

Healing steps for leaders of color serving in white spaces:

How to retreat, release, reintegrate, and invite

Retreat

Retreat is taking an intentional pause, a posture in which we distance ourselves from what is bringing heaviness.

Stories

Here are some ideas to engage with stories that mirror your own cultural background and elevate its beauty and assets.

- Watch a movie.
- Pick up an autobiography.
- Watch a documentary.

Breaking Bread

Meals that are shared with others remind us that at that table, we share in filling our basic needs of nourishment and connection.

- Pick a recipe you have always wanted to make and take your time making it.
- Invite friends to share a meal.

Spiritual Disciplines

- Prayer of Examen.
- Centering practices or contemplative prayer.
- Engage in worship through song.
- Practice Sabbath by stepping away from work.
- Invite people to be a part of a discernment circle with you.

Travel

- Take a day trip with friends.
- Visit a neighboring city and learn its history.
- If possible, take a trip abroad.
- Visit a local spiritual retreat center.

Release

Naming our experience—the exhaustion, the pent-up frustration, the hurt—helps us release it.

Communicate

- Call a trusted friend.
- Text a friend or group of friends, inviting them into the moment and asking for prayer.
- Journal.

Laughter

Laughter is a reminder that death and darkness do not have the last word. Laughter has the power to pierce through the webs of lies and cuffs that keep us enslaved.

- Research local comedy clubs and attend.
- Meet up to share a meal with a friend that you can laugh with.
- Pick up a comedian's book.
- Listen to podcasts that have a comedic flare.

Artistic Expression

- Join a paint night.
- Find open-mic opportunities.
- Write your own stand up comedy.
- Write poetry.

Movement

Moving your body through exercise can help defuse some of the tension, and sometimes you may need to physically move away from a situation for a while.

Here are ideas to move:

- Take a walk, hike, or run.
- Enroll at a local dance studio and learn a new kind of dancing.
- Take a local martial arts course.
- Enroll in a workout class at your local gym.

Reintegrate

The work that we do cannot be accomplished alone. So, when the reintegration is appropriate, I always enter with a clear why and how.

Having a couple of phrases that capture your “why” keep the purpose and direction of the work in constant alignment as you engage in your daily rhythms.

Take a moment to reflect on why you do what you do:

These could be statements, a bullet list, scripture verses, stories, mantras, etc.

Values and Commitments

What are the values and commitments you want to abide by in your cross-cultural work and relationships?

Who can you invite to help you delineate these?

Boundaries

Think of a current invitation or situation in which you need to make a decision about your involvement. How might the values and commitments listed above directly inform your decision?

Invite

No one can appreciate or understand the topography of who we are without an invitation. So as leaders, we invite.

List the names of people you would like to invite to get a glimpse into your reality:

Ways to invite others:

- Share meals at a restaurant or cook something together. Explain a cultural food or meal tradition that is meaningful to you.
- Watch movies that highlight your experience.
- Listen together to music that you love, or share a link to a song or short video that connects with your cultural reality.
- Attend a local event that you enjoy.
- Share a podcast that you find helpful or energizing.