HEALING THE HEALERS
Supporting youth-service workers who provide first line support to youth in crisis.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Healing the Healers is an innovative program that addresses secondary trauma experienced by youth-service providers who are often the first line of support for young people in crisis. Daily contact with youth who are in crisis and those who have been exposed to trauma places considerable strain on youth-workers. These workers, often young adults themselves, need safe spaces to process their own trauma and the secondary trauma they experience, a supportive network of peers, hands-on techniques to manage their own self-care, and a therapeutic approach that recognizes and affirms their cultural orientation and experience.

In 2015, the Healing the Healers pilot project was launched in Oakland, California by a grassroots youth-organizing group called Urban Peace Movement, in collaboration with a community health initiative called East Oakland Building Healthy Communities. Thirty-four youth-workers participated in the pilot project.

Participants in the Healing the Healers pilot project had the opportunity to learn more about the nature of trauma, to get perspectives from their peers on issues that were emerging in their work, and to receive support for their own personal self-care and sustainability.

The work was facilitated through healing circles that were held by experienced circle-keepers who combined clinical expertise with traditional cultural healing practices to establish a dedicated space for healing.

In healing circles, youth-workers learned self-care techniques to manage the secondary trauma that they experience in their work. And, they were introduced to healing techniques and practices that they could bring into their own work with Oakland youth.

The Healing the Healers pilot project was created by a planning committee comprised of directors of Oakland youth-serving agencies who came together under the East Oakland Building Healthy Communities Initiative. The agencies involved in project planning included: Urban Peace Movement, Girls Inc., YouthAlive!, Latino Men & Boys, Fremont High School Step to College, Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, Youth Together, and Asian Pacific Islander Youth Promoting Leadership & Advocacy. The project was supported by The California Endowment.

The planning committee hoped that through providing healing spaces for youth-workers, Healing the Healers would help to reduce stress among youth-workers, sustain them in the work, and equip them to better support youth clients and youth members who had been exposed to trauma. Additionally, the planning committee hoped that the project would foster stronger inter-agency collaboration by building stronger bonds between staff members from various organizations.

AT A GLANCE

This pilot project started with thirty-two youth workers facilitated by four experienced circle-keepers who combined clinical and traditional cultural healing practices.
CORE OBSERVATIONS

Upon completion of the pilot project, evaluators made the following core observations:

1) The artful and strategic use of ritual techniques by experienced facilitators was integral to the effectiveness of the program in several respects: first, to establish a sense of purposeful, dedicated space for healing; second, to focus the intentions and awareness of participants toward themselves and one another; and third, as portable techniques learned by participants to integrate into their self-care practices and client-care practices outside of Healing the Healers sessions.

2) Mutual support and group accountability were important to the success of the circles. In one group, evaluators observed that absent members were called or text messaged by fellow participants, creating an atmosphere of group accountability. This sense of buy-in and creation of a shared culture of accountability not only contributed to the success of circle sessions but also modeled techniques that participants could transfer to their continued practice beyond Healing the Healers. One group organized to meet on their own after the end of the program. These examples demonstrate ways that peer support can form a key aspect of the healing process.

3) The hands-on practice of culturally-based healing techniques were more effective and proved to be more transferable to the participants’ own lives and to their own work than the mere presentation of ideas, concepts, or activities about healing that participants were not invited to practice themselves in a group setting. This may suggest that resource materials or curriculum describing activities that participants do not get to practice in a group setting may not be an effective way to train or equip participants to conduct healing work for themselves or with their own clients.

4) Some self-disclosure on the part of circle facilitators was key in helping to set a tone for the circles and it modeled personal openness and vulnerability. This is an approach that appears to be more common within culturally-based healing approaches and not as common within clinical mental health approaches, as many clinical approaches specifically practice non-disclosure on the part of practitioners. A number of participants and facilitators reported that they felt that it was helpful for facilitators to practice some self-disclosure and that it created an atmosphere of relate-ability among participants.
CORE FINDINGS

In addition to the core observations, evaluators made the following findings:

1) Evaluators found that the project demonstrated a clear need and a desire for dedicated healing spaces on the part of youth-workers and the agencies that employ them. Most participants reported that they felt well served by the program with respect to immediate help and support for their own healing. And, most participants also reported that they felt better equipped to serve youth clients in crisis after participating in Healing the Healers.

2) Evaluators found that there were some elements of the pilot project that could use clarification or improvement for future iterations of the program.

   » Evaluators found that participants held varying ideas and expectations about the purpose and intention of Healing the Healers suggesting a lack of commonly understood principles and an insufficient orientation process for participants. And, a small number of participants resisted some of the practices, also suggesting the need for an orientation process that more clearly defines the goals and parameters of the project to prospective participants.

   » Although some participants reported that the program helped them to build relationships with other youth-workers outside of their respective organizations and agencies, the evaluators found that Healing the Healers did not necessarily facilitate interagency collaboration, suggesting that more intentionality needs to be built into the structure of the program in order to better facilitate this kind of collaboration.

   » Lastly, agency support for participation was inconsistent resulting in spotty attendance by participants from agencies that did not prioritize the project.

METHODOLOGY

Brad Erickson, PhD, Lead Evaluator

Brad Erickson is a UC Berkeley-trained cultural anthropologist. His research, writing and teaching focuses on community strategies to overcome inequality. He has taught at five California universities and served a variety of roles at Bay Area nonprofits since the 1980s including campaigner, communications director, and program evaluator.

Mara Chavez-Diaz, PhD Candidate, School of Education, UC Berkeley.

Mara Chavez-Diaz is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley. Her research examines the relationship between healing and social justice with a particular interest in exploring how a healing praxis rooted in Indigenous Knowledges can provide a context for urban youth of color to heal and move beyond trauma. director, and program evaluator.

The evaluators conducted interviews and participant observation in order to investigate questions generated by the Project Planning Committee. The evaluators collected the following data:

» Planning Committee Interviews (3 responses)

» Participant Interviews (8 responses)

» Participant Survey (11 responses, access at https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/SM-YS2XLWD2/)

» Facilitator Interviews (3 responses)

» Staff Interview (1 interview)

» Participant Observation Notes from meetings with staff, Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Circle Meetings, and Temazcalli (not included in report).

» Circle Keeper Job Description

» Planning Committee Recommendations
### Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed in dialogue with members of the project planning committee:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of Sessions and Program Length</strong></td>
<td>The program should allow participants to meet with more frequency than twice per-month and/or for more than 6 months at a time.</td>
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<td><strong>Program Orientation &amp; Participant Expectations</strong></td>
<td>The program application and orientation process should facilitate more clear communication with potential and prospective participants about what the program is and isn’t. This can be facilitated by a mixer-orientation where potential participants can learn about the program and meet the facilitators.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment Process</strong></td>
<td>There should be a more strategic and focused participant recruitment process. Recruitment should be based in relationships that allow and encourage participants to opt-in and be supported to participate by their employing agencies - rather than be mandated to participate by supervisors.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment Focus</strong></td>
<td>More focused recruitment to African American and API organizations and networks is needed.</td>
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<td><strong>Consistency in Approach</strong></td>
<td>The number of facilitators should be limited or reduced in order to create a more consistent approach across the circles.</td>
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<td><strong>Facilitator Disclosure</strong></td>
<td>Facilitators should disclose their approach to potential participants in advance of the program. This would allow participants the ability to choose to work with a facilitator whose approach is a fit for the participant’s needs and orientation.</td>
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<td><strong>Focus on Hands-on Activities</strong></td>
<td>Facilitators should focus on hands-on cultural healing and self-care practices. Participants most need hands-on practices that they can take into their personal practice and that they can introduce into their work with young people.</td>
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<td><strong>Information Sharing Across Circles</strong></td>
<td>Establish consistent structures for facilitators to share tools and approaches across circles and require facilitators to share.</td>
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<td><strong>Physical Space</strong></td>
<td>Ensure that the physical space is appropriate for the circle work. Things to consider are accessibility, quiet and dedicated space, space that allows for drumming, singing, meditation, light movement, the burning of incense, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recognition</strong></td>
<td>Participants should receive a certificate upon completion of a cycle.</td>
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DATA
Interviews with planning committee members

DESIRABLE OUTCOMES

- Build professional and social relationships between participants to support one another, grounded in mutual respect/appreciation for the different approaches of community organizers, teachers, and social workers/direct-service workers.
- Provide safe harbors for people doing this work with trauma.
- A year from now there will be 30-40 people who didn’t know each other before supporting each other and being more effective.
- In Oakland there is a lot of trauma. If the results are good, I hope we can expand this approach in other settings, bring in restorative justice folks, school nurses, counselors, public health and mental health practitioners. I hope it can continue.
- Peer support for youth workers regarding harder issues.

