

COMMON GROUND USA

THE COMMON GROUND APPROACH

PEACEMAKING IN DIVERSE CONGREGATIONS

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Common Ground USA



What are we here to do?

- Leave with actionable tools for you & your congregations
- Adopt an “always learning” posture
- Commit to 501c3 friendly discussions

What are we *not* here to do?

- Get mired in the problem
- Adopt an “always knowing” posture
- Advocate for or against a particular candidate, party, or legislation



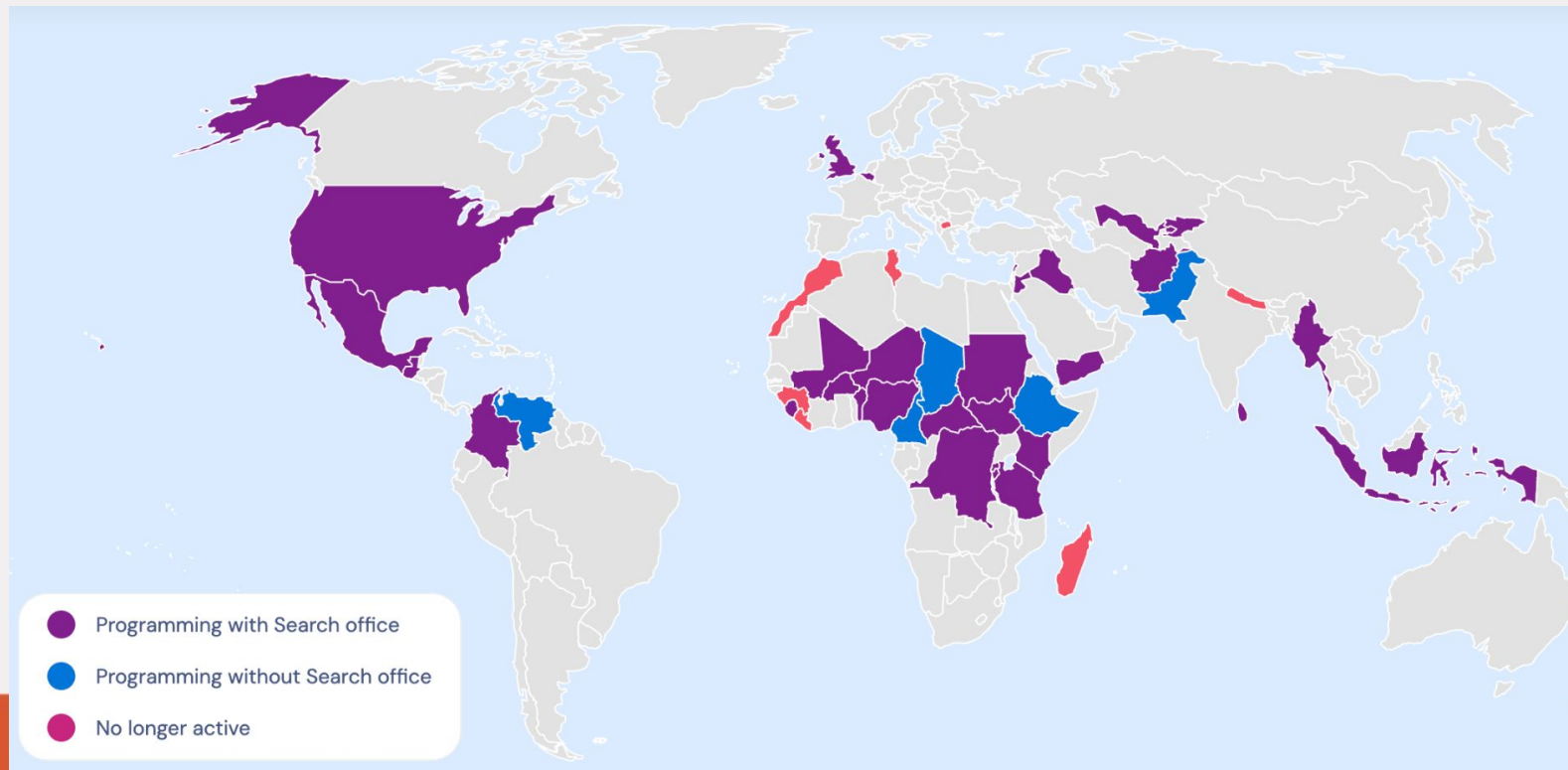
Who We Are

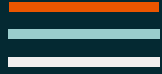


Search *for* Common Ground



Search for Common Ground is the world's oldest and largest peacebuilding organization. Our mission is to *transform the way people deal with conflict*, away from adversarial approaches toward cooperative solutions.

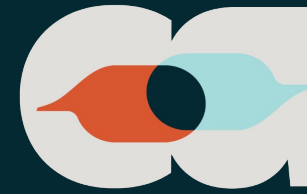




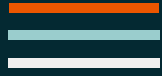
We are a nonpartisan, 501(c)(3) initiative of Search for Common Ground. We support collaboration across differences to address our greatest challenges and to build an America where we can all belong and thrive.

Our programs aim to:

- Reduce violence to prevent harms
- Decrease polarization by strengthening social fabric and building belonging
- Increase leadership capacity to manage conflict and difference



COMMON GROUND 



THE RESILIENT STATES PROJECT

The Resilient States Project is an initiative of [Common Ground USA](#) to rebuild social cohesion and help our state heal from toxic division.

