

Guide – The 8 Shields Peace Principles

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Text adapted from Deborah Benham, Jon Young, and the 8 Shields Institute online course “Designing for Peace.”

Diagram used by permission.

What is ‘8 Shields’?

The name ‘8 Shields’ refers to a nature-based framework, created to organise a collection of design principles, practices and activities for deep nature connection and community building. Since 1983, the framework has been developed by founder - anthropologist and naturalist - Jon Young, his mentors and teachers, and an international community of practitioners. The framework is organised according to the 8 compass directions, with the term ‘Shield’ referring to a set of related principles and practices, rather than an item of war. For example, the East Shield includes beginnings, newness, birth, early morning, springtime, ‘new shoots’, and the qualities of inspiration and welcome. While the framework originated in the northern hemisphere, in the southern hemisphere the north and south directions can flip so the framework becomes a mirror image.

Based on observations of nature and an understanding of nature-connected cultures, the 8 Shields framework does not derive from any one tradition. The late elder M. Norman ‘Ingwe’ Powell and Jon Young surveyed hundreds of children and adults to assign meaning to each of the 8 directional archetypes. Much consideration has been given to how the framework can best avoid cultural appropriation while also honouring the traditions which have inspired it.

The Peace Principles are one aspect of the 8 Shields framework, intended to help support conflict resilience in groups.

Lineage of the 8 Shields Peace Principles

Between 1990 and 2000, Jon Young and other members of the 8 Shields Institute had a series of conversations with Jake Swamp, Judy Swamp, and Mike McDonald, members of The Tree of Peace Society, and of the indigenous Kanien’keha:ka (Mohawk) Nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The 8 Shields Institute agreed to a treaty, similar to the Two-Row Wampum treaty, which governs relations between Haudenosaunee people and non-indigenous people.

The three Peace Principles, articulated in the treaty and adopted by the 8 Shields Institute, are non-indigenous interpretations of concepts found in the traditional Haudenosaunee story of The Journey of the Peacemaker and the Haudenosaunee Great Law of Peace. A fourth principle, inspired by the practice of ho'oponopono, was developed separately by Jon Young and other members of the 8 Shields Institute in consultation with Maka Iō Kalani Keualani Souza, Mahealani Henry, Ipo Torio, Kamahalo Ka'uhane, Puna Dawson, and other traditional indigenous Hawai'ian members of the Kanuikapono Charter School on Kaua'i.

A note on capitalisation. Some indigenous languages, when written or translated, have specific capitalisation conventions. Capitalisation can be used to indicate respect, relationship, personhood, or being-ness. In this document, certain terms, like 'Peace' and 'Peace Principles,' are capitalised to show respect for the original Haudenosaunee terms from which they are directly translated. In the same spirit, other terms like 'Unity', 'Good Message' and 'Healing', which are interpretations of traditional terms, even though they are not direct translations, are also capitalised.

The Peace Principles are shared here with appreciation and gratitude for the wisdom of indigenous cultures. Jon Young and the organisations he is affiliated with, are committed to good relations with all indigenous peoples, including reciprocity, representation, financial and cultural support. If your group adopts these Peace Principles, please consider making a similar commitment, and please honour the lineage of the principles.

Overview

In recent years, western medicine has begun to recognise the value of prevention in addition to treatment. The focus has begun to shift toward integrated health, well-being, nutrition, and environment; aiming to prevent disease, before illness has occurred and symptoms are present.

Similarly, the 8 Shields approach to conflict resilience emphasizes cultivating conditions for Peace rather than waiting until conflict resolution is needed. What conditions promote well-being, harmony, and resilience? What conditions allow conflicts to become part of a creative process, rather than potentially damaging or harmful?

What is the 8 Shields definition of Peace?

Peace is not simply the absence of conflict, nor a static state of being tranquil all the time. Peace is best described as a state of connection with one's self, the natural world, and other people -- resting on a foundation of inner quietness, gratitude and other attributes of a connection. Peace is the ability of an individual, a relationship, or a system to navigate conflict, difficulty, or challenge, and to come through that, ideally stronger and more connected on the other side. Peace is an ability to allow for disturbance or disruption without collapse, and is related to resilience.

What is Resilience?

