

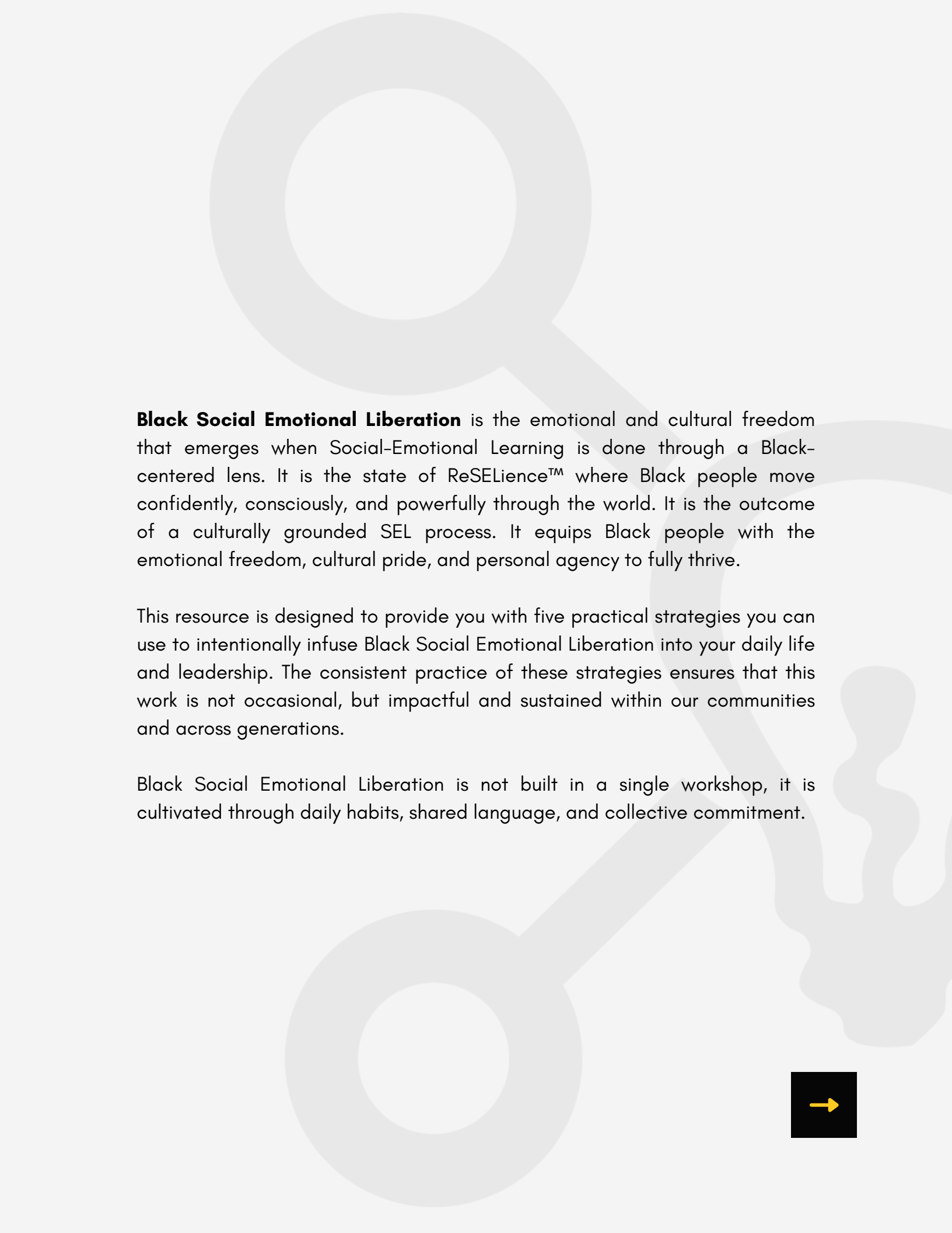
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5 STRATEGIES TO
**BUILD BLACK
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL
LIBERATION
ECOSYSTEMS**

BLACKSEL.ORG





Black Social Emotional Liberation is the emotional and cultural freedom that emerges when Social-Emotional Learning is done through a Black-centered lens. It is the state of ReSELiience™ where Black people move confidently, consciously, and powerfully through the world. It is the outcome of a culturally grounded SEL process. It equips Black people with the emotional freedom, cultural pride, and personal agency to fully thrive.

