

# Transcending Historical Trauma

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Myself, I'm one of the generations. My mother is one of the generations, wandering out there in alcoholism, and death, and murder, and domestic violence, and thinking there's no way out. Well, there is a way out... Like I tell my children, my grandchildren, 'You don't have to walk that road of alcoholism and drug addiction. I walked that road. I took all those beatings for you guys. You don't have to walk that road.

- Verna Bartlett, Ph.D., Native American elder and sexual abuse survivor

Looking back at the past few centuries of America's westward expansion, we can witness a long history of cataclysmic events inflicted upon generations of American Indians. Our country's growth was at the expense of the continent's indigenous peoples who suffered genocide, dislocation, and other unspeakable patterns of violence on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual levels.

The adverse effects of this history carried down from generation to generation are known as historical trauma. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, widely regarded as the "mother of historical trauma" by Native Americans, describes historical trauma as *the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over one's lifetime and from generation to generation following loss of lives, land and vital aspects of culture*.

The descendants of Native People continue today to suffer from massive group trauma across many generations. This group trauma manifests itself today in myriad ways, from alcoholism and drug addiction, to domestic violence and sexual abuse.<sup>[1]</sup>

The list of historical traumas is long and painful. First contact with people from Europe caused sometimes as high as 85% of Indian people to die from smallpox, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. These diseases were in fact used as biological warfare to clear the way for foreign communities, plants and animals. Many know of the massacres of Wounded Knee and Sand Creek, but do not know that there were dozens of others. The Cherokee Trail of Tears, for example, forced hundreds to relocate to Indian reservations, which were operated like prison camps by Indian agents.

Federal policies required that children be removed from families and sent to boarding schools where they were systematically belittled and beaten, and sometimes raped and murdered. Prohibiting and perpetuating doubt about Native cultural traditions coincided with a loss of cultural identity. People began to be ashamed to be Indian. This was further exacerbated when the ancient spiritual practices of Indian people were declared illegal, including grieving traditions, songs, and healing practices. Spiritual leaders were frequently banished, imprisoned or murdered. Their sacred pipes, drums and other spiritual bundles were confiscated and burned or put into museums. Tribal terminations, relocation of Native Americans to cities where they lived in poverty, resulted in rampant alcohol abuse and severe mental health and health conditions, especially Type 2 Diabetes. Research continues to demonstrate that these conditions are co-occurring in many of today's Native peoples.

Locally, Judy Bluehorse Skelton, Adjunct Professor at Portland State University's Graduate School of Education is one of many who are helping eradicate historical trauma by educating her community, Native and non-Native, Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. (WISDOM) recently recorded her for the Discovering Our Story Project:

Historical trauma is something that goes from generation to generation as opposed to a personal trauma of a shock, or a breakup, or physical illness, or something else that happens in our lives. This historical trauma is very much steeped in a history of people, and a pattern of demoralization, a pattern of disempowerment that is carried out against a people or one group by another.

...the history of the people or our people, whether it's the Cherokee Trail of Tears (all the tribes have their Trails of Tears, as we know), boarding school experience, or being taken away from parents, or being beaten regularly because that's what the school or the religious experience for some might have entailed... we look back to a loss of a relationship with the natural world, a loss of a sense of place, of where we belong and we realize that's connected again to our history as a people, being moved around or being taken from our culture, not doing the songs anymore, not having the traditional foods anymore.

But also the genocide, the violence committed against men and women and children. This history lives on in us. There's that memory, that physical memory that some have talked about. It lives on at a cellular level – a cellular memory.

Native people manifest stories of internalized ancestral trauma in the personal stories of their life. They demonstrate how trauma continues today to be unintentionally passed down to generations of Native American elders, adults and children who continue to suffer from multiple issues. Although this will continue to be felt for years to come, many Native leaders serve as role models to our people who are beginning to overcome the high rates of addictions, domestic violence, sexual abuse, Type 2 Diabetes, and educational failure within their families.

### **Yakama elder and educator, Lavina Wilkins:**

Lavina Wilkins, an elder, educator and counselor from Washington State's Yakama Nation, speaks of suffering as a child from early school experiences. Because she was raised and protected by traditional grandparents, she didn't know how to speak English when she first started school.

Now being raised the way I was raised not speaking English, I started school not speaking English... You talk about trauma. That was really traumatic, because I didn't know what they would be talking about in the classroom.

And then I was being poked fun of because of how I dressed and because of how my hair was combed and because of the shoes I wore and all of that... And then they would laugh, you know. The kids would be laughing and I'd be laughing right along with them.

My brother finally told me. He understood English some and he told me, "What are you laughing for? Don't you know they're laughing at you?"

And that just put a damper on everything. I began not to like school. I didn't want to be there to be made fun of. And because I didn't know what they were talking about, I didn't know what they were teaching in the school.

Lavina began drinking alcohol at an early age.

And at that time I didn't realize it, but then I start getting kind of hot headed... I loved to dance modern dance, so I started going to dances. My grandma said no, but yet I sneak out anyways and started drinking. I ended up addicted to alcohol and I traveled a lot, getting out of my family's sight so they couldn't see me and what I'm doing.

And during that time too, my sisters both met death because of alcoholism. One of my sisters got crushed between two cars. When she was crushed she left three children, who I inherited because I didn't have any and I was available... to take care of them. So I had three children at a very young age. Then my other sister had four or five and she drowned down in the Yakima River. She left hers who became mine. In the end, I had eleven children. I raised eleven children as my own, and I'm addicted to alcohol. But all week long I worked two jobs to take care of my children.

Despite her alcoholism, after overcoming a severe bout of depression following the loss of another close relative, Lavina continued raising her children, and went on to college where she received a Master's degree in education and counseling.

While she was in school, she learned more about the history of her people.

A lot of history... they talk about the war and what our people did. (We) always were doing something terrible. But, a lot of the things our people did were in retaliation during the war for what was done to them. All the raping of our women and children, all the slaughter of our elders, and this was even after the treaty was signed. That was traumatic.

That was their way to get our warriors to give themselves up. It happened on almost every reservation. You know, it was like they would capture wherever the elders where...a village. Or, they would come into a village at a fast pace and start slaughtering everyone in the village, even if the warriors were not there. The elders and the children had nobody to protect them.

Grandmother Wilkins reflects on why domestic violence and sexual abuse became commonplace among a people who had never practiced violence among their families. She learned how the victim became the perpetrator.

You know a lot of this happened from trauma from the past—like the boarding schools. A lot of our young men, things happened to them in boarding schools that a lot of them would not talk about. It was never beautiful what happened. And so they had to take it out on somebody.

