

# CULTURALLY INFORMED TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY TOOLKIT



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## CULTURALLY INFORMED

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AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## References and Additional Resources

### Overview Documents

#### Welcome to the American Psychological Association (APA) Culturally Informed Trauma & Grief Recovery Toolkits

No references

#### Interpersonal Trauma: Violence & Abuse In Our Communities

- <https://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/defineBT.html>
- <https://jmgomez.org/cultural-betrayal-trauma-theory/>
- <https://theconversation.com/the-unique-harm-of-sexual-abuse-in-the-black-community-114948>
- [http://victimsofcrime.org/docs/default-source/ncvrw2015/2015ncvrw\\_stats\\_sexualviolence.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://victimsofcrime.org/docs/default-source/ncvrw2015/2015ncvrw_stats_sexualviolence.pdf?sfvrsn=2)
- <https://ncadv.org/files/Domestic%20Violence%20and%20Psychological%20Abuse%20NCADV.pdf>

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#### Collective Trauma: What Happens to We Happens To Me

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American Psychological Association (2012). *Crossroads: The Psychology of Immigration in the New Century, Report of the APA Presidential Task Force on Immigration*. Washington, DC: Author.

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Herman, J.L. (2023). *Truth and repair: How trauma survivors envision justice*. NY: Basic Books.

Kira, I., & Tummala-Narra, P. (2015). Psychotherapy with refugees: Emerging paradigms. *Journal of Loss and Trauma: International Perspectives on Stress and Coping*, 20, 449-467.

Tummala-Narra, P. (Ed.) (2021). *Trauma and racial minority immigrants: Turmoil, uncertainty, and resistance*. APA Division 45 Book Series. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Vaughans, K.C., & Harris, L. (2016). The police, Black and Hispanic boys: A dangerous inability to mentalize. *Journal of Infant, Child, and Adolescent Psychotherapy*, 15(3), 171-178.

#### Grief & Loss: The Ones We Acknowledge & The Ones We Don't

References will be emailed directly to Thema by authors (Kelechi & LaTonya).

#### My Religion, My Spirituality, My Coping

Information about how to reach them can be found HERE and HERE. You can also find useful hints about meditation, yoga and other practices HERE and HERE.

#### Support As Healing: How To Respond When Someone Tells You They've Been Abused

- <https://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/disclosure/goodlistener.html>
- <http://alliancesurvivorchoice.org>

Foynes, M. M., & Freyd, J. J. (2011). The impact of skills training on responses to the disclosure of mistreatment. *Psychology of violence*, 1(1), 66-77.

Gómez, J. M. (2023). *The cultural betrayal of Black women and girls: A Black feminist approach to healing from sexual abuse*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000362-007>

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### I Can Do Bad All By Myself: Knowing When & How to Reach Out For Help

Bryant, T. (2022). *Homecoming: Overcome fear and trauma to reclaim your whole, authentic self*. Penguin Random House.

Bryant-Davis, T. (2005). *Thriving in the wake of trauma: A multicultural guide* (No. 49). Greenwood Publishing Group.

Freyd, J., & Birrell, P. (2013). *Blind to betrayal: Why we fool ourselves we aren't being fooled*. John Wiley & Sons.

Gómez, J. M. (2023). *The cultural betrayal of Black women and girls: A Black feminist approach to healing from sexual abuse*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000362-007>

Michigan Opera Theatre at Home (2021, March). *In Conversation: Arts & Healing, Part 1*. Panel at the Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) At Home Series, Detroit, MI (online only). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Tq\\_JvvM\\_Yg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Tq_JvvM_Yg)

Michigan Opera Theatre at Home (2021, March). *In Conversation: Arts & Healing, Part 2*. Panel at the Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) At Home Series, Detroit, MI (online only). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f\\_aX0-AWMJU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_aX0-AWMJU)

Moore-Lobban, S. J., & Gobin, R. L. (2022). *The Black Woman's Guide to Overcoming Domestic Violence: Tools to Move Beyond Trauma, Reclaim Freedom, and Create the Life You Deserve*. New Harbinger Publications.

Simone, N. (n.d.). I wish I knew how it would feel to be free. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSUIgOzARy4>

When Words Aren't Enough: The Power of Expressive Arts in Healing  
American Art Therapy Association. (2004). About art therapy (online). Available at "http://www.arttherapy.org" [www.arttherapy.org](http://www.arttherapy.org).

American Music Therapy Association. (2004). Definition of music therapy (online). [www.musictherapy.org](http://www.musictherapy.org).

American Dance Therapy Association. <http://www.adta.org>

Michigan Opera Theatre at Home (2021, March). *In Conversation: Arts & Healing, Part 1*. Panel at the Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) At Home Series, Detroit, MI (online only). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Tq\\_JvvM\\_Yg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Tq_JvvM_Yg)

Michigan Opera Theatre at Home (2021, March). *In Conversation: Arts & Healing, Part 2*. Panel at the Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) At Home Series, Detroit, MI (online only). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f\\_aX0-AWMJU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f_aX0-AWMJU)

National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations. (2004). Poetry therapy. [www.nccata.org/poetry.html](http://www.nccata.org/poetry.html).

National Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations. (2004a). National

Coalition of Creative Arts Therapies Associations [Online]. [www.nccata.org/](http://www.nccata.org/).

### Taking My Power Back and Changing The World

- <https://blog.ed.gov/2023/05/a-timing-update-on-title-ix-rulemaking/>
- <http://alliancesurvivorchoice.org>
- <https://www.institutionalcourage.org>

- <https://www.settheexpectation.org>
- <https://www.sashacenter.org/#>
- <https://www.wab2g.org>

Bryant-Davis, T. (2005). *Thriving in the wake of trauma: A multicultural guide* (No. 49). Greenwood Publishing Group.

Comas-Díaz, L. E., & Rivera, T. (2020). *Liberation psychology: Theory, method, practice, and social justice* (pp. xx-314). American Psychological Association.

Gómez, J. M. (2023). *The cultural betrayal of Black women and girls: A Black feminist approach to healing from sexual abuse*. American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000362-007>

Hills Collins, P. (1991). Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empire.

### Intersectionality: The Way Our Oppressions and Privileges Combine to Create Opportunities and Challenges

- The Intersectionality Wars: <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>
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- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K.W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(4), 785-810.
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- Kimberlé Crenshaw, TedWomen (2016) The Urgency of Intersectionality, [Video] Available at: [https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle\\_crenshaw\\_the\\_urgency\\_of\\_intersectionality](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality)
- Ferguson, A.D., & Miville, M.L. (2017). It's complicated: Navigating multiple identities in small town America. *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session*, 73(8), 975-984.
- Greene, B. (2012). Intersections of multiple identities and multiple marginalizations: Clinical and paradigmatic considerations. In R. Nettles & R. Balter (Eds.), *Multiple minority identities: Applications for practice, research, and training* (pp. 81-91). New York: Springer.
- Homan, P., Brown, T. H., & King, B. (2021). Structural intersectionality as a new direction for health disparities research. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 62(3), 350-370.
- Mukkamala, S., & Suyemoto, K.L. (2018). Racialized sexism/sexualized racism: A multimethod study of intersectional experiences of discrimination for Asian American women. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 9(1), 32-46.
- Nadal, K. L., Davidoff, K. C., Davis, L. S., Wong, Y., Marshall, D., & McKenzie, V. (2015). Intersectional identities and microaggressions: Influences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2, 147-163.

Patterson, J. G., Russomanno, J., Teferra, A. A., & Tree, J. M. J. (2020). Disparities in food insecurity at the intersection of race and sexual orientation: A population-based study of adult women in the United States. *SSM-population health*, 12, 100655.

Singh, A.A. (2016). Moving from affirmation to liberation in psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming clients. *American Psychologist*, 71(8), 755-762.

Tummala-Narra, P. (2020). Intersectionality in the immigrant context. In M. Belkin & C. White (Eds.), *Intersectionality and relational psychoanalysis: New perspectives on race, gender, and sexuality. Relational Perspectives Book Series* (pp.119-143). New York: Routledge.

### **Buddhism & Trauma: Healing Within This Present Moment**

- Getting started with mindfulness: <https://www.mindful.org/meditation/mindfulness-getting-started/>
- Trauma-informed mindfulness: <https://psychcentral.com/health/trauma-informed-mindfulness>
- What is self-compassion: <https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>
- Self-compassion exercises: <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#exercises>

### **Shifa: A Guide of Contemporary and Traditional Healing Practices for Muslim Americans**

AlRawi, S. N., Khidir, A., Elnashar, M. S., Abdelrahim, H. A., Killawi, A. K., Hammoud, M. M., & Fetters, M. D. (2017). Traditional Arabic & Islamic medicine: validation and empirical assessment of a conceptual model in Qatar. *BMC complementary and alternative medicine*, 17(1), 157. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12906-017-1639-x>

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Awad, G. H., Kia-Keating, M., & Amer, M. M. (2019). A model of cumulative racial-ethnic trauma among Americans of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent. *The American Psychologist*, 74(1), 76-87. doi:10.1037/amp0000344

Darting, T. (2021, August). *Muslim Mental Health Spotlight: Stanford Study Shows Adult Muslims Are Twice As Likely To Attempt Suicide Compared to Other Religious Groups*. Americana Muslim Today. <https://americanmuslimtoday.com/details/83702d92-66ae-4203-aa36-450a81d7ef4d>

### **From Collective Suffering to Thriving: Radical Healing for AMENA Peoples**

- References from AMENA PDF
  - » Hood, K. A. (2007). *Music in Druze life: Ritual, values and performance practice*. Druze Heritage Foundation.
  - » Kourosh, A., & Hosoda, E. (2007). Eye on religion: the Bahá'í Faith. *Southern Medical Journal*, 100(4), 445-446.

