



# Building Social Capital through Promoting a Sense of Belonging

**Presentation by:**

**Tatiana Gjergji**, Executive Director & Founder  
Noteworthy Resources of Albany, Inc. (NWR)

[www.nwralbany.org](http://www.nwralbany.org)

[@nwr\\_albany](https://twitter.com/nwr_albany)

# Noteworthy Resources of Albany, Inc. (NWR)...

is a unique nonprofit organization founded in 2017 located in Albany, NY.

NWR brings the Capital District together to better support their diverse educational, wellness, & recreational needs through inclusive & empowering programs and activities.

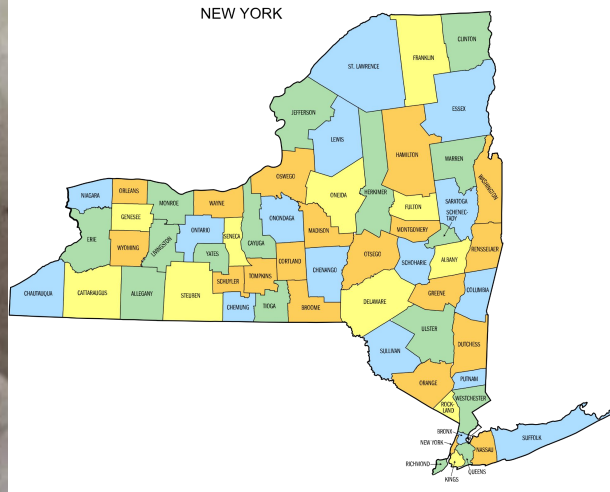
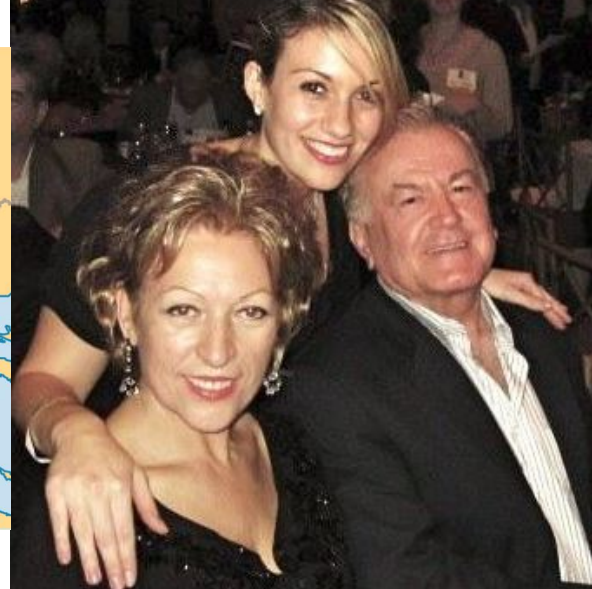
We implement *mental, physical, emotional, & social* resources & support through our programs either at the school, skatepark, during workshops, support groups, & creative community events.

**Our mission** is to offer inclusive & empowering programs & activities that support the educational, holistic, & recreational needs of the community with skating, resources for success & personal growth.



@nwr\_albany





# What are the intentions of this presentation?

- **Inform**
  - Educational strategies & resources
- **Persuade**
  - Take action afterwards
- **Entertain**
  - Sharing insights, stories, laughs, & guided meditation

*But also..*

- **Connect & unite**
- **Empower**
- **Collaborate**
- **Evolve**
- **Grow**





# What is going on?

- Physical, Mental, & emotional health struggles
- Stress
- Immigrant/refugee
- Incarceration/ legal struggles
- Grief & death of loved ones
- Bullying/Harassment
- Substance Use Disorders/Addictions
- Pregnancy/Miscarriage/Infertility
- Poverty/economic struggles
- Racism/Hate crimes
- Gang & other violences
- Domestic Abuse
- Dysfunctional family crisis/divorce/  
Breakups
- Language barriers
- Low self-esteem/ self-love
- Autoimmune diseases, Diabetes, Asthma, MS, Autism Spectrum, Thyroid issues, Anxiety, PTSD, Depression, Social Anxiety & etc.

