

Becoming the Medicine We Carry: How Presence, Relationships, and Organizational Culture Shape Healing

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Key Takeaways

1. You are one of the most valuable tools you bring to your work.

Our education, training, interventions, programs, and professional skills matter, but they are never the only things influencing our work. We also bring our presence, experiences, values, culture, assumptions, relationships, and current capacity. Developing ourselves is therefore not separate from developing our professional practice, it is part of it.

2. Curiosity creates choice.

Curiosity gives us space to notice before automatically reacting. When we are regulated enough to remain curious, we have greater access to information, perspective, flexibility, and choice. Regulation supports curiosity, and curiosity can also support regulation by helping us move from certainty and reaction toward observation and exploration.

3. Growth is a continuous process of noticing, learning, embodying, and reflecting.

Knowing something intellectually is not the same as being able to embody it in relationship. Growth happens through an ongoing cycle: Notice → Learn → Embody → Reflect → Repeat. We notice what is happening, remain open to learning, practice what we learn, reflect on our experience and impact, and return again with greater awareness.

4. Interdependence is both a strength and a vulnerability.

Our ancestors understood what living systems demonstrate everywhere around us: nothing exists entirely in isolation. Like an ecosystem, relationships allow resources, knowledge, support, and strength to move between us. Interdependence also means that what happens in one part of a system can influence another. We affect our relationships, and our relationships affect us.

5. Regulation means flexibility, not simply calmness.

Regulation is the nervous system's ability to adjust activation in response to internal and external demands while maintaining enough flexibility to function and respond effectively. A person can be angry, grieving, anxious, excited, challenged, or uncomfortable and still be regulated. Dysregulation occurs when activation or shutdown exceeds our current capacity to adapt effectively and our available choices begin to narrow.

6. We borrow and reciprocate regulation.

Human beings continually receive relational information through voice and prosody, breathing, expression, movement, attention, pace, and presence. Another person's steadiness, responsiveness, or perspective can increase the regulatory resources available to us, and at

another time, we may provide those resources for them. Co-regulation is relational and reciprocal; regulation does not happen only within the individual.

7. Dysregulation can spread, too.

Relational influence is not automatically regulating. Urgency can increase urgency, defensiveness can invite defensiveness, and anxiety can amplify anxiety. Recognizing this does not make us responsible for another person's nervous system, but it does invite us to become more aware of what we contribute to the relational environments around us.

8. Not all medicine soothes.

Healthy relationships are not defined by the absence of discomfort. Truth, challenge, boundaries, accountability, disagreement, and perspective can increase activation while still contributing to learning and growth. Discomfort may sometimes signal danger or harm, but activation alone does not tell us what an experience means. Regulation gives us greater capacity to remain curious enough to discern the difference.

9. What we practice together becomes culture.

Repeated interactions create shared expectations, and shared expectations shape organizational culture. When curiosity, accountability, repair, regulation, and asking for help are repeatedly practiced, people learn that those behaviors are possible and expected. Urgency, defensiveness, blame, avoidance, and silence can become cultural patterns in the same way. Culture is what people repeatedly experience from one another.

10. Our presence shapes the work we do, and what we carry shapes our impact.

We bring more than knowledge and technical skill into every interaction. What we carry influences what we notice, how we listen, how we respond to challenge, what we assume, and how we relate to others. Our intentions and our impact will not always match. Curiosity, accountability, and reflection help us recognize that difference, repair when necessary, and become increasingly intentional about how we show up.

Final Reflection

Becoming the medicine we carry is not about becoming perfectly regulated, endlessly agreeable, or universally soothing. It is about becoming increasingly aware and intentional about what we bring into relationship and the impact we have within the systems we are part of.

Stay curious about what you bring, what you receive, and what you create together.

Notice → Learn → Embody → Reflect → Repeat.

How do I want to show up in the spaces I am part of?