We do this by **preventing, defusing, and responding to political violence** – reducing the chilling effect it has on society; and by **equipping public leaders** – to work across differences and model civility with their words and actions.

You can learn more about us here:

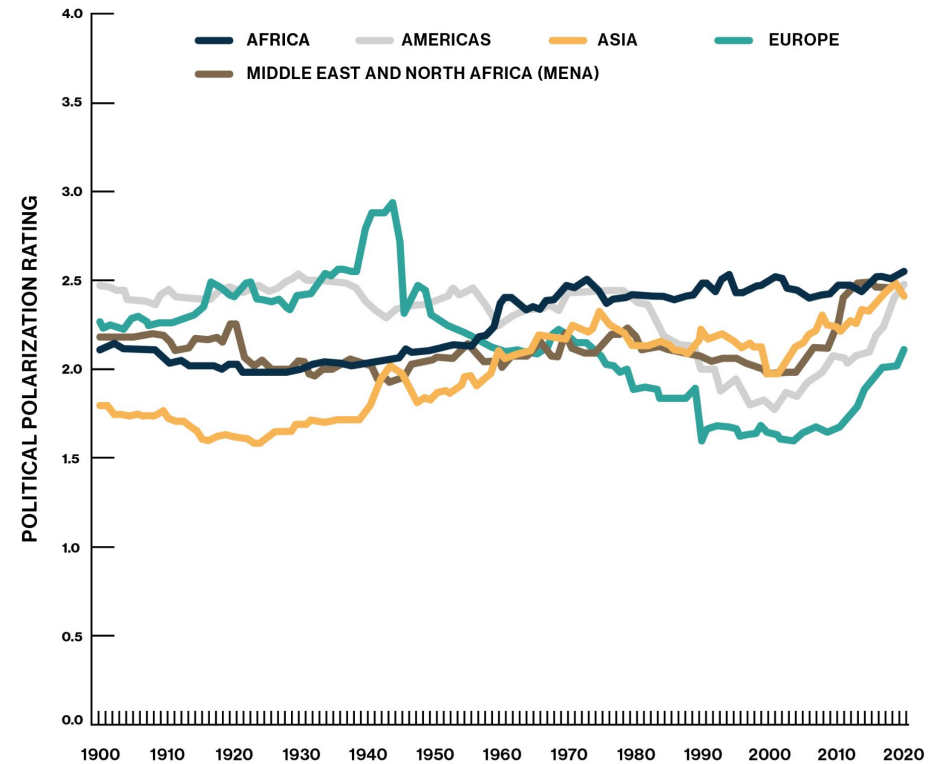
<https://www.cg-usa.org/resilient-states-project/pennsylvania>



**We live in
an age of extreme
global polarization.**



Political Polarization by World Region Since 1900



SOURCE: Michael Coppedge, John Gerring, Carl Hebrink Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, and Jan Teorell et al., "V-Dem Dataset Version 11.1," V-Dem, March 2021, <https://www.v-dem.net/en/data/archive/previous-data/v-dem-dataset/>.

Excluding Europe during WWI and WWII, every region is experiencing record or near-record levels of polarization—with dramatic increases in the last 20 years.



When you think about peacemaking, what Scriptures / stories inspire you?

Build out a repository. Refer back to it.



Search for
Common
Ground



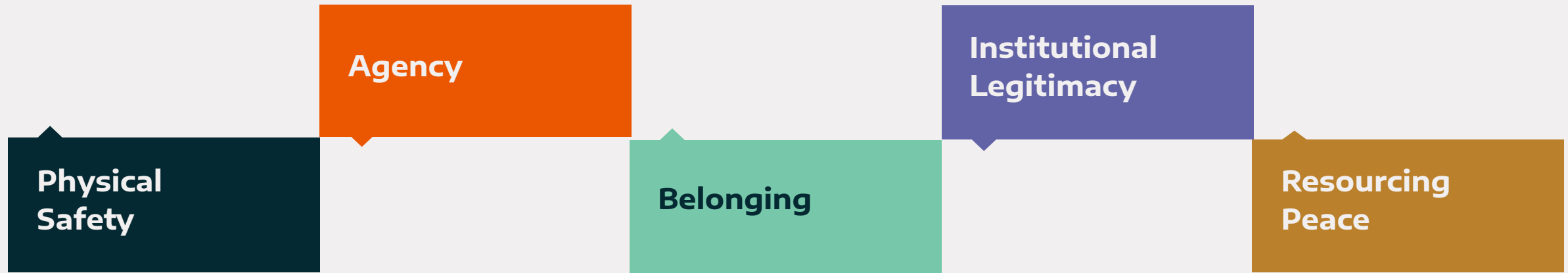
What is peace?

Peace in our world is not the absence of conflict (known as a negative peace); it is the presence of justice, belonging, *wholeness*, and fellowship (positive peace).