*EVERYONE is going through something, whether you see it or not.*



# Self-Care Strategies

- How have you been treating yourself?
- “ “ “ “ talking to yourself?
- What emotions have you been you experiencing lately?
- How is your physical health?
- Have you been social with others?
- Who do you feel comfortable talking to?

*Understand & attend to your needs first before helping others meet theirs.*

1. Awareness & acknowledgement
2. Brainstorm what needs to happen that is for your best interest
3. Take action to better support yourself!



# Coping Skills...

help you regulate your emotions during stressful or traumatizing experiences & keep you mentally & physically safe.

You might do it daily to support your mental health &/or in moments of stress.

Effective coping skills are different for everyone! Take time to explore & understand what coping skills work for you in different situations.

*The goal is to support your unique needs & mental health, both immediately & overtime.*

## *Types of coping skills.....*

- **Distraction**: taking your mind off the immediate problem or emotions
  - *What it looks like:*
    - Reading
    - Coloring
    - Watching Netflix
    - Gardening
    - Going for a walk
    - Chatting with a friend
    - Painting
- **Self-Soothing**: comforting yourself through your senses & validating yourself
  - *What it looks like:*
    - Touch- cuddling with a blanket
    - Sound- listening to music
    - Sight- look at photos/nature
    - Taste- drink tea or your favorite food
    - Smell- light a candle or use essential oils



- **Opposite Action:** doing something that is the opposite of your impulse that is consistent w/ more positive emotions
  - What it looks like:
    - Positive affirmations- validate your emotions, thoughts, & experiences
    - Something fun/funny- similar to destruction, sometimes the best thing in the moment can be laughter

- **Mindfulness:** tools for centering & grounding yourself in the present & in your environment
  - What it looks like:
    - Meditation (guided/self-led)
    - Grounding objects, like a rock, crystal or weight
    - Practicing yoga
    - Breathing exercises
    - Relaxation recordings
    - Spiritual practices/praying



- **Emotional Awareness:** tools for identifying & expressing your feelings
  - What it looks like:
    - Journaling
    - Tracking your emotions
    - Mood chart
    - Reading or listening to educational things you relate to
    - Moving your body in an intuitive way
    - Post-meditation reflection
- **Crisis Plan:** contact info of support systems & resources for when coping skills aren't enough
  - What it looks like:
    - Therapists or mental health professionals
    - Family
    - Friends
    - Hotlines
    - Crisis teams
    - Community platforms & support groups





# Be aware of your Chakra Balance & Healing

We have thousands of energy centers all throughout the human body that **help to regulate all its processes, from organ function to the immune system & emotions**; called chakras (*wheels of energy*).

7 chakras are positioned throughout your body, from the base of your spine to the crown of your head.

Each chakra has its own vibrational frequency, color, & governs specific functions that help make you human.

***You are energy! You are in control of your healing!***

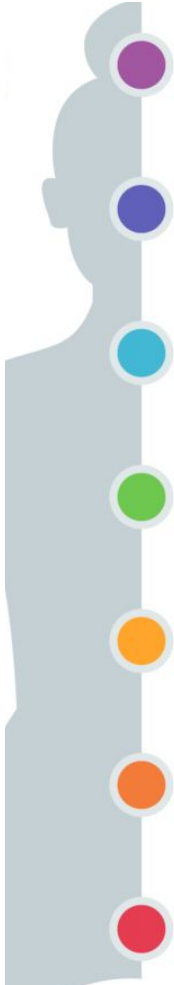
All living things are created by & composed of energy.

