

Cultural Praxis

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Team W.O.M.A.N., Inc.



Praxis is the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realized. "Praxis" may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas.

Table of Contents

APPROACH TO OUR WORK

Domestic Violence	1
Respect for Survivors	1
Accessibility of Services	2
Survivor Safety	2
Collaborations.....	2-3
Mindful Affiliations	3
Intersectional Feminist Perspective.....	3-4

APPROACH TO OUR WORKPLACE

Positive Workplace Environment	4
Teamwork and Consensus	4
Accountability	4-5
Direct Communication	5-6
Respectful Use of Power	6
Transparency	6
Anti-Oppression	6-7
Environmental Practice.....	7
Inclusion Statement	7

ADDITIONALLY

Self- Care.....	7
Community Agreements	7-8

We are W.O.M.A.N., Inc. and we believe in collective liberation. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their bodies, in their homes and in their communities.

We are:

PRO-IMMIGRANT

PRO-LOVE

PRO-MUSLIM

PRO-PEOPLE OF COLOR

PRO-QUEER

PRO-REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

PRO-SURVIVOR

PRO-TRANS

Our feminism will be intersectional. We will love each other, support each other and work collectively toward justice and liberation.

We believe in collective liberation. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their bodies, in their homes and in their communities.

Domestic Violence

We believe that domestic violence is defined not by individual acts of violence, but by a pattern of intentional behaviors used by one person to maintain power and control over another. W.O.M.A.N., Inc. recognizes that domestic violence occurs in all communities, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, age, immigration status, ability, education, socioeconomic status, etc. and seeks to provide culturally-relevant and inclusive services to all.

Furthermore, we understand that the severity of domestic violence, particularly within marginalized communities, can be compounded by racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other types of oppression. Keeping this in mind, we view survivors of as whole-people and understand that domestic violence may be only one of many types of oppression they face. These layers of oppression are often interconnected; thus, the support we provide must be reflective of this.

Respect for Survivors

At W.O.M.A.N., Inc., we meet survivors 'where they're at' and believe that all survivors deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, to be honored and valued, to have the abuse and violence they have experienced taken seriously and not minimized.

Some ways in which we practice respect for survivors include:

- Not pathologizing or making assumptions
- Viewing each survivor as the expert of their own life
- Avoiding simplified or disrespectful labels
- Honoring self-determination
- Working with survivors collaboratively
- Being mindful of the impact of trauma and how this might foster feelings such as anger, fear, hopelessness and behaviors such as defensiveness, aggression, and helplessness.

Accessibility

We are committed to services that respect the human rights and diversity of survivors. We believe that services for survivors should be easily accessed with minimal intrusion. Our aim is to eliminate many of the barriers to services that typically exist. We work toward inclusion whenever possible looking for ways in which our services are appropriate to support the survivor, and referring out for services when necessary.

Safety and Domestic Violence

We oppose the use of violence as a means of control and work toward the ending of all forms of violence. While we honor and acknowledge the complexities involved in the use of violence, we believe domestic violence is the sole responsibility of the person using abuse. We work towards increasing safety.

We embrace the guiding principles of '**Creative Interventions**' and believe that safety strategies are most effective when they are:

- ◆ *Creative*. Allow solutions to emerge
- ◆ *Collective*. Solution relies on collective or community capacity, resources and decision-making
- ◆ *Holistic*. Hold all parts including survivor(s), allies/community, person(s) doing harm to possibilities of positive change
- ◆ *Accountable*. All are accountable to transform violence; all have a role and responsibility
- ◆ *Safe*. Expand options and opportunities for safety – emotional and physical
- ◆ *Risk-Taking*. Task risks – risk vulnerability to expand opportunities for transformation (companion to safety)
- ◆ *Organic*. Build on what people/communities know and value
- ◆ *Flexible*. Understand unique opportunities, challenges and changes in each situation – stay open
- ◆ *Patient*. Respect the unanticipated and long-term timing of transformation
- ◆ *Sustainable*. Build processes and solutions that are sustainable long-term
- ◆ *Transformative*. Remain guided and driven by a vision of healthy change for all
- ◆ *Regenerative*. Solutions regenerate and expand in unique ways across diverse communities and locations

adapted from Creative Interventions, creativeinterventions.org

Collaborations

WI values strong collaborations with various community members and groups. We embrace the necessity of such collaborations and honor the diversity in approaches to supporting survivors of domestic violence. Collaboration enables us to increase our capacity to provide accessible services and learning opportunities, to address the needs of clients in a comprehensive manner and creates room for diverse perspectives and expertise to work together towards a unified cause.

As with affiliations, we carefully consider our collaborations and utilize team consensus when considering a new collaboration. We consider the potential value to survivors, the larger community, advocates and agency capacity.