Maybe their mothers became alcoholics and left them. And maybe this is why they became like they hated womanhood, whatever the situation. But again, it all points back to trauma that happened to them. They take it out on somebody weaker.

And that's why I look at our children and I feel they shouldn't have to go through any of this. All this learned behavior... It's something that triggers it off.

Lavina sees better days coming for her people because more of the community are recovering and turning to higher education so they can help their community heal. After her 4 year old granddaughter gets older, she plans to go back to school to get her Ph.D.

## **Haida story keeper, Woodrow Morrison:**

Woodrow F. (Woody) Morrison, Jr. was born of Virginia Elsie Cloud, a Cherokee, and Woodrow F Morrison Sr., a Haida. His parents met as a result of his father being sent to an Indian School in California. His father was a well respected Haida elder and spoke the Haida language.

Woody Jr. began his training as a history keeper with Haida elders when he was three years old. As a young child he enjoyed the depth of his culture and was inspired to walk the footsteps of his father as a fisherman. His life changed following eighth grade when he was sent to Indian boarding school. His anger grew and rage began to consume him.

The only way that I could survive was to fight all the time. I fought anybody all the time. I was always in trouble. There weren't always fistfights, but I got kicked out of classes, once because I got in an argument with a teacher... Since it was a Presbyterian school, it was Christian teachings. She said that if you didn't know Jesus Christ, you were going to hell.

I said, "Well, what about my great grandparents? They never heard about Jesus."

And she said, "They all probably went to hell."

And I just went into a rage. I started throwing desks and chairs around.

And I thought, "Is that what love is all about?"

And then I got kicked out of class. Wasn't too much longer, I got kicked out for something else.

With me, when I got out of school, I went right into the military, and I didn't get out until I was 25 years old. Well, I started kindergarten when I was 4. So for 21 years, I was institutionalized, and of course I was angry. I mean there was a rage going on in there.

I would lash out and I nearly killed people. I didn't kill them, but it wasn't because I wasn't trying. There were people that would intercede, and I knew, after the last one, I was absolutely convinced that I will kill the next one.

And fortunately I never turned my anger on my family, in a physical way, but I abused my wife and kids emotionally I guess, psychologically. They were terrified of me and I wanted it to stop and I didn't know what I was going to do. It was sort of funny in a way, my wife had called me wanting a divorce the night before final exams when I was in Law school...

Over the years, after Woody became a lawyer, he returned to explore the his people's spirituality.

I got invited to go to a sweat. It was a woman who invited me because it was for her birthday. There were a bunch of us and my reason for going to the sweat had nothing to do with spirituality. And I knew what it was going to be. It was going to be dark, and it was going to be hot, and it was going to be sweaty. So this was what went through my mind and I went into that sweat.

And it wasn't very long before I suddenly saw what I had become. I wanted no part of that and I yelled, "Let me the hell out of here!" and I forced my way out. I wanted no part of that.

It was a couple weeks later, I was convinced. This guy practically twisted my arm to get me in the sweat again, and this was in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And I decided, I'm going to face me. It was the first time that I can recall crying since I was a kid. And I was ashamed of myself. And I walked out after four rounds.

This Navajo guy came up and he put his arm around my shoulder and he says, "Congratulations, Woody. Now you're weak enough to be a man."

Woody's anger began to subside. Today, a treasured elder and Haida story keeper, he utilizes his education and culture to help others transform abuses and anger by exploring their own heritage.

### **The Return to the Sacred Path**

All of the elders and storytellers attribute their healing and resilience to their spirituality. Woodrow Morrison was no exception.

I used to pick the biggest guy I could find; maybe I was hoping, this one could kill me. I wasn't what you would call a good fighter. I was just crazy. I wouldn't even remember it afterward when the rage was gone.

In the ten years that I tried to figure out how to make that stop, I managed to meet a lot of Elders from a lot of places all across North America, from Africa, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia. It all seemed like we were trying to find the same thing. We were all trying to find our way back.

A man from West Africa said, "You know, you've got to stop once in awhile and let your Spirit catch up."

"Well, how the Hell is my Spirit going to catch up when I don't know where it is? They cut my head off."

One day I asked an old, old man—I said how do I find my Spirit?

He said, "It'll find you."

And I asked, "How am I going to do that?"

And he said, "Stand on the land that's your home. Quiet your mind. Just stand there quiet. Pretty soon you'll feel your Spirit come back."

And that's when my healing began, when I could feel that come back again.

### **The Mother of Historical Trauma**

According to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, widely regarded as the mother of historical trauma, "First is confronting the historical trauma. Second is understanding the trauma. Third is releasing the pain of historical trauma. Fourth is transcending the trauma." As exemplified by the stories of Grandmother Wilkins and Woody Morrison, this means we must tell our story and the story of our elders and ancestors.

In our view, community healing along with individual and family healing are necessary to thoroughly address historical unresolved grief and its present manifestations. The process is not quick nor is it easy. However, without such a commitment to healing the past, we will not be able to address the resultant trauma and prevent the continuation of such atrocities in the present. Nor will we be able to provide the positive and healthy community activism needed to stop and prevent the social pathologies of suicide, homicide, domestic violence, child abuse, and alcoholism so prevalent in American Indian communities—as in society at large—today.

The crux of our argument has far reaching implications for other colonized, oppressed peoples throughout history and those being oppressed, as we write, that are obvious to us. Wherever peoples are being decimated and destroyed, subsequent generations will suffer. We need only heed the traditional American Indian wisdom that, in decisions made today, we must consider the impact upon the next seven generations. [3]

Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart has given a huge gift to our Native people. While the healing circle is growing to encompass the world, the work of Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. in Portland, Oregon is another example of how Maria's work is bearing healing fruit for Native communities.

### **Historical Trauma in Portland, Oregon**

Portland has the ninth largest Native American population in the United States according to the U.S. Census, with 19,209 members of one race and 38,926 multiracial self-identified as Native American, representing 380 tribes. The U.S. Census shows Native American poverty rates in Oregon skyrocketing in recent years, from 22 percent in 1999 to 31 percent from 2006 to 2008.

It is no wonder that Portland State University and Coalition of Communities of Color reported in 2010 that Native American children are up to 26 times more likely to end up in foster care than white children in Multnomah County. [4] Additional statistics show urban Native Americans in Portland, Oregon as low-income, living in distressed neighborhoods, and in families headed by a single parent lacking the skills and education to participate fully in today's economy. As a group, they still enter school with measurably lower social, personal and cognitive development than other children in Oregon, according to the Oregon Department of Education. American Indians now earn a lower percentage of the state's college degrees than they did in 1997, according to the Oregon University System.

