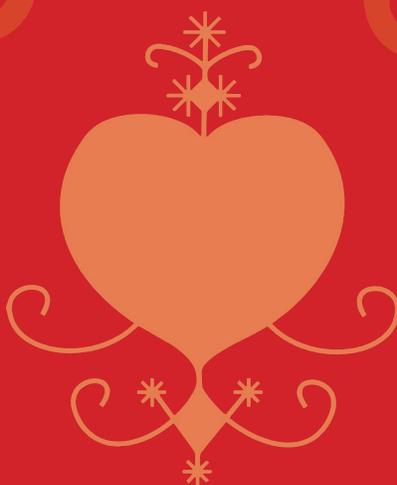


THE ROADMAP TO HEALING



a digital toolkit

created by the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies (IWES)
in partnership with National Community Action Partnership (NCAP)

About **IWES**

Founded in 1993, the **Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies (IWES)** is a national non-profit health organization domiciled in New Orleans. Utilizing health advocacy and policy development, health education, research, direct services and innovative media strategies, IWES works with communities, schools, individuals and organizations to provide tailored health and wellness services.

Mission

IWES is dedicated to improving the mental, physical and spiritual health and quality of life for women, their families and communities of color, particularly among marginalized populations, using community-engaged research, programs, training and advocacy.

Vision

IWES envisions a world wherein all people can live and create environments and communities where health and wellness are valued and promoted so as to enhance quality of life.

Instagram: [@iwes_nola](#) | Twitter: [@IWES_NOLA](#) | Facebook: [@IWES.NOLA](#) | [YouTube](#)

About **NCAP**

America was built on the promise that every family should have an opportunity for success. Yet, today's uneven economy has put a good quality of life out of reach for too many Americans. **Community Action Partnership** is a national, 501(c)3 nonprofit membership organization that provides technical assistance, training, and other resources to Community Action Agencies, non-profit and public groups funded by the Community Services Block Grant, a federal program that allocates funding to states to connect Americans to greater opportunity. When national, state and local leaders tap into these agencies' experience, they can promote workable solutions that connect more families to opportunity - and make America a better place to live for everyone.



User Guide

The Roadmap to Healing serves as a workbook, guide and source of support for self, organization and community. This toolkit provides ideas and inspiration as you define and explore your unique road to healing and create your own map, find your own compass.

The Roadmap to Healing is largely informed by [Healing Is the Revolution](#), a book written by our CEO & Founder, Dr. Denese Shervington, that illustrates the effects of decades of compounding structural oppression, societal disfranchisement, and psychological backlash on individuals living in an environment where hate speech and hate-driven actions and policy are no longer underground. The book invites readers into a discussion of the nameable and unnamable struggles African Americans face in a tense and high stress existence in the United States. It also lays bare Black American history and how it continues to affect modern day African Americans both mentally and physically. Like this toolkit, it also provides steps for healing from the individual to the community level, revealing opportunities for action and motivation for change. To find out more about the book, and/or Dr. Shervington's work, please email us at HealingIsTheRevolution@iwesnola.org.

Dr. Denese Shervington, MD, MPH

Dr. Shervington is a board-certified psychiatrist and international trauma expert with over 30 years of extensive training and experience in mental health, HIV and sexual and reproductive health. Lovingly referred to as a community psychiatrist, she has devoted the last 15 years of her career to addressing the psychosocial needs of Black and Brown communities to achieve optimal health and wellbeing, especially those of young people.



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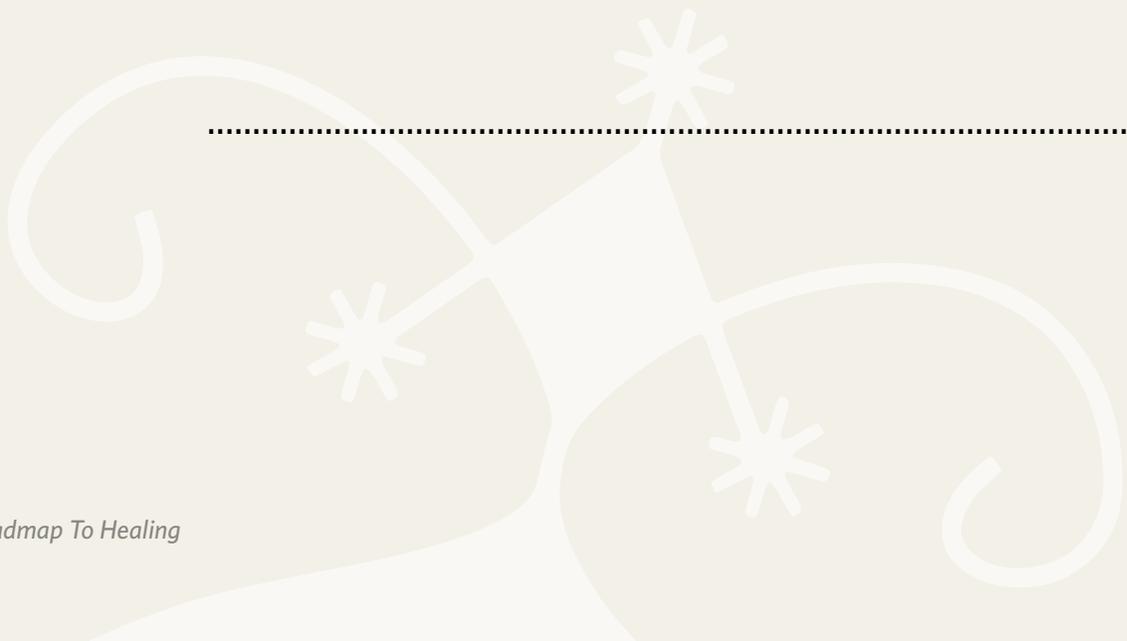
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THE ROADMAP TO HEALING

The Roadmap to Healing invites you to move at your own pace through the four phases outlined below. As you travel along the map to each phase, we encourage you to begin by engaging in reflective practices that can eventually lead you to action and integration. We've also provided some "rest stops" to help you think deeper about your healing, explore what it looks like to you, and practice new routines, rituals and mindsets that will help you connect with your past, present and future. We understand that healing journeys are non-linear, so your path may not follow exactly in this order and may take steps backwards and forwards, however there is always a beginning to every journey and this roadmap helps you find that beginning.

