

# Cultural Considerations in working with Tribal Communities

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# Objectives Participants will

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- Overview of Trauma and its connection to health outcomes
- Overview of historical trauma and ancestral wisdom
- Overview of Indigenous Wellness and healing





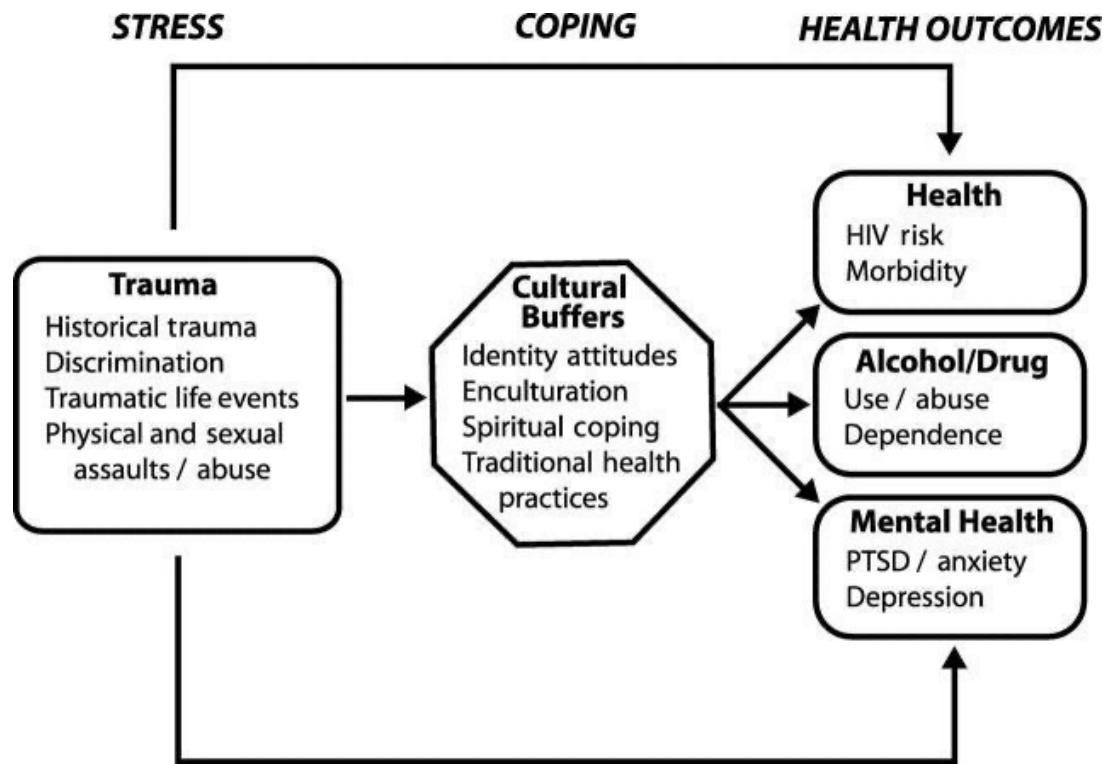
- Maestro Jerry Tello - traditional healer

- Trauma is disconnection
- Healing is Sacred Connection
- Therefore think of the importance of acknowledgement

# Indigenist Stress Coping Model

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Walters, Karina L, Simoni, Jane M, & Evans-Campbell, Teresa. (2002). Substance Use Among American Indians and Alaska Natives: Incorporating Culture in an "Indigenist" Stress-Coping Paradigm. *Public Health Reports* (1974), 117(Suppl 1), S104–S117.