VITAL SIGNS OF PEACE

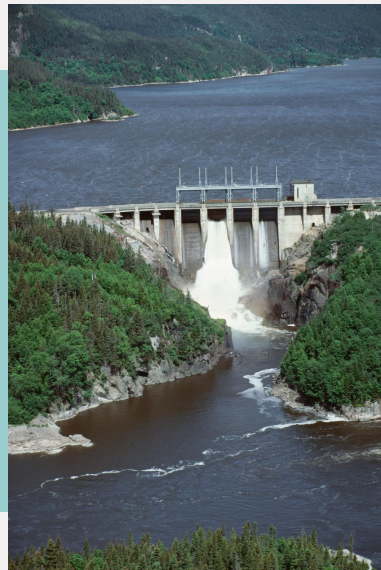
 Societal Vital Signs





Living amidst conflict is hard, but it is also an opportunity — like water:

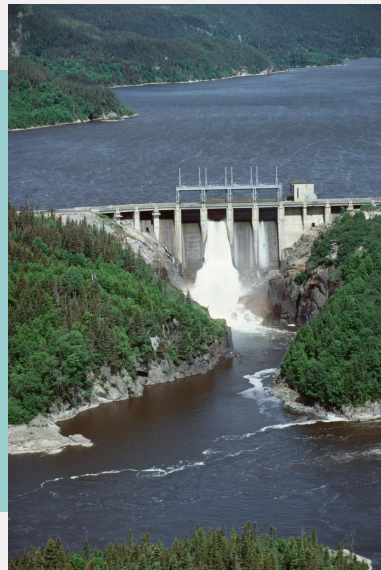
Harnessed well, it can generate creative solutions that unlock a better future for all.





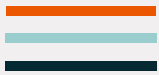
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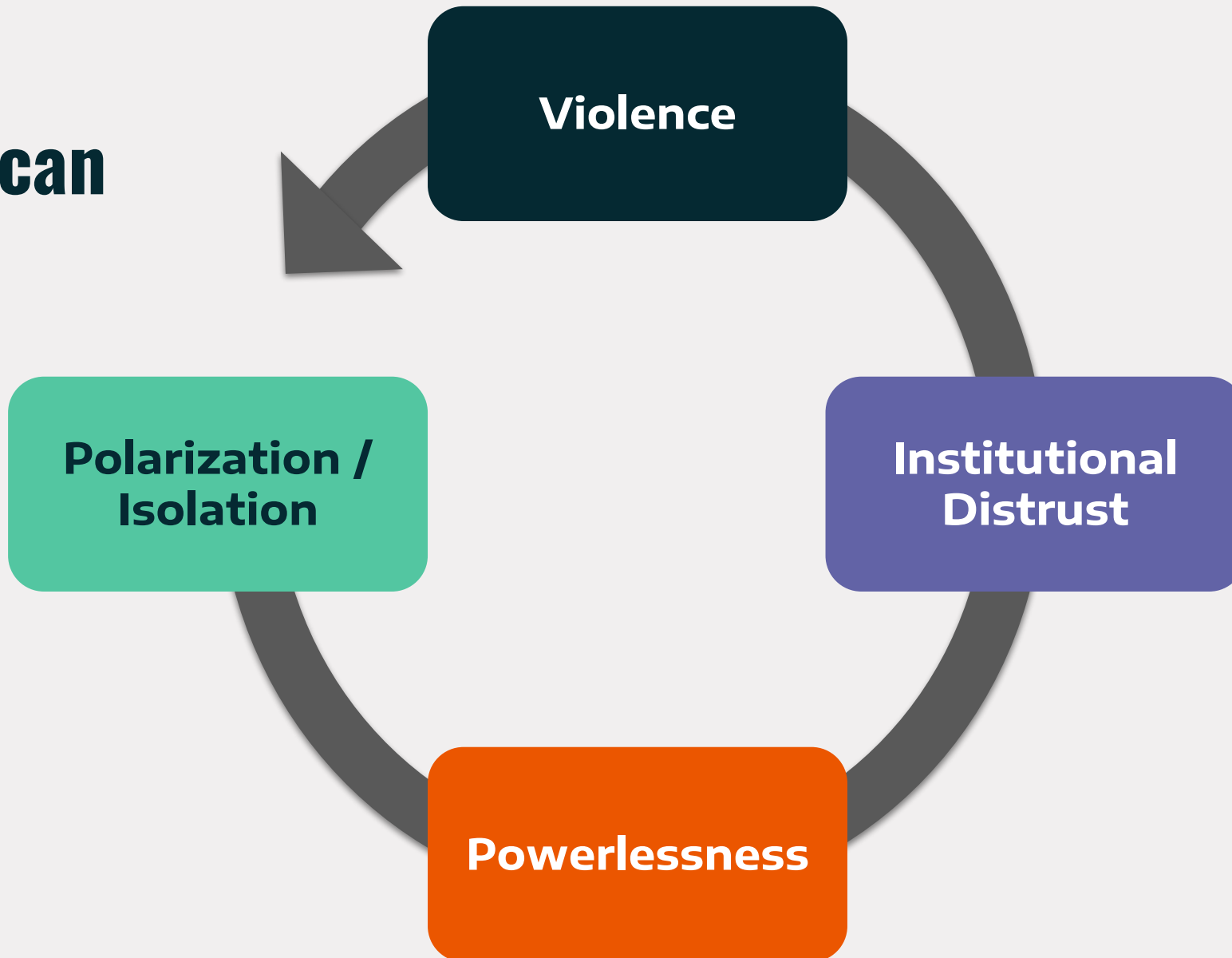


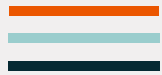
Left unchecked, it destroys all progress in its path.



