



# **Sayu'ꞑ X Wey**

The Sacred Way of Life & Journaling

***By Dee Rhodes-Koester, M.S.***



**WomenSpirit Coalition™**

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# FOREWARD

Dear Friends, Allies, and Survivors –

I am excited to offer you this opportunity to express thoughts, feelings, and stories of healing from trauma.

## ***Sayu'ꞑX Wey – Healing with HOPE – The Sacred Way of Life & Journaling***

While your Journey is a personal one, it is a benchmark of healing when one can share experiences and expressions along the way with others.

  
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Dee is a grandmother, mother, and daughter of the Lower Elwha Klallam, Quileute and Makah tribes in western Washington State. Her first printing of this journal was in 2008.*

## *Revered & Respected*

Domestic and sexual violence was uncommon in traditional Native communities because it conflicted with the role of Native women.

In most Native communities, there was a strong emphasis on respecting and recognizing women's contributions to their families, clans, and communities.

Many Native societies were matrilineal, giving women rights to leadership roles, land stewardship, and custody and care of children. In some Native communities, women were also responsible for passing on wealth, power, and inheritance.

Even in patriarchal societies, instances of domestic and sexual abuse against women were uncommon and viewed as unacceptable behavior. Historical records of tribal justice reflect the validation of women's grievances, often resulting in severe repercussions such as corporal punishment, exile, and communal rebuke for perpetrators.

Additionally, Native women were revered for their vital role in childbearing and were highly respected for their pivotal contribution to preserving religious ceremonies and artifacts, as well as providing for their communities through hunting, farming, and gathering food.

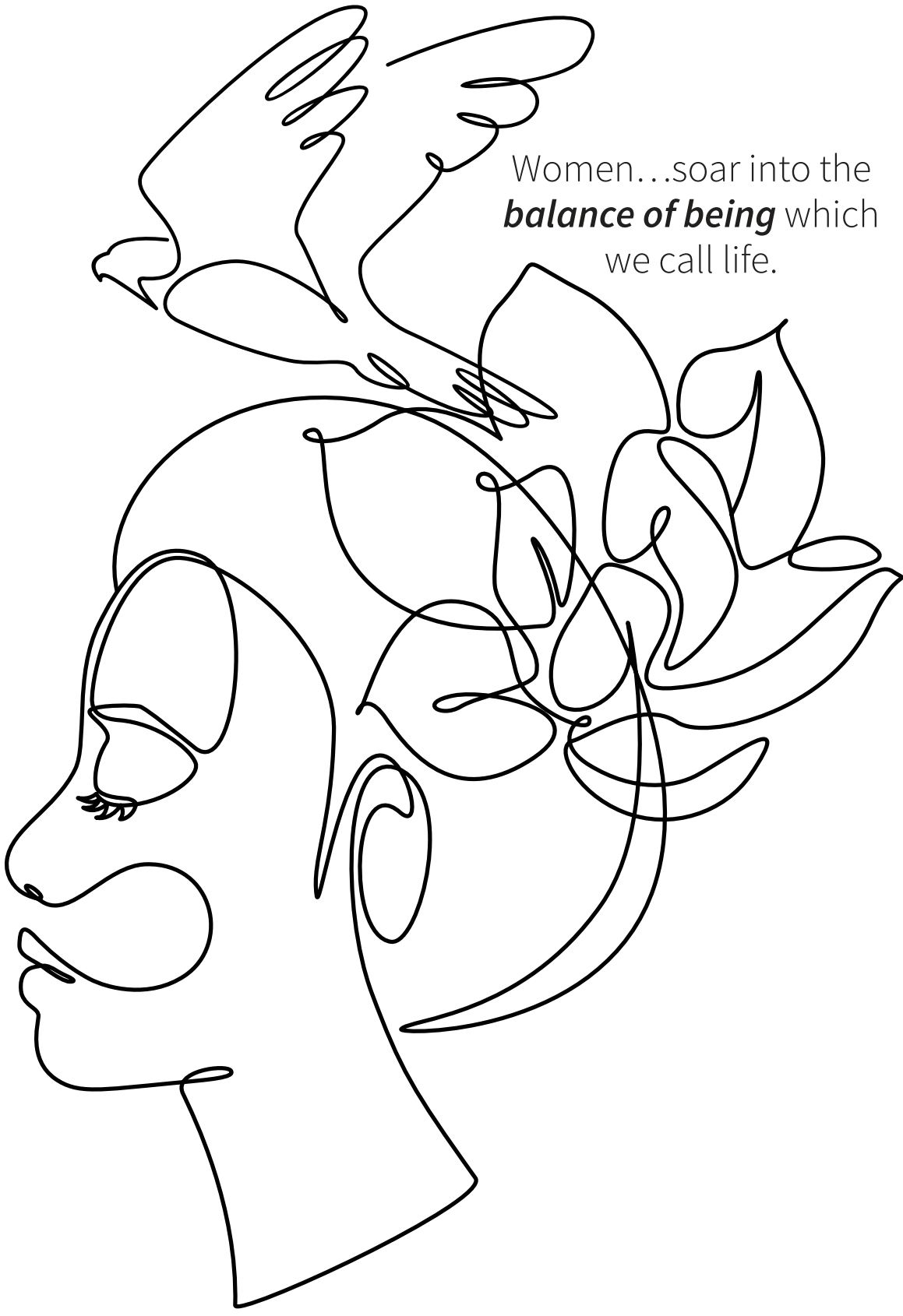
*Violence Against Native Women:  
A Practitioner's Guide, 2006.*

***Sayu'ꞑX Wey is the breath that moves you forward in life.***

***When you are a victim, and you are worn down and tired and want to give up...***

***When you are not getting your needs met...***

***Sayu'ꞑX Wey comes into your life and gives you the strength to move forward and make a change.***



Women...soar into the  
**balance of being** which  
we call life.

# DANCING THE DREAM

Where are the dances of Oneness,  
That I knew before my birth?  
Did I surrender my wholeness  
In order to walk the Earth?  
Did I choose forgetting  
In order to make life real?  
Did I inhabit a human body  
So I could learn how to feel?  
I am here to dance the dream  
In my human sacred form.  
To celebrate my uniqueness  
And to ask no other to conform.  
Dancing through life's lessons,  
I will learn to move with grace,  
While I dream of remembering  
The potential of the human race.

—JAMIE SAMS

*Personal Healing and Restoration:*

**A JOURNEY OF THE SOUL**

*A Series of Personal Restoration*

**(SAYU'X WEY)**

*and Renewal Exercises*

This workbook is for you to complete and consider as you wish. The thoughts and exercises are designed to provide a foundation for the internal growth and awareness that is important in order for you to move out of the trauma/negative thinking that has challenged your efforts to break free, to move forward in your personal life and professional life.

Use the Journal pages and Journal questions to spur thoughts and memories; learn to free associate and tap into your creative consciousness. Explore the Creator's gifts and your life purpose as you progress on your journey.

Lastly, be inspired by your own life.



## *Be Your Personal Best*

The journey of moving toward self-actualization (being the best you can be) is a very personal journey that requires you to make decisions about the paths that are right for you. No one can make the journey for you! For the purpose of this workbook, it is both an individual and a group process.

This work considers universal truths that life philosophies and religions have as basic, profound guides to live by. The challenge in this part of your journey is to align your values, beliefs, and practices with the truths that define your life purpose.

