

# Maintaining Cultural Connections: Why, What, and How?

Through the Eyes of a Child  
Conference 2023

Oregon Court Improvement Project

Salem, Oregon



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**August 8, 2023**

# Connection

- A sense of belonging can only be said to exist, if it exists in the mind of the child
- Our job is to protect and promote that sense
- It is the cornerstone of a positive outcome



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# Permanency: an Indigenous Persepctive

- Concept Of Belonging—
- The Heart Of Permanency
- Is Central To Indigenous Culture



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# Family Relations and Beyond

- Family
- Extended Family
  - Nurturing Networks
  - Fictive Kin
- Clan
- Community
- Tribe
- Mother Earth
- Grandfather Creator
- All my relations



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# Grandmas Matter

**grandmas matter**

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# Reference Points For Belonging

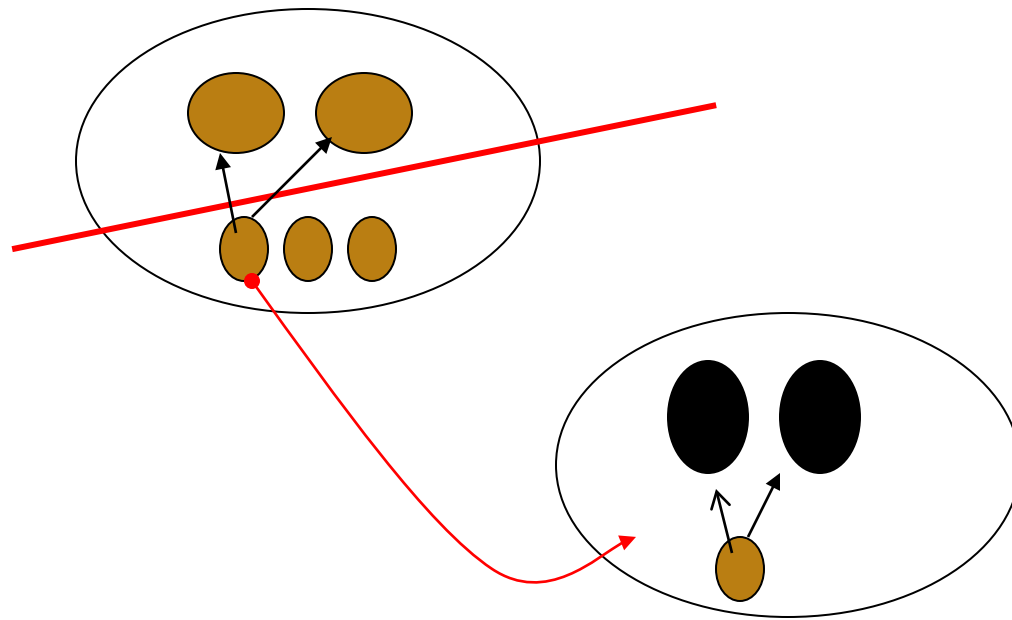
- Sense of Trust
- Continuity
- Identity
- Persist over time



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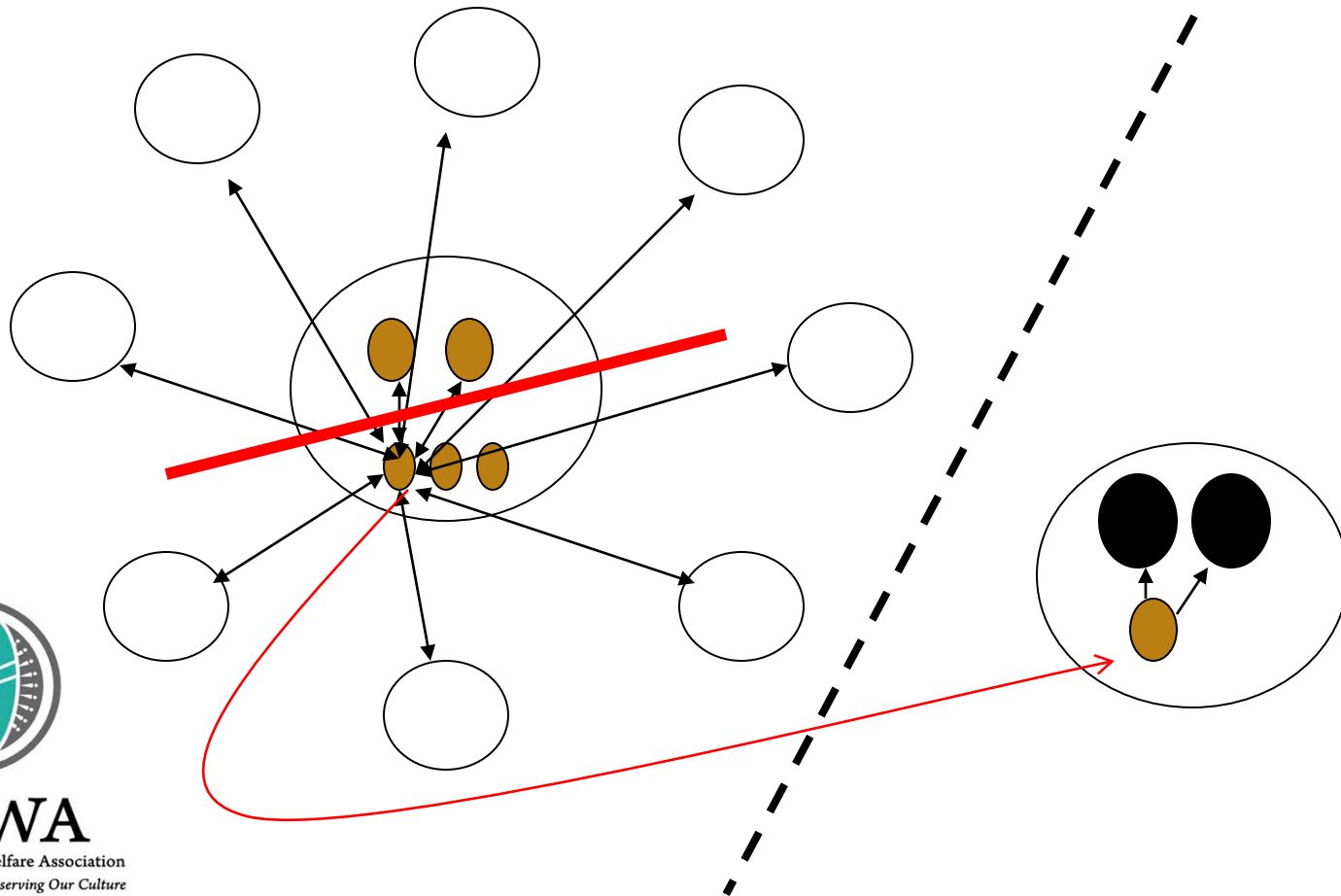
# Psychological Parent Model



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# Extended Family Model



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# Culture Matters



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# Key Points

- Blood degree does not indicate cultural identification
- Colonial process inflicted deep complex trauma & lateral oppression. It happened to us but..
- Racial healing is desired internally, and with other cultures
- Native peoples are here to stay
- Race equity includes making the invisible visible



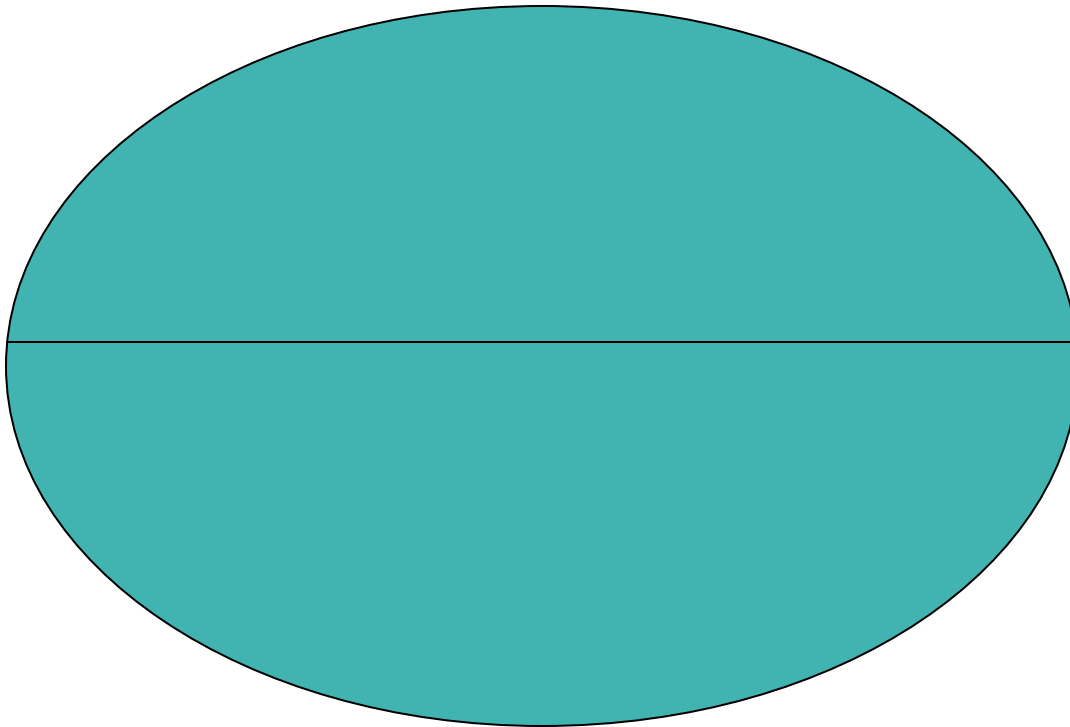
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# THE INDIAN IDENTITY EXPERIENCE

Comfort

Traditional



Assimilated

Confusion

Cross, 1985

# What is Culture?

- What comes to mind when I say the word Culture?



