



Fighting for Justice with Humanity: A Trauma-Informed Approach to Practicing Law

PEOPIL & AAJ Women in the Law Conference

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Why this Work Matters to Me



Jamie Beck, J.D. (she/her)

- Founder of Justice avec Humanité (Justice with Humanity)
- 15+ years practicing law and working with trauma survivors
- Trauma-informed educator
- Former nonprofit founder
- Expert witness in cases involving trafficking and trauma



Justice with Humanity

Justice With Humanity is a way of engaging with legal systems that seeks to preserve our own humanity and that of our clients within systems that can unintentionally suppress, diminish, or erase it.



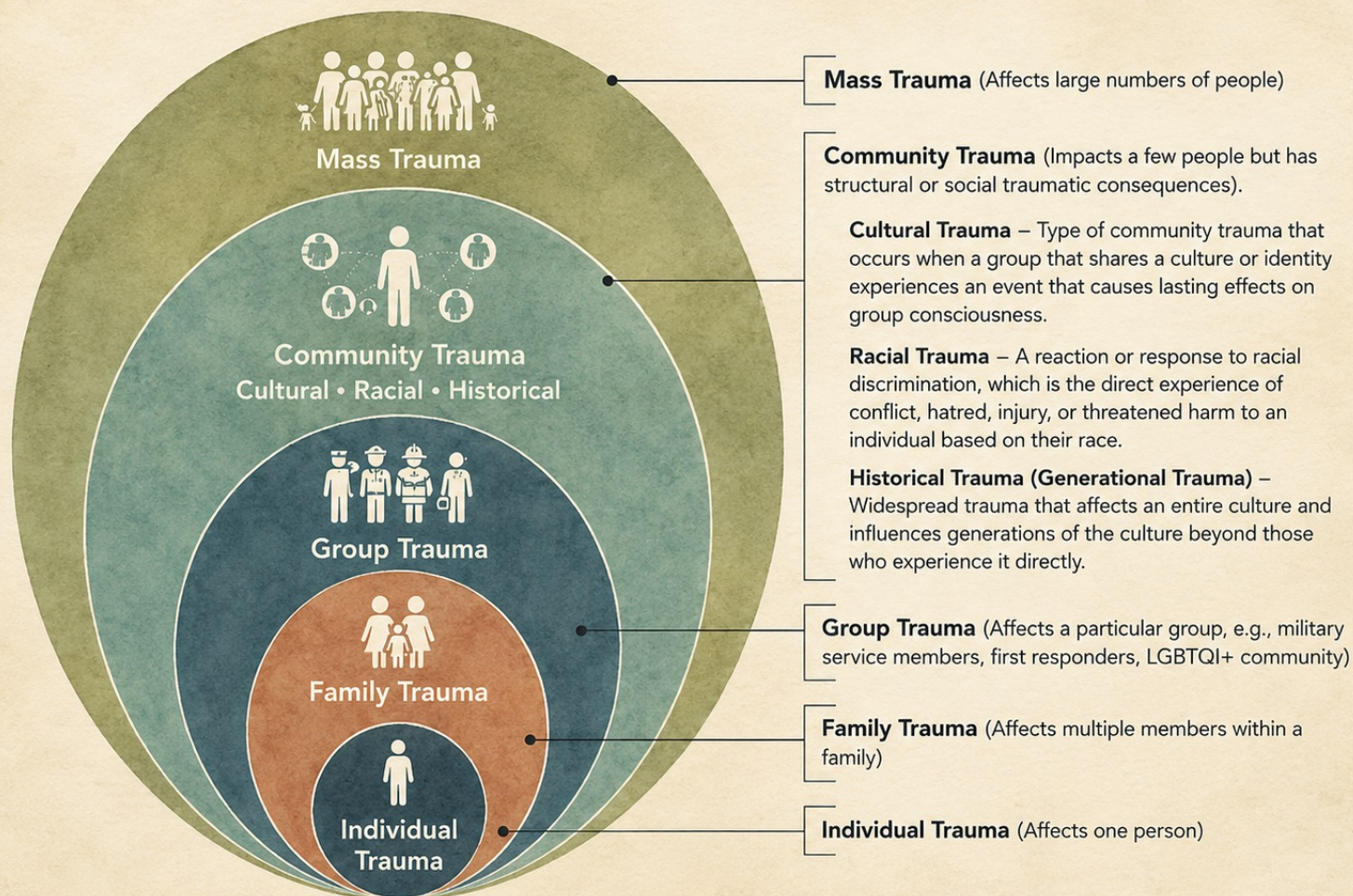
Part I - What is Trauma-Informed Legal Practice?

