TRAUMA WEB

The column on the left lists various types of trauma that can affect our lives. The column on the right lists characteristics of trauma. Any of these may have affected you, your parents, grandparents or other people who have had a significant impact on your life. For each of the traumas and characteristics that have affected you, your family or significant others draw a line connecting the trauma or characteristic to "you" in the center of the page.

Death of a loved one
Gambling addiction
Emotional abuse
Drug addiction
Physical abuse
Verbal abuse
Cultural loss
Alcoholism
Neglect
Racism
Divorce
Poverty
Violence
Disability
Relocation
Foster care
Adoption
Oppression
Sexual abuse
Loss of a job
Boarding school
War experiences
Loss of spirituality
Discrimination of any kind

YOU

Frequent periods of depression
Difficulty hearing positives
Fear of conflict and anger
Continuing sense of guilt
Need to be in control
Fear of dependency
Overly responsible
Very irresponsible
Overachievement
Poor self-images
Need to be right
Fear of trusting
Perfectionist
Chaos junkies
Fear of feeling
Fear of intimacy
Underachievement
Denial of problems
Fear of incompetence
Compulsive behavior
Heavily depends on others
Repetitive relationship behavior
Unable to relax, let go, and have fun
Hypersensitive to the needs of others

BEING TRAUMA AND HEALING INFORMED

Over the last several years there has been increased attention to the impacts of trauma on behavior. The term "trauma-informed" was coined as a way to help service providers (education, social services, health and medical, law enforcement, etc) and their agencies or departments better serve the people by better understanding their behavior.

To be trauma-informed, you really are being "healing informed." Being trauma and healing informed, in the big picture, means:

1. You have a profound understanding of trauma on behavior;
2. You have a profound understanding of trauma on behavior and you seek not to re-traumatize people;
3. You have a profound understanding of trauma on behavior and seek to understand the difference between "what's wrong with you" vs. "what happened to you;"
4. You understand neuro-trauma (like FASD) and learn about trauma on the brain;
5. You understand that healing is the answer to trauma and you have done your own healing work or at least started your healing journey;
6. You integrate healing opportunities into your home, community and work life (because often, if we're not healing, we're hurting);
7. You continue to learn more about trauma and healing.

Having a "profound understanding" means that you have studied historical and intergenerational trauma (read books, attended training, been mentored by experts), you have experience working with people and communities impacted by trauma, you have an understanding of the brain and how it responds to trauma and you have done your own healing work in response to your trauma.

