



Personal Wellness Plan/ Medicine Wheel

# Vicarious Trauma - Strategies for Resistance

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**SELF CARE**

**(2018)**

## **THE MEDICINE WHEEL A SHORT HISTORY**

The Medicine Wheel is a symbol of peaceful interaction among all living things on Mother Earth. It represents connections and harmony. The term “medicine wheel” was first applied to the Big Horn Medicine Wheel in Wyoming U.S.A., the most southern and one of the largest in existence which is made out of rocks. Despite their physical existence, there is a lot of mystery that surrounds the Medicine Wheel, because without written records, so little is understood as to their meaning.

Medicine Wheel Teachings are among the oldest teachings of First Nations people.

The teachings found on the Medicine Wheel create a holistic foundation of human behavior and interaction; the teachings are about walking the earth in a peaceful and good way, and help people to seek healthy minds (***Mental: East: Yellow***); strong inner spirits (***Spiritual: South: Red***); inner peace (***Emotional: West: Black***); strong and healthy bodies (***Physical: North: White***).

The Medicine Wheel can best be described as a mirror within which everything about the human condition is reflected back. It requires courage to look into the mirror and really see what is being reflected back about an individual’s life. The term “Medicine” as it is used by First Nations people does not refer to drugs or herbal remedies. It is used within the context of **inner spiritual energy and healing or an enlightened experience, in other words, spiritual energy**. The Medicine Wheel and its sacred teachings assist individuals along the path towards, physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional enlightenment.

## **THE CIRCLE**

First Nations people believe in a creation-based form of spirituality which has at its centre, the symbol of the sacred circle. It is believed that the circle represents a harmonious relationship with nature and with all living things who are our relatives and that all things are connected and equal because there is not beginning and no end. Mother Earth is often referred to as a Medicine Wheel or Sacred Hoop because she is circular who also turns in a circle.

Birds make their nests in circles;

We dance in circles;

The circle stands for the Sun and Moon and all round things in the natural world.

The circle is an endless creation, with endless connections to the present, all that went before and all that will come in the future.

## **POSSIBLE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAUMA SURVIVOR**

### ***Acknowledging the Need for Healing: Walking the Healing Road***

The word “character” is a Greek word that means “sharp etched lines or to engrave or scratch”. Characteristics means to have a special quality or identity. We have been marked by the residential school experience, and can be identified by common actions, behaviors, language that we learned as children at the residential school. Unfortunately the majority of these markings are not positive and the result of them shows in us physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. At times people do not even know that they have a characteristic or scar and how it affects others.

As a Survivor, or a child of a Survivor, you may have expressed some or all of the characteristics listed in this section at one time or another. By acknowledging our behaviors, we can begin to erase those characteristics that have been causing us harm, and replace them over time with new positive healing characteristics.

**See attached sheets for:**

- Physical Characteristics**
- Mental Characteristics**
- Spiritual Characteristics**
- Emotional Characteristics**

### **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

#### **-- Everything To Do With Our Bodies --**

- Not taking care of my body (teeth, health problems)
- Being over or underweight
- Developing health problems such as diabetes, heart problems, ulcers, etc.
- Poor posture from being abused as a child
- Dislike certain food groups
- Feel tired all of the time
- Addicted—used alcohol, drugs, gambling to fill the emptiness, to kill the pain and give me courage to do things that I wanted to do
- Physically active all the time to silence the inner voice
- Preoccupation with sex, or a complete lack of desire
- Changed eating habits
- Difficulty with sleep, often have to use medication to sleep
- Fear of intimacy and sexuality
- Long for touch, but doesn't know proper touch
- Migraine headaches
- Lower back and neck pain
- Prone to injuries
  
- Suffer anxiety attacks when  
away from comfort zone  
(upset stomach, headache,  
nausea, diarrhea)

## **MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **-- How We Think and Act --**

- Do not believe that I am good for anything
- Will put myself last and suffer silently
- Think that no one cares for me
- Isolate myself from family and friends
- Identity "I didn't know how I was supposed to act as a First Nations person"
- Rebellious "I didn't like the regimentation so I became undisciplined/resistant to order, including household responsibilities"
- Hung on to relationships
- Left a relationship before the other person left me
- Have a hard time making decisions
- Avoided anyone/anything associated with the residential schools
- Control became a drug
- Became self-indulgent
- Struggle when it comes to authority figures
- Fantasy lifestyle—saying "What if, or I should have"
- Feeling abandoned and unwanted
- Feeling misunderstood
- If it is not going to be perfect why bother
- Starting things and not finishing them
- Compulsive lying for appearance sake
- Become patronizing (snobby, know it all)
- Will not make waves to protect others feelings
- Breaking promises
- Inability to be spontaneous, being careful
- Lack of hospitality skills
- Procrastinator