REST STOPS

NOTICE 1

Pay attention and listen curiously to your internal landscape and the world around you

2

NAME

Increase your awareness about how the stress of trauma and loss impact your mental and physical functioning

3

DISCOVER

Shift from awareness to embodiment as you move from being trauma-informed to trauma-responsive

4

LIBERATE

Release woundedness and suffering by cultivating an authentic practice of self and community care

NOTICE.

an acknowledgement of the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

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During the last 19 months, many of us have been reflecting on big questions in new ways. We consistently hear people pondering what it means to be physically and mentally well in a time of so much uncertainty. Although people have very different ideas about what we can and should do collectively in the face of COVID-19 and its variants, I'm noticing fewer references to 'when we get back to normal' as people talk about their future plans. Over the last several months the guidelines are less clear but still have to adapt as things change. In this moment, it feels like many of us are actively reimagining how we live, work, learn, and interact as a global community. The pandemic is pushing us all to do things differently and there is inspiration in the ways people are using imagination, creativity and collective effort to adapt and care for one another.

Adaptation is the new normal.



- Dr. Lisa Richardson
**CHIEF IMPACT OFFICER,
IWES**

Pandemic Rites of Passage

(adapted from Roshi Joan Halifax)

Phase 1: Separation

- Separation from the usual ways of ordinary life -
- Loss of what was customary, predictable or certain -

Phase 2: Threshold

- Between both worlds, old and new -
- Radical uncertainty, not knowing -
- Feeling torn apart -

Phase 3:

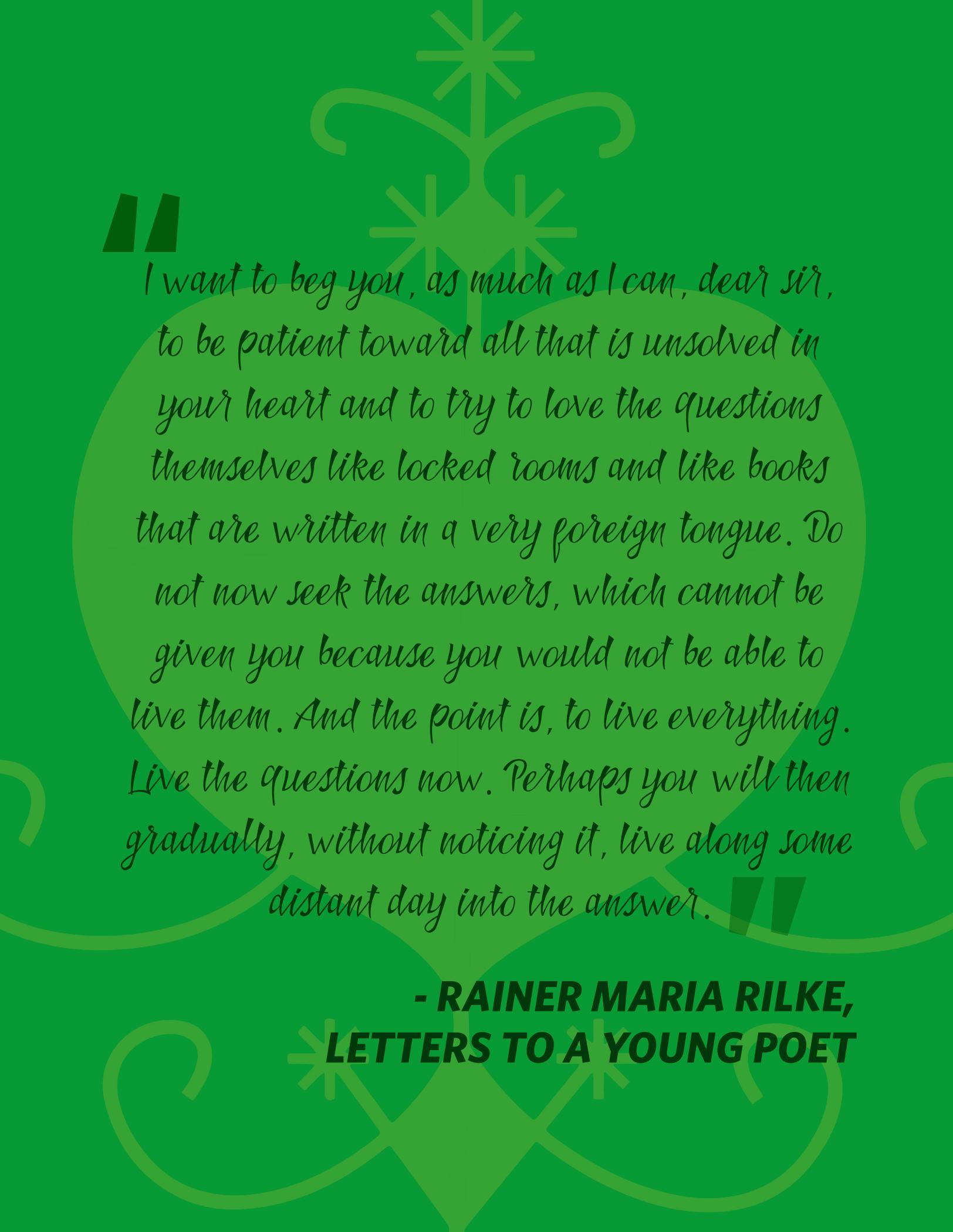
Making time for deep reflection --
turning toward (not away from) the pain

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION
tell your story

***When did the
pandemic start
for you?***

***Has the pandemic
given you any
unexpected gifts?***

***What has
the pandemic
allowed you:
...to put down?
...to let go of?***



“
I want to beg you, as much as I can, dear sir,
to be patient toward all that is unsolved in
your heart and to try to love the questions
themselves like locked rooms and like books
that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do
not now seek the answers, which cannot be
given you because you would not be able to
live them. And the point is, to live everything.
Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then
gradually, without noticing it, live along some
distant day into the answer.”