<https://doi.org/10.1097/SMJ.0b013e3180316af3>

- » Syrian refugees use [Dabke](#) for healing and hope
- » [Baha'i Institute for Higher Education](#)

#### • Psychology of Radical Healing

- » Psychology of Radical Healing Collective: <https://psychologyofradicalhealing.com/>
- » Envisioning collective thriving during Ramadan: Reflections on healing for Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African people <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/healing-through-social-justice/202004/envisioning-collective-thriving-during-ramadan>
- » French, B. H., Lewis, J. A., Mosley, D. V., Adames, H. Y., Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y., Chen, G. A., & Neville, H. A. (2020). Toward a psychological framework of radical healing in communities of color. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 48(1), 14-46. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000019843506>
- » French, B. H., Neville, H. A., Lewis, J. A., Mosley, D. V., Adames, H. Y., & Chavez-Dueñas, N. Y. (2023). "We can create a better world for ourselves": Radical hope in communities of color. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000670>

#### • Museums

- » Arab American National Museum <https://arabamericanmuseum.org/>
- » Museum of the Palestinian People, Washington, D.C. <https://mpp-dc.org/>

#### • AMENA Organizations

- » ACCESS <https://www.accesscommunity.org/>
- » Palestinian Institute for Biodiversity + Sustainability <https://www.palestinature.org/>
- » Yezidi International <http://www.yezidisinternational.org/articles/>
- » AMENA-Psy <https://www.amenapsy.org/>
- » AMEJA <https://www.ameja.org/>

#### • AMENA Collectives & Coalitions

- » [Black Arabs Collective](#)
- » [SSWANA Initiative](#)
- » [Collective for Black Iranians](#)
- » Iranian Diaspora collective <https://www.iraniandiasporacollective.com/>
- » SWANA Ancestral Hub <https://www.riverroseremembrance.com/ancestralhub>
- » [Tatreez & Tea](#)
- » Filaha Texts Project <http://www.filaha.org/>

## Connection is Our Strength: Trauma, Grief, and Healing Among Asian & Pacific Islander Americans

- Atkin, A. L., Yoo, H. C., & Yeh, C. J. (2019). What types of racial messages protect Asian American adolescents from discrimination? A latent interaction model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 66*(2), 247-254.
- Inman, A. G., Tummala-Narra, P., Kaduvettoor-Davidson, A., Alvarez, A. N., & Yeh, C. J. (2015). Perceptions of race-based discrimination among first-generation Asian Indians in the United States. *The Counseling Psychologist, 43*(2), 217-247.
- Liu, C. M., & Suyemoto, K. L. (2016). The effects of racism-related stress on Asian Americans: Anxiety and depression among different generational statuses. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 7*, 137-146.
- Thompson, T. L., Kiang, L., & Witkow, M. R. (2016). "You're Asian; You're supposed to be smart": Adolescents' experiences with the model minority stereotype and longitudinal links with identity. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 7*, 108 -119.
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- Tummala-Narra, P., Gordon, J., Gonzalez, L.D., de Mello Barreto, L., Meerkins, T., Nguyen, M., Medzhitova, J., & Perazzo, P. (2019). Breaking the silence: Perspectives on sexual violence among Indian American women. *Asian American Journal of Psychology, 10*(4), 293-306.

## Cultural Wounds, Cultural Strengths - Traumas, Healing & Latina/o/x Intergenerational Wisdom

For online community programming on Latina/o/x wellbeing and healing please visit [www.razapsychology.org](http://www.razapsychology.org)

## Abuse & The Church: Christianity, Spirituality, & Healing

- [www.netgrace.org/resources](http://www.netgrace.org/resources)
- <https://nccasa.org/hope-and-healing-for-survivors-of-sexual-and-spiritual-abuse/>

Langberg, D. (2020). Authority and abuse in the Church. Brazos Press.

Knapp, P. J. (2021). Understanding religious abuse and recovery: Discovering essential principles for hope and healing. Pickwick Publications.

## Healing While Black/African American: Triumphant Over the Pain

Association of Black Psychologists: <https://abpsi.org/resources/#directory>

National Association of Black Social Workers: <https://www.nabsw.org>

Therapy for Black Girls: [https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/?\\_ga=2.106887107.1994837978.1685356985-881713382.1685356985](https://providers.therapyforblackgirls.com/?_ga=2.106887107.1994837978.1685356985-881713382.1685356985)

Psychology of Radical Healing Collective: <https://psychologyofradicalhealing.com>

Dax (2021) Black Lives Matter. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A2o15RCtSS0>.

Decker, N (2021). 'Say Her Name': Janelle Monáe's New Song Draws Attention To Black Girls And Women Killed By Police. Newsone. <https://newsone.com/4217065/janelle-monaes-say-her-name-song/>

Eisenberger NI. (2012). The neural bases of social pain: evidence for shared representations with physical pain. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 74*(2):126-35. doi: 10.1097/PSY.0b013e3182464dd1. Epub 2012 Jan 27. PMID: 22286852; PMCID: PMC3273616.

Johnson KA. (2022). A Mother's Tears: Contemplating Black Grief. *Annual Family Medicine 20*(4):381-382. doi: 10.1370/afm.2822. Epub 2022 May 31. PMID: 35641134; PMCID: PMC9328698.

Kiwanuka, M. (2016). Black Man in a White World. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TYlcVNI2AM&list=RD-TYlcVNI2AM&start\\_radio=1&rv=-TYlcVNI2AM&t=0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TYlcVNI2AM&list=RD-TYlcVNI2AM&start_radio=1&rv=-TYlcVNI2AM&t=0)

Mays VM, Cochran SD, Barnes NW. (2007). Race, race-based discrimination, and health outcomes among African Americans. *Annual Review of Psychology, 58*:201-25. doi: 10.1146/annurev.psych.57.102904.190212. PMID: 16953796; PMCID: PMC4181672.

Morelli, S.A., Torre, J.B., & N.I. (2014). The neural bases of feeling understood and not understood, *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience, 9*, 12, 1890-1896, <https://doi.org/10.1093/scan/nst191>

O'Connor MF. (2005) Bereavement and the brain: invitation to a conversation between bereavement researchers and neuroscientists. *Death Studies. 29*(10):905-22. doi: 10.1080/07481180500299063. PMID: 16265797.

Okona, N.N. The imposition of Black grief (February 7, 2023). Yes Magazine <https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/endings/2023/02/27/black-grief> .

Wilson DT, O'Connor MF. (2022). From Grief to Grievance: Combined Axes of Personal and Collective Grief Among Black Americans. *Frontiers Psychiatry*. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2022.850994. PMID: 35573332; PMCID: PMC9095947.

## My Suffering Does Not Define Me: Hindu Americans' Healing from Trauma & Loss

Harvard University Divinity School (2023). *Hindus in American textbooks*. <https://rpl.hds.harvard.edu/religion-context/case-studies/minority-america/hindus-american-textbooks#:~:text=There%20are%20around%202.5%20million,Hindu%20immigration%2C%20largely%20from%20India> .

Tummala-Narra, P. (2022). Hindu spirituality and psychoanalytic psychotherapy. In S.J.

Sandage & B.D. Strawn (Eds.), *Spiritual diversity and psychotherapy: Engaging the sacred in clinical practice* (pp. 19-46). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Whitman, S. M. (2007). Pain and suffering as viewed by the Hindu religion. *The Journal of Pain, 8*(8), 607-613.

## Resilience & Brilliance: Healing for LGBTQIA+ Persons of Color

- Atlanta Black Pride
- National Black Justice Coalition
- Audre Lorde Project
- Latino Equity Alliance
- Two Spirit Collective

- National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance
- Ahwaa

Edwards, K. M., Mauer, V. A., Huff, M., Farquhar-Leicester, A., Sutton, T. E., & Ullman, S. E. (2022). Disclosure of sexual assault among sexual and gender minorities: A systematic literature review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15248380211073842.

Fingerhut, A. W., Peplau, L. A., & Gable, S. L. (2010). Identity, minority stress and psychological well-being among gay men and lesbians. *Psychology and Sexuality*, 1(2), 101-114. doi:10.1080/19419899.2010.484592

Sherman, A. D. F., Allgood, S., Alexander, K. A., Klepper, M., Balthazar, M. S., Hill, M., Cannon, C. M., Dunn, D., Poteat, T., & Campbell, J. (2022). Transgender and Gender Diverse Community Connection, Help-Seeking, and Mental Health Among Black Transgender Women Who Have Survived Violence: A Mixed-Methods Analysis. *Violence Against Women*, 28(3-4), 890-921. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012211013892>

Whitfield DL, Coulter RWS, Langenderfer-Magruder L, & Jacobson D. Experiences of Intimate Partner Violence Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender College Students: The Intersection of Gender, Race, and Sexual Orientation. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 2021 Jun;36(11-12):NP6040-NP6064. doi: 10.1177/0886260518812071.

### Post-Survey

Mini-Survey

## CULTURALLY INFORMED

## TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY

## TOOLKIT

AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

# Welcome to the American Psychological Association (APA) Culturally Informed Trauma and Grief Recovery Toolkit

*“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”* MAYA ANGELOU

As diverse people with multiple experiences of oppression, the burdens we bear are great. But our will to thrive is so often stronger. Even still, the trauma and grief we experience creates lots of harm and loss. The trauma and grief we endure can make it challenging to catch our breath, to resist, and to heal. We, a group of psychologists and mental health professionals from diverse marginalized communities, created this Culturally Informed Trauma and Grief Recovery Toolkit. Our hope is that this toolkit builds upon our communities’ inherent resourcefulness, resilience, and strength.

The intended audience for this toolkit is diverse people who have been marginalized, including Black, Indigenous, and people of color, people in the LGBT+ community, people from lower income, people whose native country is not the U.S., ciswomen, older adults, people who are religious (e.g., Hindu, Muslim, Christian), and/or people with disabilities. Our purpose in creating this toolkit is to educate, share tools and resources, uplift, and affirm the experiences of members of our communities who have experienced trauma and loss. In addition to being used by individuals, it is our hope that the toolkit and resources can be used by groups to support community dialogue and healing. Specifically, we hope this toolkit will empower communities to mobilize their strengths and utilize their community resources and cultural practices to heal, resist, and thrive despite facing multiple types of discrimination. Therapists can also share this toolkit with their clients.

The toolkit includes written documents and short videos. The written documents are each two pages and have been written by our group of diverse psychologists from marginalized communities. The videos are each approximately 5 minutes long and were created by various members of the psychology community. We have created a resource page ([here](#)) for people who would like to learn more about the topics found in the toolkit.

