

An illustration featuring a glowing orange lightbulb with a teal base, a teal checkmark inside a circle, an open book with 'CASE STUDY' written on the cover, a pencil with teal and orange stripes, and a spiral notebook with a bar chart on it. The background is light gray with abstract shapes and dots.

JESS PETTITT

# CASE STUDIES

# & NOTICE NOTES

■ Beta Test for Almost: When Answers Need To Ask More Questions



Thank you for being a Beta Tester for my upcoming book. Please use this short survey to capture any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, questions, etc., you may have to assist with the book writing process.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALMOSTING>

PART  
01

# ALMOST-ING CASE STUDIES

As a Diversity Consultant, I have the privilege of working with clients, ranging from small volunteer lead organizations to non-profits to global corporations, that truly want to do the right thing, whatever that may be. Often, they have tried and failed. Diversity initiatives fail for several reasons, many of which result in not asking enough questions. I want to take the acts of good and learn from the missteps, mistakes, fears, and accidents so that we can keep Doing Good.

Do not get me wrong: I am aware that real harm can be done out of good intentions; over time, we may even lose sight of the good intentions leaving behind a legacy of disbelief. Ideas can also be flipped inside for personal gain and thrive by riding out the good intentions that led to the original idea. For example, it is Giovanni Gentile's concepts of utopia that opened Benito Mussolini's 1932 Doctrine of Fascism. Mussolini's definition of utopia was misconstrued to fulfil a personal agenda.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps, we still have something to learn from this tragedy. We can ask more questions. There are moments when a do-over is necessary; or perhaps in hindsight, a better-fitting answer appears more obvious than it was in the moment. Ideas and concepts can be flipped on their ear and end up unrecognizable. Taking an answer and asking more questions can go south, be misinterpreted, and lead to doing very real harm. Or, conversely, we can do even better than before. Honestly, Fascism is more my kind of research, but I find myself coming back to the intersection of three realities, the role of business in the world; my first book, *Good Enough Now*, and our individual responsibility; and how Doing Good can go so terribly wrong for so many.

When I explained the concept of this book to a friend, she said, "You want to Monday Morning Quarterback your client's missteps and mistakes and use them for good." I think she is accurate; even though I am not a football fan, it seems commonplace to dissect a game play by play and make better choices in hindsight. I truly know nothing about any professional sports, so I am just going to have to take her word for it.

This use of hindsight is a concept that I, like Mussolini (but for the greater good, though he may have said those same words), like and now want to make my own. What I want to do is look at real examples that did not work out, even though the chosen answer was almost good enough, so that we can build something new and better by asking more questions.

A postmortem analysis or even backseat driving may address this hindsight expertise, and I do not want to lose sight of the good intentions gone wrong. An area I know even less about, the military, uses something called an AAR, an "After Action Review," to capture what went well and what needs to change moving forward.

Similarly, facilitation practices often conclude sessions with Roses and Thorns, positives and deltas, and the like. These hindsight practices review, reflect, and project forward for next time. Hypocrisy and irony show up as often as the unknown in example after example, and we can always learn to make a more informed choice next time.

What I do not want to happen is the burnout that prevents us from trying something new due to fear of new or repeated failure. Regret, reexperiencing old wounds, and uncovering trauma are not what I want to do here. I need to acknowledge that sharing multiple examples to look at in hindsight may cause just that for you, the reader.

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1 <http://www.worldfuturefund.org/wffmaster/Reading/Germany/mussolini.htm>

## Almost-ing

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Many of the initiatives that will be shared did more harm by pulling or aborting the effort than by just trying in the first place. This process can also be misleading and harmful as these ideas are after the matter at hand has passed, off the field of play, and too late for the moment being reviewed to be fixed in real time.

It is my hope that the good intentions of these examples fuel more good intentions that are set up for success by learning from failed attempts to Do Good. I believe this success comes from doing something different. Efforts begun from a place of privilege in the name of advocacy or allyship often speak for or represent those marginalized without consent, discussion, involvement, or collaboration.

When reading Don Norman's *The Design of Everyday Things*, I was struck by an off-handed comment about addressing bad design. "Sometimes the design is fine until the people come along. An everyday thing could say, "I am sorry I am so bad with people!" (Norman, 37). I want to keep this reverse voice going in retrospective! Our mistakes, missteps, failures, and almost successes are all places of growth. We are talking about disruption, and it is not always terrible. Anything can be almost terrible while still be the right action, just like the right behaviors can land terribly unexpectedly on another. Disruption is growth. There is order in chaos and changes can easily manifest into a new as-yet unimagined way of being.

When I first moved to Northern California, the giant Redwoods were mysterious neighbors. I realized I had a lot to learn about coastal forests, King Tides, fire season, tsunamis, and other nature-related elements I had not had to learn about growing up land locked in Texas. Fire is required for a lot of vegetation to pollinate as the heat is needed to release seed. Redwoods not only grow so tall due to the moisture in the air, but they are also flame-retardant, burning from the inside. If El Niño winds are strong enough, a hollowed-out Redwood may collapse and begin to sprout seedlings.

This adaptation is chaotic and is an example of natural order. My not knowing about tides, moon cycles, and the like does not mean they did not exist; I must learn and relearn because I entered a new moment in time. The trees and moon met me where I was and helped me learn and grow from my current state of ignorance. They are answers to questions I had not ever asked. Objective measurement is full of my own bias. I believe we can learn from examples of others and we can check our own biases by getting to know our self and current mindsets to grow. I am going to call this Almost-ing.

For example, one client had me meet her at the swimming pool at her all-women's undergraduate college for privacy and to show me an example of Do Gooding efforts gone wrong. She asked me to the pool because, at the time, she was the only Muslim student who liked to swim (that she knew of) and her classmates would make fun of her and her burquini, a swimming outfit that covers one's full body. The College's response was to close the pool to all non-Muslims for one hour a week so she could swim in private.

**Almost** – Where this may seem like a positive response to end bullying, it is important to note a few things. First, the bullies were never addressed, nor could she have ever been able to be on the swim team due to the harassment. The Muslim swim hours were scheduled when she had class and could not use the pool at that time without missing class.

It may take a lot of Almost – ing to find the best solution forward.

I reflect on the popularity of support for the Ukrainian military while they are defending themselves while we, the US, have invaded other countries for a land grab and have even bombed our own residents inside our own borders. The image of former President Trump throwing paper towels to Puerto Rican hurricane survivors, US Citizens, who survived a devastating hurricane, and other photo opportunities he and his designees took are burned into my memory. Media coverage is a manipulation of opportunities, appearances, and intentions that can miss the mark (an understatement) by not taking responsibility for impact.

Giant piles of fast fashion, almost disposable, donated clothing items piled on street corners being sold by virtually homeless folks come to mind when I buy new clothes for one-time occasions or even just because I am bored. I can even write a story about the good I am doing by supporting businesses and donating clothes to those in need where there is no order in who or how the coveted items would be distributed. I think of students in matching T-shirts doing neighborhood clean-up community service projects in my own yard, uninvited and unexpected, on a weekend and then the future wearer of those shirts in a far-flung impoverished community surrounded by litter and waste.

There is a pattern of threes that is in itself an example of order. Humor writers highlight jokes that come in sets of three; even chaos theory lands on a three-winged bird of chaos when random behaviors are tracked over time. In my first book, *Good Enough Now*, I describe the scene in the 1984 *Ghostbusters* movie where the three main characters defeat Zuul by crossing the streams of their Proton Packs. The Ghostbusters assumed “crossing the streams” as dangerous and never tried, but they took a risk, and it paid off. Perhaps I should have said there was a spoiler alert? A pattern of three parts seems to be everywhere. I am currently crossing the streams of Margaret Wheatley’s *New Science and Quantum Physics* while Almost-ing the mistakes of my current and past clients, and we need one more stream for this to really work. Oh, yes, accounting theory.

I learned in my Financial Accounting course, as part of my MBA program, about occupational fraud. The temptation to commit what we typically refer to as a white-collar crime comes down to three variables presenting themselves to an employee.

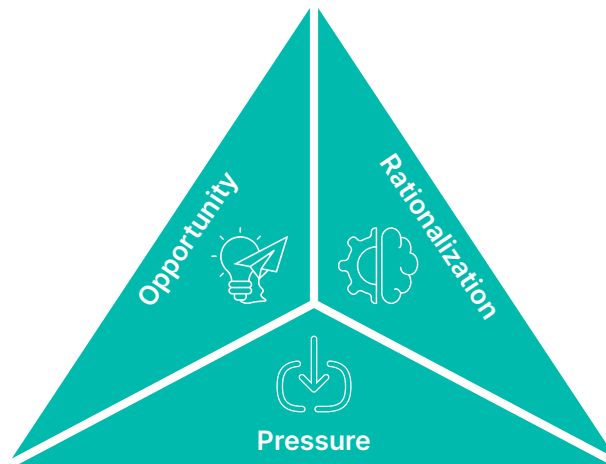
Dr. Donald R. Cressey<sup>2</sup> first identified these three elements in 1953 and it became more widely known in the 70s as “the fraud triangle.”<sup>4</sup> Cressey studied and made significant contributions concerning accounting crimes, fraud, corporate scandals, and even organized crime. He concluded that an employee is led to commit fraudulent behaviors when there is 1) opportunity, 2) rationalization, and 3) incentives (motives) or pressure (internalized or externalized). Cressey listened to convicted fraudsters as if he did not know the answers and allowed white-collar criminals to ask questions.

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2 <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/2934104>

3 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald\\_Cressey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Cressey), Wells, Joseph T. *Principles of Fraud Examination*. Wiley, 2008. ISBN 978-0-470-12883-1

4 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accounting\\_scandals#The\\_fraud\\_triangle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accounting_scandals#The_fraud_triangle)



Cressey's Fraud Triangle has evolved and changed since 1953;<sup>5</sup> this may prove my point even further. Refined definitions of opportunity, rationalization, and pressure have included, over the years, capability, coercion, external regulations, societal influences, ignorance, ego, greed, and arrogance.<sup>6</sup> Opportunity does not matter if the employee is not capable, just as pressure does not matter if it is not persuasive. Competitors, stakeholders, shareholders, and your surrounding community can also be sources of pressure to do something and can also serve as an echo chamber where opportunity can go unnoticed.

Traci Brown, Fraud-Busting Body Language Expert (Fifth in the World actually!),<sup>7</sup> emphasized the pressure people and organizations feel to make Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) changes to their workplace culture. While their actions may come from good intentions, if one of the main "triangle ingredients" is missing, the initiative fails.

Some of the failed DEI initiatives used here as examples may never have been intended to succeed in the first place and may have been born of societal pressure (more because their backs were up against the wall) without a real, tangible, and strategic plan. One's own mindset, emotional maturity, sense of self, and entitlement are also required to launch any initiative to Do Good. When all ingredients are present, anything is possible, especially when we can learn from others' missteps and mistakes.

Over the 20+ years that I have served my clients and listened to my audiences, I realized my own three-part model that overlays well with Cressey's findings. Pressure, internal or external, provides the motive or incentive for someone to Do Good in the world by providing an idea larger than one's self. Referred to as the "heart" in my model, it is the ideas that bring about someone's motivation to act. One's attitude or justified rationalization aligns with the "head" variable in my own approach to Doing Good.

Having the details, answers, and specifics is also a motivation to act. However, it is in combination that the heart and head, or, as Cressey calls it, incentive and pressure paired with rationalization, that one finds the opportunity to act.

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5 [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Fraud-Triangle-Source-Cressey-1953-1-Pressure-Albrecht-et-al-2006-pointed-out-that\\_fig1\\_323609076](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Fraud-Triangle-Source-Cressey-1953-1-Pressure-Albrecht-et-al-2006-pointed-out-that_fig1_323609076)

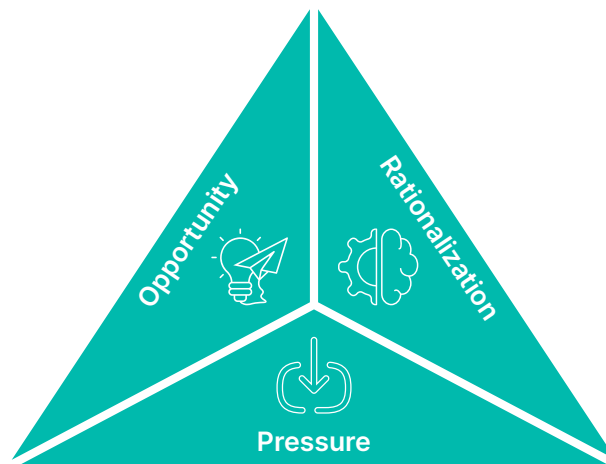
6 [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Fraud-Triangle-Source-Cressey-1953-1-Pressure-Albrecht-et-al-2006-pointed-out-that\\_fig1\\_323609076](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Fraud-Triangle-Source-Cressey-1953-1-Pressure-Albrecht-et-al-2006-pointed-out-that_fig1_323609076)

7 Personal Communications, 12/26/22 Traci Brown, Fraud-Busting Body Language Expert, 303-956-3693, [traci@tracibrown.com](mailto:traci@tracibrown.com)



Acting, or remaining inactive, stuck, undecided are responses of themselves, I posit, that to use Cressey's model for identifying risk of fraud committing harm, these same variables can be used together for good.

Let us call it the Doing Good Triangle. We can review the following cases, one variable at a time, to learn from the answers provided, ask more questions, so that the intentions can move from Almost to more successful next time.



I am repurposing this accounting theory as Mussolini was inspired by Gentile's utopian philosophy, this time for good. A loyal employee who is otherwise of high moral character can be tempted to commit fraud and betray their employer. This behavior can be justified when the right ingredients present themselves to go against the grain of the pre-existing expectations on the employee.

Is it not possible that this enticement could be used for good, too? When someone is creating an initiative to increase employee morale or support the retention of existing talent, they, too, must go against current company culture. With the existing time, talents, and resources, the opportunity alone would not be enough to do something, but it could spark an idea.

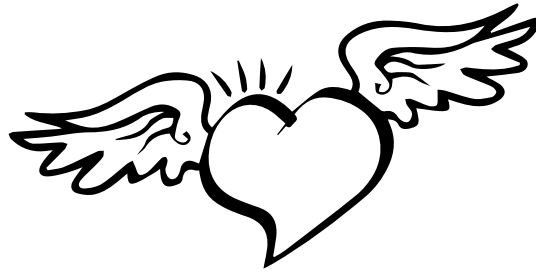
Personal attitudes or rationalizations may shift and change as the employee learns about the experiences of others; and they may want to step up as an ally or advocate for acknowledgment, change, or corporate stand on the subject. Perhaps other issues are being addressed that motivate or incentivize this employee to act for good. Societal pressures, current events, or internal pressures could bring these initiatives to the forefront. If all three variables that make up the Doing Good Triangle are present, it seems likely that someone will try to do something for good to better the whole.

By Almost – ing dozens upon dozens of examples of Do Gooding gone wrong, we can learn which elements may have been present, which were missing, and how next time could be more successful.<sup>8</sup> Imagine if we could disrupt diversity initiatives and beyond by listening to the answers that are already presenting themselves and asking new-to-us questions.

## Almost-ing

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We do not experience every problem others are facing and they have answers to questions we have not imagined yet. Can we allow these answers to meet us where we are so that we can grow? Perhaps this is how Einstein imagined our consciousness levels shifting and changing so that we use the tools we have grown accustomed to building and begin dismantling the known structures that are not serving all.



Duff McDon'ld 's book, *The Golden Passport*, further articulates the need for higher consciousness to solve problems while also naming how insulated Harvard Business School (HBS) was in creating the problems it was trying to solve. HBS certainly has the resources and influence to make change in corporate America, and yet it is caught in the same circular cycles with its internal gaze.

Despite opportunity and rationalization, the motive or incentives seem slight at best to truly dismantle its teachings and funding structures that create the loop in which HBS's answers and questions are caught. Asking answers new questions can break this cycle and lead to doing better – Doing Good.

Theodore Roosevelt said, "To educate a [person] in mind but not in morals is to educate a menace to society."<sup>9</sup> This is where I think the Doing Good Triangle comes into play. In *The Golden Passport*, McDonald shares the opinions of Carter Bales, who, in 2009, founded New World Capital Group, an investment firm dedicated to solving environmental problems rooted in the stakeholder vs. shareholder focus. Bales states, "Business people respond to incentives. They do not break new paths. Why have we gotten nowhere on climate change in this country? Because corporations havncentiventive to change... The only thing that works is incentives."

In a 2015 essay, "Impacting Investing: Trading Up, Not Trading Off," Bales describes the mandate of New World. He concludes: "Without changing the behavior of Corporate America, there is little prospect of curing certain environmental problems and many other societal ills." Incentives, motives, and their applied pressure may or may not modify behaviors because they are connected to a bigger idea. This bigger idea could be for selfish benefit and greed, or it could be for good – the greater good.

Uri Gneezy, Stephan Meier, and Pedro Rey-Biel, in their 2011 *Journal of Economic Perspectives* article, "When and Why Incentives (Do not) Work to Modify Behavior,"<sup>10</sup> write about several social ills spanning from education to prosocial behaviors like "donating blood, volunteering, protecting the environment" (et al, 199) and good and bad habits. To connect incentives or motives and apply the internal or external pressure, I believe our efforts can Do Good. And more questions are needed to succeed.

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9 Duff McDonald 's book *The Golden Passport* page 441.

10 Uri Gneezy, Stephan Meier, and Pedro Rey-Biel, in their 2011 *Journal of Economic Perspectives* article, "When and Why Incentives (Do not) Work to Modify Behavior," Volume 25, Number 4, Fall 2011, pages 191-210.



In addition to having the right motivational idea in mind, we also must be able to logically rationalize our choices moving forward. Learning from past missteps or mistakes is a great learning foundation; from these past answers, we can ask more questions to be better prepared to Do Good moving forward.

Neil deGrasse Tyson says, “Private enterprise can never lead a space frontier’ It’s not possible because a space frontier is expensive, it has unknown risks, and it has unquantified risks”<sup>11</sup>; and yet private space shuttles are taking off. The privatization of space and other planets in our solar system is a new business frontier because a rationalized business argument is being made. Some are still asking *WHY*, as the pressure seems like an internal race between rich white men only. No one is clear on the motive or incentive, but a rational business case must have been made between Bezos and Musk.