When the alignment of life's purpose and our values become one, the world as we know it and perceive it becomes a valuable array of lessons to be learned, and progress is achieved.

## *Universal Truths to Consider on Your Journey*

- The opposite of living in balance is living in chaos and disharmony.
- The process of living in balance includes a decision to honor ourselves and others.
- In order to find the balance in our relationships and achieve peace, from within and without, we must put aside childish reactions and emotions that block our movement forward and our ability to accept unexpected blessings life has to offer.
- Once these challenges are overcome, we can know our purpose in life.
- The path to spiritual enlightenment encounters our past hurtful experiences; the ability to gain insight and wisdom only comes from a place of integrity.
- Once we begin to accept imperfections in ourselves and others we can begin to see that our place in the world, what is expected of us, requires "spiritual work" in order to fulfill our divine purpose.
- We all learn by feeling joy and sorrow; both are necessary emotions to reveal an appreciation and gratitude for what we have.

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### *Journal Question*

**Find a quiet place in which to meditate and consider where you are on your Journey. What lessons have you learned?**





# Twelve Principles of Indian Philosophy

1. Wholeness. All things are inter-related. Everything in the universe is a part of a single whole. Everything is connected in some way to everything else. It is only possible to understand something if we understand how it is connected to everything else.
2. Change. Everything is in a state of constant change. One season falls upon the other. People are born, live, and die. All things change. There are two kinds of change: the coming together of things and the moving apart of things. Both kinds of change are necessary and are always connected to each other.
3. Change occurs in cycles or patterns. They are not random or accidental. If we cannot see how a particular change is connected it usually means that our standpoint is affecting our perception.
4. The physical world is real; the spiritual world is real. They are two aspects of one reality. There are separate laws which govern each. Breaking of a spiritual principle will affect the physical world and vice versa. A balanced life is one that honors both.
5. People are physical and spiritual beings.
6. People can acquire gifts, but they must struggle to do so. The process of developing new personal qualities may be called “the learning.”
7. There are four dimensions of the learning. A person learns in a whole and balanced manner when the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional dimensions are involved in the process.
8. The spiritual dimension of human development has four related capacities: a) The capacity to have and respond to dreams, visions, ideals, spiritual teachings, goals, and theories. b) The capacity to accept these as a reflection of our unknown or unrealized potential. c) The capacity to express these using symbols in speech, art, or mathematics. d) The capacity to use this symbolic expression toward action directed at making the possible a reality.
9. People must actively participate in the development of their own potential.
10. A person must decide to develop their own potential. The path will always be there for those who decide to use it.
11. Any person who sets out on a journey of self-development will be aided. Guides, teachers, and protectors will ease the traveler.
12. The only source of failure is a person's own failure to follow the teachings.

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## Journal Question

Are there other principles you live by?





# Natural Order of Life: Our Interconnectedness

## SPIRITUALITY: CORE BELIEFS AND RITUALS/PRACTICES

- Respect is the foundation for our relationship with all things. Disrespect causes pain and wounds the soul of man.
- Our Mother Earth and Father Creator reign over all things.
- Reclaiming our traditional ways is one solution to moving forward on our journey to healing and attaining balance in all things. Another requires acceptance and forgiveness.
- Language, prayer, talking, and decision-making circles ensure communication in a shared cultural context.
- Dances and drumming both entertain and have deep spiritual and cultural meaning.
- Status in a community provides meaningful role modeling for youth and a place of honor for elders in the community.
- Most tribal communities relate to the sacredness of the feminine, the nurturer and life giver.

## EMOTIONAL

- Visionary/Intuitive: Native people often seek and are given visions, signs, and dreams to guide their paths in life. One must be open to accepting the messages sent, be free to carry out the visions, and have faith in the messenger and the message. This is how great things are accomplished. This is how the destiny of a people is fulfilled. Visionaries are humble servants of the Creator, chosen to stand for and speak out as leaders.
- Intergenerational and Metaphysical Connections: What we know is that our ancestors have never left us and accompany us in life, guiding and protecting us. If we dishonor ourselves, we dishonor them.

## OUR PHYSICAL WORLD

- Respect for Mother Earth is integral to our survival and survival of the planet.
- We experienced our land being taken from us, left ravaged in some cases for monetary gain. The entire world has suffered; Mother Earth has suffered. Native people strive and sometimes fight for the return of or compensation for taken lands and the return of ancestral remains.

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### *Journal Question*

**Which traditions, rituals and practices do you embrace?**

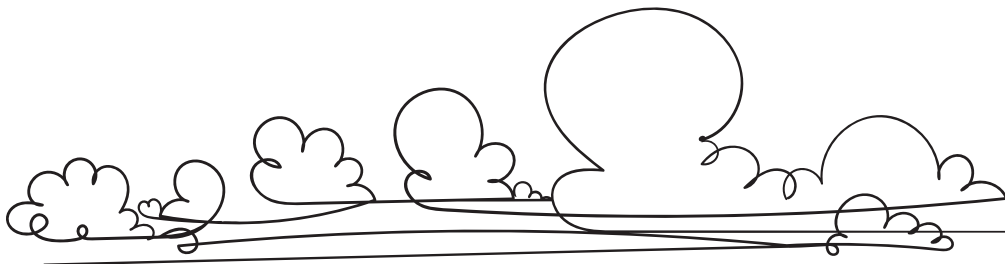
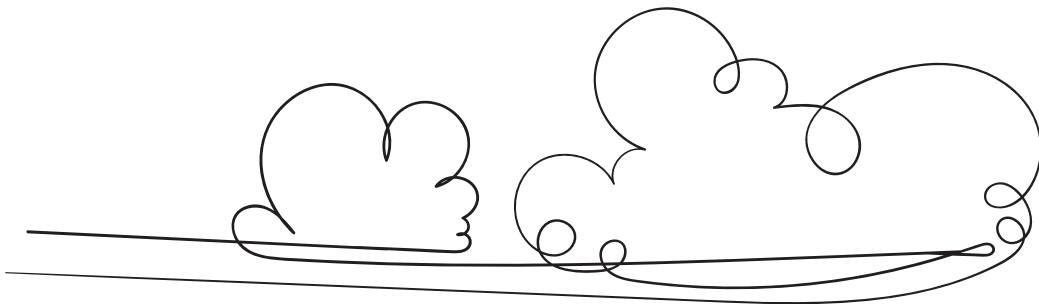
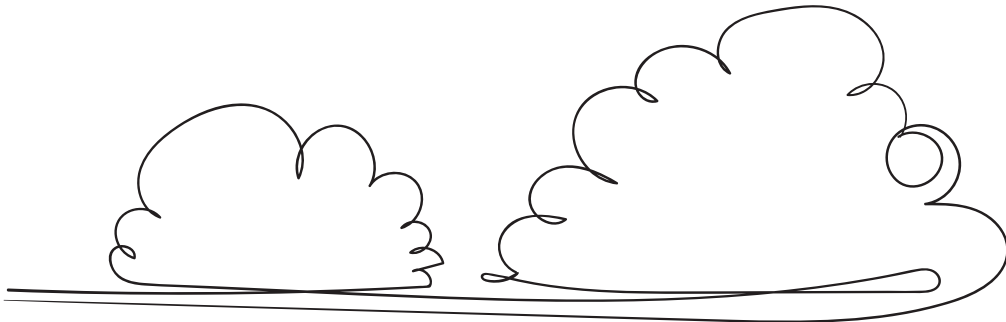




*All emotion is*

## **ENERGY IN MOTION**

Our journey requires that we examine our chosen paths, the choices we make and why (how we expend our vital energy). The expansion of the human spirit comes from a willingness to be an explorer and manager of life.