What is Trauma?



- Extremely negative event(s); deeply distressing or disturbing experience(s) that overwhelm our nervous system and coping skills
- Emotional response(s) to terrible events that include immediate and long-term reactions that can be difficult to resolve
- Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that a person experiences as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening and that may have lasting adverse effects on their functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional or spiritual well-being

Levels of Trauma Experience



A Tension in Legal Practice



Legal training often teaches us to:

- Analyze first
- Detach
- Move quickly
- Prioritize outcomes
- Focus on facts

Trauma-informed legal practice (TILP) asks us to:

- Understand context
- Attend to relationships
- Recognize human impact
- Reduce unnecessary harm
- Remain connected



What is Trauma-Informed Legal Practice?

Trauma-informed legal practice (“TILP”) is a strategic and relational approach to the practice of law grounded in understanding trauma and its impact

What is Trauma-Informed Legal Practice?



TILP integrates:

- Self-awareness
- Relational integrity
- Strategic advocacy
- Systemic awareness

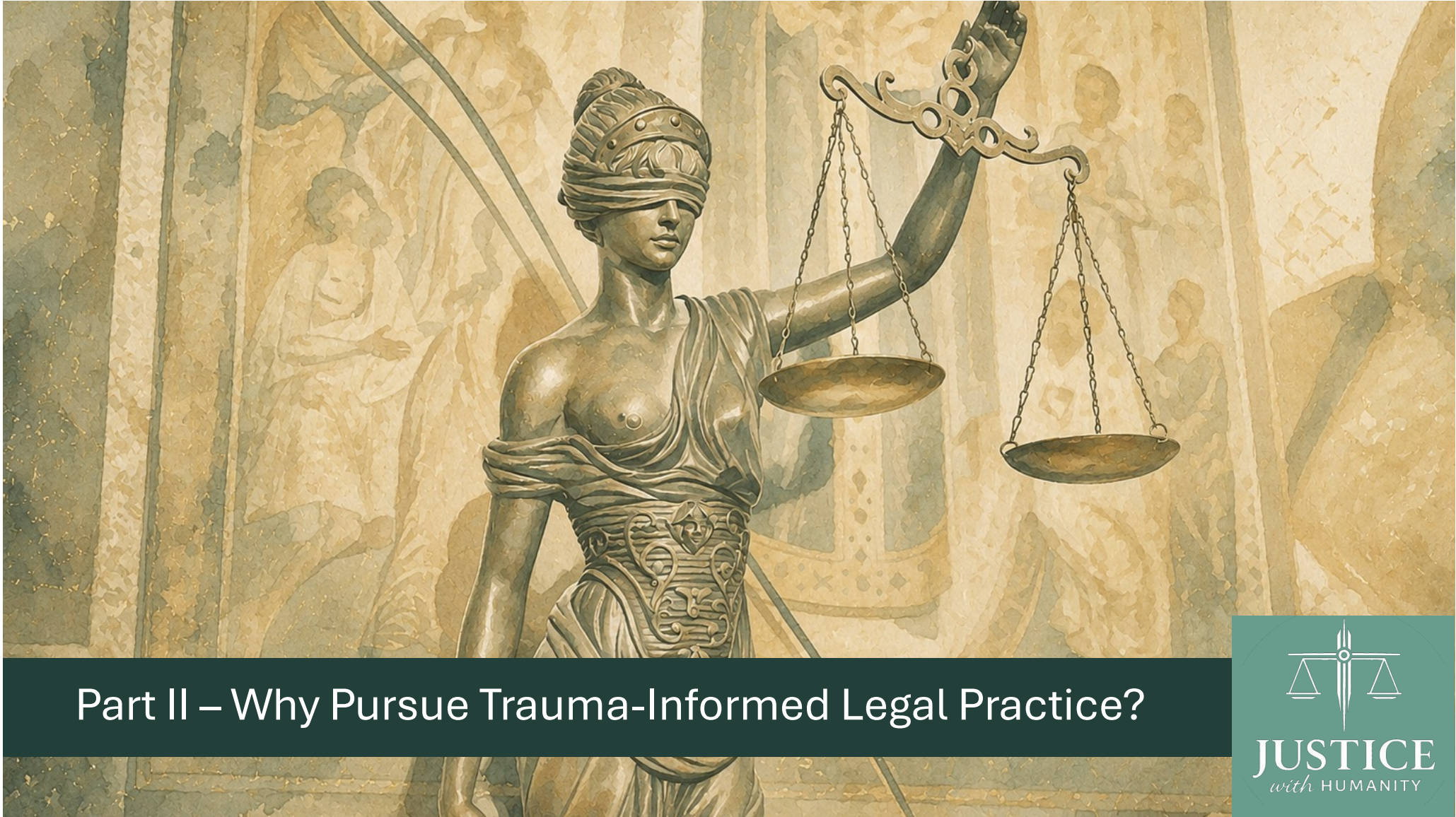


What is Trauma-Informed Legal Practice?



