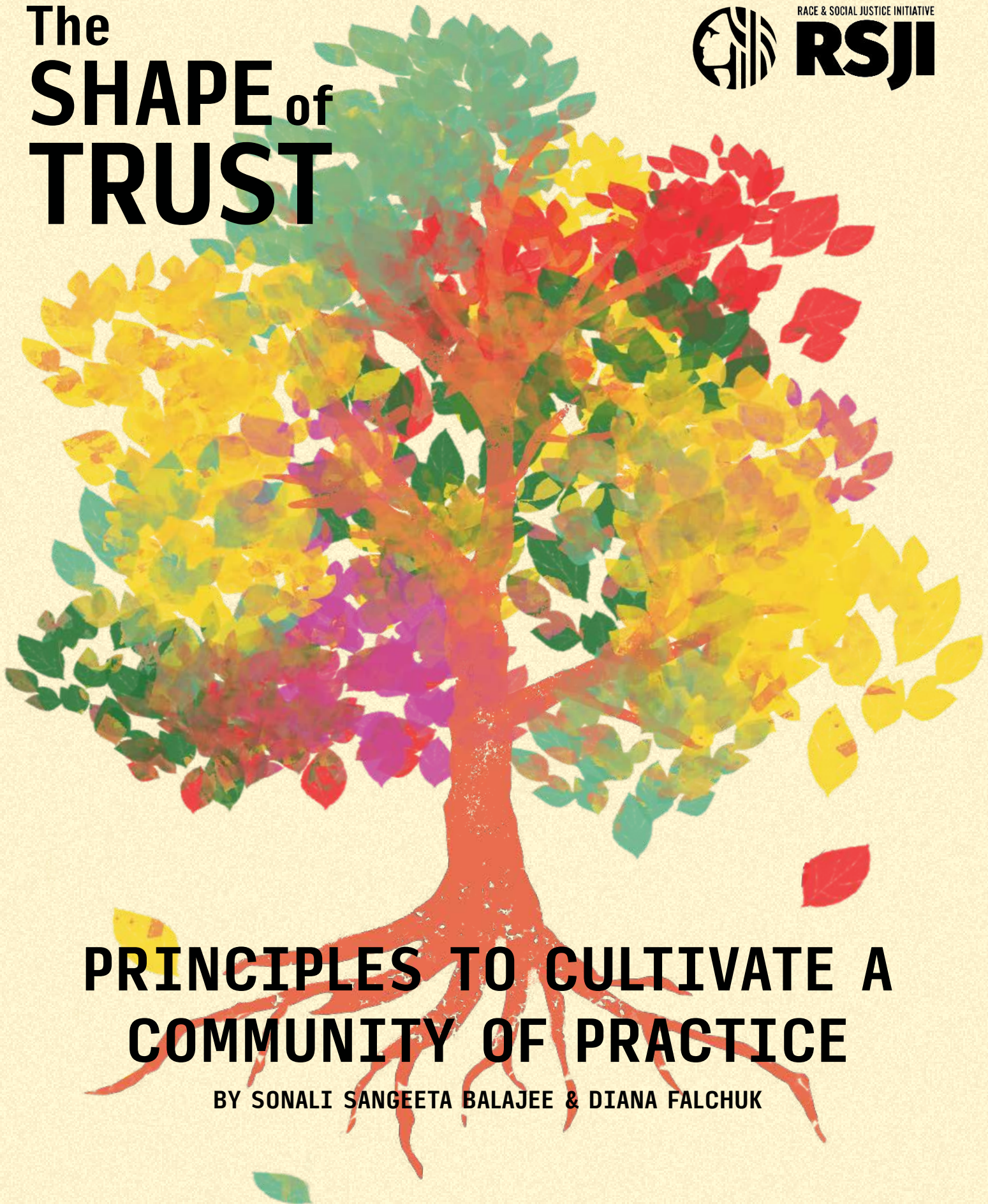


The **SHAPE** of **TRUST**



RACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE

RSJI



PRINCIPLES TO CULTIVATE A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

BY SONALI SANGEETA BALAJEE & DIANA FALCHUK



WHAT

An interactive drawing and discussion activity to explore cultivating principles. Principles are ways of being and relating that help us nurture and maintain a community of practice. A community of practice is a group learning environment oriented toward relationship, health and wellbeing, adaptivity, authentic presence with difficult content, and space for personal and collective growth. This activity can be adapted for live, virtual learning.

Number of Participants

5–40. This activity works well in smaller groups and will require more time for larger groups.