This resource is designed to provide you with five practical strategies you can use to intentionally infuse Black Social Emotional Liberation into your daily life and leadership. The consistent practice of these strategies ensures that this work is not occasional, but impactful and sustained within our communities and across generations.

Black Social Emotional Liberation is not built in a single workshop, it is cultivated through daily habits, shared language, and collective commitment.



Normalize Emotional Check-Ins & Model Healthy Emotional Regulation

Normalizing emotional check-ins is foundational to building Social Emotional Liberation Ecosystems. Creating space for individuals to acknowledge and express their emotions strengthens emotional literacy and collective trust.

Modeling healthy responses to strong emotions, such as anxiety, frustration, or anger, provides a roadmap for others. **When we demonstrate pausing, reflecting, and regulating, we teach resilience in real time.**

As we prioritize self-care as a form of self-regulation, we must also prioritize collective care. Liberation is not individualistic. Look for ways to center caring for one another.

Possible Prompts:

- What word describes how you're arriving today?
- What do you need to feel supported this week?
- I felt overwhelmed earlier, so I took a pause.
- That conversation made me sad, and I needed time to process.

Scenario:

During a weekly staff meeting, the team immediately begins discussing deadlines and project updates. Partway through the meeting, one team member becomes quiet and disengaged, while another responds to feedback with visible frustration. The facilitator notices the shift in energy and realizes the group never paused to check in with how people were feeling before starting the work.

Reflective Questions:

1. What is one simple way the facilitator could introduce an emotional check-in in this meeting?
2. How might emotional check-ins improve communication and trust within the group?
3. What is one way you could incorporate emotional check-ins in your own meetings, classroom, or team setting?



Affirm Black Identity *Intentionally*

Affirming Black identity intentionally is essential in developing confidence and providing reassurance for our community to show up fully and authentically in the world. Integrate affirmations of Black excellence, creativity, brilliance, and ReSELIence into daily interactions. Create opportunities to highlight Black leaders, cultural achievements, and historical contributions. Cultural pride strengthens emotional security and expands personal agency.

Possible Prompts:

- Use affirmations such as: Your voice matters, Your feelings are valid, Your story is needed.
- What part of your identity are you most proud of today?
- How does your culture shape the way you think, create, and lead?
- What strengths do you carry because of where you come from?
- How does your lived experience give you insight others may not have?
- What does showing up as your full self look like in this space?

Scenario:

During a Sunday School lesson, a facilitator notices that the examples used in activities and discussions rarely highlight contributions from Black leaders or creators. While discussing innovation and leadership, most of the examples shared come from individuals that do not reflect the identities of many participants in the room. The facilitator realizes this could be an opportunity to intentionally affirm Black identity by incorporating examples of Black excellence, creativity, and resilience into the discussion and future sessions.

Reflective Questions:

1. What is one way the facilitator could intentionally affirm Black identity during this session?
2. How could highlighting Black leaders, cultural achievements, or historical contributions impact participants' confidence and sense of belonging?
3. What are some ways affirmations of Black excellence and creativity could be integrated into everyday interactions or programming?
4. How might intentionally affirming cultural pride strengthen emotional security and personal agency for participants?



Create Brave Spaces for Dialogue

Regularly create spaces to discuss identity, stress, race, and belonging. These conversations are essential for healing and growth. They can take place anywhere you have influence, your home, church, classroom, or organization.

Silence sustains harm. Dialogue builds collective awareness, understanding, and transformation.

Possible Prompts:

- What does feeling safe to speak honestly look like for you?
- What agreements do we need to hold this space with care?
- How does your identity shape how you move through the world?
- When do you feel most proud of who you are?

