Beyond The Pressure to Thrive

Teachings from the Medicine Basket
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Teachings of the Medicine Basket



- Cedar is a sacred medicine
- Our relationships
- Reciprocity
- Basket requires care
- Not meant to hold everything

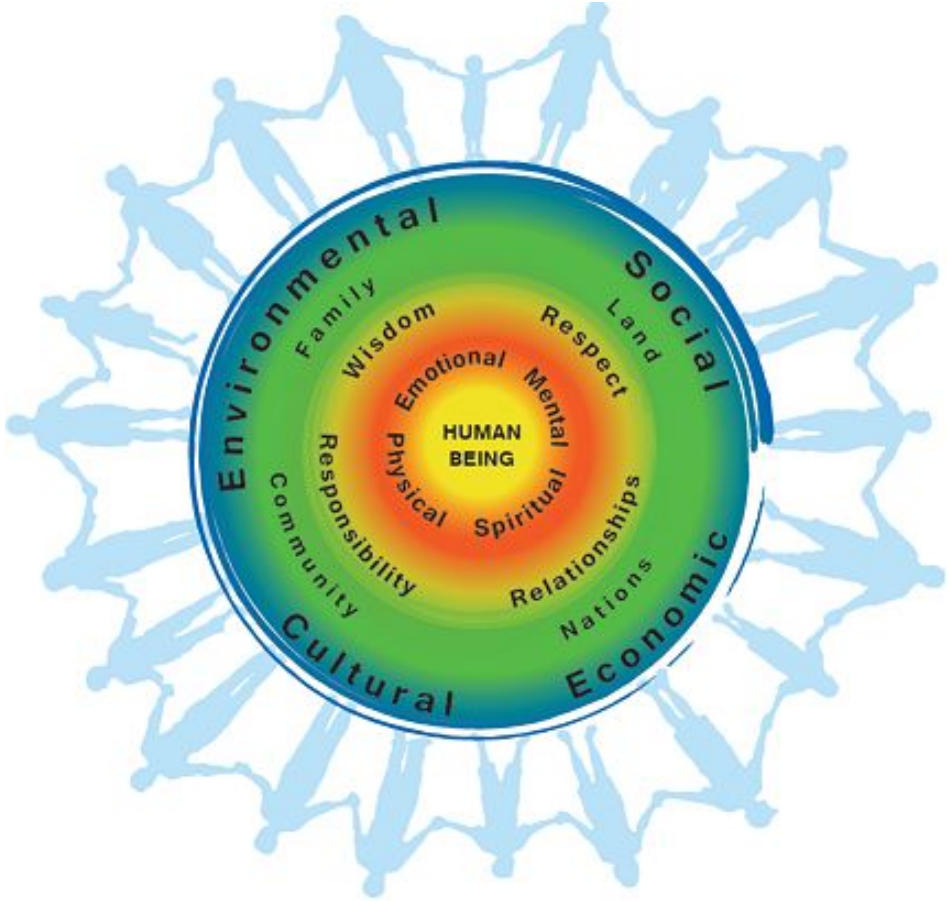
The Context for Contemporary Pathways to Mental Health:

1. Mental wellness is distinct
2. Ecosystem rooted in individuality
3. Hyperfocus on independency
4. Disconnection from land



Mental Health Continuum Model

HEALTHY	REACTING	INJURED	ILL
• Normal mood fluctuations • Calm & takes things in stride • Good sense of humour • Performing well • In control mentally • Normal sleep patterns • Few sleep difficulties • Physically well • Good energy level • Physically and socially active • No or limited alcohol use/ gambling	• Irritable / impatient • Nervous • Sadness / overwhelmed • Displaced sarcasm • Procrastination • Forgetfulness • Trouble sleeping • Intrusive thoughts • Nightmares • Muscle tension / headaches • Low energy • Decreased activity/socializing • Regular but controlled alcohol use / gambling	• Anger • Anxiety • Pervasively sad / hopeless • Negative attitude • Poor performance / workaholic • Poor concentration / decisions • Restless disturbed sleep • Recurrent images / nightmares • Increased aches and pains • Increased fatigue • Avoidance • Withdrawal • Increased alcohol use / gambling is hard to control	• Angry outbursts / aggression • Excessive anxiety / panic attacks • Depressed / suicidal thoughts • Over insubordination • Can't perform duties, control behaviour or concentrate • Can't fall asleep or stay asleep • Sleeping too much or too little • Physical illnesses • Constant fatigue • Not going out or answering phone • Alcohol or gambling addiction • Other addictions