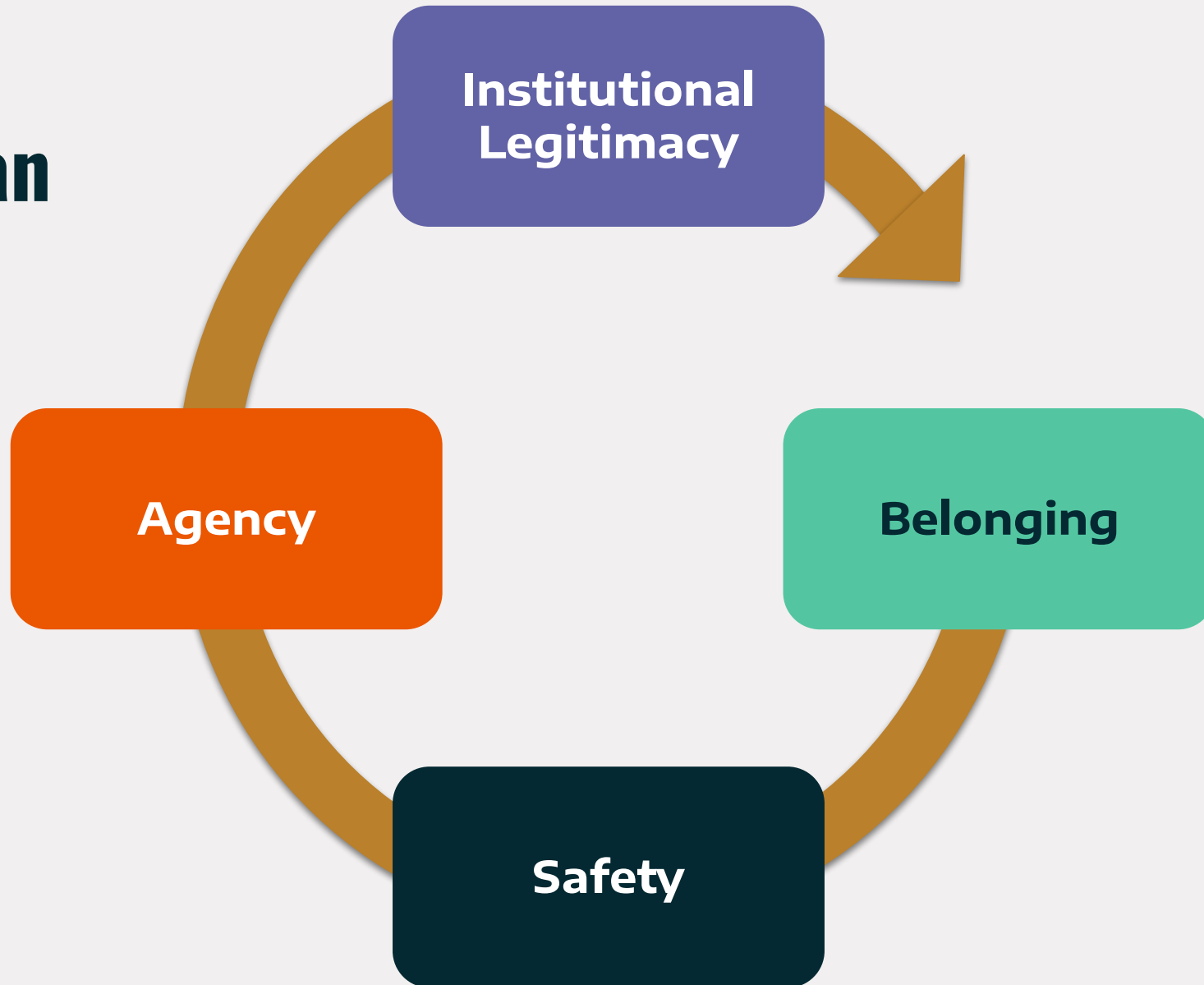


Violence can often be cyclical...





**...but so can
peace.**





Pair & Share | Large Group

Any reactions to this cycle? Have you seen this play out in your own congregation or community - either in negative or positive ways?

How do the vital signs fit with your definition of peace?