The ability to experience turbulence or imbalance, and then return to a state of balance. Having processes and pathways to restore balance. Here are two definitions:

The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the viability, function, or development of that system. (Ann Masten 2014).

The process of harnessing resources in order to sustain well-being. A sense of hope that gives meaning to suffering and helps to link the past to the present and the future. (Catherine Panter-Brick & J. F. Leckman, 2013).

Three Levels

In 2017, after conversations with peace activist Satish Kumar, the three Peace Principles were aligned with the three levels of Peace described in the Vedas and Upanishads:

- the internal (associated with an individual's body and mind)
- the physical (associated with others, including people, animals, and nature)
- the divine (associated with aspects and energies beyond typical human perception).

An ancient Vedic tradition involves invoking Peace ('Shanti') three times, so as to promote Peace at each of these three levels.

These three levels correspond to the first three principles, and to three axes of the 8 Shields model. Several practices support each axis with various ways to promote Peace.

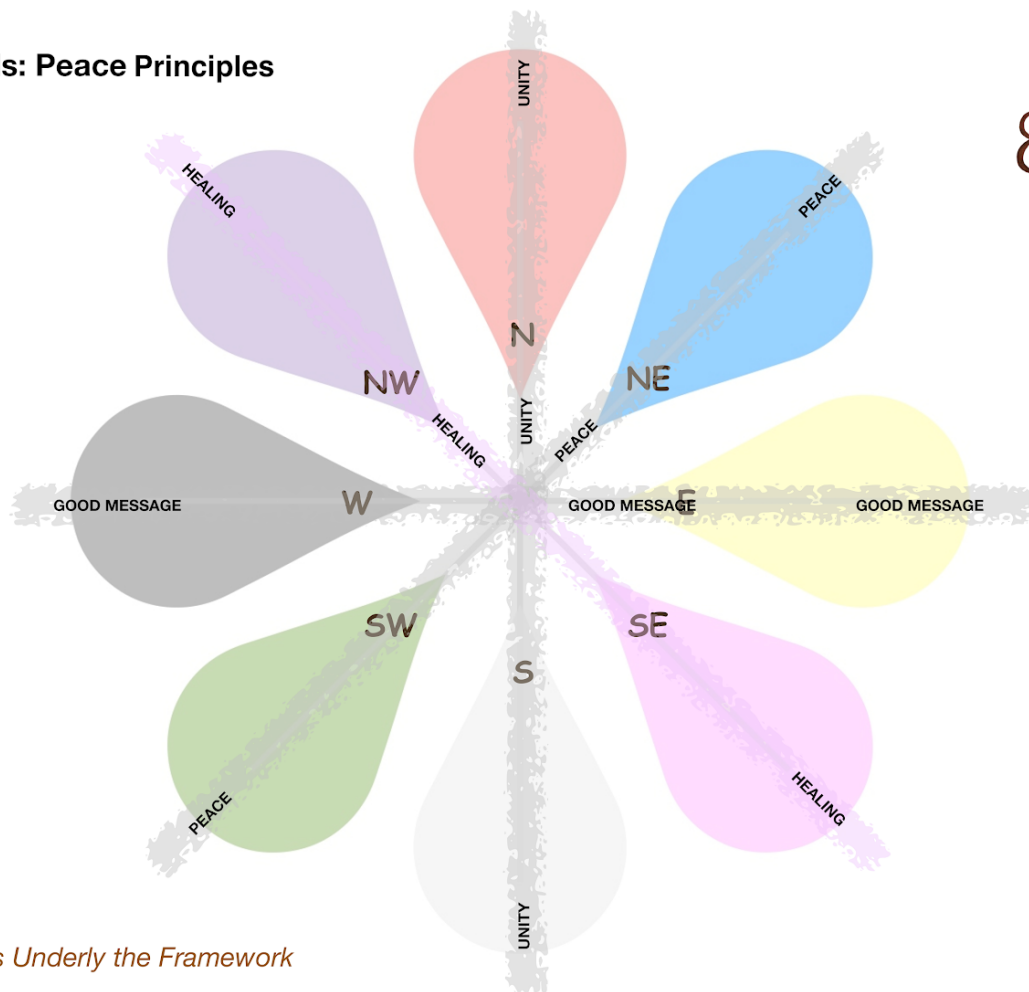
1. The Peace Axis: personal Peace.
2. The Good Message Axis: interpersonal or relational Peace.
3. The Unity Axis: collective Peace.

