



# Indigenous Trauma Care

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# Objectives

## Participants will

- Overview of trauma
- Connection of trauma and substance misuse
- Overview of historical trauma and ancestral wisdom
- Skills to address trauma
- Overview of Indigenous Wellness and healing
- Culture as medicine



# TRICKSTER

NATIVE AMERICAN TALES

A GRAPHIC COLLECTION

“Meet the Trickster, a crafty creature or being who disrupts the order of things, often humiliating others and sometimes himself in the process. Whether a coyote or a rabbit, raccoon or raven, tricksters use cunning to get food, steal precious possessions, or simply cause mischief.”

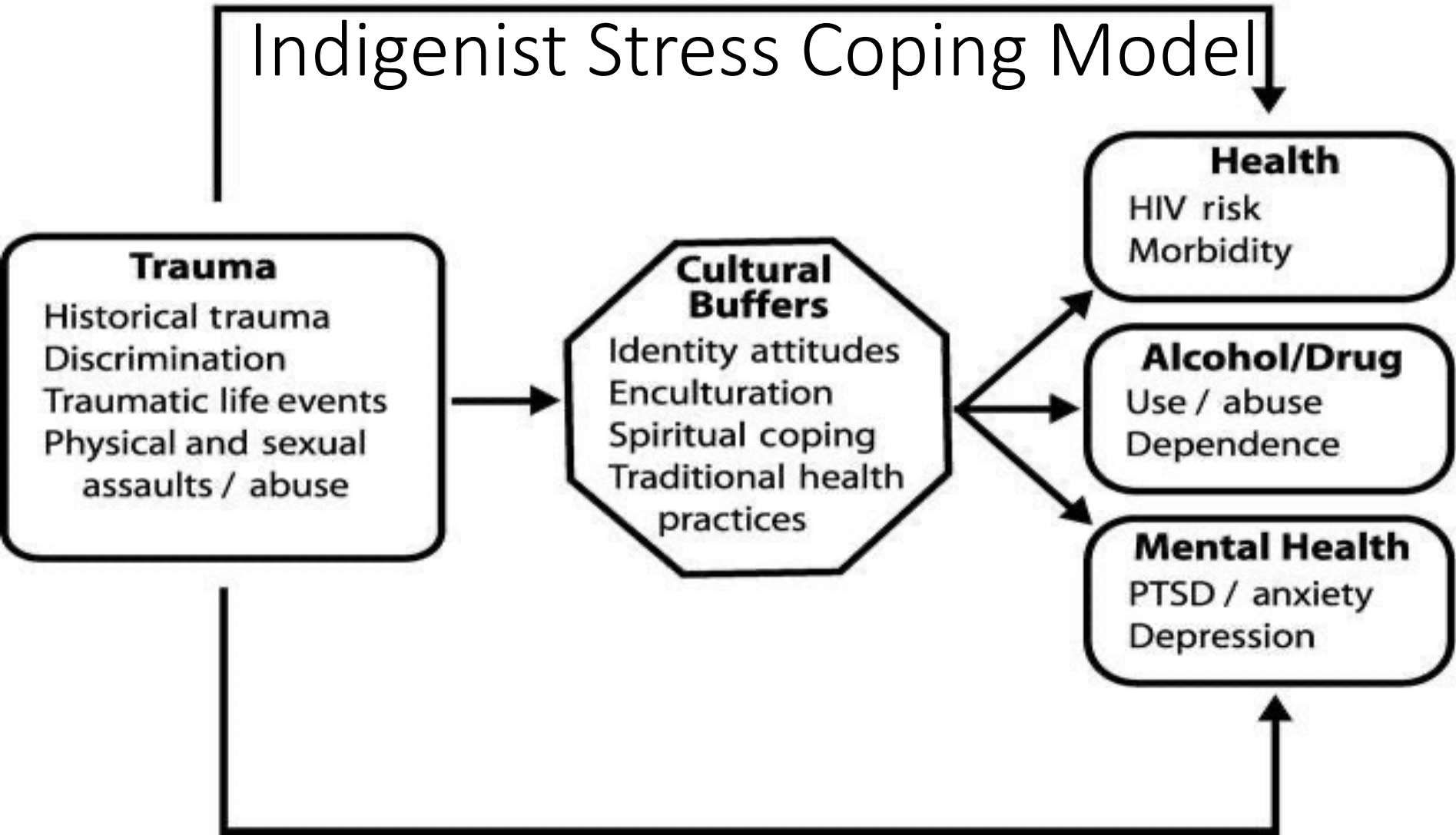


**STRESS**


**COPING**

**HEALTH OUTCOMES**

# Indigenist Stress Coping Model



Walters, Karina L, Simoni, Jane M, & Evans-Campbell, Teresa. (2002). Substance Use Among American Indians and Alaska Natives: Incorporating Culture in an "Indigenist" Stress-Coping Paradigm. *Public Health Reports* (1974), 117(Suppl 1), S104–S117.

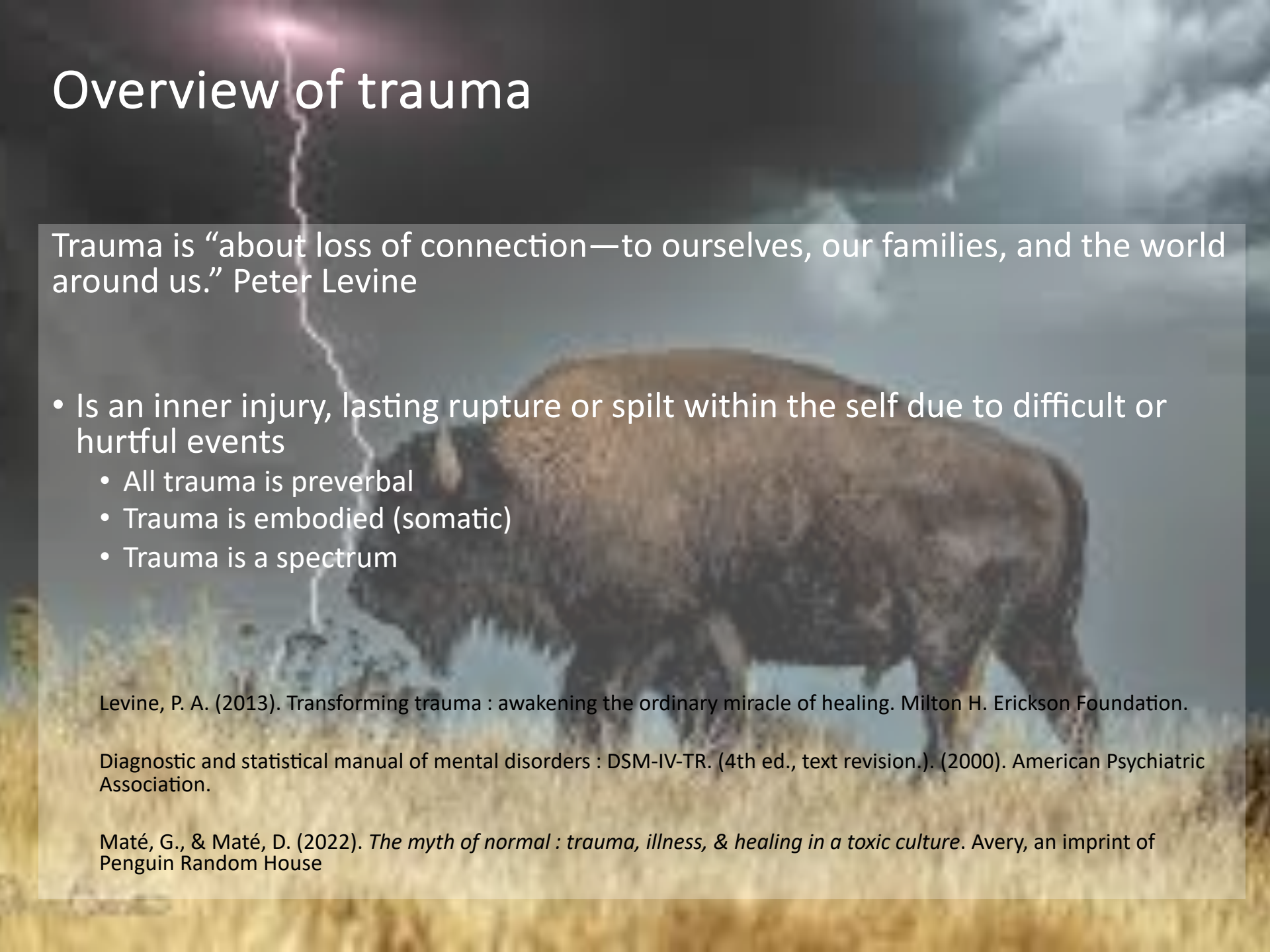
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- Maestro Jerry Tello - traditional healer
  - Trauma is disconnection
  - Healing is Sacred Connection
  - Therefore think of the importance of acknowledgement



