

Parkdale Project Read Tutor Training **Bringing the Whole Person to Learning/ The Impact of Violence on Learning**

Total time of workshop: 3 hours

Handouts: Brief notes about Violence and Learning

Key Messages about Violence

Whole self: "How to nurture and heal the parts of our selves in order to better support learning"

1. Acknowledge that violence is a difficult issue – Violence has affected and continues to affect all of us. Encourage self-care.

Check in - Taking care of ourselves (15 minutes)

Supplies needed: Blank cards or pieces of construction paper cut into squares, markers, crayons, stickers and other decorative items

1. Take a card and write down 2 things you would like to do no holds barred
2. Turn over and write down 2 things you like to do that don't cost a cent
3. Address to yourselves as a reminder about self-care and of our dreams.
4. Go around and share one thing on your card with the group.

2. Who are our learners? Brainstorm as a group on flipchart (15 minutes)

- Why are they learning to read as adults?
- What happened to them as children – at home, in school, in society?

Ideas to come from brainstorm:

-interpersonal violence (physical, verbal, emotional, sexual)

-institutional violence (schools, police, exclusion, bullying, labelling, negating culture, etc.)

-systemic violence (racism, sexism, poverty, dangerous working conditions, threat of rape, etc.)

-different levels of violence intersect and reinforce each other

-responses to violence are different for everyone (reject school, take refuge in school)

-violence as the norm – not an aberration (assume everyone who walks through doors is impacted by violence)

-violence in the context of cultural communities. Remind tutors to be aware of their social location and their ideas about learning.

4. But I'm not a therapist... (25 minutes)

Now that we have named violence and its effect on learning, what can we as practitioners/tutors do? Mention that 'But I'm not a therapist' is a quote from Jenny's research, that literacy workers across the country said they were hearing the stories of violence but they weren't therapists, often felt overwhelmed.

Traditionally, literacy and therapy are seen as separate...however we are often faced with taking on the "counselling role." This divide is arbitrary. The reality is that education involves counselling and learning is about healing. Creating bridges between the two disciplines is the key. Making therapy and counselling more visible within literacy programs is important. Also providing adequate supports, referrals to agencies that can provide counselling and advocacy alongside learning, when we can't offer it, is important.

We want to move away from thinking that a learner must go away, get therapy, get better and come back to literacy when she is 'ready' (our programs would be empty). We don't want to do in-depth therapy, but we want to support. How do we do that?

- not labeling
- not separating out those who have experienced violence (support group for trauma survivors)
- figuring out our own boundaries, doing our own work around these issues (so we can be present and available)
- acknowledge that violence interrupts lives and educational goals
- naming violence can help students move from shame and self blame
- don't skirt around the issue, change the subject, freeze; name it and be honest about it A disclosure is an important moment, may not come up again. Silence conveys a message (colluding with the perpetrator).
Indications of violence may not be direct disclosures
- Female learner printing out information to show that she has been at the literacy program
- being asked to speak to a learner's partner on the phone
- Not wanting messages at home

How can we prepare ourselves for this, without actually becoming a counsellor?

- Know the available resources so you can refer (half listening is worse than no listening). See list of listening defenses. P. 259 Too Scared To Learn

- Provide names of counsellors in your community as a resource for learners and tutors (vicarious trauma – the cost of bearing witness)
- Talk about making connections in the community with other social workers and counsellors for referral, attending community events together.
- Self-care is important. Implement ways of healing the spirit, like music and yoga into your program. Use staff and volunteers as a resource and helping hand. Provide tutor support groups/evenings and other supportive, tutor development opportunities.
- Refer to www.learningandviolence.net

3. Bringing the whole self to learning (35 minutes)

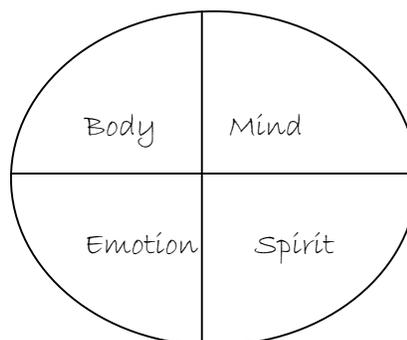
Prepare chart with four quadrants (below). Describe the source of the Medicine Wheel from Aboriginal/First Nations culture.

In Jenny’s research and in our own experience, we’ve seen how trauma affects the different aspects of the self.

- body – physical or doing, manifests as discomfort or pain
- mind – mental or knowing it, which affects memory and concentration
- emotions – relational or feeling it, which can be fear, sadness, etc.
- spirit – intuitive or seeing it, like feeling hopeless

Sometimes we get stuck in one aspect of the self, don’t feel it, lost touch with it, get obsessed with it.

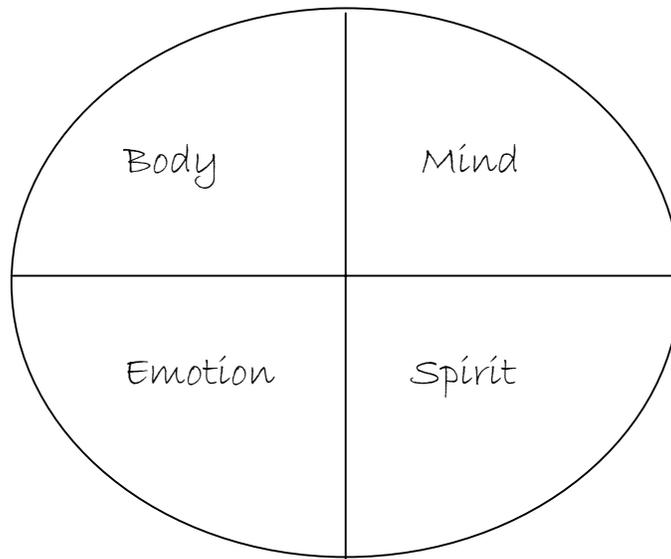
The goal of literacy learning needs to be engaging all aspects of the self in order to support the reintegration and connection of the whole person.