- Safe space to feel vulnerable with adults so they don’t have to carry frustration/pain/burden but can let their guard down.
- Learn from a variety of experiences about ways to support young people.
- Capacity building from a variety of clinical and culturally-rooted strategies for healing.
- Inter-organizational trust.
- Use of local skills and resources.
- Participants feel restored, renewed for their work.
- They gain tools/insights to bring back to their work.
- Develop a community of peers.

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INNOVATION OF THE PROGRAM

- Two different types of people (those with clinical expertise and with cultural/healing traditions) in the room working together.
- The cultural approach fills a hole. In Western culture, there are generally few opportunities to recognize your culture so this approach provides a sense of validation of the history and culture for those who often feel left out or not recognized.
- Ceremonial practices such as ritual openings are not just folkloric; acknowledging your ancestors and/or that which you deeply care about puts you in a different modality. These practices change the tone; this is not just a meeting. You become more open, more receptive to learning new things. Even for those who are hesitant to participate or feel uncomfortable with this approach, it can help you think about what is important to you.
- Getting support from other people of color, bringing support to black and brown youth, community and building solidarity between people who look like them. A safe space for youth workers of color to connect.
- Most professional development is treated as optional and occasional. Because HTH is on-going and built in to their schedules, it can become a regular part of their work and a long-term form of support.
- Participants get multiple experiences of leadership with respect to race, gender and approach from which to build their own self-care and leadership.
- Group therapy rather than individual.
- Provide therapeutic support to people doing unrecognized mental health work.
- Therapy/support usually within an organization, but this builds community
- Cultural healing approach is more accessible.
BENEFITS OF EVALUATION

» At the personal level of the participants, the evaluation can mirror back the experience of the program. At the next level out, people who didn’t participate can learn about this approach.

» Produce a narrative to inform the broader field about the multiple modalities approach. Currently the clinical approach is more common and recognized. The community healer side is more under the radar but this could help culture-based work to come out of the shadows, give people permission to be more open about what they do. And this will give us more tools to work with.

» This approach is urgently needed now because there are so many people experiencing trauma both directly and indirectly. [Context of racial/economic inequality, aggressive policing and community violence.]

» There is high turnover and many people loaded with emotional baggage among youth-workers. If HTH shows benefits, we need to implement it institutionally so that we provide it for all youth workers including teachers.

» We should evaluate six-months after HTH to determine whether workers continue to feel support.

» Demonstrate effectiveness in order to secure funding to continue the program.

» Find out how participants felt about trust building

» Determine if it is the right dosage; e.g. too many meetings or just enough?
1. What Motivated You to Participate in the Healing The Healers Program?

» “Living in the US, I’m colonized. Knowing this project would connect me to elders and would continue the process of decolonization. As a HS teacher at the intersections of identity I embrace, I experience micro-aggressions everyday. I need specific tools to heal and I need to connect to other folks in the community.”

» “We never get time for self-care. We always help others. It’s great to have time to process myself. It puts me in a better place to help others.”

» “The name itself stands out. I wanted to know more. I was hesitant, nervous at first. The sense of smell, the traditions and welcome really stood out. I still had questions about what it was all about and I didn’t really get it until we were meeting as a circle. I really liked calling the spirits, bringing in a peaceful environment. It could be uncomfortable: I wondered, is this religion? More background/explanation of what we were doing would have helped me to relax more in the beginning.”

» “It was immediately appealing, even the phrase Healing the Healers. It was a new idea. We don’t take care of ourselves. I work with the juvenile justice population and have exposure to secondary trauma. Because we have a position of relative power and privilege, we think we don’t need healing. We can’t just ride the highs [of our successes] we can’t compartmentalize; it’s not healing. It’s doing what we tell youth not to do. We don’t recognize ourselves as impacted.”

» “[Employer] made it part of our job. I wanted to try something new. I knew [the Facilitator].”

» “Feeling really overwhelmed working at a high-needs school, and feeling I am not doing enough, even though I am doing way more than I could possibly do; but yet feeling that was not enough, and feeling a constant sense of being drained but then having to make sure I can give to my students and their families. So the thought of having a space to be more balanced and to revitalize myself in order to better serve the population I work with is what drew me in.”

» “I have a long history of working with young folks in different various communities, specifically working with youth of color, specifically with low income folks, LBTGQ youth and have seen how trauma really affected those communities, and I really started this as a young person myself. So as a young person working with young folks while dealing with my own trauma always came up in the work and as I have aged into an adult ally I have realized: okay, this is still happening. How can I take care of myself a little better so I am not traumatizing the young folks I am working with? I can do things, like, I know this is bad, this is hurting them, but never really going past, beyond trauma. Getting away from crisis management to a really healing space and I thought this would be a great opportunity to learn that.”

» “For the last couple of years I have been into self-healing; I have been part of a 3-year program through a college summit that focuses a lot on life coaching/healing; talking about the trauma we have dealt with and about how do we give ourselves options because of the trauma we deal with. We live by default instead of making conscious choices. I met [a Planning Committee Member] at camp & got motivated to join”
2. What is your understanding of healing?

- “A lifelong journey. It takes great courage, dedication. To practice many forms of healing, one size does not fit all. It has to be a 24-7 practice.”

- “Taking a traumatic experience and turning it into a triumph in any way that works to make you feel happy and at peace, to have your body, mind and soul all on the same page.”

- “Still a learning process. Coming from a low-income family, I never knew about emotions. I learned to understand, accept and work with my emotions. I had no clue before Healing the Healers. It wasn’t direct but helped me find out for myself. In Healing the Healers I saw myself in a different way and how I could help myself. I was resistant at first. Being busy you don’t let yourself take care of yourself.”

- “To presume we all have wounds as humans. There is always a place for recognizing that. There are different responses: ignore, self-medicate, go shopping, or... having a witness like a circle, the healing power of story telling/hearing. Being witnessed by others. It’s not always about a solution but about being heard, loved and supported. It can be done in different ways. It is powerful because you are not alone and we can’t always heal ourselves.”

- “Being at peace, stress-free, mind is clear, happy/relaxed, safe.”

- “Healing is not optional, it is vital for thrival. Healing requires a conscious effort; it requires an allotted time dedicated to it. It comes in so many forms. It comes through relationships with other people, making the time to be intimate and to feel held, supported, loved and being given an opportunity to release. It also comes in physical form whether it is receiving body treatment, somatic side in terms of how stress and trauma builds on our physical bodies. It is spiritual, whatever form of spirituality is for anyone making sure one is connected and attentive to their spiritual needs is healing. It runs the gamut of all aspects of us and it happens both individually and in group but very often we need to feel accountable to others to take of ourselves. In many senses it is dependent upon other people; not necessarily doing anything for you but being a mirror or a reflection to remind you or a voice when you are overcome with too many other survival matters. It is something that has to be done regularly. It is preventative. We need to take care of ourselves before we have a blow up or before it is too difficult to amend. Frequency is critical to healing.”