Psychiatry and Indigenous People  
Linklater, R. (2014). Decolonizing  
Trauma Work: Indigenous Stories and  
Strategies . Fernwood Publishing

- Goal is to identify and treat mental disorders
- Psychiatry Diagnosis
  - DSM
- Diagnosis and program funding
- Psychiatry and culture
- Psychotropic Medication
- Does not recognize colonization

# Overview of trauma

A bison stands in a field of tall grass under a dark, stormy sky. A bright lightning bolt strikes down from the top left corner of the frame.

Trauma is “about loss of connection—to ourselves, our families, and the world around us.” Peter Levine

- Is an inner injury, lasting rupture or spilt within the self due to difficult or hurtful events
  - All trauma is preverbal
  - Trauma is embodied (somatic)
  - Trauma is a spectrum

Levine, P. A. (2013). *Transforming trauma : awakening the ordinary miracle of healing*. Milton H. Erickson Foundation.

Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders : DSM-IV-TR. (4th ed., text revision.). (2000). American Psychiatric Association.

Maté, G., & Maté, D. (2022). *The myth of normal : trauma, illness, & healing in a toxic culture*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House

# Indigenous Trauma Care: A decolonial perspective

“Using trauma terminology implies that the individual is responsible for the response, rather than the broader systemic force caused by the state’s abuse of power”

Linklater, 2014

Linklater, R., & Mehl-Madrone, L. (2014). Decolonizing trauma work : Indigenous stories and strategies. Fernwood Publishing.







# Types of trauma

- Acute trauma
- Repetitive trauma
- Complex trauma
- Developmental trauma
- Vicarious trauma
- Cultural, Historical and/or Intergenerational trauma

# Source of the wound





# Historical Trauma

- Historical trauma - Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding from massive group trauma across generations, including lifespan.
- (Brave Heart, 2004)



# Ancestral Memory

**“The memories of our ancestors are passed down on our blood”**

**Little Joe Gomez**

Hamby, Sherry, Elm, Jessica H L, Howell, Kathryn H, & Merrick, Melissa T. (2021). Recognizing the cumulative burden of childhood adversities transforms science and practice for trauma and resilience. *The American Psychologist*, 76(2), 230–242. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000763>

# Impact of Historical Trauma

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- Disruption in our ability to fulfill our original instructions
- Disruption in our relational ways of being
- Disruption in how we narrate/story our lives
- Health Prevention/Promotion Interventions incorporate:
  - Original Instructions
  - Relational Restoration
  - Narrative Transformation





Our bodies are designed to remember danger

## Physical Indications of Fight or Flight Response



dilated pupils



pale or flushed skin

## ANCIENT SURVIVAL RESPONSES TO LIFE THREATENING CIRCUMSTANCES

Bracha, H. (2004). Freeze, flight, fight, fright, faint: Adaptationist perspectives on the acute stress response system. *CNS Spectrums*, 9(9), 679-685.

Stanton, S. (2016), "Intuition: A Silver Lining for Clinicians with Complex Trauma". Dissertations. <https://surface.syr.edu/etd/615>

# Resilient Responses to Trauma

- Increased bonding with family and community.
- Redefined or increased sense of purpose and meaning.
- Increased commitment to a personal mission.
- Revised priorities.
- Increased charitable giving and volunteerism.



