Sweet Grass Grows: Moving from Victim to Survivor using Traditional and Western Methods of Healing

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Objectives

- Participants will learn how trauma impacts the mind, body and spirit
- Participants will learn skills that develop or do not develop as a result of trauma
- Individuals will learn three positive internal resource skills that integrate cultural wellness strategies for personal and/or professional use in coping with trauma triggers.
“We are living the stories planted in us early or along the way, or we are also living the stories we planted knowingly or unknowingly – in ourselves.

We live stories that either give our lives meaning or negate it with meaningless.

If we change the stores we live by, quite possibly we change our lives.”

Ben Okri
Nigerian Storyteller
From The Truth About Stories
By Thomas King
Trauma = an overwhelming event that impacts one's ability to cope

- What happens when mammals experience trauma?
  Biological hard wired response
- What areas of our lives does trauma impact?
  Physical, Mental, Emotional and Spiritual

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Exposure to a traumatic event in which person experiences actual or threatened death or threat to physical integrity of self or others. Person’s response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror
- Re-experiencing-recurring intrusive memories, images, thoughts, dreams, flashbacks
- Avoidance – thoughts, feelings, activities, places people
- Enduring symptoms of hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, irritability or outbursts of anger, difficulty falling or staying asleep
What About Historical and Intergenerational Trauma?

Society
Beliefs and norms (historic – present)
Demonization, Invisibile/Omitted, Noble Savage

Community, Lateral Oppression,
Loss of Language, Fragmented, Loss of Social Roles, Alcohol Abuse, Drug Abuse

Historical and Intergenerational Trauma

Family
- Boarding school, loss of language, coping mechanisms transferred to next generation

Individual
- Learns behaviors from first teachers, identity formation, coping/survival
Behaviors Observed with Trauma

- Defense of self
- Isolation
- Performing
- Hyperaware
- Disappearing

Shame
Care taking
Intellectualization
Need for perfection
Blame
Behaviors Observed with Complex Trauma

- Guilt
- Anger/or lack of anger
- Letting self be used
- No boundaries
- Controlling
- Avoidance of conflict
- Conflict seeking
- Over accountability
- Non accountability
- Fear

Skills Missing due to Trauma

- Connection
- Healthy boundaries
- Trust
- Choice
- Ability to say yes/no
- Lack of ability to experience a wide range of emotion/feeling
- Satisfaction
- Belonging
- Acceptance
- Creativity
Skills Missing due to Trauma

- Having a voice – using it for positive
- Worthiness
- Being with contradiction
- Containment
- Curiosity
- Feeling/owning/connecting with one’s body
- Taking a stand

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Rebuilding

- Safety
  - Internal
  - External
- Managing symptoms
- The story - what happened
- Finding the internal meaning – negative belief
- Reframing the meaning telling a new story – positive belief
- Integration

Integrating Culture

- Safety
- Stories
- Sending of Voice
- Movement
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