Source: “Too Scared To Learn” by Dr. Jenny Horsman (1999)

Exercise: Using learning **prompts** to get us thinking, provide flip charts/pens and tape for each group. Number off to form 4 small groups (each one to look at a different part of self) to look at:

- How does each part get damaged, hurt, dented throughout our lives?
- How can we nurture each part in order to better support learning for ourselves and for our learners?



Ensure that the following key ideas are included (see handout):

- “all or nothing”
- presence (disassociating, being present, able to engage, etc.)
- living with crises (avoid blaming the victim,)
- trust and boundaries
- “telling” (deciding what to share, taking care of the listener, etc)
- setting goals (“control, connection, meaning” or “voice, trust and hope”)

Report back on key ideas. Record key ideas on flipchart. Note overlaps and mention that none of these parts operate on their own, can’t separate each part out. Mention how the traditional education system wants us to separate them.

Handout: Whole self: “How to nurture and heal the parts of our selves in order to better support learning” (2 pages)

BREAK (15 minutes)

How does this issue affect your tutoring relationship?

4. Boundaries and Connections (30 minutes)

Talk about confidentiality and general guidelines around respecting one another's boundaries and personal information. Mention the issue of confidentiality, why it is important in the tutoring relationship, how we use group guidelines in the program to ensure learners' stories and voices are respected. Be aware of the power/privilege dynamic ('us and them') when we take learners' stories with us (to dinner parties, etc.).

Boundaries

We all have boundaries but they are not always clearly defined.

These are a few things to consider in respect to boundaries. It is important to create a safe learning environment and a healthy relationship between you and your learner early (in the first couple of sessions).

Three categories. Identify the three categories, give an example for each and have the group brainstorm the rest. Record the list on the flipchart.

Physical Boundaries

- Personal comfort zone
- Touching
- Location of activity, public or private
- Time

Intellectual Boundaries

- Using jargon or psychobabble. Always use clear language.
- Diagnosing or labeling someone
- Speaking for someone, don't impose your voice on them
- Confidentiality

Emotional Boundaries

- Attacks on someone's self image
- Patronizing
- Making assumptions

- Trivializing someone's emotions
- Interpreting someone's emotions
- False empathy (I know how you feel: check in when you hear yourself saying this)
- Insisting on trying to make someone feel better
- Not listening, tuning out when it's something uncomfortable to hear

Group discussion: Provide examples of boundaries not to cross

The learner wants to borrow some money from you. What do you do?

Personal relationships, dating/sexual etc. When is it ok, is it ever ok?

Questions to ask yourself about boundaries.

- Do you set boundaries consciously?
- What does it feel like to have your boundaries crossed?
- What are your definite boundaries?
- Do you ever find your boundaries invaded without knowing it?
- How do you know when you have crossed others boundaries?

Exercise 1:

Personal space and boundaries

Have the large group split off into two smaller groups. Ask tutors to stand in two lines facing one another. Have one line of tutors walk towards the other (who remains in one place), approaching their partner and ask the person who is walking to stop when they are comfortable.

- Talk about why some people stopped sooner than others.
- How does it feel when your partner gets 'too close'?
- Did anyone in the still line move back when their partner got too close?

Now, ask the tutors to walk back to where they started and ask the other line to do the same.

- How did where the first partner stop influence where you stopped?

Discuss as a group.

Exercise 2 :

Continuums...

Introduce that this is a way to explore the complexities of the tutoring relationship, remind that there is no right or wrong answer to the scenarios. There is no wrong place to stand on any line. Like the previous exercise, we all are in different places in how we enter the tutoring relationship.

Ask tutors to stand in one long line and point out that one end of the line represents one end of the continuum, the other is the opposite.

Where do you feel you are on the line when it comes to:

- confident to anxious
- friend to teacher
- boundaries - are they important to not at all...
- boundaries - good at keeping them to not at all...

5. Power Dynamics (25 minutes)

Make connection to Power and Privilege discussion in training if possible. Learners and tutors are equal partners *but* the learner/tutor relationship is not totally balanced.

1) The tutor has essential skills the learner wants to acquire.

Be sensitive to this

2) Some people feel real inadequacy if they can't read or write. They feel they are *less than* those who can read and write well. Relationships need a delicate balancing act to equalize the power imbalance

Group Exercise:

Creating a list of guidelines together to address the following question:

- How can you even out the balance of power and build a supportive relationship with your learner?
- How can you create a climate where your partner feels comfortable to try new things without being afraid of failing.

Some important points to include:

- **It is important to not be critical.**
The cornerstone of the relationship, like all adult relationships, is mutual respect.
- **Understanding limitations:**
 - Our abilities
 - Our partner's abilities
 - The program's abilities
- **We can best nurture the tutor/ learner relationship with a balanced diet of:**
 - Encouragement
 - Praise
 - Listening
 - Setting realistic goals
 - Honest appraisal

6. Closing? (15 minutes)

Round - one word (or a phrase) what you can do to make PPR a good place of learning for all (whether experienced violence or not).

Additional Handout: Key messages about violence

Hand out evaluations.