

**Elena:** [00:00:00] I will just start with welcoming you, Nick, back to the podcast cuz you've been on the podcast a few times already.

So welcome back.

**Nick:** Thank you. I'm glad to be back.

**Elena:** And today we are gonna have a conversation about a question that we frequently get when we present our equity workshops as well as other workshops when we are talking about how to have conversations about equity and we. Include the need to focus on the client's strengths, to unpack and explore beliefs.

And so the question that we get sometimes is along the lines of why don't you disrupt racist behavior immediately? It seems like you're coddling the client when you focus on strengths or beliefs without addressing the racism. So that's what we're gonna unpack. As I was thinking about this conversation we're about to have this morning, I was just wondering what comes up [00:01:00] for you when you think about responding to this question in this conversation.

Like what's present for you right now as we get into this?

**Nick:** The first thing that comes to mind for me is I start to feel, I think the best word for is activated. I take myself to a moment where I hear something racist sometimes against myself. I am a black male. I live in Tulsa.

I've experienced racism. I see racism happening either towards me or someone else. And I feel like, oh yes, that is a familiar feeling I have. And when I get that question, I want to just say absolutely. I want to respond in the moment and stop people. When I experience racism or I see it, I wanna shut it down.

I'm activated because I guilt back to points where I feel angry myself about that or I feel regret that I didn't interrupt in the [00:02:00] past and I've seen something. That comes up for me cuz it's stuff that I actually want to do. But the things that also come up for me are.

I'm counting on my hands. How many times did I actually get to my greater purpose in those moments where I did the thing that was gonna feel good in the moment? I'll admit, sometimes it was, I wanted to shame someone. That's the thing that is underneath it. I've definitely gotten it to conversations either on Facebook at certain points when everyone was on Facebook in the summer of 2020 saying a lot of things, , I wanted to write narratives.

I wrote back to people paragraphs and I wrote instant messages. I did so much that I was gonna tell them why they were wrong and I did what I wanted to do and I can go back and go, Yeah. My purpose for that was I really wanted to shame someone. I really wanted them to feel how silly or stupid just wrong they were.

I wanted to express what [00:03:00] wrong it never. In my conversations, whenever I've done it, it felt good. When I pressed enter, it felt good when I ended my sentence for a second. Mm. And then when I realized that the response that I got was never, Nick, you have changed the way I think.

Wow. I didn't even know what I said was racist or, you know, against you or against a whole marginalized community. Now I'm gonna change. It has never, in my experience, led to change. When I tried to shame someone, it definitely led to fights. Fights that I don't even think I won. It was just fights where I landed.

A couple blows too.

**Elena:** Hmm. I think I wanna just, Reflect what I'm hearing and sort of frame it more broadly, which is we bring who we are, our whole selves and all the complicated parts into our work, into our coaching, into this conversation that you and I are having now, we bring all this history, all these emotions, these experiences, these [00:04:00] unresolved, aspects of our life.

And that comes up in responding to this question as well. We don't leave who we are behind when we come to work and right now you and I are both at work. You work for Bright Morning. I work for Bright Morning. When I was thinking about this conversation that you and I were gonna have, I was realizing I was starting to have some anxiety about whether I would answer this question correctly.

Mm-hmm. , would I be able to explain why it is that we coach the way we do in Bright Morning, that we use these methods? Would I be able to do justice to my beliefs and just all this anxiety about like, will I be understood? Will I sound articulate? I have a lot of fear of not sounding articulate.

Cause I've been told many times that I was not articulate. Will I be doing right by other people of color? Will people of color be listening to this and feeling like, this is not doing US justice. So I'm speaking for myself as a person. I'm aware that as the [00:05:00] founder of Bright Morning.

I'm also speaking for our organization and describing how we do our work. And I do want folks listening to be really clear on this is the approach we take at Bright Morning. This is our theory of action. These are the values that we embody when we respond to racism in the way that we do as coaches.

And there can be a perception perhaps that it seems like we're coddling the client. And this is what I really wanna unpack so people understand, but I'm just naming that for myself. I'm like, Am I gonna do a good enough job? I'm always afraid I'm not gonna do a good job because, I really wanna see things change in our country and in our world.