Center for Substance Abuse Treatment , issuing body, publisher. (2014). *Trauma-Informed care in behavioral health services : A treatment improvement protocol*. (Treatment improvement protocol (TIP) series ; 57). Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.







# Effects of trauma

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- Separates us from our bodies.
- Splits us from our feelings
- Limits response flexibility
- Fosters a 'shame' based view of self
- Distorts our view of the world
- Alienates us from the present

Maté, G., & Maté, D. (2022). *The myth of normal : trauma, illness, & healing in a toxic culture*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.





“Trauma is not what happens to you, but what happens inside you”

Gabor Maté’

Maté, G., & Maté, D. (2022). *The myth of normal : trauma, illness, & healing in a toxic culture*. Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House.

# BREATHING EXERCISE

FOR RELAXATION #1



INHALE  
THROUGH NOSE

Perform for  
2 to 5 Minutes

Instagram: @elevatevibe



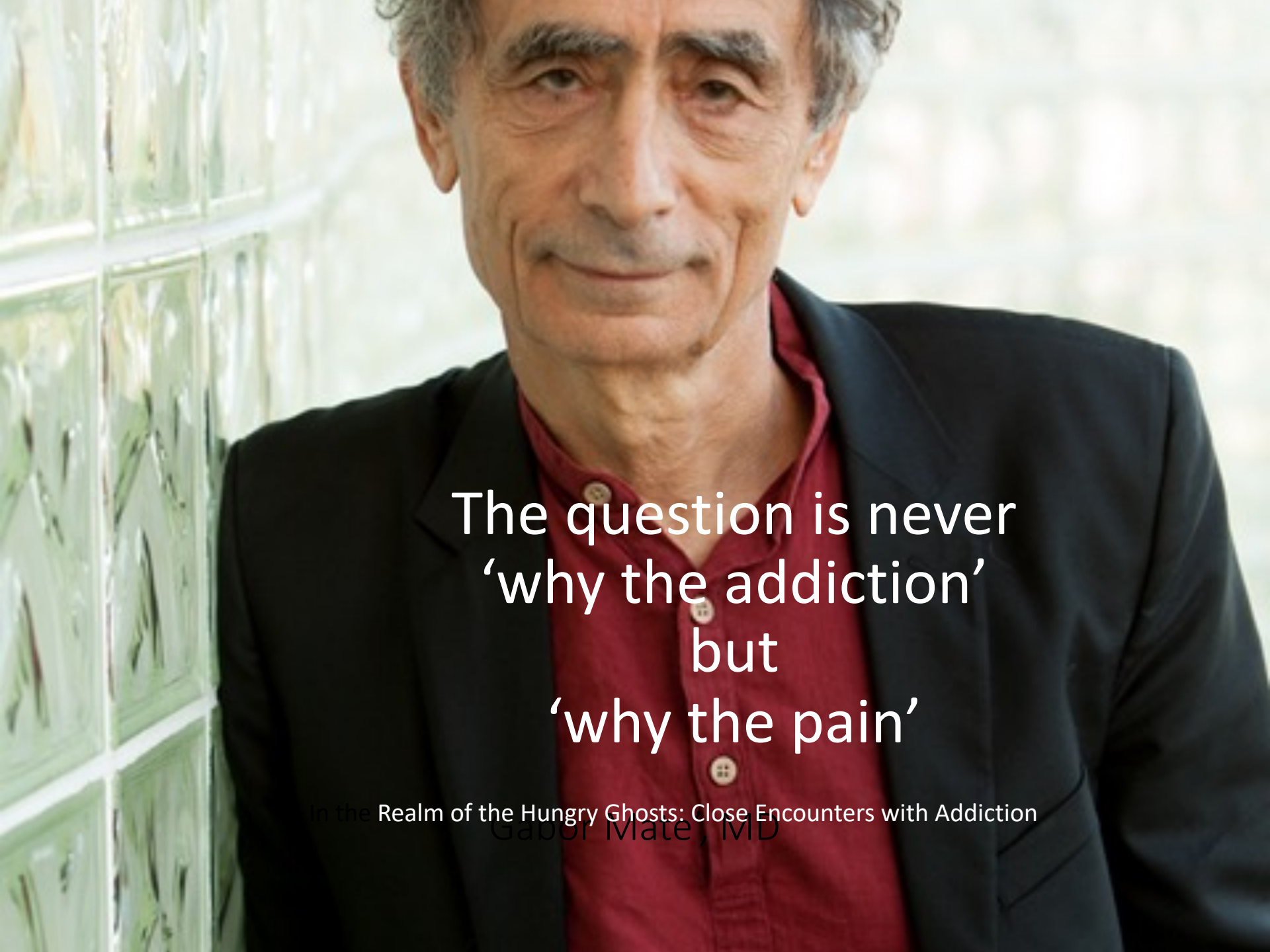
**“The very same brain centers that interpret and feel physical pain also become activated during experiences of emotional rejection. In brain scans, they light up in response to social ostracism, just as they would when triggered by physically harmful stimuli. When people speak of feeling hurt or of having emotional pain, they are not being abstract or poetic, but scientifically quite precise.”**