There are 3 categories of written documents:

1. **Overviews:** In these documents, we explain what interpersonal trauma is, what collective trauma is, and what grief is. Each of these documents has definitions, common experiences, and typical ways people are impacted.
2. **Healing & Coping Strategies:** In these documents, you will find information on reaching out for help, responding supportively to someone else, using the will to exist and live, engaging in religious and spiritual coping, and healing through dance and the arts.

3. **Cultural Considerations:** In these documents, we explore special cultural considerations for trauma, grief, coping, and healing for people with:
- A. different ethnicities—Black people, refugees and immigrants, Asians, Latina/o/x, Indigenous people, Middle Eastern and North African people
  - B. different religions—Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, Christian
  - C. sexual orientations and gender identities—LGBT<sup>+</sup> of color
  - D. multiple marginalized identities who face interlocking oppressions like racism, sexism, and homophobia (known as intersectionality).

The short videos will build on the topics we cover in the written documents.

Though created by psychologists, this toolkit is not therapy. Instead, we hope that this toolkit provides easy to understand information about interpersonal trauma, collective trauma, grief, coping, and healing that uplifts our communities, while reminding us all of the strength and wisdom we inherently possess. Let's Begin!



## CULTURALLY INFORMED

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## Interpersonal Trauma: Violence & Abuse In Our Communities

*“Something happened at home last week. I don’t know what to call it. But I feel crushed...and depressed.”*

Interpersonal trauma is violence and abuse that occurs between two or more people—typically where one or more person is the causing harm to the other(s). Because violence and abuse are about power and domination, research shows that people of Color, LGBT folks, and those with disabilities experience more interpersonal trauma. The person who commits the violence is usually called the perpetrator, while those who experience the violence are typically known as victims or survivors. Still, people are complex and multidimensional. Perpetrators are more than what they’ve done, and victims/survivors are more than what they’ve experienced.

There are 3 types of abuse: physical, sexual, and emotional. Physical abuse includes throwing things, shoving, hitting, strangling, or beating someone up. Physical abuse can include weapons, like a knife or gun. From research, we know that over half of the general population has experienced some form of physical abuse in their lifetime.

Sexual abuse involves a wide range of unwanted behaviors where consent is not given, including, but are not limited to, molestation and unwanted touching, sexual harassment, attempted or completed rape, gang rape, and sex trafficking. Not giving consent includes saying “no” and/or trying to push the person off of you, as well as being unable to give consent due to drug/alcohol intoxication or limited cognitive capacity. People can also be unable to give consent due to age, such as a 50-year-old adult molesting a 5-year-old child; in those instances, the child is considered unable to give consent because they are too young. Research shows that between 24% and 80% of the general population has been sexually abused sometime during their life. Emotional abuse includes verbal words and behaviors like yelling, screaming, putting someone down, and calling them names. Emotional abuse can also be controlling behavior that isolates the other person, like someone not allowing their romantic partner to talk to their family. Researchers have found that about half of the general population experience emotional abuse.

Interpersonal trauma often occurs in private, like in someone’s home. It can also happen in public. For example, community violence happens on public streets and inside neighborhoods. It can also happen in semi-public locations, like at parties.

Interpersonal trauma can be perpetrated both by people the victim or survivor knows and people who are strangers. Research finds that abuse is most often perpetrated by familiar people: acquaintances, friends, romantic partners, and family members. Authority figures, such as police officers and doctors, also commit interpersonal trauma.

Interpersonal trauma is harmful for many reasons, including the betrayals that happen as part of the abuse. Research finds

that when perpetrators are someone trusted or needed like when a parent sexually abuses their child, there is a betrayal within the abuse. Cultural betrayal occurs when violence is perpetrated within communities that face societal discrimination, like people of Color and the LGBT community. Research shows that with cultural betrayal, the violence and abuse are impacted by it being perpetrated by a member of the same minoritized community.

There are decades of research that document that interpersonal trauma is linked with mental health struggles, like depression and anxiety, physical health difficulties, like chronic illness, and behavioral health, like thinking of suicide. From research, we know that internalized racism, like a Black person thinking all Black people are violent, is also a possible outcome for those who experience violence with a cultural betrayal. Although these outcomes are common and understandable responses to trauma, researchers find that people can and do have happiness in their lives after violence. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

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## Collective Trauma

Why do people suffer when their communities face oppression? Different forms of injustice can contribute to the stress faced by many people. Collective trauma is an event or series of events that impact not only one person but also a group of identified or targeted people. Collective trauma usually refers to traumas rooted in oppression or discrimination toward a minority group by a dominant group, in contrast to interpersonal trauma. However, the term, collective trauma, is sometimes used to include environmental disasters, violence (e.g., school shootings), and pandemics that affect people across different communities. Therefore, collective trauma refers to both traumatic interpersonal interactions between the minority and majority group members, such as gender-based violence, micro-(for example, insults), and macro-aggressions (e.g., hate crimes), and governmental and non-governmental systems perpetuating discrimination, war, political and religious persecution, trafficking, and torture.

There are three important considerations regarding collective trauma, including how long it may last, its impact, and the severity of problems between different racial, cultural, religious, or political groups. First, how long does collective trauma last? This can vary depending on the type of trauma. For example, discrimination due to gender, race, color, or religion can be a lifelong traumatization process. Many communities are victimized by violence and neglect across generations. For example, poverty and the lack of access to safe housing, healthcare, and education can have a lifelong impact on individuals, families, and communities.

Second, what is the impact of collective trauma? This may depend on what is called the “density” of overlapping traumas or intersectionality. Discrimination and bias based on factors such as gender, race, color, national origin, immigration status, social class, sexual orientation, religion, and disability are denser than discrimination or bias based only on race. For example, transwomen of color continue to be among the most targeted communities in the U.S. and globally.

Third, the severity of collective trauma influences how a person or a community experiences its effects. The harm or injury caused to a group or a community varies. Some examples of severe collective traumas include genocide of indigenous people, slavery, the incarceration of Japanese Americans in the Second World War, the Nazi Holocaust, violence against those perceived as Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, and the separation of migrant children from their family members at the U.S./Mexico border.

Because collective trauma impacts a targeted group, any traumatic event experienced by one group member, like George Floyd’s murder, is observed and witnessed in the media by other group members who can experience parts of the traumatic event as their own. Another example is that the violence and harassment of Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic have raised anxiety among many Asian Americans who may not have been directly targeted. In addition, what happened to parents and grandparents can be transmitted cross-generationally through similar dynamics, especially in

genocides and slavery. Collective trauma that occurred in the past can be powerful and may affect a community's sense of safety across generations. For example, historical and ongoing police brutality and White supremacy directed against African Americans and Black Americans have left a mark such that families and communities remain highly alert about their safety, which can affect their sense of belonging in U.S. society.

Healing the wounds of collective trauma is a challenge that requires supporting each other, and fighting together to achieve social justice.

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## Grief & Loss: The Ones We Acknowledge and The Ones We Don't

*“Grief is really just love. It’s all the love you want to give but cannot. All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go”* JAMIE ANDERSON

Throughout our lives and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, our communities experienced considerable losses. Losses trigger grief: an intense emotional experience that is a normal and automatic response to losing anything that we value. Related to loss, grief is an internal process that involves feelings, emotions, and behaviors that are unique and healthy expression of love. It is so important to preserve the dignity of grief and grieving, which can sometimes take a lifetime.

Some losses that can trigger grief are easily recognized by society and ourselves. These include things like death of a loved one, a break-up, or loss of a job. However, there are other losses that do not always fit into the norms of what our society may identify as worthy of grief. Examples of these kinds of losses include: miscarriages; a decline in health; separation of families through immigration; an adoption that doesn't go through; infertility; loss of a loved one by suicide; living while a loved one is incarcerated; or a loss of cognitive functioning through things like dementia. Children can experience unique unrecognized losses, such as loss of connections with teachers, peers, and other meaningful adults in their lives when school is canceled or interrupted. These and other losses are called “unrecognized losses.”

Even though often unrecognized, these losses can be just as detrimental to our mental health and overall well-being. Those of us who experience grief from these unrecognized losses may get more judgment and stigma from others, which can result in our increased isolation and disconnection from the very support systems that could mitigate the impact of these losses

Grief itself impacts our whole being—physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. Experiencing recognized and unrecognized losses of any kind can leave us with a range of emotions, including anger, despair, depression, confusion, frustration, exhaustion, loneliness and anxiety. While grieving, we can also experience trouble sleeping, difficulty concentrating, a lack of motivation, fatigue, despair, aggression and/or difficulty connecting or re-engaging with others after the loss. If left unaddressed, there may be long-term disruptions in our ability to complete daily tasks related to school, work, or home.

While loss is a shared human experience, losses don't impact each of us in the same way. It is important to remember that grief is not a linear process with predictable stages that you can work through. Instead, grief is more like a spiral where you go in and out of stages more than once. Not only are we impacted differently by loss, but there is also lots of variation in our expressions of grief across genders, races, classes, religions, ages, and cultures. Therefore, cultural ways of expressing grief, as well as the developmental impact of grief on children and youth should be incorporated into tools and resources that support individuals experiencing recognized and unrecognized losses.

And some communities experience increased risk and vulnerability for certain types of losses, which create and reinforce social, economic, health and wealth disparities. These kinds of losses can include death of a loved one by gun violence, loss of contact with a family member through deportation, inability to travel to your home country to grieve with family after a loss, and not being able to openly love a life partner because of homophobia.

Though grief can be overwhelming, we can remember the words of Jamie Anderson: *Grief is just love with no place to go*. Our love—even when that love is in the shape of grief—can hold us as we mourn our recognized and unrecognized losses. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

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## My Religion, My Spirituality, My Coping

*Do you ever feel that life is meaningless?*

*Do you wonder why bad things happen to good people?*

*Have you experienced loss without a chance to grieve?*

One of the highest human needs is to find meaning and purpose in life. This may include the need to connect to something bigger than ourselves, a creative force that can give us strength to face life. Trauma and grief can impact us on a spiritual level, causing feelings of emptiness, isolation, and disconnection from meaning and purpose. Religion and spirituality can be powerful coping mechanisms to help us navigate life's problems, traumatic experiences, and losses.

Religion usually refers to a set of practices, rituals, and guidelines that advise many of our everyday behaviors. Religious rituals can help some of us cope with death and grieving, celebrate weddings and births, connect to the seasons and each other. Religion can relate to specific cultural traditions and symbols, such as the Cross or the Star of David or the Crescent.