*Journal Question*

Consider a choice made and one regretted and the lessons learned.



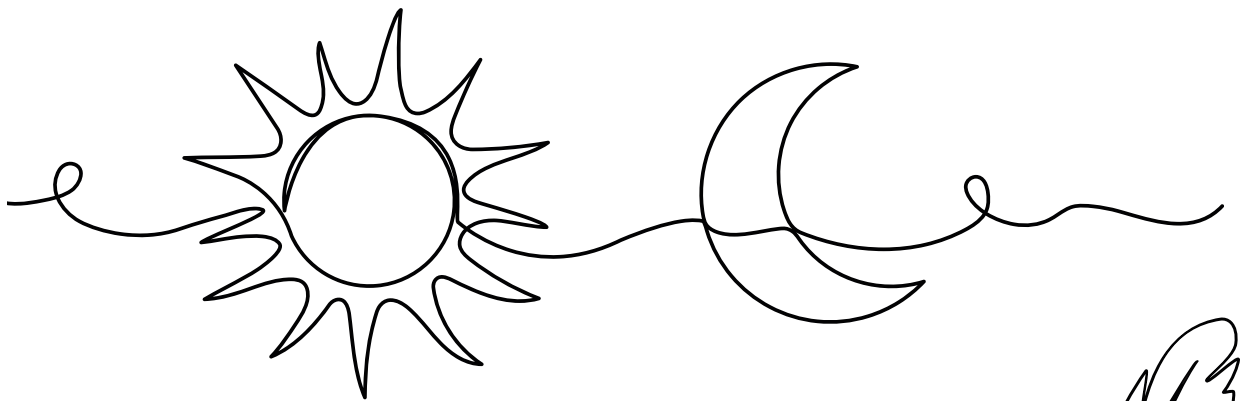


## *Living Requires Being Courageous*

Take back your authority over your life! Become impeccably accountable in all you do, think, and believe to be true. The definition of accountability is to be trustworthy, reliable, and conscientious. If we do not hold ourselves accountable, we fall into a victim's role overshadowed and diminished by guilt, shame, anger, regret and blame. The journey to reclaiming one's life is not for the faint-hearted. We will no longer give ourselves away by dishonoring the gifts (the medicine) given to us by the Creator on the day of Creation. This is no easy task. How do we begin?

## *Embrace the Light and the Shadow*

The goal of life is not to master all the rules of perfection. It is instead to become aware of our thoughts, feelings, desires, and actions so that we can eventually live in harmony with all the world; we can live in harmony and oneness with everything. That is the secret to life, the ultimate life lesson. We must come to appreciate everything. We must not judge another's journey or path. We must tap into our personal courage and choose to learn from our mistakes and move forward.



### *Journal Question*

Acknowledge your shortcomings and vow to make a change toward **full** accountability.



## *The Groundswell of Life is Wisdom*

One of life's greatest lessons is to learn to relate to one another in respect, allowing for where another is on their journey without passing judgments and affording an air of superiority. In an age of invisibility, we must embrace an attitude of compassion toward one another. We can strive to embody two actions of compassion: grace and patience. Our life force is dependent upon positive energy, grounded in wisdom and the teachings of our ancestors, applied with focused intent and mercy. Think of how much better our world would be if we could practice compassion with one another.

## *The Ten Native Commandments*

### VERSION ONE

Treat the earth and all that dwell thereon with respect.

Remain close to the Great Spirit.

Show great respect for your fellow beings.

Work together for the benefit of all humankind.

Give assistance and kindness wherever needed.

Do what you know to be right.

Look after the well-being of mind and body.

Dedicate a share of your efforts to the greater good.

Be truthful and honest at all times.

Take full responsibility for your actions.

### VERSION TWO

The Earth is our Mother; care for Her.

Honor all your relations.

Open your heart and soul to the Great Spirit.

All life is sacred; treat all things with respect.

Take from the Earth what is needed and nothing more.

Do what needs to be done for the good of all.

Give constant thanks to the Great Spirit for each day.

Speak the truth but only for the good in others.

Follow the rhythms of nature.

Enjoy life's journey, but leave no tracks.



## *On the Path to Overcoming Life's Challenges*

Empowerment is the act of increasing someone's self-esteem by inspiring, confidence building, and encouraging self-determination regarding decision-making. Our goal in domestic violence work is to empower people, especially survivors, to take charge of their lives and create a life of their own. While we are the crafters of our own journey and paths, we are also the experts on what is needed at this moment in time. Often how we react to circumstances in life is more important than the circumstance itself.

Crisis **is** an opportunity for change. Out of crisis comes the opportunity to identify our resources and options that are unique to us. As we move toward maturity we build our capabilities, build confidence, and become more at peace with the chaos in the world. We begin to be able to define and control the negative aspects we let into our lives. It is taught that we have 397 spiritual ways to "learn and be" in the world at our full realization. While we hear about five in the mainstream world (sight, feeling, hearing, seeing, and smelling) we have many more in the Native world. We believe in the seen and unseen world.

Reason tells us that while we are on our journey we are gaining new skills and insights that will bring us to live peacefully in the world. Without intervention, a survivor who is in an abusive relationship will be constantly accompanied by feelings of powerlessness and withdraw from those who care most about her or him: friends, family, community.

We must always be able to visualize life free from violence! We begin to make choices about how to protect our vulnerabilities. This does not mean that life is without **confl.ict**; usually change can only be accomplished with conflict. Conflict resolution can be a difficult mediation between egos. Often the world divides people into "winners" and "losers."

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### *Journal Question*

**Think about a crisis in your life and how you overcame it or moved through it.**





## *Symbolic Power and Language*

Language, symbols, and ceremony are all-powerful means we employ in order to express ourselves. Deep-seated meanings add to our ability to communicate our values and beliefs to others and ourselves. Language allows us to organize our thoughts and describe our experiences. Sometimes our unique personalities are enriched by certain phrases or words that we incorporate into our vocabularies.

When we engage in healthy discussions with each other, these conversations help shape and clarify our point of view. This is one way we learn and share our knowledge with each other.

When there are unhealthy discussions, arguments, there might be unintended casualties. It is unfortunate. At times bystanders may feel it necessary to take sides. Some find chaos and drama preferable to change.

Those who work in the anti-violence field often debate the use of language. Using words like “domestic violence” instead of “battering” has a different intended effect. Using “rape” instead of “sexual assault” has a different meaning and intended effect. Consider “strangulation” versus “choking.”

We should always think about the intended effect when choosing our words and consider the impact upon those listening. However, if we cannot or do not “name it,” we cannot deal with it or heal from it.

Ceremony infuses every part of our life. We feel good and safe when there is a noticeable beginning, middle, and end to things. To the extent that we give thanks, respect all things and express our feelings toward the seen and unseen, we feel a greater connection to Mother Earth and the Creator, Grand Father, the Great Spirit.

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### *Journal Question*

**What symbols are important to you? Do you have a totem?  
What significance do you attach to your totem?  
What are some similar traits you share?**





# The Violent World and the Native Non-Violent World

The violent world is the *unnatural way of life* for us. Choosing a life that is non-violent is choosing the *natural way of life* of Indigenous first peoples. (Add to the chart if you like.)

