

## The Diversely Me Foundation White Paper

### Abstract

#### **The Diversely Geek and Diversely Me Foundation Research Study Model proposes & strives to answer the following question:**

Can our Fandom Passions become a Transformative medium for physical, spiritual, and mental wellness? And can they help us not only identify, but also inspire us to invest in and improve our self-identity, self-worth and self-image, guiding us on a journey to achieve self-awareness and self-actualization? Can we establish positive self-identity and self-acceptance by engaging in positive, supportive, cathartic fandoms and hobbies that have transmutative properties? When we participate, and engage in physical, mental activity and social and communal hobbies, and past times, does that help us improve and empower us to pursue mental wellness, self-care, and healthy human connections.

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August 2, 2021



## The White Paper

The key to grassroots applications for any small non-profit organization trying to show the value of something as something as out of the box in improving social, communal, and mental wellness is to hold on to the belief in its TRUTH! The beauty and pure state of connection is in the terminology itself: it's sowing the seeds of self-care, human exchange, health connection, positivity, inclusion, and diversity through our innate belief that being a Geek is actually the essential, missing code or pretext to understanding how truly critical it is to connect to our own potential and action potential by engaging in positive healing fandoms and hobbies. That is precisely what **Diversely Geek (DG)** and **The Diversely Me Foundation (DM)** encapsulate and focus on as the credible untapped source for establishing positive self-identity, self-acceptance, self-awareness and the building blocks for healthy connections at a stage in a fan's life where the joy of it all, to grow and flourish into an infrastructure for positive self and inclusion.

Public perception of these fans has been toxic, belittling, and bullying, over multiple generations and has caused them to withdraw or internalize, dissociate from society & themselves. Therefore, the first step is to break down the barriers that are implied in "labeling" a fan, fan group or organization, in a restrictive or funneled way. Diversely Geek and TDMF supports an ethos, and infrastructure for building a larger, supportive, uplifting community experience for the fan (labeled as geek) One that is accepting, forgiving and transformative.

To show that the "labels", society has applied to being a fan vis a vis "a geek," are not in fact socially or culturally correct or appropriate. In fact, the "geek", or "nerd" who is invested in loving a positive fandom, is actually one who is motivated to participate and excel in science, technology, education, art and math (STEAM), in communal altruism, in projects for positive human exchange. Also, the values of inclusiveness, diversity, caring, and understanding are universal values, most often holistically practiced by fans and within fan communities. In fact, Fans who are supported and encouraged to, "Embrace Their Inner Geek," are more likely to live well rounded, productive lives.

Fans who have identified with the positive characteristics and traits of their favorite fandoms, learning from those characters, can and often do, develop strategies for self-reflection and affirmational behavioral redirection. In essence, what this means is a fan can recollect and apply stratification to these influences, lessons, and messages in a way that the brain acknowledges their significance and can recall them as a usable form of coping, when applied in an emotional situation. One might recall "Uncle Iroh" from "Avatar the Last Airbender," a Nickelodeon cartoon, singing "Leaves form the Vine," as he remembers his fallen son, laying flowers at a memorial site. And we would hear

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the soft bellow of his horn instrument, his voice crack, recall the leaves gently rustling as the wind blows through them, and we may connect to his grief, and connect that grief to our own.

The Diversely Geek research team created this very paradigmic philosophy and theory seven years ago after trauma and loss spurred the now CEO and Co-Founder. Ms. Mulchan had lost a beloved brother to the deep darkness of mental illness and the ravages and toll it took on his body, soul, and spirit. And within months the US shook as school shootings took dozens of innocent lives. She felt a calling and a deep determination to make something change. At least one thing that could save even one life and prevent the suffering of another being lost to the grip of mental illness, abuse and poverty.

This theory and the structures were developed as a direct result of that determination, and the need to develop a new way to teach fans and folks how to find their own worth. While theory teaches us that we concretize identity and belief pre-puberty, we knew that a human being can reflectively analyze and adjust self and other belief systems and shed old tendencies and predispositions of self-worth. With that in mind, we knew that to capture the key moments when a child/person might lean towards self and other harm, was the critical impetus. And because of lived experience we focused on, persons of color, marginalized at risk communities, whose living experience was one of trauma, abuse, violence, or neglect. The fans who were most likely to lose their sense of identity, purpose, value and worth, putting them at higher risk and probability to either perpetuate the same types of violence, and abuse or to die because of it. The resounding question was, "What had helped us survive as persons of color, immigrants, living with mood instability and having unstable upbringings?"