When assessing risk and rationalization, I think of this as a planning tool that learns from the past and carefully, meticulously forecasts into the future mitigating risk as a cost of doing business. Joseph is said to have instructed the Egyptian pharaoh to “Collect during the seven years of plenty, and you will have enough during the years of famine.”<sup>12</sup> Rarely do I use biblical stories in my work, but this one oddly stands out from my maternal grandfather as I remember him being frugal, cautious, and risk-averse.

He was an accountant professor who carefully spent money until later in life. Oddly, he seemed to get entangled in several pyramid schemes, ended up losing his entire savings, and filed for bankruptcy before his passing.

Rationalization does not always mean you are making the best choices even if they feel like it. The root of all rationalizations is the balance between self-interest and public interest or individualism and collective responsibility. Who do you feel responsible for and how do you use your own agency to conduct yourself accordingly?

Some feel responsible for themselves or their immediate family, others may expand the circle to include their neighbors, while others feel responsible for seven generations ahead. Understanding your own scale of responsibility can assist with the minutia of details and what you choose to do with it.

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11 [https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/neil\\_degrasse\\_tyson\\_531098](https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/neil_degrasse_tyson_531098)

12 Genesis 41:34-37 Genesis 41:34-36 KJV - Bible.com <https://www.bible.com/bible/1/GEN.41.34-36.KJV>

## Almost-ing

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This is why Whistleblowers have no choice, nor do allies, advocates, and accomplices, to Do Good, and others opt to justify criminal activity. Rationalization is not enough on its own; even when paired with a clear idea that justifies your choices, you need one more variable to take action.



Cressey's third side of the triangle is opportunity which seems to be why his Fraud Theory is so deeply rooted in Accounting today. Who else has more opportunity to cover up where funds are going than the person most trusted by an organization to document the flow of money in and out of the business? An accountant with a solid plan feeling pressure and simultaneously motivated to do bad will do bad, and yet another accountant in the same situation may feel they have no choice but to blow a whistle out of loyalty not just to the organization but to all of humanity.

Taking action is part of the circular cycle about diversity programming itself; and doing something without the other two variables is bound to fail as it is almost the right thing to do.

It is in the moment that one gets to decide if they are going to do something and if that something is for good or bad. The woman who decided to put a daisy in the barrel of a gun as a sign of peaceful protest against the Vietnam War did something for good. So do the parents who decide to turn in their own guns to protect their children from accidents. In both cases, they encountered an opportunity to Do Good that can be rationalized for the benefit of the collective and impact the whole.

The key is in the intersection of all three elements. Opportunity can be well thought out or cause a great sense of urgency to act immediately. I remind us all to ask more questions. Real ally, advocate, or accomplice work may not have started with all three elements, and in retrospect it was a starting place for something good.

After many failed attempts to get national attention, the NAACP and a local community organizer partnered together for the right opportunity that would garner media attention to segregation, primarily using Montgomery buses as the example. The plan lay in wait until one day, December 5, 1955, while Rosa Parks was seated in the first row of the "colored section" of the bus, when a deputized sheriff demanded that she stand to allow a white passenger to sit in her seat. She refused to move and was arrested though she was not breaking the law. The incident drew national attention to the racist motivations of segregation, leading to a bus boycott and, eventually, desegregation legislation.

Bree Newsome, a Black woman, and James Ian Tyson, a white man, went to the capital building in Columbia, South Carolina, in 2015 to remove the Confederate flag, from the capitol grounds, after the shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. Newsome climbed the flagpole and began removing the flag while Tyson stood close by on the ground.

When local police seemed to be contemplating using their tasers on the metal pole to get Newsome off, Tyson reacted without thought and placed his white hand on the pole thinking that the police would be less likely to electrocute him than a young black woman disobeying orders. The police immediately put their tasers away and both activists were taken into custody. Opportunity can do a lot; but alone, it can fizzle into an ineffective learning moment.

Remember the Audre Lorde quote, “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house;” and the other field goal post from Albert Einstein: “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.” Lorde speaks to the pressure, or lack thereof, and unresponsive motive or incentives for those in power to act; Einstein suggests that the rationalization that led to a problem must change at the right opportunity to find a new answer.

This answer could be for bad or for good, for an individual’s benefit or to benefit the collective. By doing something different and allowing our answers to ask more questions, we all benefit. Like when polishing stones, we must go against the grain of what is known to create something new. Then and only then can we really shine.

After reading *The Wake Up: Closing the Gap between Good Intentions and Real Change* by Michelle Mijung Kim, I feel I should add a trigger warning for readers/listeners. One of Kim’s many learnings is that books can be consumed in several fashions, and I do not know where you are reading or listening to this information.

In the following pages, I reflect on 56 case studies from my clients, friends, and family of failures and almost successes. These examples may trigger issues of pain and harm that you have experienced in your life; it is my intention to use these examples as possible answers that need to ask more questions.

Let’s get to work.

# Almost-ing

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Thank you for being a Beta Tester for my upcoming book. Please use this short survey to capture any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, questions, etc., you may have to assist with the book writing process.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALMOSTING>

## CHAPTER 1

# GAS PEDAL DOWN

In *Good Enough Now*, I talk about how we must be responsible for who and how we are in the world. To do this, we must learn from our own lived experiences, what I call our Crucible Moments, and how we have adapted to feel safe and prepared. Our lived experiences allow us to “Almost” our own lives, fueling our motivation to act habitually. Traci Brown, Fraud-Busting Body Language Expert,<sup>13</sup> connected my approach to DEI to her own findings:

I think that motivations are important because it will impact the action and therefore the result. Fraudsters’ actions come from being in a pinch financially or emotionally. At least the ones I’ve interviewed have been that way. I was surprised learning about the emotional pinch. Turns out writing a big check to yourself every day at 3pm is a big dopamine hit!

I imagine a connection between an organization’s motive or incentive to Do Good and the lessons they have already learned from previous internal Almost – ing attempts. Moreover, I imagine the social pressure may lead to more risk taking without proper preparation, in turn leading to failed attempts to Do Good. However, these failures can be steppingstones that we can all benefit from. The collective dopamine hit can be derived together when all the ingredients are present at once.

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13 Personal Communications, 12/26/22 Traci Brown, Fraud-Busting Body Language Expert, 303-956-3693, traci@tracibrown.com

## Almost-ing

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Albrecht et al, wrote in 2006, "...it is imperative to use the word perceived when describing pressure or opportunity to commit fraud; this is because pressure or opportunity to commit fraud may not be real, and it only depends on the perpetrator's perceptions."<sup>14</sup> If a do-gooder employee perceives the need for advocacy, then it may have import even if they or a co-worker has not stepped forward with a harm. Moreover, pressure or incentive is key and can be made up of personal pressures, employment stress, and external pressures. When thinking about the code switching, shifting, and covering that take place to get hired and stay employed, let alone be promoted on top of surviving outside of work with intersectional lived experiences, I cannot think of a time when this would not be present.

I could not say it better myself, so I turn back to *Good Enough Now*, starting on page 171, where I wrote:

For the same reason pilots practice crash landings, you retain the experiences that took you off guard in order to inform future experiences. You will know what action to take next time because you learned from previous times.... We have an internal gas pedal. Sometimes, we sputter with excuses and perfectly logical reasons for why we cannot respond differently or must not change. This happens to all of us. We also surprise others and ourselves by accelerating into something completely different, even unexpected; it all depends on the situation at hand. We can slow down, coast, or even idle in place. We can also accelerate into a turn, ramp up our velocity, and push through obstacles. We must recognize that a gas pedal moment is a crucible moment. Our gas pedal makes us good enough.

It takes courage to use the tools that you have at your disposal to make better and more authentic connections with others. Maybe you are already great at this, but there is always room to make an improvement. If some connections are solid, others are not. We all have work to do. Making choices about how you want to show up balances on two elements—risk (cost) and reward (goals). There is no downside in responding to a situation where there is no interest in an upside. If we work to habitually make real, lasting change in the form of better authentic connections with generous sharing, vulnerable listening, and genuine curiosity, we have a goal or reward for our efforts. By truly being all of yourself and allowing others to do the same, there is less of a cost to us all. Perhaps, then, this is not an act of courage but an act of living.



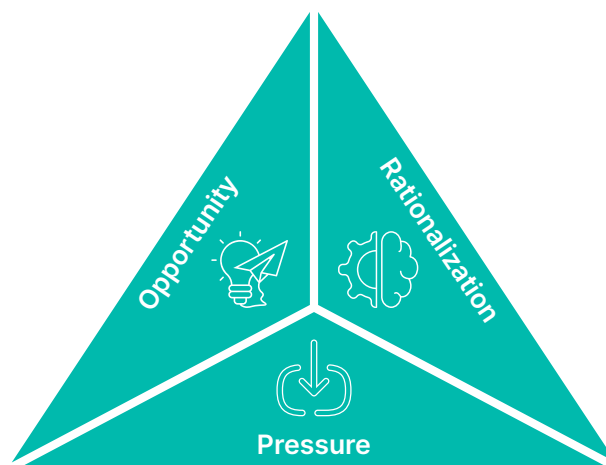
What holds you back? Can you use your gas pedal to accelerate through a situation or do you take your foot off the gas? There is a time and place for both, and we must become aware of our response patterns to decide who and how we show in relationships and with others. Doubting yourself, negative thinking, fear of failure, criticizing others, negative self-talk, procrastination, fear of success, people pleasing: If these lived experiences and voices in our heads went away, imagine what we could do.

We can look back and see why we did not do something in hindsight, or maybe where we went wrong. Perhaps we sputtered too long, accelerated too fast, allowed momentum to be in our control. Much like fraud, if we have a personal motive or incentive fueling an internal pressure or have experienced outside pressure, we may do something that is uncharacteristic for our self or organizational culture.

It is true, too, that we could do something outlandishly good with the right motive or incentive. At times we may experience external pressure due to current events, trends, or personal experiences or relationships where we are compelled to push down the gas pedal and do something. These doings do not always go as planned, and none thus far have toppled systems of oppression in all forms. It can still be the right thing to do. Failures can be Crucible Moments just like successes as we can strive to develop, improve, and get better.

The Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC)<sup>15</sup> allows for folks to identify their current mindset across cultural difference as *Denial*, *Polarization*, *Minimization*, *Acceptance*, or *Adaptation*. Each mindset has its strengths and its weaknesses and there is always room to grow, learn, develop, and move onward.

Let's now review some examples where a particular element of the Doing Good Triangle was present and see if, in hindsight, we may be able to identify where we would have used our gas pedal differently. Remember, too, that to truly move onward and learn, we must stay curious, be generous, and allow our authentic selves to be vulnerable about our failures and lived experiences.



15 The Intercultural Development Inventory, IDI, and IDI Guided Development are copyrighted and trademarked by Mitchell R. Hammer, Ph.D. IDI, LLC.

## 1. INTERNAL PRESSURE – MOTIVE OR INCENTIVES

Doing Good may be motive enough for someone to act whether incentivized or not. The dopamine hit, gratitude, reward, accolades, these initiatives are real,<sup>16</sup> and something was attempted because of a presence of Motive or Incentive. That alone does not make it a successful attempt to Do Good.

Whistleblowers may be tempted, according to Bok, “to reveal any secret, sometimes joined to an urge for self-aggrandizement... as it requires the possibility of concerted public response: the idea of whistleblowing in an anarchy is therefore merely quixotic” (Collins ed., Bok, pg., 552-553).

### 1.1 Cannabis

The legalization of Cannabis was a highly motivated act with financial and medical incentives. Here in my local community of Humboldt County, California, after the legalization of cannabis, I have noticed an increase in housing availability and a decrease in rent inflation as illegal growers could no longer grow out in the open. Knowledgeable dispensaries opened and the resulting huge influx of innovation opened doors to lots of new small businesses.

However, the permitting process is bureaucratic and understaffed due to an underestimated amount of interest. While waiting for permits to be approved, illegal grows still occur; many are so large, the small businesses cannot compete. Moreover, working conditions for illegal or permitted grows, Humboldt County speak for small- to large-scale cannabis indoor and outdoor farms, are still not monitored. Grow farms have no HR departments, and the environmental impact of grows has no checks and balances for sustainability initiatives or state-level requirements.

Lastly, most folks in state prison for cannabis-related crimes are men and women of color while primarily white men and women are now profiting off the newly legal activities. Whether individuals are incarcerated or not, the cannabis industry has not been decriminalized so criminal records, tax evasion, trafficking, and other illegal activities still occur inside the now-legal industry.

**Almost** – It seems to me that the sales tax, permitting fees, and state-level profits were strong incentives, but the rest of the plan was not really thought out. Where housing rental rates are decreasing, small businesses are now being pushed out of store fronts for more profitable cannabis businesses wanting tourist-heavy locations, impacting all local businesses. The hypocrisy of being incarcerated for something that is now legal was made a little better by President Biden’s release of nonviolent cannabis-related criminals in federal prisons; it is up to the states to do the same. As of the end of 2022, Idaho, Wyoming, Kansas, and South Carolina are the only states without some level of decriminalization or legalization.

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16 All identifiable details have been altered to protect those involved and/or to follow a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

## 1.2 Lunch Yoga

What better way to provide office staff with a way to focus on mental and physical health than to have a local yoga instructor come into the office during lunch? The motive is clear and even the health of employees is incentivized by lower insurance rates for healthier employees.

However, not everyone is physically able to do yoga; for others, such physical activity is done in private, not with friends or family let alone the folks you work with. There was an uptick in sexual harassment, fraternizing at work, and unwanted comments about employees' bodies at several of my clients' offices when lunchtime yoga occurred. Employees who took off the time to do yoga needed additional time away from work responsibilities to eat lunch, and this began to affect employee morale.

For employees who wanted to "get ahead," yoga was seen as a slacker activity so they began to work through lunch, leading to unhealthy habits. The choice of yoga instructors also needs attention as often it is an internal hire so the quality of instruction and/or customization for employee individual needs may be absent, which could lead to injury.

**Almost** - If Leadership visibly participated in the lunchtime yoga breaks, encouraged additional time for lunch, and role modeled healthy "work-life balance," it is possible the lunchtime yoga could motivate and incentivize teams to work together, support one another, and encourage breathing room, breaks, and the like. Rarely do upper-level managers or supervisors partake in the in-house yoga classes. My clients' reasoning ranges from not wanting to be seen in exercise clothing in front of subordinates to paying for fancier gym memberships offsite with significantly better-quality yoga instruction. Namaste right here in my office, thank you.



## 1.3 Office Furniture Hierarchy

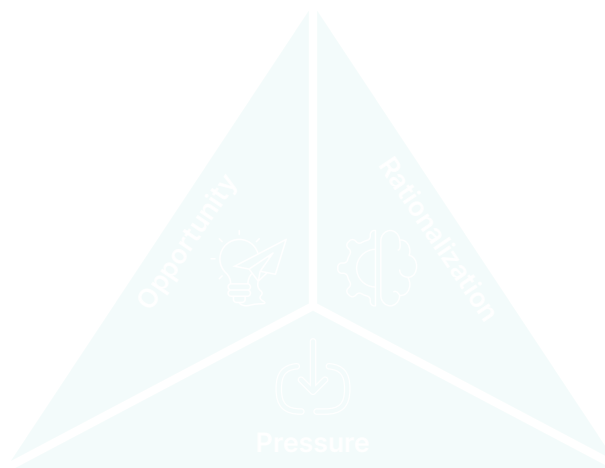
A University client had recently changed their administrative offices to an open floor plan to encourage collaboration and teamwork, and to align with a less hierarchical organizational structure. The large office space had three walls of floor-to-ceiling windows; the fourth was all windows to the internal hallway with a main set of double entrance doors. As you entered the office, bright colors, gathering spaces, and a colorful mural noticeably stated, "Welcome all and all welcome." The space was a collection of stand-up desks, docking stations, desktop computer stations, highboy tables, conference tables with wheeled chairs, clusters of half-walled cubicles, and office or meeting spaces along the perimeter with doors and half-windows.

Upon closer examination, a hierarchy was present based on how much privacy was allotted to each office space regardless of the level of confidentiality involved in the employee's role. The most tenured folks had private offices, stand-up desks, with both desktop and docking stations, flexible furniture arrangements, and internal access to private meeting spaces.

The middle managers were clustered together in a half-wall cubicle farm with wheeled chairs and were surrounded by the newest entry-level employees who stood at desks or sat at tables with open docking stations. The Office had a number of student employees and interns who used whichever spaces were open during their shifts and packed everything up at the end of the day.

**Almost** - Open spaces and flat organizational charts allow for transparency and clear lines of communication by decentralizing power concentrations. Perhaps unintentionally, furniture was selected by tenure and projected a sense of permanence or the lack thereof. Those with the highest job precarity had the least stability of workspace other than being tethered to a landline here and there with a chair that did not have wheels.

The incentive for permanence and privacy unconsciously was immortalized in the very space where the stated intention was just the opposite. Moreover, those who entered the space to get to the "real decision makers" would have to walk through the interns and student staff and be directed (managed) into offices that overlooked the quad central to campus.



## 1.4 Menstrual Supplies

A health clinic, wanting to be more inclusive, began to put menstrual supplies in all bathrooms for patients and staff to use or take with them. Over time, the supplies were only stocked in restrooms identified as “Women.” This practice did not acknowledge that anyone, regardless of declared gender, may have need for the supplies. Non-binary and transmasculine visitors may still menstruate or know someone who may need supplies.

Moreover, in the same bathrooms, the urine collection instructions were translated into Spanish, and were also still gendered as Men’s and Women’s instructions even though they were in gender-neutral bathrooms.

**Almost** - The motivation to have all-inclusive and gender-neutral spaces in all settings, not just health care clinics, is rooted in good intentions. However, we often do not think outside of gender when making gender-neutral accommodations. The incentive to make all patients and their guests feel welcome gets replaced with typical binary-gendered habits. The result is that the initiative falls flat for the very people it intended to benefit.