Spirituality refers to an experience of oneself on a spirit or soul level. It includes a sense of connection to something greater than yourself that gives meaning to life and provides an inner peace. Some people feel spiritually connected to nature, art, or a faith community. For others, spirituality is linked to one or more Gods or another higher power. Spirituality may be open-ended and can be practiced by individuals or in groups, and in most any surrounding. Spiritual practices such as lament, meditation, revelry, and making room for uncertainty can calm the nervous system and have been practiced for thousands of years.

During times of stress, we may not have a chance to grieve losses, and it can be hard to find a quiet time to calm ourselves. Trauma can take us to a fight, flight, freeze, or appease response. So, calming ourselves to a more peaceful place helps us make better decisions and choose better actions. Participating in culturally relevant rituals and practices, such as the Mexican Día de los Muertos, can help us face death and carry on the memories of loved ones. Prayers, chants, and songs can also bring meaning during loss and help heal the soul.

Consider, are there particular sacred symbols or spiritual practices that help you feel more connected to the transcendent, the world, or the universe? Do you find special comfort in connecting with a religious or worship community? For some, these practices can be helpful if you engage them. They may not totally erase all sense of a loss or pain, but the meaning they help to bring to the loss can be a valuable, lifelong process.

Local shamanic healers, rabbis, imams, priests, pastors, and other spiritual leaders can be beneficial on the healing journey. Religious and spiritual leaders are valuable resources, and often offer spiritual support and provide important perspectives and connection to a larger story, force, and power in life. We can use the same tips for identifying supportive people ([here](#)) to identify supportive faith leaders.

However you choose to heal on a spiritual level is up to you. The important thing to remember is that you do not have to do it alone. If it feels right for you, consider seeking support from your local church, synagogue, mosque, temple, or other faith organization. Be uplifted by joining with others. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).



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## Support As Healing: How To Respond When Someone Tells You They've Been Abused

*“My best friend just told me they’ve been abused by someone we both love and trust. What do I do? What do I say?”*

From research we know that many emotions can overwhelm us when someone tells us they’ve been abused, such as being beaten up or sexually assaulted. We may feel empathetic, sad, confused, fearful, anger for them, hatred towards the person(s) who abused them, and/or overcome by our own memories of being abused. An impulse can be to take control, but this approach can be harmful because it takes away their control, similar to how they weren’t in control during the abuse. Research has guidance on how to compassionately listen and support.

### 1. Use body language that shows you are paying attention

- A) Do things that let them know you are listening, like nodding
- B) Keep good eye contact without staring uncomfortably at them
- C) Do not roll your eyes or raise your eyebrows in shock of their behavior
- D) Do not move your body a lot, like playing with your phone or fidgeting

### 2. Say things that show you care

- A) Allow silence, using supportive phrases like “uh-huh”
- B) Reflect back the emotions that they are feeling, like “That seems very scary and confusing” and “That part seems to make you feel really sad”
- C) Gently ask questions when you are unsure of what they mean, like “I don’t know what you mean by...” and “What was that like?”
- D) Do not change the subject

### 3. Let them know you support them

- A) Validate what they’re feeling, like saying “I think I’d feel the same way if that happened to me”
- B) Do share positives about them, like “You are so strong for going through that and still being the wonderful person you are”
- C) Remind them that what happened was not their fault
- D) If they and the perpetrator(s) are all from marginalized communities (i.e., communities of color, LGBT community):
  - » If requested, can help them think through the pros and cons of telling what happened to formal sources, like school officials and police

- » Can remind them that what happened is not a negative reflection on their entire community
  - » Let them know that they are not responsible for protecting the perpetrator(s) and the community from discrimination because of the perpetrator(s)' abusive behavior
  - » Share that pride and solidarity in their community does not mean putting up with abusive behavior
- E) Do not try to reassure them through minimizing what they've experienced; don't say things like "That happened so long ago, I'm sure you're fine"
- F) Do not negatively judge or shame them for what they did during or after being abused. Avoid saying things like, "Why didn't you do \_\_\_ instead?"

Research shows us supportive responses to someone who's telling you they've been abused plays such an important role in their healing AND healing across our communities. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

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## I Can Do Bad All By Myself: Knowing When & How to Reach Out For Help

*“I know I’ve been struggling because of what happened. Is it bad enough for me to get help? And who would understand what I’m going through anyways?”*

There are many reasons why a person wouldn’t tell anyone that they’re struggling. Research tells us that these include not having anyone they trust, wanting to not burden other people with their problems, and being worried they’ll be blamed for what’s happened to them. Being alone with our pain can become a habit. Getting help is important: whether we are feeling depressed, suicidal, and/or just not living our best lives.

There are different kinds of help for people who have experienced or are experiencing interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, collective trauma, and grief. The first is formal therapy. Individual therapy involves sessions with just you and the therapist. Group therapy has one or more therapists who work with a group of people together. Therapists have education and training in how difficult experiences, like an assault, the pandemic, or the death of child, impact people and how to help them heal. That said, not every therapist is right for everyone. In finding a therapist, you can look at their website or brochures and ask for a free initial consultation to see how they approach therapy: Do they see their clients as damaged and in need of fixing? Do they think hold prejudicial or antagonistic beliefs about their clients’ cultures, communities, and religions are corrupt? Or do they understand the many strengths that people from different cultures have and want to work in collaboration with their clients along the road to healing? In preparation for your first appointment, you can think about your therapy goals. Because therapy is a new experience, it is normal to feel anxious during your first sessions. However, if something feels off, you don’t have to stay with that therapist. Because research shows the importance of fit between therapist and client, it doesn’t mean therapy isn’t for you if you don’t like a therapist. It may just mean that you haven’t found the right therapist for you yet.

Researchers have documented healing strategies outside of therapy. This includes reaching out to leaders at your religious/spiritual institution, like your mosque, synagogue, or church, telling someone close to you, like your romantic partner(s), loved one, close friend, or family member, and/or calling a national hotline or joining an internet forum that helps people who are struggling like you are. Thoughtfully choosing who to reach out to is important because research shows that other people’s negative reactions are harmful. Qualities to look for include being empathetic and caring; qualities to avoid could be being judgmental or making fun of people who have experienced what you have. If you’re not sure how someone will react, you can disclose a small piece of what you’re going through or share the story of someone else who has experienced what you have (without disclosing their name). If they respond well, then you can try sharing more. To help others understand and respond well to you, you could share with them information about interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse ([here](#)), collective trauma ([here](#)), grief and loss ([here](#)), and how to be supportive when someone tells them they’ve been abused ([here](#)).

Researchers have found activities you can incorporate into your daily life that promote healing. These include doing arts and crafts, playing or listening to music, watching or acting in theatre, drawing strength from your spirituality, enjoying nature, engaging in activism, and writing poetry or journaling. You can ask yourself “What would being free look like for me?” This question can lead to better understanding of what you want in your life and what you can do to start or continue living the life that you want. Feeling joy and happiness while having a good life is possible, no matter what you’ve gone through. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

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## When Words Aren't Enough: The Power of Expressive Arts in Healing

*“Have you ever felt at a loss for words? When something bad happened to you, did you feel numb? Wish you could communicate what happened?”*

When we experience trauma, violence, loss, and grief, our emotions can be so overwhelming that our body either shuts down or disconnects. We might discover that we don't know what we feel, or we can't feel anything. Even though these natural responses can be confusing and painful, they are normal ways of reacting to life-altering events.

Oftentimes, healing from trauma, violence, loss, and grief, comes in the form of words. We are encouraged to connect with people, or seek professional help in therapy. For instance, you can see our resource on knowing when and how to seek help, [here](#). However, words with our loved ones and/or professionals are not always an option to us. And there are times when someone asks us, “How do you feel?”, and we just don't know what to say.

Not having the words to express what we are thinking, feeling, and experiencing makes sense. Our memories from traumatic events doesn't always include words; sometimes, the memories are stored in our bodies. For instance, during a miscarriage or when witnessing someone being murdered, we may dissociate, or disconnect emotionally, from ourselves and the experience. So, after it is all over, the harm can live hidden within us in ways that words can't express. Instead, our emotions and memories can come out in our dreams and nightmares.

How can we express our hidden and wordless feelings? And how can we experience the healing that comes with sharing those feelings in a warm and supportive environment? One way is through **Expressive and Creative Arts Therapies**. Beginning with shell-shocked war veterans of World War II who could not speak following the war, music therapists found that music reached a part of the psyche that was still active. In this way, music therapy helps people who have been traumatized, with music as a way of communicating with and through our hidden and unknown feelings.

**Art therapists** can also help children and others heal when they've experienced something, like sexual abuse or community violence, that they do not yet have words for. In art therapy, therapists work with people to help them draw their fears, share them with others, and discover their own creativity and strengths.

As detailed in our resource on resistance strategies, found [here](#), we know that we can flee, fight, freeze, or appease when we experience a traumatic event. When that happens, fear, terror, anger, grief, depression, anxiety, and other emotions can get locked in our bodies. How do we unlock our bodies so they can flow again, and we can move forward into a new day? **Dance Therapists** are trained to work with the body, to understand nonverbal communication, and to incorporate culturally sensitive ways to bring the body back to life.

Other forms of **Expressive Arts Therapies** also use creative and symbolic ways to communicate. These include Poetry, Storytelling, Drama, Psychodrama, and Mixed Media. Each of these types of **Expressive Arts Therapies** have support groups and therapists specially trained to work with culturally relevant arts psychotherapy. Therefore, no matter what has happened to us and how we are dealing with it, the arts offer us avenues of healing (see our resource on seeking help, found [here](#)). And in addition to or in lieu of words, **Expressive Arts Therapies** can provide us the space, time, and community to express our deep emotions, wounds, and hope, thus freeing us from being trapped underneath what we have experienced. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

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## Taking My Power Back and Changing The World

*“What happened to me made me feel helpless. But I’m taking my power back to make change in my own life, my community, and the world!”*

Those of us who have survived horrific experiences can, and often do, become agents of change. Through pain, we have a window into both the evils of what life can be and the joy, peace, and freedom we can share with each other. In fact, hallmarks of liberation frameworks from psychology and other disciplines are the resistance strategies that we take: instead of drowning under our sorrow, we can take steps to heal, and then, when we feel ready, we can use our experiences—the good and the bad—to change the world. Transforming our pain into activism and advocacy on large and small scales, both formally and informally. In doing so, we can become the change we want to see in the world: **by career, by volunteer, and by our life.**

### By Career

There are many formal avenues for creating positive change in the world. Some can be directly related to our experiences. For instance, a person who has survived years of sexual abuse by their parent can become a rape crisis counselor, trauma psychologist, or social worker that helps others along their healing journeys. Another example is a parent whose child was murdered can begin a non-profit organization that provides education, hope, healing, and policy change that addresses gun violence while humanizing those who have caused harm to the community.

