

# Prescription P.A.D.

The PAST is (*always*) present:  
Attunement as a tool for healthy  
Delivery

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# Overview

- Utilize the story of a Black family to examine ways individual and systemic biases influence outcomes during the perinatal period
  - Describe strategies that support mental wellness, with a focus on attunement
  - Identify ways partnerships with Black birth workers and Black-led community organizations can support delivery (of supports, healing resources, and healthy babies)
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# The beginning

- So much joy
- Black man, Black woman
- Not one but two bouncing baby boys



# The Delivery Room

- Will rested
- Providers cheered, directed, and respected
- Alexis delivered twins strong



# What could go wrong?



The past is (always) present

# A Past (*Rooted in Pain*) became Present

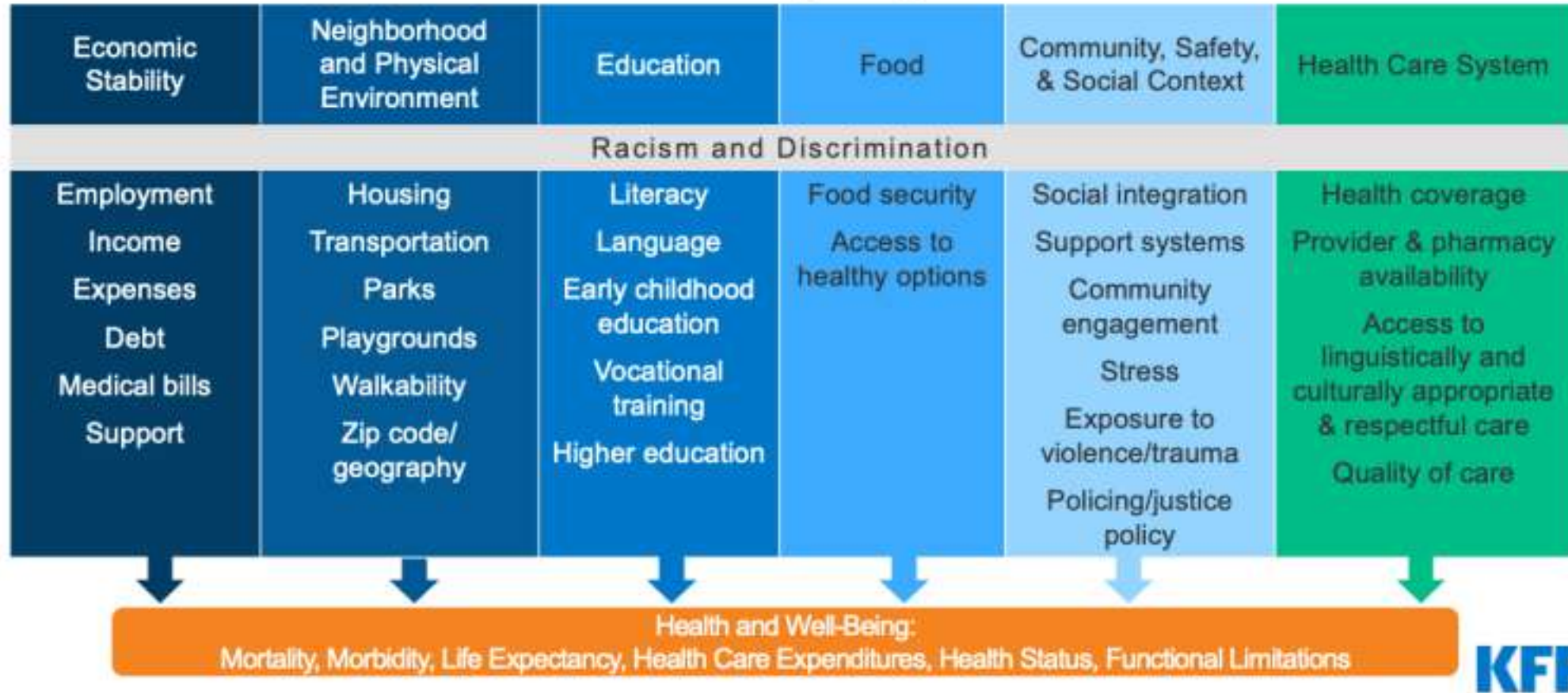
- A provider delivering a diagnosis of “Failure to thrive”
    - Sparked a systemic response that involved
      - healthcare providers
      - child protective services
      - media
      - Nationwide law enforcement police
      - the family “support” system
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# Breathe, Believe, Be...