In response, focus group research was conducted in Portland, Oregon by Native American Rehabilitation Association among their clients. This uncovered instances of historical trauma and consistently high levels of co-occurring substance abuse (alcoholism), mental health (depression), and Type 2 Diabetes. [5]

Compromised behavioral immunity, another devastating consequence of historical trauma, has also been uncovered within Portland's Native community. This condition is signaled by an inability to form significant emotional connections with others. It is related to the policy of forcing generations of Indian children into boarding schools which thrust them into a harsh institutional culture contrasting sharply with their traditional family-oriented environment.

### **Wisdom of the Elders: Healing With The Heroes Journey Model**

Today, Portland's Native community is demonstrating increasing cultural resilience and enjoying a renaissance of our diverse cultural heritage. Community leaders are actively and aggressively tackling issues, addressing the impact they have had on generations of Native families, and restoring traditional Native parenting practices.

Research indicates that historical pain becomes even more painful when it seems to be forgotten, trivialized, or denied.<sup>[6]</sup> This trauma is similar to that of other historically oppressed groups who have experienced "difficulty in mourning a mass grave, the dynamics of collective grief, and the importance of community memorialization."<sup>[7]</sup>

With this in mind, Wisdom of the Elders Inc. has created a unique multimedia project in response to the discovery of historical trauma for Native American clients and the therapists that serve them. To recover the loss of cultural traditions and family structure across generations, Wisdom of the Elders, Inc. (WISDOM) has produced the Discovering Our Story Project, and is sharing videorecorded stories of resilient Native Americans like Verna Bartlett, Lavina Wilkins, Woody Morrison, and other exemplary elders and storytellers. Funding is provided by United Way of the Columbia-Willamette.<sup>[8]</sup>

The videos and teachings form a culturally tailored curriculum that fits the unique learning style of Native Americans. Sharing stories is a traditional native practice that provides a vehicle for learning and healing. We know that life is a difficult journey, one that causes some people to become lost along the way. In the video recordings and health and wellness teachings, tribal elders and storytellers reveal how they experienced being "lost," and they share how they found their way to eventually return to a meaningful life.

On WISDOM's web pages, Native people learn more about historical trauma, its history, its effects, and most importantly, its treatment. This site, available at no cost to users, presents teachings designed to help re-establish respect and harmony throughout all generations of Native families and communities. These teachings integrate positive identity development with building healthy relationships, encouraging appropriate conduct and skills development, and the restoring of traditional cultural values back into our family relationships. It provides hope for those affected by historical trauma, not just Native people, but all peoples.

As we strive to end violence against all people, we at WISDOM especially focus on those most vulnerable: women, children, and elders within Native communities. Our Native youth are our future. The Discovering Our Story video productions and lessons being provided at WISDOM's website over the next three years are being created to help them, their extended families, and others as they re-awaken their identity, remember their own story and create their own career pathway plan.

Today's Native people, currently experiencing a dynamic cultural renaissance, are demonstrating the potential and resilience to break through historical barriers so they can enjoy a culturally enriched and financially secure life. WISDOM welcomes other communities, survivors and providers interested in healing historical trauma to contact Rose High Bear, Executive Producer at [wisdomoftheelders.org](http://wisdomoftheelders.org).

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[1] The Historical Trauma Response Among Natives and Its Relationship with Substance Abuse: A Lakota Illustration, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD, *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 35 (1), 7-13, 2003.

[2] Crofoot, Thomas L., et al. "Mental Health, Health, and Substance Abuse Service Needs for the Native American Rehabilitation Association Northwest (NARA NW) in the Portland, Oregon Metropolitan Area." American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center 14.3 (2008).

[3] The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Ph.D. and Lemyra M. DeBruyn, Ph.D. Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health 8(2) p.75.

[4] Curry-Stevens, A., Cross-Hemmer, A., & Coalition of Communities of Color (2010). Communities of Color in Multnomah County: An Unsettling Profile. Portland, OR: Portland State University, 2010.

[5] ATRIAD: The Risk for Alcohol Abuse, Depression and Diabetes Multi-morbidity in the American Indian and Alaska Native Population, AI/ANMHR, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2007), p. 1-21.

[6] Crofoot, Thomas L., et al. "Mental Health, Health, and Substance Abuse Service Needs for the Native American Rehabilitation Association Northwest (NARA NW) in the Portland, Oregon Metropolitan Area." American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research: The Journal of the National Center 14.3 (2008).

[7] The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief, Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Ph.D. and Lemyra M. DeBruyn, Ph.D. Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health, 8(2) p. 61.

[8] Also supported by grants from National Endowment for the Arts, The Oregon Community Foundation, The Collins Foundation, McKenzie River Gathering Foundation, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, The Charlotte Martin Foundation, O. P. And W. E. Edwards Foundation, Running Strong for American Indian Youth, and Wildhorse Foundation. Partners include Native American Rehabilitation Association, Indigenous Ways of Knowing Program at Lewis and Clark College, National Indian Child Welfare Association, Cowlitz Tribal Health Clinic, Northwest Indian Storytellers Association, Westview High School ESL Program, and Roger Burt, Vocational Rehabilitation Consultant.

## Lesson 1: Historical Trauma

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### Goal:

Gain basic understanding of historical trauma

### Activity:

- Read the following material for Lesson 1
- Read definitions relative to historic trauma on the resources page
- Activity

Our focus is on diabetes but in order to address the holistic components associated with a balanced life, we need to address other potential affects. The mind holds our life experiences and is central to our emotional



and spiritual health. It is connected to our feelings and emotions of the heart and spirit. Certain studies have shown that treating mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder are significant in diabetes management, especially among Indigenous cultures.

Indigenous people have been living with unresolved grief and anger trapped by the historical events of our past due to distrust with non-Indian doctors and counselors and the lack of Native doctor's and counselors who understand the holistic and collective healing methods of our Native people. Many of us have learned to hold in our pain, it is forbidden or believed to be bad to talk about certain traumatic things that happen to us.

The lack of knowledge of our traditional healing practices sometimes keeps us from going to see a medicine man or medicine woman, or attend a ceremony for healing and guidance. We also have few traditional healers and they are always in demand, or we fear opening our hearts and minds to other traditional healers.

The more education we have about ourselves, our traditional healing methods and our prescribed diabetes management the more successful we can be in controlling it without medication or preventing further damage, and for some a chance to reverse it by maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

This introduction to historic trauma and intergenerational trauma are part of treating our diabetes so it is recommended that we also take advantage of all the material offered on this website; Healing Circles, Addictions, and Domestic Violence, to ensure we are addressing all possible affects that may be contributing to unhealthy choices.