Other avenues for change can be more indirect. These could include becoming an educator in K-12 or higher education that engenders critical thinking and intellectual curiosity in their students. In teaching about history, critical studies, social work, and psychology, these students gain a clearer understanding of the world—including reverence for the ancestors who have already walked their paths. Through fostering critical consciousness and self-esteem, these students then continue the legacy of changemaking with their own communities, loved ones, and children. Another option is to become a researcher who studies something positive, like happiness: *What makes people joyful? How important is laughter in our lives?* They then share this research with their communities and the general public—enabling others not give up on themselves and their happiness, even when it seems that all the odds are stacked against them.

### By Volunteer

Sometimes we don’t want or can’t have a full career of changemaking. So instead, we can volunteer ourselves and our time to make the world a better place. This can include volunteering at the local animal shelter to walk dogs who are currently without a stable home after being abused by their former humans. Relating to animals who have experienced some of the things we have—like being beaten—can be healing and comforting for us and for them. Another example is to advocate for victims’ rights through submitting a comment to upcoming legislation, like the U.S. Department of Education’s Title IX rulemaking changes that affect diverse survivors of sexual assault on college campuses. We could also chart our own path of hardship and healing through publishing our poetry or writing a memoir.

**By Our Life**

Whether or not we promote change through volunteering or in our careers, we can always promote change in our personal lives. For instance, when we see jokes on social media about domestic violence, we can bring up a conversation with our friends about why it isn't funny. Or we can amplify the good work of members of our community. Or we can support local artists who reflect our existence from our own lenses. No matter what, we can change the world, one tiny act at a time: sharing our healing and hope with everyone around us. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).



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# Intersectionality: The Way Our Oppressions and Privileges Combine to Create Opportunities and Challenges

*“Sexism isn’t a one-size-fits all phenomenon. It doesn’t happen to Black and White women the same way.”* KIMBERLÉ CRENSHAW

People belong to different social groupings, positions, or locations based on their characteristics. These social locations or positions, in part, shape their identity. Each person has multiple social locations and positions based on their race, ethnicity, class, religion, birth country, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, and disability status. In the United States and around the world, some social locations and positions have more power, perceived importance, legal protection, and resources than other social locations and positions. For example, in the category of age, adults are afforded more power, importance, and access to resources than children or aging individuals. Similarly, people who are White; middle or high-income earning; male; Christian; U.S. born; heterosexual; or able-bodied have more power and access to resources than people of color; low income earning; women; transgender; or intersex; non-Christian; immigrants or refugees; or individuals with disabilities.

Intersectionality is a term that was developed by pioneering law professor, Kimberlé Crenshaw, J.D., to describe how a person’s social locations or positions can interact to create unique disadvantages and unjust treatment. For example, a Black transgender person will experience different life challenges compared to someone who is White and transgender or a Black person who identifies as male and was born a male. We know from research that, compared to individuals who have social locations or positions with less power, those with more power have: (a) better physical and mental health, (b) more education, (c) live in safer neighborhoods, (d) consistent access to nutritious foods, and (e) financial stability. These inequalities can be worse for individuals who have multiple positions with less financial, political, or social power.

Intersectionality is important to consider when someone is dealing with trauma and loss. For example, a bisexual cisgender man of color who has been sexually assaulted might be denied access to resources based on race, gender, and sexual orientation, making it harder to get help in coping with his assault, both within his racial or ethnic community and within mainstream society. It is also important to consider the power held by people who are privileged within different communities, as these individuals often define the group’s cultural norms. Specifically, it is often the case that cisgender men and heterosexual members of a racial or ethnic group have more power and authority over other members of a particular group, and therefore can define how trauma and loss are dealt with in a community.

A person coping with being overlooked due to their intersecting oppressed social positions and trauma or loss can experience both stress and strength. They may struggle with finding help from others due to multiple types of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, ableism, religious discrimination, and xenophobia. They may also find ways to cope with their trauma and loss in meaningful ways through the help of others. Therefore, it's important for people with multiple oppressed social positions to identify safe people and spaces where their concerns are recognized and supported. It is also important to remember that those with the lowest status in an already marginalized group need people with common goals to support them as they seek help in coping with trauma and loss. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

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## Buddhism & Trauma: Healing Within This Present Moment

*“Having compassion starts and ends with having compassion for all those unwanted parts of ourselves. The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen: room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy.”* PEMA CHÖDRÖN

Buddhism is a major world religion and philosophy originally founded by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha or “awakened one”, around 2,500 years ago in India. Buddhism is a spiritual and philosophical way of understanding the world, suffering, and the path to liberation with a particular emphasis on the cultivation of mindfulness, compassion, and wisdom. Since being founded in India, Buddhism has spread throughout Asia and the rest of the world, becoming one of the fastest growing religions. Whether you were raised in a Buddhist culture, adopted Buddhism later in life, or are simply interested in Buddhism, there are two concepts that can prove to be especially beneficial when healing from traumatic experiences: mindfulness and self-compassion.

### **Mindfulness: anchoring ourselves**

Mindfulness is a pillar of Buddhist practice and is defined as a non-judgmental, ongoing awareness of the present moment. When dealing with trauma, it can be easy to get stuck in the past or be consumed with worries about the future. Mindfulness helps us to be with what is happening in the here and now. Practicing mindfulness helps us accept our emotions, become less reactive, and move into a state of awareness that can be relaxing at times. Over time, mindfulness can help us understand ourselves better and increase our ability to feel safe and at peace. Mindfulness is usually performed using an anchor for the mind’s attention, most commonly the breath, while sitting or lying down in a comfortable and safe environment. We simply notice the breath moving in and out of our body, while becoming aware of physical sensations, emotions, and thoughts. As these arise, rather than attaching to a part of our experience or trying to make our sensations, emotions, or thoughts different than what they are, we simply observe them and allow them to come and go like waves on a beach or clouds in the sky. At times it may feel like we are being swept away by the waves or clouds of our minds – in these moments we gently return to the anchor of our breath. While mindfulness can be done more formally, moments of mindfulness can occur throughout the day. Whether we are washing the dishes or going for a walk, taking a moment to pay attention to what is happening in the present moment can help settle the mind and relax the body.

### **Self-compassion: kindness directed towards the self**

Another pillar of Buddhism is avoiding harm and wishing happiness for all beings, including ourselves. Mindfulness can also help us act more warm, kind, and caring toward ourselves when we have painful thoughts or emotions. This is known as self-compassion. We may blame ourselves for what happened and expect ourselves to heal quickly. We

then are surprised by unexpected triggers, unsettling physical sensations, and other confusing but natural responses to trauma. Developing a sense of acceptance and compassion for where we are on the healing journey, rather than where we want to be, can be transformative. This practice is not about fixing ourselves or punishment, instead it is about accepting all parts of ourselves. By practicing mindfulness, many people find that they are more accepting of their natural responses to trauma and the thoughts that arise in the mind, allowing them to cultivate a sense of self-compassion. Mindfulness and self-compassion can be powerful sources of healing that can be done alone or with community. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

## CULTURALLY INFORMED

## TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY

## TOOLKIT



## Shifa: A Guide of Contemporary and Traditional Healing Practices for Muslim Americans

بُوبُلُقُلَا نِيْمَطَتِ هَلَلَا رِكِذِبِ آلَا

*“Truly in the remembrance of Allah does the heart find rest.”* QUR’AN 13:28

Throughout history, Muslim Americans have experienced collective trauma (see [here](#)) through discrimination, bullying, racial profiling, Islamophobia, and challenges in accessing culturally sensitive health care. Due to the war on terror, many Muslim Americans have been impacted due to displacement from our home countries, which has led to difficulties in assimilating to American culture while remaining steadfast in our cultural and religious traditions. Many Muslim cultural and religious traditions across the globe have been lost and transformed, altering the lives of millions and creating a widening gap between generations.

Muslims believe that all aspects of grieving, suffering, death, joy, and happiness are derived from Allah. As a result, there is a strong element of acceptance of Allah’s will and a belief that faith in Allah is what serves as a source of comfort that aids in the healing process. Although there is an element of acceptance, Islam normalizes mourning and expressing grief. Thus, Muslims are encouraged to turn to Allah in times of distress or grief through prayer and other forms of religious practices as a way of finding solace in times of grief and distress.

Traditional healing practices for Muslim Americans can be categorized into 2 main domains of religious and cultural practices. Religious healing is seen as the most impactful and restorative, with special emphasis added to prayer, dhikr, and recitation of the Qur’an. Allah has mentioned in several places in the Qur’an that the Qur’an has been sent as a healer of the heart. It is important to create space and time to read it mindfully. There are many verses within the Qur’an that provide guidance on how to manage anxiety, depression, and grief. In fact, many western constructs of healing, such as mindfulness, are part of the Qur’an and prayer as important ways of healing, shifa, and self-care. Therefore, embracing prayer and recitation of the Qur’an is a crucial element of healing for advancing our emotional well-being.

In addition to religious practices, Muslim Americans use various cultural practices that have been passed down from generations to prioritize healing and wellbeing. The usage of folk medicine including herbs, plants, dietary practices, and incense are traditional cultural healing practices from the 7<sup>th</sup> century by Islamic scholars and physicians. Examples of herbal medicines and dietary practices include black cumin seeds, turmeric, anise, honey, ginger, and garlic, which are all mentioned in prophetic traditions (ahadith) and within the Qur’an. The Qur’an and ahadith also mention a great number of plants and fruits used in traditional healing, such as figs, olives, and pomegranates. Other therapeutic healing practices used for thousands of years in the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) region are fasting and Al-hejamah, most notably known as cupping. All in all, the use of traditional cultural healing practices

stemming from religious texts have served as a crucial source of health and healing for Muslims across the globe.