And it feels like change is so slow and I don't want the people I love to experience anymore suffering. I don't want myself, I don't wanna experience anymore. I don't want my grandchildren, I don't want the kids in Oakland who I've taught and their children to experience any more racism and suffering.

And so [00:06:00] this is just all of what's present. But what I want people listening to make the connection to and to consider as essential for reflection is you gotta know where you're coming into this convers. You have to know who you are, what you're bringing into it, literally into this conversation, but into the broader exploration of how do we disrupt racism.

You have to know what you're bringing in. You have to have that awareness of, and the insight on the past ways that you've showed up engaged and what it's done for you and how it's worked, right? And so I so appreciate your self-awareness and your vulnerability to be able to recognize those moments in which you wanted to shame people.

You were discharging the uncomfortable emotions, right? So when we feel pain and suffering, it's actually so much easier to feel anger. If we think about anger, like think about it in your body, what happens? You can feel kind of energized, even a little shaky. You can feel [00:07:00] the adrenaline starts pumping.

Sometimes your thinking gets clearer. You can form those statements on Facebook. You've got energy sometimes underneath anger is deep sadness and grief. And if you think about sadness and grief, and we've all experienced it, you remember what that's like in your body that often has a quality of exhaustion, Flatness, depletion, a lack of energy, right?

And for many human beings, that's scarier . And so we choose anger because it kind of keeps us going and it feels like we're doing something. And perhaps the

key is to feel it all. Anger is valid. Anger needs to be expressed and released when it's directed to other people.

Sometimes it's less effective. It doesn't actually address also the sadness. But it's all present. All of this is present. And especially, do I wanna say especially yes, especially when we are [00:08:00] people of color doing this, cuz at least for myself, I feel like I have this heavier responsibility. You know, it's me and my ancestors and my husband and my son and my yet to be born grandchildren.

And the responsibility is just massive. Mm-hmm.

**Nick:** It brings up two big things for me. One is, yes, when even thinking about this conversation, I felt a sense of responsibility. and it further underlines that I'm coming to the conversation in my whole identity, in all my intersections.

As a black man who has always lived in the South, I feel very marginalized being a black man most of the time. I also have a master's degree and I'm pretty much middle class and I have so many privileges, but I bring all of that to this conversation and start thinking about, am I gonna say the thing that encompasses what all people of color should do whenever they want to coach someone who says something racist, or whenever they see [00:09:00] something and they wanna figure out What is the most effective way to change this person's mind?

Am I gonna. To the person and give them something useful that really helps. Or is it gonna be taken a different way? There's a lot of responsibility that it feels like if I take on the massive weight of I need to speak for everyone, so I won't, And I heard that from you too. And I can't speak for every single person or every single situation, but if we start talking about the context, if we start talking about coaching people, then I can talk about if my purpose of the conversation is coaching, if my purpose is to coach another person, then I can speak to what's been working for me and I can speak to what did not work for me so far.

And I welcome difference of opinion, but that's what I can actually speak to. And I think what I also heard you in there talk about is just. Making sure to keep in [00:10:00] mind is what you bring to this conversation. Every time when I get a question about why are we even doing this, I immediately think, I want to affirm that you asked this question.

Cause I ask myself the question in the moment too. Why am I trying to write down this person's values when I start a conversation? , why do I invest in a

person's strengths before I even know the things they have gaps in? I try to gather this because I need to have a foundation of what makes you a beautiful human doing educational equity work.

Before we get to these other pieces too. I need to have stuff cause I bring my own stuff as well.

**Elena:** I want us to start digging into answering this question really directly. You just raised purpose, which when I think about this question, why don't we disrupt racist behavior immediately?

I think what's the purpose? Mm-hmm. , what's the context? And so I'll just name for folks who are listening. A [00:11:00] really important companion to this recording will be the series on what to say when you hear something racist. And in that series I offer the three P's to consider what to do.