- “I think it’s the process of taking care of yourself and really a place where you are taking care of yourself and you are thriving. Could be in a place where you are not taking care of so many things so there is trauma that you are dealing with and sometimes deep rooted trauma or sometimes the stress of life. So healing really is moving past trauma and managing that stress so you are really thriving in life.”

- “I think it’s two parts. One, I think of healing as very specific to things or traumas we have gone through, pertaining to specific individuals...there is always going to be the scar, and those scars stop us from being able to heal...telling our stories and being able to forgive those individuals is part of our healing. So one piece of healing is the individual trauma we go through and how we heal from those pieces. The second part of healing is more big picture, just because being in America certain things and traumas we go through that we have to heal from. Part of that is how we see ourselves I have been taught as a black man how I am supposed to see myself and value myself and that takes another level of healing. It’s not like it’s something I can turn off. I live in an environment where that is how people see me in a certain light. That scar is not like I can just wipe it away and it’s not going to happen again. It’s not a specific event but something that I will have to live through so its a constant healing I have to maintain so that I don’t get lost in everyone’s else image and I have to be able heal myself: this is who I am, I know who I am, and I need to remind myself of that every day. So that’s the ongoing healing we all have to do. We all live in a society in which there are labels that are put on us; some we take up that aren’t really true. Also, just the ways we see ourselves as far as the physical or mental. Healing as a community is the third piece. How do we heal as a community? Part of that is trust. We live in constant insecurity; that another level of healing when we can see the entire community as healthy.”
3. How do you integrate healing in your practice with young people?

» “I’m present. That is an act of healing. It’s not often they see a brown, queer, child of working class immigrants. I’m vulnerable, I help them identify their feelings. I focus on community building, peer relationship building. I’d love to use medicine but don’t know if I can burn sage in my classroom.”

» “A big part is story-telling, telling stories and figuring out how to turn a bad story into a positive outcome.”

» “I work with a difficult community of students with trauma. I need to learn to help without carrying the weight. My program is very structured and it was hard to add anything to the schedule but they needed something else: healing. I work with 3rd and 4th graders. They came in with anger and attitude so I changed the environment. We made a box with positive quotes on it and when they got there the girls would put their stress in the box, they just knew how to do it without me explaining it. The facilitator would empty the box out the window, just throw out the stress so they could start anew. This helped create a different setting.”

» “We do restorative justice, which assumes we are interconnected. We sit in a circle, create a safe container for loving, nonjudgmental witness. It doesn’t happen quickly. It’s a long haul, unconditional, non-hierarchical. It’s about naming power, showing up. It takes a lot of restraint.”

» “Circle three times per week. Honor the four directions, pláctica (discussion): respect and listen. Work with mascaras (masks) on masculinity.”

» “Community circle once a week to check in about how we are feeling; monthly reflection piece: kids looks at a piece that they have written related to their social & academic learning/goals; appreciations. Write message of gratitude/compliment to another student; building community support to affirm positive behavior; check-in and check-out systems with a small group of students who need more support (6-10 students). Students get points for positive behavior and get a prize at the end of the week (provides a sense of accountability). Preventative measure/reflection as a form of healing. Play a lot of music; opportunities to have joy and rhythm throughout the day. Mindfulness.”

» “It’s both with young people I work with but also with the adult residents. Tools around self care check-ins, resourcing yourself, emergency plans so in a moment of stress who are you going to call; what is a technique you can use to distress in the moment; what are some triggers, what are the things that stress you and how can we support you in the moment and then also other ways to get out of the big things people are stressed about. Create an altar setting, a thing that helps us create a focus point so we can be healing, a lot of breathing exercises, a lot of fun games; just fun and also some deeper stuff, a lot writing, integrating both with youth and adults, and with staff—integrate it at all levels.”

» “Just started working on this. It’s hard to be able to teach someone how to heal if you haven’t learned how to heal yourself. You have to be able to go through it to understand it. Now I can try to help others go through something that I have gone through; storytelling; telling our stories, every time we tell our stories we heal; find an outlet to tell your story: poetry, written, etc.; educate my kids on a healthy lifestyle.”
4. What motivates you do healing work?

» “Our youth: brown, black, queer, trans, are dying. Liberation begins with self.”

» “My mom was killed when I was one. Having such an experience and feeling like a victim instead of a victor, one way I change that is to hear other people’s stories, I don’t feel alone.”

» “The result I see. It works. It works for me and it works for my girls. It takes practice. I’m still learning the language.”

» “I used to be a nurse. It comes from love but it’s patriarchal [in the sense that the client may feel that] “I’m broken and you’re fixing me.”

» “My family, to give back to my community.”

» “I feel it takes me back to my childhood. Grew up in a much more punitive environment, its generational, sometimes its family. From an early age I experienced a lot of not being heard or seen. It made me more aware. I was not allowed to speak; I experienced this drive to have everyone be heard. As a result I’m more aware to the needs of others to be heard. Part of healing is making sure our voices come out because when we hold it in, it builds up to the point that we may not recognize where it started. To attempt to heal requires so much effort because you don’t know what you are unpacking anymore. Working with youth, I want to make them aware of that; start speaking, let out don’t hold it in.”

» “I have learned various cultural practices and so how do you respect the various cultural practices in the group and bring those cultural practices without tokenizing, co-opting cultures that are not your own; that is always a challenge. A lot of the young people I work with come from a specific religious practice, and so calling on some traditional practices sometimes calls into question their religious practices. So how do you balance that? I think the initial hard thing is getting young people be open to it in the beginning; once they get past “what is this weird thing?” it works. Also trying to balance it out so that it’s not therapy because young people might spot that right away.”

» “Biggest challenge is money; you need money to be able to be healthy. Poor folks don’t always have access; i.e. to counseling or healthy food. Peer pressure. Teenagers are more influenced by peers. You can’t touch every student, getting them to come to certain programs is challenging. It’s powerful when you can get the entire group to go!”

5. What are the challenges and/or tensions in integrating healing when working with urban youth of color?

» ““Working within oppressive institutions. The primary purpose of education is to socialize workers into the workforce and does not include time to integrate healing. There is a mandated curriculum and no resources.”

» “Building their trust. If you don’t have trust they won’t be comfortable telling you their stories.”

» “Sometimes they won’t be accepting or won’t show up. Not just the students but the parents. You have to be careful not to step on toes or cultural tradition. 95% of the girls are African American.”

» “Trauma is huge. What people see as lack of commitment or other faults often comes from not believing that you have a future, lack of trust, feeling abandoned and having internalized the sense that “I don’t matter” or “I can’t trust.” There is a reality behind this such as lack of jobs, generational incarceration, generational lack of graduation, and profiling. They get violated for doing nothing and the first offense gets you started, to being institutionalized, in a way that it doesn’t for white kids in Danville doing the same things.”

» “You might not have the resources to help people. Dealing with immaturity with patience. Not taking things personally.”

» “Time. Healing in general takes some time and you can’t rush through it. Having to balance certain obligations with our work in our daily schedules and allowing time for life to flow. Talk about “low achieving schools,” “results,” and “test scores” are constraints; but open the door for healing. The fear of not responding in a way that will maintain safety can shut someone down. I can’t say everything I want because I am not the “parent” and have to choose words wisely.”

» “I have learned various cultural practices and so how do you respect the various cultural practices in the group and bring those cultural practices without tokenizing, co-opting cultures that are not your own; that is always a challenge. A lot of the young people I work with come from a specific religious practice, and so calling on some traditional practices sometimes calls into question their religious practices. So how do you balance that? I think the initial hard thing is getting young people be open to it in the beginning; once they get past “what is this weird thing?” it works. Also trying to balance it out so that it’s not therapy because young people might spot that right away.”

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6. What are the rewards in doing this work?