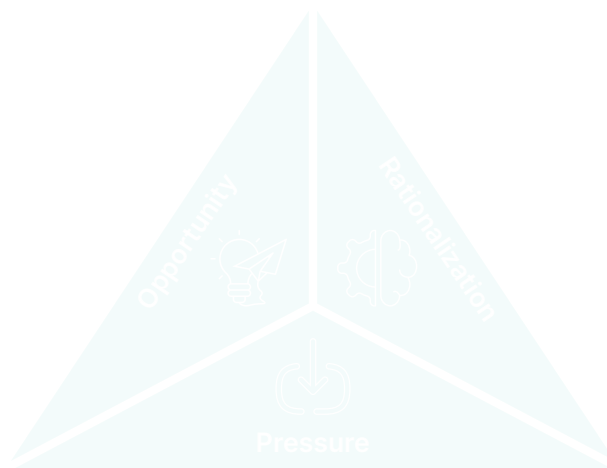
To offer menstruation supplies is to offer them to whomever needs or wants them, regardless of a person’s gender identity or expression. By defaulting to typical habits, the most vulnerable visitor, someone who is not perceived as a person who may menstruate, would have to out themselves to gain access to the free supplies. The people most impacted by these oversights are the very people who do not fit into a binary system, and likely they are the only people who would notice the hypocrisy.



## 1.5 ERGs

Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are common initiatives in the corporate environment motivated to support underrepresented employees to both build community and offer internal programming to deal with specific issues and educate allies. Multiple ERGs may exist and often they have conflicting meeting times, so an employee must pick an identity instead of being their whole self. These groups are often led by volunteers with little or no connection to top leadership and are woefully underfunded, if at all.

**Almost** - Having a “safe space” for marginalized or underrepresented employees develops communities of support that have a direct connection to retention and even make an impact on recruitment efforts. However, they often become “in charge” of their own support and end up doing the heavy lifting of educating co-workers, who rarely support an ERG’s programming, thinking it is a space for “others.” This also imposes upon these same “others” the role of providing free education on top of their job responsibilities. ERG leadership and programming can be seen as a distraction from an employee’s responsibilities and reflect negatively on job performance.



## 1.6 Women's ERG

A large global tech firm I worked with was having a lot of race-related issues among the staff. One of the biggest instigators was the leadership team of the Women's ERG, three white women who took their ERG roles seriously. Outside the ERG, the women were middle managers in three different countries, but together, they focused on the lack of women in the tech industry globally.

Increasing the recruitment and retention of women in the workplace, pay equity, as well as benefit packages that included pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, IVF, maternity leave, and breast-feeding stations were among topics central to their agenda items across the globe. This agenda overlooked women of color harshly as they were significantly underpaid compared to their white counterparts and even less represented than white women. Nonbinary and trans employees, both white and of color, felt even more silenced by the advocacy of the Women's ERG Leadership as the focus was only representative of cisgender women.

**Almost** - This is an excellent example of how motive or personal incentive can be crystal clear and still miss the mark. ERGs are problematic often to begin with (underfunded, underutilized, overworked volunteers who then have negative performance reviews, and other issues). Not to mention having to pick and choose an identity to be involved in one ERG over another and yet good work is attempted. The three white women were personally incentivized to have their concerns addressed to solve problem for other women just like them. Meanwhile, their actions alienated other members or potential members and shut down collaborative efforts to improve the workplace for all on a global level.



# Almost-ing

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## 1.7 Kindness Bingo

An elementary school teacher shared an example of an incentivized program created by the principal. The program is called “Kindness Bingo.” A student’s parent or guardian at home fills in their initials on a bingo card daily if the student does one act of kindness.

**Almost** – This is a great idea to incentivize acts of kindness by motivating students to win a bingo game gone wrong. What if students stopped doing “regular normal courteous habits, like holding a door open or helping clean up a spill, for the rest of the day? By only getting credit for one act of kindness a day, students could decrease the acts of kindness as the day progressed.

The whole gamification idea of being kind is uneasy making. Does this need to be gamified? Perhaps a game of daily bingo blackout would have helped increase the amount of kindness? What if the students got to sign each other’s cards when they received an act of kindness? What if there is not a healthy relationship with an adult at home, or even a stable home life consistent enough to get a daily signature? What if the child must teach their adult about kindness?





## 1.8 #Traction

At SXSW years ago, a company sponsored a photo contest so people would donate and Do Good. After an act of kindness, be it a donation, or the gift of time and attention, attendees were encouraged to take a picture and post it on social media with a hashtag created by the sponsor. Attendees began to question not only the exercise's sincerity, seeing it as a media ploy for traction even if the intent was to Do Good, but also its execution because of privacy and confidentiality. The initiative did not gain the traction it could have.

**Almost** - Gamification of kindness is a problem with children and adults. Conference attendees vocalized their concerns right away and drew attention to privacy concerns related to their financial donations as well as the dignity and privacy of any people involved in these acts of kindness. Again, incentivizing common sense behavior motivated by exposure needs to be re-examined. The campaign organizers may be trying too hard to do too many things at one time and losing sight of the opportunity at hand.

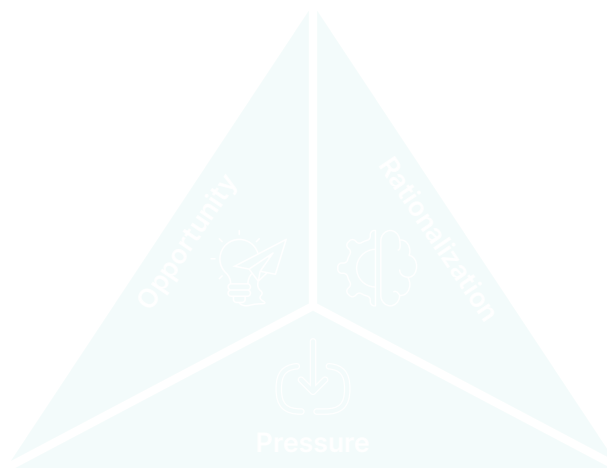


## 1.9 Single-Use Restrooms

A Division Chair reflected on a situation where it became clear that there were no safe restrooms for nonbinary people on campus. As part of the solution, the Chair began discussions with administration and facilities people about what was needed and suggested changing the signage on the single-use restrooms to reflect that usage was not restricted by gender. These particular single-use restrooms, long designated as “Faculty Women” and “Faculty Men,” were accessible only with a key.

Faculty pushed back on the updated signage saying, “Where will *OUR* restrooms be?” In the end, the signage on those single-use restrooms was successfully changed despite faculty objections. However, these restrooms always remained locked! Anyone wanting a private restroom would have to go to the Division Office and ask for a key.

**Almost** - The Division Chair learned to be specific and explain fully when advocating for change. The power dynamic between faculty and students needs to be accounted for in this conversation and it may also culturally have become an entitlement they were used to. Is there another option for faculty to privately use a restroom on campus or in the building? Is there a rational reason for these restrooms to remain locked throughout the day or during the times when the building is being used? Can cisgender faculty and non-binary faculty and students all use this space? If the bathroom doors of genderless single-occupancy bathrooms can lock from the inside, they could remain open unless in use.



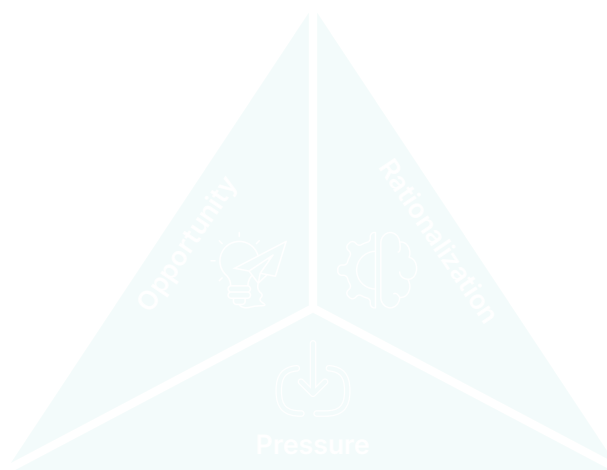
## 1.10 Talking Stick

A large-group facilitator was looking for a meaningful and simple way to wrap up a 5-day intensive training for sexuality educators. She put the 50 participants in a large circle and decided to use the “whip method” by asking each participant to reflect briefly on the entire training experience. Recently, a dear friend had given her a foot-long stick beautifully carved into a phallus. On theme, she decided to use the phallus as a “Talking Stick” passed around the circles as the final reflections were shared, to signify the holder as the “talker” to be honored for their moment of sharing.

Handing it around to the first few people went fine in spite of the chuckles. Then it was placed into the hands of a Native American participant who said as she began to cry, “I’m sorry. I cannot do this. This is not a Talking Stick.” The facilitator stopped the process, dispensed with the prop, and the group completed the exercise. Afterward, as people dispersed from the closing circle and the training, the facilitator apologized to the participant for her ignorance and presumption.

**Almost** - The facilitator shared with me, “I have never fully recovered and feel very humbled in my cultural ineptness. I have long been very interested in Native cultures and practices, but my fascination is not enough to ensure I do not appropriate them for my shallow purposes.” In hindsight, she could identify both her motive and mistake. Some would argue that a co-facilitator may have “checked” this assumption before the closing activity started, or to plan the closing activity in advance and in a more thoughtful manner.

I would challenge us all to take a moment to sit with this. The motive and the impact of such a mistake are both real. Being clear on intention and taking responsibility instead of being defensive makes this likely a crucible moment in the facilitator’s life. This does not mean she has never misappropriated a culture again nor does it mean that this experience has not shaped how she questions herself and her plans moving forward.



## 1.11 Diversity Hire

A large membership association's Governing Board unanimously added a Diversity Advocate position to the leadership team. The organization is made up of smaller organizations that historically have had an obvious racial divide, tension between the types of employee groups (campus or organizations), and problems with the issue of whether employees qualify for association leadership positions or not.

As the first Diversity Advocate on the board, I was added to give voice to the non-straight/heterosexual and/or trans and nonbinary members. The vast majority of "out" professionals identified as gay or lesbian; members who were gender nonconforming were largely passing within a binary gender system. I, a cisgender, white, lesbian, former campus professional, was the first line of diversity the board wanted to address.

**Almost** - I wanted to "conform" to the board's expectations so that the position would not be removed while I also wanted to advocate for voices and concerns that were not at the table. I frequently was told to "stay in your lane" and proceeded to advocate for an intersection of multiple identities in our membership community. In retrospect, I see that LGBT issues are often a "safe entry point" for many starting diversity initiatives because those in leadership are the most comfortable with these topics as compared to such topics as racism, classism, sexism, and ableism.

In trying to do the right thing, the Board's motivation and incentive were clear, but that first Annual Meeting brought to the foreground all the other issues that were not being addressed, like conscious dismissal of ideas from organizations of color, ageism, and a certain elitism regarding where members worked or went to school. The Executive Leadership members were woefully unprepared to have these conversations as I rolled off and a new Diversity Advocate stepped up.



## 1.12 Being All Things

Close to 20 years ago, I was invited to serve as part of a think tank on Trans Inclusion that would bring together the most current activists, researchers, educators, and advocates, so that our work could inform the others and bring us all onto the same page. Our collective motive was to produce better work that was incentivized by our collective liberation.

We met monthly on conference calls as we were all located around the country and the timing of the calls was a challenge due to work, class, and travel schedules, as well as organized yet urgent protests drawing away members' attention. The group ultimately fell apart because we were all on such different pages as to where to start and lacked the trust in the others' domains to truly collaborate and develop a path forward.

**Almost** - In hindsight this is probably the coolest group of people I ever almost got to work with. We were all motivated to move together yet our respective approaches were so radically different we could not even agree on how to run a meeting let alone what to produce or discuss. I still have deep respect for every member of this group and wish them all the very best from our respective corners of the globe where we continue to do the good work we do – all working together toward the same goal, but in wildly different manners with vastly different resources at our fingertips.

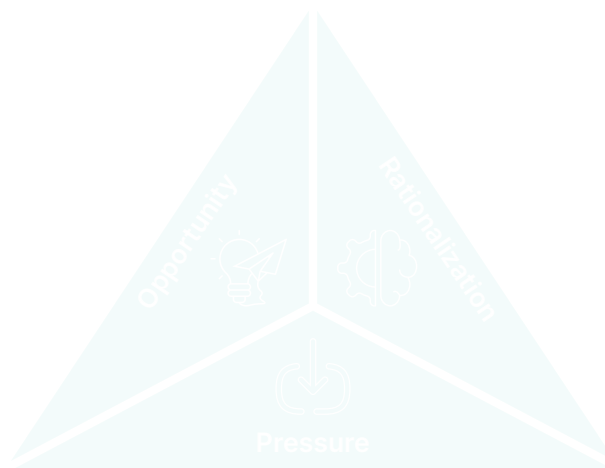


## 1.13 Because They Know

A small nonprofit board that I recently joined with the understanding that I was to lead a capital fundraising campaign was struggling with operational expenses; they had not even begun to raise funding to host the big annual conference still 8 months away. The organization had grown significantly yet was not administratively set up for grant writing or reporting, and most donations from supporters came in the form of expertise, products, or time.

Very little fundraising effort was implemented as donors seemed to appear just in the nick of time and save the day with a big check. Like most associations, COVID cost the organization a lot in cancellation fees and I was the newest version of magic coming along just in time. When I asked for administrative details, contacts, incentives for donors, and other necessary information, I was told that people know what the organization does and that is reason enough to give.

**Almost** - “Because they know” is a problematic fundraising mantra because if “they” knew then they would have given already. They obviously do not know the financial hardship of the organization, and we do not know their actual financial situation leading them to donate time and expertise instead of writing a check. Doing powerful work is itself a strong motive and the incentive to be a part of an organization doing great work does not always equate to cash in the bank to pay for insurance, deposits, marketing, staffing, operational expenses, and the like. Motive and incentive are important elements of Doing Good work, but they are not enough.



## 2. EXTERNAL PRESSURE – MOTIVE OR INCENTIVES

Motive and incentives are a huge part of Doing Good. As Traci Brown learned from her own interviews with those convicted of fraud, sometimes pressure from the outside is greater than internal motivations. Peer pressure, current events, trends, benchmark institutions, public promises made by leadership, and external regulations can also be part of the efforts to Do Good, but alone they are not always enough to be successful.

Our Gas Pedal, used to accelerate, cruise, or slow down, can be mitigated internally; often, outside pressures lead to “do-gooder” initiatives being started but not coming to fruition. We still need to remain curious and generous as we play Almost with these examples<sup>17</sup> of outside pressure. These missteps and mistakes require a degree of authenticity to share and vulnerability to recognize when you have buckled under the same external pressures.

### 2.1 Platform

In another membership association, my fellow National Board members were (and to this day still are) feeling outside pressure to stay “relevant” in the industry. Due to industry insiders offering similar benefits, the Board had done intensive industry research, resulting in new initiatives, revenue streams, and ultimately a new name for the organization.

During my first Board meeting, where I was to observe prior to being voted onto the board, the final presentation was given for the findings, and it was robust to say the least. I was impressed with the frank conversation around the board room of outside pressures that really were taken seriously and positioned the organization for the future of the industry. The branding and research were overwhelmingly supportive of this decision. The roll-out plan was to be a surprise to membership during a break at the annual meeting.

Unfortunately, the rollout did not go as planned and garnered significant push back from members who were averse to change. Eventually the name change was dropped altogether, leaving the organization in a worse financial position than it had been in before the announcement.

**Almost** - Where the internal stakeholders had conducted extensive research, no one on the outside knew about process or how the results came about. Interestingly, past Presidents had access to all open information from the board meetings, but few if any were involved in or following the process. When the announcement was made, they blindsided key stakeholders, the known contrarians had a field day, and the rollout did not extend to the local chapters. A fantastic idea that was well thought out and proactively addressed industry pressures was not enough to Do Good.

My biggest lesson from watching this roll-out failure was to share the pressures felt, clearly communicate the process from start to finish, and run a soft launch (even a series of soft launches) with key stakeholders, in title and in social power. Converting key stakeholders into intentional cheerleaders to explain motive and incentives would also mitigate the backlash.

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<sup>17</sup> All identifiable details have been altered to protect those involved and/or to follow a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

## 2.2 ICE

A large tech company wanted to address a number of diversity-related issues from on-boarding, promotion processes, transitioning in the workplace, review of benefits, and the like. The campaign was called “Everyone Deserves a Safe Place to Work.” The company had a hard time retaining well-paid Diversity Consultants because it also serves as the main firm to keep undocumented people from working in the United States. The former consultants broke their contracts when it became clear that the largest project the company developed was for Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE).

**Almost** - I understand the pressures the consultants may have felt when aligning their businesses with this organization’s role in deportation. I also believe “everyone deserves a safe place to work.” I accepted the role so that the employees could safely navigate their employment and perhaps that would create a more solid foundation to push back on the work that was being done – where needed.

The same technology is also used to deter sex and drug trafficking and even animal-breeding factories. External pressures are real and complicated and may be dependent on motive and incentive. There is an opportunity (and rationalization) here to Do Good, if and only if one is clear on why the work needs to be done.





## 2.3 Budget Cuts

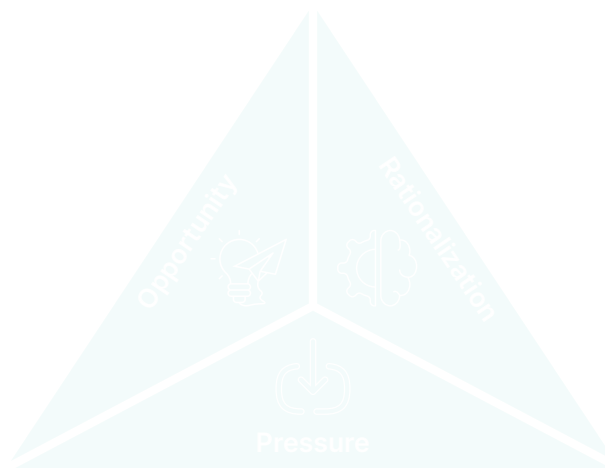
An urban Children's Emergency Room needed to withstand budget cuts as mandated by the Hospital Board and this led to a significant personnel loss. The budget cuts were in response to federal legislation rumored to be coming related to universal health care and the private hospital was tightening its belt in preparation. The ER staff, both day shift and night shift, was cut in half, patient bays were taken offline, and morale tanked.