TILR strives to:

- Recognize and understand the impact of trauma
- Prevent, address and repair harms accumulated through the legal process
- Promote dignity, agency, and meaningful participation
- Preserve our Humanity and the humanity of our clients within the legal system



Part II – Why Pursue Trauma-Informed Legal Practice?

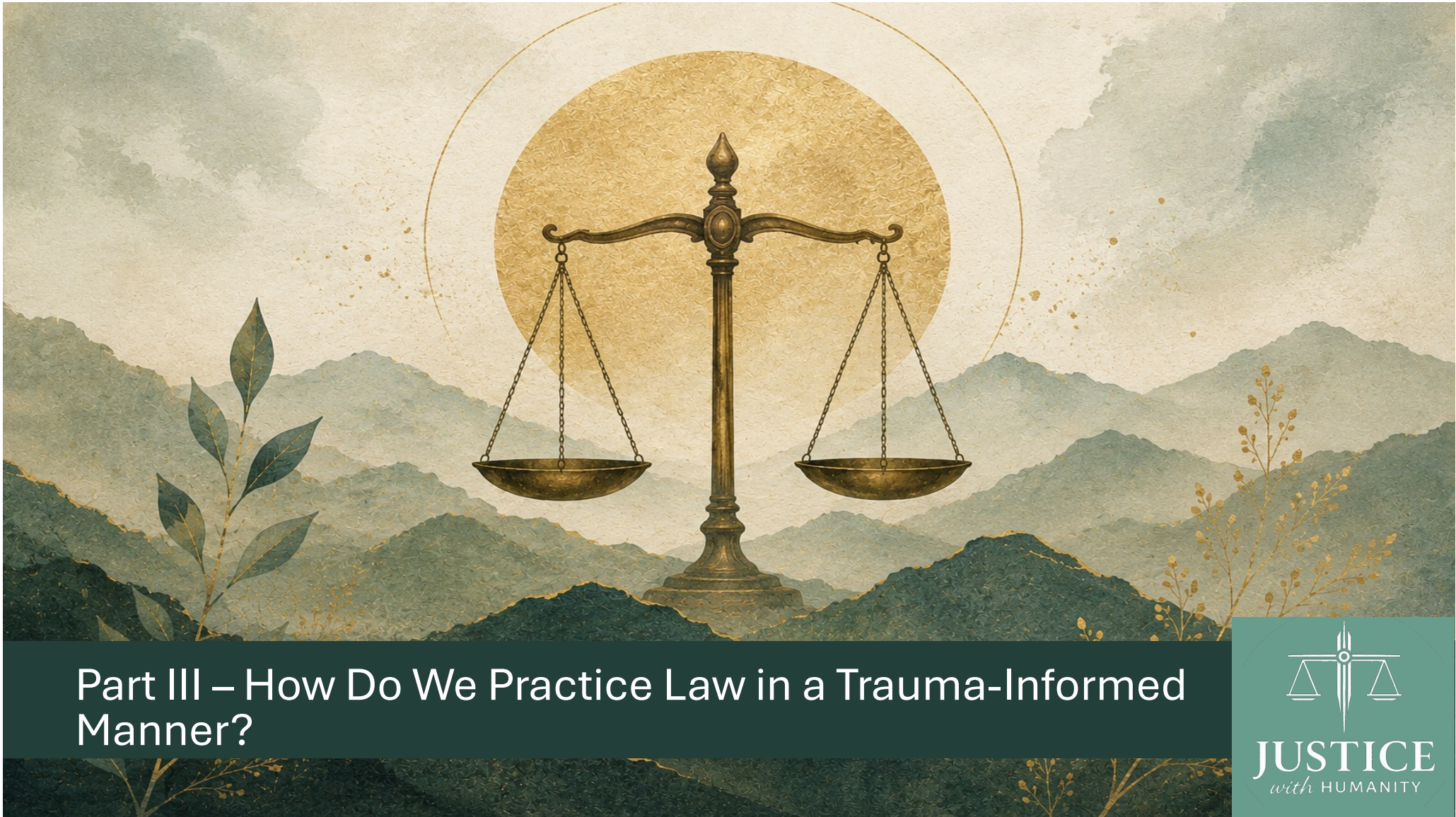


Why Trauma-Informed Legal Practice Matters



Trauma-informed legal practice is not separate from effective advocacy. It strengthens it.

