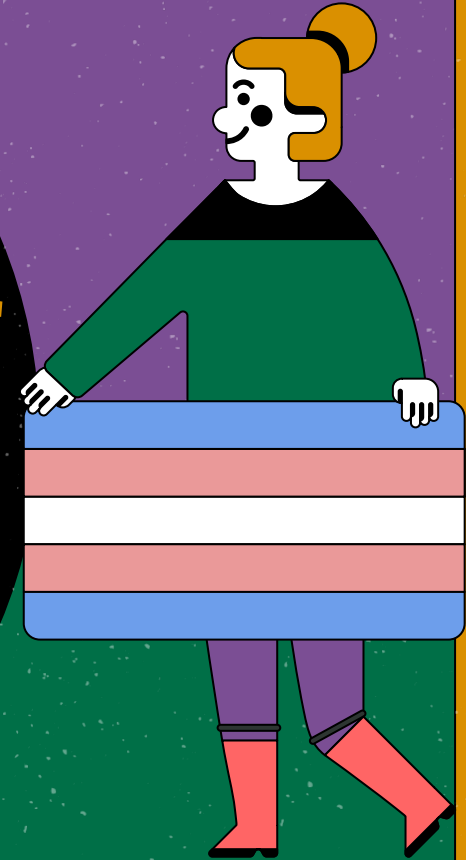
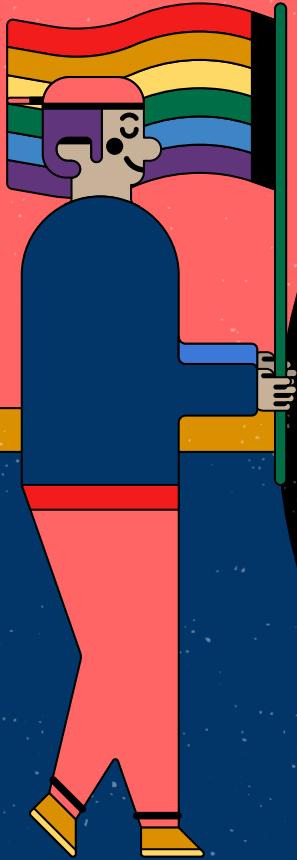


# LGBTQ+ Suicide Through a Lens of Systemic Trauma

Maggie "Pebble" McCleary, LCPC  
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CoTenacious, LLC