UNNATURAL WAY OF LIFE	NATURAL WAY OF LIFE
<i>Violence</i>	<i>Non-Violence</i>
<i>Chemical Abuse</i>	<i>Prayer, Ceremony</i>
<i>Environmental Abuse</i>	<i>Honoring Gifts/Differences</i>
<i>Boarding Schools</i>	<i>Respect</i>
<i>Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)</i>	<i>Seeking Counsel</i>
<i>Emotional Abuse; Stereotyping</i>	
<i>Physical Assault</i>	

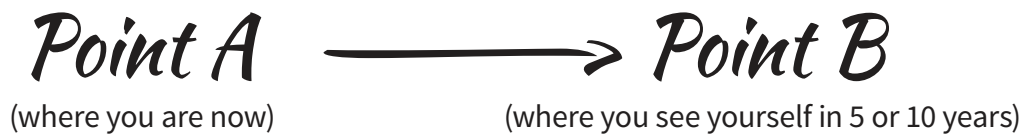
Every time you delve into the true nature of your being, you will become more equipped to handle each situation put before you with a greater sense of mastery. The understanding necessary to move forward is dependent on our ability to cultivate compassionate feelings and forgive those who commit wrongs against us. Forgiveness leads to healing and healing leads to being open to the many blessings that result in attaining wisdom.

Because we are an *invisible* people, we have much to forgive in others. The greater the call to forgive, the larger our spiritual nature will and can expand. Take every opportunity to journal or mind map when a choice needs to be made or a life issue needs to be thought through (mapped out). Remember, *making no decision is making a decision*. You are empowered to be self-determined. Use your free will.

## Mind Mapping & Vision Boards

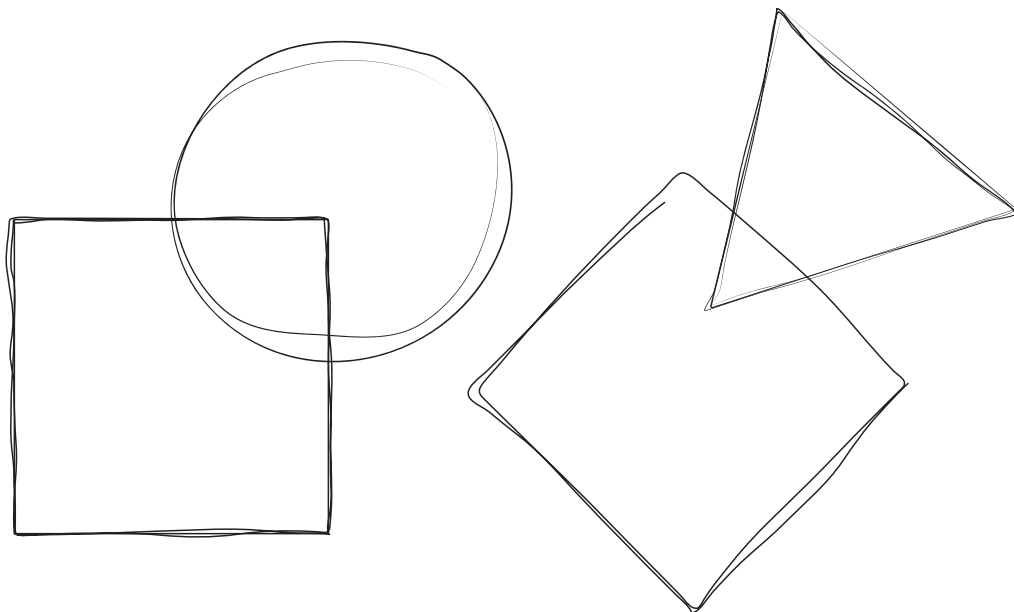
**Personal mind mapping** is an exercise that utilizes free association and creative thinking to reflect upon the paths you chose in the past and paths that will lead to the future you desire.

Mind mapping was an exercise adapted for use in the career counseling field. It was designed to be a way to guide the unconscious mind to a future goal by “mapping” the journey from



**Here's how it works.** Take a large piece of butcher paper and lay it out on a large table or the floor. Using colored markers you are about to identify significant points in your herstory, enclosing them in shapes like circles, squares, diamonds, etc. Color them as you see them. Connect them chronologically with lines. The idea is to “map” your way to success. Being creative using shapes and colors of your choice is an added bonus.

Creating vision boards is another example of an activity to assist in the definition of life goals and purposes. A vision board is done in the same way as a mind map except that it often uses cut-out images or drawings of things desired in order to better visualize them.



## *Mind Mapping Exercise*

Use this page to create a mind map in a smaller version or (as suggested) spread out on a table or floor to complete this exercise. Share your mind map and inspirations and visions with others.

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### *Journal Question*

**Did mind mapping free your mind to dream about life possibilities?**





## *Personal and Tribal Sovereignty*

Traditionally, indigenous (Native) peoples have understood that violence against others, especially women and children, is not only unnatural but also an affront to peace and harmony in the world. Violence toward one's family members was a rare event that called for swift intervention, whether that was banishment from the family/community in extreme cases or another method of reparation to the wronged individual, along with the community. Since we are all a part of the whole there is not an isolated event or impact that does not touch everyone in the circle.

In the end, we are all responsible for eliminating violence and creating safe and healthy communities. Those who hold positions of trust with the authority to make a difference are especially responsible for finding solutions.

When our basic human rights are taken away and denied us in very elemental ways we are vulnerable to violence in our communities and at home. Our homes should be the safest and most harmonious of all sanctuaries.

To protect the most vulnerable of our populations, laws were passed.

### FEDERAL CRIME VICTIM'S BILL OF RIGHTS

A federal domestic violence victim has the following rights under 42 U.S.C. Section 10606(b):



- The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.
- The right to be reasonably protected from the accused offender.
- The right to be notified of court proceedings.
- The right to be present at all public Court proceedings related to the offense, unless the Court determines that testimony by the victim would be materially affected if the victim heard other testimony at trial.
- The right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case.
- The right to an order of restitution from the defendant.
- The right to information about the conviction, sentencing, imprisonment and release of the offender.

The following table discusses sovereignty and the responsibilities and rights that go with it as they apply to Tribal Nations and Native Women.

## *Tribal Sovereignty*

*All Tribal nations have an inherent right to:*

1. A land-base: possession and control is unquestioned and honored by other nations. To exist without fear, but with freedom.
2. Self-governance: the ability and authority to make decisions regarding all matters concerning the Tribe without the approval or agreement of others. This includes the ways and methods of decision-making, social, political and other areas of life.
3. An economic base and resources: the control, use and development of resources, businesses or industries the Tribe chooses. This includes resources that support the Tribal life way, including the practice of spiritual ways.
4. A distinct language and historical and cultural identity: Each Tribe defines and describes its history, including the impact of colonization and racism, tribal culture, worldview and traditions.

Colonization and violence against Native people means that power and control over Native people's life way and land have been stolen.

As Native people, we have the right and responsibility to advocate for ourselves and our relatives in supporting our right to power and control over our tribal life way and land—tribal sovereignty.

