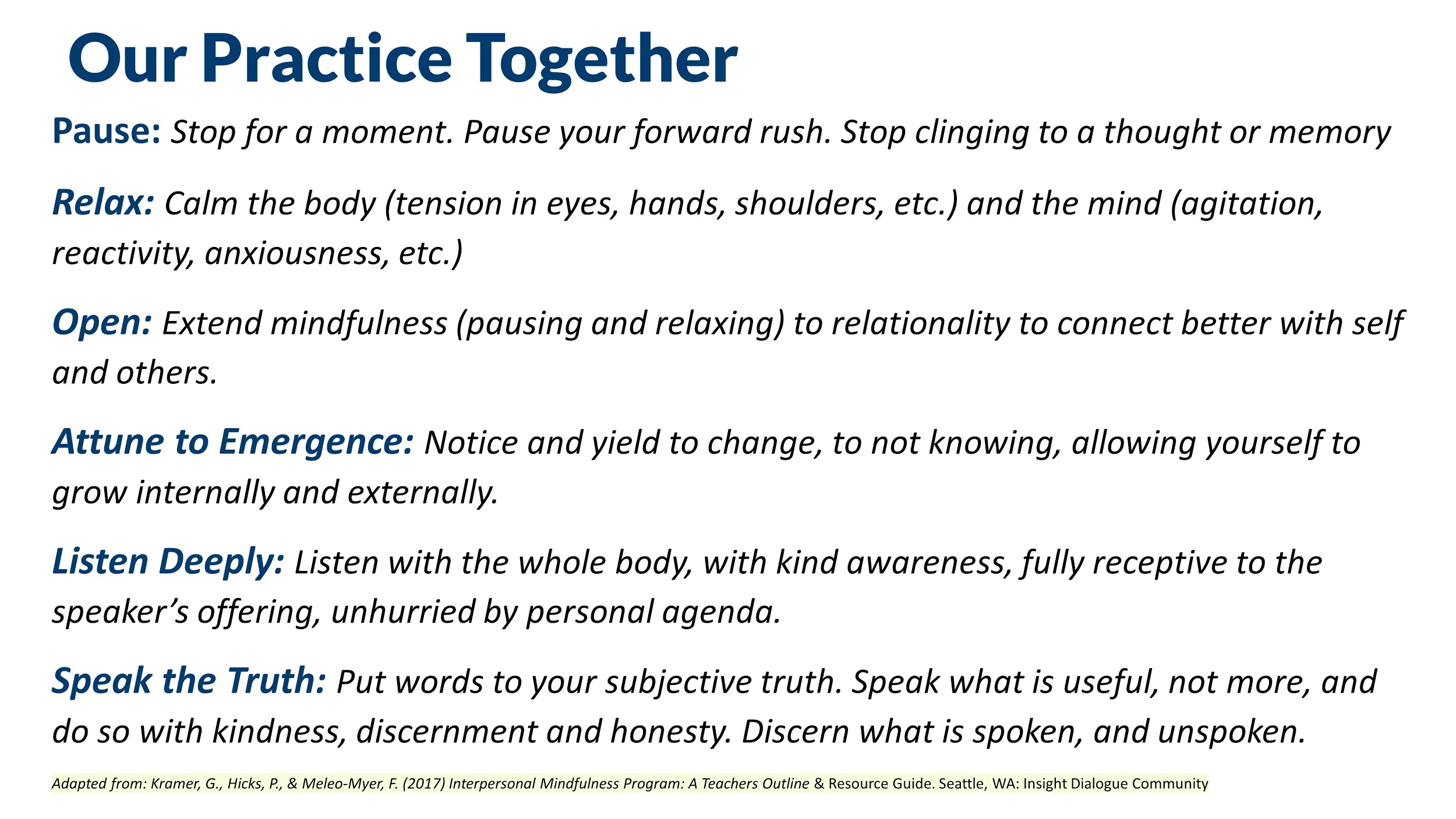
This article is the second in a three-part series that applies Edwin Friedman's A Failure of Nerve, Gregory Kramer's Insight Dialogue, and Karl Weick's "Small Wins" to improve the effectiveness and well-being of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) practitioners.