# Overview and Objectives

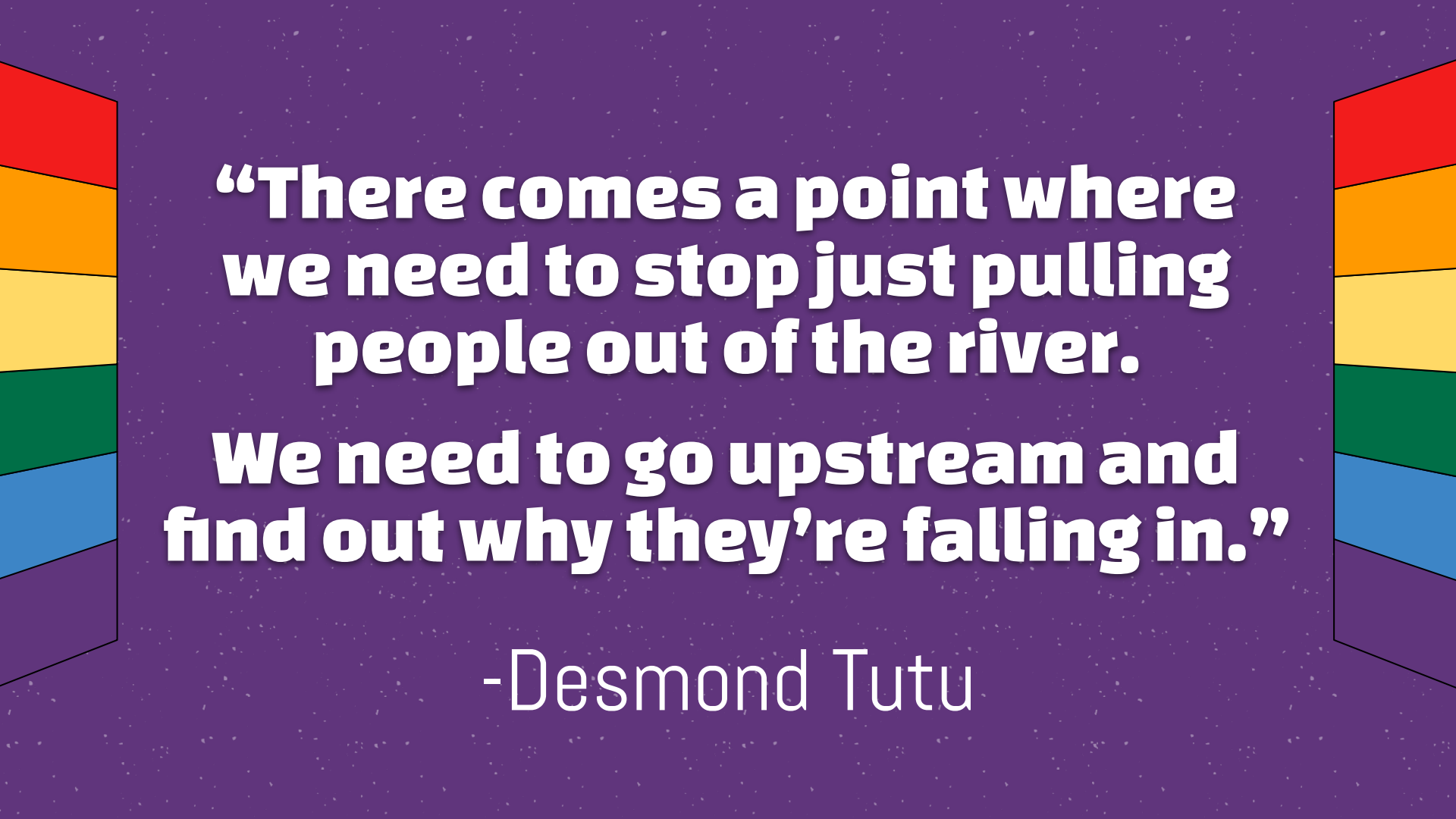


## Overview

- Systemic trauma
- Minority Stress Model
- Joiner's Interpersonal-Psychological Theory of Suicidal Behavior
- Allyship to decrease systemic trauma for LGBTQ+ community

## Objectives

- Identify the impact of systemic trauma on mental health, leading to increased risk of suicidality
- Increase understanding of LGBTQ+ suicidality as a symptom of oppression and trauma
- Gain allyship skills to make societal shifts in order to decrease systemic trauma for the LGBTQ+ community



**“There comes a point where  
we need to stop just pulling  
people out of the river.  
We need to go upstream and  
find out why they’re falling in.”**

-Desmond Tutu



# What do we mean by “Systemic Trauma”?

**Systemic:** Of or relating to systems or a system ; Relating to or affecting the entire body

**Social Systems:** the patterned series of interrelationships existing between individuals, groups, and institutions and forming a coherent whole

**Examples:** institutions, families, economy, organizations, media, technology, infrastructure, politics, bureaucracy, culture

**Trauma:** a person's emotional response to a distressing experience

**Traumatic Event:** events are traumatic to the degree that they undermine a person's sense of safety in the world and create a sense that catastrophe could strike at any time

**Examples:** acute, chronic, complex, vicarious, ACEs



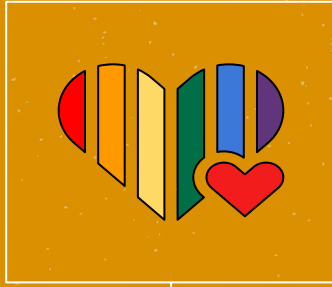
# What do we mean by “Systemic Trauma”?



This perspective extends conceptualizations of trauma to consider:

- Influence of environments
- Agencies and systems
- Conflicts
- Dynamics of oppression
- Academia, professionalism, etc

(Goldsmith, Martin,  
and Smith, 2014)



**LGBTQ+ suicidality**  
**is a byproduct of**  
***minority stress***





# Minority Stress Model

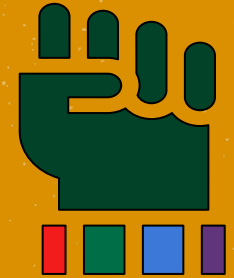
- Struggles arise not as a result of individual dysfunction
  - Natural response to increased stress of living in an environment that is hostile to those who hold a particular identity
  - Environmental stressors of discrimination and familial stressors of stigmatization
- Internalized oppression and prejudice have an additive effect on psychological distress
- Intersectionality of multiple marginalized identities increase experiences of minority stress

(ALGBTIC, 2012)

(Puckett & Levitt, 2015)

Greene & Britton, 2015)

# Minority Stress Model



“Describes that individuals who hold minority status (LGBTQIQA identities) experience daily stressors above and beyond the day-to-day stressors that everyone experiences [and] result[s] from the pervasive nature of oppression within our societies, and they result in an increase in overall stress for individuals with minority status.”

