

Trauma Responses with Indigenous Youth



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Who We Are

- Child and Youth Mental Health Counsellors
- Registered Social Worker
- Services for ages 6-24
- Hamilton and Brantford sites
- Individual counselling in an interdisciplinary setting
- Training in Trauma Counselling, CBT, Play Therapy, DBT

Colonization and Trauma

- Disease
- Indian Act 1876
- Reserve system
- Residential school
- 60's scoop
- Racist laws
- Current policies disadvantage Aboriginal communities

Intergenerational Trauma

- Transmission of historical oppression to communities, families, and individuals
- Passing down the trauma and maladaptive coping patterns associated with it
- Contributes to mental illness, suicide, addictions, violence, loss of culture, loss of language, insecure attachments

Intergenerational Trauma

- Indigenous youth are 3-6 times more likely to die by suicide than non-Indigenous youth
 - Suicide accounts for almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of all deaths among Indigenous youth
- Over 90% of residential school survivors have abused alcohol after leaving school
- 82.6% of residential school survivors have abused an intimate partner

Trauma: An Experience Like No Other

- PTSD is the most commonly diagnosed mental illness for Indigenous people
- intergenerational trauma creates risk for insecure attachment, in turn creating a greater risk of experiencing a heightened level of distress when facing trauma

Understanding Indigenous culture

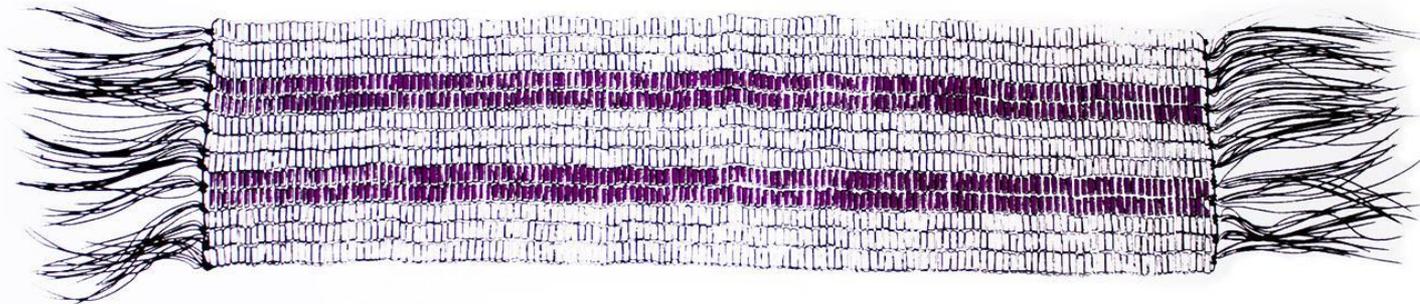
- Circular, holistic
- Importance of our relationships with each other, all living beings, the land, spirituality
- Values giving thanks, humbleness, humour, living in balance, caring for one another
- Values non-interference, sharing, accountability for one's actions
- Story-telling, sharing circles, ceremony, role modelling are integral to culture

Healing from an Aboriginal Perspective

- Need for community connection
- Need for clear understanding of Aboriginal identity
- Need to approach healing holistically
- Need to have healthy relationships with the counsellor, family, and community

Healing from Aboriginal perspective

- Two-eyed seeing
- Seeing individual as part of family, community culture – trauma experienced on all levels
- Decolonization of the client
- Decolonization of the counsellor