## *Native Women's Sovereignty*

*All Native women have an inherent right to:*

1. Their body and path in life: the possession and control is unquestioned and honored by others. To exist without fear, but with freedom.
2. Self-governance: the ability and authority to make decisions regarding all matters concerning themselves, without others' approval or agreement. This includes the ways and methods of decision-making in social, political and other areas of life.
3. An economic base and resources: the control, use and development of resources, businesses or industries that Native women choose. This includes resources that support individual Native women's chosen life ways, including the practice of spiritual ways.
4. A distinct identity, history and culture: Each Native woman defines and describes her history, including the impact of colonization, racism and sexism, tribal women's culture, worldview and traditions.

Violence against women, and victimization in general, means that power and control over an individual's life and body have been stolen.

As relatives of women who have been victimized, it is our right and responsibility to be advocates supporting every woman's right to power and control over her body and life—personal sovereignty.

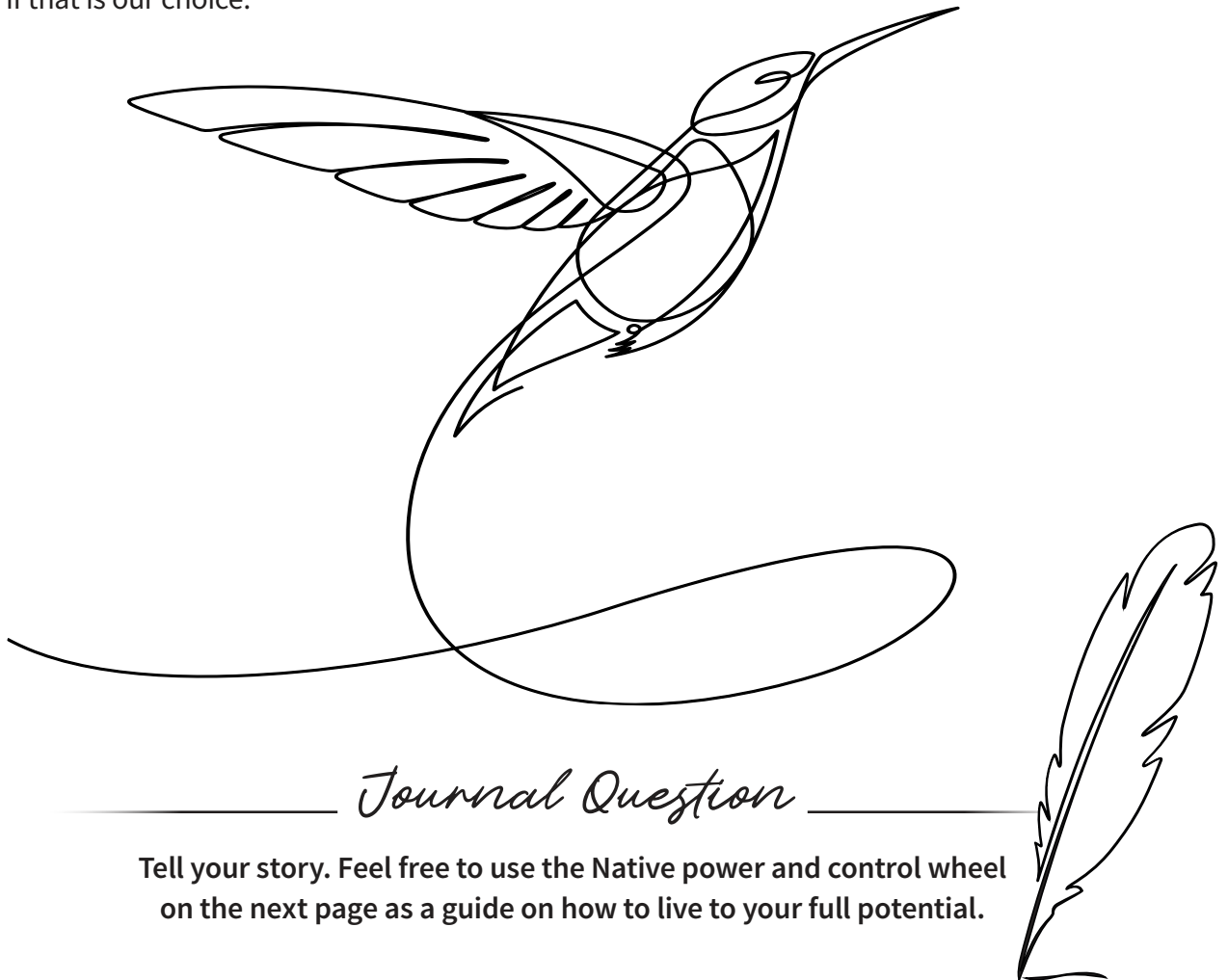


## *A Glance to the Past*

We have said all along that our teachings include looking at the past, acknowledging the perpetrators, the pain, and the lessons learned so we can move forward on our journey. This session will be spent looking at two truths of our pasts. One is our personal or *her*storical truth, the other is cultural truth.

Although we think the past is gone, upon closer examination we realize the present is but a product of the past, and the future a product of the present. We owe it to ourselves to revisit the past and make peace, realizing our lessons and present being would not be as strong without a challenging past. Once the past has been put in perspective we can build a bright and brilliantly enriched future.

The practice of beginning anew is an exercise of the mind. We do not have to bear our wounds forever. We all have made mistakes; we all can learn from them and continue to our next level. Once this awareness is set into practice, we can heal and start anew if that is our choice.



### *Journal Question*

**Tell your story. Feel free to use the Native power and control wheel on the next page as a guide on how to live to your full potential.**

# Power & Control Wheel

Developed by the Domestic Abuse Project in Duluth, Minnesota and crafted in close consultation with both victims and batterers, the **Power & Control Wheel** vividly illustrates the dynamics of intimate partner violence.

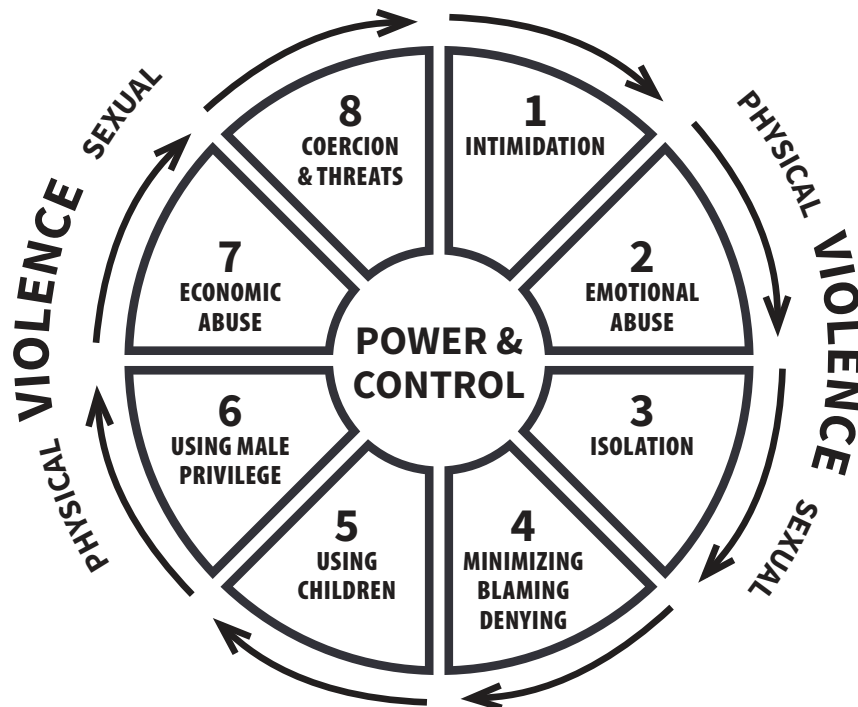
The outer rim shows the intermittent behaviors of physical and sexual violence that keep the victim caught in the relationship.