The ability of your energy centers to function optimally is what keeps you **psychologically, emotionally, physically, & spiritually balanced.**



# Chakras related to stress...



- 
- **Crown Chakra** (*spirituality, wisdom, and our higher self*): stress from feeling alone & disconnected from the Divine
  - **Third Eye Chakra** (*inner strength, thought patterns & intuition*): Stress from feeling like we're not expressing ourselves next in our lives, or from being unable to see the bigger picture up front
  - **Throat Chakra** (*communication, self-expression, & truth*): Stress from feeling like we're not expressing ourselves the way we'd like, or that we're not being heard in the way we want to be heard; stress around speaking out truth
  - **Heart Chakra** (*compassion, love & forgiveness*): Stress stemming from disconnection with self & as a result, with others
  - **Solar Plexus Chakra** (*confidence, personal power & vitality*): Stress coming from lack of self-worth & a sense of powerlessness
  - **Sacral Chakra** (*sexuality, creativity emotions*): Stress from pent-up emotions, not expressing ourselves creatively (artistic or making things) or in healthy sexual ways (sex or masturbation)
  - **Root Chakra** (*survival, safety, grounding self*): Stress from feeling like our basic needs are not being met

# Are you living in fear v.s love?

## Do you ever...?

- Judge someone else or yourself
- Feel the need to control what happens or how people do/say things
- Stress, worry, or get anxious about something
- Shout at someone
- Feel the need to be defensive
- Snap at someone
- Gossip
- Feel angry or slighted
- Carry a grudge
- Complain
- Rely on your own strength (instead of letting the Universe help)
- Feel guilty



*Let's choose to live in love.*

With this mindset & living we are open to new **opportunities**, feeling **grateful**, **honoring** ourselves & others, spreading **kindness**, embracing **compassion** to self & others, cultivating **peace**, & more!!

What choice are you going to make on how you are going to live your life?

## Exercise for self-compassion:

Imagine you as a child & they are experiencing stress, feelings, & situation as you right now or when you're having a hard time. To nurture & *love them through it*, we can find a way to soothe, forgive & move forward.

We need to go backward and heal and soothe our inner child so we can build a stronger relationship within ourselves. This boosts our self-esteem & self-love.

The time when you're able to show yourself time to love yourself you can then nurture & soothe yourself through the hard times.

Your ego, the protective one, comes in so fast & knows what to say to push you & cause you conflict.

With the power of love we're able to allow ourselves to heal.

***What would you say to your inner child?***





# Communication Styles

- **Passive**- a pattern of avoiding expressing opinions, decisions, or feelings.  
(*ex: deep sighs, mumbled complaints, profuse apologizing, incessant permission asking, shrugs, no direct eye-contact*)
- **Aggressive**- expressing your feelings & opinions strongly & as they occur.  
(*ex: shouting, yelling, demanding, commanding, blaming, being critical, or being verbally abusive, fists, angry expressions*).
- **Assertive**- expressing your thoughts, feelings, & opinions in a way that makes your views & needs clearly understood by others, without putting down their thoughts, feelings, or opinions.  
(*ex: confident, high self-esteem, stands tall, no limitations on opportunities, curious, hopeful, calm, speaks up*)

**Responding**, a spin off from the word responsibility, is considerate and deliberate.

Responses tend to go like this: Something happens. You Pause. You Process.

You Plan. Then you proceed.

*versus*

**Reacting**, on the other hand, literally means to meet one action with another one.

It is immediate and rash. Reactions tend to go like this: Something happens.

You panic. Then you proceed.



# Let's normalize checking in before venting to others

Considered “**emotional consent**”.

- Sometimes co-workers/loved ones are not in the position to dedicate emotional energy to you at the moment you need them
- It doesn't mean they don't care.
- It also doesn't mean they don't love or care for you.
- It's important to ask rather than ASSUME.
- You don't know what someone else is going through until you ask.
- You have emotional needs & so do they.
- Consider them before you unload onto them.
- RESPECT EACH OTHER'S BOUNDARIES!
- Be okay with them saying no. It can feel a lot like rejection, but it's not. Their 'no' is NOT ABOUT YOU, they are at capacity to take on more emotional heaviness. Humans are complex creatures.



**You can try to:**

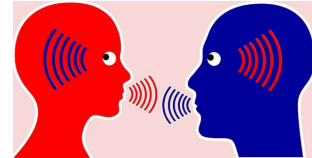
- Send them a message in advance.
- Provide them with options (give them a few times).
- Be explicit. Let them know what you need.
- Be clear about how long you need.



