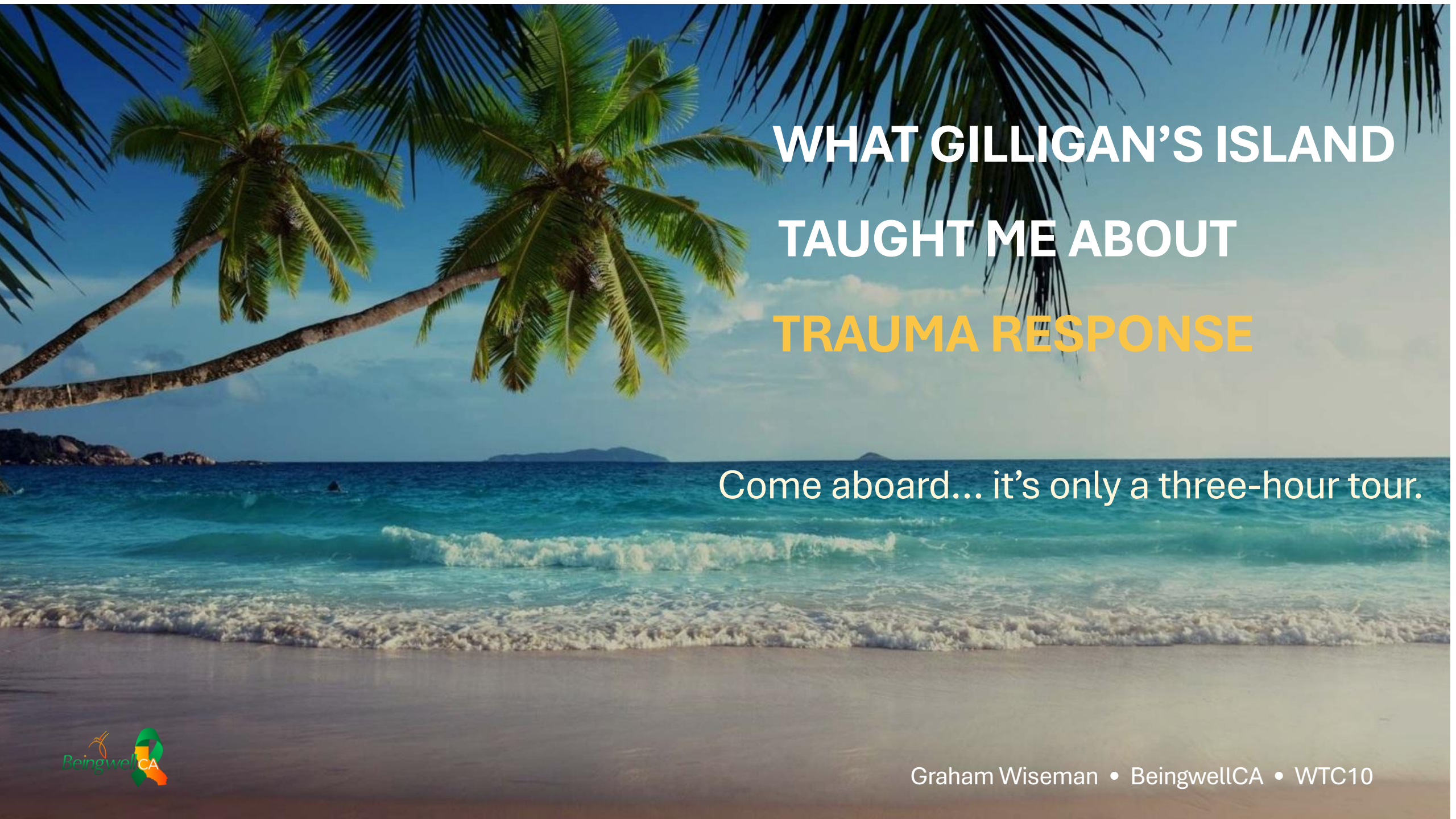




WHAT GILLIGAN'S ISLAND TAUGHT ME ABOUT TRAUMA RESPONSE

Come aboard... it's only a three-hour tour.

**FOR THOSE WHO NEVER
TOOK THE THREE-HOUR
TOUR...**

1964-1967
98 episodes
7 castaways

**One very short boat trip
that didn't go according to plan.**

You don't need to have watched the show for
the analogy to work.