Figure 6

# Health disparities are driven by social and economic inequities that are rooted in historic and ongoing racism and discrimination



<https://www.kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-efforts-to-address-them/>



# Where Disparities Exist, Trauma Persists

- **Provider bias and discrimination during pregnancy and post delivery have contributed to:**
  - Real and perceived poor quality of services
  - Illness (mental and physical) and death for babies and moms
  - Grief and loss for families
  - Mutual mistrust
  - Lack of routine medical procedures
  - Maternal death/near deaths among women of color where providers did not/were slow to listen to patients
  - Higher rates of mistreatment (shouting, scolding, ignoring or refusing requests for help) during the course of their pregnancy
  - \*Child abuse and neglect identification bias: Children of color are overidentified—and White children are under-identified—as victims
- **In turn...**
  - The child welfare system has disproportionate involvement with Black children and families
    - 54% of all Black children will experience a child-welfare investigation by age 18 vs 37% of all U.S. children
    - Black children have higher rates of substantiation of maltreatment, referral to services, and out-of-home placement than white children

*\*Of 3.9 million referrals to CPS involving 7 million children, only 618 000 (15.8%) children were substantiated as victims of abuse or neglect in 2020*

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# The Truth of Consequences

- Pervasive symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
    - Fear of knocks at the door
    - Excessive worry about the children's safety and separation anxiety
    - Mistrust of systems
  - Fractured relationship between the patient/family and clinician
  - Significant emotional hardship
  - Employment loss and financial hardships
  - Traumatic separation...separation anxiety
  - Stigma due to CPS involvement
  - Missed workdays
  - Legal costs
  - Family strain and significant effort to rebuild trust and connection
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# Attunement: A Tool for Healing, Transforming Relationships, and Preventing Trauma

## Attunement

- Your deeply emotional, affirming, and supportive connection to yourself
- Your deeply emotional, affirming, and supportive connection to others

### Social and Emotional Learning Competencies



Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

# Attunement

A Tool for Healing, Transforming Relationships, and Preventing Trauma

- Tune in to you first
- Use your ability to access the power of healing, wisdom, and your higher self

## \*Steps to Self-Attunement

- 1. Check in with yourself (set an intention, breathe, believe, be)**
- 2. Acknowledge and accept all parts of you without judgement**
- 3. Shift your perspective and change your narrative**
- 4. Grow your courage to change**
- 5. Let go and forgive**
- 6. Be curious, be inspired, be creative**
- 7. Practice the above as a (daily) practice**

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*\*Skills common in mindfulness, trauma-focused practices, yoga, social emotional learning*

# Attunement

A Tool for Healing, Transforming Relationships, and Preventing Trauma

- Tune in to those you serve with your whole heart
  - Sense deeply
  - Acknowledge ALL of who they are and all the factors that make them uniquely who they are
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# Trauma trauma-sensitive practices for the perinatal period

- Recognize possible trauma responses in the postpartum period and respond sensitively
- Recognize indicators of possible trauma responses beyond the first month after birth and support identification of need for trauma-specific interventions or referrals
- Facilitate connection through listening and noticing how people talk about their birth and early parenting experiences
- Emphasize positive coping strategies, resilience and parenting capacity

- Have an understanding of intergenerational trauma and attachment to support the development of parenting and family identity alongside challenges
- Support parents' understanding of their and their infant's mental states and separation of the infant and parents' distress
- Foster attunement to the infant, self-regulation and responsiveness to cues, with awareness of the bidirectionality
- Confidently reflect on, observe, validate and explore attachment related experiences, emotions and cognitions to support awareness and integration
- Help parents identify the need for trauma-focused parenting support when necessary and refer to appropriate services
- Reflect on the interwoven nature of resilience with all experiences of trauma

# How to Attune for a healthy delivery



William & Alexis Wade

# Strategies to Collaborate with Natural Supports and Community Organizations

## Assessment Questions:

- How do I see the benefits of having Black staff and collaborating
- How am I demonstrating a value for collaborating with Black individuals and Black-led organizations?
- How much time will I invest in connecting and collaborating?
- What are the incentives/benefits for Black staff/consultants/organizations to partner?