The first article's theme was that differentiated leaders have a deep sense of calm, of who they are, and what is unique and special about themselves to advance their ideas in a steady, undeterred drumbeat. Because they also help others understand and cherish their uniqueness, people gravitate to them, foster allies, and deter enemies. Differentiated leaders are the balm that improves the whole organization by enabling leaders to conduct a self-examination of their racial biases. The third article in the series discusses how Karl Weick's organization theory of "small wins" can reduce individual and organizational anxiety (on race and racism) and accelerate personal, professional, and organizational effectiveness.

The theme is this third article is that one grows cultural competence through a relationship with other people. The Insight Dialogue (ID) aspects of mindfulness (pause and relax), relational growth (open and attune to emergence), and wisdom (listen deeply and speak the truth) allows two, or more, people to pause, suspend judgment and be curious of each other in a vulnerable, caring and discerning manner. Relational Meditation (RM), based on ID, fosters the differentiation that Edwin Friedman champions because it encourages a practitioner to develop a psychological safety within themselves and with others to examine emotional and anxious issues, such as racism, sexism, and ageism, etc. to foster insight, wisdom, and transformation.

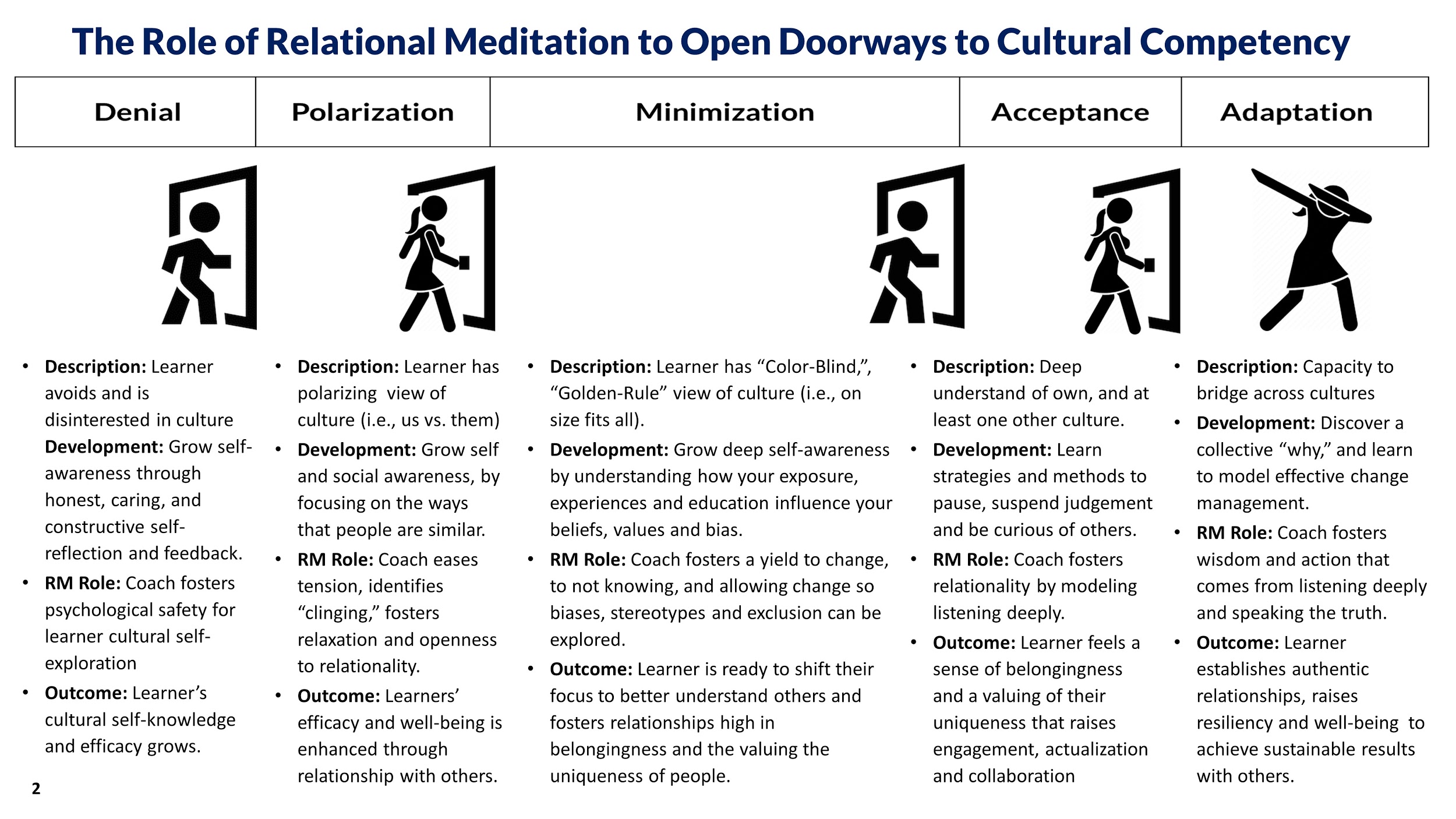
To appreciate the role of Insight Dialogue and its Relation Mediation application, we need to define the two meditational approaches. As developed by its founder Gregory Kramer, "Insight Dialogue is a way of bringing the tranquility and insight attained in meditation directly into your interactions with other people. It's a practice that involves interacting with a partner in a retreat setting or on your own, as a way of accessing a profound kind of insight."