# Helping others & Asking if they are okay...

When you're worried about someone, the best thing you can do is **listen** & let them know you're there for them realistically & be specific on how.

- **Having the chat**- Pick the right place somewhere quiet & away from other people. Try to remove any distractions before you start. Don't push it; if they say they don't want to talk, let them know you're there if they change their mind.
- **Starting the conversation**- 'Hey, how have you been lately? What's been happening?' 'You haven't seemed yourself lately. Is there something you'd like to talk about?' 'How are you doing today? Anything you want to chat about?'
- **How to respond**- Ask questions to check that you've *understood* what they've said. Don't try to solve the problem for them. Ask them why they may be feeling that way. Let them know you're there for them. Don't judge what they say, even if you don't agree with them.  
(*Cannot cure, control or fix anyone*)
- **If they say they're NOT ok**- Ask them what's going on, listen & acknowledge their feelings. Ask what they think will help them. If you feel like they need more support you can ask if they've considered talking to a mental health professional or someone else they trust. If you're worried about their safety, let someone know.



# Setting & Maintaining Healthy Boundaries

Healthy boundaries helps us take care of ourselves instead of sacrificing our for others. Boundary setting is an important skill for people of all ages to learn. It is vital for healthy, lasting relationships.



## ***Types of boundaries:***

- **Material boundaries**- give or lend things, such as your money, car, clothes, books, food, or toothbrush. *“I can’t lend out my car. I am the only person on the insurance.” “Sure! I am happy to share my dress with you. Just a heads-up, I do need it back clean by Friday.”*
- **Physical boundaries**- your personal space, privacy, and body. *“Do you give a handshake or a hug – to whom?” “I’m not drinking tonight but thanks for the offer.” “How do you feel about loud music, nudity, & locked doors?”*
- **Communication boundaries** -how someone speaks to you. *“We can discuss this once when we are more relaxed, yelling solves nothing.” “Please don’t make comments about my body.”*
- **Emotional boundaries** -separating your emotions & responsibility for them from someone else’s. *“I am having a hard time & really need to talk. Are you in a place to listen right now?”*

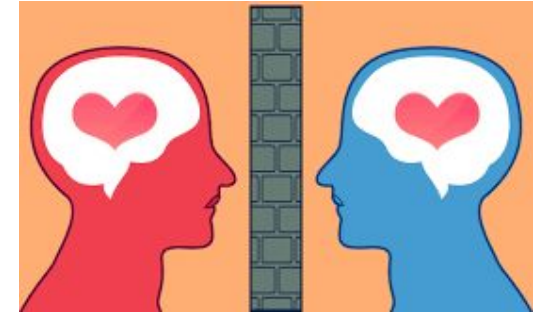




- **Sexual boundaries** –relationships & intimacy. Also, of course consent & protect your comfort level with sexual touch/activity (what, where, when, who). *“Is this comfortable for you?” “I don’t like that. Let’s try something different.”*
- **Time Boundaries**– How you spend your time. *“Please don’t be late.” “I can only stay for an hour.”*
- **Intellectual Boundaries**– Thoughts, beliefs, values, opinions. *“I can respect that we have different opinions on this.” “When we talk about this, we don’t get very far. I think it is a good idea to avoid the conversation right now.”*

**In order to keep a boundary with others we have to maintain:**

- AWARENESS & noticing the boundary is being kept or not
- Establish your STANDARDS & how you treat yourself is how others will treat you
- RESPOND with taking action & communicating confidently/ assertive

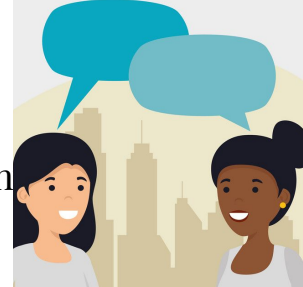


# Boundary Script Ideas

- I would rather not discuss this personal issue with you and ask that you respect how I feel.
- I respect that we disagree on this topic and hope you feel the same way.
- It is not okay with me that you volunteer my time and make plans that include me without including me on the plans.
- I understand you are angry, however, I would prefer having this discussion when you are less distressed.