MEET YOUR SKIPPER FOR TODAY

Graham Wiseman

CEO & Co-Founder, BeingwellCA

FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE CAPITOL



IN THE CLASSROOM

Mental health • Suicide prevention
Intervention • Postvention
Working directly with students &
educators



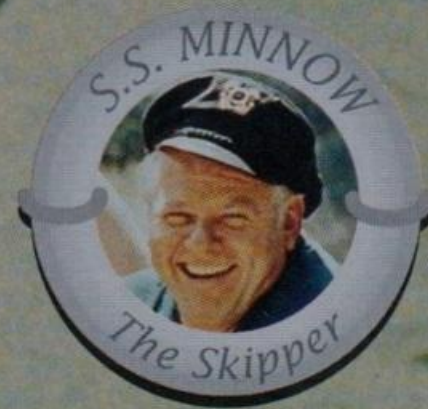
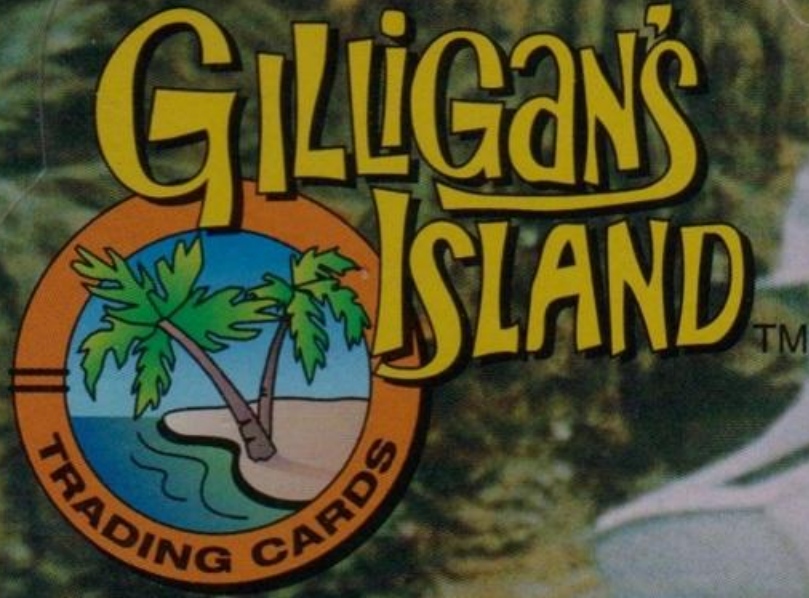
AT THE CAPITOL

CDE Student Mental Health
Advisory Workgroup
CDE Model Suicide Prevention
Policy
CA Mental Health Awareness
License Plate

**The work is professional.
The reasons are personal.**



They're not wrong. They're just incomplete.



THE THREE-HOUR TOUR

We all boarded expecting something different.

WHAT WE EXPECTED

A DESTINATION

A PLAN

A ROLE

A PURPOSE

WHAT WE BROUGHT WITH US

Experience

Strengths

Beliefs

Relationships

Loss

Trauma

Nobody boards empty-handed.

Most of the time, we don't see what someone brought aboard. We see what happens when it gets tested.

THE STORM

Some pressures we simply cannot control.

What is one “storm” — a pressure outside your control — that you have experienced at your school or district?

SCAN TO ANSWER • 1-5 WORDS



SLIDO

#3239719

Use the QR code or
enter the event code.

Nobody scheduled the storm.

But everyone on the island has to respond.

THE ISLAND

We are all on an island of some sort.

THE PEOPLE ARE ALREADY HERE.

We don't get to choose every castaway.

THE RESOURCES ARE WHAT WE HAVE.

We inherit systems, history and limitations.

THE STORM STILL HAS TO BE DEALT WITH.

Monday morning still comes.

How do the people already on this island
learn to work together?

You didn't choose all of your
castaways.
And they didn't choose you
either.

BEYOND THE COLORING PAGE

There is artistry underneath.

At first, we see labels:

Gilligan is clumsy. The Skipper is strong.
Ginger is glamorous. The Professor is smart.

Those descriptions are not wrong.

They are incomplete.

NOW WE LOOK THROUGH FIVE LENSES

What we see → What may be underneath → Under pressure → What they bring → What they need

Since I am standing here dressed like him, it is probably only fair that we start with the Skipper.