Time

20 minutes minimum. Timing for each step is flexible, based on the needs of the group and overall facilitation plan. Some suggestions are provided. Total time will depend on format (in-person, virtual, or hybrid), number of participants, and other factors such as where you want to focus learning. We expect that experienced facilitators will know how to adjust and limit time as needed.

This Activity Spotlight is a component of The Shape of Trust Video Facilitation Guide by the City of Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). For information on the facilitation experience recommended for those using the Guide, a glossary of terms, and tips to support collective health, wellbeing, and belonging – in particular of BIPOC – please download the Guide from the RSJI website.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

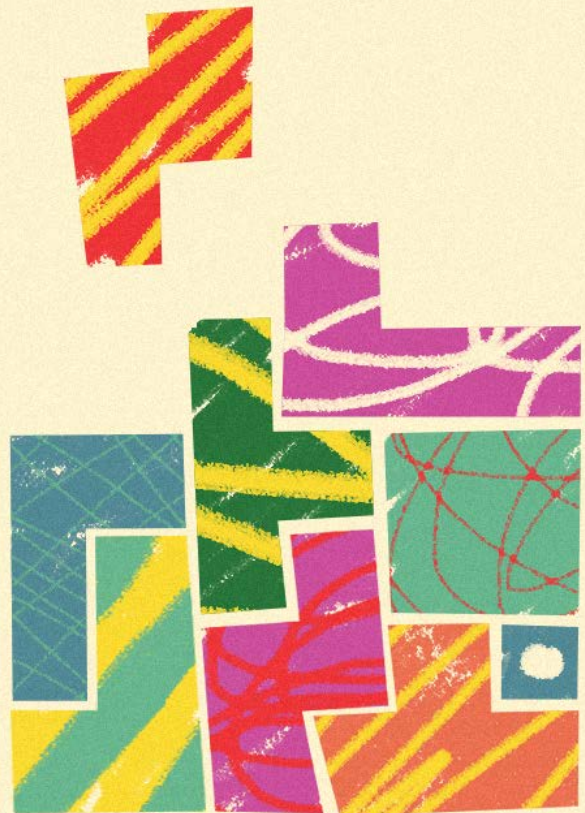
Define what a community of practice looks like.

Understand the purpose of cultivating principles in communities of practice, as well as the relationship between these principles.

Name a cultivating principle that they want to bring into their workplace relationships and work.

Share how it feels in their bodies to concentrate on that cultivating principle, using drawing as a tool.

Describe how cultivating principles support their specific group in being a community of practice.



Participant Preparation

If you are facilitating online, ask participants to come to the session with 2 pieces of blank paper, as well as drawing implements such as pens, markers, or colored pencils.

Invite participants to read these two written pieces in advance:

- [On Adaptive Capacity and Resilience](#) by Richard Evans in ArtsFwd
- Untitled poem by Beth Strano

*there's no such thing
as a safe space
we exist in the real world
and we all carry scars
and have cause wounds
this space
seeks to turn down
the volume of the
world outside and
amplify the voices
that have to fight to
be heard elsewhere
this space will not
be perfect. it will
not always be what
we wish it to be. but
it will be ours together and we
will work on it side by side.*

Marika Swan, *Deep In Our Bones*, 2015,
Limited edition giclée, 30.75"x24.63"

Seattle Public Utilities 1% for Art Portable
Works Collection



Facilitation Materials

- Cultivating Principles list.
- Untitled poem by Beth Strano.
- [On Adaptive Capacity and Resilience](#) by Richard Evans in ArtsFwd.
- If you are facilitating in person, bring blank paper and drawing implements such as pens, markers, or pencils.
- The Shape of Trust Video Facilitation Guide, "Glossary".

CULTIVATING PRINCIPLES LIST

A few elements on this list are adapted from "[Respect Differences? Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education](#)" by Özlem Sensoy and Robin DiAngelo. We recommend you check it out.