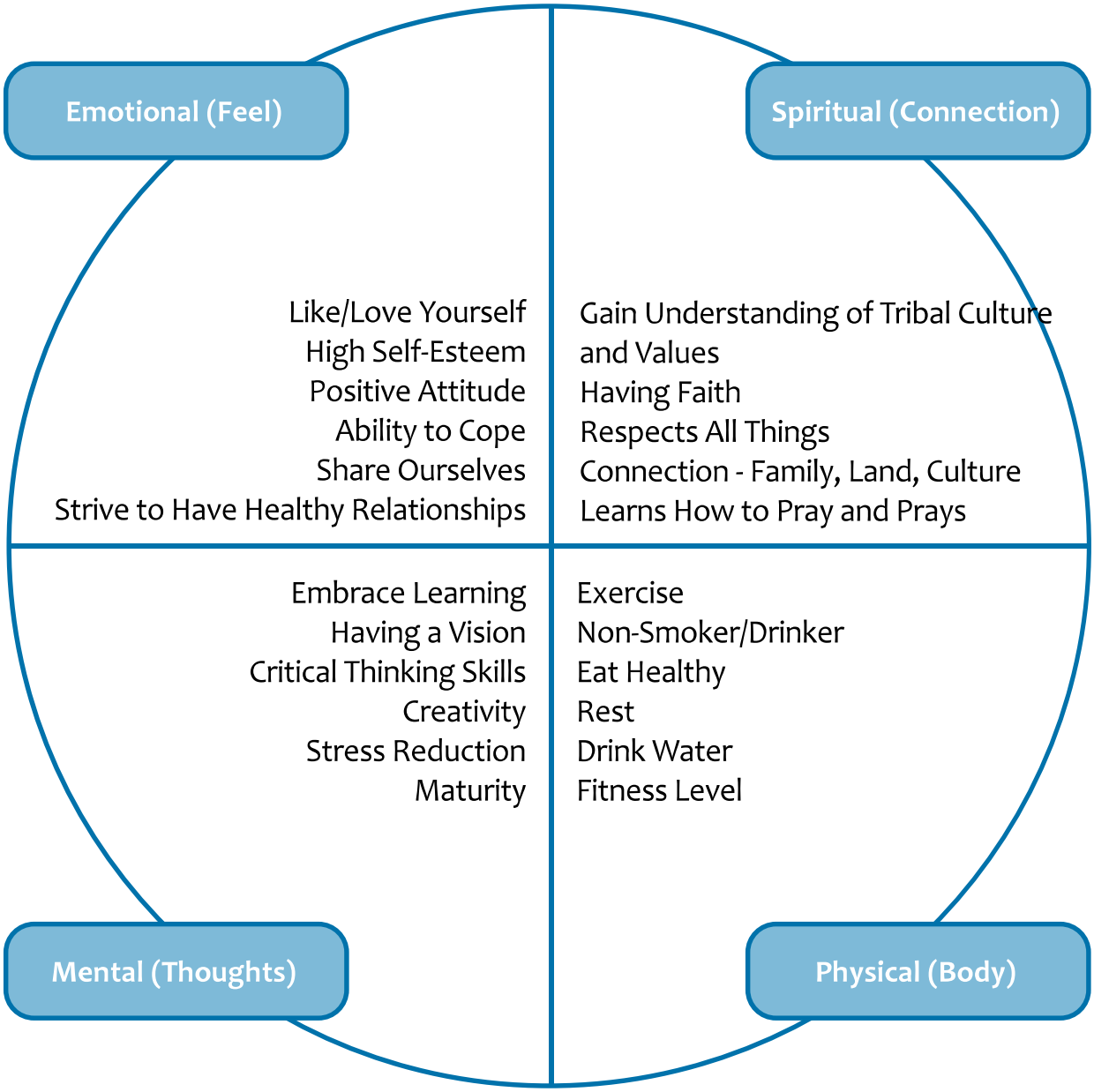
"Where there has been trauma, healing is the answer."

WARRIOR SHIELD

Warrior shields are decorated with images, or medicine, to give a warrior strength and power. In pictures only, draw your medicine on the shield. What best describes you? What are your sources of strength? What protects you?