» "It changes and saves lives. Many students are lost and have no purpose. When they begin to heal, they have a direction and are able to be taught. They become healthy, productive human beings."

» "Seeing people transform and grow, seeing homicides and crime decrease. Building trust and relationships and all of that good stuff."

» "Giving girls skills to get through difficult times and heal on their own."

» "Changing someone’s life."

» "Rewards are seeing kids who look weathered or already beaten down and they start to perk up and speak, "I don’t like when you do X to me or I appreciate when you …" and they engage I am valuable and that really motivates me. That to me is a reward just ingraining a sense of listening on the part of those who are always ready to speak and don’t allow others to speak. And seeing those kids who don’t have for whatever reason less desire or motivation to speak their voices, to speak up is a reward for me. Make it a point to acknowledge their efforts.”

» "It allows people to be joyful in the work even when we are trying to manage a lot of social justice issues that are very depressing. Personally, it has allowed me to find space in-between work."

» "You feel good. Also helping others heal and seeing the power of that is powerful; of changing their perspective, giving people options. The listening campaign at [a Youth Center] youth shared that how they cope is through drugs. Seeing people change their behaviors is a big reward. Another reward is that it builds community. Once you are able to connect with someone and be able to help someone people don’t often have a safe space to go to so to be able to go to safe place where you can heal instead of being hurt builds community."

7. With your participation in the Healing the Healer program, do you feel better equipped to support young people who have been exposed to trauma or are in crisis? If so, in what ways?

» "My participation was short lived, and introductory (I missed three sessions). Yes, but I need more guidance and exposure. I don’t have enough practice. I wish they could offer an apprentice program. Think about how long [the Facilitator] studied to get where he is."

» "Yes, I got the chance to hear about other people’s experience dealing with youth and that gave me a fresh outlook."

» "I do but I wish there was more time to acquire more resources. Attendance was poor so that hurt our ability to learn from each other. We needed more of that. It was more about learning to feel. I needed more hands on."

» "I love this circle. It could be instrumental in making me better at my job. Attendance is very poor in my circle. There has to be a commitment. We don’t see ourselves as people who need healing: [a Cultural Healer] said that to be the eagle we need to be the butterfly in the cocoon. In the future, applicants should be interviewed face-to-face to find out their needs."

» "I feel empowered not only with my students but also their parents and staff. "Unpacking" with parents. Applied tools learned in HTH with parents, i.e. [the Facilitator] asking deep questions to reflect upon. Tool gained in HTH: being able to ask critical questions to heal oneself and be able to do it at your pace. Use questions with students; implementing some of the somatic and drama play activities from HTH with students have helped students to build awareness."

» "I think that the tools that I have really gained have been around cultural practices and how to incorporate them into the everyday work that I am doing. I come with a lot of youth development work and you get a lot of support around therapy. It’s about how to manage a crisis and do referrals and I think this allowed me to do something different to hold the space and move through it."

» "Yes. I do. One, I have learned some practices that I can use with my students. I learned new strategies workshops I can do with my students. Two, a better understanding, [The facilitator] did a training around trauma and we watched videos and that helped us to understand how it affects the body and the mind. I can learn how to help the young people I am working with because I can recognize the signs. It also sparked me want to learn more."
8. Did you learn new tools for supporting young people? What were they?

» “Yes, next year I want a classroom altar, they can bring photos of those they lost and it would support the students. I want a self-care station. I want to continue with healing circles.”

» “Yes definitely. I learned that some youth may feel that I’m giving others more time. I realized you have to make sure they feel treated equally.”

» “Yes. I incorporate songs to my welcome and closing. [In circle] we would open and close with songs and I had no idea how powerful that was.”

» “Yes, One thing I really appreciate is that [the Facilitator] created a lot of space for us individually in the group setting. We were able to give each person feedback on what they were going through; coaching in the moment. I want to try with my students, all of us come with advice. I would like to see how students can interact with one another and help each other heal. I want to implement healing circles with students.”

» “Yes (see 7.) I also got more connected to [the Facilitator], felt more supported.”

» “Yes, I gained helpful strategies/tips from other participants in HTH circle to problem-solve challenges facing at work. i.e. facilitating circles with parents.”

» “Also learned how to call upon my colleagues in the circle about how they are doing things. I have a small network of people I can rely on.”

» “Yes. I learned new ways like limpias (ritual cleansings), on myself and friends.”

» “Definitely.”

» “This is the first time. Now I want to venture out. I’m open to experience about my own health. Things have come up that I need to heal from.”

» “Yes.”

» “Yes, I already knew [the Facilitator]. He’s honest.”

» “To the utmost, I was considering quitting teaching and feeling overwhelmed. I didn’t go in with any expectations but it has surpassed anything that I could have expected. It provided me with a something to look forward to; to a place where I knew I was going to be able to release, let things go, and to share my burdens, to relieve some of the burden, to be able to connect with other people who are all experiencing [similar things]. Telling group that I am depressed. HTH provided a constant reminder that you are going to be okay. I always got the sense: we are here for you. Leaving the session like I was carrying their support, their love, with me, helped me carry through. Check-ins with each other between sessions, these little things have really helped sustain me. My workload became more intense. HTH the only place I knew I could go release, and feel completely unjudged, and safe. This bond that has been established carries through and I think we need that. Going to circle every two weeks is that reconnection; space for us to connect with others.”

» “It has. For example, how are you taking care of yourself. I have been trying to do that with my co-workers, supporting them, and have been doing those practices a bit more. I think healing is about self-care and checking-in, dealing with physical and emotional stuff and now I am trying to improve.”

» “I did have some healing. There was plenty of opportunity for us to talk, share, and the feedback piece, that was powerful. I got some self-healing. I took away some more practices that I can use individually. Yes I do feel lighter.”

9. Have you received support for your own healing and stress-reduction practice?

» “Yes.”

» “Definitely.”

» “This is the first time. Now I want to venture out. I’m open to experience about my own health. Things have come up that I need to heal from.”

» “Yes.”

» “Yes, I already knew [the Facilitator]. He’s honest.”

» “To the utmost, I was considering quitting teaching and feeling overwhelmed. I didn’t go in with any expectations but it has surpassed anything that I could have expected. It provided me with a something to look forward to; to a place where I knew I was going to be able to release, let things go, and to share my burdens, to relieve some of the burden, to be able to connect with other people who are all experiencing [similar things]. Telling group that I am depressed. HTH provided a constant reminder that you are going to be okay. I always got the sense: we are here for you. Leaving the session like I was carrying their support, their love, with me, helped me carry through. Check-ins with each other between sessions, these little things have really helped sustain me. My workload became more intense. HTH the only place I knew I could go release, and feel completely unjudged, and safe. This bond that has been established carries through and I think we need that. Going to circle every two weeks is that reconnection; space for us to connect with others.”

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» “I did have some healing. There was plenty of opportunity for us to talk, share, and the feedback piece, that was powerful. I got some self-healing. I took away some more practices that I can use individually. Yes I do feel lighter.”
10. Did you feel welcomed? Did any specific words or actions contribute to (or take away from) your sense that you were welcome?

» “Absolutely. [The Facilitator] is great. At the opening ceremony they asked what I wanted from this experience. I said unlearning patriarchy and a number of people supported my request. When I bring up issues of queer/trans folk there are nods of acceptance and recognition.”

» “Yes. The number one thing was group agreements about how the meeting should go.”

» “Yes, all the time. We slowly built up a really strong group (of those who came). Snacks and songs and check-ins that were open ended.”

» “Yes, mindful check-in.”

» “Yes.”

» “I definitely felt welcomed. The specific things were the opening ceremony, the calling of the directions and calling of ancestors. In the smaller group the facilitator was very warm and welcoming.”

» Came in late in the program, 2/3rd meeting but felt really welcomed; people were welcoming, smiles, hugs, and warm greetings.