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# What Comes to Mind When We Think of “Culture”?

Spirituality, Religion, Beliefs, Values

Ceremonies, Customs, Rituals,

Art, Music, Dance

Stories, Traditions, Literature

**Worldview**, Identity, Shared History

Social Activities, Affinity Groups

Family, Kinship, Marriage, Parenting

Institutions, Laws, Governance

Social Rules/Manners, Norms, Help Seeking

Clothing, Shelter, Food



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# What is “culture”?

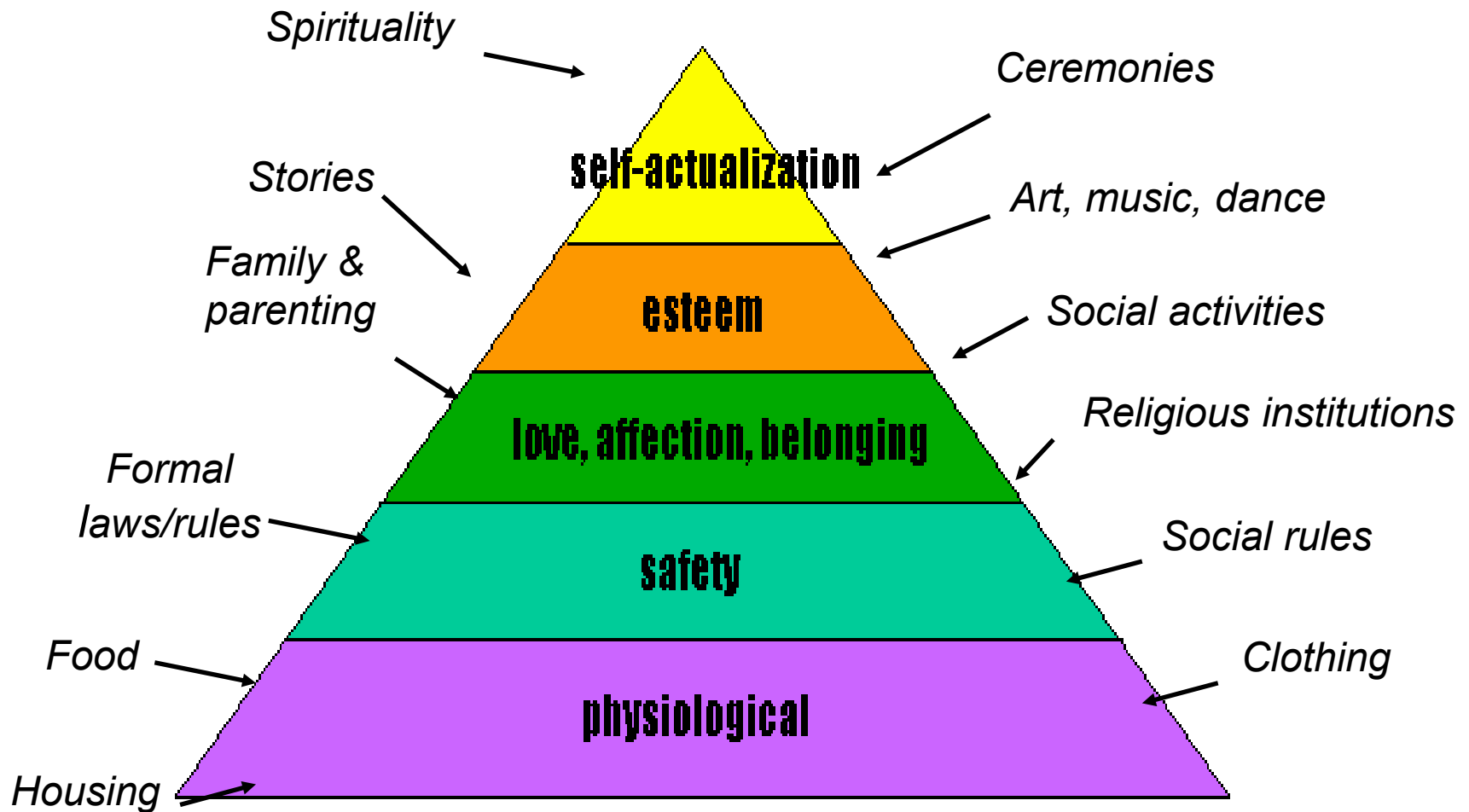
- The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior.
- The customary beliefs, social norms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group.



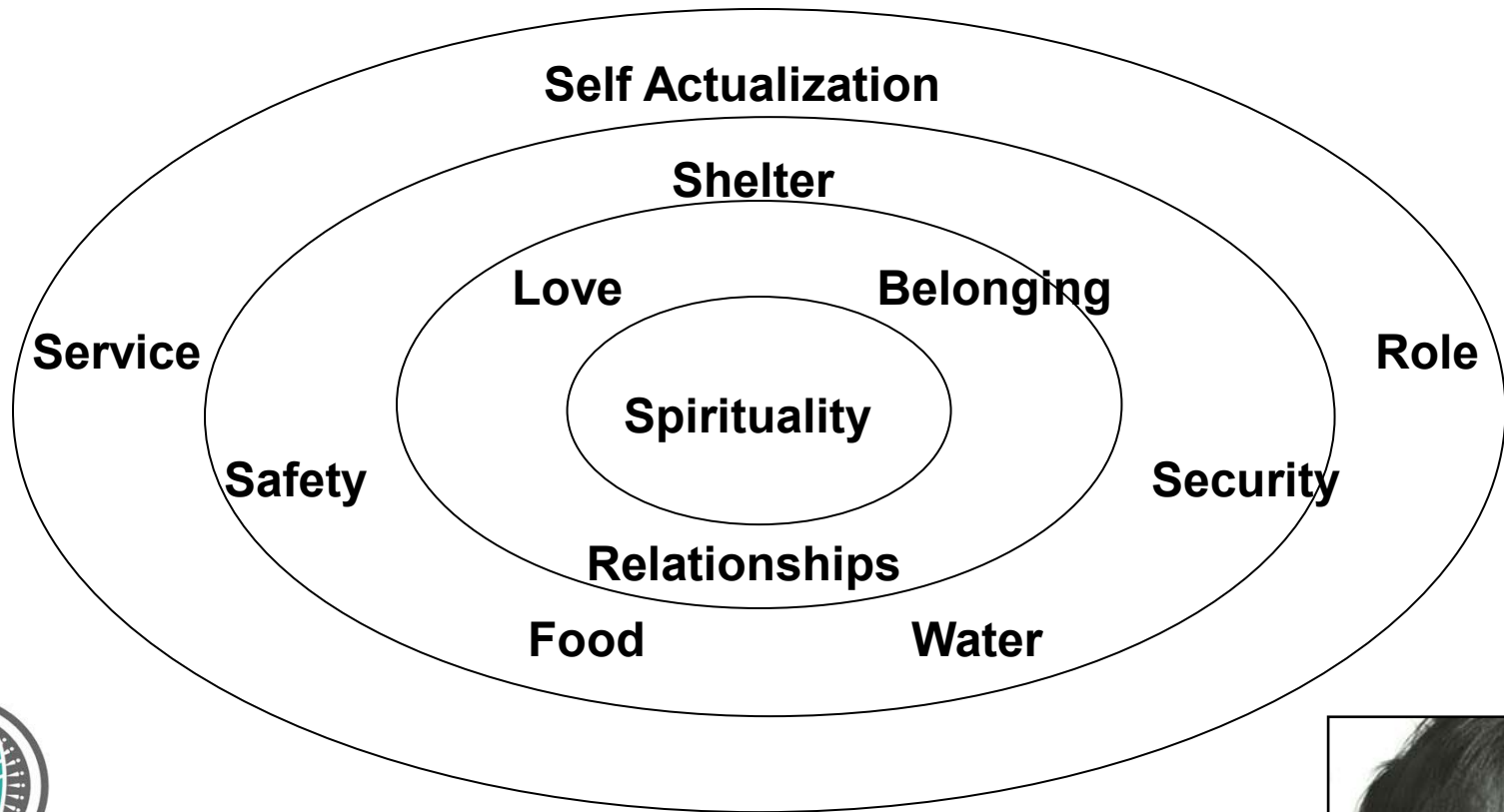
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# Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



# Maslow: Through Indigenous Eyes



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# What is a “worldview”?