1. The Peace Axis: personal Peace (NE-SW or SE-NW)

How does it feel to be at Peace in ourselves? How can individuals cultivate personal Peace? How do individuals recognise when they are out of sorts or out of balance? What techniques help individuals return to personal Peace?

The personal Peace axis maps practices that support personal Peace in the mind and in the body. At one end of the axis are practices to support Peace in the mind, like mindfulness meditation, or nature-based practices like a sensory, walking or sitting meditation in nature. At the other end of the axis are practices to support Peace in the body, like nutrition, rest, wellbeing, and safety.

8 Shields: Peace Principles



Principles Underly the Framework

For groups:

How can groups support personal Peace, in the mind and in the body? How can a group support individuals to feel good, and to access their Personal Peace while in the group? How can the group promote individual resilience and wellbeing so everyone can bring their best selves to the group?

For example, how does a group bring everyone's minds and hearts together for their shared endeavor? In an 8 Shields group, this might look like sharing gratitude or a sensory meditation. In other groups, where this practice might feel unfamiliar or edgy, this can look different. Maybe a moment of silence, or time to think and write about an agenda item before discussing it.

Peace in the body can include looking after individuals' wellbeing in various ways -- health and safety policies, physical comfort, room and space, food and water, time for breaks and vacations. In many modern workplaces, individuals often feel a lot of anxiety and stress. What are some ways the group can help to reduce stress, so people can feel more spacious and able to show up in their full selves?

2. The Good Message Axis: interpersonal or relational Peace (E-W)

How do individuals communicate with each other? How do people manage their interpersonal relationships? The Good Message axis maps practices that support good communication and community building. At one end of the axis, good greeting and orientation practices help people feel welcome. These can include circle processes, such as a round of names and check in, which support inclusion and all voices to be heard. At the other end, listening to people's stories, honouring their contributions and celebrating their unique 'gifts' to the group, can help people feel valued, with a sense of belonging in the community. These practices help build a sense of Peace and trust in relationships.

For groups:

What are the shared agreements about interpersonal communication? Are there agreements to communicate authentically, honestly, cleanly or with compassion? to use I-statements? to reflect on one's own part in the communication? to tease apart emotional responses from any information that's needed? Is there space for both positive or celebratory feedback, and for constructive or challenging feedback? Is feedback shared in a good way? given and received in a way that feels safe and clean? Are there regular opportunities, times and places, for feedback and appreciation?

Are there ways to navigate tensions? When there is heated or blocked communication, are there ways to address that in a constructive way? Are there support mechanisms and infrastructure in place to help that happen? Does the group provide trainings or a handbook? Are there identified mediators, peacemakers, or skilled people someone can go to for help?

Groups can provide infrastructures to support good communication, and teach people how they can access and use them.

3. The Unity Axis: collective Peace (N-S)

How do people cultivate Peace and unity in communities, organisations and other wider social systems? How can groups work together well? How do groups co-create a sense of shared purpose, values, agreements? to perform optimally for the good of the whole? The Unity axis maps practices that support a big picture sense of direction and overview at one end, like shared vision, mission, aims or objectives; and the more detailed grounded elements at the other end, like processes, policies, agreements, and project plans.

For groups:

Groups benefit from a clear vision balanced by clear ways to get things done. Roles and practices which support direction and coordination often sit in the North [South], understanding the various other group roles and practices needed and how they interact. The South [North] is where the many details that help the group achieve its purpose sit; like a Handbook or Manual of organisational policies, operational procedures, job or role descriptions, pathways for internal communication and sharing information.

The Unity axis can be an easy place to start when introducing the 8 Shields Peace Principles to a group. A shared sense of both overall purpose and agreed ways to achieve that purpose, can bring alignment and Unity to a group. For example, here's an analogy that often makes sense for a group or organisation. Imagine everyone in a group is on a ship together. Everyone shares an idea of the group's ideal destination or the desired outcome for the ship's journey. Everyone knows their role on the ship, is able to work together smoothly, and knows exactly what needs to be done. That group has a much better chance of getting where it wants to go.