- Strengthens attorney-client relationships
- Improves trust, participation and client engagement
- Supports more effective communication and advocacy
- Leads to better legal experiences and outcomes
- Strengthens justice experiences for everyone involved
- Reduces burnout, increases job satisfaction and lowers staff turnover

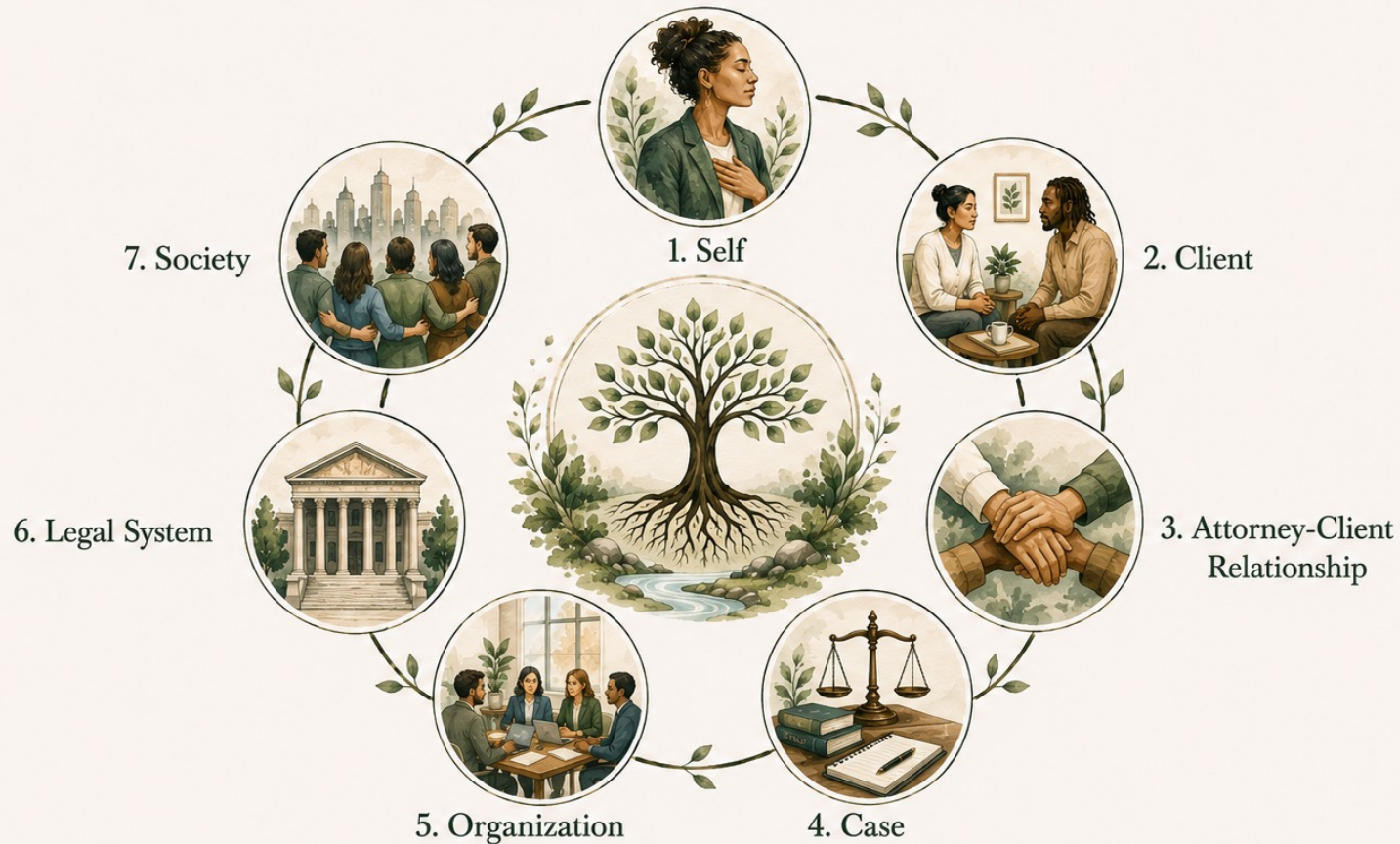


Part III – How Do We Practice Law in a Trauma-Informed Manner?



Trauma-Informed Legal Practice Ecosystem

A strategic and relational approach to the practice of law grounded in understanding trauma and its impact.