- Collective thought process of a group or people
- “Linear Worldview”
- “Relational Worldview”



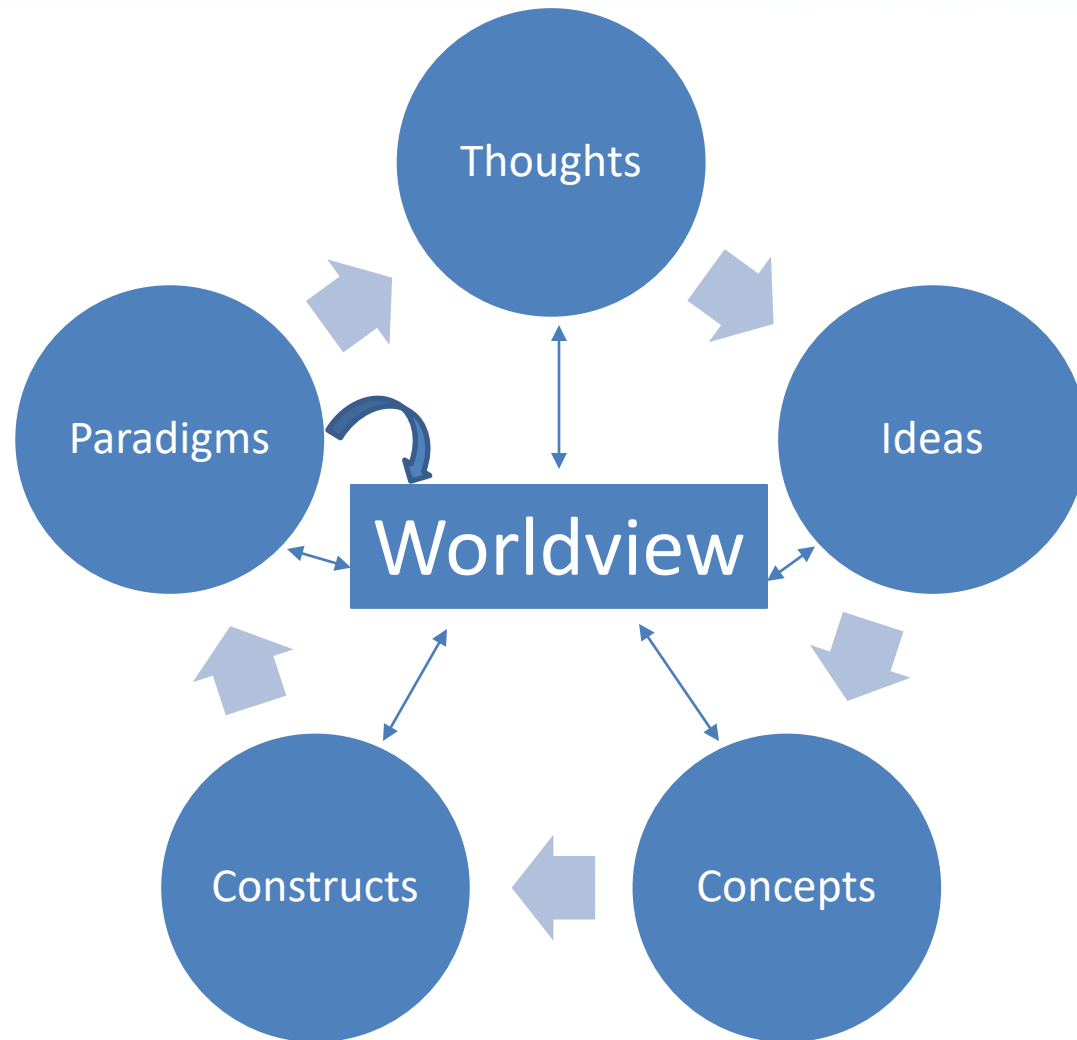
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# “What’s the big idea?”

## “Worldview”



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# Linear Worldview

## Western European/American thought



**Cause → Effect → New Cause → New Effect**

# Linear Worldview Social Work/Medical Model



**Cause → Effect → New Cause → New Effect**

**Social History → Presenting Problem → Assessment → Treatment → Outcome**



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# Linear Model Values

Facts

Measuring

Knowledge (New)

