

Tool for Building Stamina in Anti-Racism Practice: Moving from Protection to Connection

White people often self-protect in conversations about race and racism, which upholds the deeply entrenched culture of white supremacy.

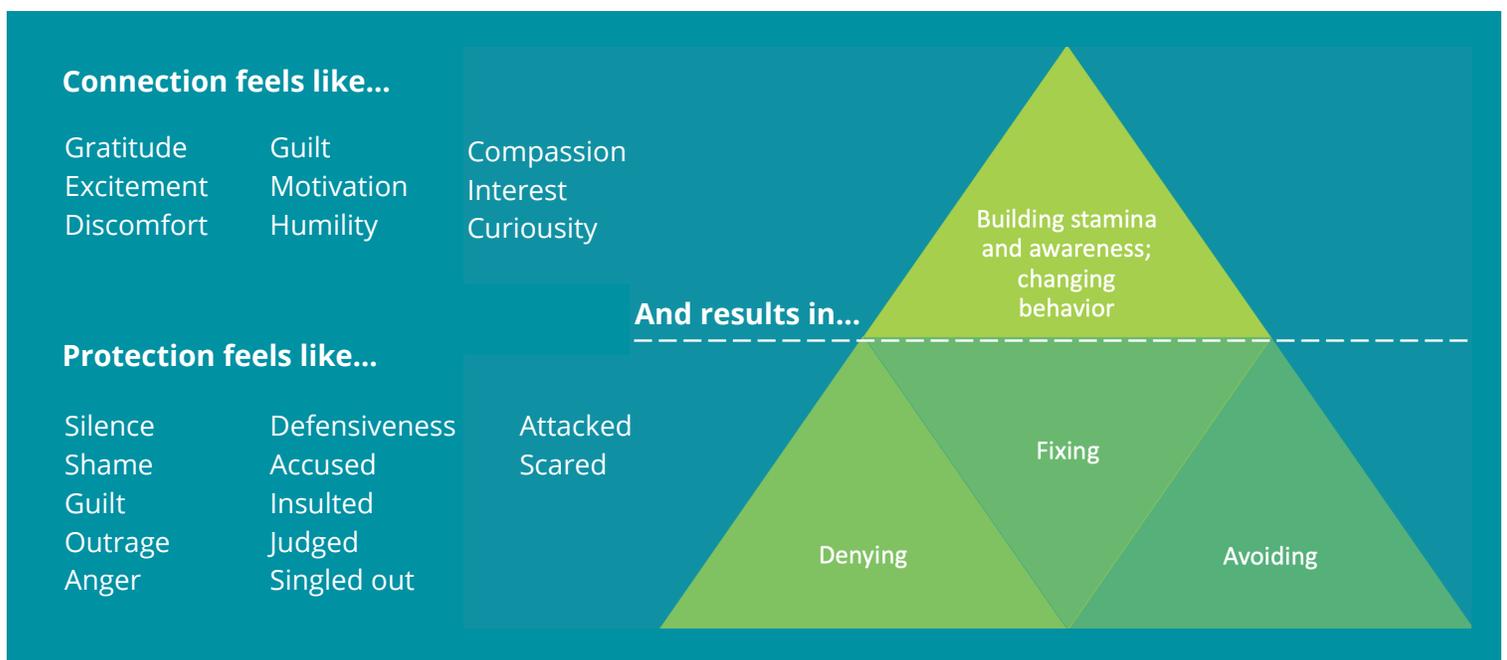


Regardless of intention, these protective responses can have damaging and traumatic effects on Black, Indigenous, People of Color.



The practice of challenging these defense mechanisms and moving toward connection with others is key to building stamina for difficult conversations.

This Tool for Building Stamina (inspired by Robin DiAngelo's book, *White Fragility and grounded in our understanding of the biology of trauma) has provided a framework for our team at Alia to lean into the discomfort of tough conversations and to build connection with each other.**



White people, to establish self-awareness during difficult conversations:

- 1 Name what you feel in your body. Do I feel defensive or connected?
- 2 Orient your narrative (connection or protection). What story am I telling myself?
- 3 Write down what you are feeling. Use the next page as a guide to review what you have written and identify where you are.
- 4 If you are coming from a place of protection, use the chart and do the interpersonal work suggested to get you to a place of connection.

*DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White Fragility: Why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.

Self-Awareness in Anti-Racism Work

Move from **Protection**

Denying/Invalidating

If you find yourself thinking...this isn't true, because...

Your inner narrative may sound like:

"I know where this is coming from and the story behind it."

"This is one individual's opinion."

"That's not what I meant."

"That wasn't my intention."

PAUSE

Questions for reflection:

Are you filling in the blanks and making the case for why feedback isn't true?

Are you making a judgement about the validity of the feedback?

Are you valuing a belief in your good intentions over the impact you may be having?

Avoiding/Redirecting

If you find yourself focusing on something outside the content of what you're hearing...

Your inner narrative may sound like:

"Why didn't he/she bring this up sooner?"

"XYZ [specific detail] isn't accurate."

"That's not exactly how I said that."

"You sound upset, let's talk about why this is so hard for you."

PAUSE

Questions for reflection:

Does who gives feedback or how it's given make it untrue?

Is redirecting the conversation away from the content mitigating your discomfort?

Am I focusing too narrowly on what I don't agree with (invalidating its entirety) rather than considering what may be true?

Fixing

If you find yourself jumping to solutions or fixing without an understanding of the impact...

Your inner narrative may sound like:

"What do you want me to do about it?"

"Can you give me some solutions?"

"That's an easy fix...here's what we should do."

PAUSE

Questions for reflection:

Am I redirecting the conversation to ease my own discomfort?

Do I fully understand what is being said?

Am I validating the harm and trauma this may have caused?

To **Connection**

Questions for reflection:

How might this be true? How might I benefit from this? How might I be contributing? What do I need to know to fully understand what's being said? How will my behavior change based on my new understanding? What about my reflection could move the conversation forward?

Your response may sound like:

A reflection - An apology - Listening Processing - Seeking more understanding Grappling - Engaging - Believing/Validating