4 The Healing Axis: (NW-SE or SW-NE)

This axis is in a slightly different category than the other 3. The first three axes present principles and practices which support a group to develop Peace and conflict resilience. If the first 3 principles have all been well implemented, and conflicts and tensions are still arising, it's likely because there is something else present that people are bringing from the past, such as a personal or cultural wound, sensitivity or trauma. In 8 Shields, the term Healing refers to acknowledging and addressing anything from the past that may be having a difficult impact on the present or the future.

Sometimes this shadow of the past is called psychological trauma or historic trauma. It could be from an individual's own experiences or upbringing, or from further back than that. It may have been passed intergenerationally over time through families, cultures, or communities. It can affect individuals' relationships with each other, and how they behave in groups. More information regarding psychological trauma and historical trauma can be found in the resources, definitions and also in this resource - [Compassion for Challenging Behaviour](#). This is why Healing - finding ways to address the shadows of the past, like grief and trauma -- is an essential part of the 8 Shields model. As part of a Healing process, individuals can make commitments to 'inner tracking' - reflecting on and bringing understanding to their emotions and sensitivities, and the things that can trigger their reactions.

For groups:

The Healing axis includes practices which can be the most unfamiliar to introduce to a group or organisation. Many modern westernised societies, workplaces and community groups may not encourage people to show up in their wholeness. The practices on the Healing axis can feel like they are more relevant to individuals than to a group. These can involve transparency around personal sensitivities, uncomfortable emotions, psychological wounds, or habitual patterns that individuals can bring to a group. The practices of this axis may feel uncomfortable to a group that is less comfortable with relational or collaborative group culture.

Many people find it hard to leave the difficult emotional parts of themselves at home. However much they may try to act 'professionally,' or to only present their most pleasant aspects, their more difficult aspects can still show up in a group setting.

If the group doesn't have ways to support individuals with their sensitivities and difficult emotions, if there is no agreed way to express these in a good way, this can become problematic. Challenging emotions can build up into resentment or anger, leading to more explosive conflicts, or withdrawal from the group. Or emotions may leak out inappropriately, leading to more challenging or tense interactions ([see Guide to Emotions](#)).

People can easily misunderstand each other's behaviour if they don't know where that behaviour is coming from. Groups can provide opportunities for individuals to increase awareness of each other's preferences and sensitivities, and normalise a culture of acknowledging and addressing difficult emotions. Groups can provide the infrastructure that supports emotional literacy and resilience. This begins to normalise the many processes for Healing the issues -- individual, relational, or systemic -- that most people from modern westernised societies bring with them when they join a group.

Groups can identify supportive and appropriate times, places, and ways for processing emotions. And maybe separate those from appropriate times and places for more operational work. It can be helpful to have both. Groups can provide times and places for healing and processing, as well as times and places for operations and strategy ([see Making Space for Uncomfortable Emotions](#), [see Task-Process-Relationship](#)).

Healing is a huge topic with a wide spectrum of different approaches and perspectives. The enclosed list of resources and references is not at all comprehensive or complete. The shadows of the past, like grief and trauma, can show up in many ways, so there are many different ways to begin to address them. There's no one-size-fits-all approach for every individual or group.

Activity

You might like to try using the Peace framework as a tool, to map what your group is already doing to support Peace and conflict resilience, and what you might like to develop further.

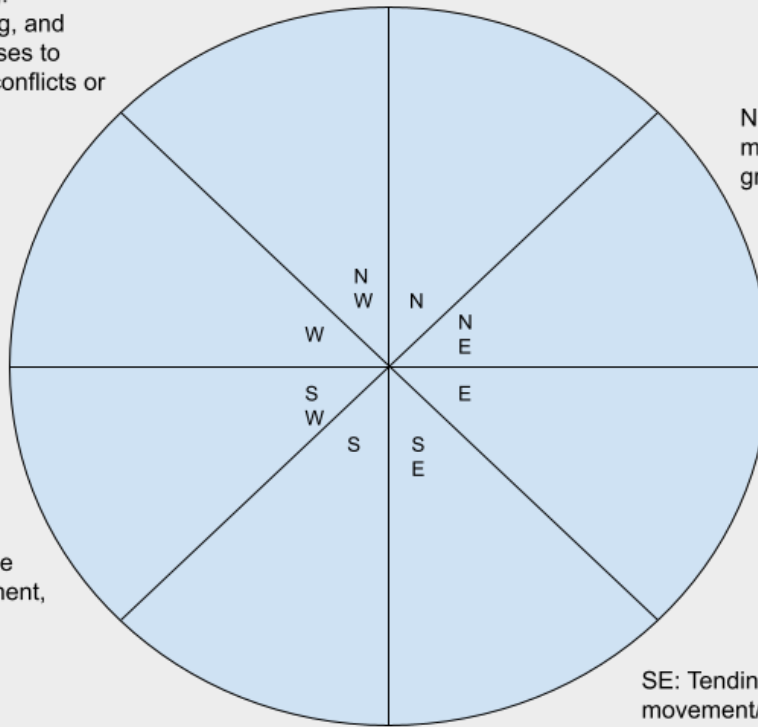
Copy the next page and offer it to group members. Individually or in small groups, write practices that your group uses, which you feel fit into each section of the wheel. This can be followed by a discussion to identify areas of peacebuilding and conflict resilience where you feel your group is strong, and areas where you might want to offer more attention.

