

Tribal Youth Resource Center Online Learning Event

Compassion Fatigue: A Path to Wellness, Resiliency, and Self-Care

Dr. Marilyn Zimmerman, Senior Policy and Program Director
Veronica Willeto DeCrane, Training and Technical Assistance Manager
Nona Main, Training and Technical Assistance Specialist
National Native Children's Trauma Center
October 26, 2021



Opening

Breathe in for 4 seconds

Hold for 4 seconds

Breathe out for 4 seconds

Hold for 4 seconds

Objectives

1. Identify and recognize signs of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress
2. Realize how reducing occurrences and mitigating symptoms will aid in serving tribal youth
3. Review and practice self-care strategies

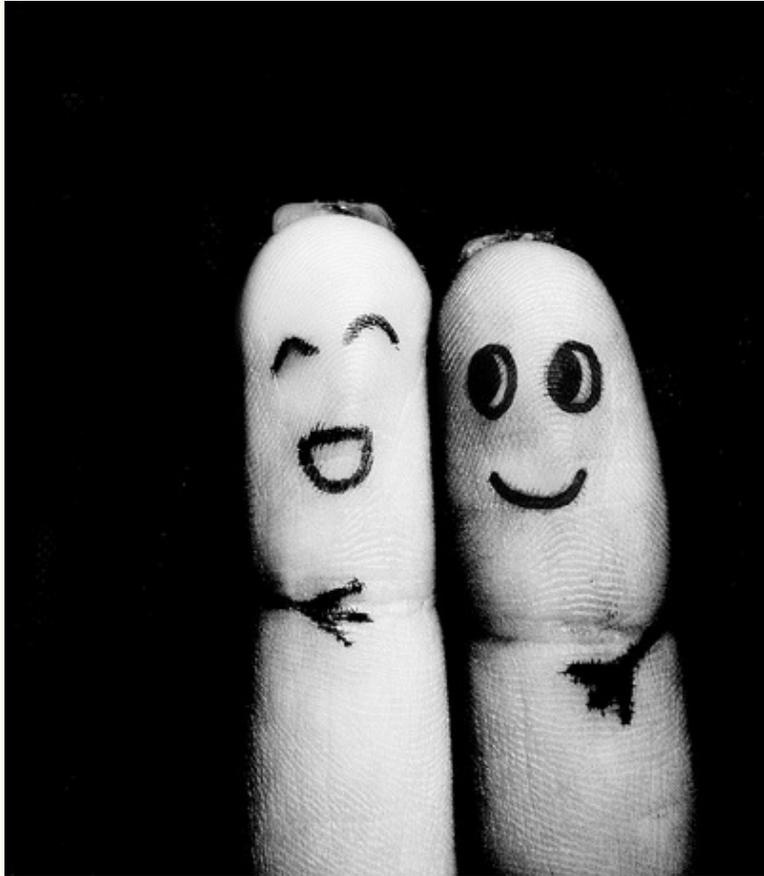
**NATIONAL
NATIVE
CHILDREN'S
TRAUMA
CENTER**



UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA



Compassion Satisfaction



- The perceived joys derived from experiencing the suffering of others and succeeding in helping relieve it in some way (Figley, 2002)



Compassion Fatigue

- Compassion Stress – the perceived demands derived from experiencing the suffering of others and wanting to help relieve this in some way (Figley, 1995; 2005)
- Compassion Fatigue –
 - “The experience of short-term exhaustion and traumatic stress reactions associated with exposure to the suffering of one’s clients.” (Boscarino, Figley, & Adams 2004)
 - “The weariness that comes from caring.” (Johnson, 1997)



Vicarious Traumatization

- Changes in the inner experience of a staff member, such as expectations for trust, safety, control, esteem, intimacy that result from cumulative exposure.
- Difficulty gaining satisfaction from work.



Secondary Traumatic Stress

“The natural and consequent behaviors and emotions resulting from knowing about a traumatizing event experienced by a significant other, the stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person”

(Figley, 1995.)



STS Connection to PTSD

Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive re-experiencing

Psychological or physical reactions to cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the event(s).

Avoidance of memories, thoughts, feelings or with external reminders associated with the event(s).

Negative changes in cognition, mood, arousal, and/or reactivity beginning or worsening after the event(s).