## SPIRITUAL CHARACTERISTICS

### -- Beliefs and Will to Live --

- Struggle with religion
- Left out, I wasn't connected to what was going on at home
- Lost, especially with relationship because I had no role models to follow
- Survivor, I did whatever was necessary to survive and lost all concern for other issues; i.e. I became self-focused
- Wanderer, I didn't want to settle in one place, I just wanted to keep moving
- Hungered for my identity, my culture, my family, companionship, understanding and acceptance
- Floundered as a parent (especially when my children get older)
- Did not enjoy Christmas, Easter, Birthdays and any celebration
- Didn't want my kids to go through what I did but subjected them to the same types of things
- Have difficulties with parents
- Had problems adjusting to home/reserve life
- Have suicidal tendencies
- Am reckless, even when with others, i.e. driving
- Feeling disconnected from the Creator and Creation
- Children do not have a spiritual base due to no role models in this part of life
- Stay up all night and sleep all day

## EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

### -- Feelings that Will Return Even Though we do not Like Them to --

- Feeling of depression will not go away
- Get angry at the wrong time towards to wrong people
- Be cruel without reason
- Feelings of insecurity were shown by jealousy
- Feelings of loneliness, for not having mail, visitors, from parents, relatives, and friends at the residential school
- Ashamed, because of things I didn't have; i.e. good clothes, money, athleticism
- Paranoid, a feeling of being stalked therefore I lost out on intimate relationships
- Numbed feelings
- Refused to become vulnerable, become aloof
- Have difficulties trusting
- Have negative self-talk
- Feelings of hate for white people and different religions
- Feeling guilty all the time, even when I am happy
- Fear of confrontation
- Uncomfortable to show emotions whether sadness, love, happiness, or anger
- Do emotional blackmail (talk about committing suicide)
- Rage, expressed and hidden (make threats and at times go ballistic)
- Co-dependent in all aspects of my life

## **HEALTHY MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS TOOLS**

### **-- How We Think and Act --**

- Keep a personal journal. Some people make entries every day, short or long!
- Read self-care books that can help you to better understand yourself and others
- Write stories and poetry about things that you feel strongly about (positive)
- Seek help/advise from an Elder, a Traditional Person, or a Counselor (commit to see them regularly until you have been helped)
- Do not keep things bundled up inside, set them free!
- Participate in Peer Helping or Life Skills Courses that may be offered in your community
- Spend time with family and friends
- Set short-term and long-term goals and try to finish them

## **HEALTHY PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS TOOLS**

### **-- Everything To Do With Our Bodies --**

- Take care of your body: be clean and well-groomed and remember to brush your teeth
- Exercise regularly (20 mins. 3 x/wk. is recommended): play sports, walk, run, dance, etc.
- Take a hot and long relaxing bath or shower
- Get plenty of sleep
- Eat healthy food (to avoid health problems such as diabetes, heart problems, etc.)
- Learn and educate yourself about addictions that can and do cause harm to you, your family and your friends (gambling, alcohol, drugs, sex, control, etc.)
- Learn about healthy sexual boundaries (good touch/bad touch)
- Be a role model
- Go to a doctor or nurse if your body does not feel well

## **HEALTHY SPIRITUAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **-- Beliefs and Will to Live --**

- Believe in whatever you choose to believe in
- Take time to pray however you wish to do so
- Read the Bible or devotional books as often as needed (some read them every day to help them nurture their spirit)
- Attend Church or Traditional Ceremonies or both
- Do a Smudge Ceremony (learn how to if you do not know how)
- Take time on the land to feel the connectedness to the Creator and Creation
- Learn about your identity, your culture, and your language
- Spend time with family (social events, family gatherings, etc.)
- Tell your family members that you love them!
- Set up a time to talk with your family about any concerns that may arise (try a talking circle)

## **HEALTHY EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **-- Feelings that Will Return Even Though we do not Like Them to --**

