

***Sometimes when things fall apart, well that's the big opportunity to change.***

***-Pema Chodron***

For over a decade RYSE has been relentless in our pursuit of justice and love for the young people. We have centered our work on being responsive to the explicit needs of youth and centering trauma-informed, healing practices for our members, their families and the larger community. We've also worked hard to create a professional environment that models our commitment to healing. And, the painful, vulnerable realization is that what we've put in place to cope and steward the trauma we hold and triage everyday as an organization is not enough right now.

The cumulative toll of persistent, atmospheric trauma – direct, vicarious, and system-induced- has been compounded by the impact of the federal elections continuing the cycle of organizational anxiety and hypervigilance. The weight of holding so much distances us from our ability to live our values. The larger impact is that a staff that loves this work is moved to a point of just “getting through” or “getting by.” Each day we are bracing ourselves for the next community incident, the next Executive Order, the next shooting, the next hate crime, the next news story that depicts us and our members as problems and threats. Each day that we aren't addressing this toll we're becoming more rigid and reactionary, when we need to stay responsive, patient, and compassionate.

What is true for us is that we've been conditioned as people, people of color, queer people, that courage, bravery, and leadership are demonstrated by holding in our emotions, our feelings, our vulnerability and our humanity. For those of us that are in movement work, the work of liberation, we are even further conditioned to believe that truly “being down for the cause” means being willing to sacrifice emotionally, mentally and physically. We've been taught that strength is in keeping it all together, rather than allowing things to fall apart.

We are here in the deepest service to young people, and that means we must show up with our full authentic selves. Our young people deserve that. Our young people see and feel the toll, and react to it in similar ways, but with less power and more vulnerability. And the truth is we need to get our shit together.

Taking a day off or giving ourselves a day for self-care is not enough, because it is not just about one person or one program. Our system is overwhelmed and the distress is deeper than a day away. This is a difficult realization to come to, but it is our truth. But more difficult is the potential disruption and harm to the culture of love, connection, creativity, sanctuary, and justice that we have worked hard to build and sustain for and with young people. Recognizing this is part of the healing, but it also means we must address it with our fullest intention.

Starting May 15th, RYSE is enacting a week of restoration for staff to rest, reflect, and recharge mind, body, and spirit. We will begin and close the week with intentional and collective practice, and share daily reflections during the week. Upon return, RYSE will be instituting a set of comprehensive short and long-term staff supports that we will try on, adapt, and be transparent with what is and isn't working.

This is a week to reimagine a new way of existing that allows us to be whole, healed and in deeper service to ourselves, our community, and our collective liberation. We know that there are others out there in similar struggle. There are others out there trying to find space to breathe, to rest, and to regroup for the struggle ahead. Just know we see you, we need you, and you are not alone.