We hope that this information will be a basic foundation to enrich and empower you towards healing your spirit, body, mind, and emotions.

## **Introduction**

### ***Historical trauma***

*Historical Trauma* is defined by Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD as "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma."

### **What is trauma?**

Webster's definition of trauma is a bodily or mental injury usually caused by an external agent. In other words when someone has hurt us, physically, emotionally or mentally, so badly that we have not truly healed from it and we experience feelings of unhappiness, depression, or loneliness. Our bodies also feel physical pain that we cannot explain.

The psychiatric definition of "trauma" is "an event outside normal human experience." Trauma generally leaves you feeling powerless, helpless, paralyzed. It tends to be sudden and overwhelming; it "owns" you. You cannot think clearly during and after a severe trauma; at the same time, you are forced to focus your consciousness in an attempt to deal.

## **What is genocide?**

Genocide is the deliberate and systematic destruction of a racial, political, or cultural group.

Our people suffered through war and genocidal acts of European and western colonizers seeking to claim new lands, gold, and other valuable goods. Government policies and different genocidal tactics were used to *try* to destroy our people.

## **Some genocide methods**

Bounties paid for Indian scalps caused our people to be hunted like animals and terrorized.

Ecocide is a method of destroying the food sources like buffalo by allowing commercial hunting for hides and meat. Some government officials supported hunting buffalo to extinction so that Indians would starve to death or move from their homelands.

Assimilation is absorbing into a culture so that Indian children would become similar to the white culture. The U S government removed children from their homes and sent them to boarding schools, where they were stripped of their identities, language, and cultural practices. They were forced to accept Christianity. Many of our elders were abused and died while attending boarding schools and those whom returned home were lost to their families and cultures. While still many died from abuse and emotional pain of loneliness and separation from their parents, family and tribal communities.

Ceremonial practices were outlawed in order to destroy our spiritual practices and beliefs that are at the heart of our cultures.

Removal Acts forced our people to walk hundreds of miles to reservation lands away from our homelands, separated from our traditional diets and natural resources.

As we look back at history we must learn from it and understand that we are moving forward towards healing and understanding, that confronting our past is a way to begin healing the spiritual wounds passed through the generations of the past 500 years.

## **Trapped in unhealthy cycles of behavior**

Native American have, for over 500 years, endured physical, emotional, social, and spiritual genocide from European and American colonialist policy. Contemporary Native American life has adapted such that, many are healthy and economically self-sufficient. *“Yet a significant proportion of Native people are struggling with health disparities that stem from intergenerational trauma.”* Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, PhD

We are currently plagued with chronic diseases that our non-Indian doctors have not been able to truly diagnose and treat us for, but our ancestors and elders have known all along that when our land, food sources, water, spiritual beliefs, medicinal plants and families have been separated from one another our people and all that is a part of our culture have become ill. We have been one with our landscapes since time immemorial and our traditional stories hold those histories within them, yet we have been doubted and disregarded.

We have many tribal leaders, who are doctors, with a voice and understanding about our needs and it is through their hard work that changes are being made, our health needs are being recognized, and technology is being used to increase our knowledge, validate our beliefs, and provide us opportunities to share our traditional healing, like this one.

As presented earlier that historic trauma is real and a root of what is happening with our people today because we are linked with what is called Intergenerational trauma and Dr. Cornelia Wieman, Six Nations of Canada has provided an explanation of how it works.

*Intergenerational trauma:*

How it works according to Dr. Cornelia Wieman, M.C. FRCPC, Six Nations of Canada

“I think you’re dealing with generations of people who have been damaged by colonialism,” Wieman says, “and the way that we have been treated by the dominant culture makes you feel dispirited. You feel devalued and so people will turn to things like addictions as a way of coping, of self-medicating, of not really wanting to be here because their situation is just so intolerable.” (thestar.com November 25, 2006 article 144908)

We have seen many of our people struggling with these types of coping methods in our homes, on the reservation, and in our urban cities.

This brief introductory lesson on historic and intergenerational trauma are a way to awaken our spirits and gain some insight about our feelings pain and does not begin to cover all the information available to us.

According to Dr. James W. Pennebaker, writing down your deepest feelings about an emotional upheaval in your life for 15 or 20 minutes a day for four consecutive days helps us to focus and organize an emotional experience. Some people have found that their immune systems improved, students have seen their grades improved, and some have had their entire lives changed. And so we will be writing for healing.

**Activity:** Journaling/Writing exercise:

You will need pencil/pen and paper or a notebook.

**Lesson:**

Writing is often used for healing and wellness. By taking our thoughts and emotions that are trapped in our minds they can control our emotional responses to things that frighten or make us uneasy, we will be able to transfer them onto paper making them have substance or ability to see what we are feeling.

We can keep a daily journal which helps with everyday situations.

We can write about one particular event that bothers us and throw the paper away.

This is personal and you can choose to share your stories or not.

Write about, “What historical trauma means to you”

You can reflect on your tribal history. Some questions:

- What kind of events changed where you live?
- Has it impacted your family?
- How may it have impacted your culture?
- Does your tribe or band still practice their same tribal traditions? How have they changed?
- Have you heard any elders talk about your tribe’s history and what did they say or feel?

## Lesson 2: Social Traps

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### Goal:

- Social Traps
- Understanding Culture Loss

### Activity:

- Read the following material

### Introduction

Historical trauma is at the root of how our people were displaced upon destitute lands and among depressed environment. We are currently experiencing that same depressive state of mind and it is contributing to an unbalanced state of health. Our mind, body, spirit, and emotional state are all affected by what is happening within and around us. We have been experiencing the ill effects of social traps and that is a term we don’t hear of on a daily basis but it has and still does affect us every day.

### What is a social trap?

A ***Social trap*** is a term used by psychologists to describe a situation in which a group of people act to obtain short-term individual gains, which in the long run leads to a loss for the group as a whole.

John Platt recognized that individuals operating for short-term positive gain (“[reinforcement](#)”) had a tendency to [over-exploit](#) a resource, which led to a long-term overall loss to society.

### Examples of social traps include

- [Overfishing](#); loss of food resources
- [Logging](#); destroys vegetation, allows for soil erosion, and disrupts animal habitats.
- [Agriculture](#); destroys lands containing traditional roots and plants used by our people, and over use of water resources depleted resources on reservation lands.

