

Everyone can learn

Changing the way violence gets in the way of learning

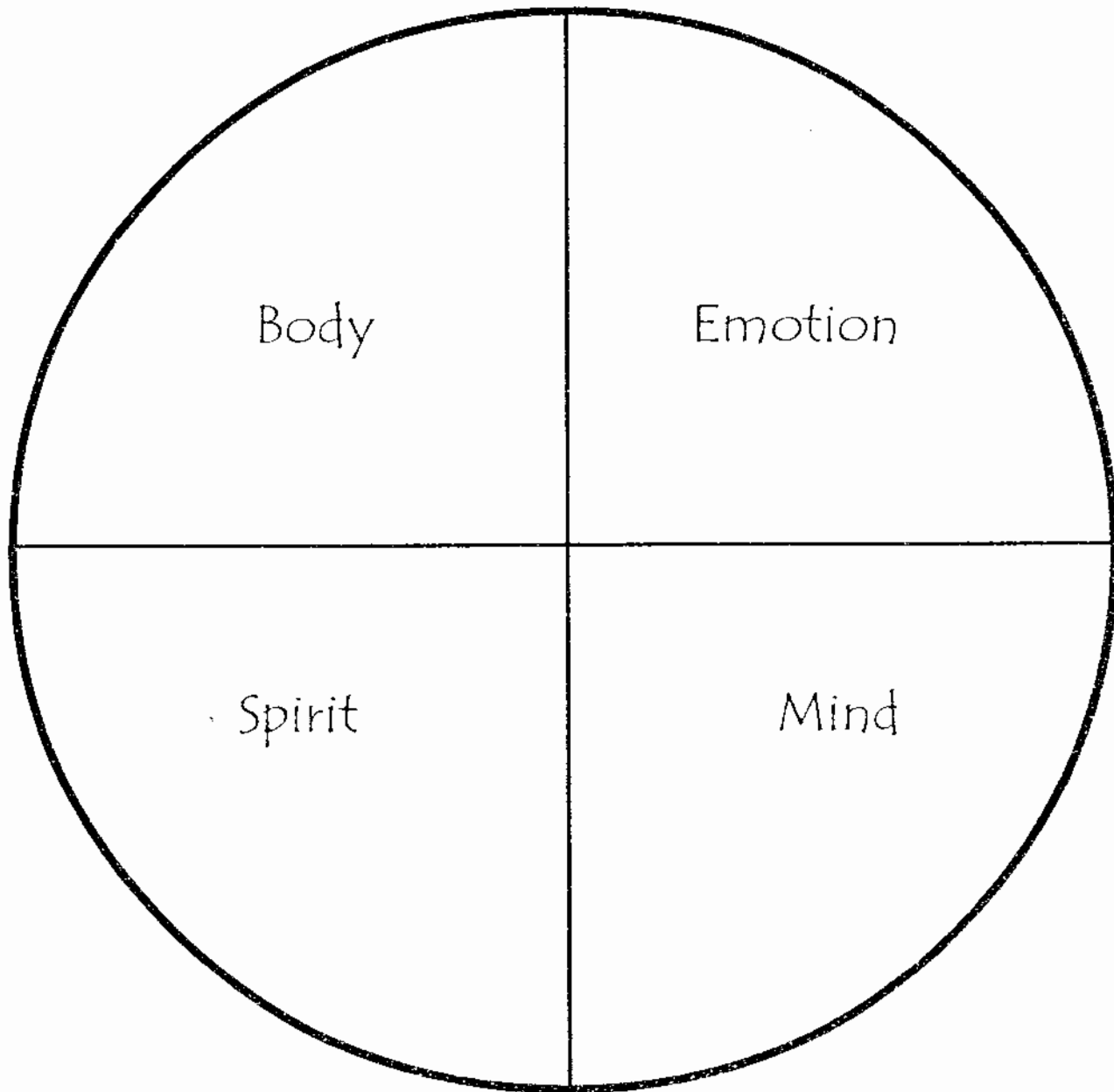
Workshop with Jenny Horsman

WE LEARN

Conference

March 12th 2004

The Medicine Wheel



Key Messages about Violence

- Many people experience violence
- Violence affects many different people (this includes students, tutors and staff)
- Violence is never ok
- Everyone has the right to be safe and free of violence
- Is someone hurting you now? You can get help.
- Did someone hurt you when you were younger? You can get help to work through the ways it still bothers you.
- If you are hurting someone it is not their fault. You must take responsibility, get help, and stop. There are places to learn how to stop being violent.
- People who have been hurt are strong survivors and should not be judged.
- If you have been through violence it may have made it hard to learn. It may still get in the way of your learning.
- This program supports all students to learn. This includes all people who have been hurt or who are being hurt now.

(Adapted from Drawing the Line: Dealing with Affective Issues in Literacy. Saskatchewan Adult Literacy Network, 2001)

Violence and Learning

Violence that happened in the past or is happening now can affect our learning. Violence affects our bodies and other parts of ourselves. Violence and trauma change how we learn new things.

We learn from violence

- **We feel the effects of violence in ways that others may not see. Or they may not understand and may judge us so we try to hide them.**

“All or nothing”

Feeling something or some person is totally good one moment and totally bad the next. This feeling could be about learning new things, or about trusting ourselves and others.