11. Did you feel safe in sharing personal experience in the circle? Did any specific techniques contribute to (or take away from) your confidence to share?

» “All the time. The elder holding the space, modeling vulnerability is really important for students and made the space safer. He took risks telling stories.”

» “Yes. No, I tell my stories all the time, I’m an open book.”

» “Yes, it took some time. One activity was to touch something on the centerpiece, for example a stick for the anger inside you. Another was worries, and two more I can’t remember. Everybody opened up and vented. It was a powerful moment.”

» “Yes. [The Facilitator] is good at nonjudgmental reflection. You feel heard.”

» “Yes. Being told it was confidential. Having [the Facilitator] model for people, how to do it.”

» “I felt very safe in sharing very personal and surface things and I think there were some practices that [the Facilitator] taught us around naming things. [I learned to] use things from the earth to help healing. People shared. I shared. Everyone shared.”
12. Did you feel that your experience was acknowledged and treated with respect?

» “Yes.”
» “Definitely, yes.”
» “Yes. Nobody judged or criticized. I learned language to use with adults, for example ‘I hear you.’”
» “Yes, a lot.”
» “Yes I do and it carries over into work.”
» “All the time. I’m at the beginning. The four directions prayer. I can’t even pronounce the Nahautl words. I’m paddling.”
» “Yes I do. Other people’s stories are a big part of my healing. When they put themselves out, made themselves vulnerable, I felt I wasn’t alone. I learned more about youth services than I thought I would.”

» “I’m still learning. I do feel confident to heal myself with or without a program. HTH helped me to see it. Oh yeah, definitely. Just knowing you are going through the same thing. You don’t feel alone, you feel supported.”
» “I’ve had an awakening that this is needed. I could use more practice. Twice a month isn’t enough. [The Facilitator] brings it back to you, healing the healer. Burden lifted? I feel lighter for having had the opportunity to prioritize new perception. Self-care is not selfish. My burden is not yet lifted.”
» “Yes I can do it. Like when I use a story to get everyone quiet. Find my narrative for every kind of lesson and learn from my mistakes.”

13. Do you feel better equipped to engage your own stress and healing? Has your burden been lifted?

» “The four elements; my altar has all four now. I didn’t know before. I used sage, copal and cedar before but now I have the feather. I clear the energy in my home five times a month and I use limpias on myself frequently.”
» “[The Facilitator] did a diagram but I can’t remember it now. The “who are you” exercise when you ask/answer that question repeatedly, was a very good exercise.”
» “Breathing methods, tapping method, creating routines in our lives to make us happy. I didn’t used to take breaks, now I do and I know what to do. I cry if I need to. A lot of things.”
» “Paying attention to my own body: what is it saying? Mindfulness, intentionality, who are you doing this for. [The Facilitator] handed out material on self-care techniques but we didn’t practice them.”
» “Drums and limpias”

14. What tools did you acquire to engage your own stress and healing?

» “A commitment, I am very clear on lots of strategies for self-care but I have a really hard time committing to it. This learning I need to have a commitment to my own self-care the commitment of engaging in self-care is a tool; hard time asking for help. Stop and think about what I need. Tool of asking myself what do I need to be ok is something I picked up; self-care. I am taking time with friends; not feeling guilty about it, and making the time for self-care: i.e. time with friends, massages.”
» “In the beginning there was a checklist to see how you are taking care of yourself. It was a useful tool and I shared that with others. Helpful strategies on how to improve in various areas of life.”
» “One. Drumming. Drumming in a group felt very meditating; morning meditation.”
15. Do you have a self-care plan?

- “For sure. To be the healthiest person you can be is revenge against oppression. You are better able to resist. I build a circle of love and peace around me. To resist institutions of power you have to heal yourself first and then change lives. Empowered communities are devastating to those in power.”

- “Yes. I make sure I play my music more. Spend time with my daughter. Working out two or three times a week and make it realistic.” [At this point we had a longer conversation about the challenges of getting access to a gym and juggling all of this as a single mother, how she drew on Christianity and how her life revolves around being a mother.]

- “Yes but I haven’t been good at it. I eat breakfast now but I didn’t used to. I do kickboxing as a release. I didn’t think I needed it before.”

- “It’s more reactive than proactive. [The Facilitator] said to do something everyday. But we re as much in need of support but we don’t recognize it. You need to recognize that you matter enough.”

- “I find time for myself, take time when I need it. Don’t take work home. I hum a lot, which is calming.”

16. Can you tell me about the beginnings and endings of your circle sessions?

- “Four directions prayer, one person would open the circle. Check out was a reflection on experience with a closing word. Sage/copal, bringing food and having an altar at every session.”

- “Always start with a check in. Then either an exercise or discussion about trauma. [The Facilitator] spent a lot of time talking about history, slavery etc. We can go over the past but I think we need to discuss what happens now. What we need to do now, like build relationships. Meeting with the police, protesting, but talking about the past or slavery doesn’t help. Wal-Mart is now: are you shopping there? That’s what matters most. I just got in touch with my own happiness. Being able to forgive people, I’ve got to live what I preach, peace and love, and own up and change my life around.”

- “Songs I already talked about and always check-ins. At the end the song would be happy or inspiring, never sad.”

- “Open the circle, check-in, 4 directions.”
Question #16, continued.

» “We did a meditation a couple of times. We talked a lot about families. Our kids are fighting for our love because we help clients more than our families. Story telling is most effective for me. I hadn’t really heard stories about deportation and how that affected youth and why they lash out.”

» “The tradition of calling the directions I liked a lot. At first I was doubtful but I felt good doing it. I needed more explanation. After the beginning we stopped doing that. Later we called our own spirit, someone who passed on to support you. Everyone welcomed them. Passing the baton to another person speaking. There was never pressure to talk but only if you felt like it.”

» “No.”

» “Deep breathing, silence, sage and copal, Florida water. You smell that and it feels like you’re in circle as our ancestors did it. Calm and protecting. The things I learn I want to do it for the kids and the staff.”

» “Close eyes. In touch with our bodies; middle of session if something heavy came up the copal was passed around; quieting techniques to signal that session was going to begin; mindfulness strategies; consistency with techniques.”

» “Centering exercises around breathing and acknowledging tension our bodies hold; grounding yourself with the earth; tapping techniques (clinical approach).”

» “A variety of ways of learning. Some were physical, i.e. drumming, theatre of the oppressed, presentations. There was a lot of space to tell our stories and talk; that is what made us really close. That’s a part of healing that is not individual it’s in a group for a reason, to able to support each other in a group.”

» “The languages used made me aware of what I need to learn. Rituals made me inspired to continue the journey. That [the Facilitator] was born and raised in [a Bay Area city] — I could tell he had a similar background to mine. He was able to code switch, Spanglish made me feel safe as did his experience with [a life challenge]. He has overcome hardships similar to mine. A facilitator as a healer with experience helps establish trust.”

» “I’m not sure. It was more about history as a technique to plan our present.”

» “I don’t know if there was enough. At first yes but then it dropped off. I would have liked it if everyone brought in some kind of cultural tradition to build acceptance of diversity.”

» “There were a couple of sessions honoring elders, etc., but it was mostly referential.”

» “Nothing was ever excluded. Links back to opening circle, different traditions were introduced. I didn’t assume everyone knew. Culture did not supplant the purposes of healing but there was an acceptance that there are different cultural practices for healing and everyone in the circle respected the means that were being used without feeling that other cultural traditions wouldn’t be respected. [The Facilitator] always invited us to bring things. Different elements from different cultures were integrated, integration of different cultural methods for healing without one necessarily being in a place of predominance over others.”

» “I think it was a central practice and part of our circle. The facilitator had different cultural practices that were across various communities that were helpful. Also, a question came up about whether it is appropriate to deploy various authentic cultural practices if they are not your own.”