Insight Dialogue was six meditational guidelines I have slightly adapted for cultural competency coaching (figure 1. Our Practice Together). As mentioned above, the Insight Dialogue (ID) aspects of mindfulness (pause and relax), relational growth (open and attune to emergence), and wisdom (listen deeply and speak the truth) allows two, or more, people to pause, suspend judgment, and be curious of each other in a vulnerable, caring and discerning manner.

ID is a "practice together" versus "interaction ground rules or norms." Ground rules are methods to regulate behavior among group members, and many times to legislate against "misbehavior" when the group would learn far more if the behavior actually showed up. As modeled by ID, a practice fosters an atmosphere where group members can learn from each other mistakes, missteps, and "inappropriate" comments. A practice is a mind, spirit, and body practice that incorporates breathing techniques, meditation or relaxation, and deep contemplation. Below is a full explanation of these guidelines:

* **Pause:** Stop for a moment. Pause your forward rush. Stop clinging to a thought or memory. Pause is the first step ID, and I would argue, the most crucial. Leaders have a natural tendency to push forward. Moreover, we all cling to thoughts or memories that have generated pain or pleasure. I have been called a nigger; others have suffered police brutality or sexual assault. A cultural competency coach will need to foster a psychologically safe environment for learner self-exploration. They will need to be in the here and now.to resolve organizational challenges quickly
* **Relax:** Calm the body (tension in eyes, hands, shoulders, etc.) and the mind (agitation, reactivity, and anxiousness, etc.). Reflect on your mind and body state after I mentioned the examples above. I became tense as I wrote, and you may have gotten as you read. A cultural competency coach needs to ease tension, identify our "clinginess" (so that we can let go in the moment), and foster relaxation. This state opens the door to relationality and mutuality.
* **Open:** Extend mindfulness to relationality to connect better with self and others. A cultural competency coach can share, emit, and foster a feeling shared action or relationship between two or more parties.
* **Attune to Emergence:** By being open, we yield to change, not knowing, and allowing change so biases, stereotypes, and exclusion can be explored and examined. We connect better with ourselves and others.
* **Listen Deeply:** Listen with the whole body, with kind awareness, fully receptive ot the speaker's offering, unhurried by personal agenda. A cultural competency coach fosters relationality by modeling listening deeply. At this point, a coach begins to foster Friedman's differentiated leader. Differentiated leaders have a strong, immutable, enduring sense of who they are and their values and principles. Confident in their uniqueness, they are a calming presence through whom others can learn from one another. Differentiated leaders can listen with their whole self without personal agenda.
* **Speak the Truth:** Put words to your subjective truth. Speak what is useful, not more, and do so with kindness, discernment, and honesty. Discern what is spoken and unspoken. A cultural competency coach fosters wisdom and action that comes from listening deeply and speaking the truth. Similarly, differentiated leaders recognize and address the pain of stereotypes, bias, and racism and close windows to escape these issues. They exemplify the emotional maturity needed to execute a bold plan to foster racial equity.