THREE TOOLS FOR PEACE

TOOL #1

“Imago Dei”
Conversations

TOOL #2

Map Your
Community

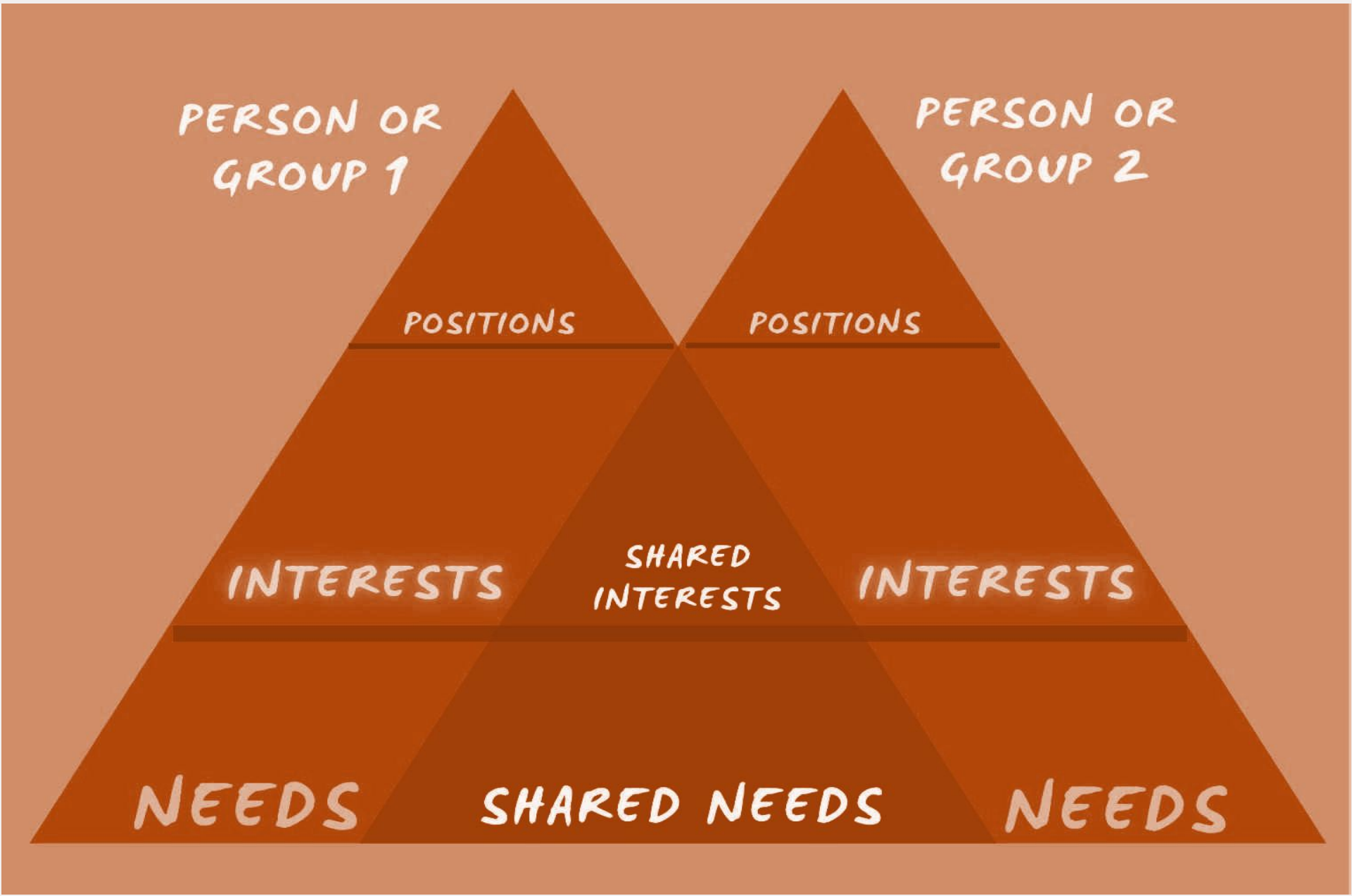
TOOL #3

Build an
“Avengers team”



TOOL #1: Imago Dei Conversations

- **Practice active, empathetic listening** – Notice words, expressions, & behaviors. Mirror, summarize, & reframe. Check in with yourself and ask: am I listening to understand, or am I preparing my response while they speak?
- **Ask curious, open-ended questions** – These do not have 'yes/no' answer and do not contain assumptions/leading.
- **Consider that listening and understanding another viewpoint is not the same as endorsing that viewpoint.** At the same time, hold tight to the values you set around unity and constructive disagreement.
- **Prepare to experience heightened emotions.** Make a strategy ahead of time: How do I want to respond when I hear something that offends me? How can I maintain a non-anxious presence?
- **Be aware of power imbalances** – Create a space where everyone can express themselves authentically.
- **Orient towards shared values** – Remind yourself and others that you are in shared fellowship.



*Adapted from the work of mediator William Ury



TOOL #2: Map Your Community

Remember:

The people who are leaders are not always the people in charge.

GATEKEEPERS

Who gets things done internally

BROKERS

Who gets things done outside (w/ community leaders)

CARETAKERS

Who do people turn to in a crisis for help or to convene

FLAK-CATCHERS

Gather and disseminate the 'tea'



TOOL #3: Build An “Avengers Team”

- Gather people from across divides to collaborate on a shared issue
- Involve all people affected by the issue, not just those who agree
- Take stances that promote the dignity of all people affected





Small Group Discussion (2-3 ppl)

Consider the **3 peacemaking tools** we discussed:

- Imago dei conversations
- Mapping the community
- Building an “Avengers team”

Which of the three feels the most possible for you to implement right away?

Are you already using some of these tools? How?