- Cattle; [overgrazing](#) of vegetation and contamination of water resources.
- Commercial hunting; Near-[extinction](#) of the [American bison](#).

**An example of how policies were used as means to benefit the non-Indian group is:**

The Indian Removal Act of 1830 which has lead to a great deal of loss to the American Indian population as a whole. The only difference is the non-Indian population has continually benefited from this act for a lifetime, while our tribes are still fighting to regain lands and rights wrongfully taken and denied to us.

**What is the Indian Removal Act of 1830?**

The Indian Removal Act is a United States government policy that was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson on May 26, 1830. According to Wikipedia, “The Removal Act was strongly supported in the [South](#), where states were eager to gain access to lands inhabited by the “[Five Civilized Tribes](#)“. This act was used on other tribes as well.

History has impacted us throughout Indian Country but it is not all bad as we are reaching and succeeding new heights in understanding what it takes for us to heal in a culturally appropriate way. Science is now recognizing that the “Traditional Ecological Knowledge” of our cultures has contained answers to questions about sustainability, “Living a sustainable lifestyle is to live a balanced life with our environments, in essence a traditional lifestyle, the way of our Indian people.” We as Native people have the answers we just have to be willing to return to some of those traditional ways of life, especially where nutrition is concerned.

**Why is it important to understand our history?**

Our history has played a part in the types of environments we live in today. We have literally and spiritually been disconnected from the environments of our traditional cultural practices. We have adapted unhealthy behaviors in order to cope with the living situations and environmental stressors found around us.

We cannot change the past and we cannot allow ourselves to be trapped by the historical events by feeling *victimized, cheated, or hopeless*. The end results of social traps have left us with changed environments but also we have *adapted* to the current lifestyles of convenience and technology.

Convenience of traveling; vehicles are used to drive short distances that can be walked. We are also able to order foods and have them brought to us, or drive up to a fast food window so we can eat while we drive.

Shopping for packaged and processed foods filled with chemicals, salts and fats are more convenient than taking the time to prepare a meal from fresh vegetables and broiling meats. We find satisfaction in drinking high fructose drinks rather than consuming water.

This high stress and quick fix lifestyle has been adapted by many of us and this has caused us to disconnect from communicating and connecting with family, like when our grandmothers used to be at the kitchen table preparing meals and everyone would help prepare the meal and catch up with what is happening in their lives, listening to traditional stories about coyote, sharing jokes, planning upcoming family events or other family activities that took us outdoors to the park, down to the river, up to the mountains, or back to places where we camped while gathering roots, plants and berries, taking the time to ponder good memories and reconnect with environments.

For some of us it seems like we are stuck in this unhealthy situation and don't feel as though we have the support or energy to change, some of this mind set is due to the unhealthy foods we have been eating, another part is because throughout the years we have heard the stories over and over again and again about the traumatic events of our history that we have unconsciously associated the tragic events as a part of our identities, and this has affected our attitudes about how we manage our life and the affects of diabetes.

Diabetes can have psychological effects on us, just as harmful as the foods we eat. We must understand that our whole body is affected by external stressors and diet. Some of the attitudes we have adapted have allowed diabetes to take control of us and for some of us we are heading towards a diagnosis of diabetes if we aren't making positive changes to our life and diet.

We must *take control* over diabetes by first of all changing our attitudes about our situation, because our brain and body work together; unhealthy thoughts and unhealthy food consumption will change our bodies metabolism and the outcome is not a good one.

**Attitudes like:**

- Ignoring the problems (denial), diabetes isn't that bad in our community.
- It will never happen to me, I'm not like others.
- If I get diabetes there are pills I can take, that's what science and doctors are for.
- Lost hope, there's nothing I can do to change it, my family is pre-disposed to diabetes.

Here is an example of an elder speaking on attitudes from the Wisdom of the Elders interview transcripts.

**Delphine Woods, Umatilla, 2005.**

**WOE**

**Q:** *What would you recommend to other people who are in your situation if they're having you know, problems inspiring themselves to do, you know, do it.*

**Delphine:**

*"You know, it's like, you have to think of your body, to me, it's a temple. It's something you have to maintain. You have to keep it, keep it going, to keep it in good shape. And you need to exercise. You need the diet control. You need the medicine to help keep the diabetes in control. And a good attitude too! And not, try not to get too depressed about it or to stress out about it, because then you're just kind of working against yourself."*

Social traps provide short term satisfactions but in the long run create damaging effects on our health. We have adapted a lifestyle that provides us with short time distractions, easy access to entertainment, like TV programs, games, and videos which creates a sedentary lifestyle.

Along with changing our attitudes we need more education and changing the environments which limit our physical activity, and support from our communities.

Delphine addresses this concern in her interview.

## WOE

*Q: What would you recommend that the tribe, at the tribal level with the tribe or health clinic, or whoever's responsible, that they do that they're not doing now, that you'd like to see more of?*

### **Delphine:**

*"Well, I think they're starting it, but we need more education out for the young people, to let them know that when you're obese, when you're inactive, when you're sitting in front of the TV with those games, you're a good candidate for becoming diabetic. And you think the junk food they eat, you know, all the hamburgers, hot dogs, French fries, chips and all of that stuff. They're good, but then you, it should be limited to maybe once a week or even less-once a month."*

When Delphine says the junk food is good, she is referring to how the *taste* of these foods bring us pleasure and satisfaction for a short period of time; over the months and years of this type of food consumption we begin to see our bodies get bigger, the external physical change, and internally we feel unappealing and our emotional response may be a depressive we feel stuck in this addictive behavior of wanting to those high sodium and fatty foods known as carbohydrates. This also becomes a *trap*.

## **Activity**

Go to website and read the traditional story of "Coyote and the Tree"

Discuss the story with a friend, family member, or group and ask each other what kinds of messages you received from the story. Stories have been told to teach us and each of will find a moral or behavior that we can associate with but at the same time we also can find answers if we just listen with an open mind and heart and enjoy the lesson at the expense of "Coyote the Trickster."

While discussing the story, take some notes about Coyote's behavior and see if anything he does applies to you and see how they fit with changing how we think and feel about getting trapped into over consumption of foods, time at computer, TV, games, and unhealthy "thinking."

Take one thing you would like to work on and start making a change to it.

For example:

How much time do I sit at the computer? Plan a limited amount of time and use the other times for walking or doing chores outside.

# Lesson 3: Personal Traps

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Goal:

- Recognizing personal traps
- Relationship to affects of wellness

Activity:

- Read the following material
- Do activity

A Personal journey is about looking from within, searching for emotional events that may contribute to our emotional reactions when we experience situations that cause us to engage in unhealthy behaviors, do things that make us appear to feel better for a short period of time. Most times try to avoid bad memories so we don't have to deal with the pains or hurts, so it's important that we stop letting those bad memories control our emotions.