The inner parts of the wheel represent the constant, daily behaviors used to control the victim.

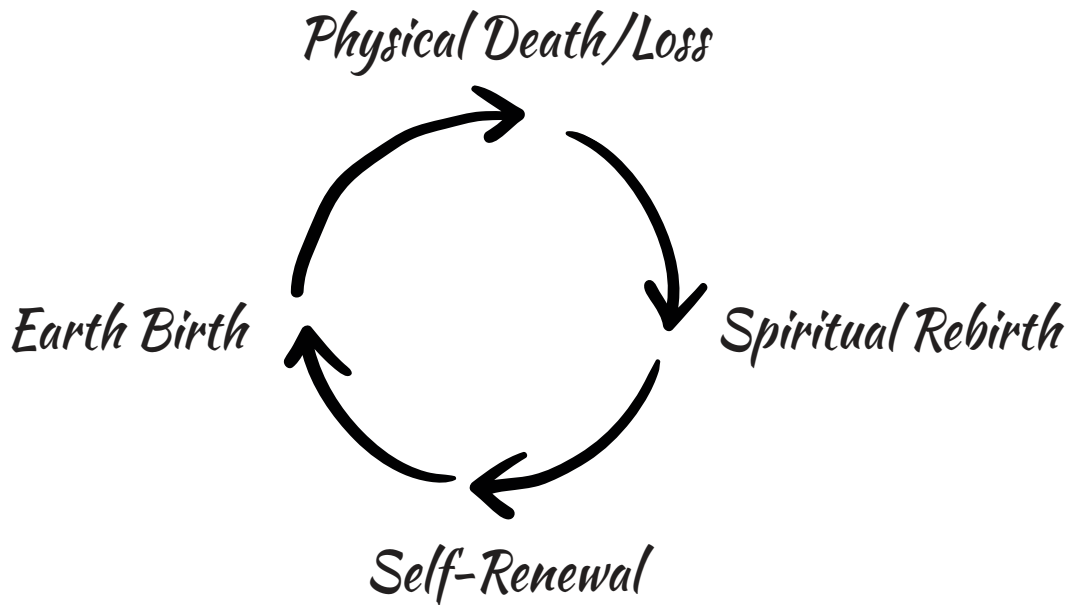
In Western society, the Power and Control wheel is used to describe domestic violence as a pattern of increasingly severe physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, spiritual, and economic abuse by one intimate partner against another in order to obtain power and control.

In the Indigenous perspective, domestic violence is seen as an energy or **consciousness of violence**, emphasizing the importance of addressing unresolved, suppressed, or repressed energies of soul wounding to harmonize actions.

Recognizing the influence of language on perception is crucial to the healing process. The ability to perceive from multiple perspectives is integral to the decolonization process.







## *Begin With the End in Mind*

In the physical world, we save time and effort if we “begin with the end in mind” (Steven R. Covey). We first create an image of what we desire in our mind, create a blueprint, then set about to construct it. In the Native world our desires, images and paths come to us in forms of inspiration or teachings because of our dreams or visions. Our being is first created in the spiritual world, and we came to be in the physical/human world secondly.

When we begin to renew our spiritual beliefs and practices, we become aware that we are not alone in our quest. We intuitively know that we have myriads of generations of ancestors who walk with us through this world and are supporting us in our journey. They may reveal gifts of wisdom and knowing at the junctures when we need this knowledge most. On the four winds the message is carried to us; we are given the wisdom of our ancestors. We know the pain, suffering and hardships that shape the soul of our people. Their journeys provide a map for us for our journey. Value the seen and unseen world and show respect for what you know and do not know.

- Personal mind mapping is an exercise that illustrates this inspirational knowledge/guiding spirit that lives within us. Given the opportunity to be creative and free flowing with our thoughts many wondrous thoughts and blessings are possible.
- Journaling is another exercise that can benefit you lifelong. Give yourself the freedom to let your imagination flow.
- Visualizing/dreaming is a tangible means to tap into unconscious resources available to us. Thought becomes action, action becomes reality.

## Visualization Exercise

Close your eyes.

Let us visualize ourselves on a beach far away. Feel the sun on your face. Squeeze the sand between your toes. Run your hands along the seashells on the sand beneath you. Feel your breathing in and out; relax for a few moments just listening to your breathing. Breathe deep.

Imagine that you are no longer afraid of anything: you feel at peace. No jealousy, anger, or despair. Listen to the waves gently coming ashore around you. Now you begin to feel the water. It is warm. It is relaxing. You are calm and enjoying your nap on the beach, free of cares, free of worries.

You notice the smell of the air; it is sea air. Smell the seaweed, the salt, feel the breeze on your body. You can feel the warm water tickling at your ankles, bathing your ankles in soothing warmth. You know the salt water is good for your skin and any wounds you may have. You revel in the fact the beach is all to yourself for you to enjoy.

You listen to the seagulls. In the distance, you hear the sound of people and the nearest town, but it is a faint sound and it is not disturbing your glorious day at the beach. The sun is soooo relaxing. It's just right; not too warm, not too cold.

Imagine that you are a wave. You have been created, you rise, you crest, you fall, and you are a part of a larger sea with other waves. As a wave, we share the life of the water.

The water has risen to your knees. Feel the water around your legs and knees. It is warm and it begs for deeper relaxation, a deeper sense of being—a deeper awareness of your senses. The sounds,

*Play soothing music in the background, preferably sea sounds.*

the smells, the feel of the beach are very real to you. Take a moment, listen to the music, and experience the feel of the beach with all its hidden mysteries and surprises.

The warm water is now around your waist. Feel the water on your feet, ankles, legs, knees, and across your stomach. You are special and today your journey has taken you to the most beautiful place in the world: your own beach. In your mind's eye see the beach and what lies just beyond it. Are there palm trees, native huts?

Mmmmm... the water is now at your chest. You cannot believe how good this feels. Warm waves are pulling you to a place of safety and harmony, greater, more peaceful than you ever imagined possible. It is nirvana. It is the desired end of your long journey.

As the water rises a little more, you feel exhilarated, renewed. You know you must move from the beach because the tide is coming in, but you do not want to move. You realize you have relaxed the day away and have to return to the world and fulfill your responsibilities. You slowly move, open your eyes, and remember your special day today. You are renewed and any time you feel tired, frustrated, depressed, troubled... you know that you can return to your private beach and become renewed once again.