**- RAINER MARIA RILKE,
LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET**

NAME.

an outline of key terms related to stress, trauma & resilience

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LANGUAGE CAN BE EMPOWERING AS WE SEARCH FOR WORDS TO DEFINE EXPERIENCES IN LIFE THAT ARE DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE. A HEALING JOURNEY BEGINS WITH THE NAMING OF ONE'S STRESSORS, TRAUMA AND UNIQUE RESPONSES DEVELOPED OVER TIME FOR SURVIVAL AND SELF-PROTECTION. ADDITIONALLY, ONE MUST NAME AND CELEBRATE THEIR STRENGTHS, RESILIENCE AND ASSETS. TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE GO HAND IN HAND. IN THIS SECTION, WE WILL EXPLORE WORKING DEFINITIONS OF STRESS, TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE AS WE CONSIDER THEIR IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON, ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT, AND COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY.

Stress, Trauma, & Resilience 101

Trauma 'wound':

an external event (or ongoing pattern of experiences) that overwhelms a person's coping and activates the neurobiological stress response

Stress:

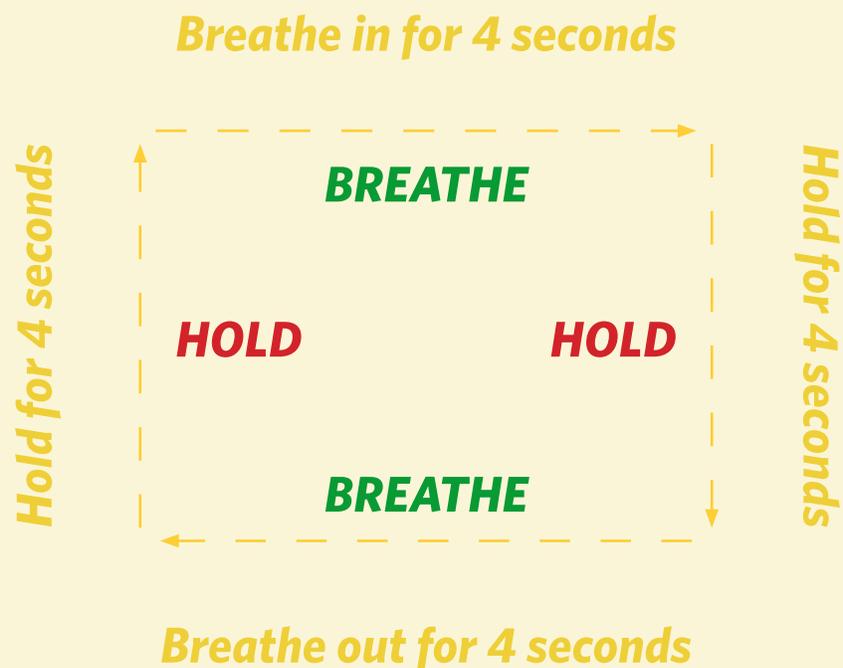
a threat to an individual's physiological and psychological integrity -- results in biological and behavioral responses necessary for to recreate homeostasis and survival

Fight/Flight/Freeze:

- When one perceives something as a threat to their life or safety, the brain tells the body to fight, flee or freeze. This is a protective tool that evolved from the days of our early ancestors. Although we may not face the same “threats” as those of our early ancestors, this system continues to automatically activate in order to protect us from perceived danger.
- The amygdala processes certain events and if it senses a threat, the alarm goes off and the hypothalamus releases hormones (cortisol & adrenaline). These hormones tell the heart to beat faster in order to pump more blood to the muscles. Breathing increases so the body has more oxygen. Blood flow increases to the muscles and the brain, and the skin begins to sweat.
- As we attempt to constantly adapt to psychosocial stressors and adverse environments, our fight/flight/freeze response may sometimes remain activated. In this case, it is harder to accurately assess threats and reach equilibrium. Without self-regulation, basic functions such as memory, attention, mood, socialization and sleep can become disrupted and dysregulated.

TRY THIS!

Breathwork is foundational when trying to calm the nervous system. When you breathe in, your heart rate naturally increases. When you breathe out, your heart rate slows down. A **Box Breath** is a quick exercise you can do anywhere at any time to self-regulate and achieve calm.



Try a few rounds of box breathing and notice how you feel.

The Ripple Effect of Trauma

For those in helping professions with exposure to the chronic stress, trauma and suffering of others, there can be—as trauma expert Dr. Charles Figley says—“a cost to caring.” It is critical that care providers are aware of the risk factors and warning signs related to **compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress and burnout**.

Compassion Fatigue: Emotional residue or strain of exposure to working with those suffering from the consequences of traumatic events overtime or in isolated cases. It can occur due to exposure in one case or cumulatively. (Figley, 1995).