## What are personal traps?

Personal traps can be emotional, mental, or physical, or a combination. Sometimes we live in a chronic state of stress so long that we don't realize we are in personal traps like high anxiety, stress, or depression and so we develop unhealthy habits in order to cope with these conditions.

## Why is important to recognize personal traps?

Like the social trap where a group of people exploit resources or gain short term satisfaction from a behavior that is detrimental to the group or another group, an individual trap is similar but it involves one person. Their behavior usually involves a habit that brings immediate satisfaction, referred as short-term reinforces, that lead to long term loss or damage to self by practicing or participating in unhealthy behaviors, the unhealthy outcomes also impacts immediate family members, friends, and even employment.

Examples of individual traps:

1. Habitual tobacco smoking leads to lung cancer
2. Daily alcohol use leading to cirrhosis of the liver
3. Addictive drug use can lead to loss of health and contracting disease
4. Eating foods with high sugar content can lead to obesity and diabetes



## Why do we seek out these short term reinforcers?

When we neglect ourselves by not taking a personal journey into our hearts to try and find those hurtful memories that are hidden and find healthy ways to resolve our feelings about the hurtful memories, we turn to things that make us feel good for short periods of time. Before we know it we have created an unhealthy habit and sometimes feel as though we cannot change or stop what we're doing. Yes, not everyone will want to change but it is possible, if you are this far in the lessons and using the other available lessons within this website, you are taking control of your health and wellness.

In our cultures today we have learned to use foods and unhealthy substances to give us immediate relief from pain whether it be emotional, mental or physical, there's drugs, alcohol and foods that create a physiological response that makes us feel good for a short period of time.

## How do I recognize these traps?

- There are many types of feelings that can be identified as reasons for making us feel trapped, here are a few examples of emotional traps.
- Resentment is holding onto anger and not allowing ourselves to move past mistreatments in the past. We allow ourselves to continue to be "victims" of the mistreatments that have scarred our spirits.
- Solution: Let go! Life is not fair and people do not always behave well or kindly. Use your trauma to make you wise, kind, gentle, and strong. Holding anger will not work.
- Guilt makes us feel as though we have hurt, failed, or sinned and need to be punished. Guilt can be an illusion or sometimes we do have behaviors that hurt people we love and have not taken responsibility for our actions. Guilt:
- Solution: If we have transgressed, we must make restitution, ask forgiveness, learn from our error and move on. If it is false guilt, set it down as an unnecessary and irrational burden.
- Shame has us believing we are worth-less, we have flaws that keep us from connecting with others. It is not that we have done something wrong (guilt), but that we are bad or wrong. If we have done harm to others and not asked to be forgiven or taken responsibility for some wrong doing than we do feel shame.

- Solution: Clear, rational thinking. Everyone has behaved badly, but no one was created badly! Any flaws only serve to make you stronger, more heroic or more compassionate toward others.
- Loneliness is when we allow ourselves to believe that no one loves us, cares about us, and we must desperately cling to anyone who finds us attractive or acceptable. This creates dependency, not intimacy.
- Solution: Accurate Self-Assessment. Not everyone will love you, but many people will if they meet you, get to know you, and spend time working/playing along side you.

## Self Doubt

- Self-Doubt is the repeated, endless questioning of your own abilities, opinions or actions. It is an inability to take a stand, to act boldly, or to follow-through.
- Solution: Action! Think clearly, then, take action and follow-through. Start small, but do it! You are the world's expert on your life! Use your wisdom to live well
- Remember these are a few examples of which we can start to change how we feel about ourselves. When we begin take control of our feelings and find ways to change we can heal from inside and this helps us towards a more balanced life.

## To find out more about personal traps

The Positivity blog – <http://www.positivityblog.com/index.php/2009/03/10/three-sneaky-traps-of-personal-development/>

A Content Life – <http://www.acontentlife.com/2009/06/8-thinking-traps/>

## Activity

### Personal Traps

Match the solutions on the right side to the feelings on the left.

Place the correct letter in the blank space below the feelings.

## **Feelings**

## **Solutions**

Self doubt

A: Let go! Life is not fair and people do not always behave well or kindly. Use your trauma to make you wise, kind, gentle, and strong. Holding anger will not work.

Loneliness

B: Clear, rational thinking. Everyone has behaved badly, but no one was created badly! Any flaws only serve to make you stronger, more heroic or more compassionate toward

Resentment

C: Accurate Self-Assessment. Not everyone will love you, but many people will if they meet you, get to know you, and spend time working/playing alongside you.

Shame

D: If we have transgressed, we must make restitution, ask forgiveness, learn from our error and move on. If it is false guilt, set it down as an unnecessary and irrational burden.

Guilt

E: Let go! Life is not fair and people do not always behave well or kindly. Use your trauma to make you wise, kind, gentle, and strong. Holding anger will not work.

Answers: e, c, a, b, d

## Lesson 4: Emotional Traps

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### Goal

- Understanding emotional traps

### Activity

- Self evaluation

### Introduction

Ever wonder how we develop our thoughts, ideas, and views about the world around us? Or question why we feel the way we do about certain things? As we become more aware of our surroundings and other peoples behaviors we see other views and wonder why?

American Indian people have rich cultures that are distinct and connected to where they come from as a people. Our place of origin is recorded in oral histories, just as our identities are tied to our origins, our cosmological beliefs, and traditional lifestyles. We normally don't question our culture because it is our way of life and we are a spiritual people, but there are things that make us question the world in general.

Written histories have contributed distorted views about our people, using negative words like savages, wild animals, dirty heathens, unintelligible, and in war our people massacred while the military defeated.

Some of our reservations are burdened by drugs, alcohol, violence and high rates of suicide. We live in a stressful society and many of us can cope with this, while some of our people use drugs and alcohol.

Sometimes we can only see the negative things in our lives and this begins to shape how we feel all the time, unless we reflect upon our own thinking we will be unable to change and see more positive things in life.

The negative thinking is bad for our emotional and mental state because it leads to unhealthy reactive behaviors in our people. So how do I know that I have negative thoughts and where might they have started? For some of us it's from our worldviews.