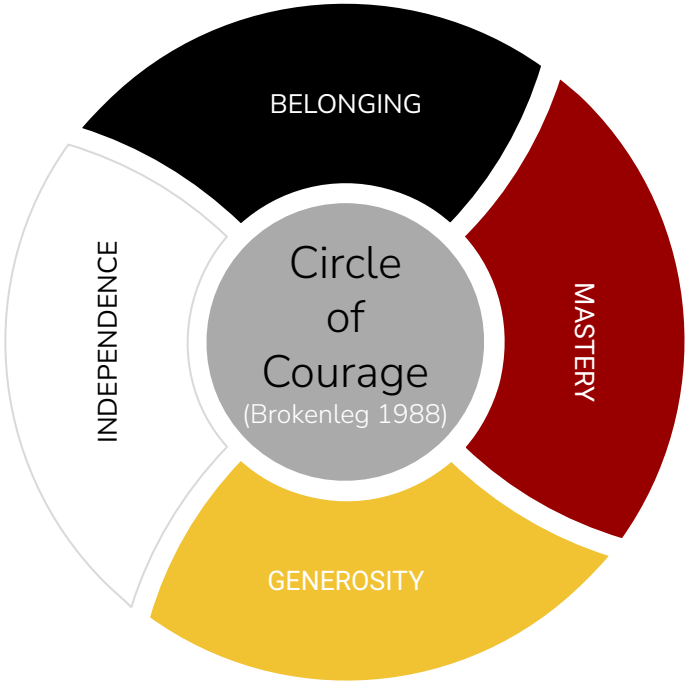
The Circle & The Box Framework (Dr. Jann Derrick)



The Circle = Indigenous Worldview

The Box = Western Worldview

Self-Care & Community-Care



Belonging - relational connection:

- Are my team members feeling happy, grounded, and well supported?
- Have I nurtured a sense of kinship, trust, and connection within the team?

Mastery - self-determination:

- Have I created space for team members to exercise agency and autonomy?
- Do I know their aspirations, and have I asked: “Where do you see yourself growing next?”

Generosity - collective contribution:

- Have I made room for everyone to meaningfully contribute their gifts?
- Am I encouraging shared leadership, collaboration, and community-centred contribution?

Independence - creative power and purpose:

- Have I supported team members in expressing their unique brilliance and independence?
- Am I shaping roles around people’s strengths, rather than forcing people into rigid roles?



Praise is the most powerful source of healing, connection, and validation that we can bestow upon another human being.

Land-based healing practices:

- Holistic self-care practiced everyday
- Cedar brushing
- Singing
- Dancing
- Feasting on the land
- Storytelling
- Spirit baths
- Thanking Creator (praying)
- Laughing
- Crying
- Plant medicines
- Fasting

The Teaching of Water



- Water is central to teachings
- Water is the oldest Matriarch on the planet
- Water is medicine
- Water is healing
- Water is intelligence

The Teaching of Fire

- Fire is sacred
- Medicine (sweat, fever, etc.)
- Doorway to the spiritual world/realm
    - Connect with ancestor
    - To pray
    - To heal
    - To cleanse the body, mind, spirit
- Symbol of power, responsibility, renewal, and knowledge
- Grounding in a strong teaching of the respect and responsibility for life, dealth, and interconnection

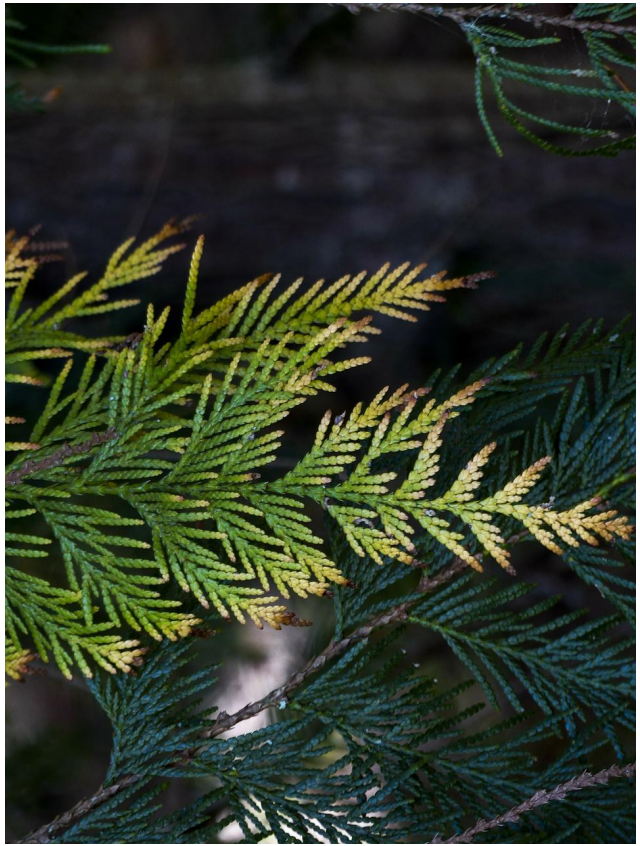


The Teaching of Earth/Land/Territory



- Land is relative
- Ancestors
- Language
- Identity
- The source of medicine, food, and technology
- The land is not owned, it is stewarted for all living things and coming generations
- Holds your history (Where are your stories?)
- Source of The First Laws

The Teaching of Process & Letting Go



- Ceremony: cedar, brushing, smudging, burning, etc.
- Fire, earth, air, water as medicine and healing mechanisms
- Feeling stuck or trapped as a pitfall: name it, process, it, accept it, value it, commit to an action and go
- Modern day hacks:
    - Bathroom Tissue Therapy (BTT)
    - Wandering clouds
    - Give it to someone
    - Give it back to Mother Earth

“Perhaps the greatest act of decolonizing mental wellness is remembering that we were never meant to heal, grow, or thrive in isolation.

Our ancestors understood something that modern systems too often forget: wellness lives in our relationships. When we restore connection, nurture belonging, and make room for one another, we begin to restore the conditions for everyone to thrive.”

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