N: Overview & big picture e.g. having a clear and shared Purpose or Vision, values and sense of direction.

NW: Tending the past e.g. acknowledging, supporting, and offering spaces or processes to address emotions, grief, conflicts or trauma.

NE: Supporting Peace in the mind e.g. meditation, gratitude, silence.

W: Celebration, appreciation and community building e.g. recognising and honouring people's contributions, making time to be together.



E: Good welcome and inclusion. Making space for all voices to be heard e.g. greeting, induction, orientation and circle processes.

SW: Supporting peace in the body e.g. comfort, nourishment, breaks, self & group care practices.

SE: Tending the future, facilitating movement/flow & removing blocks e.g. coaching, mentoring, embodied practices. Having good facilitators.

S: Attending to details and agreements e.g. having clear policies, procedures, plans and communication or relational guidelines.

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3 Levels

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Personal Peace Axis -

Transition Network’s Personal Resilience resources.

<https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/inner/personal-resilience-resources/>

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<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.3402/ejpt.v5.25338>

Good Message Axis -

Transition Network’s Conflict Resilience & communication resources.

<https://transitionnetwork.org/do-transition/inner/conflict-resilience-resources/>

Unity Axis

Websites

Common Fire Foundation (Kavitha Rao & Jeff Golden). www.commonfire.org

Communities for Restorative Justice (Jean Bell, Joan Turner, Jennifer Larson Sawin). www.C4RJ.com

Conscious Collaboration (Nick Osborne & Justine Corrie). consciouscollaboration.co.uk

Cooperation Works Cooperative Development Network cooperationworks.coop/resource-library/

Enlivening Edge (Frederic Laloux). www.enliveningedge.org/category/tools-practices/

Group Facilitation (Tree Bressen). treegroup.info/library/

Holacracy (Brian Robertson). www.holacracy.org/

Neighborhoodization (Edwin John). www.childrenparliament.in/inclusion.html

Seeds for Change (Kathryn Tulip, Matthew Herbert). www.seedsforchange.org.uk/resources#grp2

Sociocracy For All (Jerry Koch-Gonzalez). sociocracyforall.org/

Sociocracy 3.0 (James Priest). sociocracy30.org/

Tools for Change (Bill Aal). toolsforchange.org/resources/

Université du Nous. (Lydia Pizzoglio & Laurent van Ditzhuyzen) universite-du-nous.org/

Videos

John, Edwin (Neighborhoodization) 24:54 “Neighborhood Parliaments in India.” 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D50li942xX8>

Koch-Gonzalez, Jerry (Sociocracy For All) 4:00 “Sociocracy, The Operating System of the New

Economy.” 2016 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3zFWpntExg&feature=youtu.be>

Osborne, Nick (Transition Network) 6 x 10:00 “Self Organisation: Beyond Hierarchy.” 2015
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZYHfM4_lhIPMmXkjsPvMGxol_FEVIQN

Sociocracy for All videos. <https://www.sociocracyforall.org/content/>

Written materials online

Transition Network Resources - Healthy Groups, Networks & Partnerships, Community Involvement

Transition Network Infosheet - [Overview of How Groups Develop](#)

Transition Network Guide - Shared Governance and Working in Circles

Transition Network Guide - [Decision Making](#)

