

Indigenous Trauma Care



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Objectives

Participants will

Culture as medicine

Connection of trauma and
substance misuse

Overview of historical trauma
and ancestral wisdom

Skills to address trauma

Overview of Indigenous Wellness
and healing



Tribal Opioid Response Agenda

- The goal of the Tribal Opioid Response Agenda is to support tribal communities in healing our relatives and relations
- We have worked alongside tribal policymakers, national experts, service providers, and community members, developed this strategic agenda.



Culture is Medicine



TRICKSTER

NATIVE AMERICAN TALES

A GRAPHIC COLLECTION

“Meet the Trickster, a crafty creature or being who disrupts the order of things, often humiliating others and sometimes himself in the process. Whether a coyote or a rabbit, raccoon or raven, tricksters use cunning to get food, steal precious possessions, or simply cause mischief.”





Trickster Spirits and the Opioid Response

Indigenous Trauma Care: A decolonial perspective

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

Linklater, 2014

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



Types of trauma

A collection of natural objects including feathers, cinnamon sticks, and dried herbs, symbolizing traditional medicine or healing.

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



Our bodies are designed to remember danger

Physical Indications of Fight or Flight Response



dilated pupils

pale or flushed skin

trembling

rapid heart beat
and breathing

ANCIENT SURVIVAL RESPONSES TO LIFE THREATENING CIRCUMSTANCES

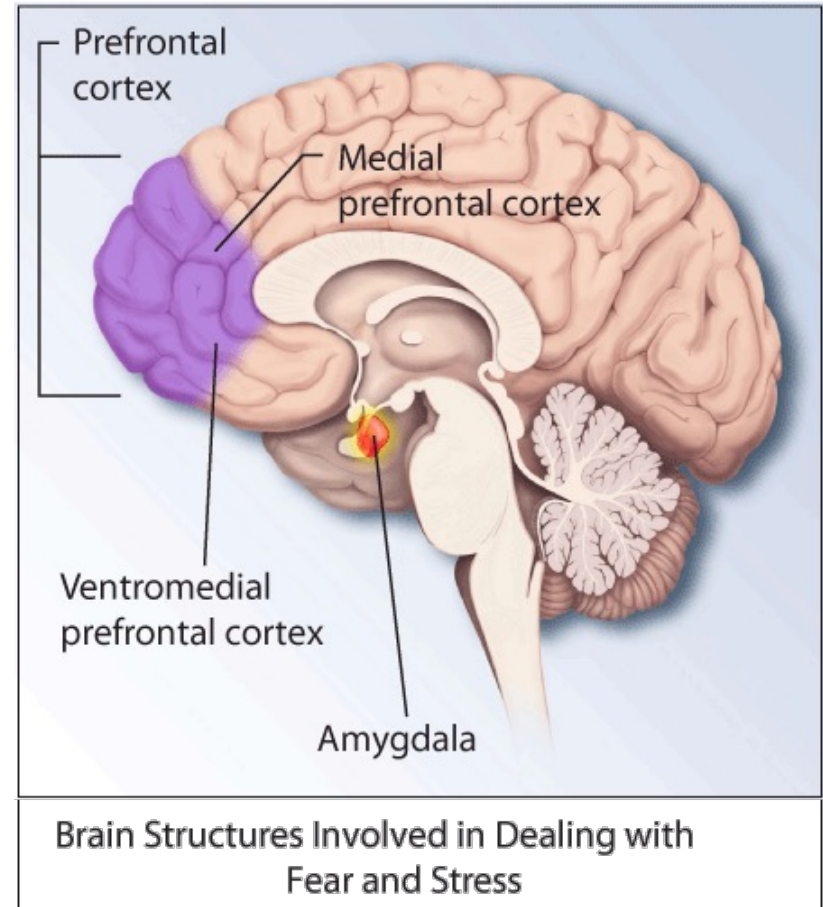
Bracha, H. (2004). Freeze, flight, fight, fright, faint: Adaptationist perspectives on the acute stress response system. *CNS Spectrums*, 9(9), 679-685.

Stanton, S. (2016), "Intuition: A Silver Lining for Clinicians with Complex Trauma". Dissertations. <https://surface.syr.edu/etd/615>