Human beings are not coloring pages.

The outline is only the beginning.

THE SKIPPER

The Responsible Leader



*Sometimes
we're navigating
today's storm
with a map
from another
time.*



WHAT WE SEE

Decisive • Protective • Experienced • Takes charge



WHAT'S UNDERNEATH

He has experience. He trusts his instincts.
After all, it was his boat that got us here.



UNDER PRESSURE

Responsibility → Control
Experience → Instinct over protocol
Confidence → "I know what to do."



EDUCATION ARCHETYPE

The Experienced Administrator

*A capable leader whose instincts may have been
formed in a different time.*



WHAT HE BRINGS

Leadership • Experience • Accountability • Courage



WHAT HE NEEDS

Other voices — and permission to update the map.

Schools need Skippers. But Skippers need the rest of the island.



GILLIGAN

*Different.
Loyal. Creative.
Sometimes misunderstood.*



WHAT WE SEE

- Clumsy and accident-prone
- Distracted or forgetful
- Gets things wrong
- Often needs help



LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER

- Loyal and caring
- Empathetic and kind
- Persistent and willing to try
- Creative and sees things differently
- May simply process the world in a different way



WHEN THE STORM HITS

- Difference becomes more visible
- Mistakes receive more attention
- Patience gets shorter
- The person can become the problem



IN OUR SCHOOLS, THIS CAN LOOK LIKE...

- Someone whose way of thinking, communicating or responding doesn't quite match everyone else's
- May ask questions others think are obvious
- May need clearer directions or more time
- Can be misunderstood, even when their intentions are good



WHAT GILLIGAN BRINGS

- Loyalty and humanity
- Creativity and fresh perspective
- Persistence
- Reminds us to stay curious



WHAT GILLIGAN MAY NEED

- Clear communication
- Patience and understanding
- Inclusion, not judgment
- Someone willing to stay curious

**Is Gilligan the problem—
or are we only seeing the problem through Gilligan?**

*Different
perspectives
make a stronger
island.*



THURSTON HOWELL III

Resources. Security. Stewardship. Control.



WHAT WE SEE

- Wealthy and privileged
- Focused on status and comfort
- Holds tightly to his money
- Seems reluctant to spend
- Confident he knows best



LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER

- Understands the value of resources
- Thinks long-term and plans for the future
- May be cautious because once it's spent, it's gone
- What looks like selfishness may be stewardship or security
- Wants to make sure the island can survive



WHEN THE STORM HITS

- Caution can turn into withholding
- Stewardship can look like gatekeeping
- Security can become scarcity thinking
- Confidence can sound like, "We can't afford that."
- Risk of losing sight of the human cost of waiting



IN OUR SCHOOLS, THIS CAN LOOK LIKE...

- Someone responsible for budgets, staffing, time or other limited resources
- Balancing competing demands from every direction
- Focused on sustainability and accountability
- May say "not now" when others feel the need is urgent
- Truly wants what's best for students and staff



WHAT HE BRINGS

- Resources and access
- Long-term thinking
- Planning and risk management
- Fiscal responsibility
- A willingness to support when he believes in the plan



WHAT HE MAY NEED

- Context and the full picture
- Trust and collaboration
- Understanding of the human cost of waiting
- Reassurance that resources are used well
- Partners who help him see the people behind the numbers

What are we protecting the resources for?

Different perspectives make a stronger island.



LOVEY HOWELL

Warmth. Reassurance. Optimism. Connection.



WHAT WE SEE

- Elegant and kind
- Positive and reassuring
- Keeps things pleasant
- Protects harmony
- Genuinely cares about people



LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER

- She may instinctively lower the temperature in the room.
- She wants people to feel safe — and believes things can work out.
- She may minimize distress because she wants it to go away.



WHEN THE STORM HITS

- Optimism → MINIMIZATION
- Reassurance → "It will be fine."
- Calm → MISSING URGENCY
- Harmony → AVOIDING HARD CONVERSATIONS



IN OUR SCHOOLS, THIS CAN LOOK LIKE...

- The person who protects culture, relationships and morale — and genuinely wants everyone to be okay.
- May say "it's not that bad" or "things will work out."
- May unintentionally minimize the urgency when others feel the need to act now.
- Truly wants what's best for students and staff.



