



## Episode Transcript

### S1E4: Readiness

**Yvette Trujillo** Hi, everybody, and welcome to The Big View: Ending Poverty in Your Community. My name is Yvette Trujillo, and I am the Chief Integrity Officer at Circles USA. And I am joined, as always, by our Executive Director at Circles USA, Kamatara Johnson. Hey there, Kamatara.

**Kamatara Johnson** Hello, there.

**YT** So we are with Circles USA and at Circles, our mission is building community to end poverty through intentional friendships, personal transformation and systemic change led by the people closest to the challenge. And our vision for the future that we want to be living into is all individuals live in equitable and thriving communities where poverty no longer exists. And this this podcast and the work of this podcast is really about sharing that mission and vision with you.

And gaining—so that y'all can gain a better idea, right, a higher level understanding of the experience of poverty to help you understand what is actually happening for folks, what's happening for them out in the world when they're experiencing poverty. And beyond that, how you can make a real difference right in your community. What can you do? We've seen that moving from surviving to thriving, that process involves five key stages, and that's what we've been talking about. So the first is Crisis Intervention. Stabilization, Readiness, Placement, and Advancement. Today we're going to be taking a closer look at the third stage to prosperity, which is Readiness. Kamatara, take it away.

**KJ** Oh, I love readiness. I was just saying to Yvette before we started recording that readiness is my absolute favorite stage, because this is where hope is reborn. It, it's such a powerful stage. So let's just think about where am I at on the map of of moving from surviving to thriving. Okay. I am beyond the crisis, and my life is now stable. So I am actually ready to look at my life. I've got my stable patterns in place. I have more breathing space. In fact, I've reached a point where I am mentally and emotionally prepared to make conscious choices about my future.

So now if I if I'm ready to, you know, pull my chin up and look around and and look ahead, then it's time to explore. Like, what are *my* interests or *my* skills my aspirations? Could could I reconnect with my dreams or see new things that are out there that I didn't even know existed?

All these new careers that are happening so fast. And get connected with something that inspires me to want to get out of bed in the morning and do something amazing in the world. So connecting with my dreams or new dreams or whatever career options. And in fact, getting the support of a network or folks in the community for this would be really helpful as well, because I need to examine my potential for personal and professional growth. Is there a career interest inventory or career counseling? Or could I build my resume?

Like what certification programs are there? Or certain scholarships? Or maybe I need extra childcare and transportation support and technology? Or do I need tutoring because it's been a long time since I've been in school or getting this certification is tricky? But I want it. So what do I need to help me to be successful?

So it is just, it's such a vibrant time of exploration and to have dreams and hope restored is so motivational.

**YT** I definitely feel like, you know as you're talking, Kamatara, and describing this really beautiful stage. It's like the, there's possibility. I know I have space to dream, to wonder, to imagine, which is, you know, such a beaut—like I'm, I'm just relating to when I'm, when I move into that conscious work, right? I do that, for example, at the end of the year or the beginning of the brand new year. We'll be like, what's possible?

What do I want for my life? What is the vision that I have? And in each one of these stages, I feel like, you know, we talk about the slack, we talk about, you know, how much space you have. But I also feel like there's, "How far can I see?"

**KJ** Oh, yes.

**YT** How far can I see into the future that that with every stage begins to advance. And it's not just how far can I see, but how wide can I see? What is possible? And part of the work that that we do in Circles with our, our, our folks that are experiencing poverty is kind of working with the mindset, right? "What is it that I believe is possible?" will shift as you proceed through these different stages.

Because now, like there's just an expansion of vision into what's possible. And it may be that you you come from generational poverty. And so the idea of what's possible has been, has been kind of generation after generation, very, very small. An expectation that it's just going to, the world is just going to keep pushing you down, right?

And that is the lived experience for people that are in generational poverty or the folks that are moving into poverty who have forgotten that I had a dream and I had a vision because life has been so hard, and all I've been able to see is right here and right now. And it felt like everything was against me.

Right? I feel very much like I was, being put upon. That there was, that there weren't options available to me. And in Readiness what happens is like. So I feel like the

blinders are taken off and like the expanding world becomes visible for folks to begin to imagine. But the work of kind of developing that ability to shift your mindset to what is possible beyond what you've thought before, right?

