

WE CAN'T HEAL IN SYSTEMS THAT HARM US

Let's say the quiet part out loud: Many of the systems that claim to help us are the very ones causing our pain. And still, we're told to show up, ask for help, be vulnerable, and do the "work." But how do you heal when the very system you're supposed to trust treats you like a liability?

PERFORMING HEALING VS. EXPERIENCING IT

People of color, queer folks, disabled folks, survivors of trauma, we're asked to contort ourselves into systems that were never built with us in mind. We're asked to be grateful for access while being gaslit, misdiagnosed, or ignored. We're praised for being "resilient" but punished for showing symptoms of that resilience. We become performers in our own recovery. Masked. Muted. Monitored. But that's not healing. That's survival. And survival is not the same as safety.

THE SYSTEM WASN'T BROKEN, IT WAS BUILT THIS WAY

When marginalized people say they're "burnt out" or "resistant to help," it's not always because they're unwilling to heal. It's because they've been harmed by systems pretending to offer healing. We carry generations of medical, institutional, and interpersonal harm. And when we finally try to seek support, we're asked to do so within the very structures that harmed our parents, our elders, and ourselves.

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THE COLLECTIVE ACT ADVANCING AWARENESS, CREATING CONNECTIONS, TRANSFORMING THE COLLECTIVE

BY CHARLENE OF THE COLLECTIVE ACT

AN OPINION PIECE



SO WHERE CAN WE HEAL?

We heal in community. In chosen family. In safe, slow, affirming spaces that understand complexity. We heal when we stop centering productivity in our recovery. We heal when rest is not earned, but sacred. We heal in group chats, in breathwork circles, in quiet mornings on the porch. We heal in art. In rage. In joy. In music. In movement. We heal when we're no longer treated as a problem to fix but a person to honor.

FOR CLINICIANS, EDUCATORS, AND LEADERS: A NOTE

If you're in a position of power, pause and ask: 1) Does your system allow for pause, slowness, and rest? 2) Are your policies trauma-informed or just trauma-reactive? 3) Do your rules uplift dignity or demand obedience? If people are disengaging from your systems, that's not resistance. That's wisdom. They are responding to something you might not be ready to face: That the system isn't safe.

HEALING IS A BIRTHRIGHT, NOT A PERFORMANCE

You don't have to stay in spaces that make you prove your pain. You don't have to stay in systems that center themselves over your story. Healing belongs to you. And you deserve to heal in spaces that hold you, not harm you.

LET'S REIMAGINE HEALING SPACES

If you've ever felt unseen, silenced, or unsupported by the systems meant to help, you're not alone. Reach out to join a healing circle so we can begin your radical healing today.

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