Scenario:

During a community youth meeting, participants are discussing challenges they face at school. Several youth mention feeling misunderstood or treated unfairly, but the conversation quickly shifts back to the planned activity without exploring those experiences further. The facilitator later reflects and realizes this moment could have been an opportunity to create space for a meaningful conversation about identity, race, stress, and belonging.

Reflective Questions:

1. What signs in this situation suggest there was an opportunity to open a conversation about identity, race, or belonging?
2. How could the facilitator have created a safe space for participants to share their experiences?
3. Why is it important not to avoid or silence conversations about race, identity, and stress?
4. What is one way you could intentionally create space for these types of conversations in a setting where you have influence (home, classroom, workplace, or community)?



Build Cross-Sector Relationships

Black Social Emotional Liberation thrives in ecosystems, not silos. It is crucial to intentionally connect with organizations and institutions beyond your own.

Sharing resources, aligning messaging around emotional wellness, and reinforcing one another's efforts ensures consistency across homes, churches, schools, and community organizations. **Ecosystems thrive when institutions reinforce each other.**

Possible Prompts:

- How is your organization currently supporting emotional wellness in your community?
- Where do you see overlap between our missions?
- What language are you using around emotional wellness and identity?
- How can we align our messages regarding emotional wellness?

Scenario:

A community organization runs an after-school program that focuses on social and emotional wellness for youth. Staff members notice that while students practice emotional regulation and reflection during the program, the same strategies are not always reinforced in other spaces like school, home, or church. The program coordinator begins to consider how building partnerships with local schools, faith leaders, and community groups could help share resources and align messaging around emotional wellness.

Reflective Questions:

1. Why is it important for organizations to work together rather than addressing emotional wellness in isolation?
2. What are some ways the program coordinator could connect with other institutions to support a shared approach to emotional wellness?
3. How might consistent messaging across homes, schools, churches, and community organizations benefit youth and families?
4. What is one action you could take to build partnerships or share resources with another organization to strengthen a collective support system?



Use Liberated Language

Language builds agency. Agency builds liberation. Be intentional about using language that affirms dignity, invites reflection, and reinforces pride rather than shame. Replace deficit-based language with strength-centered language. Speak in ways that cultivate ownership, confidence, and collective responsibility.

Use the social-emotional liberation language discussed in your learning spaces consistently and publicly.

Reflection Questions:

- Does my language affirm dignity?
- Does it build agency?
- Does it invite reflection instead of fear?
- Does it reinforce pride instead of shame?
- Does it strengthen community?

Scenario:

During a behavior meeting at a school, a staff member says, "These students just aren't motivated enough to succeed." The room becomes quiet. The school social worker reflects on how this language may reinforce deficit thinking and undermine the strengths of the students they serve. The school social worker pauses and reframes the conversation by encouraging the team to focus on the strengths, resilience, and potential of the students while exploring supportive strategies that build ownership and confidence.

Reflective Questions:

1. How might the original statement reflect deficit-based language?
2. Why is language important in building agency and reinforcing dignity?
3. What is one way you can intentionally use language that affirms pride, ownership, and collective responsibility in your own environment?



INDICATORS OF A

Thriving Black Social-Emotional Liberation Ecosystem

You will know this work is taking root when:

- Youth speak confidently about their identity and emotions.
- Parents advocate using liberation-centered language.
- Churches integrate healing and wellness into ministry culture.
- Schools reflect pride, belonging, and dignity in daily practice.
- Leaders collaborate intentionally across sectors.

Final Charge

Black Social Emotional Liberation is not an initiative. **It is a cultural shift.**

It is sustained when:

- We normalize emotional freedom.
- We affirm cultural identity.
- We practice collective care.
- We invest in leadership development.
- We build systems, not just sessions.

When practiced collectively and consistently, ReSELience™ becomes a way of life, not a workshop.



For more information about Black SEL- the Social-
Emotional Liberation hub for Black people, visit
www.blackSEL.org.

If you would like to be highlighted on our blog or join
our webinars we would love to hear from you-
email: info@blackSEL.org.

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