As the theory was built out, it became very apparent that the sure fit for applying the programs that were being created, would be a convergence across school systems. However, the theorist and research team realized quickly that the key or modus for actualization was to address the "Geek Nation" as a whole. And with a large percentage of peoples across the globe connecting to their "fandom passions," it only makes sense to look at risk communities from broader different points of view. We all are children and in stages of learning, therefore, at any stage in our life, we can adapt and connect to these principles. And the methods the team has developed to review, analyze, and prepare a realistic, experience centered plan for self-care and positive self-identity can be applied in anyone's life, and taught not just in schools, but also in any risk centric community. The method is adaptable and applicable simply because it is being created by the person who is using the tools.

The self-care reflection model, "**Self-care for Your Inner Geek**," can serve as a conduit to inspire individuals, aka fans, to pursue self-awareness, self-belief and healthy connections. As they connect to the self-value wheel, the fan uses a screening tool, called navigating the C's, courage, connection, and compassion. This self-screening method encourages the fan to externalize and harness their strengths and translate that into "courage. This toll acts as in a manner of speaking like crochet needles, pulling together the wayward pieces of the persons self-confidence.

Much like Zuko in Avatar the Last Airbender, or Sam Wilson, the Falcon does when he questions picking up the mantle of Captain America, we go through a metamorphosis of personal identity belief when we have Courage, Self-Compassion and Connection to our own inner powers. That's why the screening tool is called "**Navigating the "C's"**" because we are very aware how hard it really is to believe in our own power to excel, to have the courage to know what is right for us and not. It's a thing of beauty when we invest in our own self-compassion and forgive the missteps as we learn and try, and then stimulate the mechanisms of the nervous system that motivate us to connect to our potential, our dreams, and possibilities.

Based on research we have performed, many of the issues regarding fandom and its hierarchy internally and externally stem from the need to express oneself and that allowing "others" in, would possibly mutate or tarnish the idea of what they have viewed their fandom to be. This in turn comes from a perceived objectification of being a so-called "nerd or geek." When a person is armed with tools that are customizable, personal, intuitive and empathetic they can step forward, and be stewards for their own self-care plan, and begin to seek out community, healthy, healing connections, yet remain unique to themselves. Including having a fun, joyful the love for those positive fandoms that laid the foundations of support and infrastructures for growth, change mentality and human exchange.

We can say for certain, because of our own experiences and those shared with us as we progressed in research, that having a healthy inspiring fandom is a credible source of support and connection. Often, a resource that we remember or tap into when we are worried or stressed is connected to a learned memory. The visual, auditory, sensory, tactile experience we receive when we watch a show, read a book, play an RPG game, play Dungeon's & Dragons, go canoeing, kayaking, mold pottery, or knit are channels for stabilizing mood and focus.

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The researchers are the living example of how healthy fandom connection and community can inspire supportive infrastructures. The researchers and founders of this model, met at **The Wizarding World of Harry Potter** in 2014 as we waited for Diagon Alley to open and have been steadfast friends since. Every member of the team is a self-aware Geek and wears the flag proudly. Their favorite past times are movie outings, visits to Disney, anything Star Wars, playing board games, and cosplay. Every single moment of those shared experiences triggers positive emotion, connection, joy, satisfaction, sensory inputs that stimulate healthy neurochemical pathways.

When we remember those fun, joyous moments, and shared experiences, that becomes a positive sensory input, and then a positive thought process input is also received. That input of thoughts, create, or trigger a reflection or flow of “good” thoughts, that activates memory and emotion. This is called the limbic system, the part of the brain, that regulates and directs our senses to stimulate action and action potentials. It then stands to reason that inputting a continuum of positive, light, motivational, supportive stimuli will lead to healthy constructive, innovative, and even inspired thought, then potentiate healthy action.

The DG model and the DM Foundation are working on building simple step wise workbooks that help guide the fan In a moment of stress, worry, grief, loss, disconnection, sorrow fear or trauma. Tools that can guide us in choosing self-supportive thoughts and actions, to lay a blanket of mentally sound and healthful thought that manifest in healthy decisions. We learn how to reflect on and remember those fandoms that helped us find balance and taught us behaviors, actions, reflections, and emotional responses that could lead to safety and hope. Fandoms that have left positive impressions on the psyche can become a roadmap for traversing otherwise dimly light pathways. And can be guideposts to avoid thoughts, choices, actions, that deter us rather than motivate.

Positive Fandom influence can act as sources of inquiry and motivate us to self-reflect, to process change and challenges, lessons, successes, and sacrifices. And if we are better adapted, adaptable, emotionally grounded and self-aware, we are better able to resolve conflict. Which leads to a better sense of self or self-awareness, or self-acceptance. This in turn would begin to pull away, or re-define the so-called, “fears,” that an individual has gathered as a result of negative feedback or pre-conditioning. The connective, collaborative and supportive nature of fandom groups contributes to a feeling of acceptance and belongingness.