Timelines

Scientific Method

Materialism, Wealth

Authority, Hierarchy

Independence

Individuality

Direct Communication

Written Language

Steps and Stages

Work to Make a Living

Compartmentalizing,  
Reductionist

Credentials

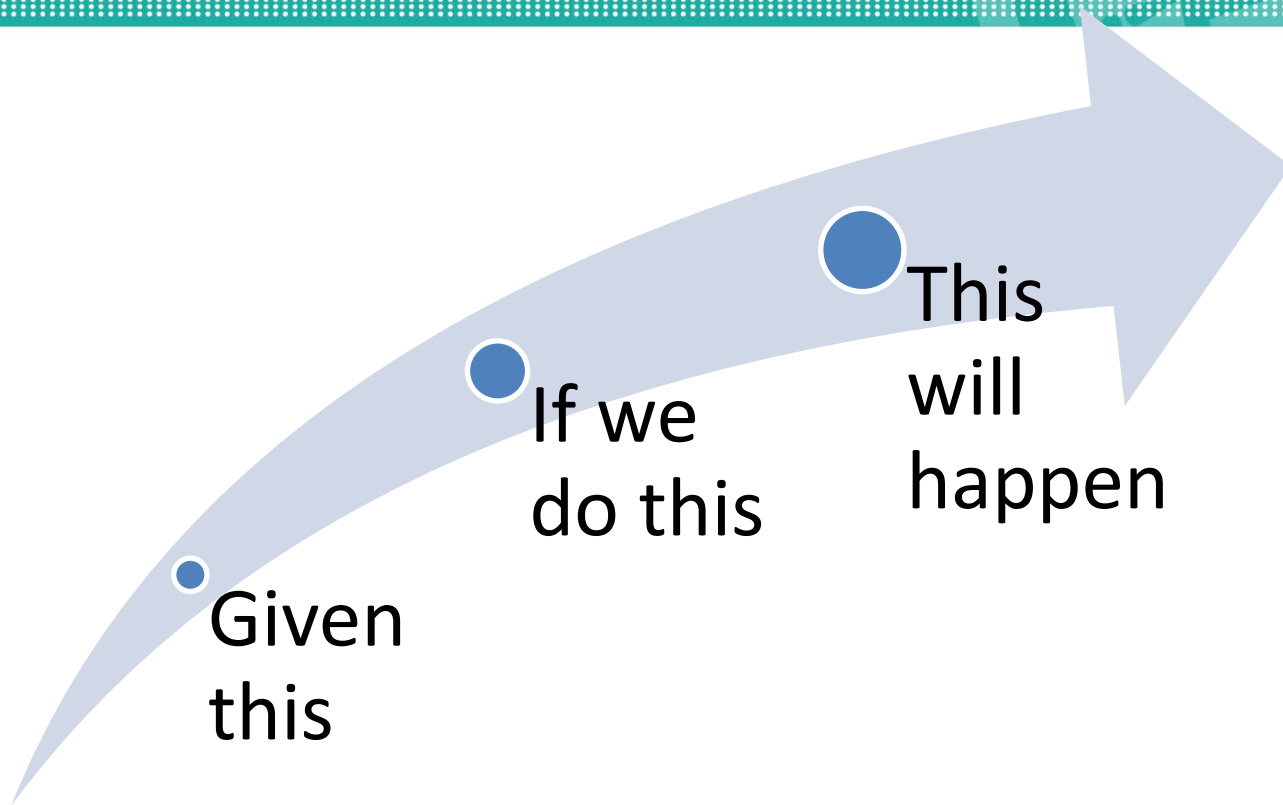


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# Linear Theory of Change



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# Linear Outcomes

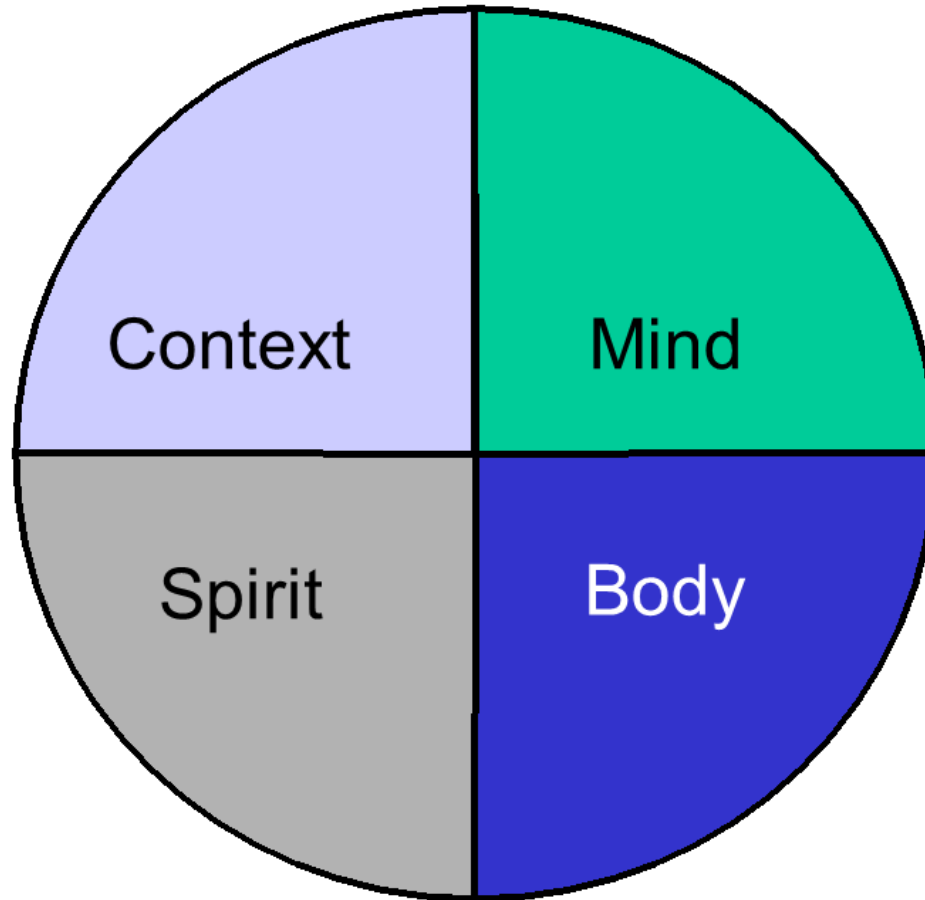
- Isolate the cause
- Fix the problem
- Measure the result



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# Relational Worldview Native and Tribal Thought



**BALANCE**



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# Relational Worldview

## Native Thought

- Fluid, cyclical view of time
- Each aspect of life is related
- Services aim to restore balance
- Interventions may not be directed at “symptoms”
- Underlying question is “how?”