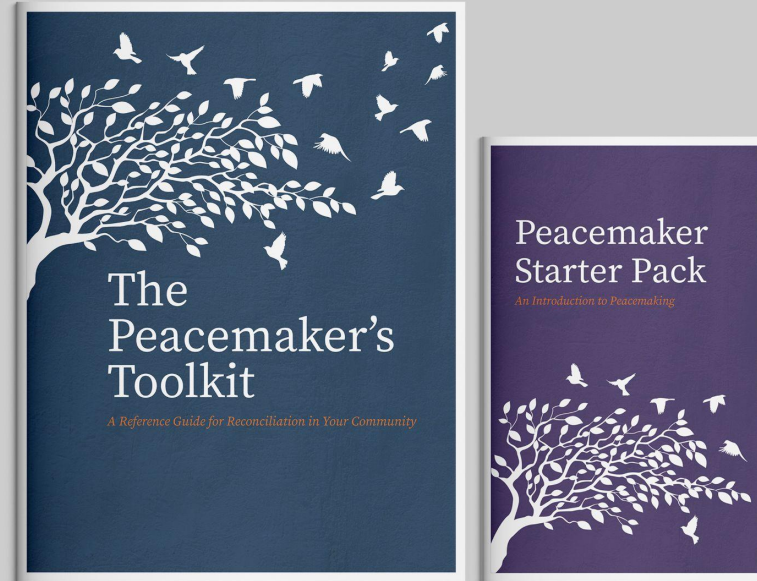
How can start (or continue) putting these tools into practice?

Common Ground USA's Peacemaker's Toolkit

Comprehensive guide for Christian faith leaders to discern and act on the dynamics that foster peace and resilience to division

To access:

<https://www.sfcg.org/peacemakerstoolkit/>

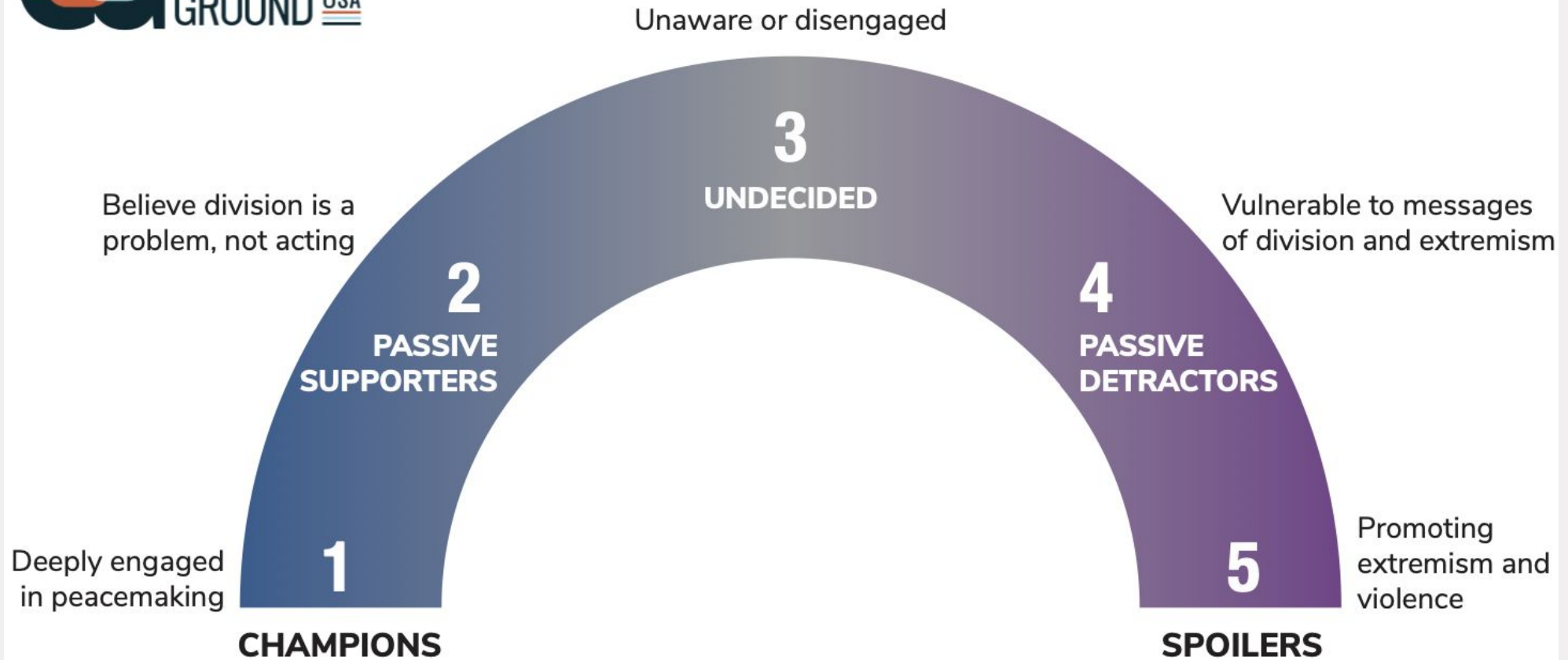


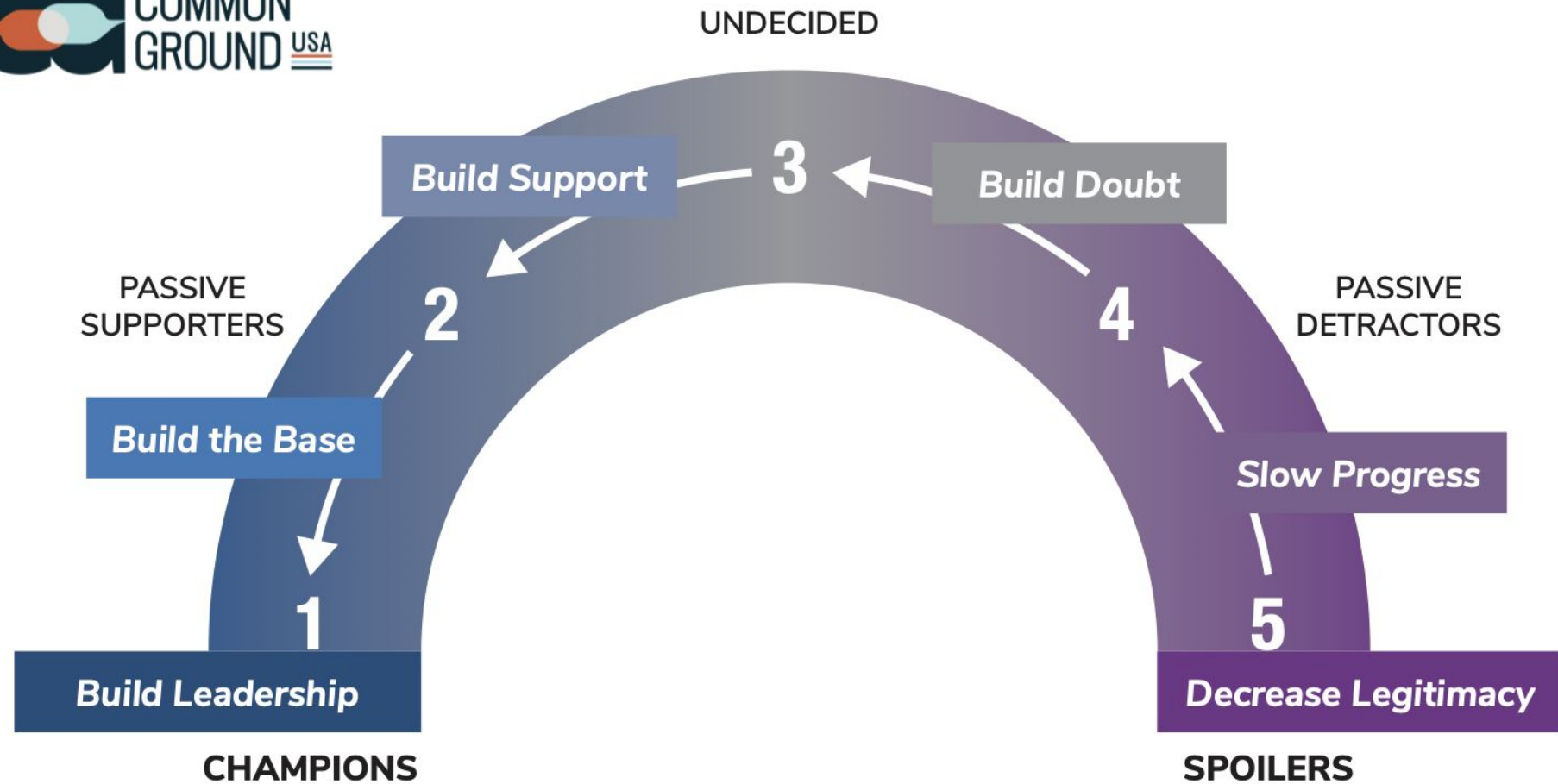


Additional Resources

Slides on burnout

Slides on the 'spectrum of engagement' (credit: CG-USA)







THE PEACE CYCLE

***Build Belonging**

Acts 15:36-41, 2 Timothy 4:11

***Shore up Safety**

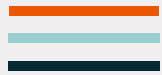
Isaiah 2:1-5, 11:1-11

***Activate Agency**

Luke 19:1-10

***Improve Institutions**

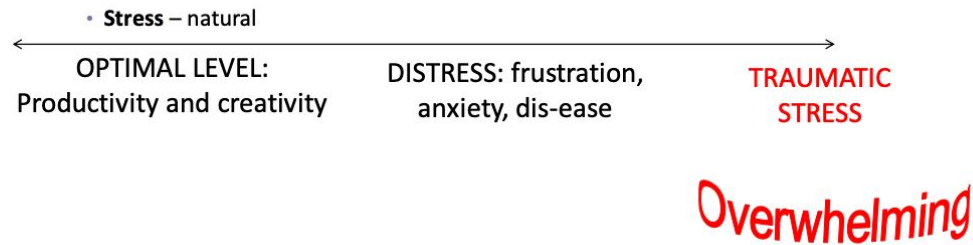
Jeremiah 29:4-14



Self awareness - triggers

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Stress and Trauma



*Traumatic stress occurs when our ability to respond to threat is **overwhelmed**.*

Dr. Peter Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 1997.

- What issues or opinions that come up in conversations trigger a strong emotional reaction or trauma for me?
- What are the signs I've been triggered?



Self awareness - burnout

“Burnout is defined as cumulative stress from the demands of daily life; a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by a depletion of the ability to cope with one’s environment ...” - Christina Maslach, [Burnout: The Cost of Caring](#)

- Signs of burnout
 - Loss of perspective, hopelessness
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Inefficacy

Common Responses to High Stress and/or Trauma

Self Test: Put a check beside the responses that describe you.