Symptoms:

- **Cognitive:** lowered concentration, apathy, rigid thinking, perfectionism, preoccupation with trauma, excessive complaints and/or blaming, existential despair
- **Behavioral:** Withdrawal, sleep disturbance, appetite change, hyper-vigilance, elevated startle response, substance abuse, overspending, poor self-care
- **Emotional:** Guilt, anger, irritability, numbness, sadness, helplessness, bottled up emotions
- **Physical:** Increased heart rate, difficulty breathing, muscle and joint pain, impaired immune system, gastrointestinal problems, increased severity of medical concerns
- **Occupational:** high absenteeism, constant changes in co-worker relationships, inability for teams to work well together, desire among staff members to break company rules, outbreaks of aggressive behaviors among staff, inability to complete assignments and tasks, lack of flexibility among staff, negativity toward management, strong reluctance toward change, inability to believe improvement is possible, lack of vision of the future.

Secondary Traumatic Stress: Can occur when work is focused on the relief of another’s suffering and there is exposure to the trauma and suffering of others. The helper/provider may develop trauma-based conditions or symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, Anxiety Disorder, and/or Substance Use Disorder. According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network ([NCTSN](#), 2011), individuals affected by secondary stress may find themselves re-experiencing personal trauma or notice an increase in arousal and avoidance reactions related to the indirect trauma exposure. They may also experience changes in memory and perception; alterations in their sense of self-efficacy; a depletion of personal resources; and disruption in their perceptions of safety, trust, and independence.

Burnout: Characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced feeling of personal accomplishment. While it is also work-related, burnout develops as a result of general stress; the term is not used to describe the effects of indirect trauma exposure specifically. ([NCTSN](#), 2011).

STAYING AWARE IN THE WORKPLACE

If you sense you are suffering from compassion fatigue, chances are high that you are. To begin your path to wellness, it's helpful to increase your self-awareness, and one tool that can help you achieve heightened awareness is the **Professional Quality of Life Measure (ProQOL)**, a self-assessment tool developed by the the Center for Victims of Torture. ProQOL is used to measure the negative and positive effects of working in a helping profession that serves individuals who have experienced trauma. It includes sub-scales for compassion satisfaction, burnout and compassion fatigue.

Directions for how to use the ProQOL and calculate your score can be found on the tool itself, however if you have any questions feel free to reach out to us at **HealingIsTheRevolution@iwesnola.org**. If you find that your scores are *low* for compassion satisfaction and *high* for burnout and compassion fatigue, you may want to consider discussing your needs with a supervisor or seek out professional support from a mental health professional. Remember, it is never a bad time to improve your self-care plan or simply invest in your mental health and wellness! Whatever your scores may be, take this as an opportunity to assess your needs and identify tools to enhance your overall well-being.

Resilience:

Both individuals and communities have survived stressful and traumatic events by calling upon and acknowledging their unique strengths and support systems. A healing journey stalls if we only recognize the pitfalls as opposed to the mountains climbed, therefore it is important to acknowledge those moments and reflect upon what resilience looks like for yourself and others. As with many points raised in this toolkit, one's definition of resilience may adapt, change and grow over time, yet at core one overarching truth remains. **Healing is possible when we simultaneously notice our wounds and celebrate the strengths, qualities, cultural practices and resources that allow hope and joy to remain.**

Resilience...

...is the ability to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change.

...develops over time and provides the capacity not only to cope with life's challenges but also to be better prepared for the next situation.

...comes from having access to safe spaces (SAMHSA, 2014).

PAUSE...

Resilience Reflection

How often do we get a chance to reflect on our strengths, assets, and resilience (both external & internal)? When we do, we re-energize ourselves and ensure we have enough fuel for the journey ahead. Below we've included some questions you can ask yourself, meditate upon, or reflect on in your journal to help in this reflection process.

- * **What is your greatest strength according to you?**
- * **What is your greatest strength according to others (i.e. how would your loved ones answer this question)?**
- * **How have you navigated stress or uncertainty to get to where you are today?**
- * **What are the greatest strengths of your organization or community?**
- * **How does your organization or community navigate stress or uncertainty?**
- * **In what ways do you feel supported by your organization or community?**
- * **In what ways do you support your organization or community?**

*Adequate tears twisting up directly from
the heart and rung out across the vocal cords
until only a gasp remains;*

*At least an hour a day spent staring at the
truth in numb silence...*

An absence of theory;

Flight as necessary;

*Poetry, your own and others, on precipice,
abandonment, nature, and death;*

*Courage to say what happened...and space
not to say a word;*

*A brief dance with sugar, to honor the
legacies of coping that got you this far...*

*Laughter, undeniable and unpretended;
A walk in the world, all that gravity, with
breath and heartbeat in you ears;
Fire for all that can be written;
Moonlight the more full the more
nourishing;
Stories, ideally of coincidence and heartache
and the sweetest tiny moments...
And just a glimpse of tomorrow, either in the
face of an innocent or the realization of a
dream...*

**- ADRIENNE MAREE BROWN,
EXCERPT FROM "SPELL FOR GRIEF OR
LETTING GO," EMERGENT STRATEGY**

DISCOVER.

an overview of tools for building & maintaining a trauma-responsive organizational environment