Effects of trauma on the brain

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

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



BREATHING EXERCISE

FOR RELAXATION #1



INHALE
THROUGH NOSE

Perform for
2 to 5 Minutes

Instagram: @elevatevibe

Source of the wound



Ancestral Memory



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

Little Joe Gomez

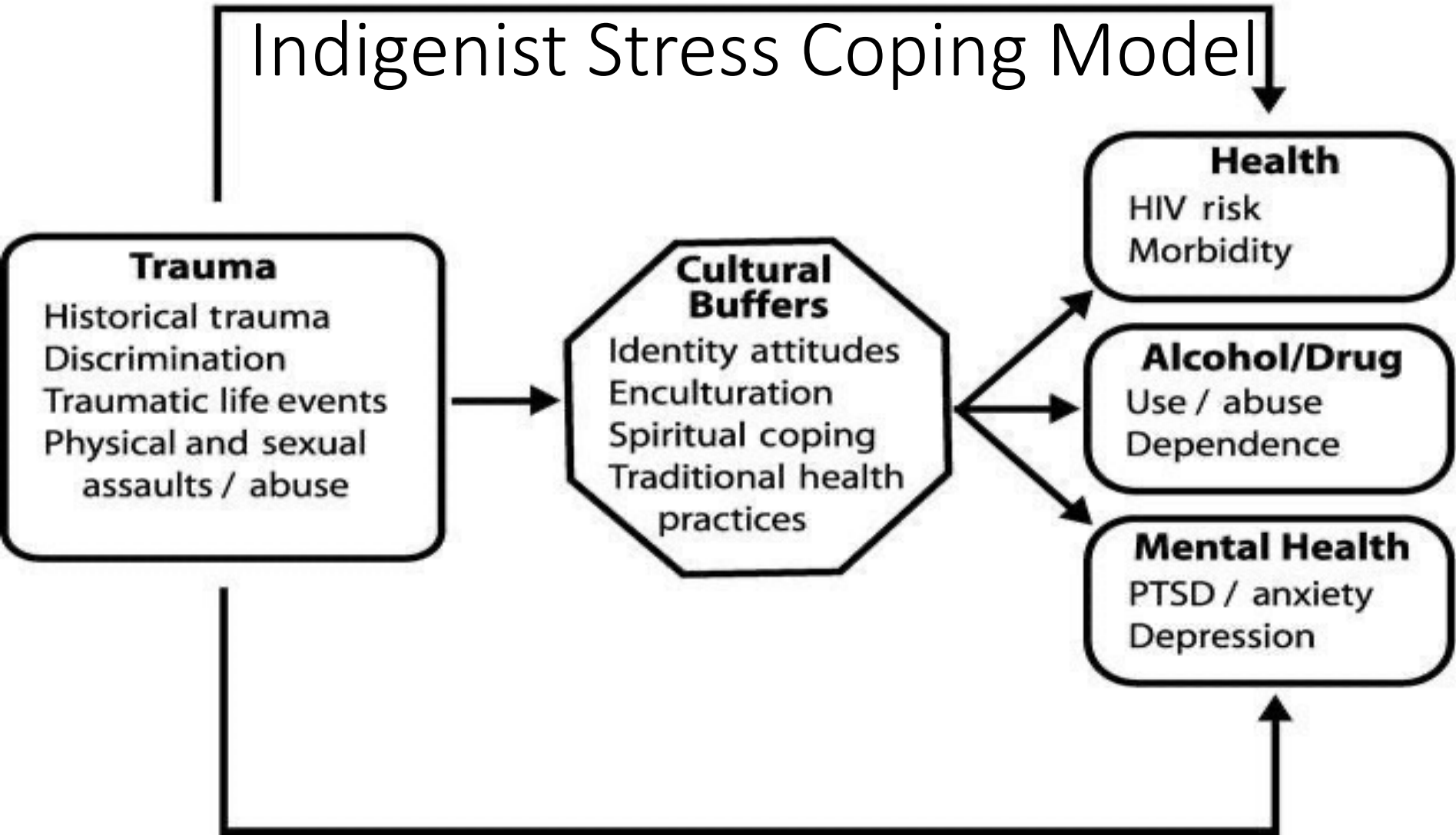
Hamby, Sherry, Elm, Jessica H L, Howell, Kathryn H, & Merrick, Melissa T. (2021). Recognizing the cumulative burden of childhood adversities transforms science and practice for trauma and resilience. *The American Psychologist*, 76(2), 230–242. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000763>

STRESS

COPING

HEALTH OUTCOMES

Indigenist Stress Coping Model



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

INITIAL REACTIONS TO TRAUMA CAN INCLUDE

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

Most **responses** are normal in that they affect most survivors and are socially acceptable, psychologically effective, and self-limited.