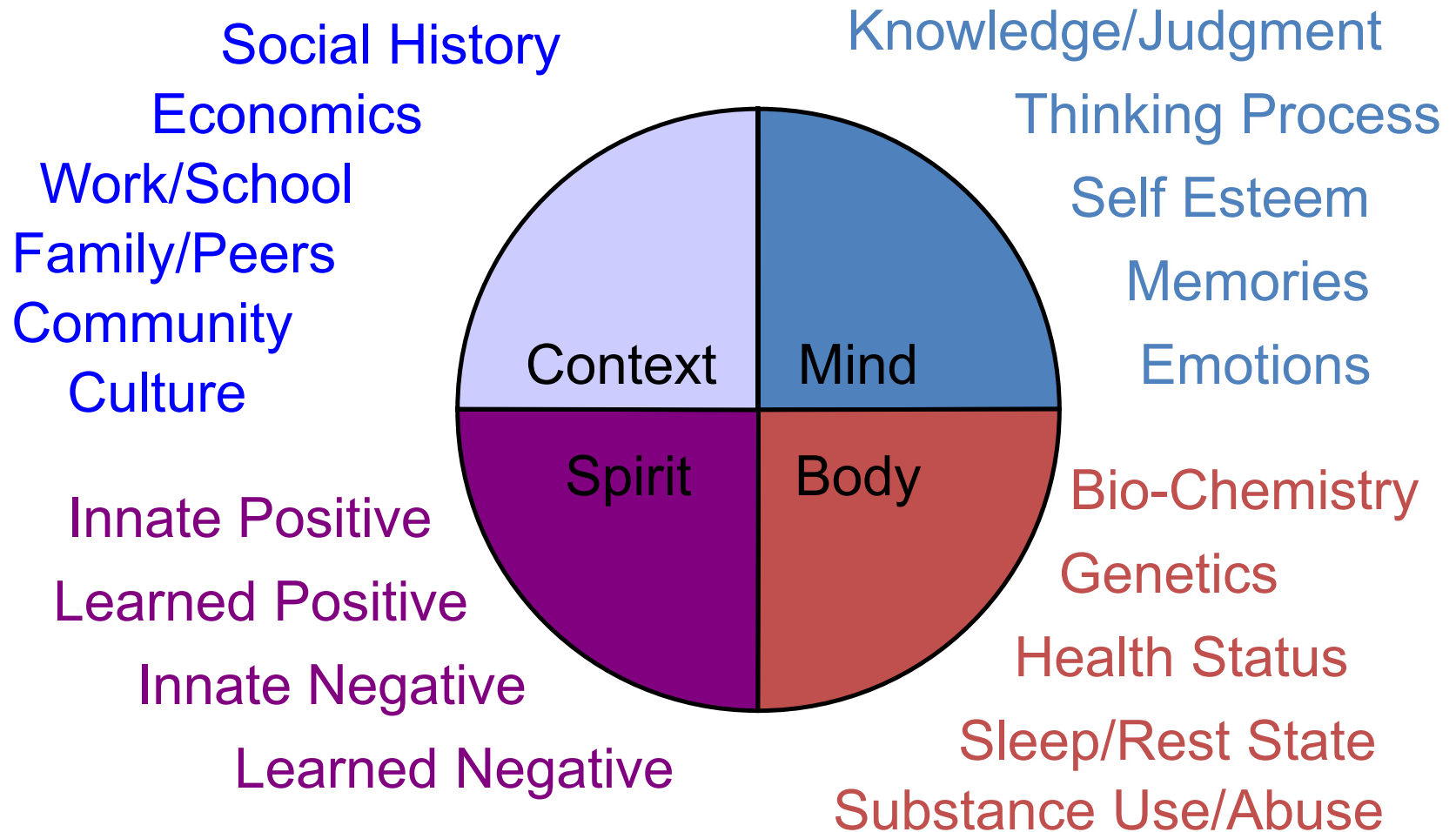


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# Relational Worldview

## *Individual and Family Level*



# Relational Model Values

Principles, Values

Patterns

Wisdom

Things in their own  
time

Observation

Generosity, gifting

Interdependence

Collectivism

Autonomy

Indirect Communication

Oral Tradition

Cycles and Phases

Work to Live

Holistic thinking

Experience

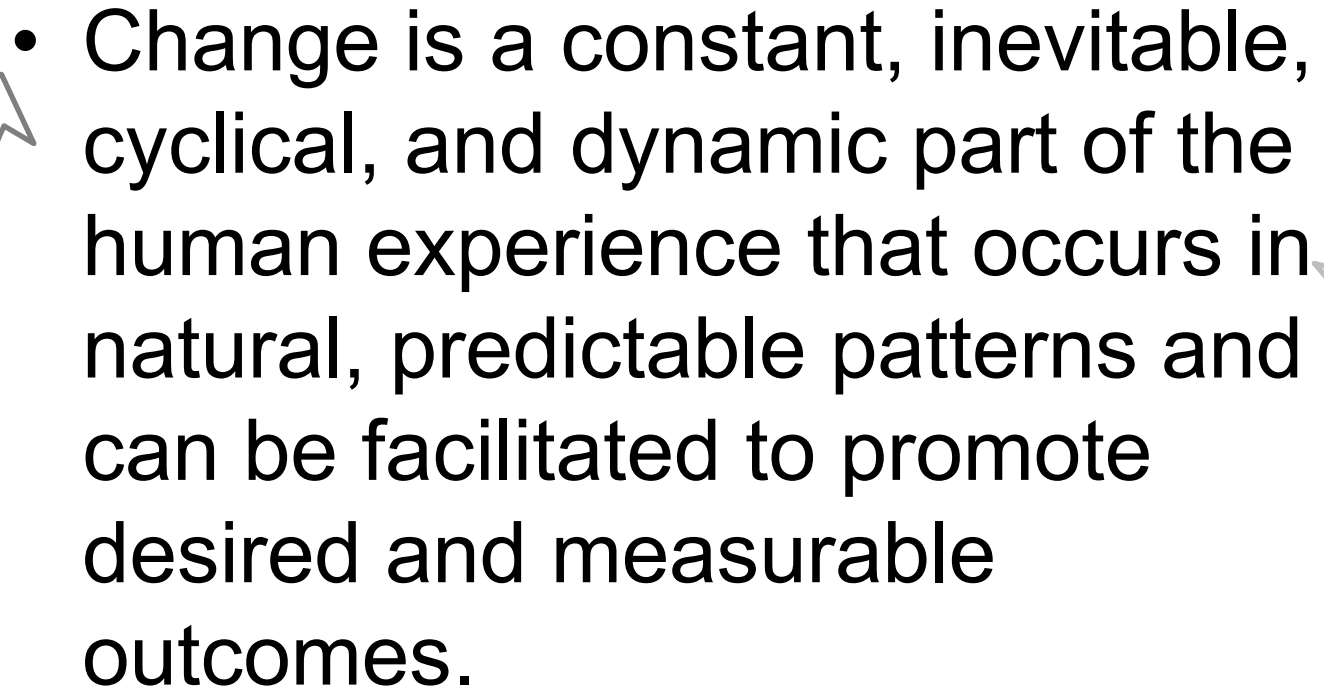


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# Relational Worldview Theory of Change

- 
- Change is a constant, inevitable, cyclical, and dynamic part of the human experience that occurs in natural, predictable patterns and can be facilitated to promote desired and measurable outcomes.



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# Desired Outcomes

- Balance = an adjustment pattern that represents the best, most basic attempt to incorporate stimuli and response.
- Harmony = various aspects of life are in a complementary relationship and taken together produce wellness, beauty, growth, success, the capacity for joy, and the ability to thrive.



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# Community Matters

- Clan/tribal/community members
- Native Organizations
- Environment/Belonging
- Natural helpers and healers
- Gathering
- Traditional ceremonies
- Sports/Recreation
- Culture



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# Spiritual Supports Matter

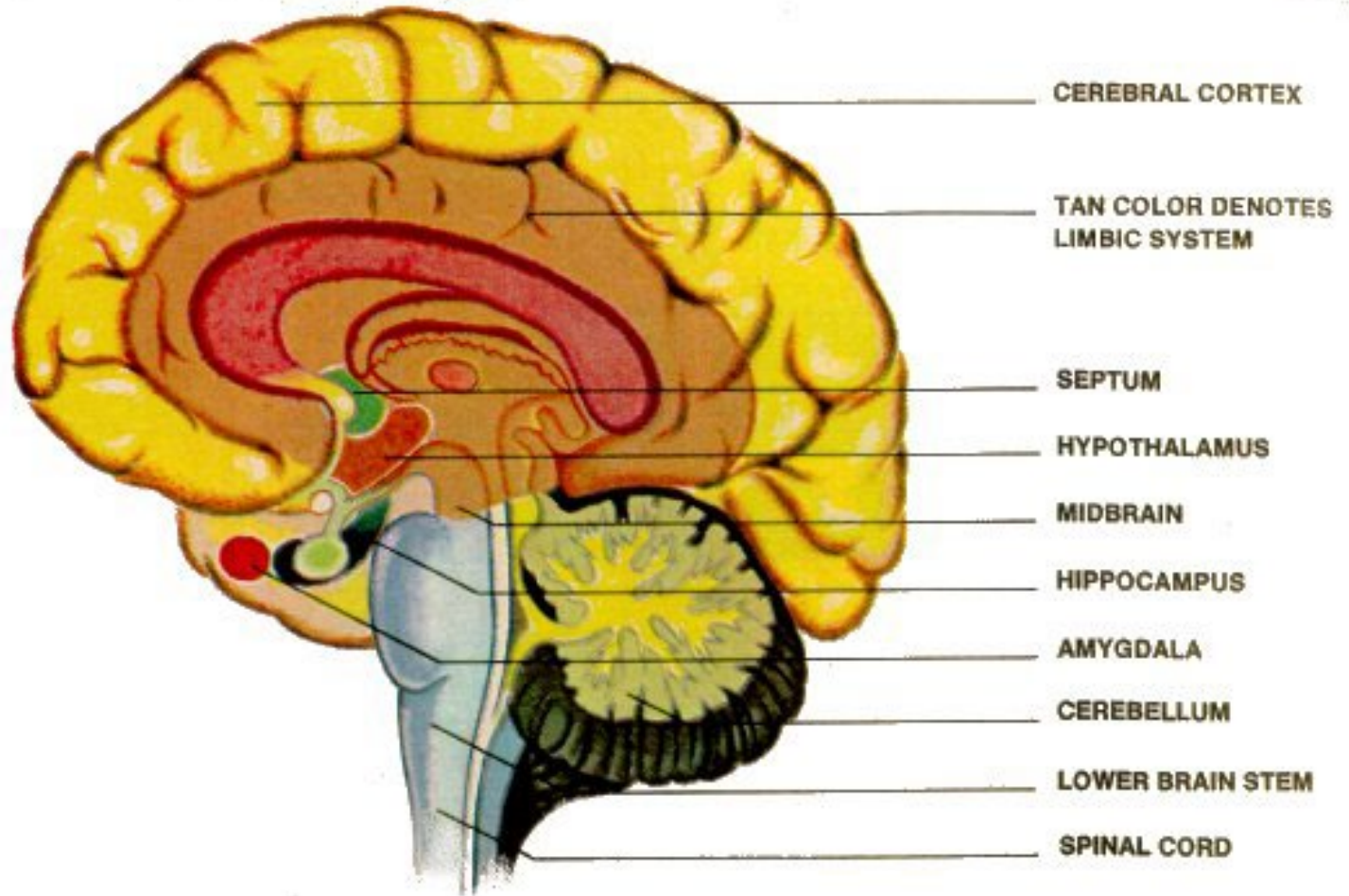
- Smudging
- Eagle feathers
- Medicine bags
- Traditional foods
- Talking Circles
- Generosity
- Gratitude
- Sweat Lodge
- Dance
- Drumming
- Traditional ceremonies



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# Brain Chemistry Matters



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# The ACE Study

- The ACE Score is a count of the total number of ACE indicators for an individual.
- The score ranges from 1 (low trauma) to 9 (high trauma).
- In the mainstream population, as an ACE score increases, the risk for numerous health problems increases.

# RISK FACTORS

## What is an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)?

The experience of “significant abuse or household dysfunction during childhood”

### Specific Indicators:

- Recurrent physical abuse
- Recurrent emotional abuse
- Contact sexual abuse
- An alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household
- An incarcerated household member
- Someone who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal in the household
- Mother is treated violently
- One or no parents
- Emotional or physical neglect