I was brought in to address issues of bullying and an incident fueled by bias, hate, and potential violence during the night shift. The day-shift administrators noticed that the night-shift leadership position was a revolving door and losing the few experienced nurses was a legitimate fear. Rumors began to spread about doctors, surgeons, social workers, and other hospital staff refusing to work in the ER during the night shift. Pressure was mounting not just from looming federal legislation and hospital leadership. The surrounding community seemed to be in the spotlight nationally.

**Almost** - After spending several overnights in listening sessions and observing the staff, I was overwhelmed by the acts of kindness no one noticed and the corporate initiatives to Do Good that missed the mark. To help with morale issues, the Emergency room got a new coat of paint and floor wax, but, due to staffing shortages, the walls and floors were not cleaned well beforehand, and it was too costly to remove the paint and wax to remove footprints, spills, name tags, and other obvious marks forever sealed away.

To save money, cheaper crayons and stickers were given to the children and they were more difficult to remove from the sheets, equipment, walls, and flooring. The closing of bays meant few patients could be treated at once; by not rotating which bays were closed, none of them had been cleaned appropriately in over a year.

All these issues could have been easily addressed if any of the day-shift leadership had asked, or even visited during the night shift, when the lighting and clientele significantly change. Feeling unsupervised and uncared for created a toxic environment for members of the night shift. It is no surprise that moments of kindness with families, patients, and first responders went unnoticed. No matter the pressure, 9-5 resources cannot solve all the 5:01-8:59 problems.



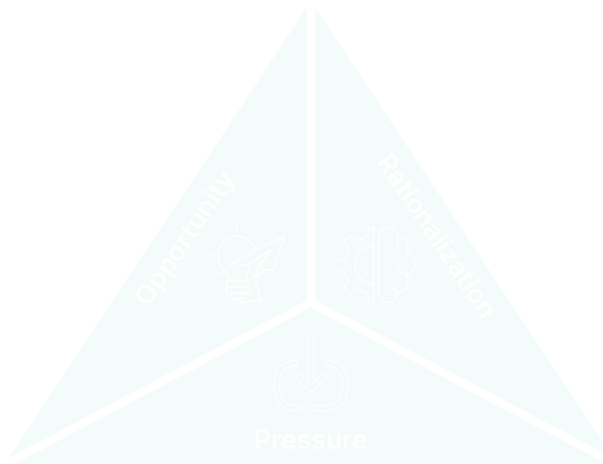
## 2.4 Confederate Flag

In 2000, I was graduating from the University of South Carolina and the NAACP was boycotting the state for several reasons, one of which was to have the Confederate flag removed from top of the state capitol's dome. External pressures were mounting; conferences and professional sports teams were cancelling events in the state; even gas companies were refusing to fill up gas stations. There were protesters from around the country at the state capitol grounds every day.

Eventually, the flag was removed from the dome and placed on the grounds.<sup>18</sup> The flag was formally removed 22 days later and is now on display "in a \$1400 viewing case that hangs between two offices in the state's Confederate Relic Room and Military Museum in Columbia."<sup>19</sup>

**Almost** - This is a great example of two forms of external pressure that are not enough to Do Good for all. First, national pressure from companies, big spenders, and state or federal legislators can address what needs to be done, without addressing real problems. Virtual signaling, tokenizing, and symbolic gestures can make external pressures soften and then time passes. Rarely do we learn from history, but we could start anytime!

Then, several cascading events followed: this flag's removal; the uprising following Derek Chauvin's murder of George Floyd, May 25, 2020; and the removal or renaming of 73 confederate statues, leaving over 2,000 in place. The removal or renaming of these statues is costly and symbolic while rights are still being stripped away and US citizens are still being disenfranchised, underbanked, unhoused, displaced, and marginalized.



18 This is the same flagpole Bree Newsome climbed with James Ian Tyson standing ground in 2015 to remove the flag after the shooting at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston.

19 [https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/5-years-ago-south-carolina-brought-down-the-confederate-flag-it-was-just-the-beginning/article\\_62b7e0f6-bfc1-11ea-808f-6f165bc5ed6e.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/5-years-ago-south-carolina-brought-down-the-confederate-flag-it-was-just-the-beginning/article_62b7e0f6-bfc1-11ea-808f-6f165bc5ed6e.html) Caitlin Byrd July 9, 2020 updated September 14, 2020, The Post and Courier Palmetto Politics, 5 years ago, South Carolina brought down the Confederate flag. It was just the beginning.

## 2.5 No Surprises

Two different tech companies have hired me through their Equity Committees or something similar run through Human Resources. In both cases, these select groups of employees wanted to roll out DEI-related programming and solicited my assistance to both facilitate the trainings and design an internal program.

There was one caveat: no surprises. I “test piloted” or “auditioned” each of my webinar offerings to multiple groups and one-person audiences, both in person and virtually before they could pick which workshops, they wanted and in what order. I explained the order that worked best and was overruled. Then I offered listening sessions to gather pain points of employees, and offered an assessment tool to quantify the learning needs of staff.

These options were controversial because I could not provide transcripts of the listening sessions before they were offered, nor could I present the assessment results prior to giving the assessment. It was also recommended that I develop PowerPoint decks and submit for approval before any Town Hall, open discussions, drop ins, or facilitated conversations.

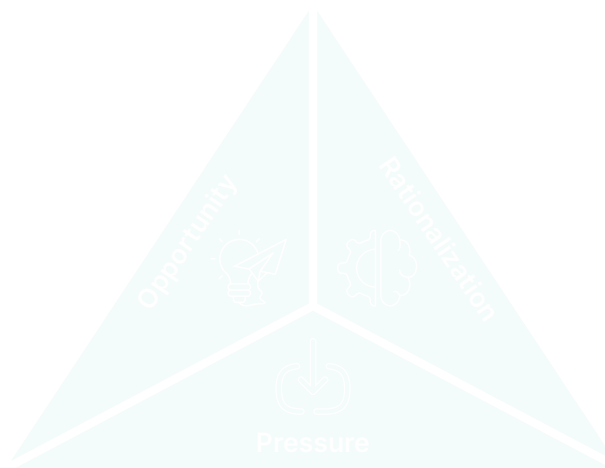
**Almost** – First, no Diversity Consultant was harmed in either of these instances and I have a therapist. This is also a great example of the external pressures, usually from top leadership, to produce results, fix problems, and be omnipotent even with new issues or dilemmas never faced before. The elevated need to know is typically indicative of past initiatives’ failures and future work is tightly controlled to avoid past problems. This is Almost – ing internally with external tools and resources. No surprises, needing scripts and practice rounds, as well as approved structure like PowerPoints for facilitated conversations, is not about Doing Good; it is about controlling for expected outcomes due to this performance pressure.



## 2.6 Mandatory Fun

A Middle Manager shared an example where employee stress levels in a small nonprofit sexual/reproductive health care facility had increased due to change in leadership and lack of confidence in Board decisions. As the Education Director, she offered to conduct a Staff Inservice on “Stress Reduction in the Workplace” with lots of engagement and opportunities for team building and relaxation. Top-level Leadership and the unpopular new Executive Director deemed this Inservice as mandatory with no exceptions resulting in a room full of begrudgingly present coworkers with little or no eagerness to participate in any part of the stress-relieving event.

**Almost** - Mandatory fun is not fun. No matter the amount of stress anyone is experiencing, laughter, connection, and engagement are almost always the answer. Shared experiences, being seen and heard in the face of intense stress, can be solutions to a high-pressured problem many workplaces experience. Endorsing the events, and even participating as top leadership can release the internal stress successfully in the face of external deadlines, existing pressures, and hardship. Asking overworked stressed-out employees to show up to get de-stressed under pressure with zero exceptions and no participation from leadership is a recipe for disaster.



## 2.7 Whistleblowing

Like many employers, Veteran Affairs Offices encourages employees to report wrongdoing and workplace discrimination, but retaliation is routine when people file a report. Whistleblowing is a protected action for all employees due to the pressure they may feel to report something. Even with these laws in place, employees can still feel the pressure of their workplace culture. <sup>20</sup>

**Almost** - The whistleblower's motive or incentive must be strong enough in the face of the existing pressure to tolerate the pressure of retaliation that will come as a backlash for Doing Good. This pressure is on top of often a stressful workload and is an excellent example of the conundrum many do-gooders face as discouragement from doing the right thing.



20 <https://www.congress.gov/event/113th-congress/house-event/LC28461/text?s=1&r=398&fbclid=IwAR16sCWs2v68KHtGbXlhVsEPCFk5iKDTA-elwQzCBfWfgDXh0ZASxzFdi3g>

## 2.8 Membership Demographics

For two different groups I have worked with that are primarily made up for lawyers, fiduciaries, and law firm partners, an interesting pattern showed up regarding Membership Demographics. Associations with paying members typically have an application joining the organization or renewing dues. On these applications, demographic information — including age, race, sexuality, gender, tenure, ability-related accommodations, locations, and education — can be gathered as either required or optional questions.

This information is typically used to set recruitment, retention, nomination, and leadership pipeline goals, as well as internal measures for programming or volunteer recruitment. In both cases of organizations made of legal professionals, I had to explain that these were not illegal questions to ask and were the foundation of any Strategic Plan they were following. These questions are often even used by Human Resources to ensure that issues such as benefits, furniture, and dress code align with a new employees' needs.

**Almost** - These organizations (and probably many more) felt external pressures to have a Strategic Plan that increased the diversity of membership by X%, but did not know 1) the current diversity of membership, 2) a working definition of what diversity meant regarding their membership, 3) how they were going to increase numbers from an unknown, or 4) by when, let alone why. Not having a plan was worse than having a bad plan at first and now it was time to fix a bad plan. However, they did not want to “make” anyone participate even though they had stressed that the plan was important to their organization, and not just lip service.



## 2.9 Leadership Forum

An international organization made up of First Responders (Police, EMT, Fire) built out a leadership pipeline program where more seasoned leaders could mentor up-and-coming staff from around the world. This program was also set up to allow the new leadership to work on global projects to create new and innovative systems, protocols, and procedures while learning best practices from around the world. The program would be four years long, culminating in an annual conference where all participants would come together to create and innovate as well as learn from a consistent leadership curriculum.

The Certification Board supported the initiative and asked that it be self-funding at exactly the same yearly level regardless of participants or current events. However, the curriculum would also need minor updates in case internal policies changed, but the program was expected to give the exact same experience to each mentee or program participant to meet lobbyists, legislators, and global first responder leaderships' expectations.

**Almost** - What? A single curriculum was to be designed, monitored, adjusted, edited, and implemented year after year in the exact same manner for four years, with first-, second-, third-, and fourth-year participants, groups of mentors, as well as presenters, to a global audience to inspire creative and innovative ideas with no funding.

I see how external pressures would make this look like an amazing initiative, and these two elements contradict each other. No surprises for no unexpected results means no new ideas. No room for failure means no innovation. Buckling to external pressures may make sense politically, and I am glad this program did not launch because I cannot imagine what the participants would have experienced.



# Almost-ing

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## 2.10 #BLM

The Black Lives Matter Movement started in 2013. It surfaced again in 2020, after an uptick in the amount of external pressure organizations and companies felt to have some sort of public #BLM statement on their websites or public facing marketing materials even if they had no DEI Strategic Plan in place. The plan was not the focus – it was the statement.

There was (and will be) a struggle to say the right thing even when there was no internal consensus on this statement or the motivation to have one. The statements become tokenizing, hypocritical, and in themselves can cause harm by being written out of pressure and not motive or incentive to align with the #BLM mission.

Not having a statement also sends a message that may or may not be intended. The non-statement came about to declare why an organization did not have a statement that became popular all to appease external pressures that may be voiced inside the organization or because a competitor is doing something that has not been prioritized yet.

**Almost** – There is no template of what a statement should say or a mandate that every organization should have one posted. This would negate the organizational reflection required to acknowledge intuitional and systemic racism in the first place.

But wait! There's more!

## 2.11 BLM Flag

I worked with a company several years ago that wanted to hang up a giant BlackLivesMatter banner to show support. They had internal discussions and worried they would get criticized for not doing it earlier. Then they worried they would get criticized for not hanging a progressive flag (for LGBTQIA communities) or including other populations. They got feedback that a progressive flag with a BlackLivesMatter flag would be seen as diluting the message of support. In the end, they decided to do nothing.

**Almost** – Perfection is unattainable especially when succumbing to external pressures. I like to remind people (and myself), we can do anything, but we cannot do everything. At least do something.

And yet even more -

## 2.12 BLM March

After George Floyd was murdered May 25, 2020, a Medical University posted signs stating, "Hearts & Minds Together. Black Lives Matter. We support the movement." Despite hiring their first Chief Diversity Officer months earlier, the organization maintained neutrality on anything deemed political. The following month, in support of a large #BLM rally downtown, the university announced it would hold its own event earlier the same day. My friend who works there thought— great! They took their whole family, masked, and maintained distance from the probably 200 people there.



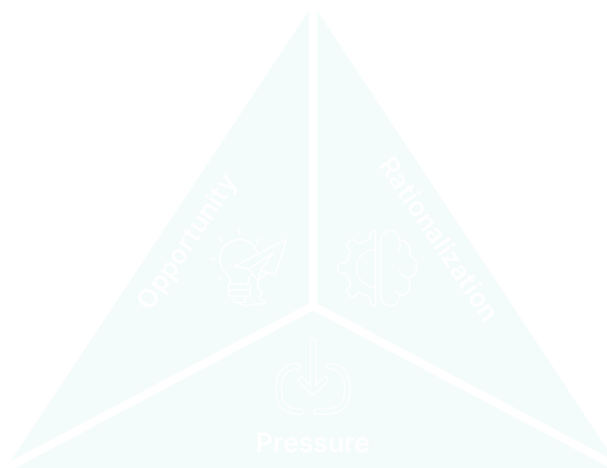
First the CDO spoke movingly about having just moved to the area from the Twin Cities and how important it was for institutions like this one to publicly take a stand on systemic racism. He implied how joining the larger rally was key. The President of the university agreed with the CDO about the need to take a stand but informed attendees that the decision had been made just that morning for this rally to not join the main one, just blocks away, because the university was a healthcare institution and it would not “look good” for them to join and add to a large crowd during a pandemic. At least half of the participants left after that to join the main rally. It was disheartening and really undermining of the new CDO, too.

**Almost** - I could not write a book that incorporates “Doing Good going wrong” without talking about feeble attempts to do or not do something when #BLM ebbs and flows from media attention and pressure to take action comes in and out of vogue. I first need to say that, statement or not, if an organization is not actively doing something about racism, including conscious and unconscious bias in the workplace as well as across their stakeholders and surrounding communities, then whatever is being discussed is performative.

Speaking of performative actions, posting flags or symbols should not create Olympics about what else is included or left out. When it does, there is a larger conversation to be had. Posting the flag or not is less important than the conversations that need to happen – this is what the pressure is about or should be. Like the march just blocks away, being crystal clear on your motivations is the best way to deal with external pressures and incentives.

Doing Good does not have to be complicated; often we make this work WAY harder than it needs to be. I would go as far as to say that, if we were to work really hard at complicated work, we might feel that we are doing the work that really needs to be done and the very hardness of the work is doing the work. It is not. Doing Good is super clear and simple and it is not complicated. It is just largely work we do not want to do because it is really hard.

Remember, Motive, Incentive, involving Internal or External Pressure is one element of the Doing Good Triangle that we are inverting from Cressey’s Fraud Triangle. Using only one ingredient motivates a lot of Do Gooder initiatives that fail because they are not enough on their own. Moreover, our Gas Pedal is a great tool to self-regulate but it is not enough on its own. It is time to cross the streams and become unstoppable so that we will continue to try to try – even when it is trying to try.



# Almost-ing

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Thank you for being a Beta Tester for my upcoming book. Please use this short survey to capture any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, questions, etc., you may have to assist with the book writing process.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALMOSTING>

## CHAPTER 2

# TRYING TO TRY

Knowing who and how we show up is an ongoing process that allows us to try. The act of trying depends on a conscious act of connection with ourselves and with others, bearing in mind that perfection is not the goal. For any change to occur, we must do something radically different than merely expecting the same actions to render new outcomes. Waiting around for others to perform the heavy lifting does not seem to be working.

I believe that the onus lies with each of us to take responsibility for our own lived experiences and to understand how these crucible moments both impair and motivate our desire to connect and communicate with each other. This is the radical action needed to consciously foster innovative, thriving, and inclusive communities of all of our lived experiences, good, bad, ugly, and awesome.<sup>21</sup>

Trying is about doing something anyway [regardless of fears, insecurities, trepidation, failed previous experiences]. Accepting and constantly seeking failure allows you to try with equal excitement time and time again. Remember, this is about doing the best you can with what you have some of the time.

*Good Enough Now, pg. 168*

## Almost-ing

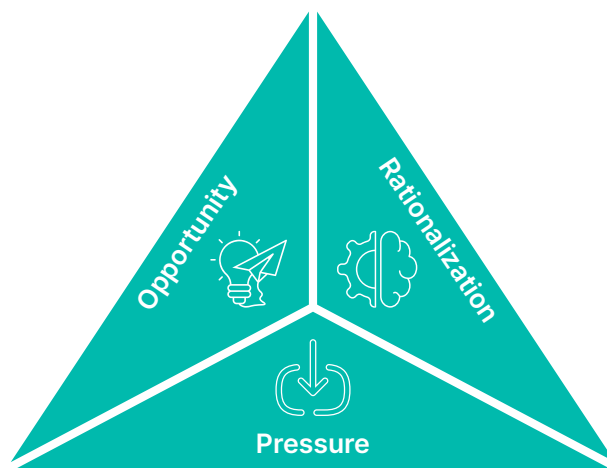
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If the Gas Pedal is about checking one's motive or incentive or the pressure being applied to do something (or not), then trying is the next step. "But... but," some might argue about not knowing what to do or when to do it. We are talking about trying to try because it is the right thing to do. A Good attitude or strong rational argument is not always enough to get one's gas pedal moving. Let's break down how intervention, advocacy, allyship, and other initiatives may stall out before they get started, leave folks behind, but succeed, and all of the complications in between.