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

~ GABOR MATE





What is “addiction”



“Is a complex condition, a complex interaction between human beings and their environment.” Gabor Mate’

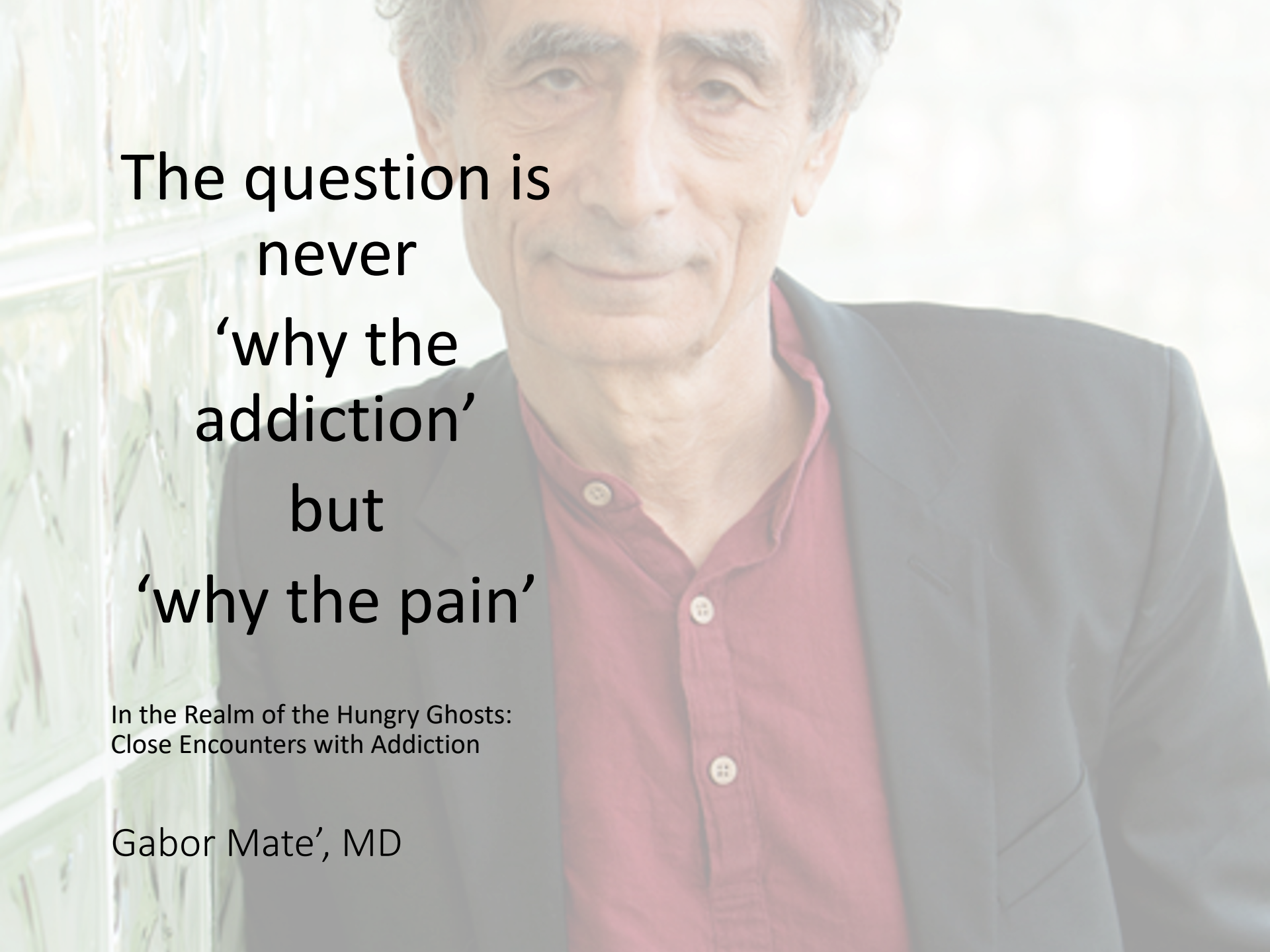
WHY 'SUBSTANCE ABUSE' IS A LABEL WE SHOULD ALL REJECT



- “Abuse” is an ugly word.
 - “Child abuse,”
 - “sexual abuse,”
 - “physical abuse,”
 - “emotional abuse,”
 - “domestic abuse.”
- And then, of course, there’s “substance abuse.”

[MAIA SZALAVITZ MAR 26, 2014](https://psmag.com/social-justice/substance-abuse-label-reject-77416)

<https://psmag.com/social-justice/substance-abuse-label-reject-77416>



The question is
never
'why the
addiction'
but
'why the pain'

In the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts:
Close Encounters with Addiction

Gabor Mate', MD

“It’s important
to meet people
where they’re
at, but not
leave them where
they’re at.”

Drug addiction is often thought of in black and white terms, with out of control addiction on one hand, and complete abstinence on the other, one is either "using" or "clean."

However, there is an entire realm of vital interventions between these extremes, where people can be helped at various stages of drug use.

This is the world of Harm Reduction.



