

CULTURALLY INFORMED TRAUMA AND GRIEF RECOVERY TOOLKIT



Taking My Power Back and Changing The World

“What happened to me made me feel helpless. But I’m taking my power back to make change in my own life, my community, and the world!”

Those of us who have survived horrific experiences can, and often do, become agents of change. Through pain, we have a window into both the evils of what life can be and the joy, peace, and freedom we can share with each other. In fact, hallmarks of liberation frameworks from psychology and other disciplines are the resistance strategies that we take: instead of drowning under our sorrow, we can take steps to heal, and then, when we feel ready, we can use our experiences –the good and the bad—to change the world. Transforming our pain into activism and advocacy on large and small scales, both formally and informally. In doing so, we can become the change we want to see in the world: **by career, by volunteer, and by our life.**

By Career

There are many formal avenues for creating positive change in the world. Some can be directly related to our experiences. For instance, a person who has survived years of sexual abuse by their parent can become a rape crisis counselor, trauma psychologist, or social worker that helps others along their healing journeys. Another example is a parent whose child was murdered can begin a non-profit organization that provides education, hope, healing, and policy change that addresses gun violence while humanizing those who have caused harm to the community.

Other avenues for change can be more indirect. These could include becoming an educator in K-12 or higher education that engenders critical thinking and intellectual curiosity in their students. In teaching about history, critical studies, social work, and psychology, these students gain a clearer understanding of the world—including reverence for the ancestors who have already walked their paths. Through fostering critical consciousness and self-esteem, these students then continue the legacy of changemaking with their own communities, loved ones, and children. Another option is to become a researcher who studies something positive, like happiness: *What makes people joyful? How important is laughter in our lives?* They then share this research with their communities and the general public—enabling others not give up on themselves and their happiness, even when it seems that all the odds are stacked against them.

By Volunteer

Sometimes we don’t want or can’t have a full career of changemaking. So instead, we can volunteer ourselves and our time to make the world a better place. This can include volunteering at the local animal shelter to walk dogs who are currently without a stable home after being abused by their former humans. Relating to animals who have experienced some of the things we have—like being beaten—can be healing and comforting for us and for them. Another example is to advocate for victims’ rights through submitting a comment to upcoming legislation, like the U.S. Department of Education’s Title IX rulemaking changes that affect diverse survivors of sexual assault on college campuses. We could also chart our own path of hardship and healing through publishing our poetry or writing a memoir.

By Our Life

Whether or not we promote change through volunteering or in our careers, we can always promote change in our personal lives. For instance, when we see jokes on social media about domestic violence, we can bring up a conversation with our friends about why it isn't funny. Or we can amplify the good work of members of our community. Or we can support local artists who reflect our existence from our own lenses. No matter what, we can change the world, one tiny act at a time: sharing our healing and hope with everyone around us. 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](#).