1. Self – The Attorney



TILP begins with the Self

Question:

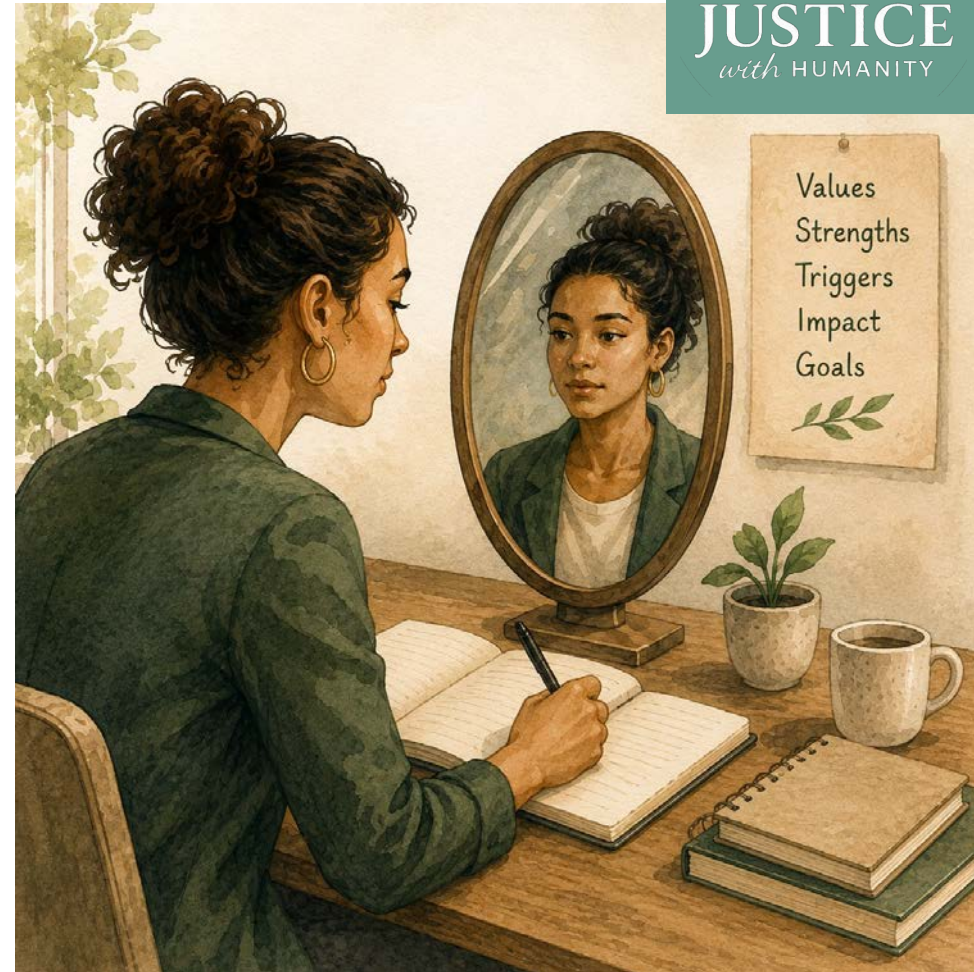
“What am I bringing into this interaction?”

1. The Self - Core Commitments



Core Commitments:

