

Theoretical Foundation: Dignity-First Identity

👤 Owner	A Ashley Zeck
🏷️ Tags	



Why This Matters

Programs that treat people as “problems” drive dropout, secrecy, and relapse. When you anchor change in dignity, safety, and autonomy, people stick around and build new identities.

Core Research & Evidence

Polyvagal Theory (Porges, Dana)

- **Key Point:** Safety—not surveillance—unlocks engagement and learning.
- **Quote:** “The nervous system needs felt safety to move from survival to growth.”
- **Citations:** Porges, S. W. (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory*; Dana, D. (2018). *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan)

- **Key Point:** Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are essential for lasting change.
- **Quote:** “Human beings have an inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise their capacities.”
- **Citations:** Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000), Ryan & Deci (2017)

Shame Research (Maté, Hari, Brown)

- **Key Point:** Shame and labels increase relapse/dropout; dignity and agency drive recovery and growth.
 - **Quote:** "Shame is the most corrosive emotion—it disconnects us from change." (Brown)
 - **Citations:** Maté, G. (2008), Hari, J. (2015), Brown, B. (2012)
-

Why This Matters for Legacy Rising

- Dignity-first language and group norms help people see themselves as "builders," not broken.
 - Builds trust, psychological safety, and a true sense of belonging—preconditions for growth and entrepreneurship.
-

Citations (Full List)

- Porges, S. W. (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory*.
- Dana, D. (2018). *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). *Intrinsic Motivation...*
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-Determination Theory...*
- Maté, G. (2008). *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*.
- Hari, J. (2015). *Chasing the Scream*.
- Brown, B. (2012). *Daring Greatly*.