Burnout

Psychological Burnout

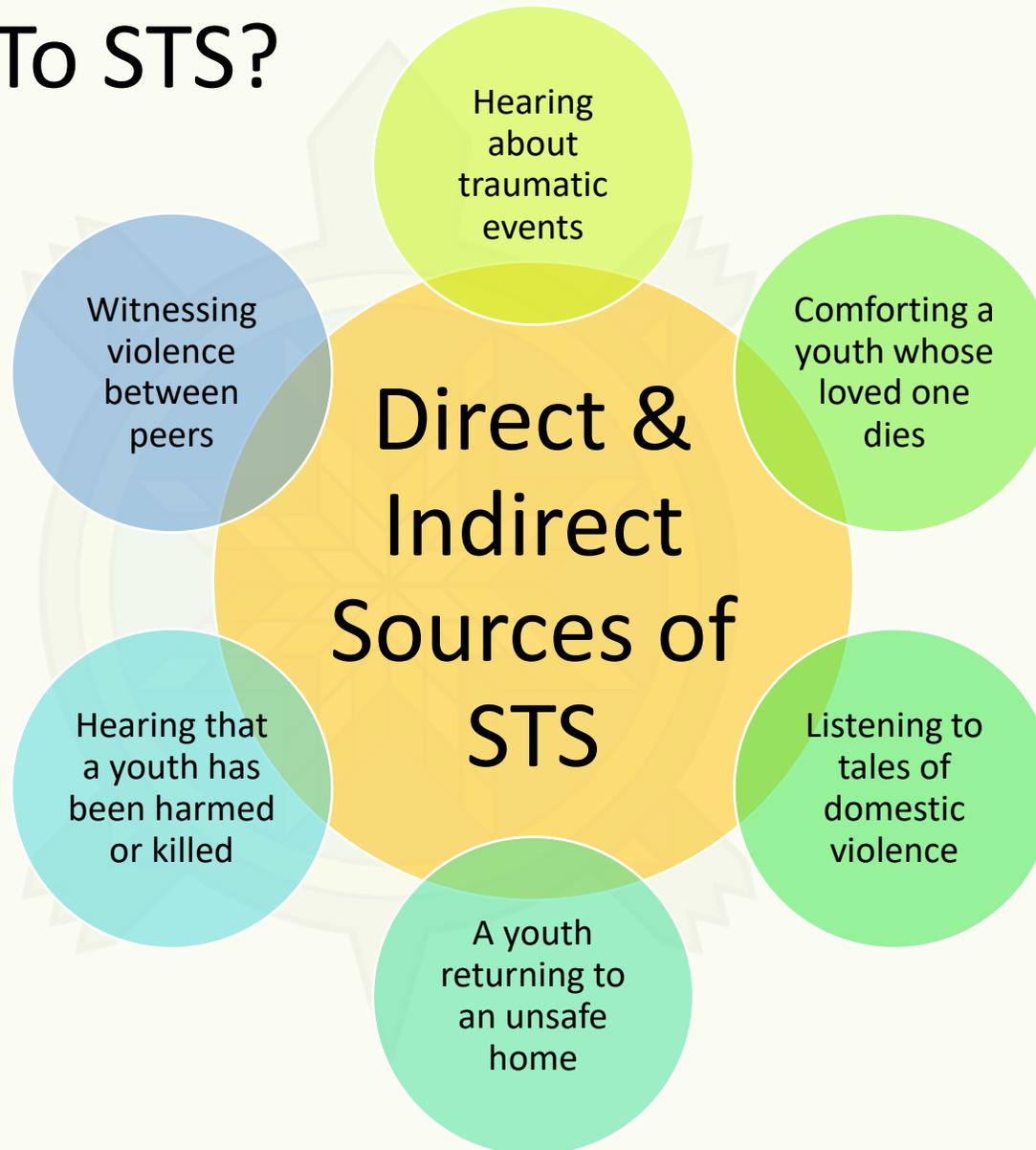
– the experience of long-term exhaustion and diminished interest in one's work that is often corrected by changing work settings or clients (Altman & Jackson, 2005)



Occupational Burnout – “Plain old job burnout stems from dissatisfaction with the work environment vs. compassion fatigue which stems from absorbing the suffering of clients.” (Figley, 2011)



Are You Exposed To STS?



Who Is Vulnerable To STS?

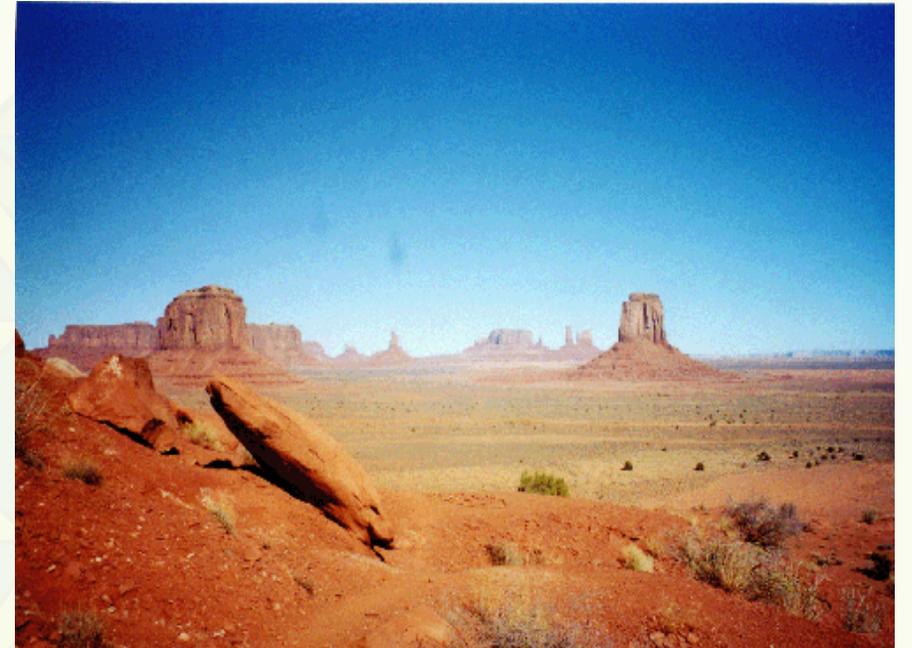
you.

- Those who are empathetic.
- Those who have experienced traumatic events in their own lives which are unresolved, and in turn, activated by similar reports of pain or trauma in others.
- Those who work directly with children and listen to their painful or traumatic experiences.
- Those who help others and often neglect or are unaware of their own feelings and needs.



STS in Indian Country

- Few studies have explored the impact of STS among American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) population
- AI/AN children are more likely than any other race to experience violence
- Due to the likelihood of trauma exposure, it is likely AI/AN helping professionals are impacted by STS



“For us the questions is not who has been exposed to violence, it’s who hasn’t been exposed to violence?”