WHAT SHE BRINGS

- Warmth and hope
- Connection and belonging
- Calm in difficult moments
- A positive, supportive presence
- Helps maintain a caring culture

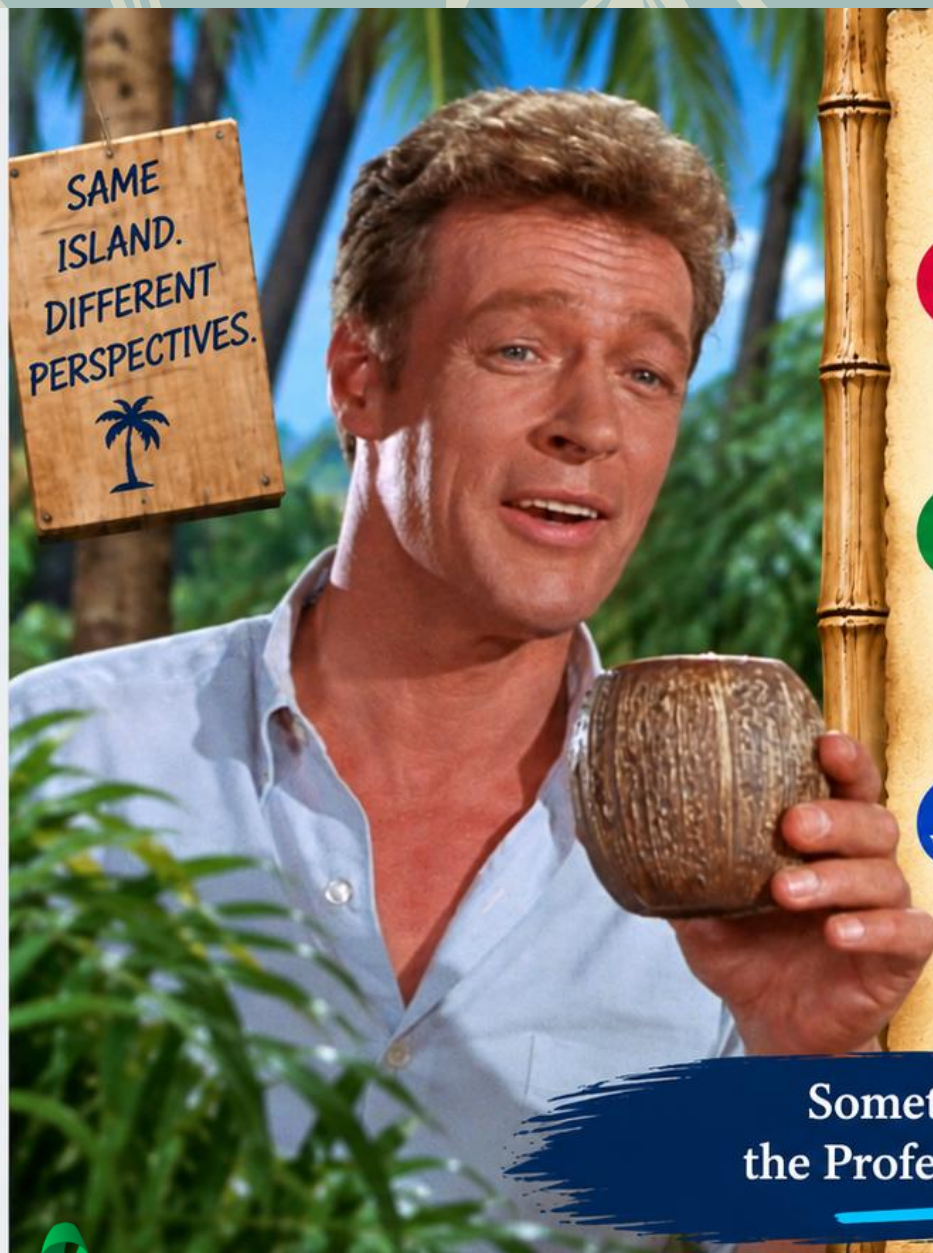


WHAT SHE MAY NEED

- Permission to sit with discomfort
- Listen before reassuring
- Recognize when optimism isn't enough
- Support to engage in difficult conversations
- Trusted partners who can help her see when action is needed

Sometimes people need to be heard
before they need to be reassured.

Different
perspectives
make a stronger
island.