## What is a worldview?

*It is our mental model of reality built on our ideas and attitudes about the world, ourselves, life, and our system of beliefs. Some of these come from hearing and seeing how others treat us or how we treat others and these ideas and attitudes can be passed on to our children. This type of thinking is relative to intergenerational trauma and becomes a cycle our children and grandchildren can get caught up in, so it is important that we understand emotional traps and try to change how we see ourselves and the world we live in.*

According Dr. David Burns there are ten types of distorted thinking that lead to problems with negative emotions or emotional traps. He suggest that Cognitive Therapy can help deal with anxiety and emotional

stress caused by distorted thinking and negative emotions, that is changing how we see situations about us and changing how we think about those situations.

Here is an example of an elder speaking on dealing with psychological stress from the Wisdom of the Elders interview transcripts.

## **Karen Zachary, Nez Perce elder, 2005**

**WISDOM:** *So, the psychological stress of just having the disease and dealing with it is itself a problem you need to overcome. So tell me about the talking circle, how does it work?*

**Karen:** *We were talking about having a talking circle to bring out our problems or maybe, you know, share some good information. It's helped me because I see somebody that's maybe in worse shape or has more problems than I do, and then how to deal with it and help each other...for a while it seemed like a couple of us were under stress for something that might have happened yesterday, and it really got to us. When we had our talking circle we brought it (problems) out and left it there.*

**WISDOM:** *During the interview Karen was asked if our culture influence how we react or deal with our feelings.*

**Karen:** *I think it is a cultural thing, because that's the way I was brought up. We were to be seen but not heard. I think that's why a lot of us really hate to get up and speak or because maybe we'll offend somebody. Or, you know, we better not just say nothing, and we'd be better off. It's really too bad because you see children or even myself walking with our head down instead of walking like were really strong. We need to be given more strength and being able to talk out what our feelings are and what our problems are.*

There are times when we get frustrated with our personal problems and when we have to deal with diabetes it creates even more emotional feelings and negative thinking, so we might even deny our feelings which cause us to be stuck in emotional traps. Here are words from the interview with **Valerie Albert, Nez Perce**

**WISDOM:** Do you have, you're, in the education of the people that actually have diabetes, I assume there's some frustrations involved in that and trying to get people to take care of themselves? How do you approach that? You have the dinner, but do people come to the dinner?

**Valerie:** It does have its times when it's frustrating. It's hard to see somebody that you give the knowledge to but they're not ready to accept that they even have a problem. Some people don't accept that they have diabetes yet. We talk about, "Well I'm borderline". I don't believe there's anything such as borderline diabetic. You are or you aren't.

**WISDOM:** You don't accept any denial talk. So its denials difficult to overcome and do you have any techniques other than just going and bugging them about it?

**Valerie:** We have talking circles. Where they talk about I think dealing with the problems of being diabetic. I've heard them talk a little bit when we have our diabetes clinics. And I hear some of them talk about some of the frustrations they go through dealing with diabetes. We do realize it and we do have a

Mental Health staff that is there for them. Sometimes it's hard getting them to see Mental Health but at least its there.

Awareness of what is available and that others are experiencing similar frustrations, assures us that we are not different or that our negative thinking defines who we are. What we need to understand is that we can change our thinking by recognizing those negative thoughts.

### **Activity**

*Need paper and pencil*

Self evaluation:

- Do the test below to see if you distort the way you think about things.
- Can you think of a situation; write it down detailing how it made you feel. Then think of some positive ways you could learn from the situation
- Discuss with someone you trust about ways to change these ways of thinking. Or with a group.

*If you feel you want more support, speak with your care provider.*

- **All-or-Nothing Thinking**

You see things as either black or white. If you are not perfect you see yourself as a total failure. You make one mistake at work and you are convinced that you are going to be fired. You get a B on a test and it is the end of the world. Your partner moans at you for not putting gas in the car and you decide that you are no longer loved. *If you recognize yourself here then maybe you think of yourself as a perfectionist. This can make you terribly anxious and cause you to spend a lot of time being ashamed of yourself because, of course, no one is perfect.*

- **Labeling**

Labeling is an extension of the all-or-nothing emotional trap. You make a mistake but instead of thinking, "I made a mistake," you label yourself: "I'm an idiot." Your girlfriend breaks up with you and instead of thinking, "She doesn't love me anymore," you decide "*I am unlovable.*" *You find an exam really difficult and think, "I am so stupid," instead of "This exam is tough."*

- **Overgeneralization**

The signs of this kind of distorted thinking that lead to an emotional trap are the use of the words *always* or *never*. You drop something and say to yourself, "*I am always so clumsy.*" *You make a mistake and think, "I will never get this right."*

- **Mental Filtering**

In complicated situations that involve both negative and positive elements, you always dwell on the negative. Your husband clearly enjoyed the birthday dinner that you gave for him but comments that the cake was a bit dry. You ignore all the positive comments and whip yourself for being a lousy baker. You get

a minor criticism at work and filter out all the good feedback and convince yourself that your boss hates you and that you are going to be fired when all that is needed is a minor correction.

- **Discounting the Positive**

Do you ever catch yourself thinking, “That doesn’t count,” or “Anyone could have done that,” or “That really wasn’t so good”? You do well on a test and think, “That doesn’t really count.” Your colleagues praise your presentation and you say, “It really wasn’t that good.” You win an award and think, “Anyone could have done that.”

- **Jumping To Conclusions**

You assume the worst based on no real evidence. Dr. Burns describes two sub-categories in this emotional trap – mind reading and fortune-telling. In mind reading you decide that another person is reacting negatively to you. Two of your co-workers are chatting at the coffee machine and as you approach, they fall silent. Chances are that they have finished their conversation, but you assume that they were talking about you behind your back. In fortune telling you predict the worst possible outcome. A test is difficult so you decide you have failed.

- **Magnification**

The emotional trap here is that you exaggerate the importance of problems, short comings and minor disturbances. Your toilet gets blocked and you imagine that you will have to get the entire plumbing system replaced. You forget to close a window when you leave home and it rains; you are sure that you are going to return to a flooded house.

- **Emotional Reasoning**

Distorted thinking happens when you mistake your emotions for reality. Aren’t we all guilty of that? “I feel nervous about flying so it must be dangerous.” “I feel guilty about forgetting my brother’s birthday therefore I am a bad person.” “I feel alone, I must not be good company.”

- **Should and Shouldn’t Statements**

This kind of thinking involves blaming yourself. You play well in a football match but miss one goal and berate yourself: “I should have got that goal. I shouldn’t have missed.” You eat a chocolate and think “I shouldn’t have eaten that. I should lose ten pounds.” Other forms of this emotional trap include *must*, *ought to*, *have to*, *etc.*

- **Personalizing the Blame**

Here you hold yourself personally responsible for things beyond your control. Your child gets into trouble at school and you think “I am a bad mother.” You are late for an appointment because of a traffic jam and you personalize it “I must be irresponsible.” But people do understand, it happens to everyone and sometimes circumstances are beyond your control.