Factors That May Impact AI/AN Caregivers

- Small communities comprised of mostly those who identify as AI/AN
- Individuals often have close kinship ties with intermediate and extended family
- Many providers are from the community they work in

“We know the community and their background and their family members and everything so we’re probably more impacted than if we were in a large city area”

Caringi, Stanick, Trautman, Crosby, Devlin & Adams, 2015, p. 249



Factors That May Impact AI/AN Caregivers

- Few formal resources in the community to treat STS
- Communities with high rates of trauma may experience added stress to local providers and agencies
- Effects of collective Historical Trauma



What Do STS Symptoms Look Like?



Personal Impact of STS

Physical

- Fatigue
- Numb
- Upset Stomach
- Nausea
- Rapid Heartbeat
- Breathing Difficulty
- Sleeping Difficulty
- Dizziness
- Impaired Immune System

Emotional

- Emotional Roller Coaster
- Denial
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Powerlessness
- Sadness
- Hypersensitivity
- Overwhelmed
- Minimization
- Irritability; Anger

Behavioral

- Changes in routine
- Appetite changes
- Withdrawal
- Nightmares
- Elevated startle response
- Self-Destructive coping behaviors (substance use, gambling, spending, etc.)
- Accident proneness



Personal Impact of STS

Cognitive

- Confusion
- Diminished concentration
- Absent-mindedness
- Decision-making difficulty
- Self-doubt
- Rigidity
- Trauma Imagery

Interpersonal

- Isolation
- Blame Others
- Relationships deteriorate
- Decreased interest in intimacy or physical touch

Spiritual

- Question religious or spiritual beliefs
- Loss of purpose
- Anger at a higher power
- Question the meaning of life



Professional Impact of STS

- Performance of Job Tasks
- Morale
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Behavioral Issues
- Attitude



Where Do You Feel Stress in Your Body?