And those three P's are purpose, power, and possibility, always starting with purpose. And so coming back to this question that we get often in our coaching workshops, the context is coaching. Right now, we are gonna talk about how we address racism when it comes up in a coaching context that is different from when we are sitting at the Thanksgiving dinner table.

Or when we are in a street and hearing something or in a classroom as a parent or an observer. So there's all different contexts and we right now are talking about the coaching context in the series. What to say when you hear something racist. I'm describing a much bigger context. And so for folks [00:12:00] listening who are like, Yeah, well what do I say when I'm at the dinner table and Thanksgiving, or in the classroom or on the playground with other parents there is more in there to unpack those other contexts in a coaching context, and particularly in the context that I'm inviting folks into, which is transformational coaching. What it means is that the purpose is transformative change, not compliance, not an immediate. Change of a superficial response or approach.

But we're looking to guide transformation of behaviors, beliefs, and ways of being. So if you are using transformational coaching and if you are committed to seeing what's possible, then you build a skill set that allows you to include seeing someone's strengths, understanding their values, unpacking their beliefs, and you build a skillset that allows you to unpack the [00:13:00] racist behavior beliefs again in a way that can lead to transformative change.

So that's, I think the first and most important thing that I wanna name for folks is, What is the context that you're in when you see, hear the racist behavior, if

you have agreed to coach someone and you're seeing this in the context of coaching and you are willing to try transformational coaching, then it means a whole bunch of things.

It means you use the tools and the strategies that I'm offering in my book *Coaching for Equity* that we offer in our workshops. You use all of that skill and knowledge and it means you work from a set of dispositions. It means that you embody some ways of being that include compassion and curiosity, and that's kind of a mandate.

You commit to working from compassion and curiosity, which is a whole lot harder than [00:14:00] it sounds. It's hard, and in order to be able to truly work from compassion, curiosity, it means you continuously do a lot of self reflection, building self-awareness, processing and healing. And I use that word and I'm using it more and more and more because when you were describing what comes up for you, and I know what comes up for me when there's anger, when there's pain suffering, it's pointing to places where healing needs to happen, and it's my responsibility and I deserve to do that healing.

**Nick:** Okay, I'm hearing that if I want to coach someone, Especially with a transformational lens. If I wanna use transformational coaching, then that's when I need to approach this person, with not just trying to change what they did right then.

Not just saying stop it. Usually not just saying, just stop the action and then hope they stop it out of compliance. But let's get down to what was going on that that was the reaction this person had or the thing that they said [00:15:00] What was their whole way of being approaching it?

I wanna get down to that because when I leave that classroom or I leave this conversation, if we are in a classroom context, that teacher still goes back to that class. And if I'm thinking about a lasting impact, I don't want it to just be, Nick said, never say that one word, so I'm gonna say a different word.

Get to the same outcome I was doing before when they had the, It's just gonna be a revolving door and I can't, and I never wanna take someone's entire autonomy away that they can't even teach. But instead, if we investigate a belief behind something someone said, then they automatically can start getting into a habit of, ooh, I need to disrupt that if they're invested in, That's not how I want to be with my students.

I don't want them to feel shame. I don't want them to feel hurt. I don't want them to feel ostracized. Ooh, I need to do my own changing. So I heard that, and it also brought up for me, what if I get activated when I get this question, I have a lot of [00:16:00] compassion for the person asking it.

When I witnessed this, someone has activated me. I'm angry. How am I supposed to coach a person and look at their strengths when they literally said something that makes me wanna walk away? Because it stirred up something inside of me. And that brought up for me what you said before about healing.

When I've encountered this with someone I'm coaching and I feel like there's a wall between us because what they said hurt my feelings, what they said made me feel despair, that I don't know if they'll be able to change. I have had to walk away from someone and say, alright. A lot of stuff was said.

This was very heavy for me. And I said, I don't think it's gonna be a productive conversation right now. I need to think about this more. And I went away and I can't say that the next time I talk to this person that all of their beliefs changed. But I heard them say something. They said that, I think they said that equity doesn't matter.[00:17:00]

Something like that to me. And I wanted to talk to 'em about their classroom, but they said, By the way, equity doesn't, These equity sessions are useless. I treat all my kids the same no matter what they look like. Then she listed off black, white, all the things. And I thought, Oh man this belief is just, and I decided am I gonna coach her?