THE PROFESSOR

Inventive. Analytical. Forward-Thinking. Sometimes Overcomplicates.



WHAT WE SEE

- Smart and resourceful
- Always thinking of a solution
- Builds and fixes things
- Calm and confident
- Uses science and logic



LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER

- May rely on technology more than people
- Can overcomplicate simple problems
- Sometimes dismisses the value of relationships and gut instinct
- May be frustrated when things don't work as planned



WHEN THE STORM HITS

- Doubles down on technical solutions
- May turn to gadgets, data, or systems
- Can become impatient with low-tech approaches
- May feel like a failure when the technology doesn't work



IN OUR SCHOOLS, THIS CAN LOOK LIKE...

- Focuses on apps, platforms, and data systems
- Believes there is a tool or program for every problem
- May underestimate the importance of human connection and SEL
- Can get frustrated when people don't adopt the "best" solution
- Sometimes spends more time building the system than using it



WHAT THE PROFESSOR BRINGS

- Innovation and creativity
- Problem-solving skills
- Broad knowledge and curiosity
- Willingness to try new approaches
- Helps us think about what's possible



WHAT THE PROFESSOR MAY NEED

- To remember that people, not just tools, make the difference
- Balance between technology and relationships
- Patience when others prefer simpler approaches
- Support in knowing when to let go of the toolbox
- A reminder that good enough can be enough

Sometimes the most important tool the Professor can put down is the toolbox.

Different perspectives make a stronger island.

SAME
ISLAND
DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVE



"Looks
aren't
everything."

GINGER

Talented. Confident. Kind.
Sometimes hiding a
much bigger story.



WHAT WE SEE

- Glamorous and put together
- Confident and poised
- Talented and admired
- Always looks her best
- Appears to have it all



LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER

- May feel isolated or misunderstood
- Struggles with self-worth
- Worries about aging or losing relevance
- Can be vulnerable beneath the confident exterior
- May question where she truly belongs



WHEN THE STORM HITS

- Feelings of insecurity can surface
- May withdraw or become discouraged
- Can struggle with changes or uncertainty
- May mask emotions to keep up appearances
- Risk of burnout from always "being on"



IN OUR SCHOOLS, THIS CAN LOOK LIKE...

- The student who seems fine but is struggling
- The high achiever who hides anxiety or depression
- The popular student who feels pressure to maintain their image
- The student who compares themselves to others on social media
- May avoid asking for help to keep up appearances



WHAT GINGER BRINGS

- Optimism and positivity
- Creativity and a big heart
- Reminds us to see the whole person
- Shows the value of self-expression
- Encourages us to celebrate individuality