More recently, there has been a concentrated effort to prioritize and normalize mental health treatment in addition to the usage of religious and cultural healing practices. Due to widespread conservative cultural beliefs regarding mental health and suicidality, many Muslim Americans have been discouraged from seeking mental health treatment, and instead, merely encouraged to pray. However, a balance of traditional and contemporary practices of shifa, including mental health treatment, is important, and can lead to continued hope, healing, and emotional wellbeing for the collective community of Muslim Americans (see [here](#) for tips on choosing a therapist). For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

## CULTURALLY INFORMED

## TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY

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AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## From Collective Suffering to Thriving: Radical Healing for AMENA Peoples

*“All human beings are members of one frame, Since all, at first, from the same essence came. When time afflicts a limb with pain, The other limbs at rest cannot remain. If thou feel not for other’s misery, A human being is no name for thee.” SA’DĪ (TRANSLATION BY EDWARD EASTWICK)*

Humanity is connected through both pain and healing. As Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African (AMENA) peoples, we can use the Psychology of Radical Healing Collective’s framework for *radical healing* from trauma and oppression through social justice. This framework has five anchors: **Collectivism** promotes engaging the support of our community; **Critical consciousness** involves reflecting on root causes of harmful social situations, fostering belief in our capacity to affect change, and taking actions against oppression; **Radical hope** is a collective and action-oriented hope for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to work toward liberation; **Strength and resistance** involves cultivating joy and celebrating the strengths of our culture, self, and community; and **Cultural authenticity and self-knowledge** involves learning and honoring our personal and cultural histories and wisdom.

AMENA families and communities often feature strong interconnectedness that supports healing through **collectivism**. Whether through intergenerational storytelling, engagement in AMENA community organizations, or through other means, we may find healing in the support of our community. For times of grief, in particular, AMENA communities have communal traditions that promote belonging and healing, such as sharing *Halvā* pastries and telling stories to promote collective coping with the bereaved; Druze engaging in a communal practice of choral music; or Baha’is engaging in collective chanting of the Prayer for the Dead.

In addition to collectivism, we may engage in **critical consciousness** and take actions at various levels to fight for social justice. Locally, Arab activists in Michigan have taken a stand against the banning of schoolbooks with LGBTQ+ characters. Nationally, AMENA individuals and community organizations are pushing the U.S. government to add “MENA” as a federal racial-ethnic category. And internationally, many are involved in supporting the “Woman, Life, Freedom” liberation movement in Iran.

The Sufi saying, “This, too, shall pass”, views difficult and/or unjust circumstances as impermanent, motivating **radical hope** for meaningful change. Many AMENA collectives exercise radical hope. The Baha’i Institute for Higher Education, for example, is an underground university for Iranian Baha’is who are barred from receiving higher education. Radical hope invites individuals to form coalitions to build a just future.

AMENA peoples have a history of using joy to show **strength and resistance** in the face of oppression. Syrians in refugee camps have used Dabke to instill a sense of healing and hope; Amazigh youth are fighting to preserve their identity, for example by proudly reclaiming, displaying, and educating others on historical dance, tattoos, and

clothing on social media. These enactments of joy can be healing and serve as effective forms of resistance.

Examples of **cultural authenticity & self-knowledge** abound in AMENA communities, such as various *Tatreez* embroidery circles that have emerged to preserve Palestinian and Syrian history and culture. In addition, grassroots and community organizations provide physical and virtual spaces for individuals to learn about AMENA histories and cultures. These resources provide invaluable opportunities for engaging in cultural self-discovery.

While connected through suffering, we have a collective pathway of healing through social justice. By tapping into our communities' strengths and cultural roots, exercising radical hope, fostering joy, and fighting for social justice, we promote healing for ourselves and each other. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).



## CULTURALLY INFORMED

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## Connection is Our Strength: Trauma, Grief, and Healing Among Asian & Pacific Islander Americans

*“It’s hard to talk about racism with people outside of my community. People don’t think that Asian people go through hardships. They think we are the model minority.”*

Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (APIs) have ancestry in various regions spanning East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. There is a great deal of diversity within API communities with regard to national origin, ethnicity, language, and religion. In the midst of our communities’ and our own strengths, we also endure hardships.

Historically, we have immigrated for different reasons, such as family reunification, search for educational and employment opportunities, discrimination, poverty, war, natural disasters, trafficking, and political and religious persecution. Many API immigrants face hardships such as language and communication barriers, limited access to resources, navigating new cultural norms and shifting immigration policies. We also experience various forms of stereotyping and racism that are often invisible and neglected in U.S. society. For example, the prevalent myth of the “model minority” assumes that Asian Americans are academically and professionally successful, inherently smart, and that we don’t experience stress or obstacles in U.S. society. The pressure to live up to these stereotypes can be crushing. Other harmful stereotypes, depending on ethnicity, include being passive, exotic, weak, criminal, or terrorist. APIs also face microaggressions, verbal abuse, bullying, and physical violence, such as in the case of South Asian Americans being targeted after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and in the case of East and Southeast Asian Americans being targeted during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In addition to these challenges, many APIs cope with violence, abuse, and neglect within their homes and communities, and these experiences can have negative impacts across the lifespan. Additionally, research tells us that many APIs who experience abuse and violence have limited resources to stop the violence and get adequate help. Within API communities, survivors of violence and abuse can face pressure to keep what has happened to them a secret due to the shame and stigma that is attached to violence and abuse. For some, there are cultural expectations that make it hard to talk about violence and abuse with other people. For example, a woman may be told that she shouldn’t talk about being abused to protect her family’s reputation.

APIs also face loss and grief in ways that may be processed somewhat differently depending on cultural and religious beliefs. For instance, some people view the death of a loved one as both devastating and as connected with the deceased person’s destiny or karma. The collectivistic orientation of many APIs often helps with grieving losses through religious or cultural rituals and gatherings. Loss can be experienced as something that an extended

family or community experiences, rather than only by a single person.

As AAPIs, we have both individual and collective strengths that help with trauma and grief. It's especially helpful when trauma and grief are recognized by loved ones, and when there is access to help from family, friends, spiritual or religious leaders, and mental health professionals (see resource on seeking help [here](#)). A strong support network helps with the isolation and stigma connected with trauma and grief. Finally, having support within and outside of one's community can be helpful. This is especially true when a person has been hurt within and outside of one's family and community, like being raped by someone in their ethnic community and facing racism outside of this community. Within the diversity of AAPI communities across generations, we can heal individually and collectively even while we may experience the pain of trauma and grief differently. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

## CULTURALLY INFORMED

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## Cultural Wounds, Cultural Strengths – Traumas, Healing & Latina/o/x Intergenerational Wisdom

*“We do not have an unhealthy culture. The unwellness in our community comes from colonization, marginalization, trauma, and oppression. Our culture is ancient and powerful. We can live Brown and live well.”*

Although Latina/o/x communities have diverse histories and backgrounds, there are some aspects that represent common cultural experiences that in general facilitate a sense of wellness and healing. The strengths of a strong cultural identity, of healthy interdependence and familismo, and an enduring connection to spirituality are Latina/o/x cultural characteristics for both individual and communal healing.

When looking at our trauma, grief and healing, we must always first acknowledge the violent European (i.e., Spanish and Portuguese) invasion and colonization of the region of the world now referred to as Latin America. This region’s original inhabitants were the Indigenous peoples. In addition, European colonizers forcibly brought Africans as slaves to certain areas of Latin America. These historical traumas continue to shape our identity. Although we often use Latina/o/x to refer to ourselves (including in this document), we can identify the legacy of European origins and languages in this term that ignores any and all Indigenous roots and ancestry.

### **The Traumas that Impact Us**

Latina/o/x communities in this country are often faced with racist attitudes, discriminatory practices, violence, xenophobia and exclusion in many levels of society. This has always been the case for Latina/o/x populations in the U.S. The Trump-era policy of family separations for those crossing the U.S.-Mexican border, including children held in detention centers, along with the history of ICE raids sometimes resulting in parents being deported, separating them from their minor-aged children are but a couple of examples. Long-standing incidences of police and law enforcement violence and killing are part of our long history of racial trauma, discrimination, and prejudice. These are the cultural wounds we carry. These collective traumas (see [here](#) for more information) can impact the mental health and wellbeing of Latina/o/x to different degrees for different individuals, and they can increase experiences of grief, depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms.

### **Cultural Strengths that Promote Healing**

Latina/o/x people carry intergenerational wisdoms regarding wellness and healing that are part of our cultural strengths. One is a positive and strong sense of cultural identity. Research shows that positive cultural identity can protect against experiences of discrimination. Having a positive identity helps us to connect to others in our community. This communal experience can be an important source of support in healing from trauma. Thus,

maintaining or reconnecting to a sense of cultural identity and rootedness can be important to the healing process. Second is our sense of collectivism, such as familismo. This may also include valuing community wellbeing. Part of our intergenerational wisdom is the passed down practices of relying on a trusted group or family. This group-centeredness is also a connection to Indigenous heritage and wisdoms. Engaging in family and/or community activities, especially those that focus on the betterment of the group or community, may be particularly healing. A third cultural strength is our spirituality, which has continued to be an important part of our identity. Although there are differences in religious and spiritual beliefs in our community, the belief and importance of god or creator is present in the majority of our communities. Finally, prayer, meditation or engaging in other spiritual practices individually or in community can promote us to truly live well. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

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AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
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## Abuse & The Church: Christianity, Spirituality, & Healing

*“..savage wolves from your own group will come in among you, not sparing the flock.” ACTS 20:29B*

Church attendance and participation in a religious community are an important part of life for many of us. Religious involvement can provide individuals, families, and communities with a vital source of support and spiritual strength. However, when abuse occurs within the religious context, it can trigger a crisis of faith as well as emotional trauma for the abused individual. Trauma can occur in any environment including in religious spaces such as churches. Likewise, the abuses that cause such trauma can be perpetrated by anyone, even priests, pastors, and ministers. When such abuse is made public, religious communities may resist accepting the unsavory truth about their leaders which, in turn, creates tremendous pressure on the sufferers of religious abuse to remain silent about their victimization. While such victimization can happen in any religious community, we focus here on abuse that happens specifically within Christian churches.