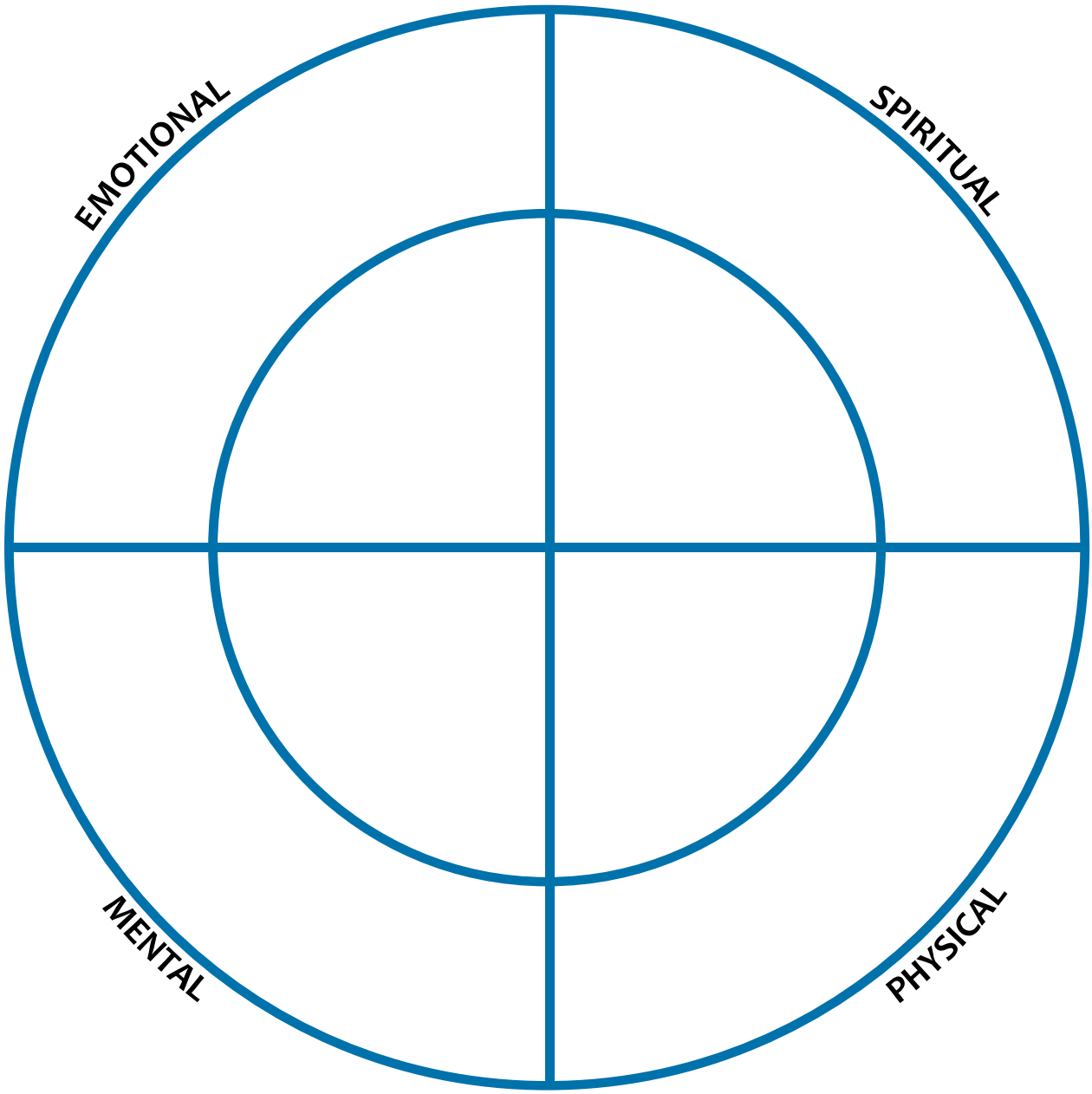
NATIVE WELLNESS

- **The Native Wellness model is a framework based in Native values and culture that helps us live in balance.**
- **Each quadrant is interdependent and connected to each other.**
- **The model teaches us to move forward each day and strive to be a better person than we were yesterday,**



HOW WELL AM I?

In each direction, write down two things in each of the center quadrants that you currently do well and in the outer circle write down two things you would like to do better. A few examples are provided in each quadrant, you can write down other examples as well.



GRIEF

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away.

Examples of loss include:

- Death of a loved one
- Divorce
- Loss of health
- Losing a job
- Loss of financial stability
- Miscarriage
- Retirement
- Death of a pet
- Selling a family home
- Loss of a pet
- What else?

In Indian Country, due to the impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma, the weight of grief can seem unbearable as we experience the loss of:

- Language
- Land
- Way of life
- Life
- Culture
- Traditional foods
- Elders
- What else?

GRIEF STAGES FOR NATIVES: DISCOVER HELP AND HOPE

Everyone experiences grief differently. There is not a right or wrong way to grieve. Due to the impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma, there are some unspoken rules that we may have learned that keep us from grieving. When we don't grieve, we often seek out other ways to numb or hide our pain. When we don't grieve, those emotions are bottled up inside of us and make us sick. Native cultures have responses to grief that can help us move forward in a good way. Here are some common stages that individuals, families or communities may experience when grieving:

Shock - Right after a loss, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or even deny the truth.