» “Essential that we incorporated culture, such as the drums. Often, when people think of healing, its the clinical way and very Eurocentric. For my people that is not the way we always heal. There is a piece that involves talking, or therapy, but there is also our cultural experiences, such as the Temazcalli, that was powerful. There were plenty of opportunities that we talked about healing within our individual cultures, both the good and the bad.”

18. How would you describe the role of culture and ceremony in your circle?
19. What do you see as the benefits or drawbacks to combining conventional clinical approaches with the approach of cultural healing?

» “Restorative justice circles use that now. It’s important to acknowledge where it comes from.”

» “I’m not sure. Being in a big group instead of one-on-one and hearing different stories and the great diversity of experience. I don’t see any drawbacks.”

» “The benefit is that it gives you confidence. You learn a lot about and reevaluate yourself. I would like more interrogation about feelings. More like the clinical approach. At work we have a group therapist, which helps. Combine both approaches more.”

» “Both are important. I have a bias for the cultural, it’s more inclusive and expansive but we need clinical too. It’s a hard marriage between the two paradigms. There’s so much grey area in cultural, nuances of spirituality, etc. One-on-one clinical approach can be offensive to the person you’re supposed to support. There is potential to integrate these approaches.”

» “It’s more culturally sensitive. Bringing drums and limpiezas to the schools will work there.”

» “It would draw more people in when you mix the clinical with different cultural ways of healing. You have to draw from any and all means of healing depending on the people involved. Also more clinical forms of healing tend to come from one culturally gendered perspective and is not very flexible. So when you look at things from a clinical point of view it presupposes that one is of that orientation only and it passes judgment on how people deal and process things which is not so much the case from traditional healing methods. For example when you look at grief from a clinical perspective there is no ritual. Clinical approaches look at grief as isolated trauma; you engage in some talk therapy and you move on. In traditional healing we know one never moves on from the cycle of life; it’s cyclical. Clinical approaches can come up with a more acute outburst of trauma but it’s not necessarily healing. As oppose to going from the basis of clinical therapy and integrating some cultural healing, I almost feel if you flip the dynamic and you have a strong base of cultural healing in all its various forms and as needed draw from clinical approaches that would be a more appropriate model. And as it applies in how we work in HTH it has been more of that modality […] HTH circles have more understanding of the scientific meanings of what things are yet the strategies for self-healing and self-care were coming from more cultural and traditional bases of healing.”

» “They are hard to combine. Clinical practices seem to be like: what’s wrong with you? What is the bad behavior you are doing? Therapy is little better in trying to help you deal with it. Cultural practices come from a different place; what are the resources you have to make yourself better? The models are conflicting. Cultural practices are about openness and being open about the things you are dealing with. We are healing all the time. I think that they are different approaches and so to merge those two approaches is sometimes difficult.”

» “It’s very beneficial. I appreciate some of the clinical approaches especially around understanding how the body works and the brain functions because it helps you understand the other side, the cultural part. The cultural part influences the brain. It makes most sense to do both.”
20. Have you gained knowledge about the services provided by other youth support organizations?

» “We have access but we haven’t really built a network. We need intentional work to bring us together.”

» “Yes.”

» “No. We said we wanted to but we didn’t. I still have no idea about the mission or program of the other people.”

» “A tiny bit but because people didn’t show up regularly, no.”

» “It’s a way to network but not much”

» “Absolutely! We’re building a web of support. It’s amazing to know what people are doing and who to contact.”

» “Yes, part of our learning is that folks had to do a presentation about the work that they do and their best practices. We worked through with some of the challenges that folks are dealing with.”

» “Yes, I know more about the various organizations that were in my circle.”

21. Have you invited staff from other organizations to participate in your organization’s events or program work?

» “No. Not yet. I will invite one person to a queer cumbia event which is also a healing space.”

» “No.”

» “No.”

» “Yes, I just did. I’ve had a couple of brief parking lot conversations. There’s so much potential that didn’t manifest.”

» “No.

» “Yes, went to one of the events hosted by one of the other participants. I had prior collaboration with some of the folks.”
22. Have you been invited by staff from other organizations to participate in their events or program work?

- "Not yet."
- "Yes, but it hasn’t panned out. At least not yet. That was an optional part of it, not the main thing. One challenge is that some of the organizations were very different. If they work with incarcerated youth, young men versus young women, it’s hard to see how you would collaborate."
- "No but it would be helpful, even amazing."
- "No, but two people asked me to meet outside."
- "No."

23. How did Healing the Healers change the way you feel about your work?

- "I feel inspired. It made it clear to me how important it is to continue with community and family. I would love to work closely with an elder to continue."
- "I don’t know. I just made me more into what I’m doing."
- "Understanding that it’s okay that you feel hopeless sometimes but that you can get help and that there is a limit."
- "Very validating. I’m doing this for a reason. Naming that I am a healer. I’m doing this for a bigger reason."
- "The advice that [the Facilitator] gives reinforces what I know and makes you feel good about the work you do. You can’t save everyone. Your palabra (word) must mean something."
- "It made me feel like I don’t have to do everything by myself. That I have resources and people with more expertise in the areas that can give support and I can pass on resources. It rekindles some of my internal fire because I had lost a little bit of sight of the positive work that can be done in this capacity at my school. It’s given me a different lens, a more expansive view of what good can come of working together in connection as opposed to isolation."
- "I think it made me really shift the way I do the work and hopefully organizational."
- "It made me really want to incorporate healing more into my work."
24. Is there anything else you want to say about Healing the Healers?

> "It would be great to see this program in all of our schools. A problem for me was the school year. At the end of the year I was too overcommitted to attend. It would be good to plan around educators’ schedules. Once a week for three months would be better, more concentrated. It should include more sweats, once a month to build community."

> "Overall it’s a good program and way to build, and learn about each other’s programs of healing work and how to integrate that into your work."

> "I wish it wasn’t during work hours. It was really hard to go back to work when you feel so emotional. But I really appreciated it; it changed how I view myself. It was a reality check. Consistent meetings were a reminder to work on yourself: accountability. I wish we could meet as a whole group more often."

> "I really believe in it. I hope it continues and builds. It’s worth forging ahead with this huge unmet need."

> "Being there with [a Facilitator] is really good. Some co-workers (in other circles) say it doesn’t benefit them."

> "I think it was a good long practice and think there was a lot of opportunity so the meeting times were a lot. It feels weird to close. I have questions about what are the next steps to this. How do we keep in touch; how do we keep this work moving with our peers. Having a peer circle outside of your work is very helpful."

> "It would be good if it were longer; be able to learn more techniques, not enough time; figure out how we can continue to connect in a group setting."
What would you identify as lessons learned from Healing the Healers?

» “There was not enough preparation.” Good idea to collectively bring agencies together. And administrators say they want to do this. Staff were under the impression they were going to be supported for their time and I had a number of participants who said that their job interfered with their attendance. Do they have support or do they not have support?

» Healing the Healers. A lot of people were in pain. Talking about really profound wounds from childhood. Struggling themselves how to balance their own pain.

» Make up of group very diverse and that got in the way of some of the people. Half Chicano men, half lesbian women.

» If you are going to make a commitment to ceremony, you have to show up.

» One session was dedicated to process, one for educational training. If participants had a choice more were interested in more sessions for processing; time for themselves, time to cry, this time was more effective for them.

» Some were interested in applying what they were learning, asking for more handouts to take with them on what they were learning.

» Time is very difficult. Some struggled with schedules and made the effort to come when possible. Consistency is something that is hard. Part of life. Three members had to change jobs.

» The possibility – maintained a connection out of the group itself. Created their own processes to check in with themselves, i.e. messenger. I put it out there but they made it happen and this made the group strong.

» Setting the tone from the beginning was very important. I was willing to talk about who I am, my struggles, my history with violence. All this set the tone for them to also want to share. Self-disclosure set the tone.