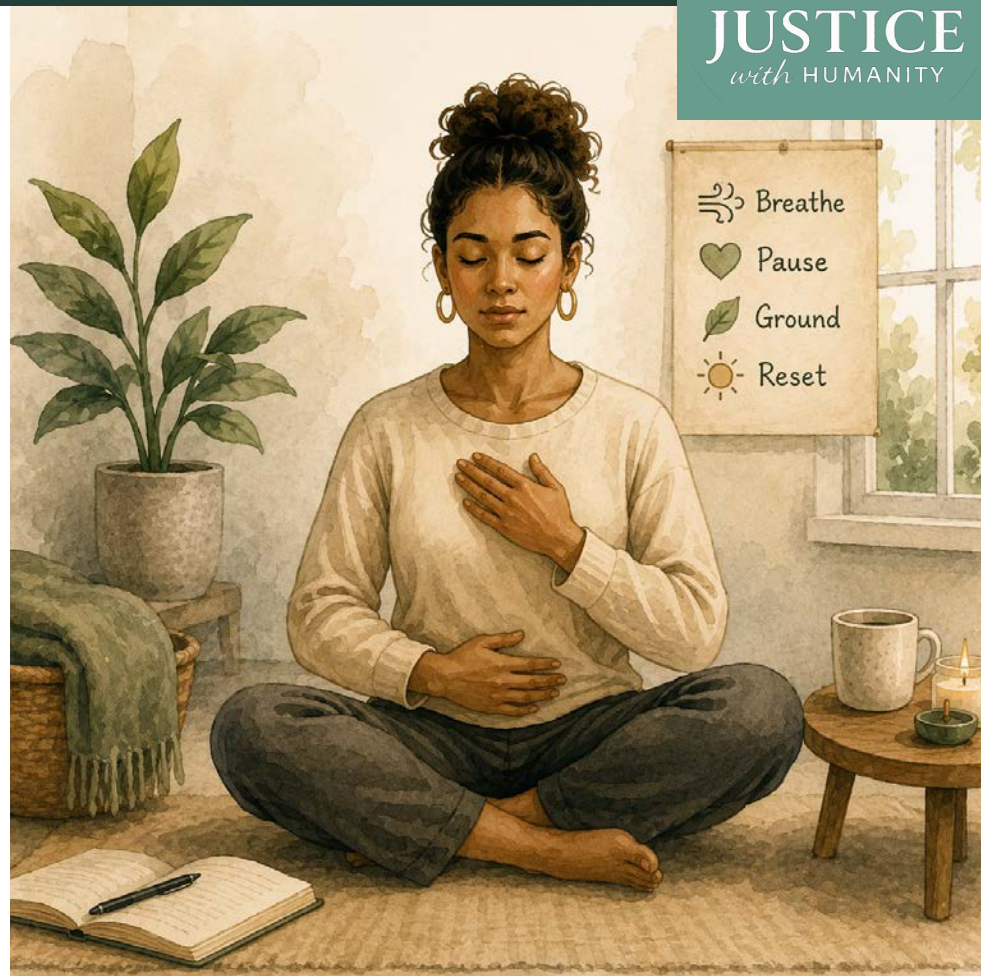
1. Self-awareness and accountability
2. Regulation and emotional practice
3. Integrity and authenticity
4. Continuous growth and reflection



1. The Self - Practice

Practice:

- Regulate your nervous system
- Develop emotional intelligence and relational skills
- Lead with authenticity and integrity
- Recognize bias and assumptions
- Identify and address vicarious trauma
- Maintain consistency and reliability
- Engage in a reflective practice
- Continue to self-educate and evolve



2. The Client



Clients are more than facts, claims, and legal issues

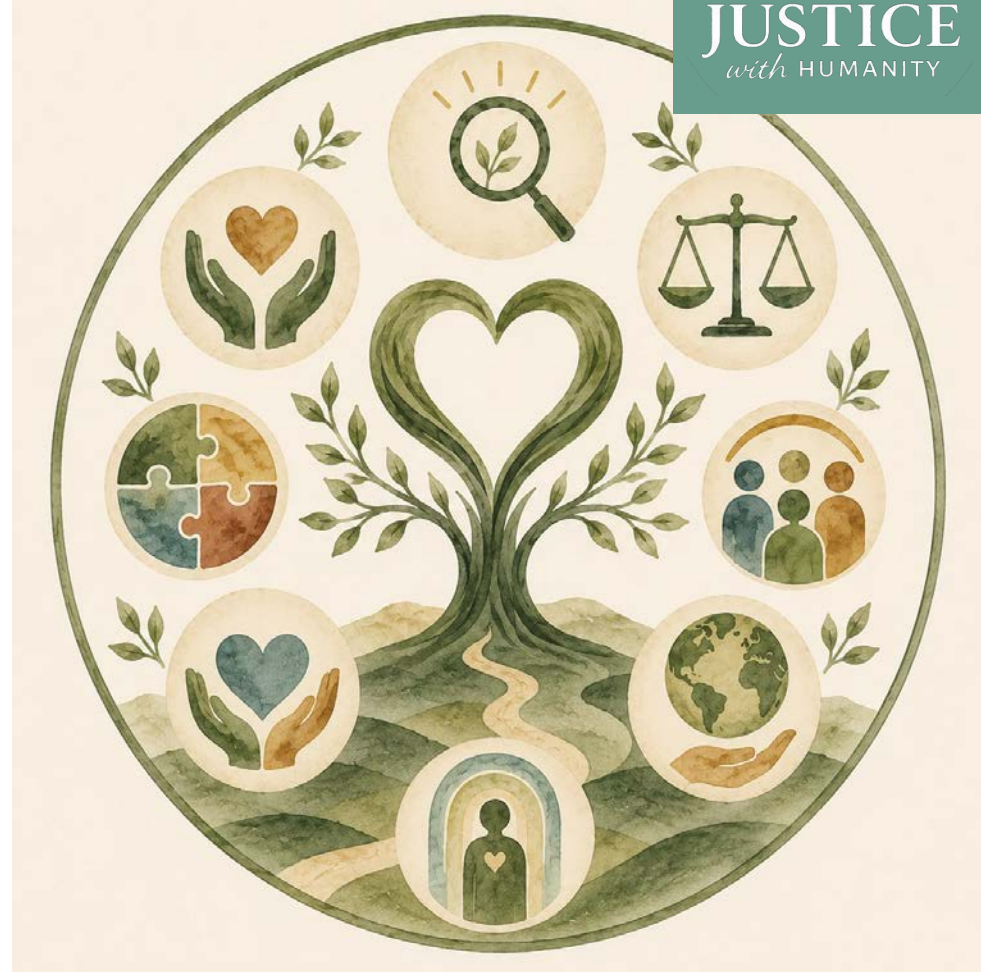
Question:
“Who is this person beyond the facts of the case?”