# 5 Tips to Understanding Boundaries:



- 1. Ask Yourself What Needs to Change**- What needs to change? Think about what feels unhealthy or bad & what do you wish wouldn't happen anymore. Getting clarity is the first step to setting boundaries.
- 2. Be clear**- If you are setting a boundary with someone, they should know exactly what you want or don't want. It is important to use clear & firm language & not words like "maybe", "it would be nice if", or "I think" (dilutes what's being asked).
- 3. Be consistent & follow through**- After a boundary has been set, it may or may not be respected by others & you may have to protect your boundary. If someone continues to disrespect the boundary, it's important to let them know every time that it's not ok.
- 4. Treat others how you want to be treated**- Model behavior you desired. If you want your boundaries respected, then you need to respect the boundaries of others. Boundary setting & respecting go two ways.
- 5. Remember NO means NO**- "Boundary setting & respecting is an important skill for people of all ages to learn." Everyone has a right to set their own boundaries. Sometimes boundaries won't make sense. Just because something may not seem like a big deal to them, doesn't mean it isn't an issue for someone else.



*Positive role models boost people's motivation by modeling a behavior, being a respectful & safe person in the community. They can be any human of any age.*

## 5 Ways to Have a Positive Impact on Your Community

1. Host a charity drive by teaming up with a local organization
2. Offer to volunteer
3. Donate your skills & services.
4. Support local nonprofits & businesses.
5. Offer up your space for fundraisers/ events.



## Be a positive role model by:

- Smiling at others
- Be easy on yourself
- Admitting you are still learning no matter what age & you are willing to change for the better rather than being stagnant/ignorant
- Being self-aware of your actions & attitude before projecting onto others
- Ask yourself "Why is \_ acting this way? What have they experienced in their life to have that reaction to others?"
- Blaming others doesn't heal your pain
- Talk it out with a safe person





# How to Share Resources in Your Community:

Community resources include **people, places, activities and things**. They could be businesses, non-profit organizations, public service institutions or individuals in the community.

Community resources remain unused because people are *unsure how to access* free or low-cost information, goods & services.

You can access community resources through local non-profits, friends, family, co-workers, public schools, faith-based organizations such as churches / mosques & more...

*What you know might help others.*

*Let's collaborate rather than compete!*



## Simply share by:

- Posting or reposting content on social media platforms
- Forwarding newsletters
- When you know someone is in need of support, information, or services you actually suggest community resources to them specifically
- Contact local businesses and organizations and let them know about what resources are available in the community
- Just in general, communicate!

*Sharing will empower, educate, inspire, build sense of belonging in the community, & so much more!*



# Sustaining Community Relationships

1. Pay attention to people & check in with them quarterly
2. Communicate openly
3. Attend networking events & invite others you have met
4. Appreciate each other
5. Research if there are any local events already scheduled the day you want to host something so we can all attend each others' event & we are not competing w/ engagement
6. If you are tabling at a community event, share the exhibitor application with them to include them to make more connections
7. Extend yourself & services
8. Volunteer for others
9. Challenge & motivate each other to do better
10. Back & support each other when things get tough



**Social connectedness is having feelings of safety, peace, and inclusion in a neighborhood or community.**

**It is the ability to interact with people who you would not commonly interact with; it is a pride that you share with your community.**



# Faleminderit shumë!

**Access resources: [www.nwralbany.org/resources](http://www.nwralbany.org/resources)**

**Contact me, Tatiana Gjergji, with any questions, suggestions**

**& collaborative ideas:**

**[noteworthyresourcesalbany@gmail.com](mailto:noteworthyresourcesalbany@gmail.com)**

**518-599-5454**

**[www.nwralbany.org](http://www.nwralbany.org)**

**@nwr\_albany**

**New Community Center w/ indoor skatepark located at:  
930 Broadway Albany, NY 12207**