Thoughts



Ache



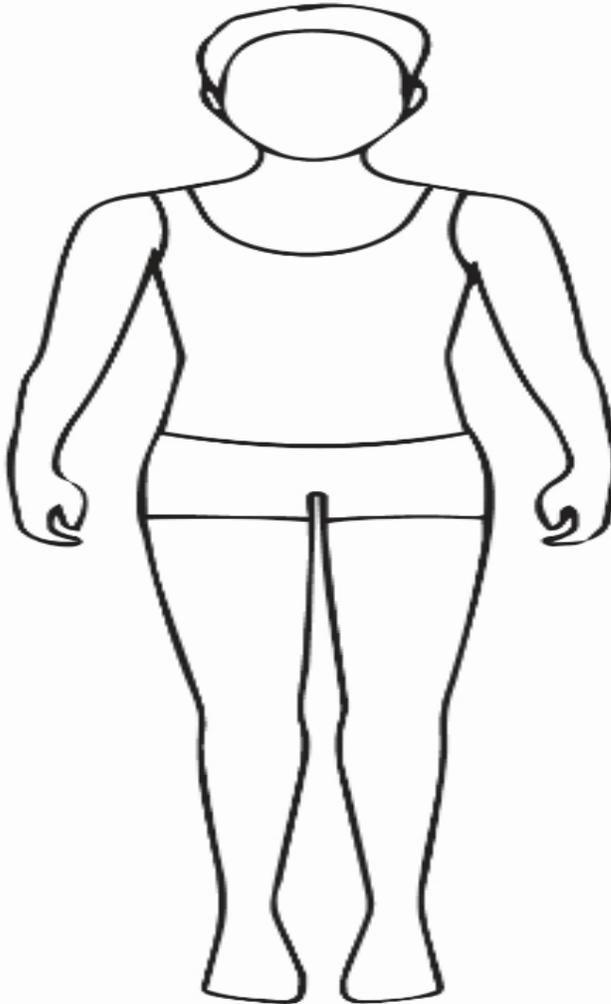
Head



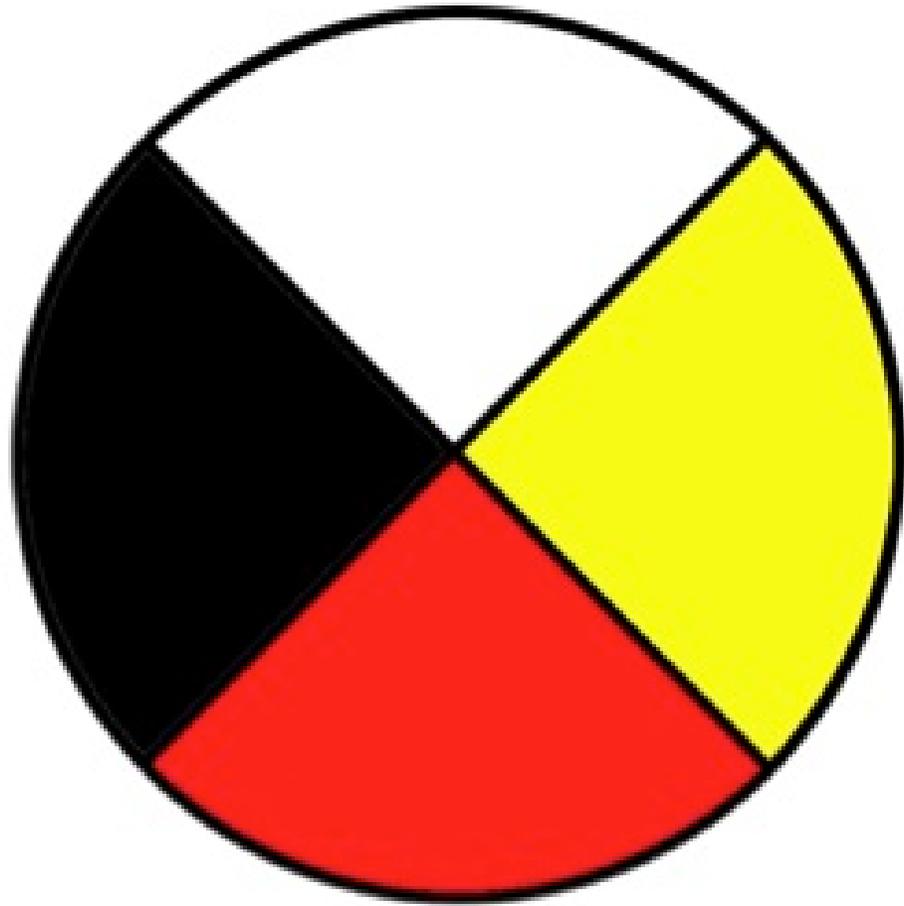
Stomach



Sweaty



Group Activity: Physical, Emotional, Mental, and Spiritual Balance



Zen

Physical: *Well groomed, eating fruits and vegetables, drinking water, rested*

Emotional: *Able to experience peace and joy, tolerance for obstacles or upsetting situations*

Relational: *Patient with my children, joking around, playful want to spend time checking in with friends*

Behavioral: *Exercising, sleeping, variety of activity*

Mental: *Thinking positively about myself, my coworkers, and my clients*



Warning: Increase Self-Care

- **Physical:** *drink more caffeine, body feels tired, less concerned about appearance, wasting energy*
- **Emotional:** *fretting, more anxious, less tolerance for agitation*
- **Relational:** *less playful with my family, less tolerance for other's flaws*
- **Behavior:** *not making as much time to exercise, skipping "me" time, tugging at my hair, less productive*
- **Mental:** *all or nothing Nancy popping up*



The End of My Rope

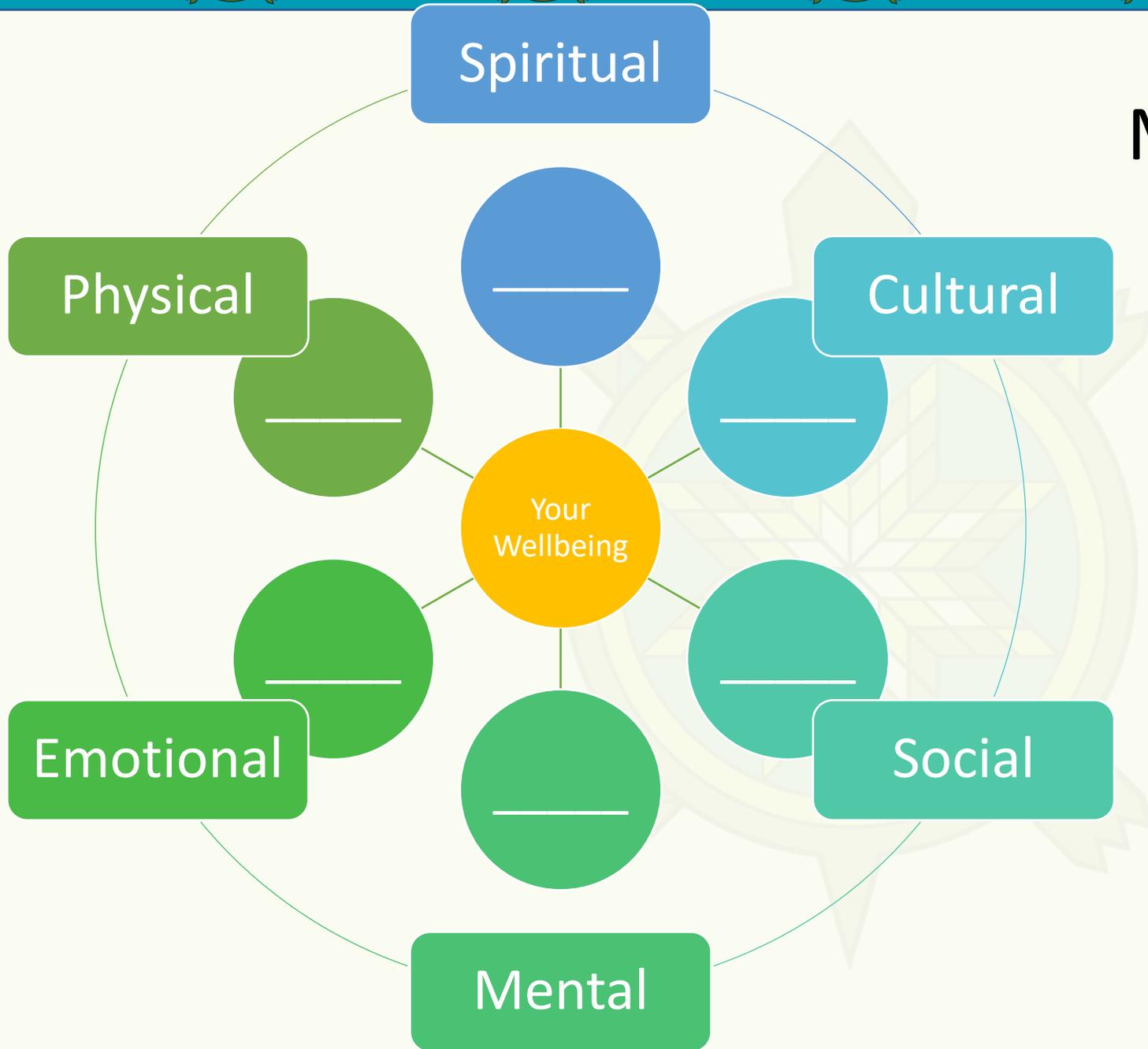
- **Physical:** *Lack of sleep, lack of energy, seeking out caffeine and sugary snacks, wondering frantically about*
- **Emotional:** *hostility, anger, panic, overwhelmed*
- **Relational:** *withdraw from my family, short with others, what friends*
- **Behavior:** *leave out exercise or relaxation, pulling my hair, unable to accomplish tasks*
- **Mental:** *obsessing over details, self-disparaging thoughts, negative thoughts towards others*