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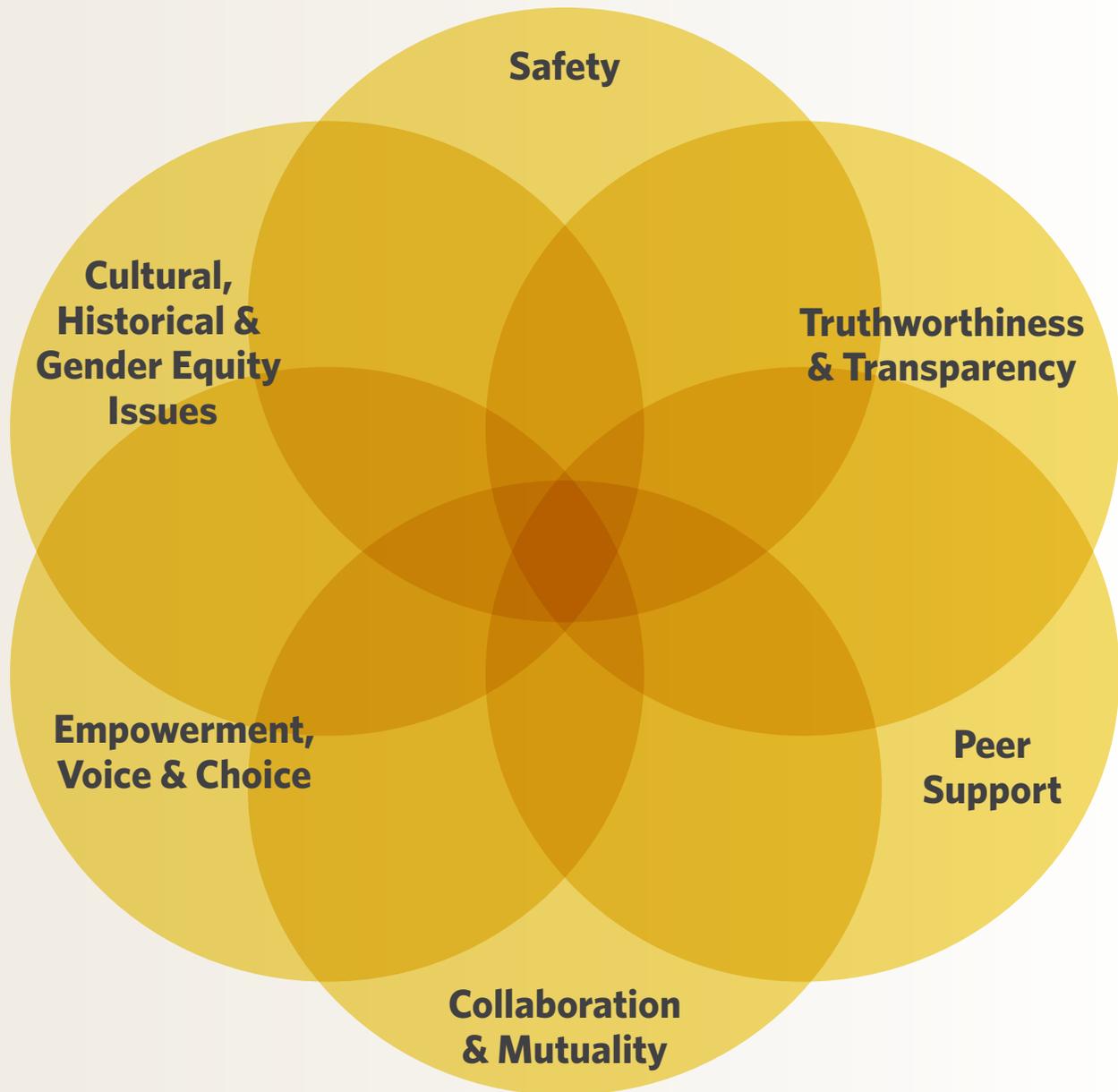
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DEVELOPING AN AWARENESS OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE TRAUMA PROVIDES THE POWER YOU NEED TO CATALYZE CHANGES AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCOVER AND ACT IN WAYS WE NEVER KNEW WERE POSSIBLE. IN DOING SO, OUR PRESENCE SHIFTS FROM TRAUMA-INFORMED TO TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE. IN THIS SECTION, WE WALK THROUGH THE CORE PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE CARE, INVITING YOU TO UTILIZE ASSESSMENTS IN SUPPORT OF YOUR ORGANIZATION AND WORK ENVIRONMENT.

6 Principles of A Trauma-Informed Approach (SAMHSA)



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication.



* Making the Shift



Trauma Organized

Organizations impacted by stress, operating in silos, avoidant of issues and isolated in their practices or service delivery. These organizations can be trauma inducing.

Trauma Informed

These are organizations that develop a shared language to define, normalize and address the impact of trauma on clients and workforce. They operate from a foundational understanding of the nature and impact of trauma.

Healing Organization

Organizations where staff policies, procedures, services and treatment models apply an understanding of trauma embedded within them. Their approaches to providing services are trauma-shielding or trauma-reducing.

- Reactive
- Reliving/retelling
- Avoiding/numbing
- Fragmented
- Authoritarian leadership

- Shared language
- Foundational understanding of trauma and healing
- Understanding of the nature and impact of trauma

- Reflective
- Collaborative
- Culture of learning
- Making meaning out of the past
- Growth- and prevention-oriented
- Relational leadership

Trauma Organized to Healing Organizations, San Francisco Department of Public Health

Trauma-responsive systems and providers...

...REALIZE the prevalence of trauma in the population.

- How often do you acknowledge the experiences of the populations you serve?
- How is the awareness of trauma integrated into your policies and procedures?

...RECOGNIZE the signs and symptoms of trauma.

- Provide learning opportunities for staff to become familiar with the impact that trauma has on the brain and related mental health disorders.

...RESPOND by integrating knowledge into:

- Practices and procedures for providing care, treatment, services, or support;
- Advocacy to eliminate trauma conditions;
- Organizational policies and practices to support staff as they work directly with community members, as they may also carry their own experiences of trauma.

...AVOID retraumatization

- Of clients,
- Of providers.

TOOL FOR REFLECTION & DISCOVERY AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Self-Reflection: Trauma Stewardship

In the book *Trauma Stewardship*, Connie Burk and Laura Van Dernoot Lipsky define trauma stewardship as a daily practice through which individuals, organizations and societies tend to the hardship, pain, or trauma experienced by humans, other living beings or the planet itself. In the book they state that, "Our stewardship involves our intention in choosing the work we do, our philosophy of what it means to help others, the tone our caregiving takes, and our daily decisions about how we live our lives."