> **Cultural perspective** - In terms of a death, can soften the impact of shock by thinking of our loved one crossing over the Milky Way or Wolf's Trail or whatever your teaching is, and they are being greeted by loved ones who have also crossed over with hugs, smiles, feasts and gatherings.

Panic - After the initial shock, panic often sets in. In this stage, the person is not able to think clearly, can't sleep and will even run around the room crying or sit paralyzed. They cannot make up their own minds or organize themselves for action.

> **Cultural perspective** - To soften this phase, one should ask permission to hold the person, sit by them, take them by the hand and guide them through this phase. Family members should take turns, de-brief, light a smudge, look into their eyes, & tell them, "We will get through this."

Denial - The denial phase is almost automatic. Once the news sinks in, the natural reaction is to say it is wrong; some feel it is a shock absorber for the soul and is a form of protection. By saying "NO" to the tragedy, they are able to absorb the facts more slowly, allow themselves time to adjust. In this phase we think it must be a mistake, we just seen them very much alive. There is no way they could be dead.

> **Cultural perspective** - To soften this phase, one should ask permission to hold them, sit by them, take them by the hand and guide them through this phase. Family members should take turns, de-brief, light a smudge, look into their eyes, & tell them, "We will get through this."

Numbness - A third phase of grief is numbness. The unexpected tragedy temporarily overloads the emotional circuits. The survivor is left somewhat dazed or numb. Often this reaction may carry them through the burial arrangements and the funeral without any display of emotion. People will make comment on how brave and strong someone is looking composed, when in reality they are in this phase of numbness, no tears because they are unable to cry. This numbness may be expressed in a physical sense where parts of the body lose a measure of feeling. The length of this phase may be as brief as a few hours or as long as several days, and it is sometimes delayed in happening. In some cases, it may not appear until several months later when all of a sudden the hands, feet, or some other part of the body begins to feel numb. To be safe, get checked by a doctor, but most often it is grief-related and will disappear in time.

> **Cultural perspective** - The way this can be softened is to maintain contact with the family and offer support. Be aware of changes that may be occurring with the individual. There might be an opportunity to refer for counseling or to offer an opportunity for a smudge or a sweat or perhaps to see a traditional healer.

Sadness – Profound sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning, or deep loneliness. You may also cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable.

> **Cultural perspective –** Trusting the process or trust in the Creator that everything happens for a reason. Feel the sadness, sit with it and give thanks for the time you had with this person or the teachings you received.

Guilt – You may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't do or say. You may also feel guilty about certain feelings (feeling relieved when the person died after a long, difficult illness or from their abusive behavior). After a death, you may even feel guilty for not doing something to prevent the death, even if there was nothing more you could have done.

> **Cultural perspective –** Understanding the teaching that we as a human do not have the power to control a life; and now that the person has crossed over, we can call upon them for help.

Anger and Rage – Even if the loss was nobody's fault, you may feel angry and resentful. If you lost a loved one, you may be angry with yourself, God, the doctors, or even the person who died for abandoning you. You may feel the need to blame someone for the injustice that was done to you. Rage is the opposite of numbness. It burns and boils and often strikes out unreasonably. Violent acts, abusive acts, blaming relatives, doctors, nurses, physically hurting self or others comes out sideways. Turned inward with drug or alcohol use can become suicide. Several days may pass before it appears, but it may or may not come. It is at this point where many Indian people get stuck in the grieving process. Their rage comes, but it won't go away. It continues to churn inside until they find a way to resolve it or it destroys them. Rage against self can be long periods of drinking, using pills to blank out. Another example of rage and behavior while grieving from being sexually abused (a trauma that is complicated) comes out with obesity and managing emotions with food. So we find the raging might be eating the whole gallon of ice cream, eating the whole bag of cookies by our self or in secret.

> **Cultural perspective –** Feel the anger, it's a normal process. When you feel yourself moving to the rage stage, seek guidance and help. For those of us watching the rage surface, we can gently offer our guidance and help to redirect the person.