» Very valuable for the participants. I really enjoyed being in the facilitator role. I think that the whole concept of giving people who work on the front line of service the opportunity for self-care and given support. I got to see growth in people who were with me and their consciousness around how they were thinking about themselves. And I also saw some relief in terms of how they were feeling about the difficulties of dealing with that population. I heard a lot of “oh man, you’re dealing with that too? It worked well.

» I’d like to see more of any agency commitment. At the place where the sessions were I couldn’t make copies, for example. I’d like more collaborator commitment. I messed up a date and then I went and there was nobody there. I had already called people. The woman said we have no space for you. The ED is an old friend so I called the ED from the lobby, then the same woman answered the phone and said she’d send me to voicemail [expressing dismay] and I said this is an emergency, can you get her. Finally, she realized who I was and it worked out. Some of the participant employers didn’t support attendance. I’d like to see stronger outreach to African American service providers, there were only two or three black people in the whole group and I was really surprised. What was that about? [The Project Coordinator] did an excellent coordination/facilitation role. Her attitude was very supportive and she got things done and I really appreciated her.

Could you outline the structure of your circle sessions?

» Four-direction prayer for process. We had sage and copal, cedar, or water. Everyone rotated in that process. Some people were not familiar with four directions “did it the wrong way” shared other modalities such as meditation, reflection breathing, check-ins, smell herbs.

» Didactic days were themed based on what they wanted to learn more about. Such as learning more about attachment, trauma, particular healing rituals & processes, learned a lot of herbs, trained them how to do limpias.

» We did drumming.

» Asked people to bring in their own techniques, what was useful to them at their work but I got explanations. The only who really demonstrated how to process was me. They were not really comfortable opening, holding the space, but we never got there. Don’t know why? Not enough time. Many of them were not clinicians. They were teachers, case managers, youth workers, advocates, mentors. So the idea of holding the space was very new to a lot of them. I think we needed to do more basic explanations, how do you open a group, how do you close a group. We did spent time talking about group processes, but these are concepts, how you apply these in a group is a different story. I think those people who surrendered to the process and opened up got enough for themselves in order to do something.

» Tried to maintain a particular order every session. I would bring in relaxing sounds to set the tone. I would burn copal & sage. I would then pass the fire to each one of them to share a word of intention for that particular day. This helped set the tone and people would bring their intentions to the circle. For process days, I asked folks to share with the group
something they want to share. For educational days, I had more of an agenda. For example, on one the days I brought information on a first aid kit for dealing with depression (introduction to depression, survey), somatic practices, etc. So for me it was to bring their attention- the music, the fire. At the end, we also passed the fire and folks shared something they take from the group today.

» We always did a check in, and depending on where people were that took 20 min to and hour and 15 minutes depending on how deep they went.

» I had everybody do a presentation.

» Then we went into some skill building I did a piece on diversity that took several sessions.

» Evaluation: what have you used, have any important issues come up? I had an agenda every time Can you share some concrete examples of strategies or modalities? What worked well?

» You bring in a sack of stones. Put them in the middle of the room. Have folks pick a stone. Reflect on the stone. Use that to talk about what the process was like for them. Some people related stone to their mother or father, others to what they have been holding on to, their stubbornness. It has a process of its own.

» Didactically- to talk about trauma and the impact it has on attachment and how it affects folks. Had a hard time staying with it. Some got headaches, got sleepy. Hard to deal with it and yet they are dealing with a lot of trauma. Talking about the application was too much for some of them.

» Focus more on the process part. I felt group open up. For example, if someone shared they were having a low day then we asked that individual if it’s ok to have group help them process. Had very intense conversations. Some folks disclosed very personal things and the group was very supported. be willing to take the risk. I was afraid because it was such a short time to get personal but this particular group came to be close. Validate peoples’ experiences. I found these strategies to be very healing.

» We shared songs that we did in groups because one of the participants requested it.

» It was participant centered, in the beginning I took list of ideas, main issues, they rated them and I did everything around those issues.

Was the location of your sessions adequate?

» Location was fine.

» Good to find locations that you can do both the didactic sessions and the more hands on activities. Example- when doing theatre of the oppressed, we needed more space. Also, not all locations allow smoke and this is very important to holding the circle.

» More than adequate, state of the art facility. The only problem is that the collaboration could have been stronger. The room had everything I needed.

Did Healing the Healers staff members provide the structure and resources you needed to carry out your work?

» I think so. I don’t think they knew what they were getting into. I think [the Project Managers] conceptually agreed and provided support- I don’t think they understand the level of commitment the agencies needed to have nor how profound the experience was going to be. If they would have known that I think they would have done some things differently. Part of it, they were not always there. Had a hard time getting it together for the opening. When you do spiritual work you are either in it or you are not and I think people felt that and if you feel that I think it gives people permission to say “well it’s not that important.”In terms of location, budget, getting paid all that was good.

» Logistics, materials, etc. were there.

» Check-ins were good.

» Yeah, they did, the only thing is that having to eat some costs, it cost me $18 every time for parking. They didn’t take that into consideration. I submitted expense report and [a Staff Person] said “you’re over budget. In the end, they gave me an hour for the sweat lodge. So I’m not complaining about the money but next time it should be clear and include a parking stipend for the time and location requires it.

» They brought supplies that were very useful.

» Reminder phone calls were great.

» Coordination was excellent.
Can you describe attendance in your circle in detail?

» Some dropped out half way through. I ended with half of the participants that initially started.

» I had 8 and out those 6 were the core. The other 2 were affected by having to switch their jobs and so absence became more challenging.

» Mine wasn’t that up and down. I had one person who didn’t come to the first meeting who came the second and never came back. That was a little awkward and I take responsibility because I didn’t integrate him well. I didn’t go out of my way to extend a greeting that I could have and I realized it afterward.

» One of the guys, [X], he started to be sketchy in his attendance due to illness, etc. but I also caught him rolling his eyes a few times so he seemed to think the stuff I suggested wouldn’t work. Sometimes people think that a simple thing won’t work because the problems are so great. I think I lost him due to my style. He didn’t come at the end.

» [described incident of someone telling an ugly joke] I used “ouch” as a way for people to respond to comments they found hurtful and “oops” for person to acknowledge it. It’s better than saying nothing. These are universal signals that help the group work.

If you could have everything you needed for your circle, what would that be?

» Having longer time to engage the group. Opening ceremony was great. However, the 2 hours every 2 weeks was not enough for me to really engage the group.

» For me every other week was enough. Some participants wanted more time. Once a week might be too much of a commitment even though the desire might be there.

» Location- with easy access, where they can move, also show power-points.

» I had everything I needed.

What were the resources for and obstacles to carrying out your work?

» There were agreements made but then some were not being attended to by the participants, some by the staff. Misunderstanding on the part of the agencies.

» The natural process of the experience itself—individuals- some were ready to process or for some it was harder. Some of the resistance showed up for example in their attendance.

» Jerry Tello’s workshop helped a lot, his teachings. For example, bringing attention to how they will practice these strategies in their daily lives; checking in about it.

» I had everything I needed.

What did you enjoy the most about this process?

» The willingness the group had to want to absorb, to learn, to want to apply what they were getting. The appreciation that self-disclosure was welcomed and not rejected. This group was very open. They appreciated being directed to literature.

» It was beautiful to see a group of people that eventually were caring for each other. Being vulnerable, sharing, at the same time being willing to explore yourself.

» Had a very diverse group with different backgrounds, and ages. This was very healing to have such a diverse group of perspectives and experiences coming together, be willing to share the space. They challenged each other, cared for each other, were very respectful.

» That it was organic, which means that I paid attention to the group and when they needed to go deeper I went there. Trusting that I was reading the room right. Real emotions came up, tears of joy and sadness.