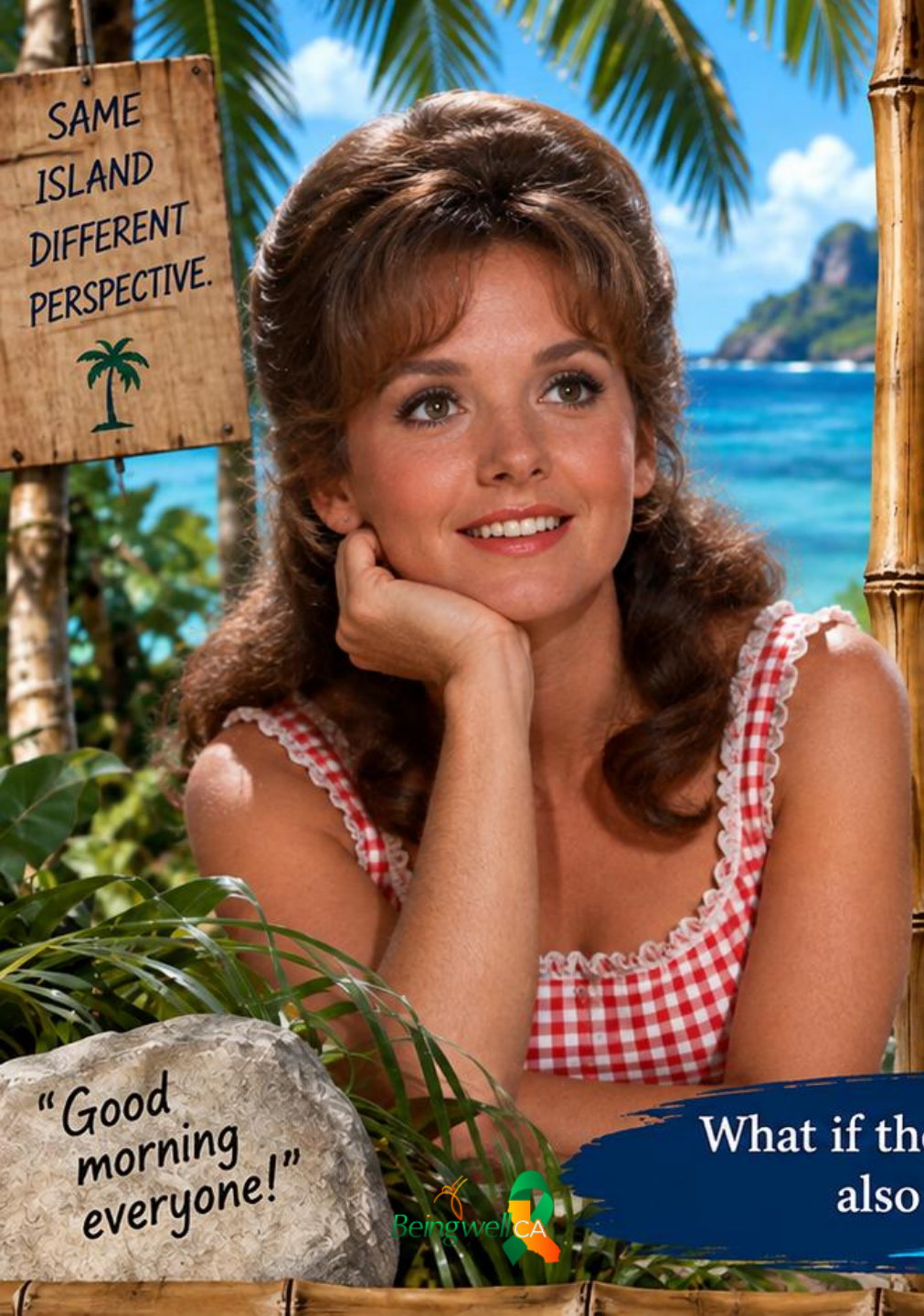


WHAT GINGER MAY NEED

- A safe space to be real
- Encouragement and authentic connection
- Support to manage stress and expectations
- Reassurance that she is valued for who she is
- Permission to not always be "on"

What if the person who looks the most
put together is struggling the most?

Different
perspectives
make a stronger
island.



MARY ANN

Compassionate.
Practical. Grounded.
Sees the good in people.



WHAT WE SEE

- Kind, caring and dependable
- Always willing to help
- Sees the good in everyone
- Keeps the island running
- Brings warmth and stability



LOOK A LITTLE DEEPER

- May take on too much
- Can put others' needs before her own
- May avoid conflict
- Sometimes minimizes her own stress or needs
- May feel responsible for everyone's well-being



WHEN THE STORM HITS

- May feel overwhelmed
- Can become the "go-to" for everyone
- May struggle to set boundaries
- Can feel guilty saying "no"
- May carry the emotional weight of the island



IN OUR SCHOOLS, THIS CAN LOOK LIKE...

- The supportive colleague who is always there
- The trusted adult students turn to
- May take on extra responsibilities
- May struggle to say no, even when overwhelmed
- Can be the emotional anchor for others
- May minimize her own mental health needs



WHAT MARY ANN BRINGS

- Empathy and compassion
- Stability and trust
- A positive and hopeful outlook
- Strong relationships
- Helps create a sense of belonging
- Reminds us of the power of kindness



WHAT MARY ANN MAY NEED

- Support and encouragement
- Permission to set boundaries
- Others to check in on her
- Recognition for all she does
- A safe space to share her own challenges
- Reminders that her well-being matters too

What if the person who is always there for everyone also needs someone to be there for her?

Different perspectives make a stronger island.



WHAT OUR CASTAWAYS MIGHT LOOK LIKE TODAY

Different people. Different experiences. Different strengths.
Same pressures. Same challenges. Same need to work together.



Students
Staff
Community
All Belong Here



PEOPLE | PERSPECTIVE | PURPOSE | POSSIBILITIES

WHAT GILLIGAN'S
ISLAND TAUGHT ME
ABOUT
TRAUMA RESPONSE

WTC10 | Wellness Together Conference



WHAT WE SEE ISN'T THE WHOLE STORY

WHAT WE SEE

Observable behavior on the surface.