Indigenous Wellbeing is Holistic



Make a Holistic Plan





Considerations for Selecting Strategies

Time

- In the moment
- Long-term

Arenas

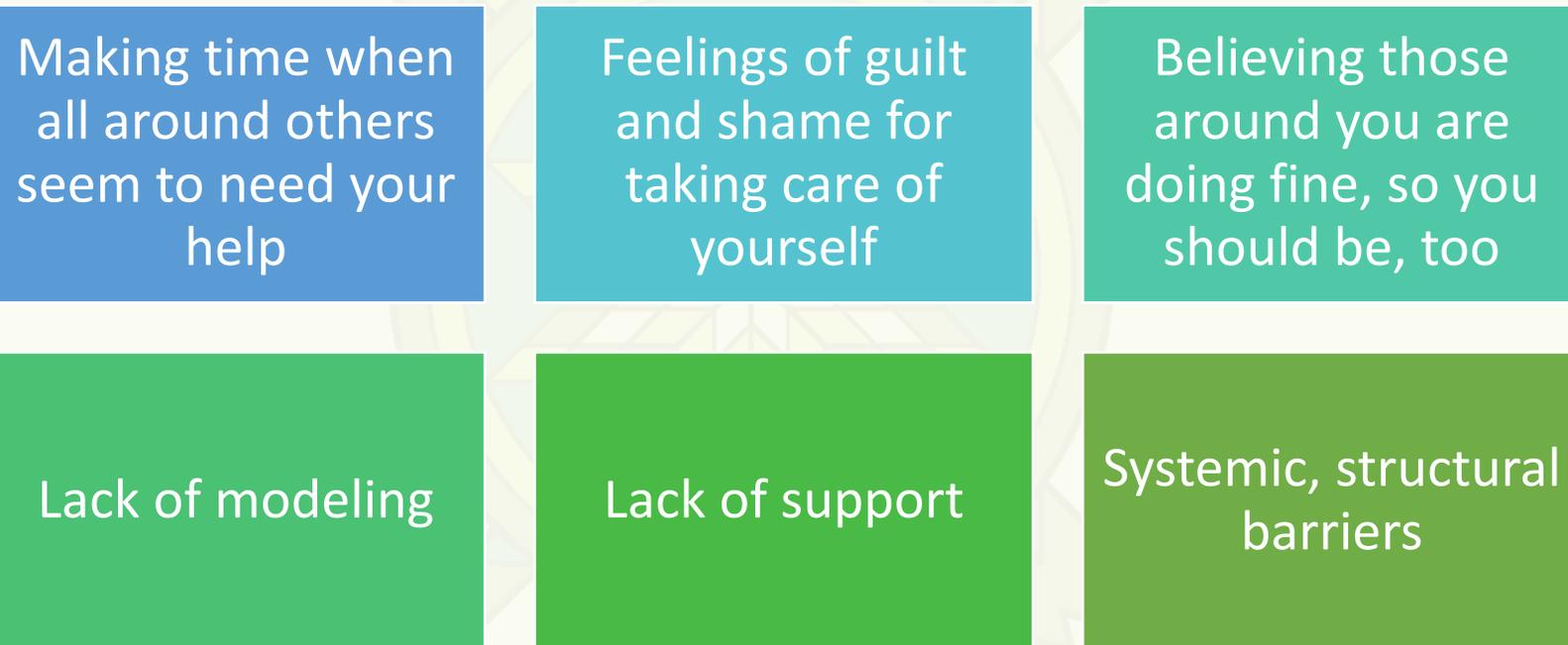
- Personal
- Professional
- Organizational

Keep a flexible and revolving door approach to the types of activities you choose

Reflection Activity: What's on your plate?



Acknowledge Challenges



Make a Commit

Advocate for your wellbeing as part of your professional development

Recognize the effort you make to take care of yourself

Continue to monitor your stress

Make it part of your daily routine

Find an accountability buddy

Encourage sharing of strategies

Managing Survival Mode



Strategies to Reduce Stress

- What is a **coping strategy**?
 - Process of managing stressful situations
 - Deliberate and planned approach
 - Goal: reduce, tolerate, or minimize stress
 - Individualized
- Create a **coping strategy** toolbox
 - A real or imaginary “box” collecting coping strategies that are successful for you



Self-Care

“Self-care is an **ethical imperative**. We have an obligation to our clients-as well as to ourselves, our colleagues, and our loved ones-not to be damaged by the work we do.”

Saakvitne & Pearlman

“We can’t teach what we don’t know. We can’t lead where we won’t go.”