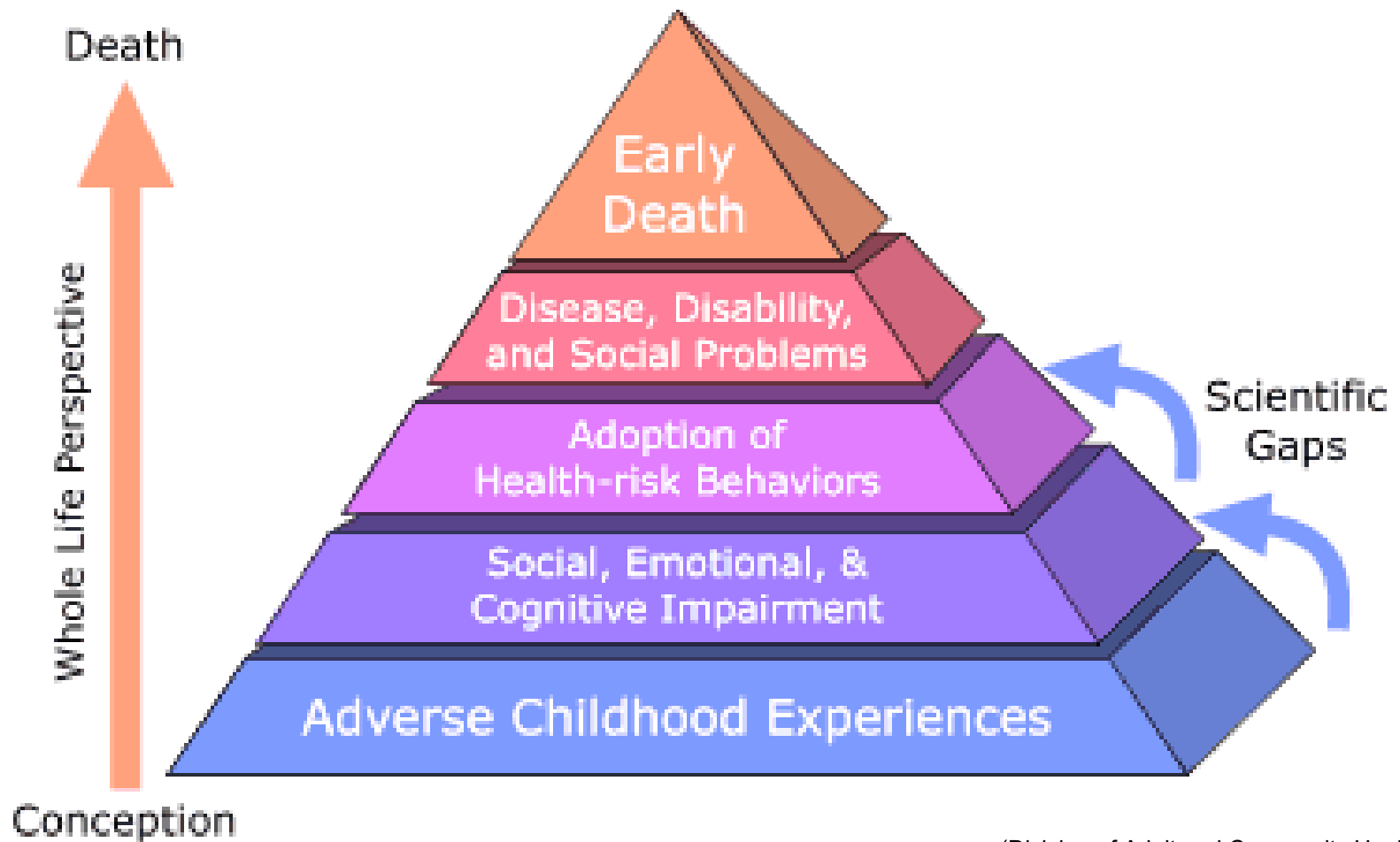


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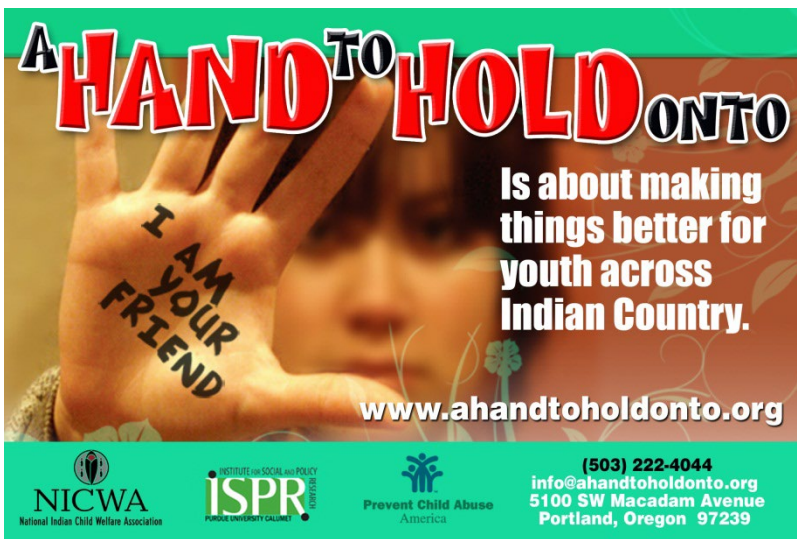
(Division of Adult and Community Health,  
National Center for Chronic Disease  
Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC, 2010)

# ACE Study Model



# American Indian Youth Victimization and Delinquency Outcomes Study (AIYVDOS)

- Used a participatory research model:
  - Culturally sensitive and scientifically sound
  - Involving community members as partners and owners throughout the research process



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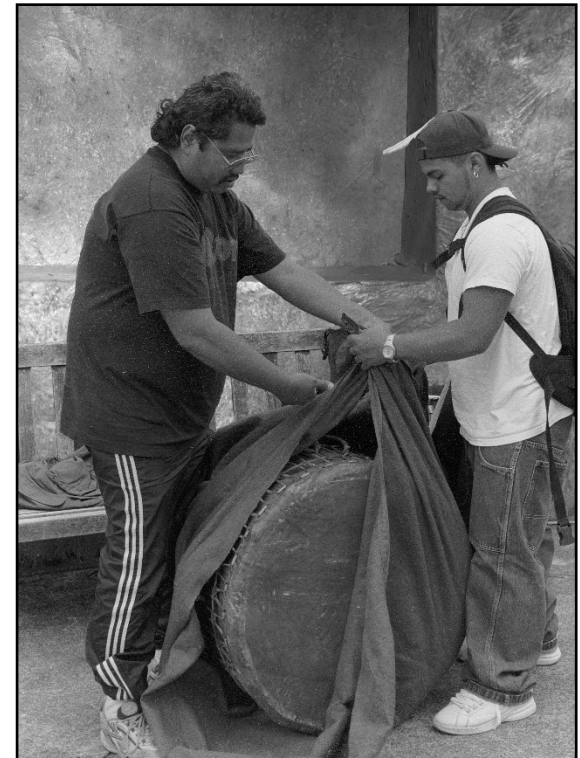
# Final Sample

- 110 young adults, aged 18–25
- 82% Enrolled Tribal Members
- 58% Female, 42% Male
- Grew up:
  - On the Reservation: 46%
  - Rural: 5%
  - Small Town: 21%
  - Suburbs: 10%
  - Urban: 18%



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# AIYVDOS and ACEs

# of ACEs	% of AIYVDOS Participants	% ACEs study (CDC, 2010)
0	30%	36%
4+	25%	13%

The percent of youth in our study with four or more ACEs is almost **TWICE** the rate in the mainstream population.

In mainstream culture, adults who had experienced four or more ACEs compared to those who had experienced none had at least four times higher risk of

- Alcoholism/drug use
- Depression
- Suicide attempts



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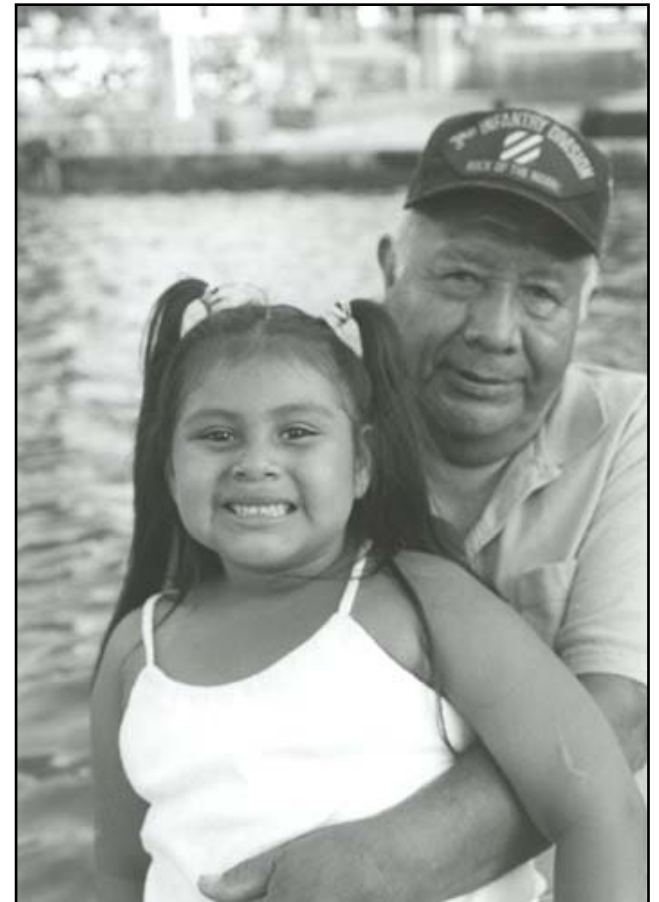
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# The good news...