Spiritual abuse occurs when any spiritual thing that should always be used for good (e.g., one’s religious position, a theological premise, the scriptures) is instead used to harm, exploit, diminish, manipulate, or cover up. Examples of spiritual abuse include: sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy; the emotional manipulation of parishioners to give or tithe more money to the church than they can afford; or pressuring a person to remain in a marriage of domestic violence due to religious beliefs. Often, spiritual abuse is the attempt of a religious group or an individual in a position of religious authority to gain control over a person. A unique element of spiritual abuse is that because it involves the sacred, its impact can also involve an existential crisis: it can feel like God allowed or even condoned the abuse. As a result, some people who have experienced this are left with a sense that things held sacred have been defiled.

If you have suffered abuse in our religious community, first - know that there is hope for safety and healing. It is also important to know that the healing process can be complex, and take many forms. For example, it may involve unpacking layers of trauma and dealing with questions such as: “If I could be deceived this way, what else am I deceived about?”; “What do I believe about God?”; “Is this God’s fault?” All of this can be scary, but these feelings are common and normal. Next, consider reading up on and viewing resources that address religious and spiritual abuse. Finally, it can be helpful to connect with a mental health professional. There are many therapists who are persons of faith who are committed to helping you heal. However, some abuse survivors may prefer a helping professional who is not connected to the faith community of their abuser(s). In this case, therapists unassociated with a religious community can also be helpful.

If you seek a new faith community in the aftermath of abuse, then there are helpful things to consider in your search: (1) Seek a faith community that demonstrates an understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma and that strives to foster healing and safety. (2) Look for churches committed to educating their leaders, volunteers, and

members about how to effectively respond to trauma. (3) Look for churches that are transparent in enacting policies and processes that ensure oversight of staff and clergy to prevent abuse. These things can safeguard leaders against acting in abusive ways. No matter which path you take, the healing paths are those where you will find persons and communities dedicated to an ongoing process to love thy neighbor well. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

## CULTURALLY INFORMED

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## Healing While Black/African American: Triumphing Over the Pain

*“Black Lives Matter: I Can’t Breathe”* SONG BY DAX

Diverse Black/African Americans—young and old, across genders, (dis)abilities, religions, nations of origin, and sexualities—are often aware of the dangers, fears, and threats of racism. Racism can take many forms and have varied impacts on Black/African American individuals and communities. Some days these experiences manifest as being followed around in a store, while other times racism takes the form of not getting a job or scholarship. However we experience racism, it can lead to feelings of frustration and anger that impact people’s sense of self, overall health, and hope for the future. Despite all this, we must believe mind, body, soul, and spirit: Our lives do matter!

Research shows the harm of racism, race-based discrimination, and prejudice takes a toll on both physical and mental health. The stress from racism affects us emotionally and physiologically, including through sweating, heart-racing, headaches, and stomachaches. Over time, racism can wear the body down and is linked with physical ailments, like high blood pressure, heart attacks, and loss of regulation of insulin. Racism has also been associated with depression, anxiety, and hypervigilance. Instead of resulting solely from lifestyle choices (e.g., how we eat and exercise), our physical and mental health is influenced by the dis-stress and dis-ease of racism.

Though difficult, dealing with the emotions related to the racism we experience can benefit our mental and physical health. Therapy is one option for coping and healing from past and present racism. Choosing a therapist that is culturally competent and trauma-informed can make the process much easier (see [HERE<sup>9</sup>](#) for tips on seeking help). This kind of therapist can understand the challenges you have faced as a Black/African American person, while also being able to identify strengths and resilience in you, your family or loved ones, and your community.

If you feel you would like support, but therapy is not an option for you, there are additional avenues for healing and joy (see [HERE<sup>6</sup>](#) for some more healing strategies). One avenue is social justice advocacy. The Psychology of Radical Healing Collective is a group of Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC) psychologists and healers who encourage social justice action while highlighting marginalized communities’ strengths, resources, and actions. Their frameworks for liberation remind us that justice itself is healing. And we can fight for racial justice. In that process of advocating for change, we promote healing for ourselves and each other, as we work to make the world a better place.

Emotional connection is another key aspect of healing and joy. Connection with loved ones, friends, and family can be beneficial. However, we know that not everyone has people in their lives who are emotionally and/or physically close to them. When we are isolated, we can connect with others from a distance, through, for example, listening to music, watching a panel of radical Black activists, checking out books from the library on healing from racial trauma, listening to growth-fostering podcasts for free, reading Black affirmations, or participating in an online Black grief ritual (for more details on healing through the arts, see [HERE<sup>10</sup>](#)).

When we don't have close connections where we live, we can create them ourselves.

Community care can be a powerful healing strategy. You might consider creating a safe community space where people can come together discuss the panels, shows, the news, podcasts, music, and books they're engaging with. Community care might also involve leading talking circles, courageous conversations on issues affecting the Black community, and adventurous outings for connecting with nature or joining a pick up basketball game in the neighborhood.

A final healing strategy is both simple and difficult: acknowledge the pain, the anger, the frustration of being treated less than human as a Black/African American. When we acknowledge the pain of racism, it can support us in identifying the healing and resistance strategies needed to not only survive but thrive as a community. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).



## CULTURALLY INFORMED

## TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY

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AMERICAN  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## My Suffering Does Not Define Me: Hindu Americans' Healing from Trauma and Loss

*"I just pray to Krishna when I feel totally alone. Then, I know that I'm not suffering alone."*

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions and is rooted in a spiritual and philosophical tradition known as Vedanta. At the core of Hindu scriptures is the belief that God or Brahman is without form but is observed through various forms or deities, such as Krishna, Shiva, Lakshmi, Parvati, and Ganesha. There is also a belief that the Divine exists both within each human being and as an external being that supports all life. Hindus believe that liberation from trauma, grief, and other forms of suffering can also be achieved in one's lifetime through meditation, prayer, and other spiritual practices. In Hinduism, suffering is thought to be a part of everyday life and is connected with a belief in karma or consequences of past actions in current and past lifetimes. Suffering is also seen as something that can be transformed through devotion or prayer, meditation, and selfless service to others.

Hindus believe that there is a close connection between the mind and body. Therefore, many Hindus practice meditation and Ayurveda to secure a sense of balance between the mind and body and to connect physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences. Some rituals that help with loss include gathering family and friends to conduct pujas or prayer ceremonies, finding comfort in being with close family and friends to remember the deceased loved one, and consulting with spiritual leaders or Gurus to remember the broader purpose of life, death, and rebirth. Death and loss are typically understood as guided by the will of God. Family and friends grieve their loss by remembering and honoring loved ones.

In contrast to losing a loved one through death, many Hindus are reluctant to talk about trauma such as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse with others. These topics are stigmatized and bring up a great deal of shame. Unfortunately, this stigma keeps many survivors isolated, making it difficult to get help in coping with traumatic stress. It's important to understand that Hinduism encourages people to get help in coping with suffering that is rooted in trauma. However, cultural stigma and expectations sometimes guide how they view and cope with trauma. In this way, South Asian cultural expectations become infused with Hindu practices. Yet, Hindu spirituality guides us to support those who are vulnerable and need protection.

One way in which Hindus cope with trauma and loss is through the practice of detachment from overinvolvement in relationships and circumstances over which they have little control, including traumatic events. Meditation and prayer often facilitate this process of detachment. For example, some survivors of trauma pray for protection and healing or they meditate to develop a greater sense of control and peace. They also remember that their core spiritual self is separate from external circumstances and forces including the traumatic event and the perpetrator(s). Through spirituality, a person recognizes that the self exists apart from suffering, and there is an understanding that all people are born with the right to happiness. Navigating what one can control and what is

outside of one's control is a part of acceptance in one's spiritual journey. This acceptance does not mean, however, that one is passive. Rather, a person coping with loss or trauma is active in the healing process through devotion to God (prayer), meditation, and service to others who need help, and through accepting the support of others who care and want to help. Some people may choose to seek help from a spiritual leader such as a Guru or from an Ayurvedic healer who can help with the physical and emotional stress resulting from trauma. Hindus are encouraged to take up whichever of these spiritual pathways is preferable to them in coping with loss and trauma. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

## CULTURALLY INFORMED

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## Resilience and Brilliance: LGBTQIA+ Persons of Color

*“Perhaps the mission of an artist is to interpret beauty to people - the beauty within themselves.”*

LANGSTON HUGHES

Being a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/ally/advocate (LGBTQIA+) person of color (POC) is something to be proud of and confident in. Know that your life experiences are valuable, and your insight is much needed. Leveraging our strengths, talents, and perspectives, many LGBTQIA+ POC have significantly contributed to the betterment of society.

While there are many benefits to being LGBTQIA+, unfortunately, LGBTQIA+ POC often experience traumatic events that are based in homophobic, transphobic, sexist, racist, and/or xenophobic attitudes and beliefs. Additionally, historical, and generational trauma are particularly relevant for LGBTQIA+ POC communities. The LGBTQIA+ POC community has been subjected to hate crimes, police brutality, discriminatory laws and policies, and xenophobia. For example, research shows that LGBT persons are more likely to experience sexual assault and domestic violence than their heterosexual and/or cisgender counterparts. Similarly, Black transgender individuals are more likely to be physically attacked compared to those of other races and ethnicities. Yet, despite this history, there are many practitioners and organizations that center on LGBTQIA+ POC culturally relevant healing.

**Find and Celebrate Your Pride:** As members of the LGBTQIA+ POC community, we are each valuable, worthy of love and acceptance, and deserve to be treated with fairness and respect. Healing from trauma is possible, and we can support each other on our healing journeys. We are not alone.

**Pride Organizations and Communities:** Connecting with others is a powerful way to heal from trauma and, at the same time, gain pride, self-empowerment, and friendships. LGBTQIA+ POC can connect with other people who have had similar life experiences, and who share common interests and values. Where can we find and connect with similar folks? Surprisingly, there are various organizations and events that are specifically geared towards LGBTQIA+ POC nationally and locally. Searching for groups and organizations in your local community can connect you with other people who are fostering community and connectedness.