Am I gonna coach her in this moment? Yes. Okay. Tell me more about why equity doesn't matter. Okay, tell me more about saying that you treat everyone the same. And we got into a little bit and I started bringing up, has everyone always treated you kindly based on your identity markers.

And she talked a little bit about being a woman and talked about that difference and how She felt like misogyny was definitely something she felt. I tried to draw parallel, like, you've experienced something based on one of your identities was someone didn't treat you fairly. Your students can feel this based on their identities as well.

And I can feel this as a black man and I need everyone to have the conversations around equity so I don't feel like the only one in the room [00:18:00] having it. And we didn't get to a place where she said, Oh yeah. I,

Yep, I see where that parallel is. I'm gonna stop. And then I also felt activated, so I just like, Okay, it's not gonna be productive right now.

I need to think some more. And I left and I called someone else, someone who I trusted, someone who was also a person who identifies as black. And we had a conversation where I got to just say, This is ridiculous, . Or I got to say, that hurt my feelings. I don't wanna coach this person right now. Yeah, this is, this is hurtful.

And after we talked and after I got a chance to say it out loud and after I talked to my manager a little while and said, I don't know if I can have these types of conversations with this person. And I had a chance to breathe. I was able to reengage with this teacher again, and now I'm reengaging with this teacher.

And I can see I've processed my feelings around the stuff that she said. I have my own boundaries and limits, and I can [00:19:00] still imagine a better future for the people she will. . So I still was able to engage with this teacher later and say, I think there's hope. I think that there's hope this person can still see maybe a little bit, that treating everyone the same no matter what is equality isn't the same as equity and that equity does matter.

And maybe that belief can get shaken up a little bit if I stay engaged with her. And then I ask myself the last question, if, if not me, who unfortunately this year, I'm her coach. I am her only coach. I don't, I can't pass her off to anyone else. I don't really want to, I want to be able to engage.

And so I told myself what's possible for her students if I'm able to continue having the conversations that her kiddos maybe aren't having with her because power. Mm. Because experience. That helped me to stay engaged. I [00:20:00] had to find a way to pull on one of her strengths. I had to find a way to have compassion for her that she's had some experiences that maybe didn't feel good for her in the past, so she doesn't feel like equity's worth talking about.

So maybe I need some more evidence. Maybe I need some more information. I figure out things you like so we can stay connected and I can possibly push a little bit and shake up some of these beliefs if I stay engaged with you. But if I think there's no hope for this teacher, there's no hope for you at all, what's possible there?

Nothing. There's no hope for you. You're just , you're just racist and you're never gonna change. Nothing will change for you this year. Nothing will change for me. And I guess we move along and I just didn't want that.

**Elena:** Mm. Nick, you have said so many things that are so powerful and that I want to elevate and name for folks listening, which include.

You're making a choice. This is your choice. You said a number of times I chose, I want to, You [00:21:00] also said, I feel like I have to, but I hear a lot of choice and I just wanna name ultimately like yes, we have autonomy we choose to stay engaged in these conversations.

And then the choice to stay connected and stay engaged, to stay hopeful, to be aware of the potential of despair, but to stay hopeful to see that you have possibility. One of the three P's is possibility, what is possible in the moment and later. And so I also really. go back to what you said around in the moment, I didn't feel like I could talk to her and I had to leave.

And the choice that you made acting on your autonomy in that moment to say, Right now I can't. I need to go talk to someone who shares some of my identity markers. I need to talk to my manager and to process and how important that is that you made that choice and did what you needed to do so you could come back and be in relationship to continue.

I feel like I'm almost ready to make a big declarative statement[00:22:00] like 70% of being a transformational coach is the work you do on yourself and in yourself. And the rest of it.

30% is the skill you build and you have to build skill at. What do you say? How do you say it? What data do you collect? How do you present it? How do you use different coaching stances and approaches? How do you coach the emotions that come up? But 70% of it is your work in and on yourself. Your self-awareness, your compassion for yourself, your ability to resource externally.