<sup>22</sup>The concept of Bystander Behavior—first penned by Alan Berkowitz and introduced to me by Mike Dilbeck and the Response Ability Project—talks about the importance of intervention. In order to act, we must have a firm understanding of how we act, when we act, and when we do not. Paralysis is an Action- or Inaction-based response. To interrupt a situation, you must take several aspects into consideration. Based on your own history, in this moment, do you feel safe and prepared enough to not be a bystander? If not, then reacting in person may not be best. Perhaps, for instance, making a phone call, bearing witness, or using your video camera can help the situation while also keeping you feeling safe. Again, please note a significant difference exists between discomfort and lack of safety.

In a training-for-trainers program, Stop the Hate! Fighting Bias and Hate Crimes on Campus, we learned that acts of violence might be directed at individuals, institutions, or entire communities. Community violence directly impacts individuals, and violence directed at individuals also affects the community. Any act of intervention can lead to real lived experiences, changing for the individuals involved, potentially on an even larger scale. Bias, both positive and negative, can lead to prejudice, which can develop into hatred and acts of violence. These acts do not have to be criminal to be powerful. Just like our acts of trying do not have to be lethal to be effective.

Let's now review some examples<sup>23</sup> where a good attitude or rationale for an intervention or action was present and see if, in hindsight, we might be able to identify where we would have used our gas pedal differently. Trying again next time means we must be curious enough to reflect on what has happened, generous enough to assume that we could make a difference by Doing Good, and prepared to fail. Failure is the best teacher and fuels our gas pedal with vulnerability and authenticity.



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22 Good Enough Now, pg 132-133 (this whole section is word for word my other book)

23 All identifiable details have been altered to protect those involved and/or to follow a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

# 1. ATTITUDES OR RATIONALIZATION

If motive, incentive, or pressure is one of the three ingredients of the Doing Good Triangle, then it is time to cross the streams and look at our own attitudes and how we rationalize our actions. In doing and not doing, with regard to initiatives, responses, or even personal reactions, we are responsible for who and how we are in the world. Where motive, incentive, and pressure may be the hearty parts of our do-gooder choices, they are only one component of what is needed to have a successful do-gooder initiative.

## 1.1 American Red Cross

The rise of the AIDS epidemic in the 80s led to the requirement that questionnaires be completed prior to donors' blood draw in 1982. Until 2019, gay men who engaged in anal sex were not allowed to donate blood under any circumstances, even if they were HIV negative. As of 2022, the overall ban has lifted, but now, anyone engaging in anal sex with a new partner, regardless of anyone's gender or sex, over the last three months must wait for three months before donating. All donations are screened for HIV regardless of answers on donors' questionnaires.

**Almost** - If all donations are screened for HIV (and other sexually transmitted infections, like syphilis, hepatitis B and C), then this policy is rationalizing homophobia and the stereotypes that gay men are more prone or susceptible to HIV. One's attitude about high-risk sex, if equitable, would be closer to the 2022 policy involving anal sex that led to a waiting period, not a complete ban. Removing only one group of people who may or may not engage in anal sex is a form of discrimination that is irrational. Even if well intentioned, this longstanding policy significantly limited the amount of blood donations across the country and beyond, even if it seemingly made sense at the time.



## 1.2 Defeating Anti-Gay Marriage

Arizona's 2006 Proposition 107 is the first anti-gay marriage bill defeated in the United States. Largely, this defeat was successful because it centered the impacts of its passage on Tucson's domestic partner provisions that guaranteed benefits for those in a relationship even though not legally married. Specifically, this successful campaign focused on an elderly heterosexual couple who would lose veteran-related benefits if they were to marry. The measure was narrowly defeated 52-48%.

**Almost** - In politics, some argue that a win is a win. I would like to use this as an example of how attitude and/or rationalization for Doing Good can still lead to harm. Utilizing the detail of personal and family benefits, and the complicated lack of clarity around corporate benefit packages, the loss of such protections or coverage certainly got heterosexual voters' attention.

The fact that Tucson already had a local ordinance protecting all domestic partnerships and that passage of this bill would literally take away a right for residents of the state, attracted folks from outside Tucson. The visual use of an elderly straight couple in marketing pieces and television ads heightened fears to a level that the measure failed in a state that had already passed bills that did not recognize out-of-state gay marriages.

The rationalization of this intersection was a strong political chess move. Two years later, Arizona's attitude toward gay rights would swing more progressively. It is also important to mention the local community harm that occurred between those "trying to win" and those in the queer community watching their actual rights and access to benefits be overshadowed by a chess game that centered on straight people's fear.

**Side note:** The 2006 election also resulted in English being declared the official language for the state, removing any requirement to translate materials into other languages regardless of community needs or makeup.



## 1.3 Introvert Hire

A small youth service organization specifically recruited an introverted professional to better serve likeminded youth. The staff and organizational leadership did nothing to change the culture or staff engagement expectations to support the new hire. Moreover, co-workers mentioned during a meeting that this candidate had been hired because of their introversion. This happened following the busiest programming season, during which other workers were fired for not being outgoing enough.

**Almost** - Recognizing that current services are inadequate for some users and then specifically doing outreach to recruit a staff member to work on this programmatic weakness is Doing Good for sure. Not informing the new recruit that their introversion is what attracted the hiring committee to them due to this heightened awareness of service needs seems to be a missed opportunity in communication. Expecting this new hire to then fit into an office culture that knowingly focuses on more extroverted kinds of engagement is irrational. The positive attitude of inclusion and the employment performance rationale do not align and do not support efforts to increase services and improve organizational culture for all.



## 1.4 Accessibility

Hosting an Inclusion Summit that focuses on the importance of Disability Inclusion involves a lot of details, planning, and foresight. Emphasizing this aspect of inclusion that is often overlooked due to planning details, limited options, and lack of experience is particularly harsh when the space the Summit is using is itself not accessible.

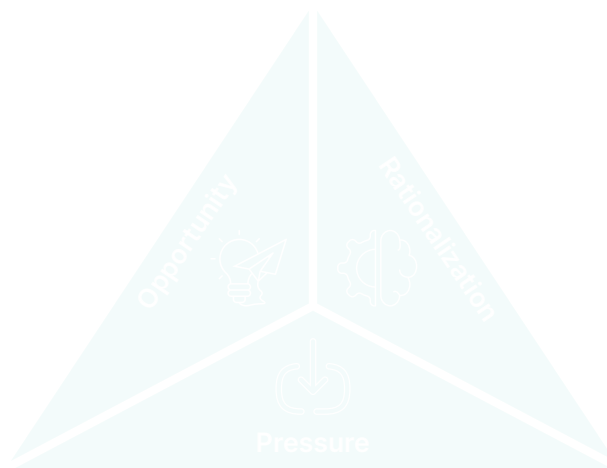
Similarly...

## 1.5 All User

A large metropolitan city's Commissioner passed a wide-sweeping ordinance to change bathroom signage to read "All User" for any renovation or new builds across the city. Allowing for all these bathroom spaces to be single occupancy addresses the need for gender-neutral bathrooms, as well as those with caretakers or children who need to be in the space at the same time.

People taking care of others and those seeking privacy can use such a space. However, no educational plan was connected to the ordinance let alone an accountability structure. Consequently, these extra duties fell to the volunteer LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group to develop, evaluate, and implement.

Just when this seemed to cover everything...





## 1.6 Beyond the Binary

Similar to the Inclusion Summit irony, an organization hosted a panel called “Beyond the Binary” in the one classroom building without any all-gender bathroom options. This program was particularly designed for students, faculty, staff, and community members who identify as outside a gender binary. Participants would have to pick a women’s or men’s restroom while attending a program discussing ways the institution was working toward inclusion of all community members, regardless of gender identity or expression.

**Almost** - Sign Language interpreters, closed captioning, ramps and wide aisles, translators, names, pronouns, changing rooms, bathrooms, and parking are just the beginning of accessibility issues when planning events. Understanding these commonly overlooked needs is important to support a progressive attitude rooted in the motive (perhaps pressure) to do the right thing.

Typically, these oversights are blamed on a lack of need or knowledge about accommodations, or inadequate budget. It is possible to state upfront what accommodations will and will not be included in the event. Budgeting in advance for accessibility can also mitigate deficiencies. Being unprepared can appear hypocritical at best unless organizers can make these realities clear in advance and address the importance of inclusion while taking responsibility for anything that misses the mark.

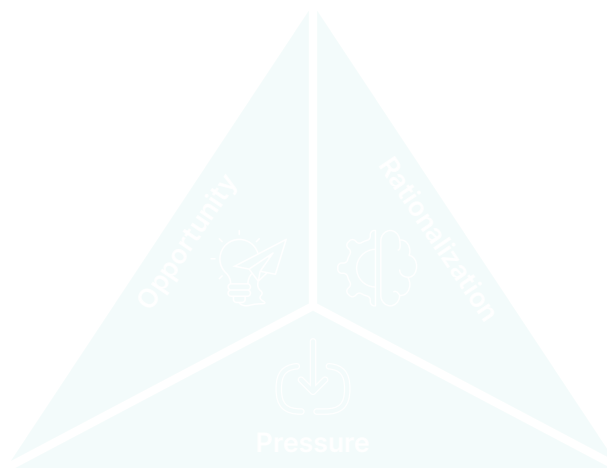


## 1.7 Water Tracing

While I worked at the University of Arizona, the Geocaching Club worked alongside the Coroner's Office to identify where deceased immigrants were located in the surrounding Tucson area deserts. The students organized water stations and drop off/refill trips in areas that connected these spots on the map, assuming this was a pathway others would be following.

Upper Administration specifically ordered that this club's activities cease because of "potential danger" the students could be facing. As the advisor at the time, I believed that the biggest concern was negative press about the area that could hurt admissions if the word got out to potential students or new hires.

**Almost** - I will admit almost two decades later this still really bothers me, because I think it is an excellent example of Doing Good with the resources one already has combining all elements of the Doing Good Triangle. It was cancelled due to 1) the assumption that the institution was in the desert, 2) the fact that immigrants crossed this desert on foot under extreme conditions that often resulted in death by dehydration, and 3) the belief that the known danger would sufficiently deter others from coming. This is beyond irrational and is protecting the potential people instead of the weakest who need the most assistance.



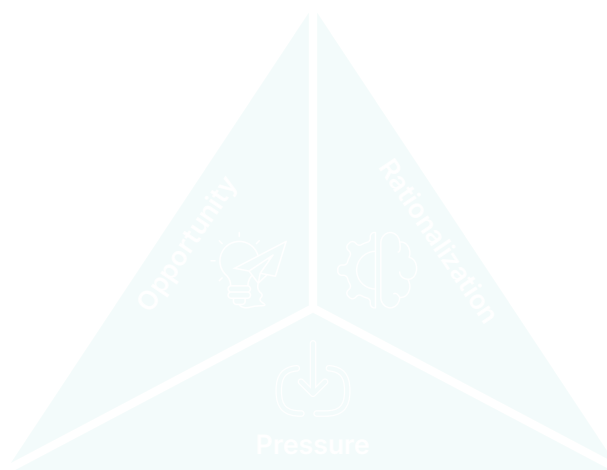
## 1.8 Crowdsourcing

The option of renaming an existing Student Affairs building on campus came up and it was decided to crowdsource options. The timing was just after the Law School was named after a Supreme Court Justice's passing. The crowdsourcing was to assist with proposing names of historical progressive leaders and then putting finalists up for a community vote.

No one expected this opportunity to spread so quickly nor that it would be picked up by "right-wing bots," as evidenced by the thousands of hateful contributions that flooded in within the first 24 hours of the poll's opening. Initially the upper administration supported this intention and process, but it was wholly shut down by the end of day two. Almost a decade later, the Student Affairs building is still named Student Union Building 1, or "SUB 1," and there is no inclination to rename it without a single donor opportunity. There will likely never be another public crowdsourcing initiative on campus.

**Almost** - This reminds me of the person who squashes what seem like new ideas because, "Back in 1972," something like this was tried and it failed. A great idea that maybe could be thought through or managed better goes awry and is never tried again.

There is a fine line between micromanaging an open forum and creating an unmonitored space for feedback. It is also hard to stay on top of weblinks and the like as they can "go viral" in a second with today's technology. I am not sure I would have even thought about ruthless "spambots" mucking up the process to the point that it was taken down and closed. Combined, motive, incentive, perhaps outside pressure, and one's attitude and/or rationalization are not enough to Do Good. This is, however, an excellent example of trying that can be a lesson encouraging us to try again.



## 1.9 Hair

“Ooooo, your hair looks cute!” said a white woman senior leader in the organization to a newly installed black woman President, while she reached out to touch the top of her head. The two women had gotten along well since the President’s start on campus. The senior leader assumed their friendly, playful, and silly communications had led her to be comfortable with the new President, and she had forgotten to think about racial and power dynamics between them. The President returned a serious look immediately and called the Senior Leader into her office a few days later to discuss the situation.

The President invited the Senior Leader to sit as she came out from around her desk to sit as well. She explained: “I am telling you this because I truly believe you are not aware of what you did. You never, ever, ever touch a Black woman’s hair. Especially when she is your campus President.” The senior leader apologized as clearly and simply as she could, offering no excuse.

**Almost** - So much attitude and rationalization to unpack here! There is a pattern where “We are friends; therefore, identities do not matter” is as casual as it is harmful. One’s lived experiences never “do not matter.” A white woman touching a black women’s head can reverse the power dynamic of a President and a subordinate.

The President calling her employee into her office is also something to think about. Few people get called into this office; when the new President comes from around the desk to sit next to a longstanding employee for some “feedback or advice,” the dynamic shifts again. The senior leader who shared this example with me was still grateful years later that the President spoke to her “alone, non-threateningly, and clearly” because it was assumed that she just did not understand her mistake.

It is also imperative to mention how hair itself is policed and subjected to policies. In 2019, the CROWN Act was created to ensure protection against discrimination based on hairstyles (primarily race-based hairstyles) by extending statutory protection to hair texture and protective styles such as braids, locks, twists, and knots in the workplace and public schools. “Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair,” i.e. CROWN, should not have to be a law and yet it does. Racism and the preferencing of straight or curly, but not kinky, hair textures as clean and professional are clearly a concern in many workplaces.

Hygiene and Professional standards are rooted in White Supremacy; otherwise, there would not need to be a law protecting the way hair naturally grows on or out of the human body. As a white woman with often atypical hair colors, I am amazed by the number of people who touch my head or ask question after question about how I get my hair the color it is. (I typically respond, “I have a checkbook.”) I know that I have a degree of fascination with differently textured hair than mine, styles my hair cannot or will not do, and the flexibility of wigs and extensions with which I have no experience. I say this because my ignorance about hair does not give me permission to ask invasive questions or touch someone’s head.

Making policies that deem what is clean or professional based on what I am used to is not even a nice try. We can do better and by “we” I mean those in racial and professional positions of power. As of 2022, nineteen states and several municipalities have passed the CROWN Act.<sup>24</sup>

## 1.10 Gift Cards

A University's response as COVID hit was to quarantine students in empty residence hall rooms when they tested positive. These students could not leave their rooms for meals, so they were given gift cards to purchase groceries out in the community. Eventually, a single staff member was selected to take orders, shop, and deliver these groceries as the quarantined students were often too ill to shop themselves and there was worry of endangering the public.

**Almost** - Instead of worrying about the community catching COVID, it seems in hindsight that the university should have worried about the nutrition of students in their care. We often worry to protect the least weak variable. This staff member was given no additional funding, resources, time off, or even PPE supplies. She is still the "go-to" solution for these kinds of situations three years later, as her full-time position seems to rationalize these responsibilities as "other duties assigned." Perhaps the initial thought was that the gift cards could be given to other students to make the purchases for the ailing student, but there was a mandatory shelter-in-place protocol. Meanwhile, an ill student was isolated and given a gift card for comfort.

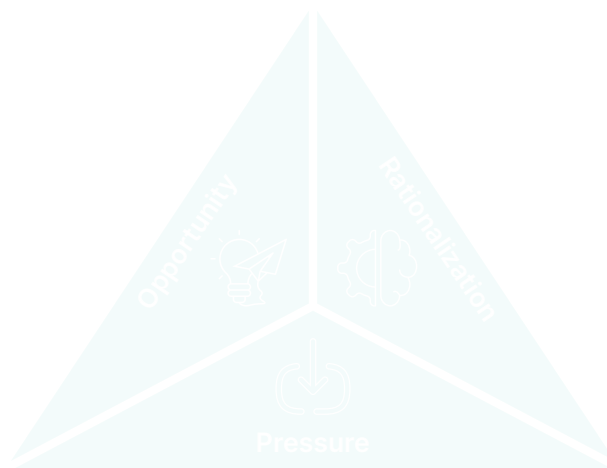


## 1.11 Work Ethic

This case study submission is from an active military member that shared a self-inflicted cultural norm around a strong work ethic. Culturally, we are pushed to do our best and those who succeed are lauded, only to have the companies they work for take advantage and pile more work on without providing additional compensation. Employees in this situation all get paid the same, including those who do the bare minimum, but the personnel who succeed get their colleagues' work added to theirs. Those with a weaker work ethic seem to sit back and do nothing because they do not seem to notice the inequitable workload and continue to collect the same check without the risk of being fired.

**Almost** - My father had a saying, "If you want something done, give it to a Pettitt, but do not watch one do it." A strong work ethic runs deep in my family so I can relate to this scenario a lot. Similar to the cliché about promotion, "We rise to the level of our incompetence," work that needs to be completed often lands on a busy person and the reward may be a promotion that comes with more work, until there is just too much work to be done.

Selecting someone who is performing well to lead the group they were a part of may make some sense, but it does not take into account the dynamics of now having supervision or leadership responsibilities over former peers. Piling on tasks because they are more likely to be completed leads to burnout, all while the other colleagues are being held to a lower standard and therefore are not motivated to step up and ease the workload. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of sorts and leads to all kinds of toxic workplace dynamics.



## 1.12 Bring Your Whole Self to Work

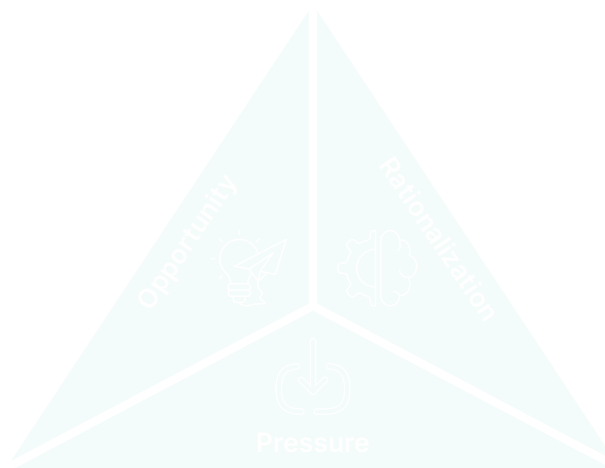
A large global technology company leads through a handful of tenets that set the tone and expectations for their employee and customer culture. One of these phrases is used quite frequently, (and not in a mocking manner): “Bring your whole self to work.”