**STRONG
RESILIENT
INDIGENOUS**

Wellness

Sacred Tree: Four Worlds
International Institute.
<https://www.fwii.net/profiles/blogs/the-story-of-the-sacred-tree-1>



What works

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



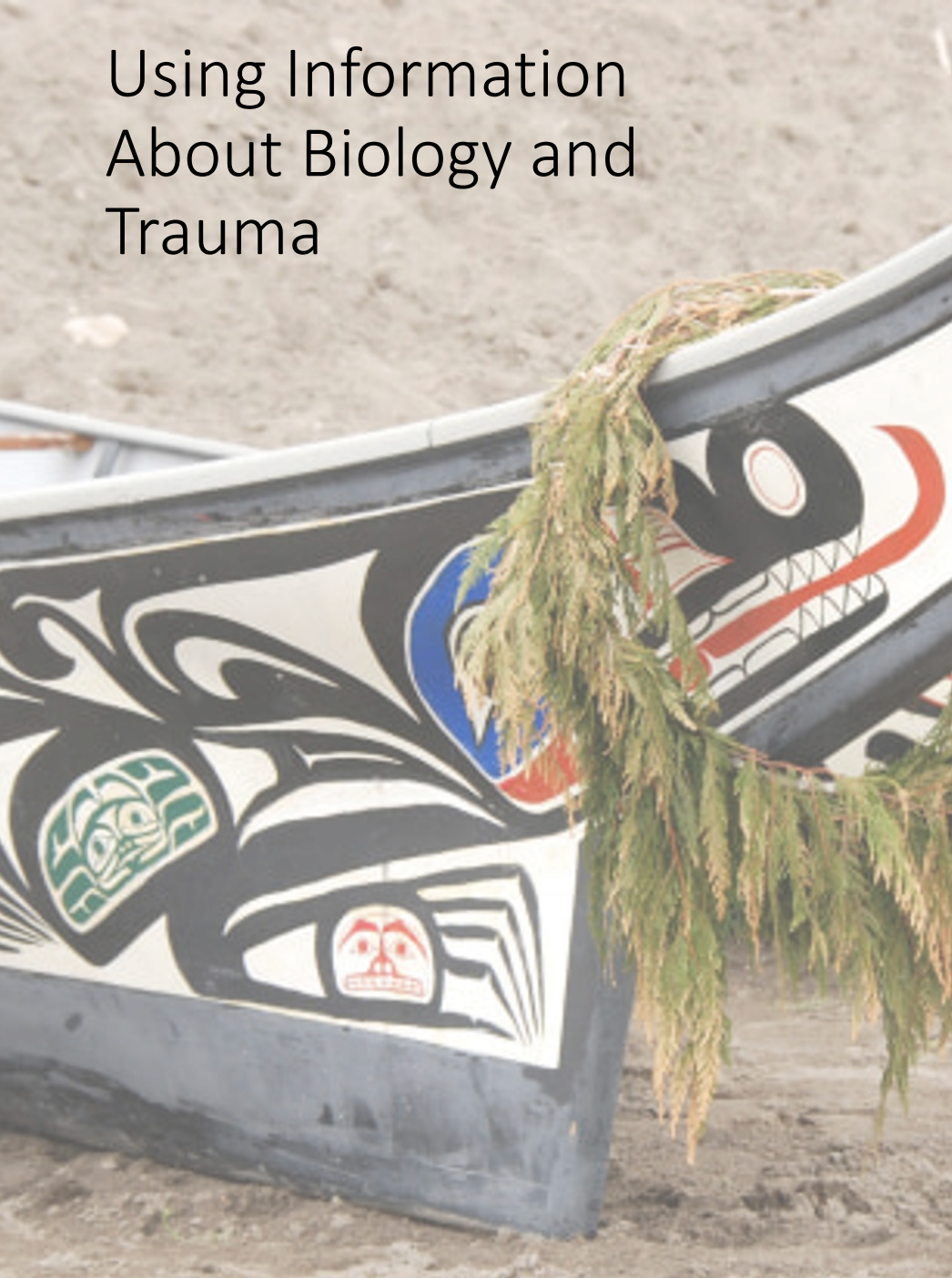
Do not despair!!!

Mate, G. (2009)

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



Using Information About Biology and Trauma



Frame reexperiencing the event(s),

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

You may need to refer certain clients to a psychiatrist

Discuss traumatic stress symptoms and their physiological components.

Normalize trauma symptoms.

Resilient Responses to Trauma



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

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

Vagus Nerve Exercises



- Cold Exposure Acute
- Deep and Slow Breathing
Deep
- Singing, Humming,
Chanting and Gargling
- Probiotics
- Meditation
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids
- Exercise
- Massage
- Socializing and Laughing

Relationship with Medicine

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



A hand holding a colorful, patterned fan against a pink background. The fan has a blue border, a yellow and pink patterned section, and a black section with white and blue stripes. The hand is wearing a silver ring with a clear stone. The background is a solid pink color.

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

CREATE

ANCESTRAL CONNECTION

SACRED SPACE

STORYTELLING/STORY LISTENING



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



WE THE

RESILIENT

HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