Some of our current collaborative efforts:

- Proud members of the San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium (DVC) and the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV)
- Crisis line coverage providers for Asian Women's Shelter, The Riley Center, and Asian-Americans for Community Involvement (AACI)
- Expect Respect San Francisco Advisory Committee
- The Mexican Consulate
- Limited English Proficiency Meetings
- StrongField project and Leadership Development Program Alumni group

Mindful Affiliations

As an active participant in the community, W.O.M.A.N., Inc. recognizes that numerous affiliations are inevitable and beneficial for both organizations and the community members we serve. We further understand that any association with another agency, group or individual can be viewed as an affiliation, endorsement or collaboration. For this reason, we must remain conscious when choosing affiliations, whether actual or perceived, striving to affiliate with agencies/groups/individuals that align with our practices of anti-violence and anti-oppression. Potential affiliations include:

- Holiday practices
- Presentations (giving and receiving)
- Donations of money, gifts or services
- Collaborative community projects
- Any event involving a religious, political or military organization
- Referrals offered
- Connections via social media

When approached with opportunities for any event or situation that may be viewed as an affiliation, W.O.M.A.N., Inc. will engage our consensus-based decision making process in order to reach a decision. In gaining consensus, the team will consider the anti-oppression stance of the agency/group/individual, taking into account the many levels of oppression that may exist (micro and macro).

Intersectional Feminist perspective

Intersectional* feminism calls on us to acknowledge that we cannot achieve gender equity without understanding how our many social identities interlock and impact the way we experience discrimination, domination, and oppression. These identities include but are not limited to race, gender expression, sexual orientation, class, and ability. It especially calls on us to recognize that women of color, particularly Black women and girls, experience higher degrees of oppression as sexism is compounded by racism. Intersectionality urges us to center the people who have been pushed out to the margins.

We embrace the idea that feminism is a political stance, especially during times when women, LGBTQ folks, immigrants and communities of color are being further marginalized by oppressive funding cuts, executive orders and policies that tell them their lives aren't important. In the words of Bell Hooks, "We have to restore feminism as a political movement. The challenge to patriarchy is political and not a lifestyle or identity."

*[Intersectionality](#) is a concept developed by Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw in the 1980's.

Intersectionality addresses how different types of prejudice and discrimination compound one another, specifically, racism and sexism. For example, discrimination against a person because they are Black and female will be intensified when compared to non-Black women.

Positive workplace environment

We value the importance of a positive, supportive workplace environment.

Some examples of this include:

- Shared ownership of environment
- Flexibility to be supportive of work/life balance
- Open communication of needs
- Value of humor and levity
- Support of one another in self-care practices

Teamwork and Consensus

Working from a system of positional authority, we strive to practice responsible use of power. Utilizing this system fulfills needs around accountability, support, supervision and designated liaisons to our board, community, funders, etc.

It is because of these beliefs that W.O.M.A.N., Inc. strongly values a team approach and seeks out group consensus whenever possible. We understand that we make decisions as a team and that our policies and procedures are the culmination of team input.

Consensus does not mean that every team member agrees with a decision or guideline, but that we agree to make space for everyone's opinions, input and considerations. We will all be able to speak to the rationale behind decisions and understand the process(es) in having made them.

In our decision making process, we strive for quorum consisting of 2/3rds of core staff. This practice applies across-the-board, for decisions pertaining to affiliations, strategic planning, agency development, etc. There are situations where quorum is not applicable, such as in cases of emergency, confidentiality, issues that involve agency liability, and labor law.

Accountability

WI values the importance of accountability on many levels. In doing anti-violence work, we are accountable to the individual survivors we serve, greater survivor communities, our team, agencies we collaborate with, and the larger community.

How we enact accountability:

- Implement change based on formal & informal evaluation
- Assess & be mindful of commitments
- Practice transparency

- Make consensus-based decisions
- Use positional power respectfully and responsibly
- Commit to providing quality services based on community needs
- Work with integrity
- Practice direct and respectful communication

Team Accountability Model (Internal)

Considerations:

- Intention is for the person to feel supported vs. punitive
- Assuming the best of intentions, understanding that we all make mistakes and sometimes they are what help us learn a lesson.
- Direct communication: has this been attempted? What happened?

Process:

- Go to larger team:
- Consider who should be involved in the discussion. Be prepared to discuss the situation openly.
- Convey appreciation for team member:

ex: 'You take a lot of shifts on the crisis line and it really helps with agency capacity. We really appreciate it. It must be difficult for you to be on time given you have so many shifts.'

- Talk to the team member about what happened, as you understand it and why its an issue.

ex: 'The issue here is that you have been late for the last 3 shifts. This impacts our operations and puts your team member's in an uncomfortable position and is unfair. We have an issue with this behavior.'