2. The Client – Core Commitments



Core Commitments:

1. Curiosity and openness
2. Humanity and dignity
3. Cultural humility
4. Non-judgment
5. Compassion
6. Whole-person orientation
7. Honoring complexity



2. The Client - Practice



Practice:

- Understand who they are, where they come from, and what matters to them
- Learn how experiences, trauma, identity, and context have shaped their life
- Understand the client's own vision of justice
- Recognize strengths, resilience, and sources of meaning
- Remain open to complexity and contradiction
- Avoid assumptions and simplistic narratives

3. Attorney-Client Relationship



**Justice is not only an
outcome; it is also an
experience**

Question:
“How do I build an attorney-
client relationship that
supports justice and human
dignity?”

3. Attorney-Client Relationship – Core Commitments



Core Commitments:

1. Safety
2. Trust and transparency
3. Agency and self-determination
4. Collaboration and shared power
5. Consistency and reliability
6. Respect for boundaries
7. Accountability and repair



3. Attorney-Client Relationship – Practice

- Cultivate physical, emotional, and psychological safety
- Build trust through consistency and follow-through
- Maintain transparency and communicate clear expectations
- Create predictability and reduce unnecessary uncertainty
- Support meaningful participation, shared decision-making and informed choice
- Support client agency and self-determination



3. Attorney-Client Relationship – Practice (cont'd)

- Collaborate rather than direct whenever possible
- Support client regulation throughout the legal process
- Respect both the attorney and client boundaries
- Recognize self-protection and avoidance as trauma responses
- Invite and integrate client feedback
- Take accountability for mistakes and engage in repair when ruptures occur



4. The Case



**TILP requires
integrating trauma into
your case strategy**

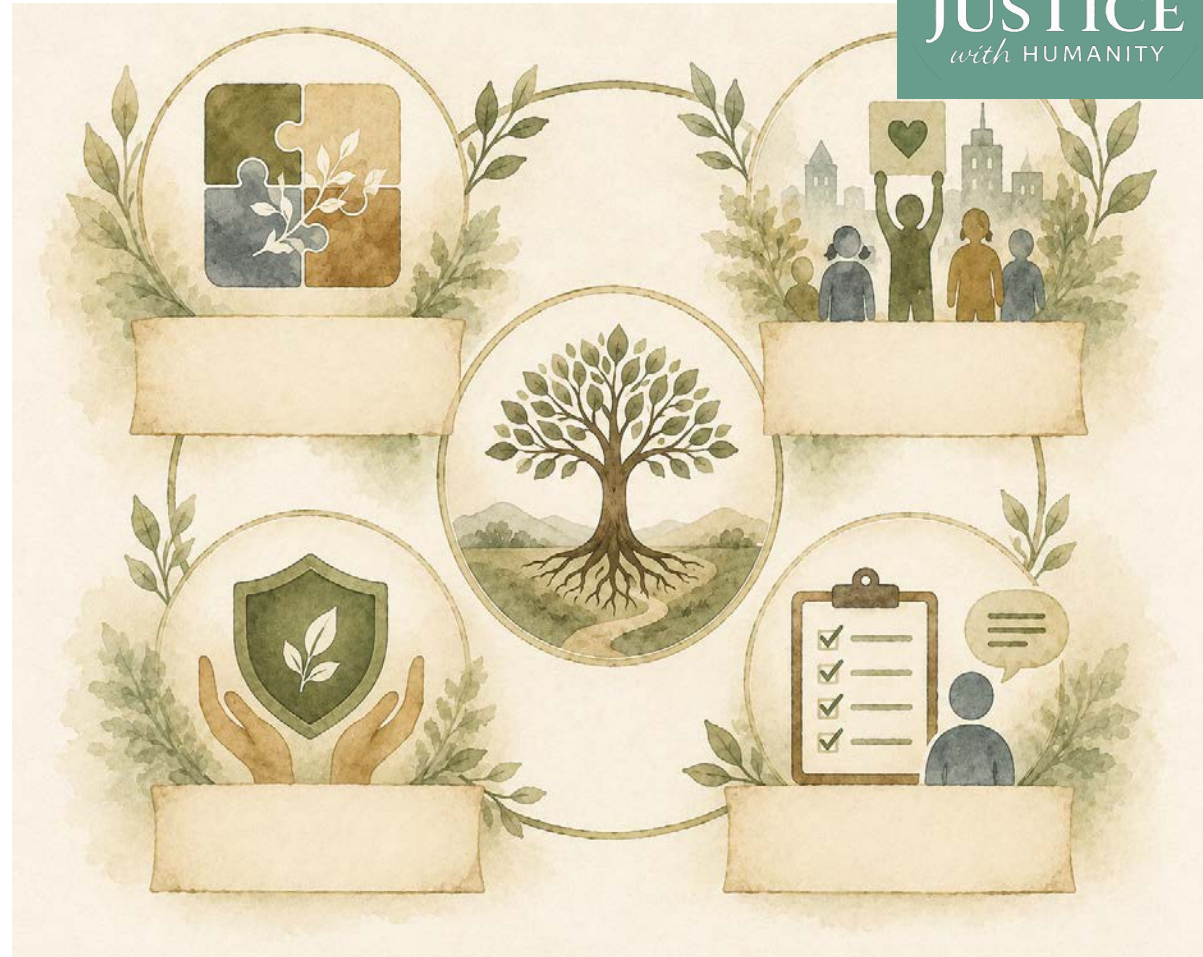
Question:
“How does understanding
trauma strengthen advocacy
in this case?”