Transition Network Guide - [How to Run Effective Meetings](#)

Transition Network Guide - [Virtual Teams](#)

Transition Network Activity - [Big List](#)

Transition Network Guide - [How to Create Partnerships](#)

Transition Network Guide - [How to Build Networks](#)

Transition Network Guide - [Design a Regional Network Workshop](#)

Transition Network Guide - [7 Ingredients for a Just, Fair and Inclusive Transition](#)

Transition Network Guide - [Action-Reflection Cycle](#)

Transition Network Guide - [Task-Process-Relationship](#)

Transition Network Guide - [Creating Healthy Human Culture](#)

Transition Network Guide - [From Founders to Future](#)

Transition Network Guide - [Succession for Long Term Success](#)

Transition Network Guide - [Moving from Initiating Group to a Transition Core Group](#)

Seeds for Change Guide - [Facilitating Meetings](#)

Seeds for Change Guide - [Facilitation Tools](#)

Seeds for Change Guide - [Effective Groups](#)

Seeds for Change Guide - [Group Agreements](#)

Seeds for Change Guide - [Anarchic Agreements](#)

Seeds for Change Guide - [Making Changes in Your Group](#)

Written materials other

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Buck, John & Sharon Villines. (2017). *We The People: Consenting to a Deeper Democracy*. Sociocracy.info Press

Butler, C.T. & Amy Rothstein. (1991). *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decision-Making*. Food Not Bombs Publishing.

Christian, Diana Leafe. (2003). *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities*. New Society Publishers.

Lakey, George. (2010). *Facilitating Group Learning: Strategies for Success with Adult Learners*. Jossey-Bass.

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Rau, Ted & Jerry Koch-Gonzalez. (2018). *Many Voices, One Song: Shared Power with Sociocracy*. Institute for Peaceable Communities.

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Healing Axis. Grief, Trauma, Healing

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Body Informed Leadership (Madelanne Rust-d'Eye). <http://bodyintelligence.ca>

Bolad's Kitchen & Flowering Mountain (Martín Prechtel). www.floweringmountain.com

Collective Trauma Summit (Thomas Hübl). <https://collectivetraumasummit.com/>

Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition (Francisco de Roux). <https://comisionverdadcol-eu.org/en/>

Family Constellation Institute (Mark Wolynn). <https://markwolynn.com/>

Gabor Maté. <https://drgabormate.com/>

Grief Tending (Sophy Banks). <https://griegtending.org>

Healing Turtle Island. www.healingturtleisland.org

Ho'oponopono (Morrnah Nalamaku Simeona). www.hooponopono.org

Integrative Community Therapy (Adalberto de Paula Barreto). <http://www.4varas.com.br/>

The Mindsight Institute (Daniel Siegel). <https://www.mindsightinstitute.com/>

Orphan Wisdom School (Stephen Jenkinson). <https://orphanwisdom.com>

Starter Culture (Claire Milne). <https://starterculture.net>

Thomas Hübl. <https://thomashuebl.com/>

The Trauma Resource Institute (Miller-Karas, Elaine). www.traumaresourceinstitute.com

Traumatic Stress Research Consortium (Stephen Porges). <https://kinseyinstitute.org/research/traumatic-stress.php>

Turtle Island Institute (Melanie Goodchild) <https://turtleislandinstitute.ca/>

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Wisdom Spring (Sobonfu Somé, Susan Hough). www.sobonfu.com

Whole Health Medicine Institute (Lissa Rankin). <https://wholehealthmedicineinstitute.com/>

Work That Reconnects (Joanna Macy). <https://workthatreconnects.org>

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<https://youtu.be/OY5SyM1vYSA?list=PL7C977927EEA7D72E>
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Definitions:

Grief

The normal and natural emotional reaction to loss or change of any kind, particularly to the loss of someone or something to which a bond or affection was formed. It often involves a combination of conflicting emotions caused by the end of a familiar pattern of behavior.

<https://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/blog/2013/06/best-grief-definition-you-will-find>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grief>

Historic Trauma

The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding of an individual or a generation caused by traumatic experiences: events with an overwhelming amount of stress that exceeds the ability to integrate the emotions involved. It is directly associated with the unresolved grief that accompanies continued trauma.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_trauma

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