Fear – A significant loss can trigger a host of worries and fears. You may feel anxious, helpless, or insecure. You may even have panic attacks. The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality, of facing life without that person, or the responsibilities you now face alone.

> **Cultural perspective –** Be gentle with yourself. Try to understand that everything happens for a reason. Focus on gratitude and practices such as smudging and praying that will help you let go of the fear.

Anguish-despair - Another phase of grieving that many Native people have trouble with is the anguish and despair. This is where the pain and sense of loss has hit them full force-long bouts of depression, not wanting to get out of bed, or not taking a shower. They might stop answering the door, don't answer the phone and shut the world out. For many, it is more than they can handle.

> **Cultural perspective** - Information to family members about the signs and symptoms of depression would be key, so that the family can refer for therapeutic support and assessment for depression and suicide ideation. Helping them to also find ceremony-crying ceremony, sweat lodge, etc. to help them through their grief.

GRIEF STAGES FOR NATIVES: DISCOVER HELP AND HOPE

Bargaining - is the phase of grief that begins to wrestle with the acceptance of the loss, in an effort to get on with living. This phase the griever might try to make contracts with Creator or God. Pledge to Sundance, pledge to stop drinking, pledge or vow to live right if only Creator will make it not true, or give some peace to the heart. As the mourner works through this phase of grief, they might say, "I could accept the death if only we had not had a fight the last time we saw each other" or "I know he can't come back, but why did he have to be drinking when he died?"

> **Cultural perspectiv**e - It is important to reflect back that this was an earlier time in the person's life and that to focus on this as a last memory of the person is not healing or positive for the person or the deceased as well. Offer to pray or smudge or sweat to address these thoughts.

Forgiveness - Another difficult phase for those who are grieving over a tragic, unexpected death is forgiveness. During grief of this type, a lot of blame is laid in many directions. Before the mourner will be able to finish grieving, they will need to forgive those that they have been blaming for the loss. Sometimes it is the person who died. Sometimes it is the boyfriend or girlfriend who they think caused it. Sometimes it is God, and they lose faith, or get angry with God. Sometimes the griever blames himself or herself, like there was something they could have done to prevent it? Whoever, or whatever, they feel is at fault must be forgiven or the grief will continue to haunt them.

> **Cultural perspective** - Forgiveness is a gift that we give to ourselves and those around us. Letting the Creator help us deal with our feelings and again offering a smudge or sweat or the power of prayer. Sometimes the dragon of anger keeps breathing fire on our life or injustice torments us. The trick is not to force forgiveness- you will feel a lessoning of that dull constant pain. Keep talking and feeling with people you trust. You will notice the anger and bitterness that clutch your heart dissolve as you talk and "let go." Forgiveness is an act of grace-and grace can only flow into an open heart.

Acceptance - follows logically once a person has taken the step of forgiveness. Suddenly, at this point, a realization comes that no amount of grieving will bring back the deceased or change the past. The person can realize that going to the gravesite every week, keeping their room the same for years. Acceptance is moving on and life begins again. The cycle of life. You notice the sunshine; you can be joyful at ordinary things. You have gratitude for life, health, a good laugh, a good meal, a good night's sleep.

> **Cultural perspective –** We can think of traditional stories that teach us about acceptance and moving forward. There is comfort is knowing that stories are teachings to help us and remembering that death is a part of life.

Growth – Maturation - Once grieving starts, personal growth and development stop, and it stays that way until the grieving process is completed. This is why it is so important for Native people to mourn and finish their grief work. Getting stuck in painful phases like rage, anguish-despair, bargaining and forgiveness leave us in a 50-year-old body with a teenager maturity. Moving through these stages and feeling all the feelings that go with it allows the grief work to be done. And when it is done, the person can begin to grow again and develop meaningful relationships. The amazing thing about life is we can begin again, and having gone through these phases we learn compassion and are a better person for it.

> **Cultural perspective –** Culture is always forward moving with tools and resources to assist us to do that. It's often our contemporary "stuff" that gets in our way of asking for help or guidance. Showing growth and maturation also allows others to see it and know that they too can move through grief in a good way.