After a recent homophobic post was shared, this tenet was reviewed internally and found to be unclear, inequitably understood, and derived from the founders’ secular and progressive agenda. The leadership team had assumed that the meaning was clear and consistent to all. These are two different assumptions. After conducting over one hundred listening sessions, it became clear that “bring your *WHOLE* self to work” and “bring your whole self to *WORK*” created wildly different experiences for each employee, team, department, region, country, and time zone.

**Almost** - The company’s value statements were consistent with the attitude that the founders brought to their new venture. This small team of original leaders still lead the organization as if it were small, though they are proud of their global growth in the last few years. At the time of the homophobic posting, this group of leaders were “off grid” at a leadership retreat, and 23 hours behind the employee who posted the comment. Even if they had been at their desks, the founders had outsourced internal communications and would still have had to be told about the post.

Further, no one in leadership globally identified as an Evangelical Christian, and may have missed the connection to the internal post and it being Pride Month. The listening sessions revealed that some employees took the stand that their *WHOLE* self was welcomed and that this could foster conversation among their peers. The leadership team eventually identified that one’s whole self is welcomed if it aligns with a secular and progressive stance; otherwise, the emphasis should be on *WORK*. What an example of Do Gooding gone astray.

Trying matters. When in doubt, try to try is the first step. It is also true that trying can be exhausting. Trying can be trying. When combining our attitudes and/or rationalizations with our internal or external motives, incentives, and pressure, trying is often all we can do. This leads us to look for the opportunity to use our gas pedals by slowing down, cruising along, and accelerating or braking, all while we move forward and become unstoppable.



# Almost-ing

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Thank you for being a Beta Tester for my upcoming book. Please use this short survey to capture any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, questions, etc., you may have to assist with the book writing process.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALMOSTING>



## CHAPTER 3

# UNSTOPPABLE

As I explain in *Good Enough Now*, the self-work needed to truly understand how your own lived experiences have taught you how and who to be with others. Self-work is just that, our own work to do. To be *Good Enough Now*, we must accept that we are all doing the best we can with what we have some of the time because it is better than nothing never. So now what? What if we were unstoppable?

In my Doing Good Triangle, Motive, Incentive through Internal or External Pressure, Attitude and a solid Rationalization have to be present for white-collar crimes to be committed when the opportunity exists. We have covered incentive, motive, pressure, and the importance of attitude or rationalizations. Let's turn to our own motivation factors, as modeled by fraudulent acts, and turn them toward the Opportunity to Do Good. First, my obsession with Ghostbusters... In *Good Enough Now*, before we can become Unstoppable, we must do our own work and cross the three streams. Identifying them is easy; but crossing streams is not so simple to do.

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**1<sup>st</sup> Stream** Take responsibility for your own lived experiences and who and how you show up, as well as the stories you write about others (motive, incentive, and pressure).

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**2<sup>nd</sup> Stream** Recognize that others are complicated and have survived a lot to be present with you and, therefore, are worthy of the benefit of the doubt (attitude and rationalization).

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Stream** Claim the opportunity to have conversations that matter, the only way better connections will be made (opportunity).<sup>25</sup>

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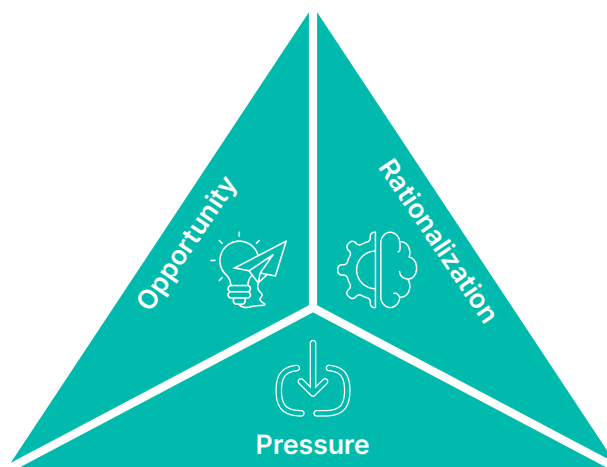
## Almost-ing

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YUCK – I mean that is hard work, and I am occasionally up for it. Remember, doing the best you can with what you have some of the time is a low bar. Speaking of low bars, the lack of integrity that is required to commit fraud should be noted. Using our own lived experiences, giving grace to others, and taking advantage of an opportunity to Do Good is to align one’s own integrity and put it into action to benefit all. This attitude and the rationalization for a greater good is mandatory to Do Good and we can always do better.

It is time now to put on our best Almost glasses, learn that these attempts were started from the right place, and decide where they went askew. If all three streams were in alignment, these efforts would be unstoppable, and, yet, here we are looking back in hindsight.

Let’s now review some examples<sup>26</sup> of opportunities to Do Good and, with hindsight, identify where we could have used our gas pedal differently. Almost – ing is easy but not always fruitful unless we remember to stay curious, be generous, and accept with a degree of vulnerability that these are authentic examples from current or past clients or folks connected to my monthly newsletter, *Another Isolated Incident*<sup>27</sup> and/or social media pages.



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26 All identifiable details have been altered to protect those involved and/or to follow a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

27 To subscribe to my monthly newsletter, visit [jesspettitt.com](http://jesspettitt.com) and scroll to the bottom to add your email address.

## 1. OPPORTUNITY

Possibly the biggest part of, the reason Cressey's Fraud Triangle is to this day a common element of Accounting Education, Ethical Certifications, and the like, is that it is the most obvious. To commit fraud, someone must have the opportunity or access to do the crime as well as potentially cover it up. Who better to embezzle money? Do not answer that.

An accountant can track where the money comes in from and goes out to and records this financial flow. They are trusted and respected with money. An ideal opportunity to commit fraud, but only if they have a motive or personal incentive or perhaps external pressure to do it paired with an attitude or rationalization for the crime itself.

By taking this same triangle and flipping it for good, the same ingredients are required for a successful initiative to be planned, implemented, and then succeed. A do-gooder, much like a fraudster, must have the opportunity to enact a plan developed under pressure.

### 1.1 Breastfeeding Room

A recent addition to maternity benefits included the installation of a Breastfeeding Station in the lobby of a medium-sized office building. A public internal calendar was set up to reserve the station as needed by employees. Employees who were nursing did not like that the calendar was viewable by all employees and Human Resources worried that the word "breast" may not be inclusive or at minimum could sexualize the space.

When the station was renamed to "Mother's Room," fathers on staff began to ask for their special space to reserve. Another staff member argued that not all mothers breastfed and the term "chest feeding" was more inclusive. Not knowing what to do, the station was removed entirely.

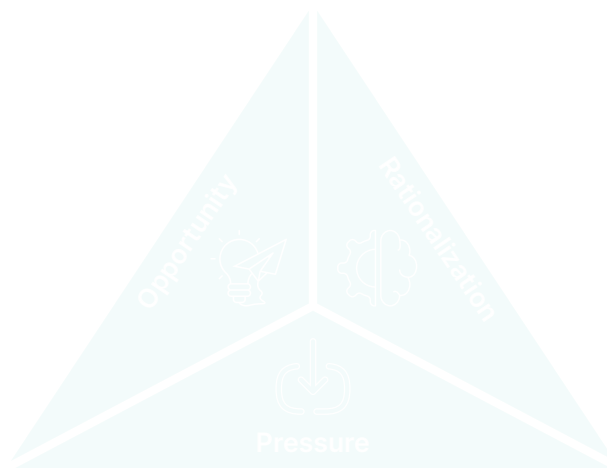
**Almost** - There was and still is an opportunity to change the calendar settings! The motive and attitude pointed in the right direction, but the opportunity was missed. Perhaps all staff could be informed that a station exists for those lactating who need to pump and store milk in a small fridge during work hours. Announcing the opportunity for staff and then allowing them to utilize it privately by asking for the scheduling link to a private "link access only" calendar would have solved this problem. Instead, it got too complicated and was pulled. Something was tried; at the first complication, we slam the brakes.

## 1.2 Center Stage

For an event specifically for, with, and about trans people, cisgender people take center stage. Cis people often are the speakers, award winners, and emcees. If not on stage, cis people make up the influencers, board members, and other stakeholders that guide an organization though the target audience is individuals who do not identify with birth assignments.

**Almost** - Another excellent example of utilizing an opportunity of allyship gone off the rails, this upstaging is often rationalized by dominant and privileged identified folks doing the work instead of asking subordinated or marginalized people to continue performing. When trans people's work is valued equally, then cisgender people's performances can be evaluated for motive and incentive.

What an opportunity to collaborate, advocate, and honor a common community! Often, we miss the mark by political agendas, fundraising needs, and misplaced ally credentialing. There is also an opportunity for privileged folks to do the heavy lifting without speaking for others. This goes back to really listening and valuing all perspectives, methods, preferences, and experiences.

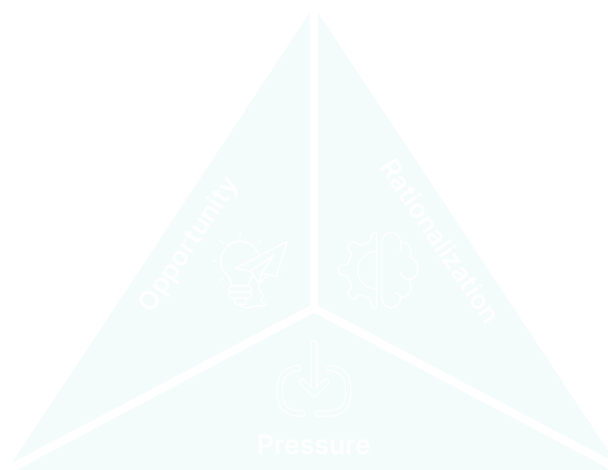


## 1.3 Womxn

A Women's Empowerment Employee Resource Group decided to change their name and all events related to Women's History Month to Womxn to be more inclusive. Unfortunately, many cis, trans women, and non-binary folks spoke up to point out to the ERG's leadership that womxn with an x has been associated with anti-trans activities.

**Almost** - So close! Good intentions paired with a justified rationalization, yet a missed opportunity to collaborate with the very people being represented by the change. Inclusion efforts need to still come from and with groups being represented or targeted to be included. Otherwise, the inclusion step is done to an identified excluded group, further targeting them as outsiders being brought inside instead of collaborating.

The difference is the targeted group is seen as outside, and its members are not welcomed as equals. If this issue had been part of the conversation, different experiences would have had the opportunity to see things from different lenses, the inclination by association would not have missed the mark, and another solution could have been created together.

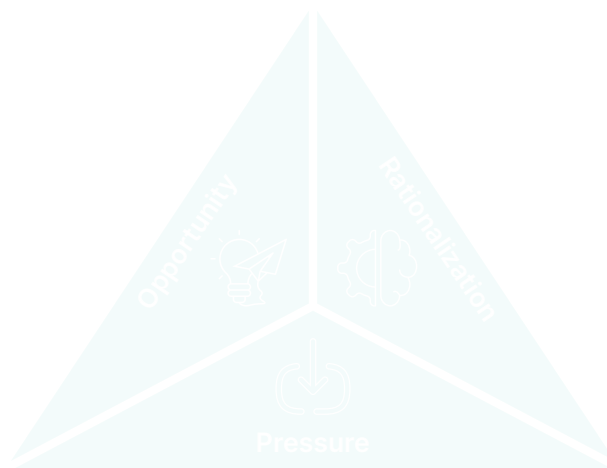


## 1.4 Abortion?

Recently, I posted to a texting thread about an abortion rights fundraiser that I was part of because I was asked to spread the word. I did not think about the impact on group members of receiving such a casual invitation. My assumption of the group members' stance on the issue created an interesting, if not tense, moment in the texting thread. I had assumed that we all had similar views on medically necessary abortions if not women's access to health care and I was wrong. One woman replied to my message sarcastically that she would be doing a fundraiser that same night for Focus on the Family. Eek. After a few days, the thread continued as if nothing had happened.

**Almost** - In my reflections, I am mindful of other times when I was not as careful. Taking responsibility for my carelessness is also an opportunity for reflection that can inform future choices. Using our tools at hand means we must have both forethought and hindsight so that our reflection can inform future choices.

After this incident occurred, the founder of the texting group, and a friend attending the fundraiser, wanted to spread the word, too. Learning from my missteps, she gave folks an entry-level question to test the waters first, recognizing that abortion is a divisive topic. She learned from me, and I learned from her.



## 1.5 Calling 911

When riding a roller coaster, it is possible for the iPhone 14's "crash detector" to call 911. Emergency staff who respond to 911 calls near Cincinnati's Kings Island Amusement Park reported this tech glitch after receiving half a dozen false alarm calls within the first month of the phone model being for sale. Similarly, Six Flags Great America roller coaster passengers near Chicago reported accidental 911 calls. Apple's advice is for iPhone 14 and Apple Watch 8 users to put their devices on airplane mode prior to riding roller coasters.<sup>28</sup>

**Almost** - I love combining innovation practices with doing-good initiatives. In business, once "enough" bugs are fixed, a new version can be released and then automatic updates or newer versions can be made available because that is the culture of technology. Some even argue that early adopters especially fund the 1.0 version of something and that the 1.0 version, in turn, fund the improved 2.0. Organizations often have a technology budget to replace and update software, hardware, and equipment, as well as the necessary trainings needed to keep up with the evolution of technology.

But we do not do this with DEI initiatives. If we could reward failure, keep trying, and remain focused on Doing Good, even as what that means and looks like changes, we would be onto something. Unfortunately, there is not an "airplane mode" because real harm is being done, perpetrated, upheld, and enculturated into our spaces and communities.

I opened the book with a few examples that I would like to revisit now so that the complications of the situations can be held, witnessed, and utilized to keep Doing Good in the world.



# Almost-ing

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## 1.6 Ukraine

I reflect on the popularity of support for the Ukrainian military while they defend themselves against Russian troops who seem to have rationalized the annexing of land, taking the opportunity to uphold their sense of nationalism, and perhaps feel external pressures of their own to follow orders. Meanwhile, the United States of America has invaded other countries for similar land grabs motivated by colonialization or rationalized due to the immediate need of military bases in strategic geographical regions.

We are also the only country to have ever dropped an atomic bomb on another country, killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people to save the lives of others in World War II. Moreover, the US has bombed entire neighborhoods, even our own residents, to make way for highways, to end proposed terrorist threats as well as nonviolent protests, and in retaliation for the upward mobility of communities of color.

**Almost** - It seems safe to say that war is complicated. It is also a powerful time for us to reflect on the three ingredients of Doing Good. What is the motive? Incentive? What are the internal and external pressures at play in making the decision? What is our accepted attitude or rationalization for war? What factors need to be in place to take the best advantage of a given opportunity for support, diplomacy, or invasion. I, for one, do not know these answers, and I outsource my sense of responsibility to others who I sure hope do.

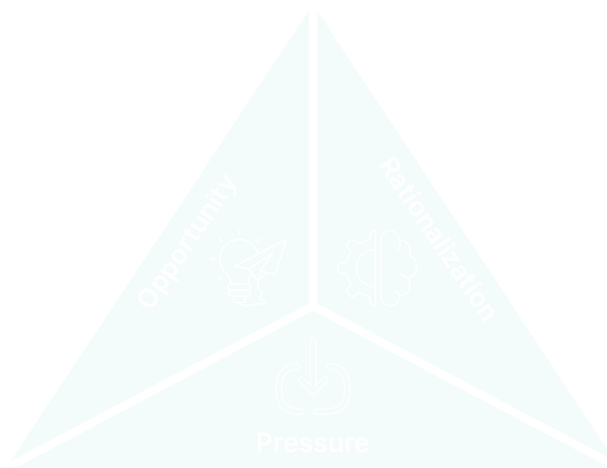




## 1.7 Photo Opps

The images of former President Trump throwing paper towels to Puerto Ricans, US Citizens who survived a devastating hurricane, still exist in the forefront of my mind.

**Almost** - I try to use this incident as a reminder to use the media as a tool. I even find myself reflecting on this tactic regarding the SEO (search engine optimization) of my website, my motives to write blog posts, and my choice of what I share on social media. It is my hope and intention that I can be so thoughtful, hyper detailed even, to be 100% responsible for any way I utilize the media as a tool. When thinking about how kindness or Doing Good is gamified, we can use these media opportunities to virtually signal intentions, game the algorithms for traction, and turn human dignity (our own and others') into a commodity. What is the goal here?



# Almost-ing

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## 1.8 Fast Fashion

As consumers, we rarely think about the value chain that goes into the life cycle of an article of clothing. We, and I mean me, make quick, impulsive purchases, and often wear them once, or never.

Fast fashion generally is not good for employees and laborers making the article of clothing, the environment sourcing the materials, or even the location where the article of clothing may end up on the planet. I can write a story about the good I am doing by supporting businesses and then donating clothes to those in need.

These donations may land locally in the hands of someone in need, but then how long will they last? If they are not taken up locally, then these items could be recycled or repurposed, and often end up in the hands of someone selling them from giant piles on corners of economically disadvantaged communities or in resale shops where clothes are sold by weight.

**Almost** - I know, I know. It is hard to think all the time. The good news is that once these practices take place, they become a habit. What does it really mean to buy something? Own something? Get rid of something? Perhaps supporting harmful systems is not our goal, but it happens because we forget what our original goal was. If there were not a market for disposable items, they would not be made. The image of starving and homeless children running around streets begging for change or food scraps in fraternity bash shirts is hard to forget, and if I am honest, hard to always remember.



## 1.9 Books and Supplies

As a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, (RPCV) I seem to have collected many other RPCVs in my life. One story came up as an example of how Doing Good is relative. While one group of RPCVs were wrapping up their service, a huge shipment of textbooks and novels arrived from supporters back home as a parting gift to the students and school.

