



**Why:** Our country is in the midst of a reckoning. Powerful institutions can no longer ignore the overt and systemic inequities facing marginalized people. Higher education is at the epicenter of this societal shift. As we work to remove oppressive systems of the past, we must create and embrace lifestyles and systems that prepare us for a more just future. Enter LACE.

**What:** LACE, or Love, Authenticity, Courage, and Empathy, is a model for connecting people with values to bring about change. With LACE, change is not a checklist or a plan, but a lifestyle. By connecting the head with the heart, anti-racism and other forms of anti-oppression become who we are, not simply the work that we do. LACE breaks down as follows:

**Love:** Selfless and wholehearted concern for the welfare of others. Leading with kindness and responding with patience.

**Authenticity:** Being aware of self, others and contexts. Allowing our true selves to shine through.

**Courage:** Being who we are afraid to be and doing what we are afraid to do.

**Empathy:** Holding space for the concerns and experiences of others. Using self empathy to get in touch with and manage our own feelings, emotions and experiences.

**How:** LACE facilitates change at three levels that build on one another: self-awareness, connection and transformation.

**Self-Awareness:** As an ongoing process, self-awareness opens our eyes to who we are, including our strengths, weaknesses, core values, blind spots and life purpose. Self awareness brings the choices that we make unconsciously into the light of day. It helps us to better manage those choices, as well as our actions, how we show up, and who we are becoming.

**Building Community:** LACE provides the common language for leaning in, learning and resolving conflict. It transforms individuals into teams working toward a common purpose. With LACE, we move people beyond passive aggressive or aggressive tendencies toward win-win solutions.

**Organizational Change:** Ultimately, LACE is about creating systems that are wholly inclusive and actively anti-oppressive. Therefore the self awareness and community building result in policies, processes and systems that are radically inclusive, not just begrudgingly tolerant.

**Where:** The principles of LACE are rooted in research on social neuroscience and positive psychology. As it turns out, the fear that we often experience in discussions about race, social

change shifts our attention away from learning (Steimer 2002; Steele 2010) and puts the brain in survival mode (Rock 2008, Arnsten 1998). However, love is the master emotion that activates oxytocin and connects our brains with other people in ways that expand cognition, physical skills, social skills and overall wellbeing (Fredrickson 2013). In fact, love, authenticity, courage, empathy and other positive values on which the model is comprised, promote big picture thinking. A two-decade long study on the impact of positive emotions showed that people who feel more positive are more likely to think creatively, be more flexible, demonstrate more ability to integrate information and are more open to new information (Isen, 1987). Positive emotions have also been shown to have an undoing effect in that they can loosen the hold of negative emotions (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998). A third body of research suggests that building a sense of belonging into the learning process (Canning, Muenks, Green and Murphy 2019, Binning 2019) helps undo emotional and disciplinary obstacles (Middendorf and Shopkow 2017), setting the stage for more expansive, connected and transformational learning experiences.

**Who:** LACE helps individuals, teams, organizations become more self aware, build relationships and make connections between who they are and what they do. It is a model for developing personal strategies for leadership and change management of all types.

#### **References:**

Arnsten, A. F. T. (1998). The Biology of Being Frazzled. *Science*, 280, 1711-1712.

Binning, K. (2019, October). Fostering a Sense of Belonging in the College Classroom: Peer Interactions that Improve Student Success. Sloan Equity and Inclusion in STEM Introductory Courses (SEISMIC) event, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN.

Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The Role of Positive Emotions in Positive Psychology: The Broaden-and-Build Theory of Positive Emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218-226.

Isen, A. M. (1987). *Positive affect, cognitive processes, and social behavior*. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 20 (p. 203–253). Academic Press.

[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601\(08\)60415-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(08)60415-3)

Middendorf, J and L. Shopkow. Overcoming Student Learning Bottlenecks: Decode the Critical Thinking in your Discipline. Stylus: New York.

Rock, David. 2008. Scarf: A Brain-based model for collaborating with and influencing others." *Neuroleadership Journal*, Issue 1: 2008

Steele, C. M. (2010). *Whistling Vivaldi*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Steimer, Thierry. "The biology of fear- and anxiety-related behaviors." *Dialogues in clinical neuroscience* vol. 4,3 (2002): 231-49.