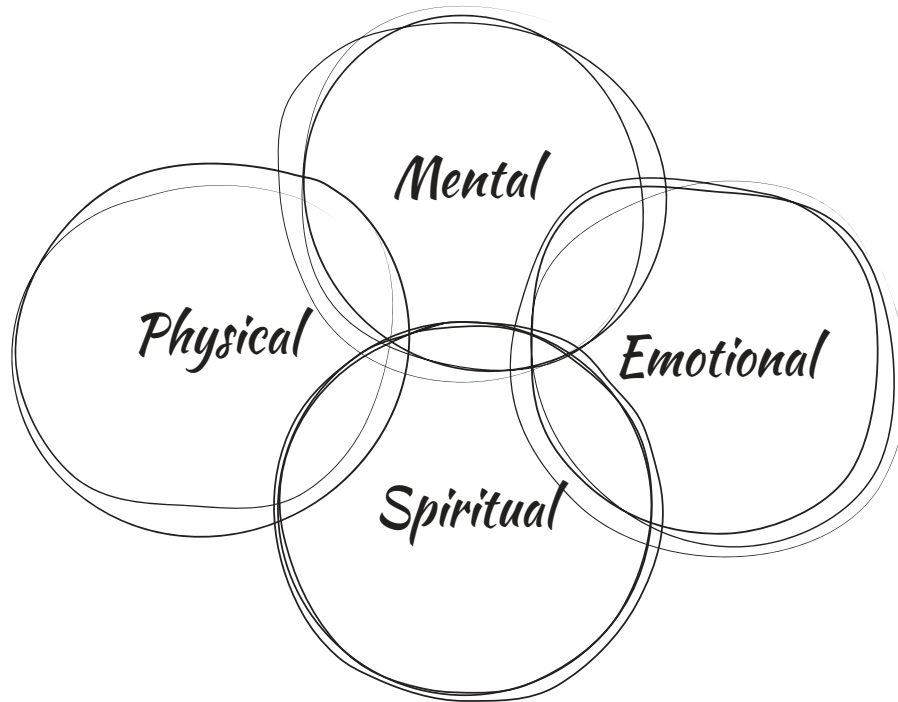
Open your eyes.

*Journal Question*

**How do you feel?**







## *The Cycle of Renewal*

Consider the physical realm of life and the spiritual realm. Life balance and optimal health requires an equal amount of attention to the physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional parts of our being.

- **Physical:** Do you have medical concerns that need your attention, or exercise/diet concerns?
- **Mental:** Do you have a healthy view of your place in the world?
- **Spiritual:** Are you connected to a higher power? Do you have faith that will guide you to a better life?
- **Emotional:** Are you depressed, lonely, angry? Do you love and care for others? Do you have others who love and care for you?

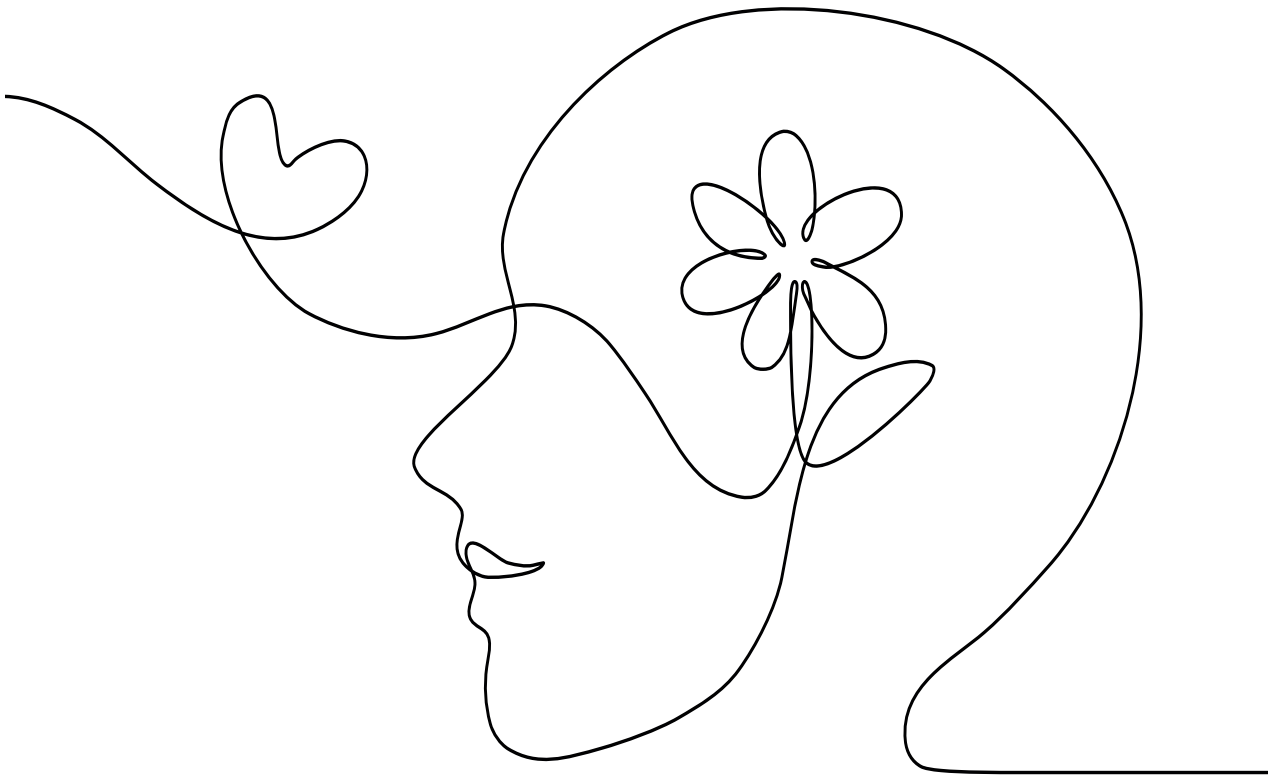
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### *Journal Question*

Which realms of life need your attention today?







**When clarity of thought and expression and listening to one's intuition guide our path, the journey becomes one of great adventure and great reward.**

## *Internalized Oppression*

While we exist in our individual family and community circles, we are also a part of the larger world circle, a World of all peoples that remains interconnected and dependent upon each other for survival.

One approach to looking to the past may be through storytelling. Each of us has a story we tell about our life experiences. We have also been given stories that tell a lesson or moral that we can learn from. Share your stories from the past or the present. While religions and religious practices or spiritual ceremonies usually have significant meaning attached, the interpretations almost always are personal and situational to you. They speak to you at the moment you need it most. They may serve as an added strength while providing a desired moment of clarity.

Colonization, boarding school experiences, chemical abuses, and disease are all forms of violence that have devastated us. Take some time to consider the effects on generations of Native peoples. When the time is right, come to a place where you can set it aside, understand it, or forgive it. Sometimes this takes many years. It is necessary to arrive at a place of peace and harmony. Reconciliation takes place within us. True reconciliation is achieving insight and compassion. When you have insight and compassion, the outward expression becomes easier. Helping another person becomes easier.

When reconciliation is embodied, you find peace and love.

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*Journal Question*

**Who do you need to forgive today?**







**Our most intense challenges present the greatest opportunities  
for change—in ourselves and in the world.**

# Revisiting Individual Readiness

## COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Having spent some time exploring ourselves and our thoughts about many things and forming a strong commitment to move forward and live our best life by finding our life passion, we are now ready to begin the work of transforming the community we live in.

Our commitment to change means:

- We have done the personal and individual work to move ourselves toward a place of forgiveness and peace.
- We are able to set clear boundaries for ourselves and others.
- We value our uniqueness, our ability and desire to contribute to the betterment of the world.
- We understand the nature of the connectedness of the universe and all its inhabitants including people, animals, plants, the seen and the unseen.
- We honor those who have come before us.
- We strive to make peace with our enemies.
- We strive to keep those dear to us close to us.
- We can see that we are part of a larger whole, that we may not understand or know all that is, but we *have faith in all things seen and unseen*.
- We recognize the pain of others and promise not to add to it; we will be a part of the solution, not the problem.