~ GABOR MATE

# What is “addiction”

A close-up photograph of a hand in a white shirt placing a yellow domino into a line of other yellow dominoes on a wooden surface. The dominoes are arranged in a slightly curved line, and the hand is positioned at the end of the line, about to tip the next one over. The background is blurred, showing more of the hand and the wooden surface.

“Is a complex condition, a complex interaction between human beings and their environment.” Gabor Mate’



The question is never  
'why the addiction'  
but  
'why the pain'

In the Realm of the Hungry Ghosts: Close Encounters with Addiction

Gabor Mate, MD



“It’s important  
to meet people  
where they’re  
at, but not  
*leave them* where  
they’re at.”



**STRONG  
RESILIENT  
INDIGENOUS**

Do not  
despair!!!  
Mate, G.  
(2009)



Our brains are resilient organs



Some important circuits continue to develop throughout our entire lives



They may do so even in the case of persistent and chronic substance dependency



Be patient with science, we are continuing to learn more about this complex human conduction and how to intervene

# Using Information About Biology and Trauma

## Frame

- Frame reexperiencing the event(s)

## Communicate

- Communicate that treatment and other wellness

## Refer

- Refer certain clients to a psychiatrist

## Discuss

- Discuss traumatic stress symptoms and their physiological components.

## Explain

- Explain links between traumatic stress symptoms and substance use disorders

## Normalize

- Normalize trauma symptoms.



# Wellness

Sacred Tree: Four Worlds  
International Institute.  
<https://www.fwii.net/profiles/blogs/the-story-of-the-sacred-tree-1>

# Relationship with Medicine

- Reestablish our relationship with medicine
- Change our relationship with medicine people
- Develop a relationship with the spirit of substances and substance misuse

# What does this look like in practice?

- **Ceremony/Prayer/Ritual  
Meditation/Deep Breath work**
- **Talking Circle**
- **Mutual Aid / Indigenous Economies**
- **Justice Movements (Standing Rock, Mauna Kea, MMIWG2S marches)**
- **Cultural Gatherings/Events**
- **Intergenerational Connection**
- **Practicing/Learning traditional arts, dance, music Food**
- **Wellbriety group**



A large teepee is the central focus, with a bright fire burning inside, casting a warm glow. The teepee's structure is visible, with several poles extending to the top. The background is a soft, colorful sky transitioning from blue to orange and pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is peaceful and spiritual.

PRAYER/ MINDFULNESS/  
CONTEMPLATION/ MEDITATION/ BREATH  
WORK

CREATE

ANCESTRAL CONNECTION

SACRED SPACE

STORYTELLING/STORY LISTENING





## **Culture is Medicine**

Encourage clients to participate in Indigenous healing practices and cultural traditions to support their overall health and wellness.