# Overview of trauma

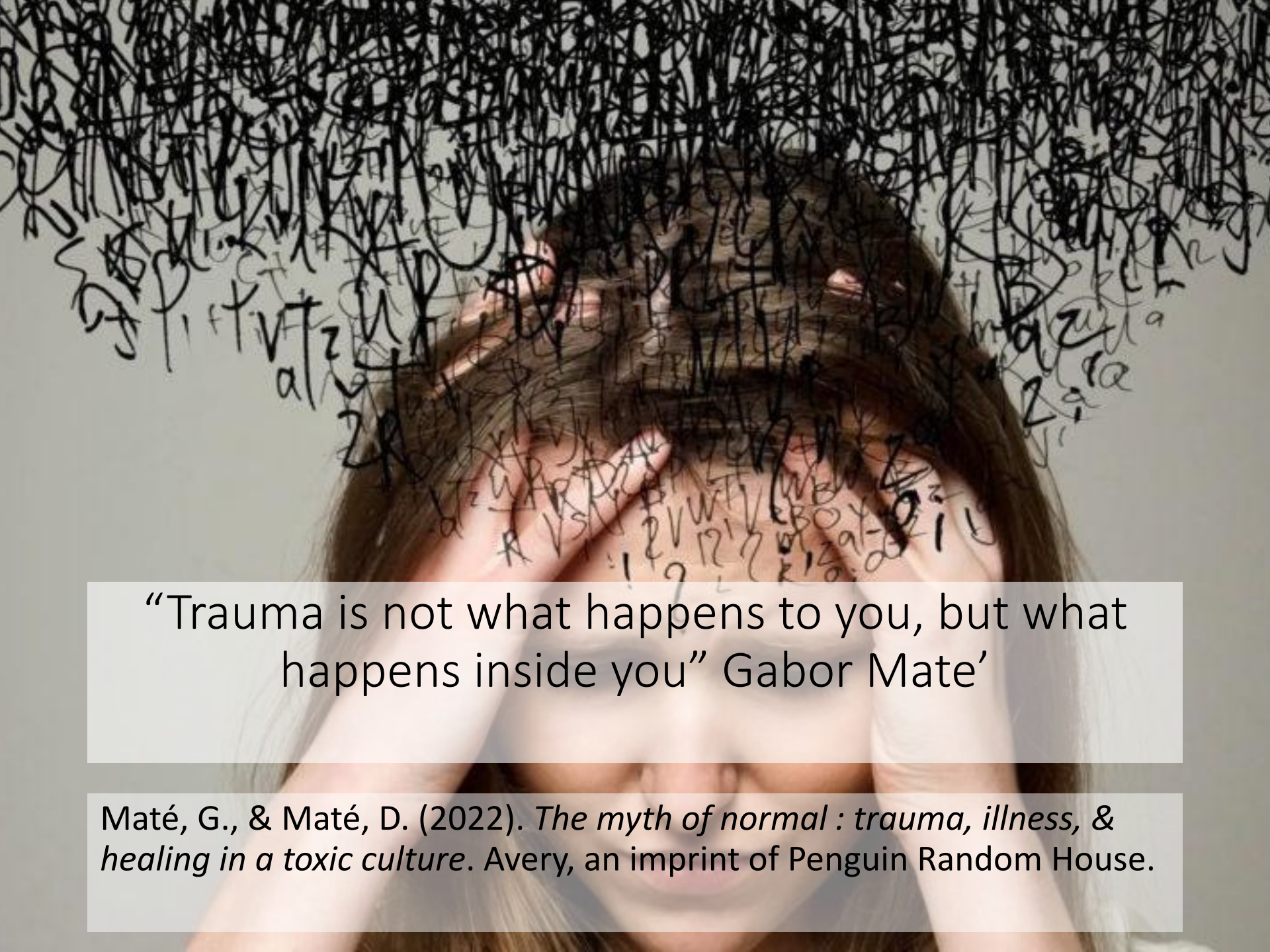
Trauma is “about loss of connection—to ourselves, our families, and the world around us.” Peter Levine

- Is an extraordinary psychological experience caused by threats to life and body or personal encounters with violence or death
  - Disasters: natural
  - Atrocities: human
- Is an inner injury, lasting rupture or split within the self due to difficult or hurtful events
  - All trauma is preverbal
  - Trauma is embodied (somatic)
  - Trauma is a spectrum

Levine, P. A. (2013). *Transforming trauma : awakening the ordinary miracle of healing*. Milton H. Erickson Foundation.

Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders : DSM-IV-TR. (4th ed., text revision.). (2000). American Psychiatric Association.

Maté, G., & Maté, D. (2022). *The myth of normal : trauma, illness, & healing in a toxic culture*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House



“Trauma is not what happens to you, but what happens inside you” Gabor Maté’

Maté, G., & Maté, D. (2022). *The myth of normal : trauma, illness, & healing in a toxic culture*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

# Indigenous Trauma Care: A decolonial perspective

“Using trauma terminology implies that the individual is responsible for the response, rather than the broader systemic force caused by the state’s abuse of power”

Linklater, R., & Mehl-Madrona, L. (2014). Decolonizing trauma work : Indigenous stories and strategies. Fernwood Publishing.