**Connect With a Mentor:** Finding a mentor can also be extremely beneficial during times of struggle and triumph. Mentors may be able to draw on their own experience and share: how they navigated and overcame obstacles in their life; how they coped with racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia; and how they infuse joy, happiness, and love in their lives. For example, research has shown that Black gay men found that having Black gay mentors was a positive source of emotional support and professional guidance. Therefore, some of the same spaces that you find connection and community, like pride organizations, can be the same place where you find mentors.

**Seek Counseling:** Another way of healing may be to find a licensed therapist. Given that there are many specific and complex experiences that we encounter as LGBTIA+ POC, it can feel that there are few people who genuinely or personally understand us. See [here](#) for tips on what to look for in a therapist. Finding a trained mental health professional who understands the unique experiences of LGBTQIA+ people of color, can be especially rewarding as they can help you heal and assisting you to realize your strengths, abilities, and inherent power.

**Resilience and Brilliance:** Regardless of the path you choose, healing, wellness, and happiness is possible! For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

## CULTURALLY INFORMED

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AMERICAN  
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## Indigenous Community Healing and Resilience

*“I choose joy over despair. Not because I have my head in the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me daily and I must return the gift.”* ROBIN WALL KIMMERER, POTAWATOMI

### Who is this for?

Whether you identify as Indigenous, Native, Indian, Native Hawaiian, First Peoples, or use your community or tribal affiliation, if you have experienced trauma or want to help others, we hope you will discover new ways to understand trauma and find healing for yourself, your family, and community. We recognize that healing practices vary from tribe to tribe, thus we give broad strategies below as examples that can be tailored to what works best for you.

### What traumas have impacted Indigenous communities?

For Indigenous peoples, the word “trauma” brings up painful experiences, not just in the present, but conscious or unconscious memories of grief, loss, and deep hurt passed on from generation to generation. Native peoples, collectively, have gone through many devastations, including mass disease, enslavement, massacre, forced relocation, stolen lands, forced removal of children from families through boarding schools and adoptions, and loss of languages and spiritual practices. Researchers call this *historical trauma* or *the soul wound*.

Historical trauma sounds like these hurts have only happened in the past, but Indigenous peoples experience many ongoing harms that impact us daily. Current traumas include racism, threats to our lands and environmental abuse, undoing the silence around boarding school experiences, and knowing that our relatives are often missing and murdered without answers. Some of our communities face high rates of drug and alcohol addiction, violence, poverty, and inadequate schooling. Even our current physical and mental health reflects the challenges that we have faced across generations.

Many Indigenous peoples are still disconnected from their cultural knowledge, practices, and language. The disconnection can come with feelings of sadness, anger, shame, and grief. We may feel lost, without purpose, or try to cope with these feelings in both helpful and harmful ways. Below, we give examples of culturally based ways of healing.

### What is Healing?

Healing means “to bring back into balance all aspects of our being” (emotional, mental, physical, spiritual). Healing is the strengthening and reconnecting of our sacred bonds within ourselves, with all living beings, and with the natural world. We do not walk in this world alone but in relationship. Therefore, we must learn to give and receive with tenderness, remembering the power of those connections through space and time. Healing is a process, and there is no set amount of time it takes to grieve or become well.

## Cultural Healing Strategies

**Connect with your Culture:** Learning, engaging, and developing your cultural practices and language is one way to engage in healing. Research shows it helps us understand who we are, be more connected with our communities and ancestors, and it contributes to our overall wellness. Researchers have found that cultural practices such as traditional teachings, storytelling, ceremony, and traditional dance can serve in healing trauma and grief.

**Find Balance with the Medicine Wheel:** The medicine wheel is an Indigenous way of restoring balance to our 4 aspects of being. When symptoms of trauma and grief linger, we are out of balance. You can complete a medicine wheel, often represented by a circle divided into 4 equal parts, to see a holistic picture of what aspects of your being you are cultivating and which you may need to give more attention and care. For example, you may find you need to take a break from social media or start going for walks with a friend.

**Storytelling:** An Acoma potter, Josie Kie says “We all have a story. We all have something to tell.” Stories are passed on orally, through clay, on canvas, in weavings, basketry and beading, and now, even through digital storytelling. Through the process of creating our stories, we can make sense and meaning of our experiences to help heal from trauma and grief. By sharing our stories, we help others better understand what we have been through, increase our connection with others, and take our power back.

**Community Healing:** mitákuye oyás’iŋ (all our relations). Our relations include all those in the healing circle, as well as our families, communities, ancestors, the animal and plant nations, and the land around us. Many other Indigenous communities express this similar idea that “you are my other me.” Healing for ourselves happens when we heal communally. Gathering of Native Americans is one way to approach community healing. Whether you participate in a powwow, a feast day, or an all-night ceremony, there are many ways to help each other to heal.



**Caring for Ourselves and Others:** We can look to traditional child rearing practices to guide how we care for ourselves and others. We start by implementing traditional values of patience, praise, kindness, humility, and respect centered within traditional Native parenting. Elders have shared that the wisdom from these practices is grounded in wholistic spiritual insights and rituals.

**Ground Yourself:** Grounding exercises help us disrupt overwhelming thoughts or emotions by focusing on something smaller in the present. For example, you could physically ground yourself by standing or sitting outside and focusing on the details of how that connection between your body and the earth feels. Another grounding exercise is deep breathing. Dr. Bigfoot teaches Native youth to pair their “inhalations and exhalations with relaxing images such as the sway of wind-swept grasses or of the movement of a woman’s shawl during a ceremonial dance.”

**Reach out for Professional Guidance:** There is strength in reaching out to a traditional healer, psychologist, therapist, or calling a crisis line. You may benefit from choosing professionals who can integrate traditional practices (e.g., ceremony, cleansing, fasting, and sweat lodge) into your healing journey. When choosing a psychologist/therapist ask if they are familiar with your community; how they include culture into their therapy; what types of services they offer; and if they are open to working with your family and traditional healers to address your needs. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).

# CULTURALLY INFORMED TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY TOOLKIT



*Have you ever felt scared about being Jewish?  
Do you feel that you have to blend in, hide your identity?*

Antisemitism is at an all-time high in the United States as this time. Hate crimes are on the rise, resulting in increased fear in the Jewish communities and synagogues where people gather. Some Jews avoid wearing yarmulkas or identifying clothing in public. Repeats of old antisemitic stereotypes like the “Jews are Taking Over; Jews run the Media and Finance; Jews are Rich and Cunning; Jews are all White Oppressors” are appearing in the media and social media, with celebrities and white supremacists spreading lies about Israel. For some, the attacks are ominous and reminiscent of mounting fascism before WWII. Many Jews carry intergenerational trauma that gets triggered with each attack.

Antisemitism is showing up in schools and graduate schools as well. Some Jewish or Israeli students are being told that Israel should not exist or is an apartheid state. Some required readings now in Diversity courses either diminish or re-write the history of the Holocaust, and students who protest have been shamed and bullied. Students report feeling isolated and afraid to speak up, facing retaliation when they do. The issue of Israel further complicates an understanding of antisemitism since Jews are both a religion and an ancient culture. Jews come from all parts of the world, in all colors and in all socioeconomic groups. It is possible to criticize the government of Israel while still maintaining its right to exist. What antisemitism does, as do all racist groups, is to stereotype all Jews and project onto them images that evoke fear: e.g., they are taking over and must be “pushed into the sea.”

**Fortunately, there are now excellent resources to help those students and others who feel threatened:**

For further help around antisemitism in school and universities, please contact:

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/diversity/education/stress-and-trauma/jewish-americans>
- <https://www.hillel.org> Jewish Campus Organization
- [ADL](#)
- <https://www.adl.org/report-incident> ADL Report an Incident
- <https://www.adl.org/resources/tools-and-strategies/resources-address-and-challenge-antisemitism> Resources on Antisemitism/ADL
- <https://brandeiscenter.com/about/>

[mission-and-values](#) Human rights activist group

- <https://www.campusfairness.org> another organization trying to protect/support Jewish students on campus
- <https://academicengagement.org> this is for faculty/administrators affiliated with universities

For information about activism, here are outstanding organizations:

- <https://spme.org>
- <https://brandeiscenter.com>
- <https://www.camera.org>
- <https://www.standwithus.com>

- <https://www.ssimovement.org>
- <https://israelcc.org>

For support for grief and loss, these are helpful:

- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/category/mourn>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/when-its-ok-to-say-nothing>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/words-of-comfort-for-mourners>
- <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/grief-mourning-signup>

# CULTURALLY INFORMED TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY TOOLKIT



## Mini-Survey

### Following Reading Each PDF

Thank you for visiting this document from the American Psychological Association (APA) Culturally Informed Trauma & Grief Recovery Toolkit!

In an effort to provide helpful materials to you and others, please answer the following questions. You may skip any questions you would not like to answer. It should take about 3 minutes to complete the survey.

1. Did you find this document useful?
  - Extremely useful
  - Somewhat useful
  - Useful
  - A little useful
  - Not useful at all
2. Who will you share this document with? [check all that apply]
  - No one
  - Loved one(s)
  - Family member(s)
  - Friend(s)
  - My therapist
  - An organization I'm a part of
  - My religious institution
  - At school
  - At work
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is there any feedback you would like to share with us about the document you read?

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If comfortable please share demographics about yourself.

How old are you today? \_\_\_\_\_



Which ethnicities do you identify with? (select all that apply):

- Arab, Middle Eastern, or North African
- Black/African American
- East Asian
- Hispanic or Latina/o/x/e
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders
- Indigenous
- South Asian
- White/Caucasian
- Not listed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

How do you identify your gender?

- Man/mostly masculine
- Woman/ mostly feminine
- Non-binary/gender non-conforming
- Prefer to self-describe: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

What is your sex?

- Male
- Trans-male (F to M)
- Intersex
- Trans-female (M to F)
- Female
- Not listed: \_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

What is your sexual orientation?

- Straight or Heterosexual
- Gay or Lesbian
- Bi-sexual or pansexual
- Asexual
- Not listed: \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

What, if any, religion do you identify with?

- Agnostic
- Atheism
- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- None
- Sikh
- Spiritual (but not religious)
- Not listed: \_\_\_\_\_