The idea is to be able recognize when we might think or feel these thoughts or emotions and learn to deal with them in a positive way.

## Lesson 5: Motivation and Energy

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### Goal

- Understanding why are Fat burning, motivation and energy important

### Activity

- Do activity
- Answer questions

Historically our people walked to certain territories where they would set up camp sites for hunting, fishing, and gathering of their foods before they would return to their wintering villages, but not all tribes moved about because some had learned to farm their lands for their staple foods. This lifestyle kept our ancestors in very good physical and nutritional health, but today our people have adapted to sedentary lifestyles. The nutritional foods once harvested are limited and so are the people who go out and practice the traditional hunting and fishing methods or traditional root, plant and berry harvests.

The traditional warrior lifestyle of practicing their life skills has disappeared with the onset of new technology and the industrialized food evolution has changed the diets of all people. Warriors of today are our athletes who prepare to represent our people in physical competitions and others have joined the health field to prepare our people for the fight against chronic diseases.

Some of the technology today has placed us in a mind set of driving rather than walking. Sitting on the beach rather than swimming in clean mountainous lakes. Ordering our foods rather than gathering the family to prepare a nutritious meal to share our lives. Our children don't gather for neighborhood games of softball, volleyball, or bike riding. We would rather spend \$50 to \$100 dollars to go out to a movie and eat high calorie snacks rather than take a day trip for huckleberry picking or pay to pick our own fruits.

Game night is pizza and the X box/Wii or rented movie and pizza. Our mindset has changed so drastically that our family time is only during special occasions that call for a festive BBQ, Super Bowl Parties, Anniversaries or Birthday parties with a buffet of carbohydrates, sugared drinks, and high sodium appetizers. This isn't a bad thing because we get to see our families and friends but it's all the types of foods we are choosing and the lack of healthy activities to help us metabolize those enjoyable festive foods.

We hear the same old story about exercising and good diets over and over but still we are experiencing high rates of our people being diagnosed with diabetes. So physical activity is probably information you have already heard and if motivation for taking walks or doing some types of activities hasn't motivated you yet, so let's just take a look at a few things about fat and energy.



## What happens when we try to lose weight?

Over the years if we don't exercise, we get out of shape and our bodies retain fat. It seems like we try to lose weight but the fat seems to remain and we don't see any changes. Like many of us who don't exercise our minds on a daily basis, it eventually takes longer to figure things out, it's like we forgot how to remember! Our bodies are the same way they *forget* how to burn fat over the years and that is why it takes more time to see visible changes.

## How is this possible?

The enzymes in muscle that *burn glucose* are emergency enzymes, designed to be retained even if we don't use them, we don't lose our stable sugar-burning enzymes. But, we lose the fat-burning enzymes. Muscles lose their ability to burn *fat*, the *primary fuel*.

For many of us we lose our motivation, we find excuses and use them as reasons for why we can't exercise like; we have to go to a gym or use fancy exercise equipment, we forget how good it feels after a fun physical activity, and our bodies need energy to want to move.

## So how do we get the energy to feel motivated?

According to Paige Wahner, movement generates energy. If we sit around, the more tired we feel. Our body generates energy from a variety of sources. Energy actually comes from [ATP](#) (adenosine triphosphate) which relies on [glucose](#) (i.e. carbohydrates) as its source of energy.

ATP is the fuel for our bodies. When we run out of ATP, our body shifts over to the [aerobic system](#). The aerobic system relies on fatty acids, glucose and glycogen as its energy source. Fat produces 9 calories of energy per gram, while glucose only yields 4 calories per gram, so you can see why you'd get more energy and burn more fat with aerobic training.

The more you exercise, the better your body is at producing more ATP and, therefore, more energy. Being aerobically fit means your body stores more glycogen, which leads to improved endurance. The American Council on Exercise says: "The greater the ability to make ATP aerobically at higher exercise intensities, the more "fit" a client becomes and the greater the ability to burn fat." (AC Personal Trainer Manual, p 14).

Until we are diagnosed with diabetes many people will ignore the voices telling them to get active. Many of the elders aren't able to afford a gym membership or do real strenuous weight lifting but they did find a way to get moving.

From the transcripts of elder Marvella James, Umatilla, 2005

**WISDOM:** And then, the other big part of your program was, besides the medications, the exercise right? You had been exercising before you found out you had diabetes?

**Marvella:** Not really. Well it just, I was real active, real busy. We'd always go up in the mountains and cut wood, or we'd go in the mountains walking. I walked a lot. But I did invest into Richard Simmons'

tapes. So I used to like to work out with him. A lot. Well, like dancing. I like to dance and so I loved his tapes. That was about the first amount of exercise that I got. That I did.

**WISDOM:** So you don't have to like talk yourself into coming down to workout?

**Marvella:** Oh no! We come every day. We only come three days a week. But she and I would come, Delphine and I would come every day if we could. Yeah. Because shucks, we only get to spend one hour, you know, with our exercising. It's really not enough for me. But then that's good. You know, we really feel good when we leave. The blood pressure's down. And our sugar's down. Oh yeah, it comes down too.

**WISDOM:** Now, you said you do some exercises in the pool?

**Marvella:** Yes, I jog in the pool because I can't run on the ground, you know, on top, on the earth. She has a regimen of, of exercise that she does, aquatics. I like to jog up and down the pool. It's tiring.

Change and starting an exercise program isn't easy but once you get started it is beneficial in many ways.

*Activity*

## Get paper and pencil

Make a list of the benefits of exercise and a list of health related problems associated without exercising. This may take a little research but for the most part this also tests your knowledge about what is happening to your body and the health risks you may be at.

After completing your list ask yourself these questions:

- What types of activities do you enjoy doing?
- Are the activities you enjoy activities that have you moving?
- Do you have a buddy who might enjoy spending healthy time together?
- Have you been to a doctor lately?
- What may be valid reasons for not being able to do a fun activity that gets you moving?
- Do you have children or grandchildren?

If so are you willing to let them experience the pain of diabetes, high blood pressure, vision loss, nerve damage, or possible limb loss if they are ever diagnosed with diabetes and aren't motivated to do exercises?

We are a people who protect our environments and culture for the future of our children and grandchildren, just as our ancestors and elders have done for us, so as present leaders in health we can make a difference by being an example to our families.

Share your knowledge and take some time to go out and enjoy your family start a new tradition in your family.