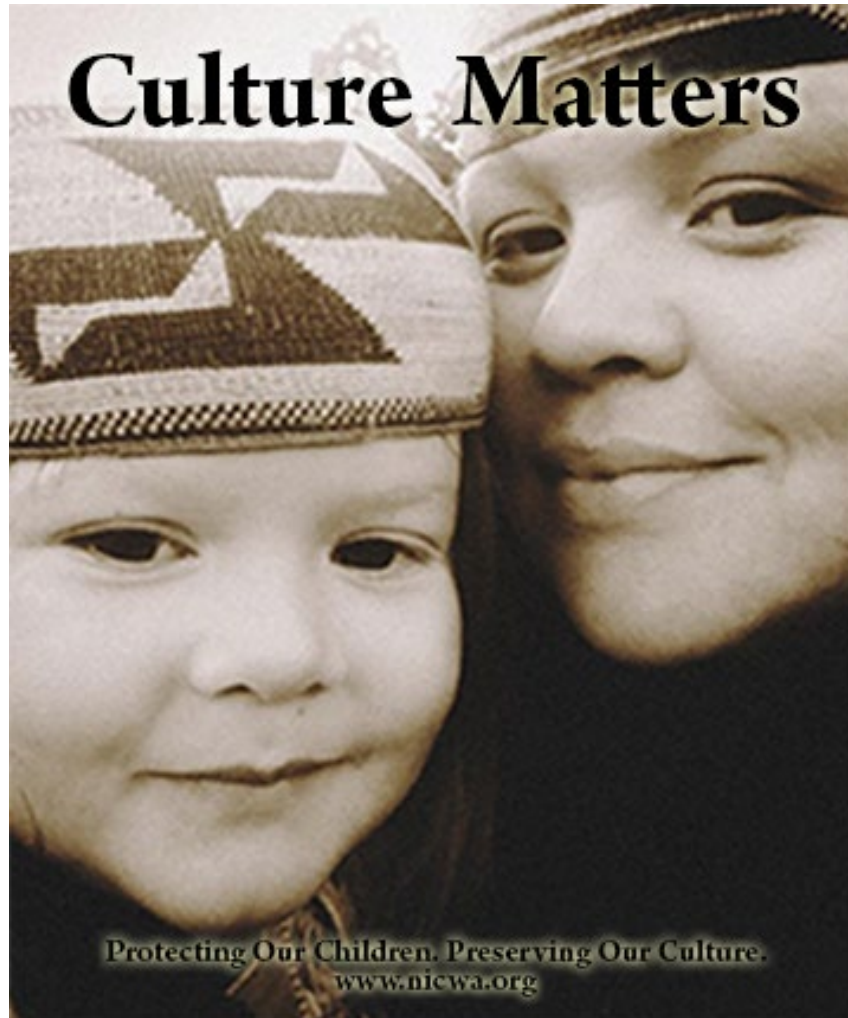


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# PROTECTIVE FACTORS

## What is a Protective Childhood Experience (PCE)?

Positive relationships and experiences while growing up that protect young people from negative influences and behaviors.

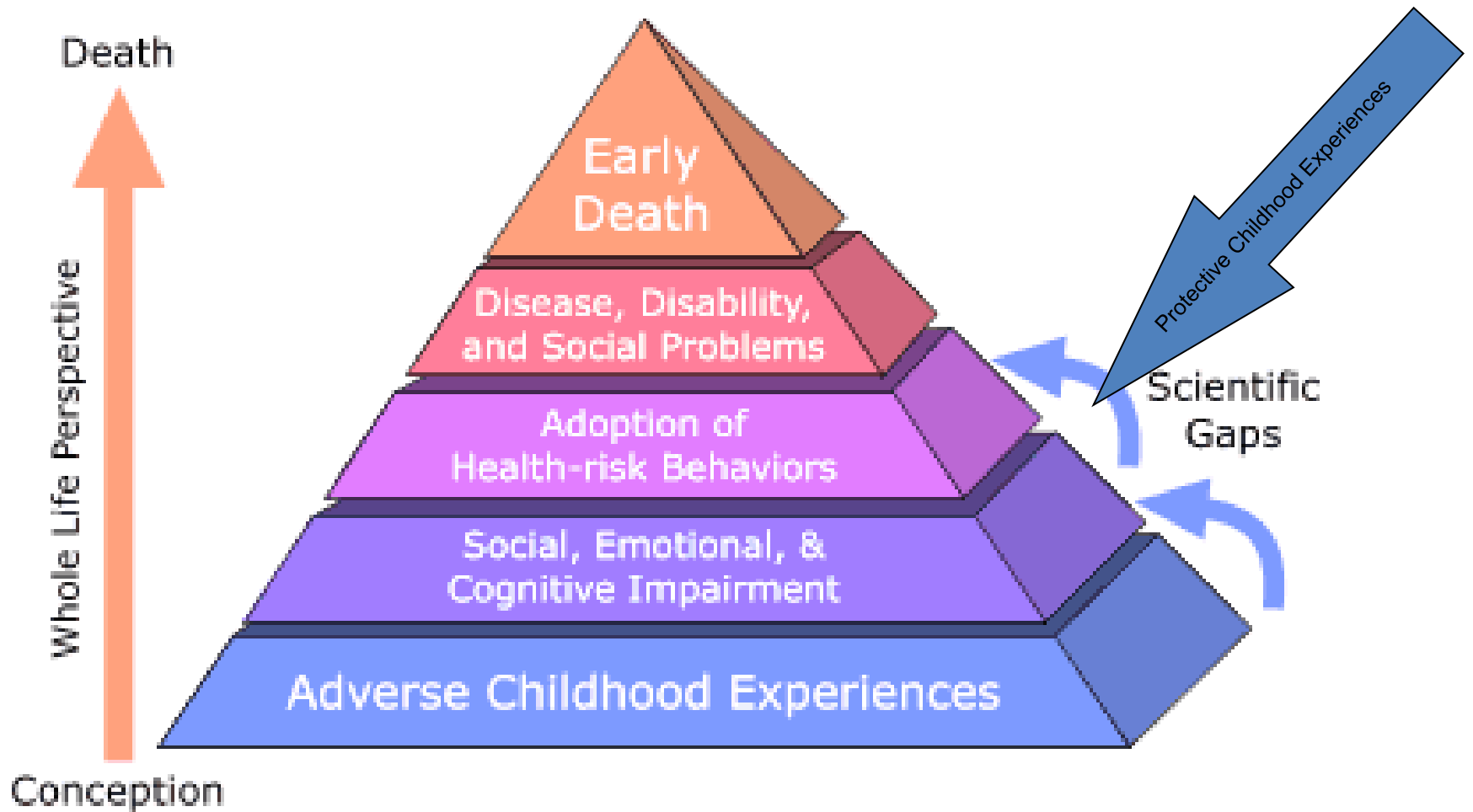
### Specific Indicators:

- Supportive Adults
- Positive Peer Groups
- School Activities
- Family Resources
- Spiritual/Religious Connection
- Connection with Tribal Elders, Learning a Tribal Language
- Safe and Strong Community



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# ACE Scores, PCE Scores, and Juvenile Delinquency

We examined how ACEs and PCEs relate to delinquency by grouping people according to both ACEs and PCEs

- The group with **low** ACEs and **high** PCEs had the lowest delinquency (14%)
- The group with **high** ACEs and **low** PCEs had the highest delinquency (67%)
- Even when ACEs were high, the group with high PCEs had lower delinquency (39%) than the group with low ACEs and low PCEs (46%)



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# ACE scores, PCE scores and Depression

We also examined how ACEs and PCEs relate to depression.

Depression was related to the following:

- Gender (female)
- Higher sexual abuse (ACE)
- Lower safe and strong community (PCE)
- Lower spirituality (PCE)