Healing is the answer to trauma; and grief is a form of trauma.

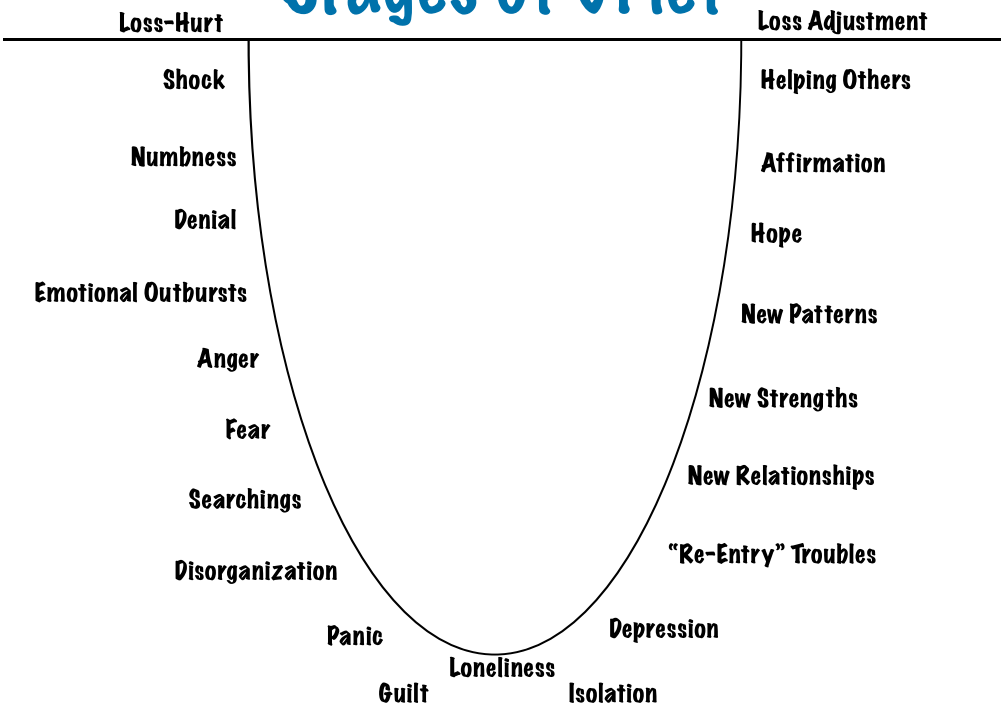
It must also be noted that we can have complicated grief which is perhaps generational, or multiple losses. Grief isn't always about death, it can be the loss of employment, the loss of a relationship, the loss of belonging.

When we heal from grief we have the sense of belonging again to the universe, the world, our community, our family and our lives.

