Dear friends,

It’s easy to feel overwhelmed by troubles, whether it’s in our own lives, in the lives of people we care about, or in events taking place around the planet. What helps you to stay connected when you find yourself feeling overwhelmed?

For me, being mindful of my body sensations has been an important practice that helps me stay connected and interrupts the cycles of worry and anxiety that I can easily fall into. Noticing my breath, placing my hand on my heart, doing a body scan from head to toe — these small actions can make a huge difference in how I carry myself throughout the day. Focusing my attention on my body gives my mind a short respite, long enough to help me “reset” so that I can lean into the part of me that is connected to all of nature and the earth. When I do this on a regular basis, I find myself feeling more trusting, grounded, accepting, and hopeful. I can then move forward knowing that I am making the best possible choices with what I have been given. Connecting with my body inevitably leads me to make choices based on my deepest values, such as compassion, honesty, and authenticity.

We all have different styles, preferences, and practices that can help us to stay connected to our best self. In this newsletter, Nazareth social work intern Jaleesa Harewood writes about the principles of effective altruism, an approach that can help us make the most out of the things we do to help. Lester Herrarte, a Community Solutions Project fellow, reflects on the unique role of teachers as leaders and influencers in creating social change from the classroom. I hope you find inspiration in their words of wisdom.

In peace,

Shira

“When we drop fear, we can draw nearer to people, we can draw nearer to the earth, we can draw nearer to all the heavenly creatures that surround us.”

— bell hooks
Effective Altruism
by Jaleesa Harewood

The world is on fire... literally. The Amazon Rainforest - the lungs and lifeblood of this planet that we call home - is simultaneously being decimated by fire and deforestation, leaving the lives and culture of millions of people at risk. Poverty has reached pandemic levels. In Rochester alone - the city that we call home - over 30 percent of our family, friends, and neighbors live bordering or below the national poverty line. Homelessness is also at an all-time high. Climate change is real; the polar ice caps are melting faster than we can offset or decrease our carbon emissions. Millions of people live in inadequate or unsafe housing. Millions of people live in food deserts where daily life is marred by food insecurity or flat out hunger. The city of Flint, Michigan - as well as various Native American reservations around the country - do not have clean drinking water. The gross disparities of wealth in this country has created a lack of educational and job opportunities for poor people and people of color. The millions of people currently incarcerated in our nation’s prisons and jails are left to languish and die as their basic human and civil rights are being ignored or denied daily. The hundred of thousands of people fleeing insurmountable poverty, war, crime, and persecution in their native lands reach our borders seeking asylum or refuge... only to be detained and forced to live in what can only be described as 21st century concentration camps; and in these camps, children are being ripped from the comforting, familiar arms of their families and friends, and then forced to sleep on floors, in cages... like animals.

I’m sure none of you reading this newsletter are ignorant to the myriad of issues in the world and in our country. Yet, oftentimes, we can feel overwhelmed and become paralyzed when we think about taking action; we can feel as if we are too small to make a big impact. But, I’ve found it helpful to follow the principles of effective altruism, a theory that can help us to make the most out of the things we do. Here are a few tips to follow to make the most of your actions to do good.

Get involved in charities that are close to your heart. In a day where money is tight, we may not always be able to donate money. Utilize your greatest asset... your time.

Invest your time and money (if feasible) to charities that are developing initiatives backed by research and evidence.

Invest your time and money into charities that can have a more immediate impact. Think homelessness and LGBTQIA rights.

Invest your time and money into causes that show promises for tremendous growth. Think about charities that can affect great numbers of people.

If you’re interested in more information about effective altruism, visit effectivealtruism.org.
Teachers as Leaders and Influencers

My name is Lester Herrarte. I am from Guatemala. I am doing a four-month practicum at PiRI as part of the Community Solutions Program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of State. This is a professional development program for community leaders from different parts of the planet.

I have taught from elementary school through college, and I must say that along my teaching experience I have made many mistakes because I was unaware of how important my job and how powerful my words and actions were. It is completely acceptable to make mistakes but being aware of our actions make us stop from making them.

I was teaching a college level once a week. I knew that learning students’ names was necessary to know who I was working with. I used to tell my adult students on the first day of class that I would learn their names and I expected students learn my name as well rather than calling me by any other title. If a student chooses not learn my name I will forget the student’s name in return.

Once, a student was doing a presentation in front of the class, he asked for my validation on his presentation, however, he was unable to remember my name. Then I publicly said I would forget that student’s name because the student had forgotten mine.

After analyzing this situation I can see that I knew that learning students’ names was important to acknowledge and recognize students being in my class. However, I was overusing my authority and I was being punitive by making students learn my name instead of being invited to. If there were a caring relationship students would learn my name willingly without being coerced to. I then understood that the better I know the better I am.