Relational Meditation takes Insight Dialogue into the coaching, management sphere to foster mindfulness, relational growth, and wisdom. Concerning this article, I am utilizing relational meditation to help individuals foster cultural competence. As Mitch Hammer defined, cultural competence is the capability to shift perspective and adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities. Cultural competence reflects the degree to which cultural differences and commonalities in values, expectations, beliefs, and practices are effectively bridged, an inclusive environment is achieved, and specific differences in your organization or institution are addressed from a "mutual adaptation" perspective.



As listed in the framework above, The Intercultural Development Continuum® (IDC®) (modified from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity initially proposed by Dr. Milton Bennett), identifies five orientations that range from the more monocultural orientations of Denial and Polarization to the transitional mindset of Minimization to the more intercultural or global mindsets of Acceptance and Adaptation. Your success in achieving your goals is better served when you can more deeply understand culturally-learned differences, recognize commonalities between yourself and others and act on this increased insight in culturally appropriate ways that facilitate goal accomplishment among diverse individuals and groups.

One can quickly discern the role of Relational Meditation to foster cultural competency. Typically, cultural differences generate discomfort, anxiety, and fear well before they inspire joy or pleasure. Individuals often retreat from the self-examination, empathy, and honesty required to foster cultural competency. Without this self-examination, empathy, and honesty, one cannot become Friedman's differentiated leader. The framework outlines how a culturally competent, a well-differentiated coach can help individuals and teams grow their cultural competence. What is particularly exciting about applying relational meditation to cultural competency is that it provides a method for coaches to face the trauma, fear, and anxiousness of discussing their roles in perpetuating racism, bias, and stereotypes within an organization.

How might we use relational meditation in practice. Let examine the case below:

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| **Situation**: School district leadership team of 18 is attempting to develop an Inclusive and Anti-Racist company strategy.  **Pre-work:** Read the first article in this series, "Failure of Diversity is a Failure of Nerve."  **Set up:** Establish six groups of 3 individuals, with each person having 4 minutes to talk, with a final 4 minutes for a discussion within the group, and 5-10 minutes for general group discussion. The contemplative topic is what about ourselves inhibits us from addressing racial disparities.   * **Round 1:** Why is addressing racial disparities important? * **Round 2:** Why might I have "a failure of a nerve" (biopsychosocial struggles, challenges) to actively support reducing these disparities?   **General discussion:**   1. What did we learn about ourselves that might impede our efforts to be an inclusive and anti-racist organization? 2. How might we address our failure of nerve with kindness and accountability? |

As Emma Donaldson-Feilder mentions in her article, I believe relational meditation can provide a safe space in which to observe our relational habits and patterns with respect to racial inequity. As cultural competence requires, relational meditation can also aid us to foster the psychological safety to pause, suspend judgment, and gain insight from individuals who are similar and different from ourselves.

The second article in the series discusses how Karl Weick's organization theory of "small wins" can reduce individual and organizational anxiety (on race and racism) and accelerate personal, professional, and organizational effectiveness.