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# Love Matters



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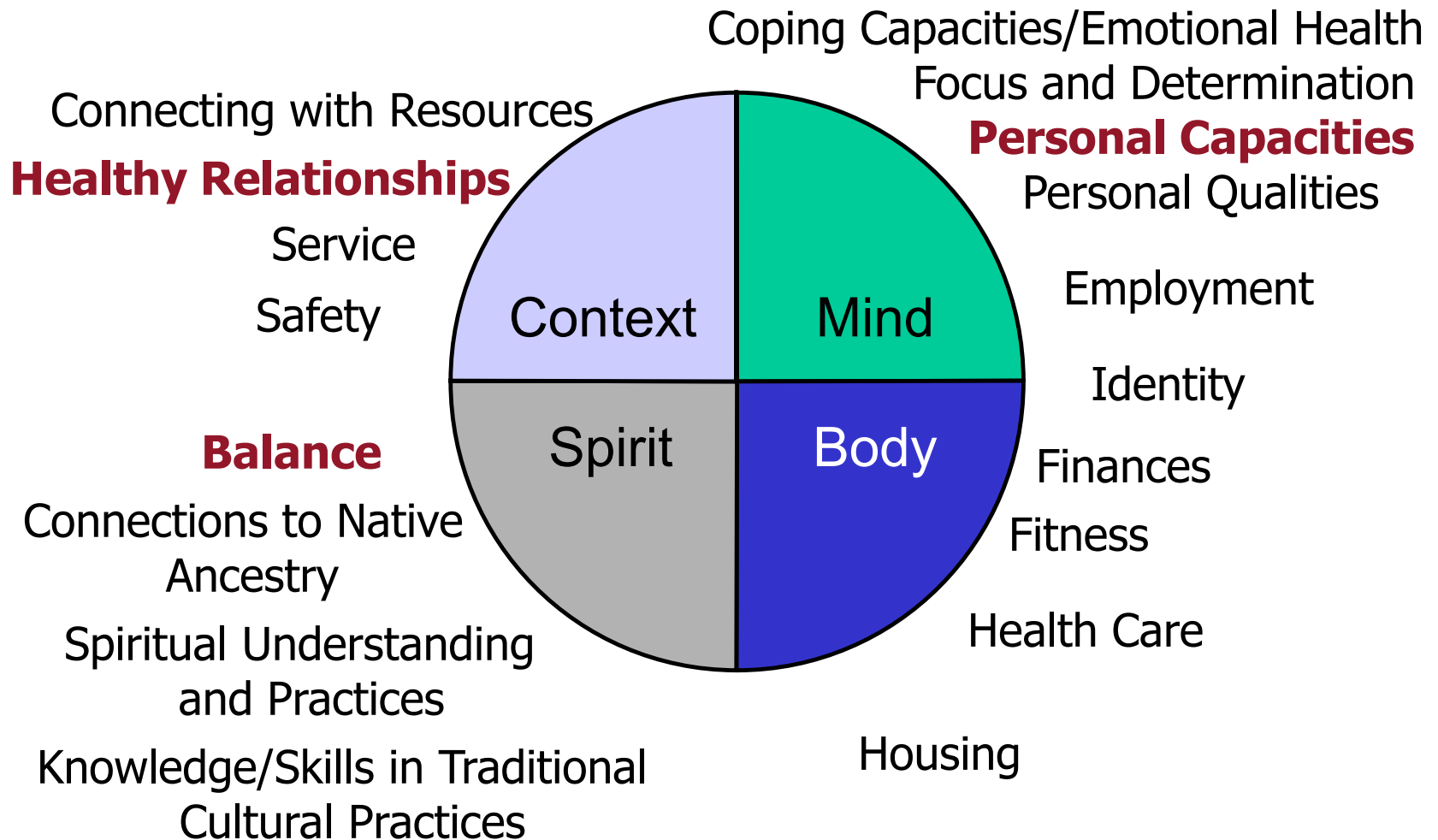
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**grandmas matter**

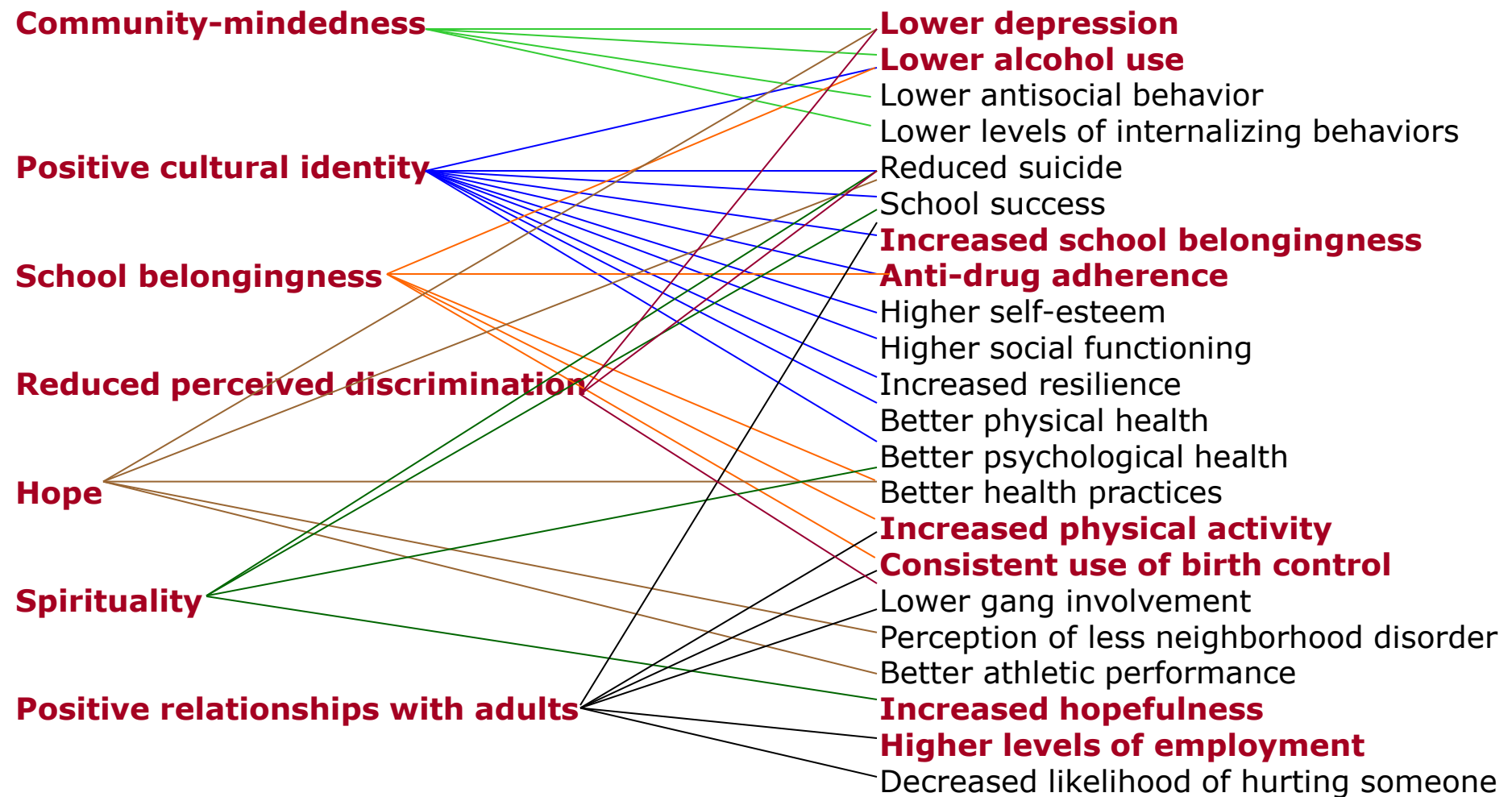
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# Community-Defined Success: Youth



# Relationship of NAYA-identified outcomes to existing evidence



Outcomes in red are NAYA-identified outcomes; all items in right column are outcomes from the research literature.

# What Heals? Resilience and Love

Culture

Hope

Safety

Gratitude

Touch

Laughter

Medicine Plants

Ancestors

Tears

Stories

Generosity

Spirituality

Ceremony

Love



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# What Can Judges Do?

## **Ask about Active Efforts: for example,**

- Engaging the child, parents, extended family and tribe
- Taking the steps necessary to keep siblings together
- Identifying services and actively assisting parents in obtaining these services
- Identifying, notifying and inviting representatives of the tribe to participate in the case
- Diligent search for extended family for assistance and placement



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**FR A.2**

# What Can Judges Do?

## **Ask about Active Efforts: more examples,**

- Offering and employing all available and culturally appropriate preservation services
- Notifying and consulting with extended family to support the child, assure cultural connection and serve as a placement resource
- Making arrangements for interaction and visitation in the most natural setting possible
- Supporting regular visits and tribal home visits consistent with the child's safety



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# Ensure “Active Efforts”

Provide remedial and rehabilitation services to  
**PREVENT** removal



Remove the child from the home **ONLY** if  
imminent physical or emotional damage  
to the child is present



Provide remedial and  
rehabilitative services to  
**ENSURE** reunification if removal  
has occurred



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**§1912(d)**

# Using Other Federal Policies

- Take advantage of other state and federal child welfare laws
  - Notification of relatives (Title IV-E)
  - Relative preference in placement (Title IV-E)
  - Sibling placement (Title IV-E)
  - Waiver of non-safety foster care standards (Title IV-E)
  - State plan re: ICWA compliance (Title IV-B)
  - Not denying placement outside state jurisdiction (Title IV-E)
  - Use of tribal placements and licensing standards/approval (ICWA and Title IV-E)



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# Culture Matters



No Face  
and her  
black  
and  
white  
necklace



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# Thank You



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