Teaching is one of the most rewarding professions since fellow-humans are full of surprises. It is unknown what can happen in the classroom. It might seem like a regular day, but it could suddenly turn out to an anecdote worth to be shared. It could be a comment, a joke, or even a facial expression that could make us laugh, connect and better understand the student.

There are many words I can use to refer to teachers, today I have chosen two: leader and influencer.

Teachers are grassroots leaders that have the priceless opportunity of working with humankind in order to solve people-to-people dialogue and conflict resolution towards embracing social change. Teachers’ instruction goes beyond any academic subject, they are instructing students how to see and interact in the world. Teachers must be reminded that they have the authority and opportunity to make important decisions (Schirch, 2004) anything they do or say has an impact on students’ lives and their future actions. Teachers have to take advantage of their power and authority to embrace social change by shaping positively the way knowledge is directed to their students to educate a generation of human beings who are committed in becoming the best-selves for the benefit of humankind and the planet.

Teachers are also influencers. They are able to use their influence to create a critical mass where many people embrace their ideas and solutions so that change is inevitable. (Schirch, 2004). Teachers share knowledge and critical opinions with their students which allows students become critical thinkers to shape their opinion and seek positive changes. Teachers had better take advantage of their privileged position to start social change from the classroom.
A Warm Send-Off for PiRI Trainer Judith Lardner

Thank you Judith for your service to PiRI! We’re wishing you joy in your move back home to Ireland. Learn about Judith’s online peer practice programs at:

www.judithlardner.com

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY AT
PIRI’S OPEN HOUSE—SEPTEMBER 25, 2019

Tony Hess, Hillside Family of Agencies, discussed the restorative initiatives taking root within Hillside’s Raise the Age program, day treatment services, and other applications.

Lester Herrarte, CSP fellow, spoke about ways to empower teachers to create social change. He also presented a photo display of Guatemala’s geographical and cultural diversity, including examples of Mayan circle practices.

“Be Kind Tuesday with PiRI”

THREE HEADS BREWING

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 6:00-8:00PM

$1 from every beer sale goes toward PiRI.

Come out and give back while you have a drink!

Hosted by Stomping Ground
Cultivating Mindfulness Within: Educator Support Group

A support group for educators that meets monthly to encourage mindfulness, resilience, and self-care.

Participants must commit to attending each month. A signed statement of commitment is requested in order to participate.

Meeting Dates: 10/9/19, 11/13/19, 12/11/19, 1/8/20, 2/12/20, 3/11/20, 4/15/20, 5/6/20
from 5:00-6:30 pm
Cost: $80 for the year (Oct 2019—May 2020)

Register by October 2 at www.pirirochester.org/events
Our Calendar

October 2019
- October 1-3 3 Day Community Building Circle Training - Pittsford Schools staff only
- October 2 Overview of Restorative Practices - Fairport Schools staff only
- October 2 Restorative Practices Overview - RIT class on civic engagement
- October 7-8 2 Day Community Building Circle Training - Greece Schools staff only
- October 8 “Be Kind Tuesday with PiRI” at THREE HEADS BREWING—OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- October 9 Cultivating Mindfulness Within: Educator Support Group—OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- October 9-11 3 Day Community Building Circle Training - BOCES 1 staff only
- October 11 1 Day Introduction to RP - Greece Schools staff only
- October 15-17 3 Day Community Building Circle Training - Rush-Henrietta Schools staff only
- October 16 Talking Circle at Irondequoit Public Library—What is the Value of My Work?
- October 16 Overview of Restorative Practices - St. John’s Brickstone private group
- October 21 Overview of Restorative Practices - Our Lady of Mercy staff only
- October 21 Monthly Talking Circle at PiRI - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- October 22-24 3 Day Community Building Circle Training - Webster Schools staff only
- October 22-23 2 Day Restorative Discipline Training - BOCES 2 - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
- October 26 WNY Restorative Practices Conference: From Conflict to Collaboration
- October 28 Day 1 of 3 Day Community Building Circle Training - Our Lady of Mercy staff only
- October 30-31 2 Day Restorative Discipline Training - Rush-Henrietta schools staff only

For more information and to register, visit our website at [www.pirirochester.org](http://www.pirirochester.org) and click Events or contact us at 585-473-0970 or office@pirirochester.org.

If you would like to volunteer as a Library Talking Circle co-facilitator, please contact Shira May at smay@pirirochester.org

talking piece

is the monthly newsletter of Partners in Restorative Initiatives. A talking piece is used in circles to create a space for each person to speak and for others to listen.

Contributing writers: Jaleesa Harewood, Lester Herrarte, Shira May

Send mailing updates, corrections and submissions to: Partners in Restorative Initiatives 111 Hillside Avenue, Rochester, NY 14610 Archives at [www.pirirochester.org](http://www.pirirochester.org)