Malcolm X



Radical Self-Care

- **Intentionally** and **frequently** creating opportunities for respite and replenishment
- Engage in activities that:
 - Offer distraction
 - Help unwind or decompress
 - Personal growth



The ABCs of Self-Care



Awareness



Balance



Connection



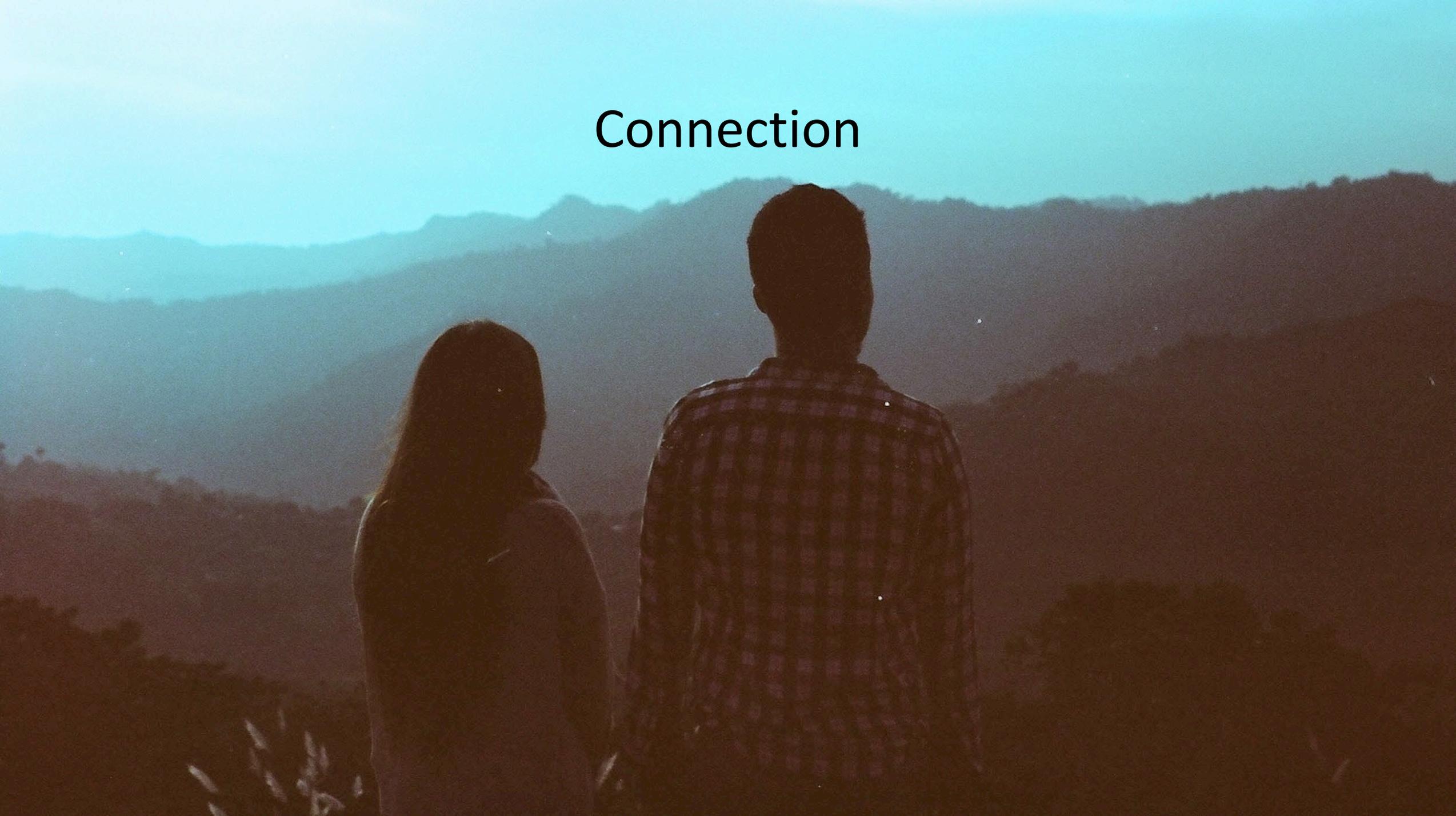
Awareness

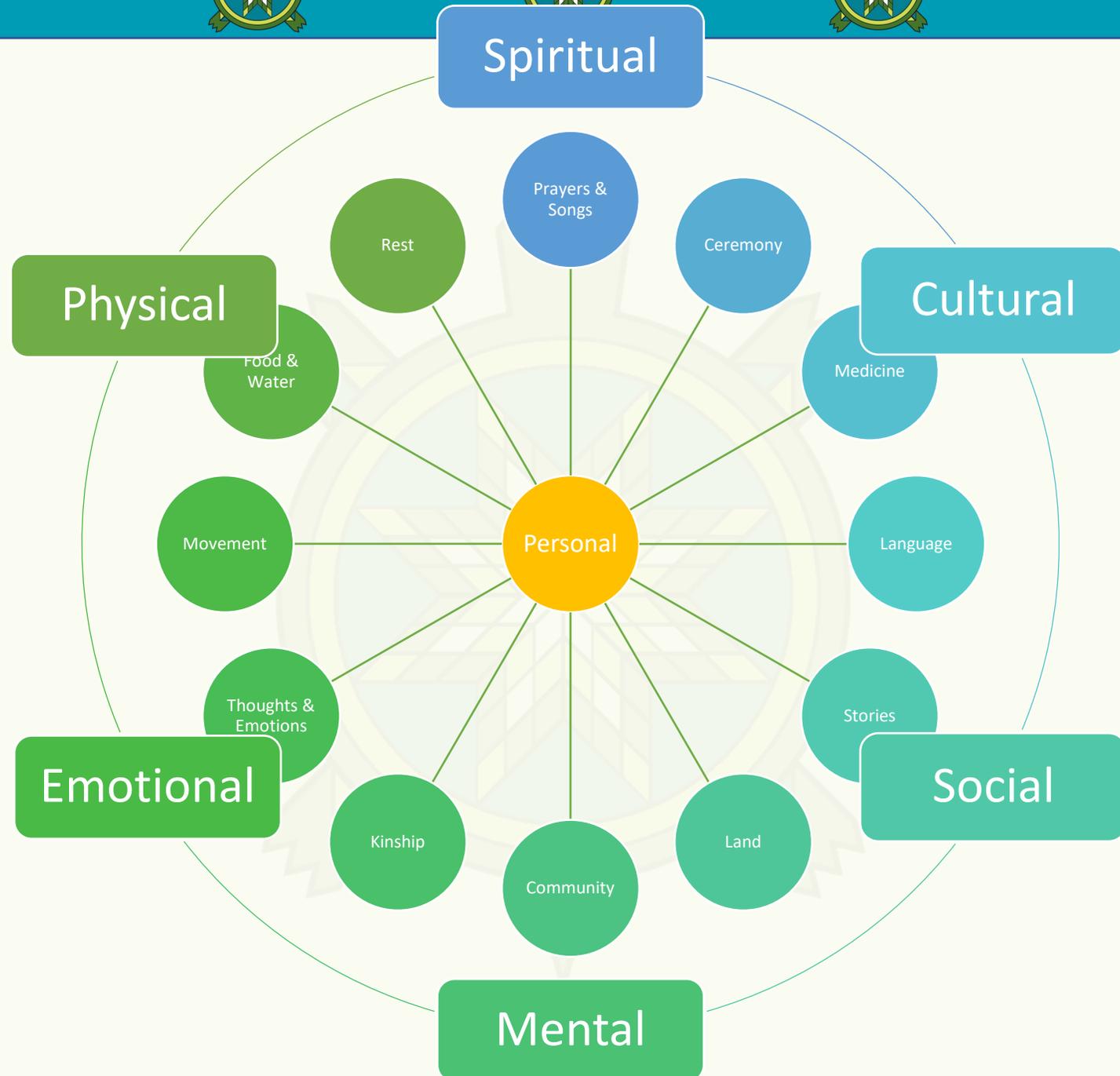


Balance



Connection





Spiritual or Cultural strategies

In the Moment

- Say a prayer
- Step outside
- Read inspirational literature
- Listen to encouraging music

Long Term

- Identify what is meaningful to you and notice it's place in your life
- Find spiritual connection or community
- Learn your ancestral language and stories
- Respect the natural laws
- Honor all life



Prayer & Songs



Medicine



Sage

- Cleansing and heart health



Sweet Grass

- Cleansing and protection of mind and body



Cedar

- Protection of a place and general health



Bear Root

- Heart and lung health



Tobacco

- Offering of thanks for wisdom and help



Corn Pollen

- Blessing and Prayer





Connection to Land

Sisnaajini

Blanka Peak

Language

T'áá hwó' ajít'éego.

It is up to you.



Stories

Hosteen Bi'ye'

The Journey of The Hero Twins



Social Strategies

In the Moment

- Call or text a family member or friend
- Hugs
- Play with children or pets

Long Term

- Spend quality time with family and friends
- Attend social events
- Be in community with those who share your interests or passions
- Practice kinship



Community

- **Create** communities
