

# DOMUS KIDS

## CORE COMPETENCY KEY DEFINITIONS

### Anti-Racism and Equity:

At Domus' core is our steadfast belief that loving relationships change people. For decades Domus combatted inequities, as evidenced by our past work with youth in group homes, schools, and the community, many of whom were overlooked, marginalized, and underserved. This meaningful and impactful work provided opportunities for youth from diverse backgrounds to thrive. Even so, we must acknowledge that these programs *alone* were not enough to address the systemic inequities present in our society. To be true to our mission to change lives in a meaningful way, we must provide services that equip young people with skills to navigate "the system." We must address systems of inequality and inequity that oppress, restrain and perversely alter the paths of our youth. For each young person who moves steadily towards self-sufficiency, our Domus community rejoices.

**Diversity** – is the practice of including or involving people and points of views from a wide range of backgrounds and perspectives. This includes race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, (dis)ability, age, religious commitment, and/or political perspective.

**Equity** – is promoting impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems based on what is needed by the individual or group. This means that different people are provided with different resources and/or opportunities based on their needs. This does NOT mean giving everyone the same thing (equality). Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of disparities within our society, of which systemic racism is one of the most significant.



**Inclusion**-Inclusion means that people across varying identities are and feel valued, welcomed, respected, included, represented, and heard and that they fully belong, can be authentic, can contribute to the collective, and have a voice.

**The Cycle of Socialization** – attempts to give us a model of how to understand where our beliefs and values come from as well as how our life experiences shape our beliefs about other people. Many of these messages are subtle and deeply ingrained within us. While the Cycle of Socialization helps us to understand what has helped to shape us, it also says that we do not have to be solely defined by our upbringing and experiences, we also have choice as to how we allow these messages to continue to impact our lives.

## **Fidelity to the Program Model:**

*See appropriate program model*

1. What is the main program goal?
2. Who is our target population?
3. What are the services we provide? At what dosage?
4. What are the outcomes that we are hoping our youth achieve?

## **Implementing Love:**

### **Why does Domus use Love as a core framework of the Domus Relational Model?**

There is robust scientific research in the fields of physiology, neurology, biology, chemistry, and psychiatry that reveal the scientific underpinnings of the healing power of love. Our physiology is built for and thrives on love. Research shows that during attuned, caring interactions, our brains, oxytocin (the hormone that circulates throughout our brain and body), and our vagus nerve (the tenth cranial nerve that runs from our brain stem down to our heart, lungs, and other internal organs) work together, to create a virtuous cycle of resilience, wisdom, and health. Furthermore, love, manifested through attuned interactions, where we have a sense of “I feel you, feeling me,” plays an essential role in healing, connection, and growth.

Love is embedded in the Domus Relational Model. All Domus staff routinely engage youth in loving interactions. Specifically, loving interactions are those where adults “attune” with the youth -- the youth knows they are cared about and they feel “seen,” “heard” or “felt.” This attunement creates a positive emotional experience for the youth that supports resilience, wisdom and health.

### **What is it?**

Love is defined in the Domus Relational Model as micro moments of shared positive resonance (a.k.a. human connection). It is interpersonal attunement with others (I feel you feeling me) in a safe context of mutual care. Love is the “secret sauce” of the Domus intervention. It is the animating force behind Domus’ success with disengaged and disconnected youth.

## **Positive Youth Development:**

### **What is it?**

Positive youth development is an intentional approach that engages youth in a way that focuses on their strengths and provides them with opportunities to build positive relationships and build their leadership skills. Positive youth development is a view that sees youth as full of potential rather than overwhelmed by problems that need to be solved. It also promotes the idea that adults can make significant and positive differences in young people’s lives. PYD strategies focus on enhancing the positive qualities adolescents already possess.

### **What framework does Domus use and why?**

Domus uses the “Circle of Courage” positive youth development framework. This framework integrates the wisdom of Indigenous Native philosophies of child rearing with research in resilience science and positive youth development.

There are many frameworks of positive youth development. Domus has chosen to use The Circle of Courage framework of positive youth development because anthropologists have long known that Indigenous people reared courageous, respectful children without using harsh coercive controls.

Nevertheless, Europeans colonizing North America tried to “civilize” indigenous children in punitive boarding schools, unaware that Indigenous people possessed a sophisticated philosophy that treated children with deep respect. These traditional Indigenous values were later appropriated and validated by contemporary child research and introduced as a newly invented concept of positive youth development. Domus recognizes that this philosophy was created by Indigenous people, and we recognize and honor this by using their model as our framework.

The Circle of Courage positive youth development framework is based on the principle that children have four universal growth needs: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity, and that when these needs are met, children can flourish.