# Types of trauma

- Acute trauma
- Repetitive trauma
- Complex trauma
- Developmental trauma
- Vicarious trauma
- Cultural, Historical and/or Intergenerational trauma





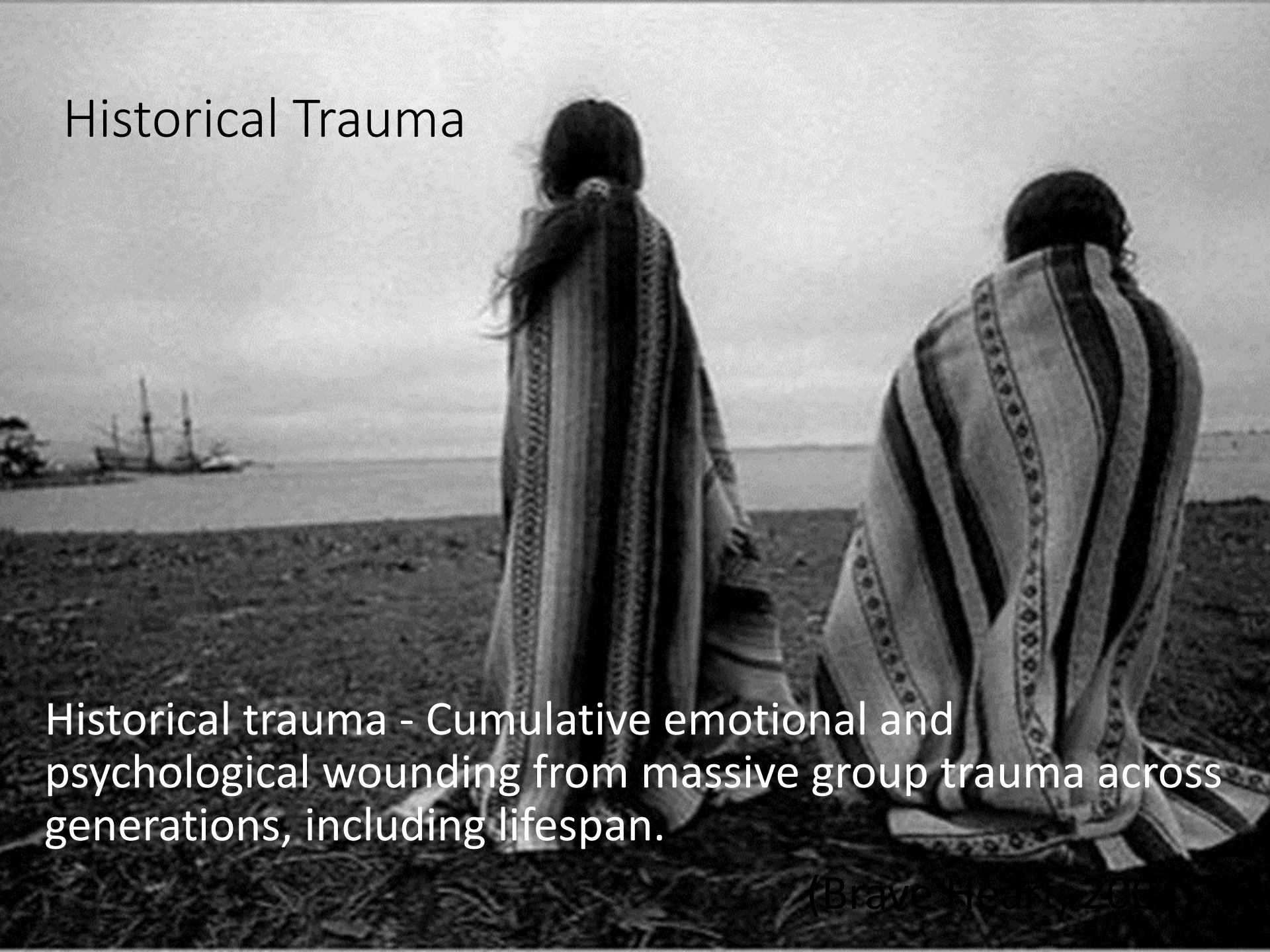
# Source of the wound



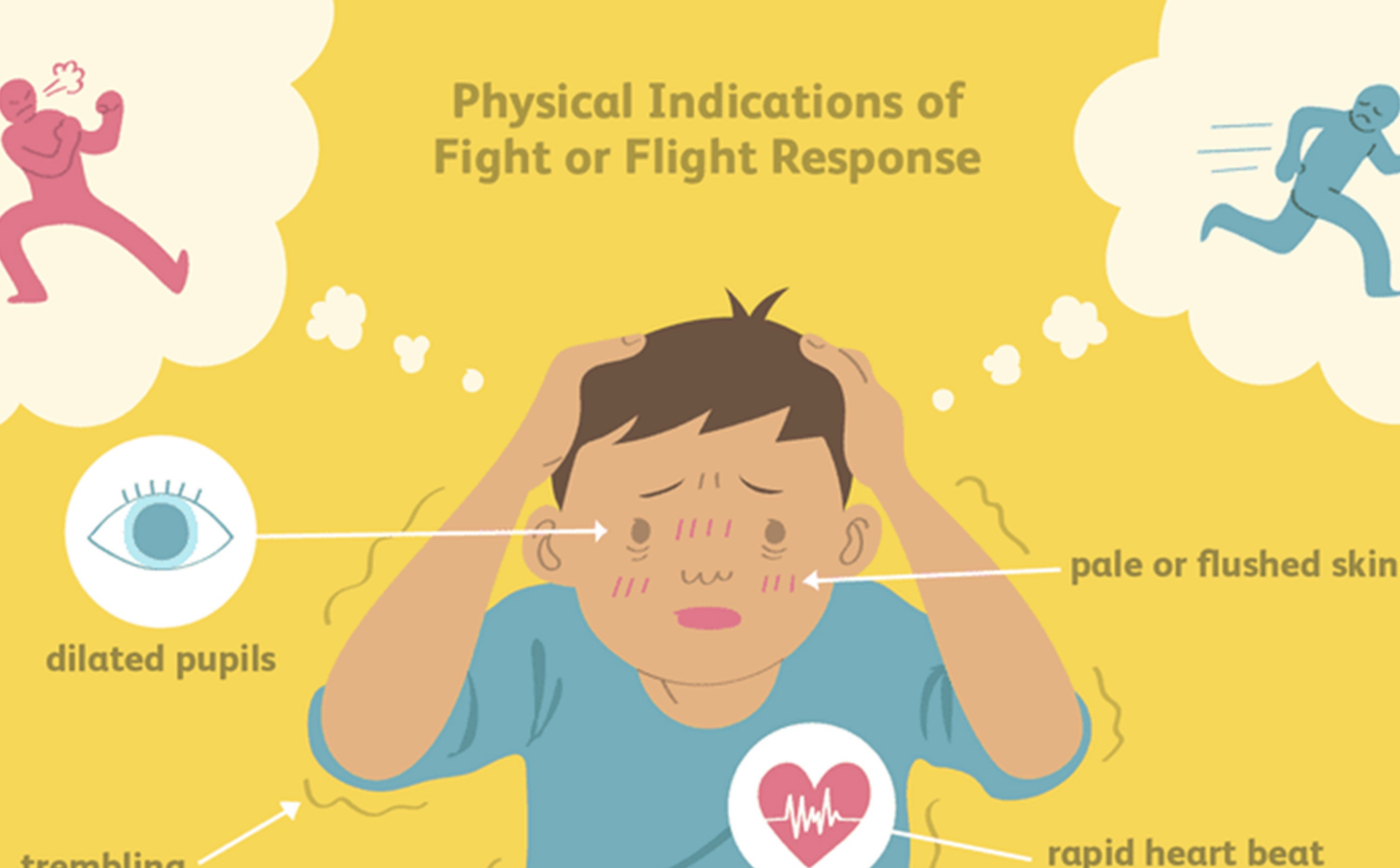
# Historical Trauma

Historical trauma - Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding from massive group trauma across generations, including lifespan.

(Brave Heart, 2011)



## Physical Indications of Fight or Flight Response



## ANCIENT SURVIVAL RESPONSES TO LIFE THREATENING CIRCUMSTANCES

Bracha, H. (2004). Freeze, flight, fight, fright, faint: Adaptationist perspectives on the acute stress response system. *CNS Spectrums*, 9(9), 679-685.  
Stanton, S. (2016), "Intuition: A Silver Lining for Clinicians with Complex Trauma". Dissertations. <https://surface.syr.edu/etd/615>



## Effects of trauma

- Separates us from our bodies.
- Splits us from our feelings
- Limits response flexibility
- Fosters a 'shame' based view of self
- Distorts our view of the world
- Alienates us from the present