- **Define** communities for yourself
- **Give back** to your community



Kinship

- Honor your **ancestors**
- Use **kinship terms**
- Be a **good relative**



Mental Strategies

In the Moment

- Change your perspective
- Positive Thinking
- Gratitude

Long Term

- Focus on what is in your control versus out of your control
- Recognize that thoughts impact your behavior and emotions

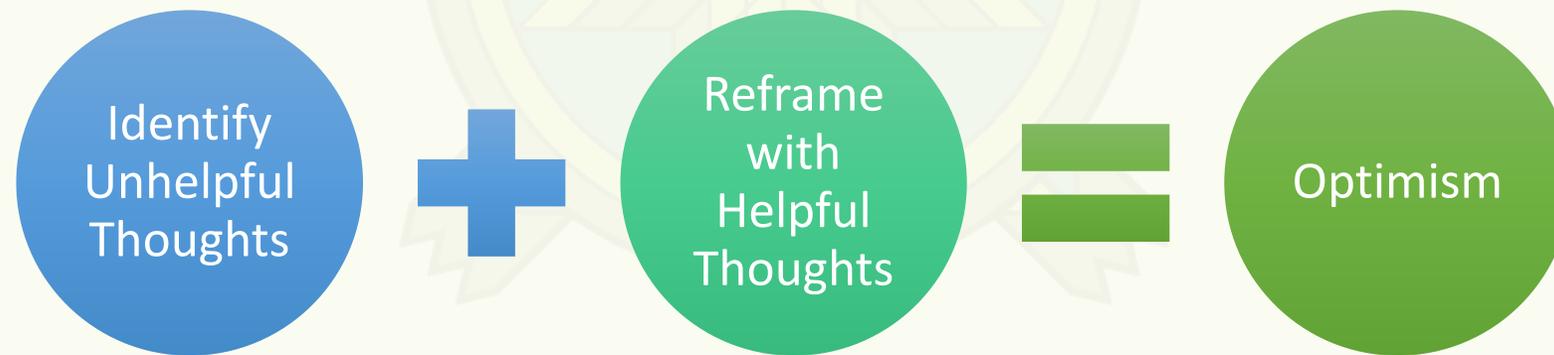


A pack of grey wolves is shown in a snowy field under a clear blue sky. The wolves are positioned in a line, with their heads turned towards the right. The fur is a mix of grey and brown tones. The text "Positive Thinking" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Positive Thinking

Develop Optimism

- Often easier to identify what is going wrong than what is going right
- Optimism can be learned



Positive Self-Statements

- Introduce repetitive positive and motivating statements into your day and in reaction to your thoughts
- Examples of **positive statements**:
 - *“I am smart! I work hard! I always do my best.”*
- Examples of **positive thought replacements**:
 - Instead of: *“I need to be perfect or I will fail”*
 - Replace with: *“I did a great job learning this new skill”*



A photograph of a forest path during autumn. The path is covered in fallen yellow and orange leaves. The trees are tall and thin, with their leaves also in shades of yellow and orange. The lighting is warm, suggesting a sunny day. The text "Meditation or Visualization Activity" is overlaid in white, bold font across the center of the image.