“I'm not all here”

Feeling stress about learning, or the place and people where we learn, makes it a lot harder to focus on learning. All this stress can take our minds away or cause us to leave.

“Living with crises”

A crisis can really interrupt our learning. If we experience crises often it can start to feel normal to live in crisis.

“To trust or not to trust”

Feeling like it's hard to trust makes sense when we've been hurt. To learn with a tutor or other students we have to decide how much to trust them and how much to tell them. This takes extra time and energy.

“Keeping it in, letting it out”

We share our knowledge when we write and talk about ourselves with other learners. We may feel ashamed of our knowledge of violence, but we may need to talk about it. It's hard to decide what to tell and what to hide.

It may be hard to move forward

- **We need to believe in our future to move forward. Violence may make that hard.**

“Control”

To believe in our future we need to be in control of it. But being in control of our learning may feel uncomfortable and new. We may need to test our control in what, how and where we learn.

“Connecting”

Learning with others involves trusting them and talking with them. Connecting with others like this is hard if we feel different because of the violence we have gone through.

“Meaning”

Experiencing violence and trauma makes us struggle to find meaning in our lives. Words and ideas need meaning to live in us.

“Support”

We may need extra support to find control, connection and meaning in our learning and to see ourselves as a complete and valuable person. This is our right.

We may feel broken

- **Trauma breaks us up, but our whole selves can help us learn!**

Spirit

Violence convinces us that we are worthless, and that our own knowledge is not worth believing and growing. We can find ways to let our strong spirit help us learn.

Emotions

Violence makes us angry, sad, afraid and confused. We can find ways to use our emotions to help us learn.

Body

Injury and illness is caused by violence. We can find ways to use our bodies to help us learn.

Mind

We are not stupid. We are experts on ourselves as learners. We learned to survive and we can learn new things and change.

THE ANGER RULES

The Anger Rules

It's OK to feel angry *BUT*

- Don't hurt others
- Don't hurt yourself
- Don't hurt property

—*DO* talk about it.

Anger is OK.

Parents too feel angry. Every time we express our own anger positively we give our children a lesson in anger management. As parents, we can help our children by learning to understand our own feelings better.

You might ask yourself some of the following questions:

- How do I react when I get angry?
- How did my parents react when they got angry?
- What happened at my school when someone was angry?
- What did my teachers do when they got angry?
- What did I learn about anger as a child?
- How did I feel as a child around angry adults?
- What do I want my children to know about anger?
- How might they learn this?

Anger is a feeling and feelings just *are*.

Anger is OK.

Abuse and violence are *not* OK.

Somehow, through firm, fair limit-setting, good communication and love, we can let our children know this important message. Every time we do this we contribute to the establishment of a more peaceful society and world.

Date _____

Name _____

SAFE WAYS OF GETTING ANGRY

Fill in with your own ideas



Sister Hold On

Hold on sister
Sister hold on

I know times are tough tough tough
you work yuself to the bones to loose this rut
but Babylon system conspire to down you
remember your strength sister
remember your joys
remember you're whole sister
and you're not alone

Hold on sister
Sister hold on

I know times are rough rough rough
seems like things jus' a get worst
some moments feel like a nuclear holocaust

Hold on sister
Sister hold on

I know you got struggles sister
right up to your eyes
just wishing the pressures could ease
signal a little relief in your life
but everytime you turn around
it's another barrier to break down
just hold on sister
sister hold on

Remember your strength sister
remember those passed
you've come this far sister
hold on

Workshop Plan (90 minutes)

At start

Music playing, pipe cleaners, paper and pens available, flowers

Working Together Safely (10 minutes)

Agenda

Setting ground rules together

Mention pipe cleaners, paper and coloured pens just to play with

“Spacing” – invite to get up and take a breather if it helps

Stories – acknowledge but avoid detail of the story – because hard to hear

Name the importance of naming...

Dreaming about learning.... (10 minutes)

Talk to your neighbour tell them one thing you dream of learning

Round – name and share dream if choose.

How violence affects us... (15 minutes) [Medicine wheel & Key messages handouts]

Brainstorming the medicine wheel together

What is violence and how does it affect each part of self?

How violence affects learning..... (15 minutes) [Violence and learning handout]

Hand out – talk a little about what’s in...

Look at it/think about own experience

Questions....

BREAK Breathe.....

What can make a difference? – a few hints (15 minutes) [points from Too Scared to Learn]

Help to stay “present”..... – talk about what helps – mention pipe cleaners, modelling clay and paper and markers as way to “fiddle” and keep mind present and ask what helps you?.....

Control - chance to stop and start course when want and to take a break, retreat chair!

Body, mind, emotion and spirit bring whole self, (which can be done through using arts and play); focus on feelings, help each other feel good [mention anger handout], and help each other hold onto hope....

And some ideas from the group....

One thing you could do differently/ or could ask your teacher to do differently to support learning?

(10 minutes)

Think - talk to person beside if it helps.....
Call out - or round

Closing (10 minutes)

Take a stone to keep in your pocket and remind you that you can learn - the conditions help you learn or they get in the way (it's not you) , it is OK to ask for the right conditions to learn for you.....

End reading the poem. [Sister hold on handout]