These massive boxes were dropped into the local community where there was no order in who or how the items would be distributed. The RPCV did not know this was happening, nor was there discussion of the desired subjects, numbers, or specific needs identified. There was not space for an introduction to the materials, no option to develop a dissemination system, yet the box of goodies created an urgency to have one, no matter what the item.

**Almost** - This kind of well-intentioned do-goodery is common because it is easy to replicate one's own lived experiences and assume the good intentions will translate across cultural difference. There could be meaning in the type of book that may need explanation. For example, a student interested in astronomy would perhaps better understand a book about the planets even if the language is not comprehended. Some folks may also be new to the concept of sharing and ownership may need to be addressed as well.

I know in my own Peace Corps service, folks in my community could not understand the concept of being a volunteer or why I would leave America to come to their little town across the globe that so many were trying to escape. It was easier for them to develop stories or theories than believe that I chose to live and work for free with them.

Some may argue that the community folks did not have enough pride in their own culture to develop anything but conspiracy theories about my choices. These people would be wrong. The community folks had plenty of pride; it just was not seen as something anyone from the outside would value. Honestly, the whole Peace Corps program is worthy of reflection. It helped me be far more critical and observant of the cultural norms that were commonplace to me than I would have imagined.

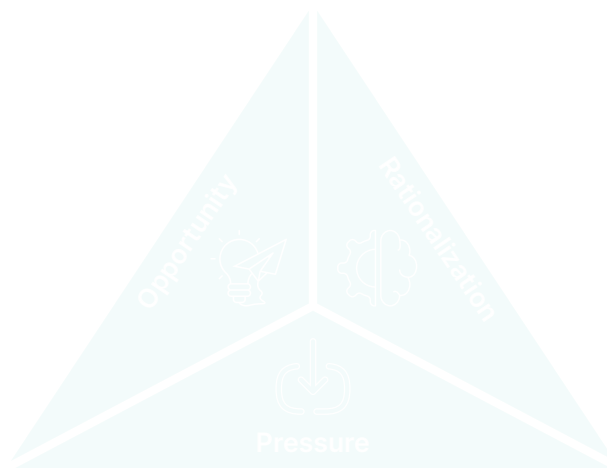


## 1.10 Community Service

Schools, companies, and organizations often promote days of service so that skills are learned, teams are built, and good is done. These events are often highlighted in the Annual Reports, involved the stakeholder communities surrounding the organizations, and can encourage other Do Gooding work.

**Almost** - Many Community Service Programs attempt to give participants this “outsider looking in” perspective by Doing Good in areas that may not be familiar. Sometimes, employees partake (voluntarily or mandatorily) in a service initiative set up by those who see the program as a way to give back, Do Good, or reflect upon one’s own experiences.

This program does not consider each participant’s lived experiences. Some employees may have to bridge their current lives with their childhood experiences with colleagues who are in their own stomping grounds, often led by others who feel like the experience is otherworldly. The matching T-shirts worn by participants does not equalize the present and historical experiences being brought to the service project. Power dynamics can also be subtly present. For example imagine college students doing neighborhood clean-up community service projects in one of their professor’s yard.



## 1.11 Guilty Until Proven Otherwise

An organization with which I am familiar is, as I write this, currently hiring for their fifth Interim Chief of Police in five years. The culture of the police force is conservative and often relegates power to tenure instead of rank. Chiefs are recruited and brought in to restore order and introduce a more inclusive and progressive manner of leading the organization.

Allegations are made within the union, across campus, and around town that then lead to investigations that ultimately conclude that the Chief is not responsible but this information is not publicly released. The Chief is forced to resign even though found not responsible for charges which now remain in the public domain unresolved.

**Almost** - Weaponizing union representation and hiding behind Human Resources allows for the system itself to harm those seeking change. I have seen this with police forces, county employees, and other union members, where bullies manage to hold onto their positions and publicly affirm stories that colleagues are pressured into supporting while innocent careers are destroyed by juicy stories, harmful gossip, and hypocrisy – all in the name of Doing Good. I am pro-union organizing, and these internal processes are not immune to being used for bad either.

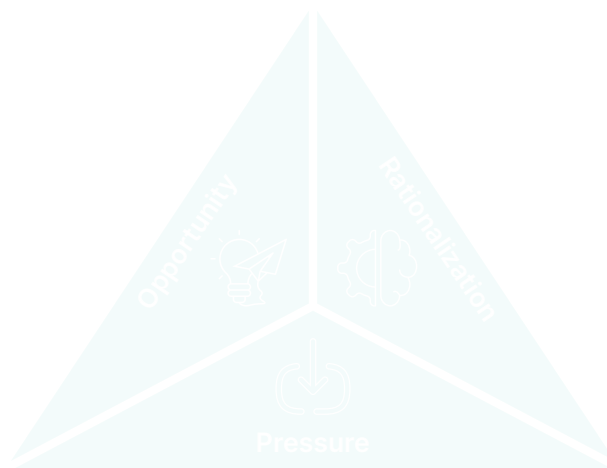


## 1.12 Hikshari' Trail

Though named locally by tribal leaders, the Hikshari' Trail is often referred to as the Eureka Waterfront Trail in my hometown. The trail is a long bike path that was installed along the bayfront for recreational use. Before it was installed, several hundred people lived in tent cities they had formed several years prior. These houseless women, men, children, pets, and belongings were removed with a week's notice. The area was then cleaned and landscaped, and the pathway was installed with benches, bike repair stations, doggie bag stations, public bathrooms, and water fountains. This land is also protected by the Environmental Protection Act.

**Almost** – This experience was particularly hard to watch unfold; it is an excellent example of a complicated opportunity. Watching the tent city be removed, and at times witnessing “boobytraps” that lit the tents on fire rather than be taken away, from my patio window was a moment of privileged reflection that I will not stop thinking about.

We, as a family, were excited and use the Hikshari' Trail often for dog walks, as well as bay access for kayaking, and bike rides. Being married to an Environmental Ethicist also raises focus that by ignoring the protected land agreements generally. It is middle- and upper-class folks, like us, who are being catered to and encouraged to enjoy nature.



## 1.13 Chewy

A fellow pet mom recently lost two of her animals in the same accident. She is a monthly subscriber to Chewy for pet supplies, food, and toys, and had a number of items still unopened that she hoped she could return for a credit. She called customer service and began to explain the situation.

The agent immediately refunded her the amounts in full and asked if she could gift or donate the unused items in her local community. The next day a condolence card and stunning bouquet of flowers arrived. The woman was completely overwhelmed as she was able to use the refund to cover cremation costs, support her local community, and feel seen all in one easy phone call.

**Nailed it!** - Finally, one example that does it right! At times, in a customer service context, it is easier for the right thing to be done because Doing Good is rewarded with customer loyalty. This can only happen if the front-line employees know what decisions they can make and how far they can go to Do Good. Exceptional customer service is unexpected; when it happens, it benefits everyone involved and then some. Remember, when motives and incentives come together, paired with the right attitude and resources, at the right opportunity, good can happen successfully.

We all can be unstoppable. We must consciously create more of these moments with and for each other so that we can Do Good and role model good for others. We are in control, and often I need to remind myself and others of our own sense of urgency. If we can remember this, perhaps the right opportunity will appear when we have the other ingredients at the ready so that our Doing Good can Do Good.



# Almost-ing

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Thank you for being a Beta Tester for my upcoming book. Please use this short survey to capture any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, questions, etc., you may have to assist with the book writing process.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALMOSTING>



PART  
02

# NOTICE NOTES

## Almost-ing

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One day, while living in Tucson, AZ., I went for a bike ride. It was beautiful. I noticed the sway of the trees, birds singing, pretty flowers, children playing. Then I turned my bike around to head back home. Out of nowhere – an intense wind was blowing right at me. I struggled to stay on my bike, let alone count chickadees and daffodils. How did I not notice this wind? As I accepted defeat and began to walk my bike, a conversation with my husband made me realize that this was a powerful metaphor for the social justice concept of privilege. Because I rode at first with the wind, everything was comfortable and easy-going; it was when I faced the winds that I struggle.

Privilege is both going with the grain and the designer of the grain that is followed. While traveling from coast to coast doing keynotes, workshops, and full-day seminars, I encourage folks to pay attention to their own experiences – after all you can only control yourself. To “fight the good fight” as I so often times hear, I have to actively engage my observation skills; to keep objective observations skills sharp – I have to practice. If starting with self reflection is not motivating enough, notice and record patterns in the media, at work, in public, etc., until you get comfortable with the practice and then turn inward to start a dialog of self reflection. Paying attention to your own actions, inactions, and emotions is hard and noticing patterns externally is equally difficult. Like the saying, “it is hard to see the forest from within the trees.” One must collect individual instances like noticing each tree and then accumulate them into a larger pattern or forest. This exercise is not about honing your judgment skills, self deprecation or the judgment of others. Standing on the judgment line will not make social change.

I will take the first step in offering you one observation to get your practice started. The following examples pull from current events where I notice power at play pulled from mainstream media sources. As you go through each prompt, use the blank space to reflect on the example I have given you. As your observation skills sharpen, use the blank spaces to record, draw, reflect, etc., on your own observations externally or internally. Take notes of your noticings. Record your own observations, actions, assumptions, judgments, behaviors, patterns, feelings, inactions, etc., and learn from them. Then review the recordings in search of more patterns. What I have found is my “normal” mode of operation is to not notice my privilege. When I start to take note, I can notice where and when I do something that is a pattern that I like as well as those patterns I notice that I dislike. What is most important is not to be error free, but to notice what you determine to be in error and be the change you want to be in the world.

Know that we are doing the best we can with what we have – everyone is doing the best they can with what they have. Provide yourself and others with this humanity. That is what gets me out of bed each morning.

## CHAPTER 7

# SKILL BUILDING

### Noticing

Noticing<sup>29</sup> is about observation and objectively tracking what you see and what you did not see at first. Paying attention to what you do and do not do say and do not say etc. For example, I am currently, and have been for about three years now, noticing my choice of language. I identify as a nonviolent person, yet I punch elevator buttons, blow up people's phone, and kick ass when I do a good job. I do not necessarily change my word choices, I just notice. In noticing the language I use daily, I can identify a pattern of violence based language that is incongruent with how I identify myself. No judgment here, just a pattern I have and continue to pay attention to so that I can eventually make more informed choices about what I had not been noticing. If self reflection is too scary or intimidating pay attention to the music you listen to, movies or television shows you like, etc., Are there patterns there? Who do you say hello to when walking past strangers? Who gets stopped and asked for directions and who does not? What race are most heroes? What color hair do "bad guys" have? It is fun, give it a whirl. Warning, once you start, you may find that you cannot stop. Either warn your friends or convince them to start noticing too.

### Triggers

When you find patterns, you have to dig deep to find the roots of those patterns.. Remember that this is a problem that only you can deal with and, in my opinion, it is your moral imperative to do your own work instead of dumping it others. It is our own work to do. This work matters.

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29 The concept of Noticing pulls from trainings and readings using terms like Tracking and Panning. The source of these training and readings cite their work as adapted from materials developed by Elsie Y. Cross Associates, Inc. 1994 Delyte Frost, et al and the Social Justice Leadership Institute's Core Curriculum ([www.sjti.org](http://www.sjti.org)).

## Listening to Humanity

The last tool is the hardest I think. I heard a speaker once talk about a piece of inspiration in her life. It had something to do with “listen to others as if they are wise.” I did not realize the power of this statement until I said it to a teacher in North Dakota who immediately responded with “my students wise – yeah right!” Then we both stood there and realized how sad that was to have such doubt in her students. Listen to others as if they are wise. By others, I mean everyone. That person you would like blasted off the planet? What can you learn from them? What would happen to my ability to listen and learn from them if I approached these conversations from a place of respect? I went one step further and really tried to give them and others a sense of humanity by saying “they are doing the best they can with what they have.” This space of humanity to them may in turn give me space to be human. If I can listen to others as if they are wise, respect that they, like me, are doing the best with what we got, then being willing to learn is not the only equalizer, but we rejoin in humanity. Join together helps end the struggle and that definitely matters.

## How to Use Notice Notes

Noticing is an objective recording or acknowledgement of an event free of judgment, explanation, logic, excuses, or reasoning. Recording your observations can be done in prose, incomplete thoughts, drawings, word mapping, or whatever form you are comfortable using to articulate your observations both external and internal. Reflection relies on the observer or noticer to engage in a dialog internally or with others with the purpose of discovering patterns, roots, and ways of showing up. Privilege is an inherited and/or earned power within a dominant group membership that may not be blameworthy but does come with a degree of responsibility. The socially constructed dominant identity is dependent on the oppression of a/many subordinated identities.

## The Prompts by Subject

### Reflection Prompts

What emotions am I feeling right now?

When do I feel safe and what do I notice?

When do I feel scared and what do I notice?

When do I feel intimidated (due to something I can sense—or not sense) in a situation where oppression is playing out?

What do I do or not do?

When do I talk too much? Why?

When am I silent? Why?

When do I cry? Why?

Why am I reacting this way?

What would I do/feel if I were one of the people in this noticing?

What would I do/feel if I were yet another person in this noticing?

What variables could change that would elicit different reactions/inactions on my part?

What is the pattern of my noticing?

What do I not notice?

Within these patterns, what covers up the root of my feelings?

What experiences do I cover in similar ways?

What do I use as a cover up? Excuse?

Where do I place responsibility?

When do I fix a situation?

When do I confront a situation?

When am I more comfortable confronting injustice?

When am I not?

How do I protect others with my privilege?

When do I protect myself with my privilege?

Who do I judge?

How do I forgive others?

How do I forgive myself?

What keeps me in the struggle when the end is not in sight?

## Reaction/Inaction Patterns

As you reflect, every once in a while turn back and see if you can uncover patterns of your reactions or inactions. When do you respond in a “heady,” “hearty,” and/or “action” oriented manner? Are there differences in your response behaviors based on what kind of power dynamic is at play? I bet so! I also bet that depending on your identities and lived experiences – there will be patterns there too!



### HEAD

If you respond with questions or find yourself with a heightened need for additional information – you are having a heady response. Sometimes, you may need your questions answered before you can think about anything else. There are both good and bad things associated with a heady response.

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### HEART

A hearty response is an emotional response. Regardless of whether you are feeling for the characters in the prompts or experiencing your own emotions – new or relived – this is a hearty response. There can be advantages and disadvantages to a hearty response.

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### ACTION

Ever leap into action before you know all the details? This is an action oriented responder classic move! If you are filled with a need to “do” something in response to a prompt or the need to “do nothing” then you are in full on action mode. Paralysis to petitions are common Action responses. There are lots of Pros and Cons to Action responses.

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## CRUCIBLE! MOMENTS

After you figure out what your “go to” response is you may also determine what your #2 response is. It is a response from your #3 place that are your crucible moments in life. These experiences will forever alter your character and how you behave or response in the future. This is the gift of Noticing. 😊

Thank you for being a Beta Tester for my upcoming book. Please use this short survey to capture any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, questions, etc., you may have to assist with the book writing process.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ALMOSTING>

## CHAPTER 8

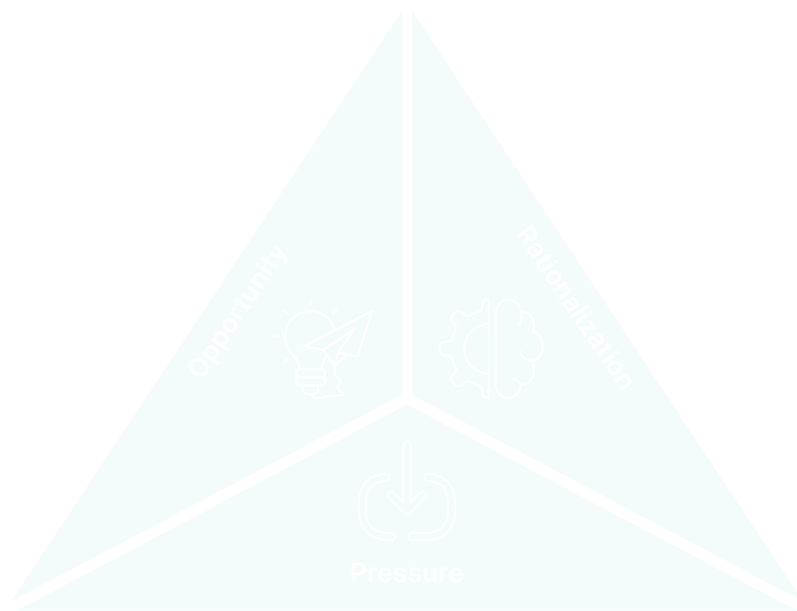
# PRACTICE PROMPTS

**NN1W8** The Frog Princess, set in New Orleans and features the Walt Disney Studio's first black princess will be released in 2009. Disney introduced its first non-white animated heroine in 1992's Aladdin, a Middle Eastern character named Jasmine. Three years later an American Indian princess appeared in Pocahontas. The creation of the Chinese heroine from Mulan came in 1998. Other Disney princesses are the main characters from Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Beauty and the Beast, and The Little Mermaid.<sup>30</sup>



**NN1W9** A billboard depicts an individual whose face is covered by a Kufiya (the traditional male headdress in some Arab countries,) carrying a hand grenade with what appears to be a blood smear and a driver's license. The billboard also features Arabic letters that were lined up without forming actual words. Additionally, there are two figures in the background wearing military fatigues, black masks, and green bandanas on their heads with what appear to be Arabic words. Superimposed on the images is a caption that reads "Do not License Terrorists, North Carolina!"

