

MEYER MEMORIAL TRUST'S EQUITY STATEMENT

NESS RESPONSE AND BEGINNING CONVERSATION IS IN BLUE)

Equity + Inclusion

Our goal is to make equity as much a part of our everyday operations as it is a part of Meyer Memorial Trust's mission: *To contribute to a flourishing and equitable Oregon*. We believe that if we really want a flourishing Oregon, we can't get there without equity.

NESS Adult Day Service follows the [*Eden Alternative*](#) model. Similar to Meyer's *flourishing and equitable Oregon*, our relationships to each other and our community is "based on a holistic understanding of human needs and capacities." We believe we can't get there without caring about our own health and well-being, first, and then caring for the health and well-being of all others.

Sounds great, but what does it mean and how do we do it?

Answering that has been one of the most difficult things we've taken on. "Equity" is just a word, but the full meaning of what it implies is a way of thinking and acting that's different from business as usual. To understand the forces that cause disparities in our society, there is history to unravel and a need for us to take a thoughtful look at how race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, [gender identity](#), sexual orientation, class, disability status, geography, age and other forms of bias and oppression are embedded within the institutions and systems in our community, within Meyer Trust, and within ourselves.

NESS is learning from scientific studies that *bias and oppression are embedded within us*: We are born with the brain's primitive amygdala fight, flight, or freeze instinct. We are reactive by nature, defending ourselves against suspected danger. These are inherent tribal instincts that cause us to be biased and oppressing.

Future more, our institutions and educational systems as we have known them, use "punishment or reward" as means to control human behaviors. "...coercion---the use of aversive behavior in an attempt to terminate someone else's aversive behavior---is the fundamental process driving human behaviors. There is no shortage of types of conflicts and coercions: wars, genocide, murder, harassment, bullying, cheating, discriminatory behaviors...the list goes on." p. 196 (Biglan, 2015)

As Meyer notes, money, power and privilege can create *unspoken advantages for some*.

That means recognizing how privilege works as the flip side of bias and oppression, creating unspoken advantages for some communities over others. For us as a foundation, it also means grappling with our identity in a field born out of wealth and power. Ultimately, it means applying our learning as individuals and as an organization to make meaningful change in how we operate at the Meyer Memorial Trust.

We know this will be a continuing journey. In 2012, we revised our mission and values statement to reflect our understanding of equity as a matter of fair access to opportunities. Our thinking continues to evolve. Five years later, as we deepen our commitment to a flourishing and

equitable Oregon, we have refined our working definition of equity to mean *the existence of conditions where all people can reach their full potential*.

In alignment with Meyer, NESS is committed to Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion by creating *conditions where all people can reach their full potential*. We begin by accomplishing the following:

1. Describe how to design and create Enabling spaces that make equity possible; spaces include our homes, organizations, in- and outdoor environments, communities.
2. Incorporate these notions into our Pre-design (above)
3. Define ideal interactions with others that fosters personal growth by creating Rules of Engagement and Modeling Behaviors.

Using that as a guidepost, we see our role as working to dismantle barriers to equity and improve community conditions so all Oregonians can experience safety, health and prosperity. We will do our best to share the power and resources that come with being part of Meyer. And we pledge to do our best to track outcomes experienced in communities hit hard by bias and oppression.

A truly flourishing and equitable Oregon will take all of our collective knowledge and commitment.

As we redouble our effort to make this mission a reality, we expect it will be uncomfortable at times. We do not have all the answers. We will make mistakes. This work is worth it. Our shared future is at stake.

NESS Reflects: Agreement with Meyer Memorial Trust's Equity Statement on the uncomfortable nature of learning to treat each other differently, not having or knowing all the answers, knowing we'll make mistakes, and the future of the universe is at stake.