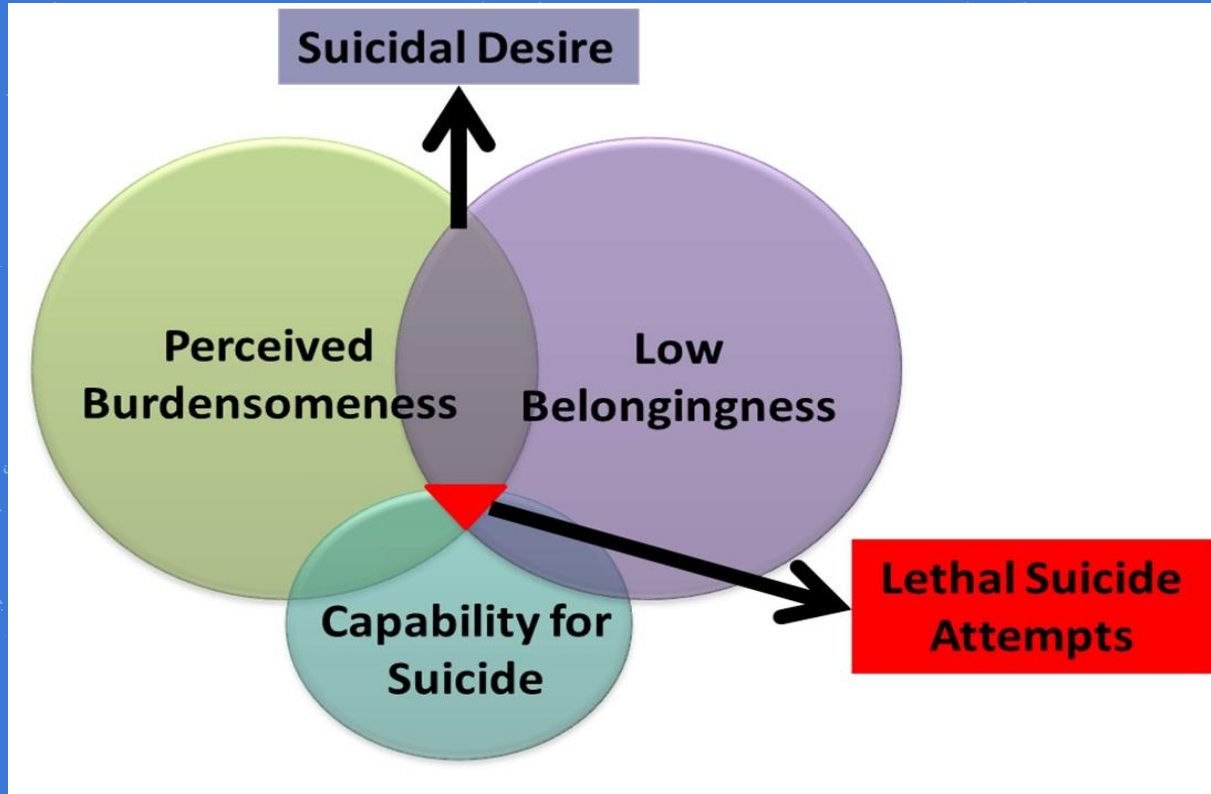




**LGBTQ+ suicidality fits into  
the *Interpersonal-  
Psychological Theory of  
Suicidal Behavior***

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# JOINER'S INTERPERSONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORY OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOR

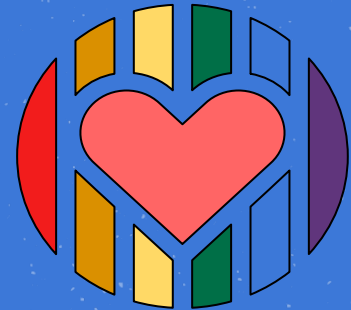


# Joiner's Theory

- Perceived burdensomeness: the view that one's existence burdens family, friends, and/or society; feeling purposeless.
- Low belongingness: feeling alienated from others; not feeling like an important part of a family, circle of friends or other valued group; sense of isolation.
- Acquired capability for suicide: grows over time; self-preservation instincts are diminished through repeated exposure to physical or emotional pain, victimization, fearful experiences, or exposure to the pain of others; multiple suicide attempts or long history of self-injury.