And that's what I hear you describing that you do. That was such a powerful example of being able to say, And then I'm making a choice to come back because this year I might be the only one positioned to have these conversations about Herb and to see her as more One of the things that I have to remind myself of a lot is people are not born racist.

And again, I always use this analogy that Beverly Tatum offered us, us of racism is like smog in [00:23:00] the air. And, and I kind of extended that analogy to like, yeah, it is toxic and it's been in our soil, it's been in the rain, it's been for 500, 600 years. And so yes, of course we are all toxic but, people are not born racist and can I see that?

Can I see that actually we as human beings want to connect deeply with each other. We want to be in community with each other and we have to rid ourselves of this toxicity and find new ways to connect and to be able to relate to each other. So I was hearing so much of that in the anecdote that you gave.

And one of the things that I was thinking about is like when we get these questions, That imply that we don't address the racism. I often think No wait, we are addressing racism. It just looks, and sounds perhaps different than what you've heard or how you've addressed racism.

But we do address racism. And I think about in coaching for equity, I wrote about two clients that I coached in depth. One of [00:24:00] them was Stephanie, who was a young white woman, and the other one was Kai, who was a person of color. And I told these long stories, There's several chapters that focus on each of them because I wanted readers to hear what it sounds like to address racism.

And it takes time and it takes being in relationship and it takes having hope, like what you just described.

So if folks listening have not yet read those chapters, they include a lot of long transcripts of what it sounds like to address racism. And I think that's part of the paradigm shift in transformational coaching.

We do address racism. There are times when I say to people very directly things like,

**Nick:** Well, yeah,

**Elena:** I hear what you're saying. I hear the beliefs you're holding and they're racist beliefs. Are you willing to unpack those? I do say things like that. [00:25:00] There's a section in coaching for equity, it's basically how to respond to racism. And some of it could sound really direct. Some of it's like, , you know, What do you mean by that? Can we unpack that? Where do you think those beliefs came from? So there is the unpacking. But going back to this question that we get, why don't we disrupt racist behavior immediately that I come back to?

So I spent many years thinking that I was disrupting racist behavior directly by calling people out. I also wanted to shame people. I thought it would shake them out of their racism by being really direct. I feel comfortable with that.

I can do it. And what I came to after a number of years was it didn't work. I wasn't seeing the changes I wanted. And what I learned as I built my knowledge was a lot of science. And human biology. And human chemistry and the way that when people feel like their identity is being attacked, which is what we're doing when we're saying You're racist, we're saying you at your core identity, that's a [00:26:00] racist person.

You are a bad person. What happens in our body? What happens in our mind, What happens in our neurochemical hormonal system is we shut down because we feel like we're being attacked. Our body goes into defending ourselves. We can't hear what other people are saying. We go into thinking about how to discredit them, how to argue with them, right?

We all know this. We've had this feeling, and ultimately it doesn't work. And so when I first started learning about this science, it was hard. It was a wake up call to like, yeah, it doesn't work. So I can either fight the science or I can learn some new strategies, which is, again, why I go back to maybe 70% of it is what we do on ourselves and maybe 30% is skill.

We can build the skill, and that's what we do in Bright Morning. That's what our workshops focus on. We can help you build the skill. Mm-hmm. , you may have to go off and do a lot of your own work, and we can point to [00:27:00] what that might be. We can give you some suggestions, but we can help you build the skill.

Yes.

**Nick:** And one thing I'll highlight too is you wrote about this, and it's a very illustrative, picture in my mind that when you went to Kai's classroom and you saw the boy who's an African American boy just sitting alone, another time in the timeout chair, you could pull up on like many times that I would come and visit, he's in the timeout.

This African American boy is in a timeout chair. He is being talked to more severely than other students. I can see that this has implications. I can see that this is ultimately racist. I can see that. But if I stop the classroom right now and go, This is a racist thing you're doing in front of all the kids, what will be the result, most likely, some type of fight?