What areas of support can we offer:

- Talk with the team member about what support W.O.M.A.N., Inc. can offer.

ex: 'Is there any support we can offer? Do you need to get rid of a shift or two? I can help you find coverage if that would help.'

Potential plan of action:

- Talk with the team member about the plan to correct behavior.

ex: 'So, you mentioned you will give up a shift. I will help you find ongoing coverage. You think that this will help you be on time. We will check back in a month and see how its going.'

Discuss consequences:

- Talk to the team member about what might happen if they do not follow through on plan.

Direct Communication

We value peaceful and direct communication, striving for non-violence in our communication styles. We believe that conflict can be healthy and is an opportunity for connection, clarity and

growth. Direct communication supports a work environment in which each person's voice is valued and we do not always need to rely on a hierarchy in order to address conflict. Using direct communication can sometimes feel uncomfortable, but we encourage team members to lean into this in order to address issues in the moment, whenever possible, and with the person/people involved.

While direct communication can look different for each of us, it may consist of some of the following strategies:

- Create space for each person involved to be heard
- Be honest and respectful
- Be specific -- what happened that is problematic, offensive, etc. and what is the impact?
- Use "I" statements
- Refrain from personal attacks and generalizations
- Offer concrete suggestions for change

Respectful Use of Power

We strive to maintain awareness of the power we hold in different situations and to use that power respectfully. We value *'collective power'*, *'power from within'* and *'power with'* versus *'power over'*.

Power over – is coercive and linked to domination and control, the power to command compliance.

Power with – the kind of social power people give to respected individuals; influence wielded among equals; power to suggest and to be listened to.

Power from within – the sense of empowerment and creativity that comes from inner resources.

Collective power– when a group or community is acting in the service of a common goal.

@adapted from CompassPoint Nonprofit Services 2012

Some examples of ways in which we might hold or exercise power:

- Positional power - supervising staff, interns/trainees, volunteers
- Working with clients or callers, access to services
- Holding certain knowledge or skills
- Collaborative relationships and connections (social capital)
- Having privilege around race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, education, ability, etc.

Transparency

We place a high value on transparency in agency operations. This includes all fiscal matters, program development, key decision-making, etc.

Anti-oppression

We are committed to anti-oppression as a lifelong practice of learning and unlearning; we value the importance of openness and bravery in this process. In order to interrupt oppression we must reject single story narratives.

“Our lives, our cultures, are composed of many complex and interconnected stories and yet we are often reduced to single stories. Single Stories are incomplete, potentially damaging understandings of other people. In order to move beyond single stories, it is important to explore how systemic power shapes which stories we tell, how we tell them, which stories become normalized and definitive, and which stories reinforce inferiority and superiority.” -

Move to End Violence, Racial Equity & Liberation

We hold space to amplify the voices of those most impacted by systemic racism and other forms of oppression.

Environmental Practice

We seek to understand the direct and indirect environmental impacts of our agency operations. As an agency, we are mindful of our utilization of resources such as paper, water, energy, disposable utensils, and all other products that can negatively impact our environment. We commit to practices such as composting, reusing materials, reducing energy consumption, water and materials use, and recycling wherever and whenever we can.

Inclusion Statement

We believe that to in order to build stronger and safer communities, the diversity of the community we support must be reflected within our team. A strong, vibrant organization consists of community members with unique attributes from various ethnicities, ages, races, gender identities, sexual orientations, socioeconomic backgrounds, immigration statuses and abilities.

Self-care

We honor the fact that choosing this work comes with a high risk of vicarious traumatization and burnout. Therefore, we not only encourage and support self-care practices, but view such practices as a responsibility and necessary commitment. As an agency we share in this responsibility by supporting avenues for addressing vicarious traumatization and burnout and for institutionalizing self-care practices.

Community Agreements:

We share space

- We respect the need for flexibility
- We take equal ownership in physical maintenance
- We remain mindful of noise levels – especially given that space is shared during work and breaks

We respect survivors' privacy

- We use respectful language when discussing clients
- We are careful with what information needs to be shared
- We are mindful of who may overhear conversations involving clients

We honor the effects of vicarious traumatization

- We commit to the practice of self-care
- We take breaks and practice boundaries mindfully
- We debrief as needed, asking permission and remaining mindful of the effects of debriefing on all who witness it

We practice direct, nonviolent communication**We participate in group discussions mindfully**

- Each person's input is equally valued
- We challenge ourselves to balance "air time"

We practice Language Justice

- We understand that this is PRACTICE
- We view "mistakes" as learning opportunities

We assume best intentions

- We strive for patience and work toward understanding all perspectives

Non-disclosure Policy

- Details of a community member's life and various identities are theirs to share

We commit to putting our goals & philosophy into practice