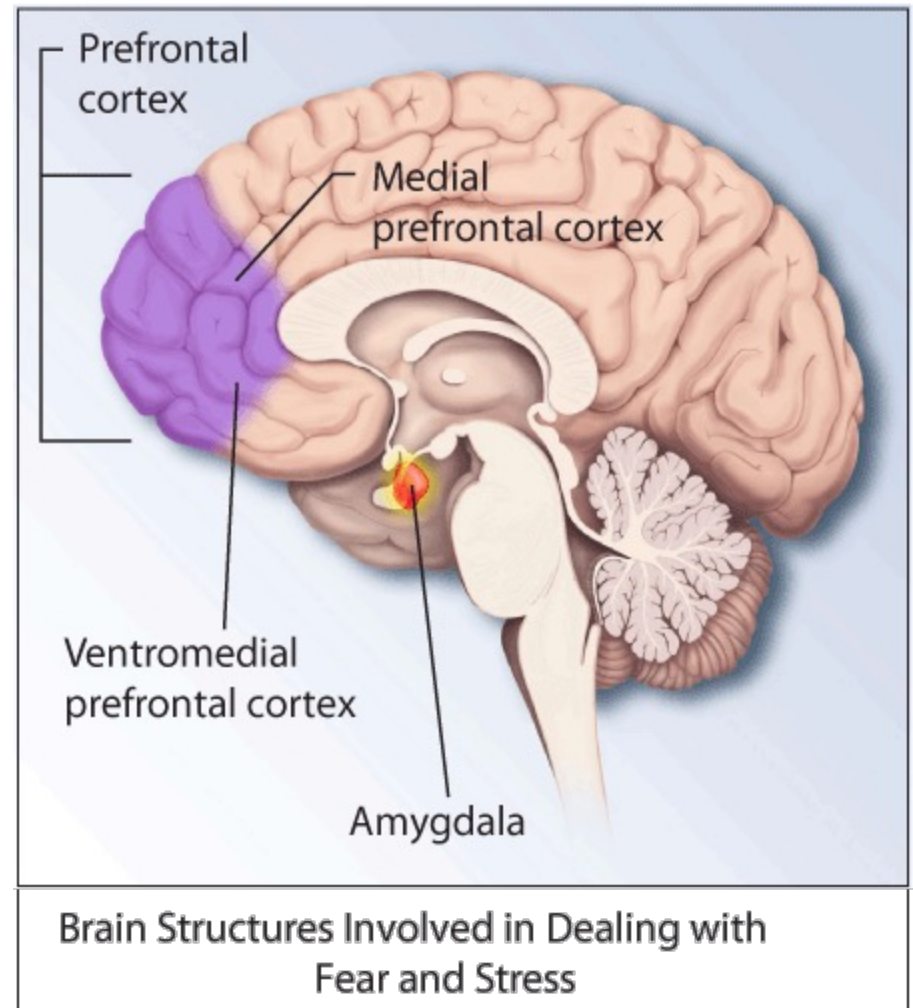
Maté, G., & Maté, D. (2022). *The myth of normal : trauma, illness, & healing in a toxic culture*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

Image credit: grandriver / Getty Images.

# Effects of trauma on the brain

Lupien, S.; McEwen, B.; Gunnar, M. & Heim, C. (2009). *Effects of stress throughout the lifespan on the brain, behavior and cognition*. Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 10(6), 434-43445.

- Damages the neural wiring of the brain
- Increases an individual developing mental and physical illnesses
- Increases aggression
- Language failure
- Asthma
- Epilepsy
- Diabetes
- Immune system dysfunction