In this way we have cleansed ourselves of past harmful influences and are beginning anew. You are more than your story. Tell your story at least once to someone non-judgmental. You may find you do not need to tell it any more or you may tell it a thousand times more. When the universe has seen your truth, the truth of your pain, you can begin to create a new you with a different story, a story filled with love and peace.

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### Journal Question

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Acknowledge any unfinished work and your intention to change or readjust your perceptions of people or circumstances.  
Tell your old story and then tell your new story.





- HOMICIDE – If arson is threatened, fire should also be considered a weapon.
- “OWNERSHIP” OF THE BATTERED PARTNER – The batterer who says “death before divorce!” or “if I can’t have you nobody can” may be stating his fundamental belief that the woman has no right to life separate from him. A batterer who believes he is absolutely entitled to his female partner, her services, her obedience and her loyalty no matter what, is likely to be lifeendangering.
- CENTRALITY OF THE PARTNER -A man who idolizes his female partner or who depends heavily on her to organize and sustain his life, or who has isolated himself from all other community, may retaliate against a partner who decides to end the relationship. He rationalizes that her “betrayal” justifies his lethal actions.
- SEPARATION VIOLENCE - When a batterer believes that he is about to lose his partner if he can’t envision life without her or if the separation causes him great despair or rage, he may choose to kill.
- DEPRESSION - When a batterer has been acutely depressed and sees little hope for moving beyond the depression, he may be a candidate for homicide and/or suicide. Research show that many men who are hospitalized for depression have homicidal fantasies directed at family members.
- ACCESS TO THE BATTERED WOMAN AND/OR FAMILY MEMBERS – If the batterer cannot find her, he cannot kill her. If he does not have access to the children, he cannot use them as a means of access to the battered woman. Careful safety planning and police assistance are required for those times when contact is required (e.g. court appearances and custody exchanges).
- REPEATED OUTREACH TO LAW ENFORCEMENT – Partner or spousal homicide almost always occurs in a context of historical violence. Prior calls to the police indicate elevated risk of life-threatening conduct. The more calls, the greater the potential danger.
- ESCALATION OF BATTERER RISK TAKING – A less obvious indicator of increasing danger may be the sharp escalation of personal risk undertaken by a batterer. When a batterer begins to act without regard to the legal or social consequences that previously constrained his violence, chances of lethal assault increase significantly.
- HOSTAGE TAKING – A hostage-taker is at high risk of inflicting homicide. Between 75% and 90% of ALL hostages in the U.S. are related to domestic violence situations.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:

## *Couples Counseling Does NOT Work in Violent Relationships!*

If you are struggling with a relationship, some people may advise you to get marriage counseling or couples counseling. While this can be good advice in some relationships, it is **not** good for couples where there is violence. In fact, in many cases, couples counseling has increased the violence in the home.

Couples counseling does not work because:

- Couples counseling places the responsibility for change on both partners. ***Domestic violence is the sole responsibility of the abuser.***
- Couples counseling works best when both people are truthful. ***Individuals who are abusive to their partners minimize, deny and blame, and therefore are not truthful in counseling.***
- Couples resolve problems in counseling by talking about problems. ***Abuse is not a couple problem, it is the abuser's problem. The abuser needs to work on it in a specialized program for abusers.***

A victim who is being abused in a relationship is in a dangerous position in couples counseling. If she tells the counselor about the abuse, she is likely to suffer more abuse when she gets home. If she does not tell, nothing can be accomplished.

If you think you will benefit from joint counseling, go **after** the abuser successfully completes a batterer's intervention program and is no longer violent.

## *The People's Pledge*

As a step toward creating nations where Native women live safely, I will continually strive to achieve the goals identified during the WomenSpirit Domestic Violence Conference in October 2007.

- I pledge to do everything in my power to change the cycle of domestic abuse.
- I will use loving, positive and respectful language with my family and in my community.
- I will speak up against violence at every opportunity I have and when I hear others doing so, I will give them encouragement and recognition.
- I will make a choice to not participate in anything that degrades, exploits, or objectifies others.
- I will be clear about my own boundaries and mindful of my own behaviors that might be intimidating.
- I will believe people when they report abuse.
- I will support any victim of violence.
- I will only engage with media (TV, movies, video games, newspapers) that have positive or educational messages/themes.
- I will challenge the media to deliver balanced reporting.
- I won't tell or listen to sexist or ethnic jokes.
- I will treat everyone in my life with respect.
- I will encourage people to do criminal background checks for staff and volunteers on a more regular basis.
- I will try to be a positive role model.
- I will not support gender stereotypes or homophobia.
- I will teach respect for self and others.
- I will respect and support the recovery of others.
- I will be accountable for my actions
- I will be aware of my own use of language.
- I will always keep a safe and positive environment for children.
- When I make a mistake, I will say I am sorry and endeavor to change my behavior.

With a spirit of love and hope, I affirm that I will live by this pledge, and that I will encourage others to adopt it as well.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**I encourage all to adopt this pledge and create pledges of their own.** There are few communities that adopt “No Tolerance of Violence” pledges for their communities. We have seen great strides in the last few years toward “no tolerance” of smoking in public places, an increase in laws regarding wearing seat belts and motorcycle helmets, and “no tolerance” of child abuse. We urge communities to create their own pledges and bans on violence.

What would this look like?

**EXERCISE ONE: Let us create a Non-Violent Community Pledge together.**

The \_\_\_\_\_ Community pledges to

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**EXERCISE TWO: Let us create a personal pledge for ourselves.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, pledge to

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## *Moving from Surviving to Thriving*

Mantras are important in defining our lives and keeping us true to ourselves. A mantra is a chant, something we say repeatedly to keep us sane or reassure ourselves we are okay. Throughout my journey, these mantras keep surfacing and I have a greater understanding of their significance as time goes on. What seemed true centuries ago (in some cases) still rings true today. Many of us in the field of working to eliminate violence have adopted Nietzsche's saying, "What does not kill us makes us stronger," as if with each life-threatening altercation, we gain strength via our perseverance through adversity. Alternatively, the mantra that is repeated comes from Mahatma Gandhi: "Be the change you want to see in the world," wise words letting us know that we must look inward before we can look outward. Finally, there is one of my favorite Cheyenne proverbs: "A Nation is not defeated until the hearts of its women are on the ground."

As survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault, our recollections are often abbreviated. Remembrances come in short sound bites and are almost never recalled in complete versions reflecting the real truth of what happened. The details are too horrifying to admit all at once; there is too much negativity and horror for one mind to encompass. An interesting fact is that most survivors share the same experiences. We are able to capture in print the experiences and thoughts and feelings that bind us all. Even more alarming is that most women have been victims at one time or another in life to someone's violent and oppressive tactics.

The importance of journaling, visioning, relearning and modeling some great leaders all contributed to my recovery from violence. Self-examination and eliminating "drama-seekers" and negative influences also helped the process along. However, journeys can be sidetracked or derailed by system interventions, although these interventions are necessary in some cases in order to preserve rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We must understand the workings of the systems around that impact us on a daily basis in order to regain and take control of our own affairs.



The purpose of a rose is to be a rose.  
Your purpose is to be yourself.  
You don't have to run anywhere  
to become someone else.  
You are wonderful just as you are.

—THICH NHAT HANH