So I used to think that maybe I could do this and maybe I could make this much, or maybe I could have this kind of a job, but it wasn't too far out. And I'm too... whatever, fill in the blank... to get the education, to get the training, to get the whatever, whatever it is. Now, those boundaries begin to get pushed out.

And just like if you have a boundary in front of your face and you're covering your eyes as that moves out, you now you just begin to see more all the way around. And readiness is just that. I mean, I'm imagining folks like folks that have engaged with who are who are at that stage of possibility, and it is contagious.

It's so...

**KJ** You know what else is exciting about it? Beyond being able to see more in an outward way, as I've gone from nose to the grindstone to like, no, pull your chin up and look out and about, like, yes, there's that vision. But I want to talk about the internal vision that shifts also.

Because for me to have hope or to think about my person... my possibilities, or like, what do I want? Or what would be the ceiling for me? Or what are my dreams? I have to value myself. I have to know that I am good and I do deserve and I can do this. And so, you know, what's shifted in me to be able to believe in myself, to have hope that this is possible?

And that's where the, the support of the community is so uplifting, especially in Circles. We love that about loving each other forward. You know, we are sharing the journey together because when we do get down in the dumps and you know, it's so hard. But we can we can know that truth for each other. Know you are good. Even when I can't see for myself,

you could know that for me. Like, no, it's okay. Let's take another step together. Let's keep going. And then little by little, little success here and a little shift there and a little change in decision or a little change in the language inside our head. And then all of a sudden that vision is opening up externally, but it also opens up internally.

I have a deep sense of who I am. And I am valuable and I am good, and I do deserve and I can do.

So this readiness stage is so, so beautiful on the, it's that critical step on the journey towards thriving because it allows me as an individual to focus on myself, not just putting out fires all around me. Like I can focus on myself and self improvement and expanding my horizons. And I can make an informed decision, not just decision under pressure or crisis, tyranny of the moment. No, no no, I can make a conscious decision

and take steps that I choose to do towards a more fulfilling life beyond the immediate crisis management.

And sometimes being on the the treadmill of continuous stabilization, that can be relentless to. So to get out of both of those relentless past journeys into the more expansive, you know, thoughtful, self-directed space of Readiness.

It's it's just so, it's so beautiful and bright and exciting.

**YT** And I'm, as you're talking I'm imagining, you know, being in Crisis Intervention and then being in Stabilization. Like, there's still kind of this tension. Right? It's not that far out of where I've been. I don't necessarily have, you know, a lot of a buffer. Right? When you get to Readiness, like this, like the shoulders are down and relaxed, you can trust yourself.

You can trust your life. You can trust the things that are happening. There's just a whole other way that you get to be in your day to day life. Because that constant threat of, you know, some kind of, something pulling the rug out from under you is a little more in the past. And I'm aware of the, you know, when you get to this point and you're looking out beyond maybe where you've seen before or you're revisiting dreams that you may have had when you were younger, is that this is a new landscape, right?

It's a new set of systems. These are things that you maybe have never engaged with before or even thought of before. And so having a community to have that social capital that can be shared, of how do you go about this? I have a dream, you know, I actually think I'd like to be a nurse. I remember thinking that I'd like to be a nurse.

What does that mean? What will that require?

**KJ** How do I get there?

**YT** How do I get there? How do I go to school? Have I taken any classes? Do I not have any classes? Did I finish my high school diploma? Like what are the steps to then begin to to take and the systems or processes or support to plug into, like it might be completely foreign. So having a community of people who have these experiences, who know those processes is so, so important.

I mean, to walk alongside and to celebrate the fact that you're looking out into the future and that contagious feeling of hope and excitement and possibility. But even more of like... Now I, as a person who has lived in the world in a way where I've had a lot of privilege, where I've had a lot of access, where I've gone to higher education, where I've accessed different things... I know something, I know something, and I can share that with people that are looking to engage with this whole new landscape of of life and possibility.

**KJ** I also want to acknowledge a little of the shadow side of this. It can be really scary in the Readiness stage, because I've worked so hard to get out of crisis, and I've worked

so hard to set up my stabilized routines. Like, okay, now I've got my my house is set, I've got some kind of transportation, I've got my childcare, I've got, you know, okay, employment and, you know, like I have got, I'm firing on all cylinders. And now adding one more thing to my plate, does it just blow the whole thing up? Or like, how do I move into that Readiness stage and it's like if I take on too much and then I just blow up my life, then I won't be stable.