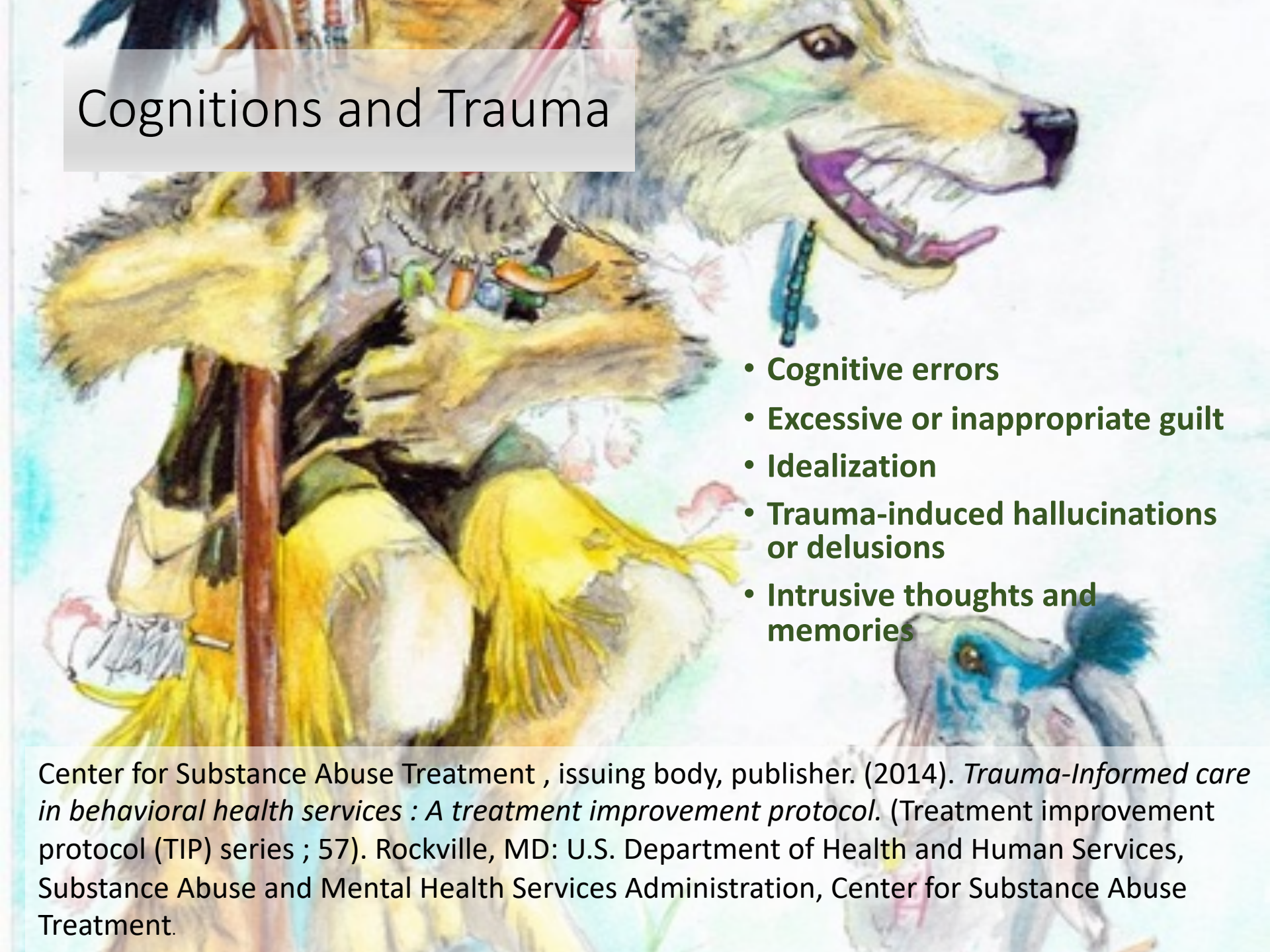
# Social effects of by trauma

**All of these conditions are correlated with stress in children that manifests as brain damage**

- Poverty
- Violence
- Sexual abuse
- Family disruption
- Substance abuse and dependency
  - To little emotional support
  - Low educational level
- Lack of commitment to parenting
  - Lack of maternal maturity

Chan, S. R. W. L., & Blackburn, E. H. (2004). Telomeres and telomerase. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B: Biological Sciences*, 359(1441), 109–122.  
<https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2003.1370>

Bolton, D., Hill, J., O’Ryan, D., Udwin, O., Boyle, S., & Yule, W. (2004). Long-term effects of psychological trauma on psychosocial functioning. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45(5), 1007–1014.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2004.t01-1-0029.x>



# Cognitions and Trauma

- Cognitive errors
- Excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Idealization
- Trauma-induced hallucinations or delusions
- Intrusive thoughts and memories

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment , issuing body, publisher. (2014). *Trauma-Informed care in behavioral health services : A treatment improvement protocol*. (Treatment improvement protocol (TIP) series ; 57). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

# INITIAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA A CAN INCLUDE

- exhaustion,
- confusion
- sadness
- anxiety
- agitation
- numbness
- dissociation
- confusion
- physical arousal
- and blunted affect.

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment , issuing body, publisher. (2014). *Trauma-Informed care in behavioral health services : A treatment improvement protocol*. (Treatment improvement protocol (TIP) series ; 57). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.