**Belonging**--sense of connection with someone else and something else, a place where you feel safe and welcome

**Generosity**—opportunity to help other people, understand value of helping others and their role in it

**Independence**—allowed to make decisions and understand how these decisions impact their future

**Mastery**—multiple opportunities to learn and get good at new skills, understand they are competent.

## **Thoughts, Emotions, and Behaviors:**

### **What is it?**

TEB, which stands for Thoughts, Emotions and Behaviors, is a skills-based approach rooted in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The connection between our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors impacts our decisions, moods, and interactions with ourselves and with others. Practicing TEB skills helps us learn strategies to break free of negative cycles and unhelpful thoughts, encouraging emotion regulation, flexible thinking and improved decision making. We then in turn teach and model for our youth how to practice these skills independently.

### **What framework does Domus use?**

The framework that Domus uses is twofold, developed by Dr. Luana Marques and the Community Psychiatry Program for Research in Implementation and Dissemination of Evidence-based (PRIDE) Treatments, which she created in partnership with Harvard and Massachusetts General Hospital. The first part of the framework is the TEB coaching model. This coaching occurs during a 30-week course that teaches staff the 5 core concepts and skills of TEB. The second piece is the TEB curriculum, supplied to each staff who are coached in TEB. This curriculum can be used in practice by utilizing the strategies, activities, handouts, and evidence-based methods illustrated in the manual.

**Charge Up** – is a skill that teaches a person that you can help build energy by practicing small, manageable activities. This skill involves purposefully scheduling, completing, and tracking activities that, over time, lead to positive thoughts and emotions.

**Face Fears** –is a skill that people can use to break negative TEB cycles of fear and avoidance. It works by teaching people to replace avoidance behavior with something called *approach behavior*. Instead of escaping from situations that cause fear and anxiety, people learn to move toward these situations and embrace them.

**Observe the TEB Cycle** –is a skill that teaches a person that you can create a pause in a situation by noticing what you are saying to yourself, feeling in your body, and doing. Observe the TEB Cycle helps you find your pause button instead of reacting right away to a situation – it lets you choose how to respond.

**Solve Problems** –is a skill that teaches a person a series of steps to proactively cope with problems. It helps people to think creatively and flexibly about different ways to address challenges in their lives.

**Explore Thoughts** –is a skill that teaches people to rethink negative thoughts (e.g.,

“I think I *can't*”) in daily life. Explore Thoughts also teaches us to generate alternative thoughts that are more accurate and helpful in daily life.

## **Trauma Responsive:**

### **What is it?**

Many people talk about trauma informed care, which is integrating an understanding of trauma throughout an organization's programs to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the program. Domus takes this a step further. While knowledge and understanding of trauma are important first steps, they are not enough to help young people fully heal from trauma. In addition to being *informed*, we must be responsive. Being trauma responsive means that we understand trauma and build our culture and programs in a way to respond to that trauma and help young people begin to heal and move forward to a positive future.

### **What framework does Domus use?**

Domus uses the Sanctuary Model. The Sanctuary Model is an organization wide framework for building a culture of trauma responsiveness. Sanctuary promotes safety and healing from adversity (trauma) by building a trauma responsive community. Although there are specific tools and techniques in the Sanctuary model, the core of the model lies in its ability to build a community that understands trauma and is able to respond to trauma to help people move forward.

Some basic tenets of the framework include:

SELF model: stands for **S**afety, **E**motion management, **L**oss and **F**uture. It is a framework for shared language for all staff and allows us to focus on the most important aspects of helping people heal from trauma. SELF is used for debriefing incidents, building individualized goal plans for young people as well as programmatic structure ie. creating agendas and program evaluation.

Community Meetings: Are the cornerstone of our practice using the Sanctuary model.

We ask 3 basic questions:

- How are you feeling?
- What is your goal for today?
- Who will you ask for help?

Community meetings help youth identify their emotions, project themselves into the future, and build emotional competency, and community.

Safety Plan: A tool that serves as a physical reminder of what a person can do when they feel strong emotions. It is a list of simple activities that a person can do in the moment to calm themselves down so that they don't resort to unsafe, or out of control behaviors. The plan includes things a young person can do on their own (such as count backwards from 10, take 3 deep breaths) and things they can do with another person (talk to my family advocate, call my mom).

Importance of self-care: taking care of yourself is an important safeguard against taking on the trauma of others and burning out from the stress of the job. Self-care allows staff members to be their best selves to help young people heal from trauma and thrive.

The 7 commitments of Sanctuary: are intended to provide guidelines for how we agree to relate to and hold each other accountable in creating and maintaining a trauma sensitive [trauma responsive] culture.