Behavior

Words

Attendance

Performance

Anger

Withdrawal

Conflict

THE UNDERCURRENT

What we don't always see... but what often drives what we do see.

Experiences

Loss

Fear

Trauma

Stress

Culture

Relationships

Expectations

Identity

Belonging

Hope

THERE'S
ALWAYS MORE
BENEATH
THE SURFACE

Behavior is visible. The undercurrent often isn't.



SAME BEHAVIOR. DIFFERENT UNDERCURRENT.

There is always more beneath the surface.

A student puts their head down on the desk during class for several days.
Tired?

Overwhelmed?

Disengaged?

Anxious?

Something else?

*Same behavior.
Different undercurrent.*

*There is always more
beneath the surface.*

WE DON'T KNOW THE UNDERCURRENT.

Until someone feels safe enough to tell us.

*Different shores.
Same students.*

SLIDO

What is your first instinct?



Fix it



Stop it



Understand it



Refer it



Wait and see

SCAN TO RESPOND



*Different
perspectives.
A shared
commitment.*

BUT CURIOSITY HAS A TRAP.

CURIOUSITY ≠ CONFIRMING OUR ASSUMPTION

**Where I THINK
you're going**

**Where YOU are
actually going**

*Asking different
questions takes us
further.*

LET'S TRY SOMETHING...

I'm going to ask you three questions.



1. Name a Baltic country.



2. Name a furry
Australian animal.



3. Name a fruit.

*The path we follow
depends on the
questions we ask.*

THE REVEAL

I knew where I hoped many of you would go.

I created a pathway.

Except when I'm talking to a student,
a colleague, a parent, or someone
who is struggling...

**I don't know whether
the answer is orange.**

They do.

*Island lessons.
Real-world impact.*



DIRECTED CURIOSITY

Creating a safe pathway toward understanding.

NOTICE

What am I
actually
seeing or
hearing?



WONDER

What might I
not know yet?



INVITE

Can I create
enough
safety for them
to tell me?

**I don't know the answer.
They do.**



*Stay curious about
the undercurrent.*

NOTICE

Start with what you can actually observe.

“I noticed you put your head down.”

What did I see?

What did I
hear?

What changed?

OBSERVATION ≠ INTERPRETATION

Not “lazy.” Not “disengaged.” Not “attention-seeking.”



*Notice the behavior.
Don't diagnose the
undercurrent.*

WONDER

Leave room for what you may not know.

What might I not know yet?

LOSS

STRESS

FEAR

BELONGING

HOME

HOPE

SOMETHING ELSE?

The first answer may be true —
and still not be the whole story.



*Wonder about the
undercurrent.
Don't decide what it is.*

INVITE

Create enough safety for them to tell you.

“What’s going on?”

“Is there something I should understand?”

“Want to tell me more?”

ASK. THEN LISTEN.

The invitation is theirs to accept.

Curiosity does not demand disclosure.



"ONE OF THOSE PARENTS"

**Sometimes the label arrives
before the person does.**

THE LABEL

What we think we know

THE MASK

What we can see

THE UNDERCURRENT

What we may never know unless we ask



*Look beyond the label.
Past the mask.*

WONDER

What might I
not know yet?

Beneath every behavior
there may be a story
we haven't heard.

SAME ISLAND

DEEPER UNDERSTANDING

STRONGER TOGETHER

BACK TO YOUR ISLAND

Think about Monday morning.

NOTICE

What have you stopped noticing?

WONDER

What might be happening beneath the surface?

INVITE

What conversation could you have differently?

SLIDO

What pressure or “storm” did you recognize today — and how might recognizing it change the way you respond to trauma?



REDEFINE ISLAND LIFE

The goal was never to escape the island.

The richness of the island is in its depth.



SAME ISLAND.

**DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING.**

**STRONGER
TOGETHER.**



THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING SEE YOU NEXT YEAR!

What Gilligan's Island Taught Me About Trauma Response

GET THE CALIFORNIA MENTAL HEALTH PLATE



mentalhealthplate.org

SCAN TO
GET THE PLATE



Bring Mental Health into the Light... even if just a traffic light.