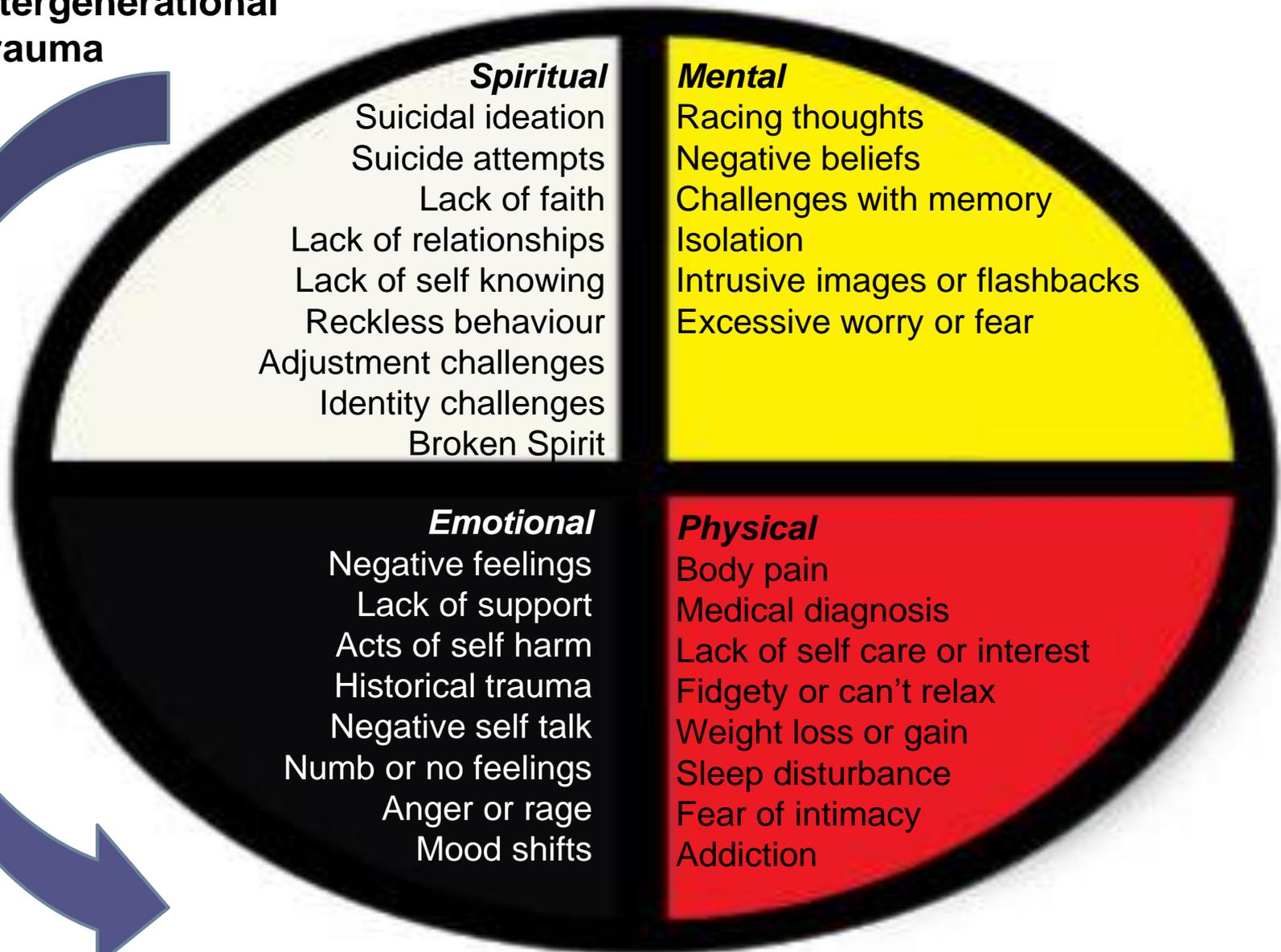


Wellness Assessment

- Medicine wheel used as a method of assessment of a client's overall wellness
- Mental health not separate from other areas of wellness
- All areas co-relate and impact one another
- Mental, emotional, spiritual and physical aspects of wellness

Wellness Assessment

Intergenerational Trauma



Theory in Practice

- therapeutic story telling
- somatic/sensory processing
- cognitive restructuring and the Good Mind
- mindfulness and grounding

Recommendations

- counsellors to be trauma informed
- universal precautions regarding trauma
- use a holistic framework
- competency in history of colonization
- counsellor as a tool, not the expert
- counsellor to work on self decolonization
- Involving family in counselling when possible

Recommendation continued

- social location: tokenism, appropriation
- being an ally: empowerment vs. furthering oppression
- flexibility with number of sessions, length of time spent with clients
- assisting clients with connecting to traditional healing if desired
- advocating within the system for Elders, Indigenous mentors to be part of services

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