ASK YOURSELF:

What is my why?

What brings me to this work?

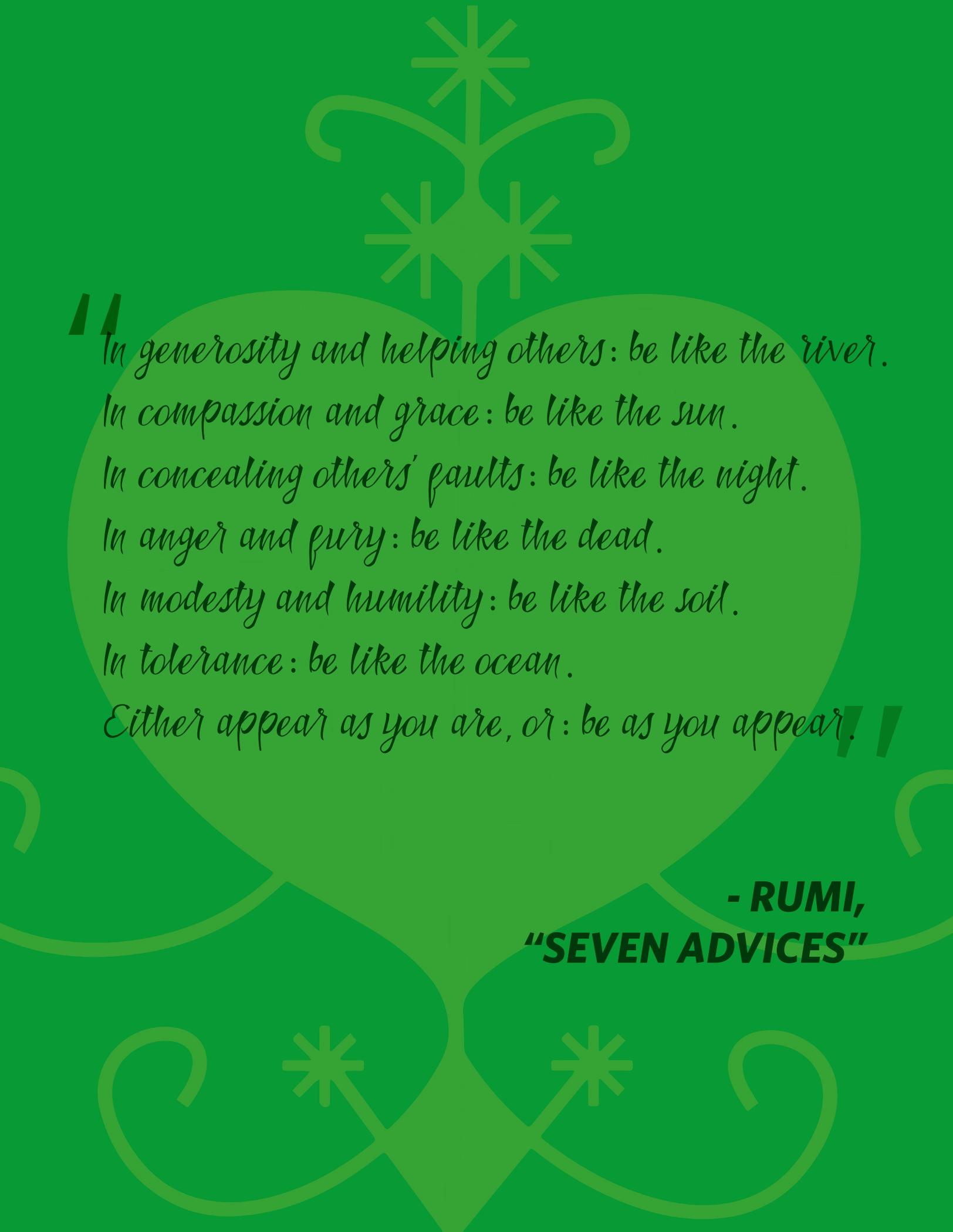
How do I show up for myself?

How do I show up for others within the work I do?

TOOL FOR REFLECTION & DISCOVERY AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Trauma-Informed Organization Survey

IWES has created a survey to help you better understand your organization's current assets and areas for growth as it relates to being trauma-informed. The survey is unscored and intended as a guide for discussion around the policies you have in place to address and respond to trauma-related experiences among staff. If none or few policies exist, this is an invitation to begin to think through what improvements could be made within your organization. The survey is intended to be distributed to all staff and completed anonymously. If your staff is currently virtual, we recommend translating this survey to a Google Form (or other survey platform) and distributing amongst staff. When taking the survey, encourage folks to reflect upon the structures, culture, and core elements of your organization; spoken and unspoken, official and unofficial. If your organization has a leadership team or senior management, they should review all of the responses to reflect upon what is working well and consider what areas may need improvement. While this is not an evidence-based assessment tool it is a helpful way that organizations may begin to discover how trauma is understood, identified and responded to in the work environment.



*“In generosity and helping others: be like the river.
In compassion and grace: be like the sun.
In concealing others' faults: be like the night.
In anger and fury: be like the dead.
In modesty and humility: be like the soil.
In tolerance: be like the ocean.
Either appear as you are, or: be as you appear.”*

**- RUMI,
“SEVEN ADVICES”**

LIBERATE.

an exploration of self & community care practices

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AN ONGOING PRACTICE OF AUTHENTIC SELF-CARE HELPS US MAINTAIN THE POWER OF PRESENCE WITH OURSELVES AND OTHERS ALONG OUR LIFELONG HEALING JOURNEYS. NOW MORE THAN EVER, IT IS ESSENTIAL WE SHOW UP ACROSS THE PLACES AND SPACES IN OUR LIVES WITH SUSTAINABILITY AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR HEARTS AND MINDS.

self-care = community care

IN THIS SECTION WE SHARE PRACTICAL IDEAS AND TOOLS FOR SELF-CARE IN ADDITION TO REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR CONTINUED CONTEMPLATION.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES:

At the organizational level, self-care can be integrated into workplace policy and culture.