1

Staff your organization with multiple Black staff

2

Hire multiple Black consultants

- Pregnant
- Perinatal
- Beyond perinatal
- Diverse identities
- Birth workers
- Expertise (e.g., evaluators, thought-partners, organizers)

3

Form alliances and conduct initiatives with Black-run organizations

- Plan together
- Include a diverse array of interactions (e.g., event-panning, goal-setting, learning together, wellness)



# Birth Workers of Color Bring Their Best

01

## Culturally Relevant Training

We specialize in doula training that creates a safe and inclusive space for people of Color, and is grounded in culture relevance and competence. This foundation ensures we improve health outcomes for birthing people, infants, and entire communities.

02

## Advocacy & Inclusive Support

Our work extends beyond doula services to actively address and advocate for Black birthing people and all marginalized communities - including undocumented individuals, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, non-English speakers, and teen parents - so they receive equitable access to prenatal care, resources, and positive birthing and postpartum experiences.

03

## Community Centered

As a collective we are deeply rooted in the communities we serve, focusing on solution-oriented support that addresses the specific health disparities of communities of Color.

04

## Climate-Centered Care

We combine reproductive health expertise with climate awareness and rapid response capabilities, equipping individuals with the tools and resources they need to provide care that is adaptive, holistic, and responsive to environmental challenges.

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<https://www.birthworkersofcolor.com/>

# Be Intentional about Bringing the Past to the Present:

## Assessment Questions

- What do you know about institutional/historical trauma associated with your profession?
- Whose perspectives inform your knowledge base?
- How aware are you of African American historical (past) trauma?
- How aware are you of the contexts around African Americans' present-day trauma?
- How do you remain aware?

## Watch...Read...Discuss...Embrace...Act with Care

Roots

12 Years a Slave

Post Traumatic  
Slave Syndrome

Public Privates:  
Performing Gynecology  
from Both Ends of the  
Speculum

'I can do the child no good': Dr  
Sims and the enslaved infants  
of Montgomery, Alabama

• <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/18605326/>

Dr. Martin Luther King on  
health care injustice

• <https://pnhp.org/news/dr-martin-luther-king-on-health-care-injustice/>

The weaponization of medicine:  
Early psychosis in the Black  
community and the need for  
racially informed mental  
healthcare

• <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9947477/>

Torn Apart

• <https://time.com/6168354/child-welfare-system-dorothy-roberts/>

# Adopt a Trauma-Informed Racial Equity Process for Decision-Making

## Assessment Question

- How does each member demonstrate commitment to trauma-informed racial equity practice?
- Ensure leaders are engaged and assess their understanding and value for understanding and addressing racialized trauma and racial equity
- Build organizational knowledge of racism and trauma (acknowledge past and present harm)
- Define what a racial equity focus in trauma-informed care looks like
  - What does trauma look like in the community you serve?
  - Where are the community-identified pain points in the delivery of health care?
  - How have you as an organization been complicit in compounding this trauma?
  - What would racial equity look like at your organization? How does this relate to trauma-informed care?
- Track progress over time
- Elevate patient/client/community voices to disrupt existing power structures
- Support staff of color (understand their experiences, establish a reporting process for harmful interactions to staff and clients, create intentional opportunities for healing)
- Adapt and adopt a Racial Equity Assessment tool, share it, write its use into policy

**May the future bring healing...**



**...and a prescription for another special delivery**

# Thank you for being the change we all need

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## **Sankofa: Return and Get It**

We must return and claim our past in order to move toward our future.  
It is understanding who we were that will free us to embrace who we are now.  
*(The meaning of Sankofa)*

*From Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, Dr. Joy DeGruy*

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