Incorporating Traditional Indigenous Knowledge in treatment settings and interventions that are grounded in Indigenous knowledge



# CULTURE IS PREVENTION

- Native people come from rich, diverse and beautiful communities.
- Native people are thriving
- Tribal Nations have a government to government relationship with the United States
- Trauma is real, happens in the brain and is connected to health

# Do not despair!!!

Mate, G. (2009)

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- Our brains are resilient organs
- Some important circuits continue to develop throughout our entire lives
- They may do so even in the case of persistent and chronic substance dependency
- Be patient with science, we are continuing to learn more about this complex human condition and how to intervene



- Increased bonding with family and community.
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## Resilient Responses to Trauma



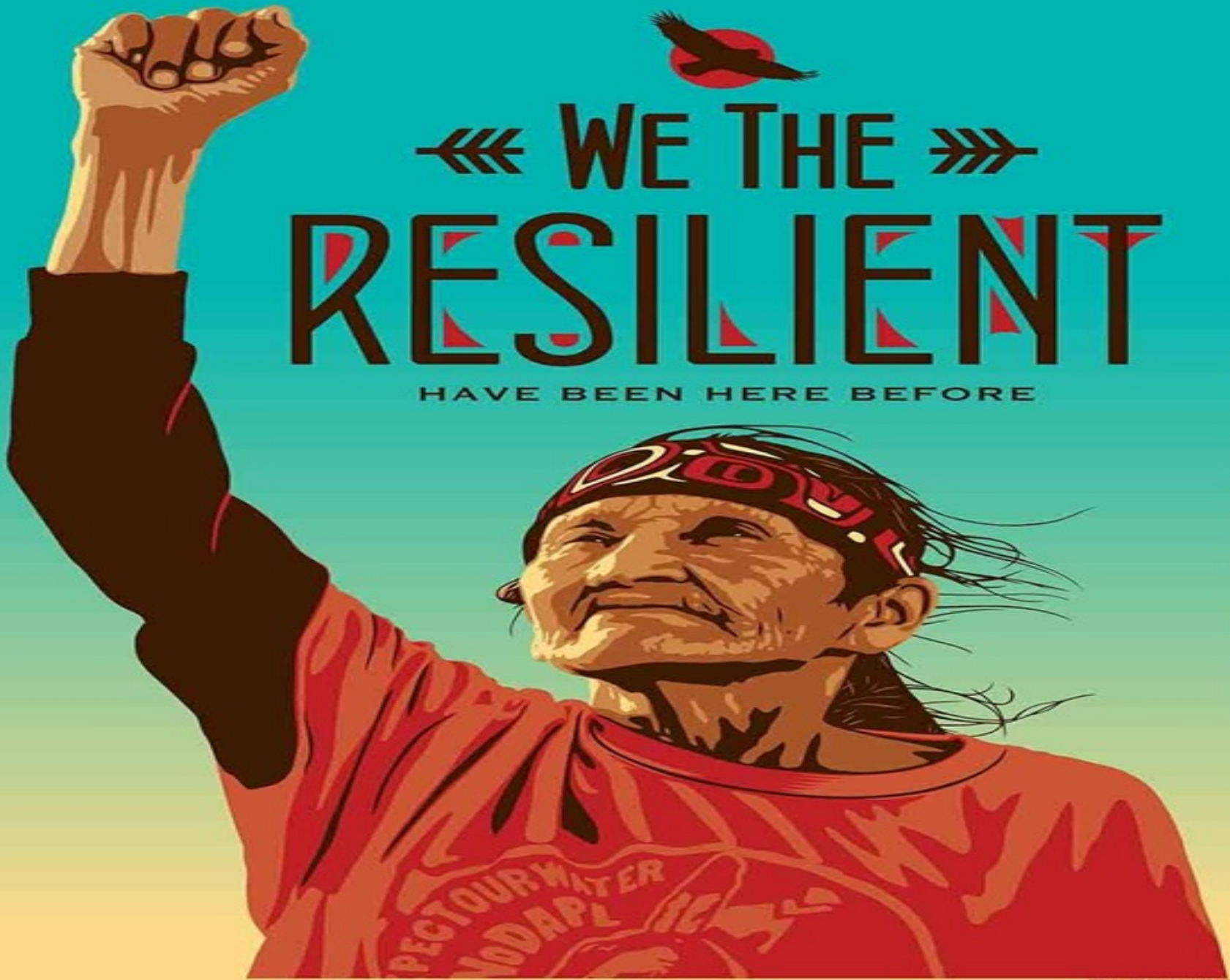
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WE THE

RESILIENT

HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE



Here is a  
drunk bee