<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress/art-20046037#:~:text=Cortisol%2C%20the%20primary%20stress%20hormone,flight%2Dor%2Dflight%20situation.>

*Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 12, 707543–707543. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2021.707543>

# BREATHING EXERCISE

FOR RELAXATION #1



INHALE  
THROUGH NOSE

Perform for  
2 to 5 Minutes

Instagram: @elevatevibe

# Impact of Historical Trauma

- Disruption in our ability to fulfill our original instructions
- Disruption in our relational ways of being
- Disruption in how we narrate/story our lives
- Health Prevention/Promotion Interventions incorporate:
  - Original Instructions
  - Relational Restoration
  - Narrative Transformation



# Epigenetic transfer of the trauma and ancestral wisdom

**“The memories of our ancestors are passed down on our  
blood”**

**Little Joe Gomez**

Hamby, Sherry, Elm, Jessica H L, Howell, Kathryn H, & Merrick, Melissa T. (2021). Recognizing the cumulative burden of childhood adversities transforms science and practice for trauma and resilience. *The American Psychologist*, 76(2), 230–242. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000763>



**“The very same brain centers that interpret and feel physical pain also become activated during experiences of emotional rejection. In brain scans, they light up in response to social ostracism, just as they would when triggered by physically harmful stimuli. When people speak of feeling hurt or of having emotional pain, they are not being abstract or poetic, but scientifically quite precise.”**

~ GABOR MATE



**STRONG  
RESILIENT  
INDIGENOUS**

HOPE:  
*Health  
Outcomes  
from  
Positive  
Experiences*

Being in nurturing, supportive relationships

Living, developing, playing and learning in safe, stable, protective, and equitable environments

Having opportunities for constructive social engagement and to develop a sense of connectedness, and

Learning social and emotional competencies.

Every Day is  
Ceremony  
Wellness  
Model





# What works

- Those who are fluent in many theories and models of treatment.
- Who are client centered/counselor driven.
- Focus on strengths and protective factors
- Who are able to develop trusting therapeutic relationships.
- Who are work within their area of expertise.
- Culture as prevention.





# The Takini Institute

Return to the Sacred Path: Reflections on the Development of Historical Trauma Healing

[https://www.ihs.gov/sites/telebehavioral/themes/responsive2017/display\\_objects/documents/slides/historicaltrauma/htrreturnsacredpath0513](https://www.ihs.gov/sites/telebehavioral/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/slides/historicaltrauma/htrreturnsacredpath0513)

We all practice our traditional spirituality;

We periodically have ceremonies to pray that our work continues to help Native Peoples;

We are grounded in our traditions;

We embrace and try to live our lives according to the Wooke Sakowin;

We are all survivors and no one is above another;