Meditation or Visualization Activity

Emotional strategies

In the Moment

- Laugh
- Take a break
- Practice gratitude

Long Term

- Do activities you enjoy and love
- Self-expression
- Create time to decompress
- Take a personal or mental health day
- Seek help





Protect

Set
Boundaries

Limit
exposure

Identify

Tune into
yourself

Triggers

Regulate

Calm

Energize



Physical strategies

In the Moment

- Taking a break
- Drinking water
- Controlled Breathing
- Muscle Relaxation

Long Term

- Healthy Diet
- Regular exercise
- Getting enough sleep
- Getting your check ups



Natural Movement



Rest





Water is
Sacred



Food
Sovereignty



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

- Useful for **relaxing the muscles when they feel tight** because of emotional stress
- Provides the most optimal relaxation
 - Chair Technique
 - Standing Technique
- Key: tensing a group of muscles, hold in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds, relax the muscles

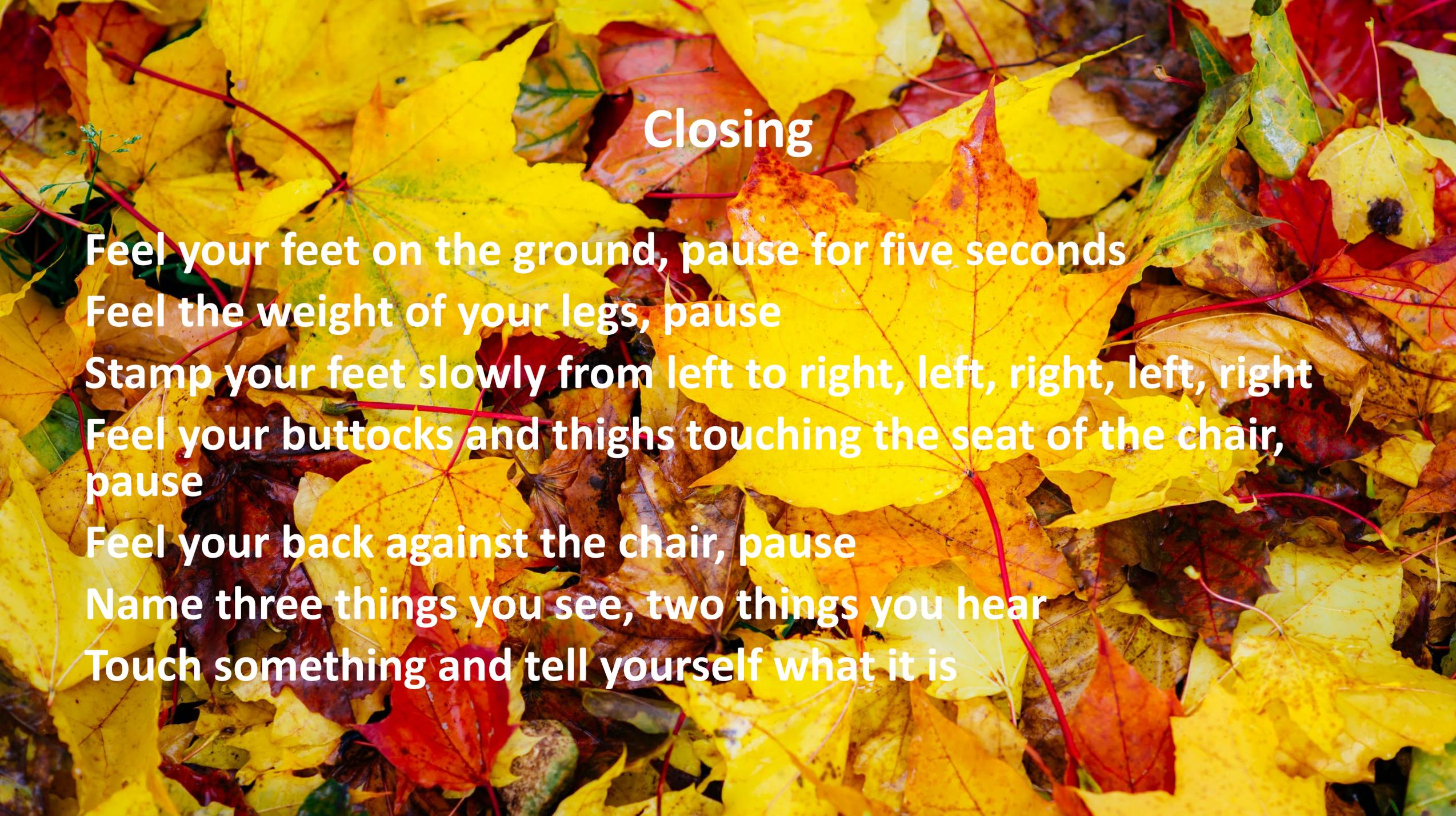




Progressive Muscle Relaxation Activity

An empty lantern
provides no light.
Self-care is the fuel
that allows your
light to shine
brightly.





Closing

Feel your feet on the ground, pause for five seconds

Feel the weight of your legs, pause

Stamp your feet slowly from left to right, left, right, left, right

Feel your buttocks and thighs touching the seat of the chair,
pause

Feel your back against the chair, pause

Name three things you see, two things you hear

Touch something and tell yourself what it is



This project was supported by Grant #2018-MU-MU-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.