- 1 Encourage and practice bravery** in order to foster the **emotional and physical safety** that is necessary to build trust.
- 2 Pause, feel, and reflect.** Check in with your body (breath, muscles, gut, head, limbs, etc.). **Listen without judgment to what your body** may have to tell you. Give care to parts that feel strained, constricted, heavy. Appreciate parts that feel at-ease, expansive, calm, settled.
- 3 Embrace vulnerability and discomfort** while sharing, learning, and listening.
- 4 Notice and stay aware of your own discomfort**, and defensive or deflective reactions. Pause to be with those feelings and to reflect on what those feelings may have to teach you.
- 5 Embrace and nurture creativity** – risk taking, experimentation, grappling with the unknown, emergent thoughts, feelings and connections – in yourself, others, and processes.
- 6 Be mindful of social and hierarchical positionality** (race, gender, etc.) as you determine **whether to move up or back** in relationship to others and in particular moments.
- 7 Listen actively – to others and to your own body – to understand and check your own biases.** Get comfortable with listening, processing, and potentially not having a response. This is especially important when we are making decisions or feel pressure related to time and expectations.
- 8 Consider the feelings of others.** Stay mentally, physically, and spiritually present as we listen and take in each other's feelings. Approach each other with grace while staying honest about the context of social and hierarchical positionality.
- 9 Wrestle with the tension of moving at the pace of trust**, which can be counter to the pace of our institution or organization.
- 10 Think and act eco-systemically.** Begin with and return to the interconnected whole of all living systems (people, animals, communities, Earth). Practice recognizing tendencies to put your own personal, team, or departmental needs ahead of the needs of the whole.
- 11 Honor confidentiality.** People should trust that what is said in this group stays in this group, even as we bring the learning into our lives and influence others.

HOW IT WORKS

ASK / EXPLAIN (10 min)

What does a community of practice mean to you? Ask a few people to share.

One way to think of a community of practice is as a group learning environment oriented toward relationship, health and wellbeing, adaptivity, authentic presence with difficult content, and space for personal and collective growth.

What would be required to have a community of practice in the workplace?

Being part of a community of practice can support greater sustainability of our anti-racism efforts in uncertain, radically changing, and often politically tumultuous times, especially for BIPOC communities and other communities experiencing oppression.

EXPLAIN / READ / REFLECT (20 min)

Review the Cultivating Principles list. Share that this list is an initial offering for this group. These are ways of being and relating that help us nurture and maintain a community of practice. These are different from group agreements in that they are focused on how we can live into flexible and complex ways of being and relating.

These ways of being support collective health and wellbeing as we confront, interrupt, dismantle, and heal from the system and culture of white supremacy. Centering these principles also helps build our health-and-liberation-focused practices during times of extreme environmental, political, and social shifts.

Invite participants to take turns reading the principles out loud.

Reflect with the group

- 1 What are these cultivating principles asking of individuals and groups?
- 2 How are the concepts explored in the article we read, "On Adaptive Capacity and Resilience" by Richard Evans — uncertainty, unfolding, being present with the moment, adaptability — apparent in these principles?
- 3 How might you bring these principles into your daily work environment?
- 4 For voluntary, optional BIPOC caucuses or all-BIPOC groups:
Which of the cultivating principles help you amplify the empowering aspects of your racial identity and experience?
- 5 Which of them help you be with the aspects of racialization that negatively affect you?

HOW IT WORKS (continued)

CREATE (5 min)

About 2 minutes of facilitated guidance. 3 minutes of silent drawing on their own.

- Ask everyone to start by making a scribble or abstract doodle in the middle of their page.
- Ask each person to choose a cultivating principle from the list that they want to bring into their workplace relationships right now.
- Ask them to write it at the bottom of their page.

- Ask participants to hold that cultivating principle present in their mind and heart and invite them to add colors, shapes, lines, and textures to the doodle so that it starts to convey the feeling of their cultivating principle. Let them know that this might or might not take on a recognizable shape or symbol. It might become something totally abstract that they've never seen. Tell them this is about exploration, starting with whatever they have and wherever they're at, and shaping from there.

There is no right answer. Let them know that whatever they are feeling — challenged, weird, liberated, frustrated, joyful, bored — they can simply notice all of that and it is okay. The process and what they realize during it are as important as what they create.

SHARE (5 min)

Invite a few people to share their drawing, the cultivating principle they chose, and how they feel their drawing expresses it.

EXPLAIN/REFLECT/SHARE/ADD TO THE LIST (20 min)

Share a synopsis of the below instructions before participants break into small groups. Each small group should be prepared to share back with the whole group.

Share their drawings with each other, so everyone can see.

Share their responses to these prompts:

- Why did you choose this cultivating principle to work with?
- How did it feel to do this activity? What did you notice about the ease or tension of doing it?

- How did you engage with your original doodle to arrive at this drawing as an expression of your cultivating principle? (You might consider what Richard Evans describes in the article you read for today, "On Adaptive Capacity and Resilience.")
- What parallels do you notice between this process of personalizing your cultivating principle drawing and the cultivating principles themselves?

Next, the entire small group will review the list again. What would your group like to add to the list (either a new principle or an adaptation of existing principles) that will support this group in being a community of practice?