

# IMPACT OF CULTURE ON VICTIM RESILIENCY

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HARNESSING OUR COLLECTIVE WISDOM:  
*STRENGTHENING THE CIRCLE OF SAFETY, JUSTICE  
AND  
HEALING*

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES



- Develop strategies in your community to help victims become more resilient.
- Understanding the influences on our ability to cope and be resilient.
- Increasing the cultural relevancy to the work that you do.

## CULTURE

One definition:

“Culture comprises the values, norms, rules, and ways of life that we get from the generations before us and how every new generation interprets and adapts those to their own lives and society.”

--Guttestad

Aspects of culture can be:

- Preserved
- Adapted/reformed
- Abandoned/replaced

“Culture is a vital part of identity. Identity is a central part of our personality; it may be seen as the core.” --Guttestad

Culture is part of the core of our identity

## REVIEW OF CULTURAL VALUES AND ASPECTS OF AMERICAN INDIAN LIFEWAYS

- Nature & Environment
- Time
- Groups/Tribe
- Other People
- Family
- Self
- Children
- Spiritual Beliefs
- Health & Medicine

## NATURE & ENVIRONMENT

- Nature is the controlling element
- Mother Nature will provide or replenish
- The earth should be:
  - cared for
  - treated with respect
  - preserved for future generations
- Take only what is needed for life from the natural environment

## LIVE IN HARMONY WITH NATURE

Different from the dominant society's  
need to control nature



## TIME ORIENTATION

- Present orientation
- More concerned about relationships and meeting the needs of others than “clock time”
- Time is without beginning or end



## RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE



- The group is more important than the individual
  - Interdependency between individuals
    - Responsibility to the tribe
    - Work for the well being of self and other tribal members
- People should be discreet and humble

## CELEBRATIONS OBSERVE NATURE'S CYCLES

- Seasons
- Passage into adulthood
- Birth and death



## RELATIONS WITH TRIBE/GROUP

- Value cooperation over competition
- Sharing
  - Group effort is valued over on individuals recognition
  - Person who self-aggrandizes is criticized or humbled
  - Difficult to accept positive feedback, if it sets them above their group
- Sharing
  - No form of indebtedness attached to sharing

American Indian values contrast with dominant society that tends to value youth, knowledge, fame and fortune.





## MOST RESPECTED AMERICAN INDIAN INDIVIDUALS

- The person who brings honor to the group
- Elders – age and wisdom
  - value wisdom more than knowledge
- People with internal strengths  
(vs. “high achievers”)



## RELATIONS WITH FAMILY

- Strong kinship ties
- Matriarchal and patriarchal systems
- Family concern may take precedence over the individual
- Extended family
  - Interdependent network of people who nurture one another
  - Primary social support unit
  - Child rearing responsibilities and role modeling



## SPIRITUAL BELIEFS

- Spiritual beliefs are integrated into way of living
  - Distinct way of living and interpreting life
  - Health and medicine
  - “Bad” happenings = punishment
  - “Good” happenings = reward
- Tobacco – medicinal purposes and the smoke carries our prayers to the creator
- Connectiveness to the animal spirits –our relatives



## REFLECTION & SUMMARY

### Activity

Name 3 or 4 components or Traditional values that you think are the strongest in your community and tell your neighbor why.

What does your community value? What are the strengths of your community?



## HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL EVENTS

- Knowledge of events that got us where we are today
- Awareness of events that shaped our future
- Recognition of how it effects us and how we move forward

## SEVEN ERAS OF FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY

- 1492-1787: Tribal Independence
- 1787-1828: Agreements Between Equals
- 1828-1887: Relocation of the Indians
- 1887-1934: Allotment and Assimilation
- 1934-1953: Indian Reorganization
- 1953-1968: Termination
- 1968-Present: Tribal Self-Determination

## HISTORICAL TRAUMA RESPONSE (HTR)

- It is said that past events shape current reality
- A collection of characteristics is formed in relation to the trauma that a group of people have endured
- HTR shows itself across Native American Nations as a group as well as with individuals.

## AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT

Trauma responses to past cataclysmic events can be transferred to offspring.

- Descendants of people who have suffered genocide not only identify with the past, but also emotionally re-experience it in the present



## THE TRAUMA

- 1880's – 1950's boarding school era
- Federal Policy forced removal of Indian children from their homes and into abusive institutions



## DISTORTION OF IDENTITY

- Self-concept
- Values
- Traditional ways-bonding with a group





## CARLISLE INDIAN SCHOOL





# RESILIENCY

“The ability to regain one’s shape (sense of identity) after going through crises or adversities. It is the ability to cope and do well in life in spite of having had to face a number of difficulties.”

--Guttestad

**Developing strong resiliency is necessary to overcome systematic and structural barriers.**

**INCREASED RESILIENCE WILL COME FROM THE STRENGTHENING OF THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS (PFs) INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES.**

**Categorizing PFs**

1. Networks
2. Abilities/Skills
3. Meaning, values, faith

All of these and their interaction determine an individuals resiliency/ability to cope, which effects life outcomes following difficult or traumatic events.

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## WHAT CAN CULTURE OFFER TO INCREASE RESILIENCY?

### Protective Factors

“Factors within an individual, their environment, and the interaction between these factors that give strength, skills and motivation to function in difficult situations and re-establish normal life”

Guttestad

### Strong Protective Factors help to:

- Establish and Maintain a positive self-image
- Reduce the effect of “risk factors”
- Break a negative circle and open up new opportunities

**Protective Factors are formed and shaped by  
culture**

## CULTURAL PATHWAYS TO CONSIDER (INCREASING CULTURAL RELEVANCY)

- Learning tribal stories
- “To all my relations”
- Tribal traditional foods
- Singing
- Naming ceremonies
- Sweat lodge for purification
- Ancestry knowledge
- Experiential activities

## INCREASING CULTURAL RELEVANCY CONT.....

- Journaling
- Listening to music
- Meditating
- Cooking Traditional foods
- Gathering

## DEVELOPING STRATEGIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY TO HELP VICTIMS BECOME MORE RESILIENT

- Intake form – add questions to assess protective factors to develop resiliency – secondary questions after initial assessment
- Activities they liked as a child, what they liked to do when they were young, elder they admire in the community or in their neighborhood
- Participation in community activities

## Keeping it Cultural Relevant

Increased PFs from Native Culture



Development of self worth



Increased Resiliency



Better chance of overcoming structural and systematic barriers

## PATHWAYS TO HEALING

- Tapping into history, not the trauma, but the thousands of years of strength, spiritual direction, inherent resiliency, and the discovery of positive identity
- Healing Circles-grieving for our forefathers, acknowledgement of the pain



**Thank You!**



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