The Coalition for a Secure Driver's License is launching a new billboard campaign in New Mexico and North Carolina, which contains extremely negative and racist images of Arabs and Arab cultural symbols.<sup>31</sup>

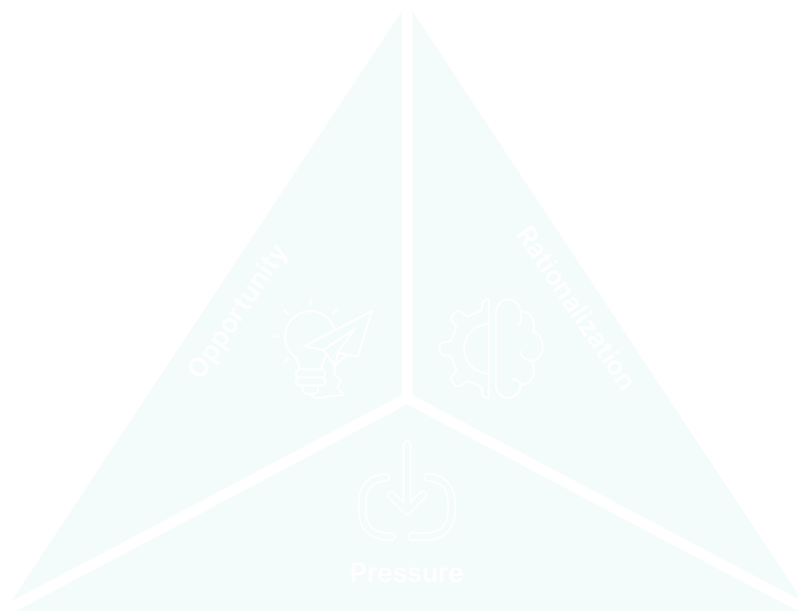


31 December 8, 2005, Washington, DC, December 7, 2005 <http://capwiz.com/adc/issues/alert/?alertid=8301626&type=CU> or <http://www.securelicense.org/site/PageServer?pagename=BillboardCampaign>

## Almost-ing

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**NN1W12** The Council on American-Islamic Relations complained publicly about plans for a commercial it said would have proclaimed a jihad on the U.S. auto market, offering Fatwa Fridays with sales representatives giving play swords to children. The statement from the dealership, Dennis Mitsubishi in Columbus, said, "A large number of people have contacted us. Lots of them have seen the humor we were trying to convey, but far too many were clearly bothered by it. This was simply an attempt at humor that fell short."<sup>32</sup>



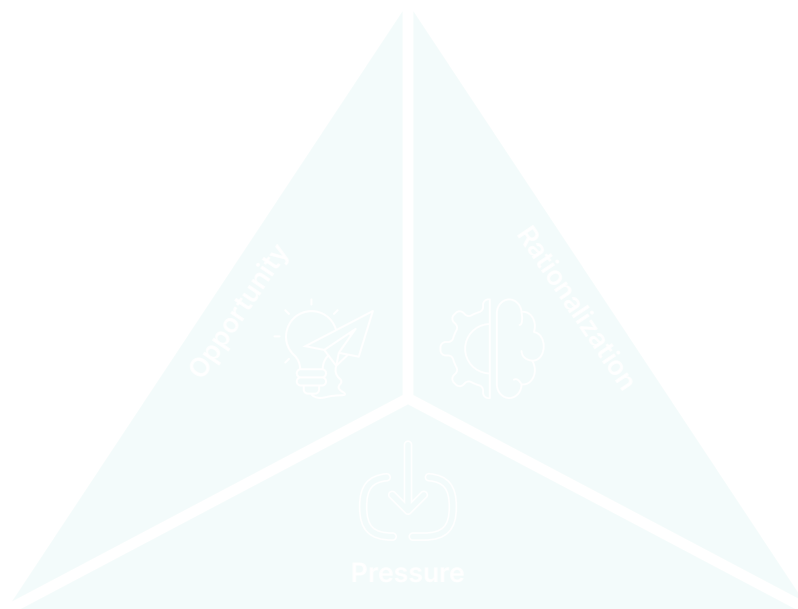
**NN1W39** A family is speaking Bulgarian at the train station saying how confused and lost they are. I, after serving in the Peace Corps, speak Bulgarian. I approach the family, and in Bulgarian I ask if I can help. In clear English, the father says "Thank you; we are fine." I offer to help again and the son says they do not speak English. I state again that I am happy to help and the youngest child tells the parents that I am speaking Bulgarian. The family is stunned and apologizes. They say that they have had such a hard time getting people to help them and listen to them since arrive in the US for a family funeral. They laugh that they were not listening to me just like the Americans never listened to them.



## Almost-ing

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**NN1W41** A black woman professional is asked to cover the duties of her white colleague while she is on maternity leave. The woman takes on two full-time jobs and is given a verbal token of appreciation and a small one time bonus. The next year, a white man with less experience is promoted and the black woman is asked to cover his duties in the interim. Now she works three jobs and gets a small one time bonus and verbal appreciation. The white woman upon return from maternity leave is given a permanent raise. The black woman continues to work two jobs.



**NN2W3** Australia may have made gender history in March of 2012, as the New South Wales government lays claim to being the first in the world to recognize an individual's sex as officially "not specified" An Australian citizen, Norrie, is now legally recognized by the Australian government as neither male nor female<sup>33</sup>

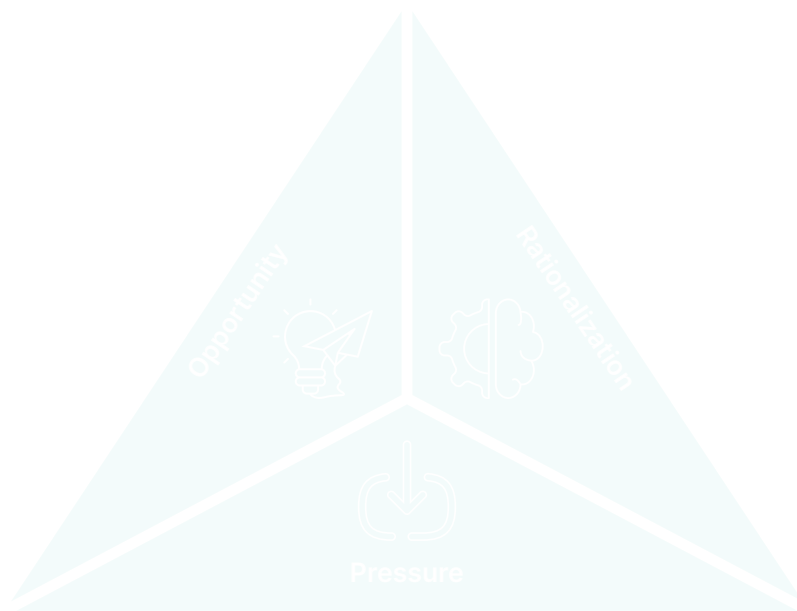


33 <http://www.gay.pinknews.co.uk/2010/03/11/australia-is-first-to-recognise-non-specified-gender/>

## Almost-ing

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**NN2W9** Arizona's new law, SB 1070, says that police must question anyone they have "reasonable suspicion" of being an undocumented immigrant. The law would require the police "when practicable" to detain people they reasonably suspected were in the country without authorization. It would also allow the police to charge immigrants with a state crime for not carrying immigration documents. And it allows residents to sue cities if they believe the law is not being enforced.<sup>34</sup>



**NN2W15** 'American Able' intends to, through spoof, reveal the ways in which women with disabilities are invisibilized in advertising and mass media. They chose American Apparel not just for their notable style, but also for their claims that many of their models are just 'every day' women who are employees, friends and fans of the company. However, these women fit particular body types. Their campaigns are highly sexualized and feature women who are generally thin, and who appear to be able-bodied. Women with disabilities go unrepresented, not only in American Apparel advertising, but also in most of popular culture. Rarely, if ever, are women with disabilities portrayed in anything other than an asexual manner, for 'disabled' bodies are largely perceived as 'undesirable.' In a society where sexuality is created and performed over and over within popular culture, the invisibility of women with disabilities in many ways denies them the right to sexuality, particularly within a public context.<sup>35</sup>



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35 <http://www.genderacrossborders.com/2010/05/11/american-apparel-american-able-girl-next-door/>

## Almost-ing

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**NN2W20** A Chinese company hire's white male westerners to wear suits and tour factories to give their businesses credibility. <sup>36</sup>



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36 <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/rent-a-white-guy/308119/> for more information visit <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128011084>



**NN2W23** To hire for a Resident Director position, co-workers conducted a phone screening and the committee LOVED one particular female candidate. The search committee invited her for a campus interview, and she wanted to come, but stated that she was not able to travel to their campus at the moment. So, this institution decided to give her another set of interviews via the telephone. Again, they really liked her. The woman does her “on-campus” interview over the phone and again, people fall in love with her. The institution moves to hire her. The woman accepts the offer. Immediately after she accepts the offer, she informs the Director of Res. Life that she was 8 months pregnant and therefore would miss training and the first several weeks of the semester. The Director rescinds her offer of employment because he needed someone who would be there to open the building.



## Almost-ing

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**NN2W25** L.P.G.A. players have voted to eliminate the tour's requirement that players be "female at birth" and to allow transgender athletes to compete, less than two months after a transgender woman sued the tour in federal court, arguing that the rule violated California civil rights law.<sup>37</sup>



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37 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/02/sports/golf/02lpga.html>  
for original story visit <http://www.myfoxtampabay.com/story/18022745/transgender-golfer-sues-lpga-in-bid-to-join-tour>

**NNW32** Mixed race or multiracial children have increased by 70% in Mississippi according to 2000 and 2010 census data. In the first comprehensive accounting of multiracial Americans since statistics were first collected about them in 2000, reporting from the 2010 census, made public in recent days, shows that the nation's mixed-race population is growing far more quickly than many demographers had estimated. In North Carolina, the mixed-race population doubled. In Georgia, it expanded by more than 80 percent, and by nearly as much in Kentucky and Tennessee. In Indiana, Iowa and South Dakota, the multiracial population increased by about 70 percent.<sup>38</sup>

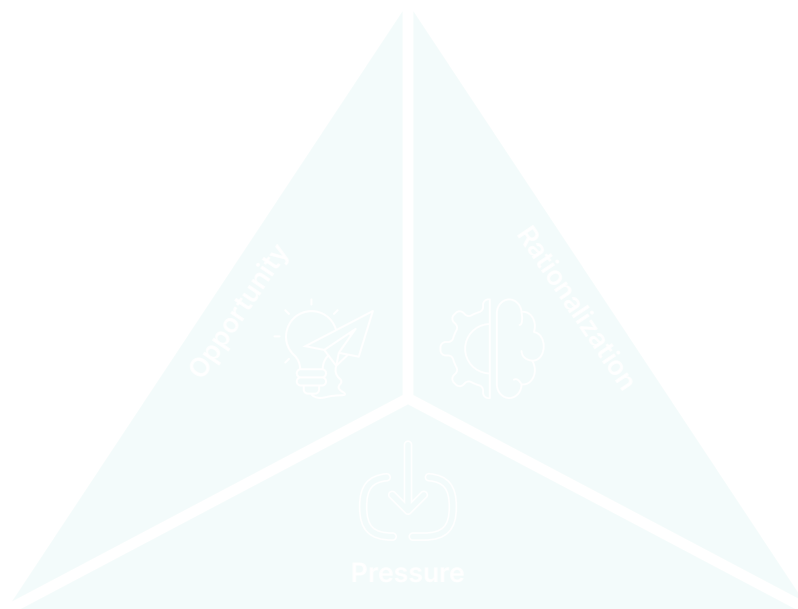


38 [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/us/20race.html?\\_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/20/us/20race.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss)  
and for the direct link to the Census Bureau visit <http://www.census.gov/#>

## Almost-ing

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**NN2W42** On December 14, 2010, 30 Bangladeshi factory workers were burned alive when an easily preventable fire broke out in the unsafe, multi-story sweatshop in which they were working. These men and women worked for “That’s It Sportswear” producing clothing for famous U.S. brands. Workers spent their days making clothes for several American companies, including Abercrombie, Gap, and JC Penney.<sup>39</sup>



**NN2W50** An Ohio landlord accused of discriminating against an African-American girl with a “white only” sign at her swimming pool told ABCNews.com that the sign was an antique and a decoration. “I’m not a bad person,” said Jamie Hein of Cincinnati. “I do not have any problem with race at all. It’s a historical sign.” The sign in question reads, “Public Swimming Pool, White Only.” It is dated 1931 and from Alabama.<sup>40</sup>



40 <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2011/12/exclusive-white-only-pool-sign-owner-explains/>

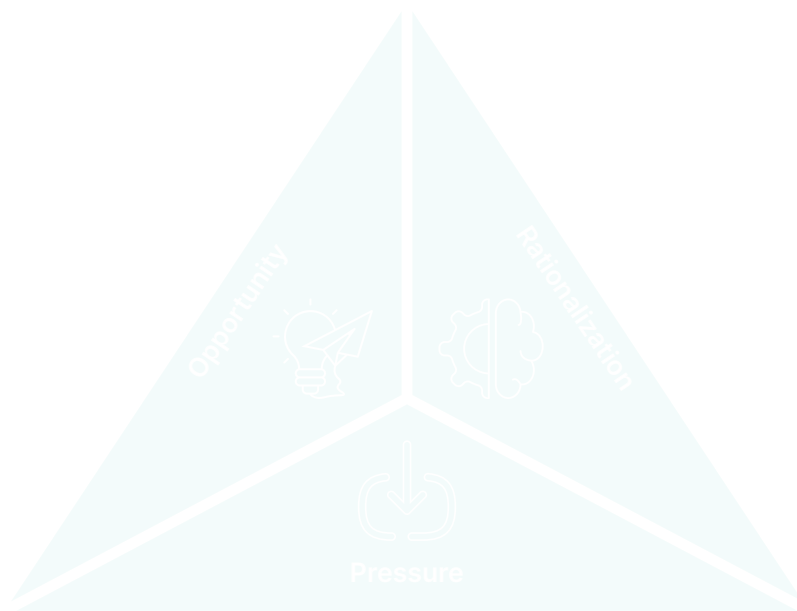
## Almost-ing

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**NN2W35** A white woman hiking alone is lost and sets a fire to gain the attention of a passing helicopter. Close by, an Apache man and contracted fire fighter sets a small fire in hopes of gaining work. The two fires merge into one of the largest fires in Arizona. The men are jailed immediately. The white woman never faced any charges.<sup>41</sup>



**NN3W13** After a series of costly and embarrassing accidents in its efforts to drill exploratory wells off the north coast of Alaska last year, Royal Dutch Shell announced on Wednesday that it would not return to the Arctic in 2013. This is the only company approved to drill in the Arctic. Other companies are applying for permits even though they do not know how to avoid similar kinds of accidents. <sup>42</sup>



## Almost-ing

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**NN3W19** An offensive email is forwarded out to professional colleagues from someone that works within the Human Resources. The email is derogatory to men, lower economic class neighborhoods, and lists things as “Adult \Problems.” When challenged by a colleague, another co-worker responds that the sender “does not have a mean bone in her body.”





**NN3W23** Wisconsin state Sen. Glenn Grothman (R-West Bend) has introduced a bill demonizing single parents by classifying them as child abusers. Senate Bill 507 specifically requires “the Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board to emphasize nonmarital parenthood as a contributing factor to child abuse and neglect.” A third of Wisconsin parents are single parents, but this law affects even more than that. The way the law refers to “nonmarital parenthood” also makes this applicable to non-married couples, including same-sex couples.<sup>43</sup>



## Almost-ing

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**NN3W33** On Monday, April 30, 2012, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) ruled that employers who discriminate against an employee, or potential employee, based on their gender identity is in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on sex.



**NN3W34** Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, considered by some to be the father of modern psychiatry, recants his support for reparative therapy for homosexuality. “I believe,” it concludes, “I owe the gay community an apology.”<sup>44</sup>



44 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/19/health/dr-robert-l-spitzer-noted-psychiatrist-apologizes-for-study-on-gay-cure.html?pagewanted=1&r=2&hp&>

## Almost-ing

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**NN3W46** Black women are being disproportionately affected by domestic violence. Twenty-five percent of black women experience abuse from their intimate partner, according to the Violence Against Women Survey.<sup>45</sup>



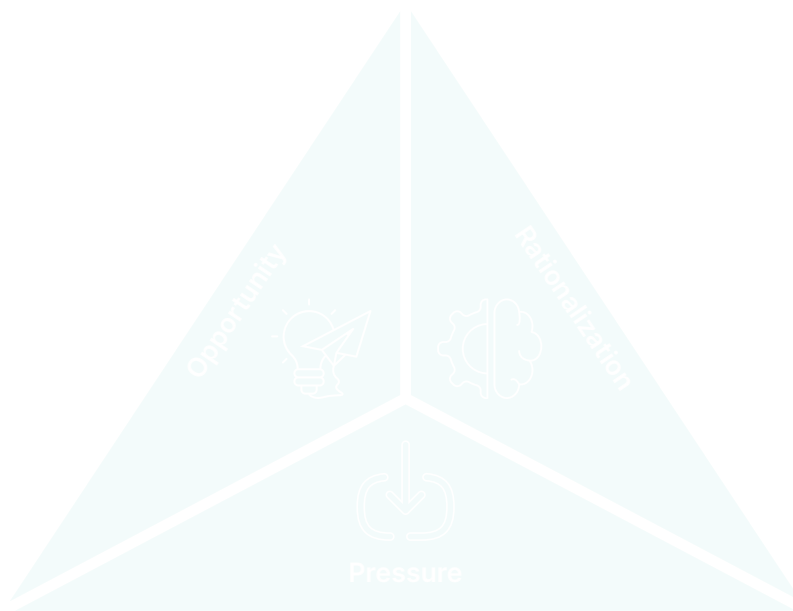
**NN3W48** Young black patients and patients without private health insurance are less likely to be assessed for a kidney transplant when they start dialysis, according to a study appearing in an upcoming issue of the Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology (CJASN). These patients are also less likely to be put on the transplant waiting list and to receive a transplant.<sup>46</sup>



## Almost-ing

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**NN3W50**<sup>47</sup> Only 25 percent of all ACT test-takers have met benchmarks for college preparation in English, reading, mathematics and science in 2012, the same percentage as last year. The highest preparation levels are in English (67 percent) and the lowest in science (31 percent). By race/ethnicity, Asian students (at 42 percent) are more likely than all other groups to have met college preparation goals in all four subjects. For other groups, the figures are white (32 percent), Pacific islander (17 percent), Hispanic (13 percent), American Indian (11 percent) and black (5 percent).<sup>48</sup>



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47 NN3W50 (for example) stands for which edition of Notice Notes (I, II, III) and which week number the prompt is pulled from.

48 <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/08/22/act-scores-are-flat#.UDTgLQdEg8o.mailto>

Thank you for being a Beta Tester for my upcoming book. Please use this short survey to capture any thoughts, ideas, suggestions, questions, etc., you may have to assist with the book writing process.

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