4. The Case – Core Commitments



Core Commitments:

1. Strategic integration of trauma
2. Contextualized advocacy
3. Harm prevention and reduction
4. Clarity and client preparation



4. The Case – Practice



- Contextualize case facts through a trauma-informed lens
- Educate judges, juries, opposing parties, and stakeholders about trauma
- Identify and reduce unnecessary sources of harm and re-traumatization
- Prepare clients for legal procedures, environments, and expectations
- Develop strategies that balance legal objectives with client well-being
- Use trauma as corroborating and contextual evidence
- Adapt advocacy strategies based on trauma impacts and client needs

5. Organization



**Where we practice
shapes how we practice**

Question:

“How does the culture and
structure of my workplace
shape the work?”

5. Organization – Core Commitments



Core Commitments:

1. Leadership commitment to TILP
2. Understanding of trauma and its impact on the workplace
3. Psychological safety and mutual support
4. Workforce well-being and sustainable practice
5. Organizational policies and practices that support staff
6. Ongoing trauma-informed education and professional development
7. Organizational accountability and continuous improvement

5. Organization – Practice



Practice:

- Train leaders and supervisors in TILP
- Develop policies and procedures that support staff well-being
- Normalize conversations around mental health and reduce stigma
- Create structures for peer support, consultation, and reflective practice
- Access workplace culture and respond to staff feedback
- Build systems that identify and address burnout, vicarious trauma, and workplace stress
- Align organizational practice with stated values

6. Legal Systems



Cases exist within broader legal systems that shape process and outcomes

Question:

“What legal system(s) shape this case, and how are they shaping the client’s experience?”

6. Legal Systems – Core Commitments



Core Commitments:

1. Awareness of systemic harms
2. Historical awareness
3. Critical reflection
4. Equity and fairness
5. Recognition of power and bias



6. Legal Systems – Practice

- Identify legal and institutional barriers
- Understand stakeholder roles and power dynamics
- Recognize how systems uniquely impact clients
- Incorporate systemic harms into advocacy
- Anticipate institutional responses
- Educate systems when appropriate



7. Society



Cases exist within broader social and cultural contexts

Question:

“What broader contexts and communities shape this case and are shaped by it?”

7. Society – Core Commitments

Core Commitments:

1. Shared humanity
2. Cultural awareness
3. Community responsibility
4. Interconnectedness



7. Society – Practice

- Recognize broader social and cultural contexts surrounding the case
- Understand community and cultural influences shaping client experiences
- Engage interdisciplinary and community partnerships
- Recognize how legal outcomes may affect families, communities, and institutions
- Recognize our shared humanity and interconnectedness



Sustainable Justice: Burnout, Vicarious Trauma & Sustainable Practice for Legal Professionals

Inaugural Cohort – Scan QR for Early Access

Pause. Reflect. Realign.

- Begins July 30, 2026
- Small founding cohort
- Join the priority list for early access and founding pricing



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