But what you talk about is how do I recognize the injustices, the inequities, and then figure out how to have this conversation in a way [00:28:00] that he can hear it, where I can give you the thing that happened and keep your identity

intact. Can I pull up on this pattern of oppression, this pattern of racist behavior, but keep your identity intact so you can grapple with this.

And it takes a lot of time to do it. Cause You have to trust me. So I need to come enough that I've seen this. I need to have evidence, I need to have quotes, I need to do interviews, do an interview with the student. And I think that was a big turning point in that relationship. He got to see what does this student say about our relationship?

And when I heard that, and I read that, I took it to my own practice and a school leader told me about, Oh, one of the people that you coach, she basically is targeting this one African American boy. And she says things that are telling me, and this is from an African American woman.

And so she's saying, I'm pulling this up for you so you know this in your next conversation. I took note of that and knew if I just go and start off the conversation with this [00:29:00] teacher with why are you being racist towards this boy? We are now in a fight. I have now opened up our argument and I ultimately may not get to the thing that I want to get to, which is how do we do something differently?

So instead I asked about the relationship she has with this one student. Mm-hmm. . And I asked her about what would he say about you? What would he say that happens in your classroom when you all interact? She came up with, on her own at certain points in that conversation of, I don't think he would say anything kind.

And I'm not forgetting that this is a pattern of behavior to her African American boy, but I am approaching this conversation trying to forget at what is your belief about the. Mm. And I need to dig in a little bit to see what do you actually feel about this student? You feel any differently about this student than your other students?

This is a way that we can have an actual conversation, but I'm not gonna forget, I have written it down. I'm gonna, I want to get to this, but I need to get to it where you can still feel like you are you [00:30:00] and you can grapple with the things you are doing too, that maybe you're not aware of, maybe you are aware of, but I don't know.

I'm, I'm gonna stay curious and I'm gonna stay compassionate and I'm gonna ask you questions cuz this will lead us likely to a different possibility for that student in this class. Yeah,

yeah,

**Elena:** yeah. I think you're illustrating so well, what I describe as a part of describing the four phases of transformational coaching, which I write about in coaching for equity and in the art of coaching workbook, which is that there are these four phases we move through, but they must exist within a container of a relationship.

And so around that graphic is this line with these arrows, which is relationship with the client. I also describe it as these are the guardrails on the bridge that hold us moving on this pathway towards justice liberation that has to exist. That container of relationship and trust [00:31:00] has to exist.

You have to stay in relationship with people. The other thing that you mentioned, about, I can't get into an argument. I say this about coaching, sometimes as soon as you get into an argument with a client, coaching is over. You are no longer in a coaching relationship.

When you feel that debate, kind of when you're like, Oh, I'm debating, I'm arguing, I'm presenting evidence, coaching is done. You are no longer coaching. I'm not gonna judge what happens. But you are no longer coaching and if you have made an agreement to coach someone, you need to stay out of that space.

Otherwise, you've broken trust, you've broken the commitment that you've made, either the official commitment or even just the internal commitment to, I agree to coach you. I agree to see your potential. I agree to see beyond your racist beliefs, beyond your racist behavior, because I know that at your core identity, that is not you.

So yeah, this gets into a little bit of a perhaps existential even, belief based question about, so what is at someone's core identity? And I think [00:32:00] I've had enough experiences with people and with people who I also know hold racist beliefs, whether those are people I've worked with. People I have known socially family, I know that there is more than that.

I know that there are parts of them that are loving and good and kind, and that's what I almost feel like for my own survival as a human, as a bipo person. I have to find that in people. And that's why sometimes when I go into coaching relationships and people are saying things that are really emotionally activating, that are really triggering to me, I have to start asking things like, tell me about what you were like as a three year old.

What, What did you like as a four year old? Mm-hmm. , what did you like to play with? Like, I have to find that humanity in them, or I personally just get so hopeless and despairing. So this is also the survival mechanism for me to remember that people are more than their racist and, and, and. I can also say, I don't wanna be around this [00:33:00] person anymore.