Please see some of our recommendations below:

Provide staff with psychoeducation and opportunities to expand their knowledge about mental health and wellness

Engage in ongoing professional development & trainings

If applicable, provide mental health professionals on staff with designated time to engage their colleagues in presentations about their areas of expertise

Provide staff with resources and information about accessing outside mental health services

Provide staff with opportunities for informal/formal self-reporting (such as check-ins and reflective activities)

Provide staff with COVID-safe on-site or virtual opportunities for gentle movement, yoga, meditation and/or other mindfulness practices

Incorporate play and creative expression into the work environment

Make flex-time scheduling and designated mental health/self-care days available to staff

Integrate and encourage breaks and periods of rest into the work day

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES:

At the individual level, self-care can be an ever-evolving exploration of practices, rituals, reflection, mindfulness and a variety of other techniques that ultimately help you feel well.

Please see some of our recommendations below:

Self-Care

Physical Self-Care:

falling in love with the physical self we live in

- Purposive movement - mind/body harmonizing
- Intentional relaxation & sleep
- Healthy nutrition

Questions for Reflection:

- ✳ Are you fully present in your body?
- ✳ What are some ways you honor and nurture your body?
- ✳ What more would you like to do for your body?

Mental Self-Care

Mindfulness:

the awareness that arises when paying attention on purpose, non-judgmentally, and in the present moment

- Awareness of thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations and the environment.

Individual Assessments

[Personal Self-Care Assessment & Self-Care Plan Template](#) (Brown University)

This tool provides an overview of effective strategies to maintain self-care. Self-compassion is key when assessing your needs and making a plan for self-care. It is never too late to switch up your routine, incorporate healing strategies, or seek support. Directions can be found on the assessment itself and after completing the full assessment, you can move on to developing a full self-care plan.

Managing Loss & Fear:

As we engage in liberation, we must acknowledge our losses, the unpredictable changes we have experienced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the fear we may hold around what the future may bring. As humans, we seek comfort through familiarity; we do not like feeling out of control or in a fluctuating state of the unknown. While we may continue to be placed in situations where we have little agency around what is happening in the world, it is important to be present with what is coming up for us, both emotionally and physically. Below are some ways in which we may befriend feelings of grief, loss, and fear that might be coming up, while being careful not to suppress them, yet rather witness their place in our hearts and minds.

ACCOMPANY

Sit with the feelings and do not turn away

KNOW

Attend to how your feelings turn up in your body; the thoughts that arise in your mind, physical discomfort in your body

BECOME

Develop an awareness of the root cause

Fear: survival of self

Grief: love for other

LIBERATE

Release desire to contract, cling or pity

BODY SCAN

try this!!

A body scan asks you to focus on different places throughout your body using a slow and gradual sequence. It may allow you to identify and release areas of tension caused by stress, yet the goal of a body scan is not to completely relieve your body of pain. Rather, a body scan helps you notice; it helps you ground yourself in the present moment. Sit with the sensations that arise as you get in touch with different areas of your body, without labeling or self-judgment. Listen; your body may tell you something that it needs.

- **Take a moment to drop into your body.**
- **Feel what it feels like to sit where you are right now — feet grounded.**
- **Come home to the sensations in your body in the present moment.**
- **Notice your breath, the gentle rise and fall of your chest.**
- **Scan your body.** Starting at your feet or your head, move your mind's eye/ awareness slowly from one pole of your body to the other. If you start at your head, move from the crown through the areas of your face (release your jaw!) to your neck, shoulders and chest (don't forget the arms!), past the belly to the hips and down to your legs, ultimately ending at your toes. If you begin at your feet, take the same journey, yet in the opposite direction.
- **As you scan your body, notice any areas that feel an inner warmth or inner tenderness — gentle and peaceful. Breathe into that warm, tender place.**
- **Allow the warmth to radiate out with your exhale, especially to places you feel tension.**
- **Continue this practice for several breaths.**
- **Allow your thoughts to flow freely, without analyzing them, without a need to reason.**
- **Be present with your breath and the sensations arising in your body.**
- **When ready, slowly and gently return to your surrounding environment and extend gratitude to yourself for taking the time to pause and drop in. Sit with the sensations that arose and any messages they provided.**

➤ HEALING PRACTICES & RITUALS ✨

In our journey to holistic health, we must keep the garden of our mind watered. The following rituals and practices can help with the upkeep of our mental gardens. They focus on actions we can take to work on the ways in which we engage with ourselves or others that may be holding us back and contributing to our woundedness. Not all of this will apply to you. Some practices may have significance only for a phase, while you may want to adapt others as long-term habits or rituals. On this journey of being mindful of what ails you, make sure to be mindful of what can support your personal healing, as well.

journal

Writing down the words that capture how we feel and think gives us momentary reprieve from our ego, which vigilantly polices our consciousness.

If I wrote down my thoughts, what story would they tell?

establish rituals

Rituals can help bind our anxieties, especially anxieties that arise in regards to the uncertainty of our existence in the world. If nothing else, rituals bring us comfort.

Do I create personal rituals that make me more present and alive?

practice creativity

The creative process taps into our intuitive Self beyond the constraints of our ego, fears and judgement and gives an outlet to what is unbound and uncensored inside. Creativity rises from the heart space, transcends language and connects us to each other.

