The Diversely Me Foundation White Paper

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Abstract

The Diversely Me Foundation White Paper on the Value and Benefit of Engaging in Healthy Fandoms to Establish Positive Self and Identity

White Paper:

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, engage in healthy-healing fandoms, in the form of creative arts, literature, engineering, gaming development, music and entertainment, can we improve physical and mental wellness? Can adding daily self-reflective activities, that adopt the positive messages and world building of our favorite fandoms, promote and support a healthy sense of identity and self-valuation?

The key to grassroots applications is in the terminology itself: it's sowing the seeds of positivity and diversity that The Diversely Me Foundation (DM) encapsulates at a stage in which it has time to grow and flourish. This is prominently so at the public and health care education levels. DM can serve as a conduit in which it can inspire individuals to gain the courage to step forward, and be stewards of a community, connectively, yet remain unique to themselves. Based on research I have performed, many of the issues regarding fandom and its hierarchy internally and externally stem from the fear 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."

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. DM 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 as a whole. 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. When the neurohormonal pathways in the limbic system, which is responsible for emotions and memory, processes input there can be a fear-negative response that triggers negative memory. But when we have a steady flow of positive-healthy, affirming supportive input, those fear or negative pathways can be deflected or redirected to trigger the "firing" of neuronal pathways that create positive thought and physiologic responses.

In essence when I hear the theme to Star Trek or Star Wars begins, as a fan, I can recollect a positive memory, and my limbic system will trigger a flood of positive memories. This type of memory leads to fun, joyful, maybe even emotionally happy, thoughts and we will be more likely to smile or maybe even chuckle. Sound, tone, and sensory input or stimuli wash over the brain and stimulate the flow of special "waveforms." Alpha waves induce rest, calm and a deep state of relaxation and occur in the given moment while we are active. When we are stressed alpha waves tend to disappear. Beta waves are the most prominent and in flow and flux as we think, process and use higher thinking. But if they are released on an overflow then they can actually

stimulate stress and anxiety. Then we have the gamma wave, which is critically important in the formulation of perception from information gathered. So in theory, if we are engaging in higher thinking and adding positive sound, speech, tactile or visual imagery then it stands to reason the input can elicit optimal flow of alpha, beta and gamma waves. Healthier wave flow means a healthier state of mind, a more balanced state of focus, relaxation, calm and even activity.

One might recall "Uncle Iroh" from "Avatar the Last Airbender," a Nickelodeon cartoon, singing "Leaves from the Vine," as he remembers his fallen son, laying flowers at a memorial site. And we would hear the sound of the 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. We might recall the Love Yourself: Answer series by Bangtan Sonyeondan, that took fans on a journey of self-inquiry, discovery and inner reflection of self, to guide fans to find that the first love one has to have is, Self-Love. The Love Myself campaign became a milestone in how truly transformative, and reflexively healing music, lyrics, and speech can become an affirmation engine. Or we may reflect on the words we learn from Mr Spock and the Vulcan culture of Star Trek, "Live Long and Prosper." All of these various pieces of information have the potential to help us stimulate healthy wave patterns, leading us to a more relaxed state, reducing strain and stress.

Having a healthy inspiring fandom is a credible source of support and connection, one that can guide us in choosing mentally sound and healthful decisions; based on behaviors, actions, reflections, and emotional responses experienced through that fandom; fandoms that have left positive impressions on the psyche. 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.

It is also very important to also address the need to adopt models that are culturally sensitive and approachable no matter the gender, age, race or diaspora. In fact, when we look at the impact and imprint that fandom can potentially have on improving self-worth and identity, we have to pay attention to the rising risk for suicide and mental illness amonst and across Asian disasporas and in communities of color. If it was simple to adapt our cultural perspectives and paradigms to accept and support mental health, we would not see the increase in mental illness in Asian and communities of color. Therefore as we proceed in data collection and analysis the reflective model will also work diligently to aggregate data and develop screening tools that are applicable across and within these at risk communities.

In conclusion, as we continue to pursue this philosophy and theory, we will also continue to support an ethos that promotes mental wellness, self-care, self-value and self-acceptance by engaging in healthy-healing fandoms. We have developed a three tier self-care workbook system using the Abraham Maslow model for self-actualization to achieve a healthy holistic state of being, as well as using a self-reflective model. We show fans step by step, one stage of self-care and self-acceptance at a time, how to adopt and apply their favorite fandoms and healing hobbies into daily screening and worksheets that helps the fan establish and pursue positive-healthy self-identity.