I choose to stop coaching them. I choose to end this friendship. I choose to not be around this relative, cuz ultimately I do have that agency. That's always my choice. Even when we are coaching people, you know, and I had the same conversation with my manager about Kai was like, I don't know if I can coach him.

I dunno if I can coach this person this year. And I came to the decision that I wanted to, We do have that choice particularly as Bipo coaches to say, Yeah, I'm choosing not to. I'm gonna make this choice and deal with the repercussions. And I've never done that and I still could at some point, but I've never done that and I think that is because of the skills that I've built in how to coach someone. And it doesn't mean that at some point I might also realize I don't have the skills or I don't want to be around this kind of belief system, or I'm not the person. One of the dispositions that we talk about in transformational coaching is humility, and sometimes I think that means also [00:34:00] saying I'm humble enough to say I don't have the skills, or perhaps I just don't have the desire to coach this person.

Mm-hmm. . And to accept that about ourselves and to accept our limitations and the boundaries that we may need to put up because we are again, in this process and in development and there may be parts of me that come up at times that are just still too raw and that need, that deserve my attention and I may still need to draw those boundaries.

**Nick:** Absolutely.

**Elena:** I think there's One other idea that I want to bring up when we get these questions, which, I'm gonna repeat it again. Why don't you disrupt racist behavior more immediately and implicit in this question? And sometimes people describe this is like, our kids need something different yesterday.

And change takes so much time in the way you're describing it, all this transformational stuff. It's gonna take so much time. We don't have the time, we don't have the hours to have these conversations like the ones that you're describing. And so [00:35:00] sometimes what I also raise and want people to interrogate are their beliefs about the timeline for change, their beliefs about

how long it will take their beliefs that like this kind of transformation takes so long.

And I want people to challenge that actually to say, really does it, How do you know? How do you know it takes this long? Is it just that you haven't tried these new approaches? What could happen if you tried these new approaches? We have a mindset that change takes a lot of time, that it's gonna take so long.

Oh, that could be true. Or maybe not, or it could be true, but what's the alternative? Or what if it doesn't take that long? What if we can unsettle some of these beliefs and then possibly see them crumble and then help someone build some new beliefs, new behavior, all within a school year? Sometimes I think [00:36:00] people make these kind of statements about it's gonna take so long cuz they haven't seen anything else.

Mm-hmm , that's all they know. That's the data they've seen. I often think through the ladder of inference and even right now I'm thinking of the ladder of inference and the bottom rung is the data that you've experienced. And so when you've only seen that change takes so long, the conclusions that you come to are, it's gonna take so long and therefore my behavior needs to be different.

I've seen people change tremendously in the course of a school year. I've seen people transform. I've seen people within a year or two begin to serve their students in ways I never imagined even so, yeah, I do have some limits to my imagination sometimes. I've seen them transform the way that they teach.

I've been confronted with my own. Um, so I can, I can say like, I really believe people can transform. And then I also have some beliefs that are like, Yeah, maybe, maybe not. And I've seen people transform and I've had to confront my [00:37:00] own, like, Oh, I didn't think she could actually do that, and she did.

And so I just wanna also push people to interrogate those core beliefs about the timeline and how long it'll take.

**Nick:** Yeah. An unsatisfying white dominant culture trait that I have been reading about a lot is a sense of urgency because of our society, our capital society says you need to do everything fast or you're wasting time and not making us money.

Basically, when I read about sense of urgency, I get so many conflicts and I can kind of, I can affirm that it's, I read about it and go, Well, yeah, I want

everything to happen right now. I want that change in that classroom today. I want them to stop doing what they're doing in this very moment.

And with that, I think about, well, at what cost? If I wanna go fast, I go alone. If I wanna just do what I want to do as fast as possible, I'm sacrificing usually a relationship that could be [00:38:00] transformative. I'm usually sacrificing, uh, let's a quick goal. And I can't get to the transformative goal.

I'm getting to a little purpose, like a smaller purpose rather than a big, iterative purpose that I couldn't even dream of a possibility for something smaller. And I'm usually doing this isolated. I'm usually going, This is my opinion, I'm gonna do it. And that's, that ultimately isn't how I even wanna work or function.