What are my creative outlets?

practice burnout avoidance

“To avoid over exposure and taking on someone else’s suffering, we should use contemplative practices to stabilize our boundaries.” - Roshi Joan Halifax, Zen Buddhist

Do I personalize other people’s suffering to the extent that I lose my footing in their sorrows, or do I create enough boundaries so that I have strength to help them?

HEALING PRACTICES & RITUALS, CONT'D

practice laughter, imagination & play

Play releases us from our fear and allows us to attach to more pleasurable states. This “letting go” helps us to release stress, belly laugh and relax.

With whom do I lose myself in playful surrender?

practice ancestral reverence

Finding solace in the memory of those who went before us, by asking for protection, guidance or inspiration, can help reduce our existential anxieties about the mystery of life and death.

Indeed, if I believe that I am my ancestors' imagining of moving towards liberation, do I pay homage to the suffering of my ancestors that has now allowed me more freedom of being?

practice being in nature

Being connected to the duality inherent in nature—her destructive as well as her creative forces—helps us to accept our own duality.

How do I engage in the mystery and magic of Mother Earth?

practice rest

Rest allows the body to divert energy from other energy-consuming activities into areas of increased need. As a preventative measure, rest allows us to stop, look, listen and sink into calmness.

When I go on vacation, do I vacate and retreat, or do I fill up my time with activities?

LOVE LETTER TO SELF

Healing is traveling into the interior of our being and coming to know our truer Self, the one we have always desired to become. And when we go there, just maybe we will discover that this is where the life force resides in us and allow that knowledge to restore our confidence in that which we know to be our truth. Healing the mind, body, and spirit is a love journey back to the Self, a dance within the beauty and awe of the universe. In the following exercise, you are invited to dote on yourself and revisit how well you are doing regularly. For the following prompts, write simple self-loving steps you can take along the way. You don't have to answer every prompt every time, and feel free to repeat & revise the prompts as desired.

There's no right or wrong way to engage with this activity. Here are some suggestions:

- * Hide the letter in a safe space and revisit it some time later when you remember it's there, are ready to find it, or just need some extra love (you could even set a reminder in your phone or calendar for a random day in the future).
- * Give the letter to a loved one and request that they mail it to you on a future date of their choosing.
- * Schedule a future email to yourself containing your letter.
- * Make it a ritual! Choose a specific day every month (or week, or quarter, etc.) that you both read old letters and write new letters to yourself.

Love Letter to Self:

Dear me/ _____,

I hereby affirm my devotion to continually optimize my physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. As a testament to my dedication to this lifelong journey of self-actualization, I hereby devote my being to...

...be kinder and gentler with myself. To achieve that, I will:

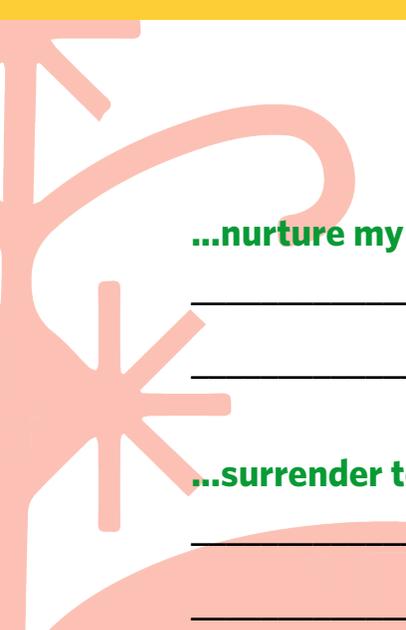
...be more honest with myself. To achieve that, I will:

...be more forgiving of myself. To achieve that, I will:

...relax more deeply. To achieve that, I will:

...have more fun. To achieve that, I will:

...experience the beauty of nature more frequently. To achieve that, I will:



...nurture my dreams more intentionally. To achieve that, I will:

...surrender to the mystery of my being more joyful. To achieve that, I will:

And as I strive to live more fully in the present moment I am practicing letting go of past regrets and future worries. Here are some additional loving thoughts:

Signed _____

Date _____

The time will come when, with elation, you will greet yourself arriving at your own door, in your own mirror.

And each will smile at the other's welcome and say, sit here. Eat.

You will love again the stranger who was your self. Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart to itself, to the stranger who has loved you all your life, whom you ignored for another, who knows you by heart.

Take down the love letters from the bookshelf, the photographs, the desperate notes, peel your own image from the mirror.

Sit. Feast on your life.

**- DEREK WALCOTT,
"LOVE AFTER LOVE"**



IN CLOSING

“The healing journey requires us to be vulnerable in the face of our pain and our joy. Healing requires us to live from the space of as-is and deal with reality; not the space of as-if, where things are not as they are but how we want them to be.”

**-DR. DENESE SHERVINGTON,
“HEALING IS THE REVOLUTION”**



RESOURCES.

a guide for continued reflection, collaboration & growth

IWES Resources

[Healing Is the Revolution](#) (Podcast) found on [Spotify](#) & [Apple](#), & [Google](#) Podcasts

[Healing is the Revolution](#) (Book) by Dr. Denese Shervington, MD, MPH

[Get Ya Mind Right - IWES' Virtual Community Support Group](#)

Materials Referenced In Toolkit

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

[National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\) Fact Sheet](#)

[San Francisco Department of Public Health - Healing Organizations through Trauma Informed Systems](#)

Other Recommended Books

[*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*](#), by Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D.

[*My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*](#), by Resmaa Menakem, MSW, LICSW, SEP

[*Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others*](#), by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky and Connie Burk; Foreword by Jon R. Conte, Ph.D.

[*Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*](#), by Peter A. Levine, Ph.D. with Ann Frederick

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