- Take time to have fun and to laugh
- Love yourself—tell yourself positive messages about yourself every day!
- Spend time with friends and also take time to be alone
- Take time to know yourself, what you like and what you don't like, then stand on your own two feet and do not follow the crowd
- Feel your emotions: laugh, cry, feel alive!
- Talk about your feelings
- Practice good, clear, and honest communication
- Forgive yourself when you mess up! It happens to all of us, you will always learn from your mistakes.
- Write out your vision of what kind of person you would like to be and what your values are
- If you are depressed, talk to someone (Elder, Doctor, Nurse, Counselor)
- Build your self-esteem and confidence, look at your personal qualities and character strengths then remind yourself of them every day
- Practice the Seven Grandfather Teachings: Honesty, Love, Wisdom, Bravery, Humility, Respect, and Truth
- Learn about stress busters if you are stressed a lot
- Set up a support group, even if it is just a small group of friends at school who can make a commitment to each other for support
- Be a Peer Helper
- Be a Role Model
- Be positive and speak positively

## **COOL HEALING THINGS TO DO**

### **-- Healing Things that People Do --**

There are many people in the world who have been on a healing journey in their lifetime. There are a lot of different ways to look after your body, your mind, your spirit, and your emotions. Here are some ideas, do you know of any other?

- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Meditation
- Traditional Ceremonies
- Get a Message
- Join a Sport Team or Fitness Centre
- Reiki
- Therapeutic Touch

Any other ideas?

## Strategies for Resistance

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### MAKING A SELF-CARE PLAN -- Building Your Own Canoe --

**On the healing road we can:**

- Increase belief in ourselves
- Improve our family relationships
- Celebrate our culture as practiced and lived by our ancestors

1. My struggle or issue is...

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2. I need help with...

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3. Things I will do in order to help myself...

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*HANDOUT continued...*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## MAKING A SELF-CARE PLAN

People that I can count on for support and contact information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Places of support that I can access:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Methods I can use to support my healing:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ make my commitment to wellness and healing. It takes time,  
but (your name)

today \_\_\_\_\_ I will honor my path.  
(date)

The witness and support to my plan is: \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

We agree to review my plan on: \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

# Vicarious Trauma - Strategies for Resistance

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## SELF CARE

(2018)

### MAIN IDEA

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Participants will learn about the Medicine Wheel: Physical, Mental, Spiritual & Emotional and the possible characteristics of Trauma Survivors that have been marked by the personal experience.
- To teach participants how to create a Personal Care Plan in order to take responsibility of their own well being as they have been impacted by trauma.
- Also this care plan can help assist participants with any issue that they need to work on and how they can assist others.

### ACTIVITIES

1. Share the information with the participants about the **Medicine Wheel** and show picture.
2. Read **Possible Characteristics of a Trauma Survivor** together, followed by a group discussion.
3. Read the **Self Care Tools and Characteristics** together, followed by a group discussion.
4. Read **Cool Things to Do** as a group and then brainstorm any other ideas that participants may have.
5. Review **Making a Self Care Plan** and have students individually and confidentially do the exercise, emphasize that they can use this self care plan at home any time that they need to work out any problems.

### ASSESSMENT

**Formative:** Group Participation, Individual Work

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**Participants will be learning about the Characteristics of a Human Being:**

**Physical, Mental, Spiritual & Emotional**

## **POSSIBLE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRAUMA SURVIVOR**

*Acknowledging the Need for Healing: Walking the Healing Road by Gerry Oleman R*

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## **SELF-CARE TOOLS**

### **- Tools for the Mind Body and Soul -**

Healing ourselves and our families means taking a healing journey that covers all the areas of the medicine wheel—physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional. It means walking in harmony and balance. For example, if there is a lot of arguing in a family, there may be physical abuse where the victim may need help from a doctor, but there will also be mental, spiritual, and emotional abuse that accompanies the physical abuse.

The cycle of abuse will continue from generation to generation (intergenerational impacts) until individuals, you, I, our families, take steps to look at the abuse and make positive changes to stop the cycle. It is up to you! It is up to all of us!

*Remember, if there are deep things inside of you that you would like to change or to stop hurting, find someone that you feel comfortable and safe with and begin talking about what is bothering you.  
Talking is an excellent first step towards your way on the healing journey.*

**See attached sheets for:**

**Physical Characteristics Tools**  
**Mental Characteristics Tools**  
**Spiritual Characteristics Tools**  
**Emotional Characteristics Tools**  
**Cool Healing Things To Do**

## **MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS TOOLS**

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- Talk about your feelings
- Practice good, clear, and honest communication
- Forgive yourself when you mess up! It happens to all of us, you will always learn from your mistakes.
- Write out your vision of what kind of person you would like to be and what your values are
- If you are depressed, talk to someone (Elder, Doctor, Nurse, Counselor)
- Build your self-esteem and confidence, look at your personal qualities and character strengths then remind yourself of them every day
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- Learn about stress busters if you are stressed a lot
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- Tai Chi
- Meditation
- Traditional Ceremonies
- Get a Message
- Join a Sport Team or Fitness Centre
- Reiki
- Therapeutic Touch

***Any other ideas?***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **MAKING A SELF-CARE PLAN - Building Your Own Canoe -**

### **On the healing road we can:**

- Increase belief in ourselves
- Improve our family relationships
- Celebrate our culture as practiced and lived by our ancestors

1. My struggle or issue is...

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2. I need help with...

