

CULTURALLY INFORMED TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY TOOLKIT



From Collective Suffering to Thriving: Radical Healing for AMENA Peoples

“All human beings are members of one frame, Since all, at first, from the same essence came. When time afflicts a limb with pain, The other limbs at rest cannot remain. If thou feel not for other’s misery, A human being is no name for thee.” SA’DĪ (TRANSLATION BY EDWARD EASTWICK)

Humanity is connected through both pain and healing. As Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African (AMENA) peoples, we can use the Psychology of Radical Healing Collective’s framework for *radical healing* from trauma and oppression through social justice. This framework has five anchors: **Collectivism** promotes engaging the support of our community; **Critical consciousness** involves reflecting on root causes of harmful social situations, fostering belief in our capacity to affect change, and taking actions against oppression; **Radical hope** is a collective and action-oriented hope for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to work toward liberation; **Strength and resistance** involves cultivating joy and celebrating the strengths of our culture, self, and community; and **Cultural authenticity and self-knowledge** involves learning and honoring our personal and cultural histories and wisdom.

AMENA families and communities often feature strong interconnectedness that supports healing through **collectivism**. Whether through intergenerational storytelling, engagement in AMENA community organizations, or through other means, we may find healing in the support of our community. For times of grief, in particular, AMENA communities have communal traditions that promote belonging and healing, such as sharing *Halvā* pastries and telling stories to promote collective coping with the bereaved; Druze engaging in a communal practice of choral music; or Baha’is engaging in collective chanting of the Prayer for the Dead.

In addition to collectivism, we may engage in **critical consciousness** and take actions at various levels to fight for social justice. Locally, Arab activists in Michigan have taken a stand against the banning of schoolbooks with LGBTQ+ characters. Nationally, AMENA individuals and community organizations are pushing the U.S. government to add “MENA” as a federal racial-ethnic category. And internationally, many are involved in supporting the “Woman, Life, Freedom” liberation movement in Iran.

The Sufi saying, “This, too, shall pass”, views difficult and/or unjust circumstances as impermanent, motivating **radical hope** for meaningful change. Many AMENA collectives exercise radical hope. The Baha’i Institute for Higher Education, for example, is an underground university for Iranian Baha’is who are barred from receiving higher education. Radical hope invites individuals to form coalitions to build a just future.

AMENA peoples have a history of using joy to show **strength and resistance** in the face of oppression. Syrians in refugee camps have used Dabke to instill a sense of healing and hope; Amazigh youth are fighting to preserve their identity, for example by proudly reclaiming, displaying, and educating others on historical dance, tattoos, and

clothing on social media. These enactments of joy can be healing and serve as effective forms of resistance.

Examples of **cultural authenticity & self-knowledge** abound in AMENA communities, such as various *Tatreez* embroidery circles that have emerged to preserve Palestinian and Syrian history and culture. In addition, grassroots and community organizations provide physical and virtual spaces for individuals to learn about AMENA histories and cultures. These resources provide invaluable opportunities for engaging in cultural self-discovery.

While connected through suffering, we have a collective pathway of healing through social justice. By tapping into our communities' strengths and cultural roots, exercising radical hope, fostering joy, and fighting for social justice, we promote healing for ourselves and each other. For more information on interpersonal trauma, violence, and abuse, see [here](#). To learn about collective trauma, see [this](#). To learn more about how to heal and thrive, go to [here](#).