# Joiner's Theory applied to LGBTQ+ folks

- Perceived burdensomeness
  - Increased experiences of discrimination and lower social status
  - Not meeting parents' expectation
  - Perceived or anticipated rejection because of sexual orientation or gender expression
  - Rejection from faith institutions
- Low belongingness
  - Little social support
  - Decreased connectedness, especially with family
  - Low self-esteem
  - Increased levels of depression
  - Gender dysphoria
  - Losing friends after coming out



# Joiner's Theory applied to LGBTQ+ folks

- Acquired capability for suicide
  - History of victimization
  - Long-term exposure to stigma
  - Suicide attempts
  - Self-injury
  - Physical pain from gender-affirming treatments
  - Gender or sexuality based physical attacks or discrimination
  - History of forced sex
  - Mental illness, especially mood, eating, substance use, and personality disorders



**“When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else’s oppression, we’ll find our opportunities to make real change.”**

-Ijeoma Oluo

# Change-makers are Suicide Prevention



## Allyship

the practice of emphasizing social justice, inclusion, and human rights by members of an ingroup, to advance the interests of an oppressed or marginalized outgroup

## Advocacy

activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions

## Activism

efforts to promote, impede, direct, or intervene in social, political, economic, or environmental reform with the desire to make changes in society toward a perceived greater good

# Intrapersonal

Within the self



- Increase awareness of own privileges, disadvantages, biases, prejudices, etc.
- Challenge internalized mindsets of oppression
- Engage with an ongoing learning process
- Emotional regulation skills to tolerate distress when challenged or challenging others



# Interpersonal

**Exchange with others**



- Have the hard conversations
- Provide resources to loved ones
- Verbal and non-verbal signs of support
- Communication skills to navigate conversation in healthy, compassionate ways

# Community-based

**For the local community**



- Talk to local politicians, boards, and organizations about need for change
- Support LGBTQ education and representation within local schools
- Involvement with organizations and businesses that serve and support community
- Challenging oppressive beliefs within community
  - Racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, classism

# Societal

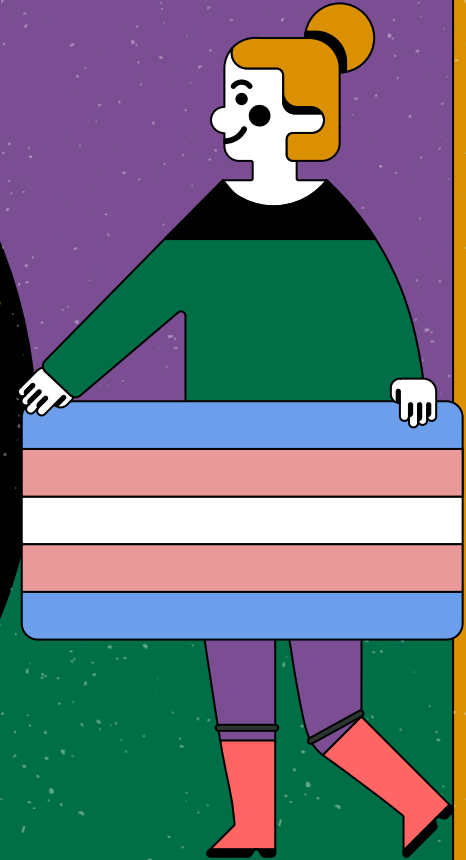
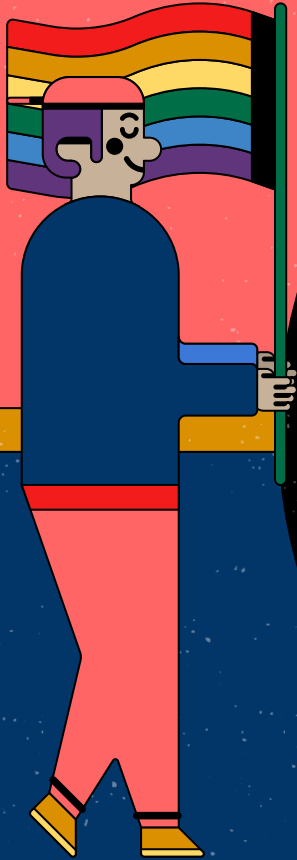
For shifts in larger society



- Institutional Reform and Abolition
  - Healthcare
  - Employment
  - Housing
  - IPV/SA Services
  - School System
  - Military
  - Criminal Justice System

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