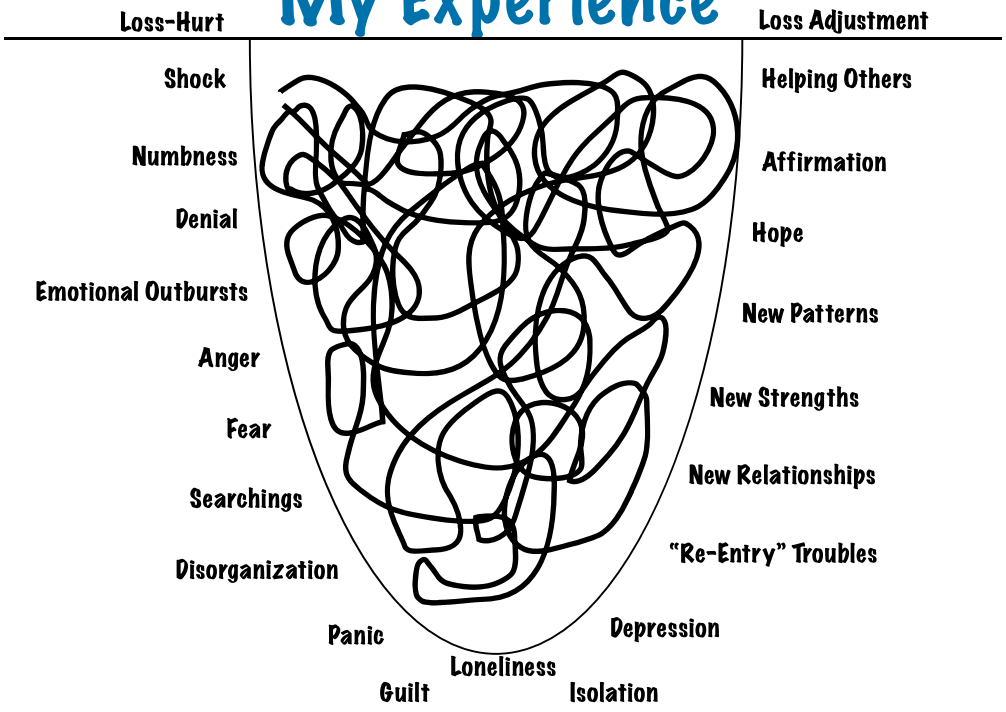
We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but grief often involves physical problems, including fatigue, nausea, lowered immunity, weight loss or weight gain, aches and pains, and insomnia.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH GRIEF

Stages of Grief



My Experience



HEALING

Healing in the English language derives from the Hebrew word Haelew, which means to be or to become whole. In Indigenous ways of knowing, we know that becoming whole means to be in balance physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In tribal languages when we translate the word Heal, most often it means "to feel good."

Healing is choosing to let go of emotions and feelings that don't necessarily serve us in a good way. Healing begins with an awareness that we have behaviors and thoughts to work on. Healing is a personal cleansing of things like:

- Mistrust
- Unresolved Grief
- Loss and Hurt
- Anger/Rage
- Shame
- Guilt
- Fear
- Abandonment
- Regret
- Addiction
- Unhealthy Relationships
- Drama
- Chronic Negativity
- and much more

We can begin to heal in many different ways. What resonates with you may not resonate with someone else, that's why trying different things is so important. We can heal by:

- Forgiveness- ourselves and others
    - Forgiveness is letting go of the anger we have toward something or someone
- Looking within (reflection and introspection)
- Praying
- Running/Exercise
- Counseling/therapy
- Ceremony
- Sharing our story with others
- Loving ourselves
- Meditation
- Journaling
- Language classes
- Cultural learning
- Movement
- Reading books
- Intentionally letting go
- And more...what do you do for your healing?

HEALING PLAN

You wouldn't go on a trip to a new destination without a map, would you? Well, a Healing Plan is your map to your Healing Journey. What are you going to do this month on the path to your own Wellness?

	Spiritual	Emotional	Mental	Physical
Example	Pray for my healing and my families healing every morning before I go to work.	Go to weekly talking circles and share what I am feeling about my healing.	Make a digital story about my healing journey.	Walk 3 miles every day after work to allow my body to stay healthy.
Week 1				
Week 2				
Week 3				
Week 4				

Remember: Healing is a journey, not a destination! Happy Travels!

ENGAGE YOUR HAPPINESS CHEMICALS

DOPAMINE

The "Feel Good" or "Reward" Hormone

- Doing self-care activities
- Eating good food
- Completing a task
- Taking healthy risks
- Listening to traditional music

OXYTOCIN

The "Love" Hormone

- Holding a baby
- Giving a compliment
- Hugging loved ones
- Playing with an animal
- Positive self-talk

SEROTONIN

The "Mood Stabilizer" Hormone

- Smudging and praying
- Meditating
- Being in nature
- Dancing
- Enjoying the sun

ENDORPHIN

The "Pain Killer" Hormone

- Laughter
- Dark chocolate
- Essential oils/traditional medicines
- Movement
- Running

The hormones and neurotransmitters listed above contribute to our happiness. Think about the activities in your day where these are released. What if you cooked and ate a meal of traditional foods with someone you love while listening to traditional music?