So I think about the same thing too. Well, where is this urgency coming from? And it gives me a distinction. Is someone being harmed right now in that classroom? Is this person at the top of their young lungs screaming at someone incessantly? Then there may need to be a stop gap intervention for, because the purpose then is to minimize harm.

Mm-hmm. to people who are not able and don't have the position to defend themselves in that moment. If that's the call I need to make, okay. Yes. I do need to immediately interrupt that moment. [00:39:00] I may need to deescalate an adult. I've had to deescalate myself sometimes that there may be that, but that is different than coaching.

That is, I'm minimizing harm in this moment. And then we might get to the coaching later when everyone is deescalated and we can actually have a conversation. But that's a different situation. Like you're saying. I immediately interrupt when there's immediate harm. Happening and that's a judgment call.

And then I'm coaching when we are both able to opt into that space.

**Elena:** Yeah, Okay, so when immediate harm's happening and you said, and that's a judgment call and that's what's really hard. That's the big gray zone. Cuz you could be observing a classroom and you're like, there are so much harm happening here.

There's so much harm. And if you intervened in that moment, it would rupture the coaching relationship. Right. I mean I have observed so many teachers where I'm like, there's so much harm happening right here. I'm witnessing it, I'm watching the children like crumble into themselves and I can't [00:40:00] interrupt.

Mm-hmm. . And there have been a handful of times where I have seen a teacher screaming at a student where I've heard a teacher using language with a student that is, you would never use. Right. And those are the times where I have said something like, Why don't you step out for a moment?

I can be here with your kids. Go get some water, take some deep breaths, and I've shifted, um, and that's been received well, or afterwards I've been confrontational in the sense that I write about it and said, This is the language I heard you use with your students today.

Are you willing to unpack that? Now? Are you able to explore that? But we're talking about servicing and naming and collecting the data and being able to use that , it's not me telling you you are racist. It's me raising all these data points and saying, Where do these beliefs come from?

These beliefs are aligned with and reflected of the ideology of white supremacy. Is that who you wanna be? Let's unpack this. Mm-hmm. It's funny, I'm having the performance anxiety again. Cause [00:41:00] I'm like, are we going around and around? Is this clear for people?

Are we making our points? Is this linear enough for people to follow? But what I want to bring back to, to start closing on is this idea again that I think so much of what we've both been talking about are the skills that we've built as well as the attention we've given to ourselves and the self-awareness and the, ability to recognize what's coming up for us to reach out and get support and get help.

And then coming back to the knowledge and skill we've built. And when I hear people ask this question of why don't you disrupt racist behavior more immediately. Part of what I tell myself right away is I hear that they want to, they want strategies, they want skills.

They do want to create the kind of schools and communities in which children will thrive. So I need to hear that willingness and I need to know that that's there when I respond to this. And I need to not [00:42:00] respond in a defensive way also. And I need to acknowledge that. Like this is someone saying, I want to do this.

Can you help give me some direction for how I can do this more effectively? And I think what you and I have shared, Some of our own journey, and I know that in our workshops you share more about who you are and how you do the work you do, and how you use the strategies that I write about and offer in my books, in my work and you demonstrate. You show this is how you do it. Um,

and then we give people a chance to practice elements and give them the tools so that they can try it out for themselves. Which again is often what I just come back to is like, people want to do this work. They have the will to dismantle racism, and they need the skills, they need to know how, they need the practice opportunities.

It's not just about reading. It's not just about thinking or talking about it, it's about practicing

**Nick:** and

**Elena:** it's about doing the internal work.

**Nick:** Absolutely.[00:43:00]

**Elena:** Okay. I think that we're gonna have to wrap up but Nick, thank you so much for being a part of this conversation.

**Nick:** Yeah, this is wonderful. Thank you for asking me

**Elena:** and for all of our listeners who want to learn more, Nick is often a co-facilitator of our Coaching for Equity workshops, and that is a place to learn more with Nick and from Nick as well as from our other presenters who also, do an incredible job sharing themselves and their skills and teaching people how to have these coaching conversations.