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3. Things I will do in order to help myself...

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*HANDOUT continued...*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## MAKING A SELF-CARE PLAN

People that I can count on for support and contact information:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Places of support that I can access:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Methods I can use to support my healing:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ make my commitment to wellness and healing. It takes time, but  
(your name)

today \_\_\_\_\_ I will honour my path.  
(date)

The witness and support to my plan is: \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

We agree to review my plan on: \_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

## ***Self-Care Assessment Worksheet***

This assessment tool provides an overview of effective strategies to maintain self-care. After completing the full assessment, choose one item from each area that you will actively work to improve.

Using the scale below, rate the following areas in terms of frequency:

5 = Frequently

4 = Occasionally

3 = Rarely

2 = Never

1 = It never occurred to me

### **Physical Self-Care**

\_\_\_ Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch and dinner)

\_\_\_ Eat healthy

\_\_\_ Exercise

\_\_\_ Get regular medical care for prevention

\_\_\_ Get medical care when needed

\_\_\_ Take time off when needed

\_\_\_ Get massages

\_\_\_ Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun

\_\_\_ Take time to be sexual—with yourself, with a partner

\_\_\_ Get enough sleep

\_\_\_ Wear clothes you like

\_\_\_ Take vacations

\_\_\_ Take day trips or mini-vacations

\_\_\_ Make time away from telephones

\_\_\_ Other:

### **Psychological Self-Care**

\_\_\_ Make time for self-reflection

\_\_\_ Have your own personal psychotherapy

\_\_\_ Write in a journal

\_\_\_ Read literature that is unrelated to work

\_\_\_ Do something at which you are not expert or in charge

\_\_\_ Decrease stress in your life

- \_\_\_ Let others know different aspects of you
- \_\_\_ Notice your inner experience—listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings
- \_\_\_ Engage your intelligence in a new area, e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theater performance
- \_\_\_ Practice receiving from others
- \_\_\_ Be curious
- \_\_\_ Say “no” to extra responsibilities sometimes
- \_\_\_ Other:

### **Emotional Self-Care**

- \_\_\_ Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- \_\_\_ Stay in contact with important people in your life
- \_\_\_ Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- \_\_\_ Love yourself
- \_\_\_ Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- \_\_\_ Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
- \_\_\_ Allow yourself to cry
- \_\_\_ Find things that make you laugh
- \_\_\_ Express your outrage in social action, letters and donations, marches, protests
- \_\_\_ Play with children
- \_\_\_ Other:

### **Spiritual Self-Care**

- \_\_\_ Make time for reflection
- \_\_\_ Spend time with nature
- \_\_\_ Find a spiritual connection or community
- \_\_\_ Be open to inspiration
- \_\_\_ Cherish your optimism and hope
- \_\_\_ Be aware of nonmaterial aspects of life
- \_\_\_ Try at times not to be in charge or the expert
- \_\_\_ Be open to not knowing

- \_\_\_ Identify what is meaningful to you and notice its place in your life
- \_\_\_ Meditate
- \_\_\_ Pray
- \_\_\_ Sing
- \_\_\_ Spend time with children
- \_\_\_ Have experiences of awe
- \_\_\_ Contribute to causes in which you believe
- \_\_\_ Read inspirational literature (talks, music, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Other:

**Workplace or Professional Self-Care**

- \_\_\_ Take a break during the workday (e.g. lunch)
- \_\_\_ Take time to chat with co-workers
- \_\_\_ Make quiet time to complete tasks
- \_\_\_ Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- \_\_\_ Set limits with your clients and colleagues
- \_\_\_ Balance your caseload so that no one day or part of a day is “too much”
- \_\_\_ Arrange your work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- \_\_\_ Get regular supervision or consultation
- \_\_\_ Negotiate for your needs (benefits, pay raise)
- \_\_\_ Have a peer support group
- \_\_\_ Develop a non-trauma area of professional interest
- \_\_\_ Other:

**Balance**

- \_\_\_ Strive for balance within your work-life and workday
- \_\_\_ Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play and rest