After experiencing a traumatic event, or in response to cumulative stressors, it is common -- and normal -- to experience a wide range of emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual reactions. These responses may appear immediately after the event(s) *or some time later*. **These are normal reactions to abnormal situations.** The following are some of the most common responses:

Emotional	Cognitive (Thinking)	Behavioral (doing)	Physical	Spiritual	Societal Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • Terror • Anxiety • Panic / Paranoia • Anger / Rage • Apprehension • Depression • Vengefulness • Shame • Guilt • Sadness • Grief • Emotional shock • Emotional outbursts • Loss of emotional control • Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness • Feeling numb • Irritability • COURAGE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confusion • Nightmares • Hyper-vigilance • Suspiciousness • Flashbacks • Overly sensitive • Difficulty making decisions, spacey • Poor concentration • Memory problems • Shortened attention span • Critical, blaming • Poor problem solving and abstract thinking • Preoccupied with the event(s): inability to recall all or parts of the event • Disoriented to person, place or time • Heightened or lowered awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Withdrawal • Self harm • Overwork • Antisocial acts • Inability to rest, pacing • Hyper-alertness • Erratic movement • Suspiciousness • Emotional outbursts • Change in speech patterns • Increased alcohol/drug use • Avoiding places related to the event • Difficulty writing or talking • Impaired sexual functioning • Loss or increase of appetite • Feeling clumsy • Domestic Violence • CARING FOR OTHERS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thirst/dry mouth • Twitches • Vomiting • Weakness • Chest pain • High BP • Rapid heart rate • Muscle tremors • Visual difficulties • Nausea/diarrhea • Shallow breathing • Dizziness or faintness • Chills or sweating • Easily startled • Fatigue • Changes in appetite • Sleep disturbances • Headaches • Grinding teeth • Inability to rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emptiness • Loss of meaning • Doubt • Feeling unforgiven • Martyrdom, feeling punished • Looking for magic • Loss of direction • Cynicism • Apathy • Needing to “prove” self • Alienated • Mistrust • Crisis of faith • GROWTH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apathy • Silence/impaired communication • Aggressive behavior • Isolation • Lack of empathy • Denial • Low energy/low productivity • Inflexibility • High rates of alcoholism, drug abuse • High rates of (untreated) mental health issues (depression, sexual dysfunction, etc) • High rates of stress-related health issues (and medication use) • Intergenerational transmission of pain • SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WISDOM

What You Can Do To Take Care of Yourself

The same areas in which we experience the effects of trauma are also areas to focus efforts to help ourselves cope. The following are some ideas others have found useful. Add to it those you have found helpful.

Emotional (feelings)	Cognitive (thinking)	Behavioral (doing)	Physical	Spiritual	Societal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice moderation • Allow yourself to experience what you feel (cry, shake, breathe deeply) • Label what you are experiencing • See a counselor • Be assertive when needed but check with a trusted person to see if you're overreacting • Practice relaxation response exercises • Keep open communication with others • Remember you have choices • Develop your sense of humor • Find a "vent-partner" • Use "positive" words and language • Go fishing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice moderation • Write things down • Be patient with yourself • See the decisions you are already making • Make small, daily decisions • See a counselor who does EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) • Get the most info you can to help make decisions • Plan the future • Anticipate needs • Remember you have choices • Review previous successful problem solving • Break large tasks into smaller ones • Ask for help from friends and family • Notice when things are ok • Practice gratitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice moderation • Balance time spent with others with time for yourself/with God • Limit demands on time and energy • Help others with tasks • See a counselor • Do activities that were previously enjoyable • Take trips or different routes to work • Remember you have choices • Ask others how they think you're doing • Find new activities that are enjoyable and (mildly) challenging • Set goals, have a plan • Do things that relax you and bring you joy • Get involved with others in working for a justice that restores 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice moderation • See your doctor and dentist • Exercise • Maintain regular sleep patterns • Minimize caffeine • Eat well-balanced and regular meals • Drink water • Wear less restrictive clothing • Remember you have choices • Engage in some physical luxuries- spas, massage, exercise trainers, baths • Practice relaxation response exercises • Dance • Take walks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice moderation • Discuss your beliefs with spiritual leaders • Pray • Meditate • Practice the rituals of your beliefs • See a counselor • Attend spiritual retreats • Visit new places of worship • Remember you have choices • Ask the hard questions boldly • Pass on or teach your spiritual beliefs • Read spiritual literature • Read stories of other survivors who overcame hard times • Sing • Paint • Write poetry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in healthy friendships • Share and invite stories • Share laughter • Share and co-create knowledge and learning • Avoid gossip • Practice appreciative enquiry and listening
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR IDEAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR IDEAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR IDEAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR IDEAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR IDEAS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOUR IDEAS



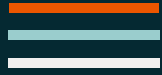
Tips for cultivating resilience

- *Make and stick to a realistic plan for engagement*
- Reflect on domains for self awareness, and develop a plan to work with triggers, burnout, stress, and trauma in advance
- Refer back regularly to your values and faith practice to ground and guide you
- Stay pragmatic about the pace and process of peaceful change
- Pace yourself; set and maintain boundaries for time online



Tips for cultivating resilience

- Engage in offline activities that energize and restore you
- Develop a strong community support network, including peers and mentors
- Step away and / or ask for backup on a difficult conversation or intervention when needed
- Make time for reflection and learning
- Celebrate small victories



You're in good company:

Extraordinary human achievements have most often been accomplished through ordinary humans.

This is the witness of Scripture - and of history.



Are you **cultivating hope?**

Are you **balancing shrewdness and innocence?**

Are you **practicing rest?**

Are you **saying “yes”** to the peacemaking that’s in front of you?

Let's Connect

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