Strategies/Interventions for mitigating Stereotype Threat suggested in Steele’s *Whistling Vivaldi*

**Represent critical abilities as learnable.**
Stress the expandability of intelligence in general and the learnability of skills in your field (Dweck). Certain groups may have stereotypes that they just can’t do something (e.g. math, writing, foreign language, art).

**Give feedback in a way that simultaneously inspires trust and motivates.**
Stress that you used high standards in evaluating the work AND that you believe student can meet those standards.

**Be attentive to the cues you send in your (teaching) environment.**
Leaders speaking about diversity as a positive value, explicitly welcoming diverse people, using diversity as a resource, being aware of issues students might encounter – all seemed to make a difference in minorities’ feelings of trust (even in the absence of lack of critical mass); and all worked better than purporting to be “color-blind.” Cues he mentioned included official statements, language in conversations, social organization, music, images, etc.

**Establish trust through demanding but supportive relationships.**
Faculty-student/mentoring relationships may work when they are calm, work-focused, straightforward, demanding but supportive. Eventually these sorts of relationships can lessen anxiety (even when one is a minority in a situation) and can motivate students, both of which leads to better performance.

**Foster hopeful narratives about belonging in the setting.**
Expose students to a narrative that explains their frustrations while projecting positive engagement and success in the setting. Rather than denying/ignoring struggles, demonstrate that similar people who came before them experienced uncertainty and worried about belonging but after that period, achieved success and a sense of belonging.

**Foster informal cross-identity group conversations or formal cross-cultural study/project groups.**
These interactions help to reveal that one’s identity is not the sole cause of one’s struggles or negative experiences in the setting; they discourage ineffective individual “over-efforting.” And if study groups are proven to help students develop skills in a particular discipline, it’s a double bonus.

**“Frame” tests/discussions/assignments in ways that don’t trigger stereotype threat.**
Consider what you tell students a test is testing (e.g. a particular skill vs. general intelligence) and whether that triggers anxieties for particular groups. You can remind test takers of identities that counter the relevant stereotype, boost esteem (“You’re Elon students”) or affirm one’s values; can reassure that no particular groups of students do better than others on this particular test. Frame difficult conversations as learning experiences (in which it is natural to be tense).

**Allow students to affirm their most valued sense of self.**
Writing/reflection about one’s most important values seemed to bring one’s sense of competence and worth back into view and make early performance and other threatening cues less important; could interrupt a negative recursive process. (Aronson said problems replicating these findings about writing, but that affirmation important).

**Facilitate the existence of a “critical mass” of various types of identity groups.**
How much is enough for “critical mass” is yet undetermined (and might be beyond your capacity to control) but critical mass of a group improves its members’ trust, comfort and performance in a setting.

Implicit: Know what works to facilitate learning in your discipline; be explicit about it and share it with all students; scaffold assignments to maximize chances of success. Interventions don’t matter without effective teaching.

Note: none of these strategies will work unless it is true that there is a safe environment for all – i.e. that in fact there are no negative contingencies for members of particular groups based on their identities.

Josh Aronson additions: **Help students understand stereotype threat.** Help them understand their academic strengths and weaknesses. Make a visit to office hours mandatory. Share your own struggles on the path that led to your success.