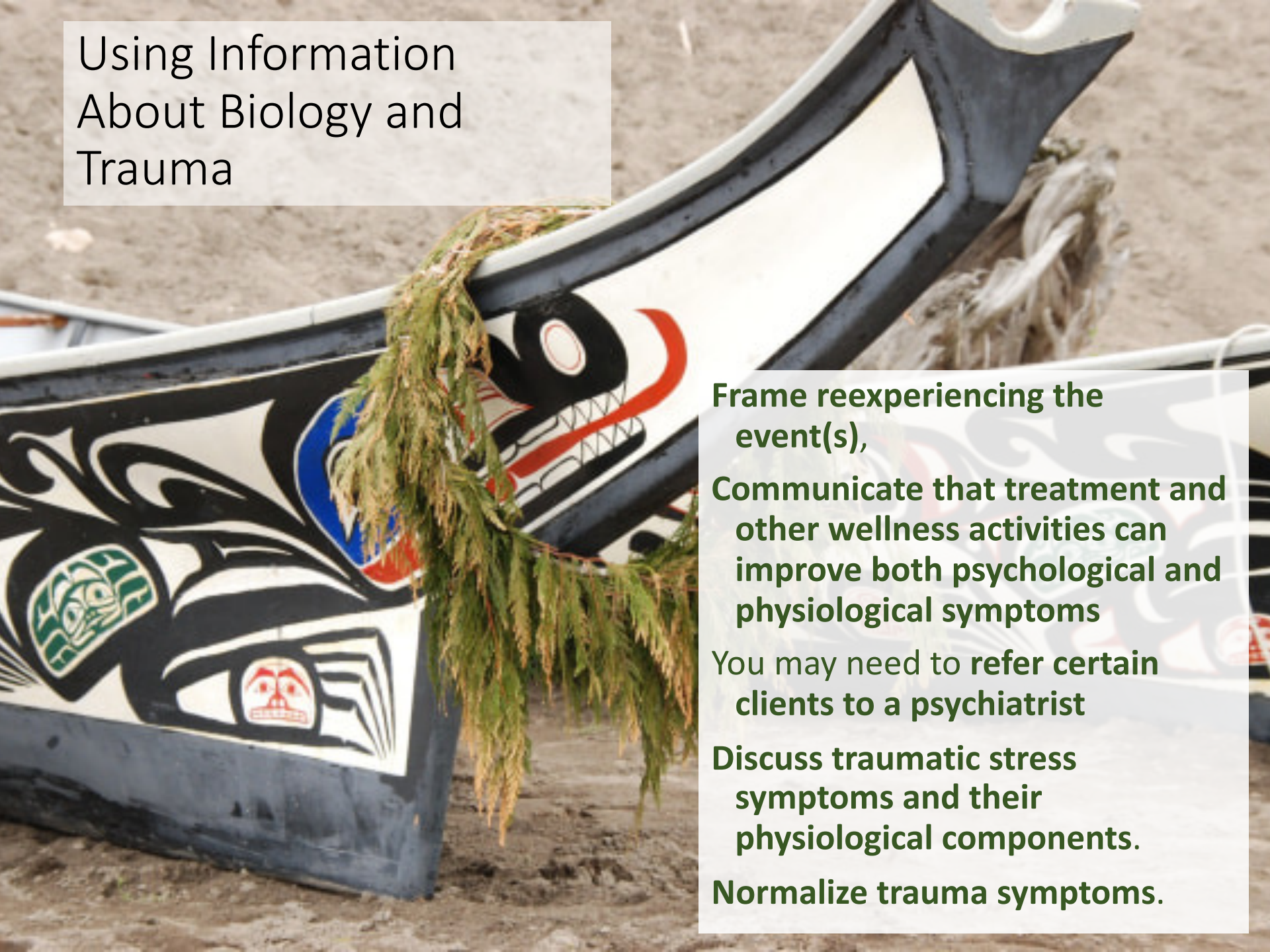
We are all teachers and learners

# Do not despair!!! Healing in Possible!

- Our brains are resilient organs
- Some important circuits continue to develop throughout our entire lives
- They may do so even in the case of persistent and chronic substance dependency
- Be patient with science, we are continuing to learn more about this complex human conduction and how to intervene



# Using Information About Biology and Trauma



**Frame reexperiencing the event(s),**

**Communicate that treatment and other wellness activities can improve both psychological and physiological symptoms**

**You may need to refer certain clients to a psychiatrist**

**Discuss traumatic stress symptoms and their physiological components.**

**Normalize trauma symptoms.**

# Resilient Responses to Trauma

- Increased bonding with family and community.
- Redefined or increased sense of purpose and meaning.
- Increased commitment to a personal mission.
- Revised priorities.
- Increased charitable giving and volunteerism.



Center for Substance Abuse Treatment , issuing body, publisher. (2014). *Trauma-Informed care in behavioral health services : A treatment improvement protocol*. (Treatment improvement protocol (TIP) series ; 57). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

# Relationship with Medicine

- Reestablish our relationship with medicine
- Change our relationship with medicine people
- Develop a relationship with the spirit of substances and substance misuse



# Belief Effects on Service Provision



# What does this look like in practice?



- **Ceremony/Prayer/Ritual  
Meditation/Deep Breath work**
- **Talking Circle**
- **Mutual Aid / Indigenous  
Economies**
- **Justice Movements (Standing  
Rock, Mauna Kea, MMIWG2S  
marches)**
- **Cultural Gatherings/Events**
- **Intergenerational Connection**
- **Practicing/Learning traditional  
arts, dance, music Food**
- **Wellbriety group**



# Culture is Medicine



Encourage clients to participate in Indigenous healing practices and cultural traditions to support their overall health and wellness.

Incorporating Traditional Indigenous Knowledge in treatment settings and interventions that are grounded in Indigenous knowledge

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a feather over a smoldering pipe. The pipe is resting on a woven basket, and a plume of white smoke rises from it. The background is dark and out of focus.

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**PRAYER/ MINDFULNESS/  
CONTEMPLATION/ MEDITATION/ BREATH  
WORK**

**CREATE**

**ANCESTRAL CONNECTION**

**SACRED SPACE**

**STORYTELLING/STORY LISTENING**



# CULTURE IS PREVENTION

- **Native people come from rich, diverse and beautiful communities.**
- **Native people are thriving**
- **Tribal Nations have a government to government relationship with the United States**
- **Trauma is real, happens in the brain and is connected to health**



WE THE

RESILIENT

HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