So it's like, how do I find that balance of, well, I could add this one class or I could do this one thing, you know, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, like, how do I plan that? How do I get to there? And it just takes a lot of support and encourage and planning to take that risk and and to and to risk the hope.

Like I'm going to get my hopes up. Because I know for a lot of people who've experienced poverty, and people who haven't experienced poverty, we get our hopes up about something and then we just get our hearts broken or we're dashed upon the rocks and we're like, why even bother? Why try? But with the support of our beautiful community members, like, okay, I'm not alone.

I'm gonna make a plan. I can do this and still remain stable. And and I can add this little bit and I can make my goals, and I can stair step my way into being completely ready for this next chapter of my life.

But there's also the push and pull of the other people around me, because I know, from a lot of our friends who have experienced poverty, once it starts to look like they're even beginning to get out of poverty... Oftentimes, you know, friends and loved ones, other people, they'll have a reaction to it, like, well, who do you think you are? You know, this fancy pants doing all this and thinking you can just whoa, whoa.

So there's a lot of emotions and, all sorts of dynamics that go on in this, this Readiness stage. But just trying to put a firewall around myself and then, who's most supportive? Who's on my team? What's gonna help me get to where I'm going little by little so I stay stable, but I still make forward progress. That's, that is tricky to to navigate. And that's where I need my community to help.

**YT** Yeah. And having a place to even be able to talk about the fact that I'm, I'm feeling really nervous about this because I'm starting to get some pushback from the people that have been my support system that are, that are my community. And you know what? Like, how can I, what kind of... what do I do with this?

How do I how do I move forward with this and not lose that system, right? Like just to even be able to have a space to talk about those kinds of fears and concerns and then maybe work together to come up with a plan or maybe just even have a space to share. And no plan, but to have that in community where, where we all know what you're up to.

We all know what we're up to. We know what you want. We know what you're, you've set up as goals. And so here you can talk about that openly and freely. To have that space, beyond you know social capital, beyond connection and beyond understanding. What, you know some of the next steps or resources to reach out for are. This is a space where we are on your team.

**KJ** Right.

**YT** And we're gonna support you to do this. So I just think that kind of, to have developed that sort of safety net, that, that, that group of people... I know when I, I have areas of my life where I'm challenged, I, I had some kind of foresight to build a network of people that are on my team that I go to when I'm having those challenges. And that is this beautiful experience that Circles USA offers to folks that are a part of this model.

And, you know, and it's it's possible to do it in a number of different ways. And we're infinitely creative. Right? So like, you could do it in your community in any number of ways. This is just how we've done it here. And we're finding that we've learned a lot about it. And and hopefully, hopefully this is this is giving you some good ideas out there.

**KJ** Yes.

And I just again, we're coming back to that compassion to support each other at this, you know, potentially scary moment in time that takes a lot of courage to to believe in myself. I could be 50 years old and sitting in a class with 20 year olds, or I haven't written a paper in how long, or I'm going to learn new technology that's changing.

You know, since lunch. Now, here's this new technology that I've never seen before. But I can do it like I, I can handle it. And taking that courageous step forward to to ready myself for things that I may not even know what's coming next, but to have faith in myself that I'm I'm learning and growing. So I'm being more proactive, like I'm in this empowered state of mind.

I'm connecting to my autonomy, and my decision making capability, and that I could drive my life in the direction I wanted to go. I'm steering the boat, I've got both oars and I'm full out rowing and and I am going the direction that I want to go.

So Readiness is such an exciting stage.

**YT** Definitely, it definitely is an exciting stage. And I hope that, I hope that you all out there who are listening to this are feeling the energy. [Both laugh] The excitement that Kamatara and I obviously have about this stage, and that you're able to take some things away that you might be able to to think of applying in your community.

And, you know, just thank you for being here. Next time around, we're going to jump into our fourth stage of prosperity, which is Placement. And I just look forward to seeing you here again. Thanks for joining us.

**KJ** Thanks so much, Yvette.