» The opening ceremony and the sweat lodge were exceptional.

» I felt like I didn’t really get to know the other facilitators and that was disappointing.

What can be improved for next time?

» Preparation. This is a spiritual and emotional process. Healing the Healers means to make that time available to them, and if you do, then people resonated and got what they needed.

» We don’t do anything without palabra and if the administration does not have palabra then why should staff have palabra? And if you are going to have people hold circles with young people then it has to be consistent. Not everyone had the consciousness of having that kind of intent.

» It has to be a longer period of time. Maybe a yearlong experience.
Everything that people did needs to be pulled together so we can have some consistency around what gets taught, what didactic materials and topics were created. Get a repertoire together so we can have some consistency and everyone gets that. And how do they apply that, how do we know what they are learning in the process is being applied in their settings?

Spend more time as facilitators and develop some type of structure. Everyone was doing what they know at an individual level. The sessions were different from each other. It would be good at least [to know] where we started and where we are going to go and develop that.

Healing the healers- participants were more interested in healing themselves; not necessarily taking it to their groups. How can I heal what I have? People were asking for more process; I need time for me.

I think that I maybe, at the end, that everything would be in a workbook, something tangible to take away. I didn’t provide a folder for my hand outs, I would do that next time.

People in my group felt it should have gone longer.

I didn’t really participate in my group until the end when I took them to lunch. When someone didn’t come I didn’t call them. I didn’t think of it until later. Maybe there should be added hours per month for additional contact with participants.

Some people wanted to see me individually but there was no budget for that.

We are collecting materials used in the circles as resources for participants. Can you provide any of your materials?

Power-point on trauma. Jerry’s Tello’s introduction to do circles.

Yes

Yes, I will dig them up for you.

We are collecting materials used in the circles as resources for participants.
Could you describe the participant recruitment process and the make-up of the circles?

Mostly worked with the EDs from the planning group to select members of their staff and that they would require it. Each organization gave me names and contact information or some of them did that themselves. There were some other organizations, mostly through [a Staff Member] who suggested other organizations that I reached out to. Calling people and leaning on EDs for names and to get applications in.

Re: groups, the main determining factor was availability. We tried to balance the groups with respect to gender and background or experience. That fell away because the only factor ended up being when they could attend. The facilitators chose their times so it was predetermined by them. The group members didn’t have much of a choice.

What guidelines were provided to facilitators?

We had planning sessions before hand. We had meetings before hand and a lot of that was determined by them, what they wanted to have as common threads as well as their specialties. We did brainstorming and they shared their experience and what they thought was crucial. We had two categories of common threads and within that, two sections: one was threads throughout spiritual-based practices, ancestry, cultural-based and the other was practical, about how to facilitate and teach the groups. It wasn’t a contract but a presentation of what each one does. A lot of them wanted to co-create with their small groups as well, to hear from their group.

How did you recruit and select facilitators?

Some of the facilitators, [a Planning Committee Member] had in mind before I came on. She put a call out as well. We knew [a Facilitator] before hand, [another Facilitator] we knew. [A Planning Committee Member] put out a job description circulated among contacts. At first we were only going to hire two to run two circles each but we interviewed 4 and liked them so we gave them one circle each.

(See Attachment: Circle Keeper Job Description)

Anything you would do differently?

The whole thing was a learning process. With recruitment we had a general sense that all the EDs and orgs were 100% bought-in and ready but that assumption was not true. Some participants felt they had to do it were told to do it but didn’t want to or didn’t feel ready to talk about these issues. The intention of the EDs was good but not everyone was really there. This translated into drop-outs. I would do more interviews before-hand, all I did was send and get back applications and maybe a short call. We need an interview process and an info night to try it out.

Perhaps we need another person in a role to support the facilitators more, more liaison after each session for example, to see if they need something else.
Were common goals or specific objectives agreed to?

Yes, getting this group of folks through a process that was meaningful and helped them unload what they went through at work and in life and also give them practical skills.

What common program features were agreed to?

See notes below from December 10, 2014 Planning Session with Mutima Imani, Jason Seals, Dr. Camillo, Juan Cuba, Nicole Lee, Xiomara Castro:

Ideas and Suggestions for Consistent Elements among all Circles:

** Please take a look at the following. The first list reflects the elements (both conceptual and structural) that seem consistent across all circles and all facilitators will incorporate. The second list reflects the elements (both conceptual and structural) that will not be facilitated across the circles, but are particular to one facilitator.

Similar consistent elements:

- Creating Sacred and Safe Space (structural)
- Clear Agreements (structural)
- Visualizations and Intentions (structural)
- Ritual Libation and Acknowledging of Ancestors (structural)
- Art Making (both conceptual and structural)
- Gather knowledge from the group early on in the process and ask what the participants in the cohorts want (conceptual)
- Teaching self-care and introduce various practices. (conceptual)
- Give information on Emotional Intelligence, by identifying healthy ways to grieve and emote. (conceptual)
- Mindfulness practices (conceptual)
- Conversations on survivor’s guilt (conceptual)

Not consistent and particular to one cohort:

- Convening with a Four Directions Prayer (structural)
- Teach somatic process, how the body holds trauma (conceptual)
- Conversations and strategies for new youth workers who are transitioning from the streets (conceptual)
- “7 points of power” (structural)
- 21st Century tools for personal and professional empowerment - role playing, grounding, tapping, etc. (structural)
- Palabra / Accountability / Having voice within the circle (structural)
- Creating a fire element in the middle of the circle to burn baggage or loads brought in by participants (structural)
- Gifts - what gifts (personal strengths, characteristics) do each of the participants have that they can share with the group (structural)
# Closing Ceremony: Small Group Evaluation Notes

## Appreciations

- Having a community of people doing similar work, but not coming together to DO the work.
- Having a sound board with no cross-talk, just listening.
- Small, intimate group helped build relationships with each other.
- Blocking out two-hour blocks for self-care.
- Collective process of sharing healing practices.
- Safe space to be vulnerable.
- Facilitator’s skills to create safety; relating to their life experiences.
- Opportunity to build with people in the same community / purpose as us.
- Having the space, the healing space to hear/be heard/connect.
- Learning from other peoples’ experiences—share/learn perspectives/tools.

## Improvements

- Once a month for 12 months or twice* a month for 12 months (*once with small group and once with whole group).
- Accessible source to retrieve resources, tips, and ideas to carry on healing work with community.
- Challenge of hosting sessions during work hours.
- Too short; for own decolonizing process would like to see program be an apprentice program, linked to elders for continual growth.
- Mindful of ethnic diversity of participants and facilitators, i.e. recruitment of for African American participants.
- Inclusive pedagogy and facilitation around gender, sexuality and race.
- Consistency with attendance.
- Evaluation process woven throughout six months.
- Participants creating expectations for facilitators.
- Commitment from members.
- Meet more frequently.

## Aha moments

- Effectiveness of participating in a peer learning/support group.
- Variety of different modalities and techniques (drumming, somatics).
- Different lives: common struggles.
- Self-empowerment.
- Breaking into personal connections outside the group.
- Temazcalli.
- I’m not alone in my "normalizing" traumatic experiences.
- The real need for healing the healers.
- Recognizing that we are all whole.

## Tools

- Games – icebreakers
- "What’s your word?" check-in/out
- Share something you don’t want the group to know
- Compost metaphor – lesson idea
- 12 unhelpful ways of thinking
- Self-care list
- Learning a diverse range of tools to open circle; proficient in opening seven directions.
- Integrating healing practices to cope with trauma with youth: songs, healing box.
- Integrating four elements into my own practice and with community members.
- List of healthy coping skills.
- Father card/images
- Drum circle.
- Theater of the oppressed.
CIRCLE KEEPER JOB DESCRIPTION

Urban Peace Movement Youth Leadership Organization (Temporary Contract Position)

**Summary Description**

We are currently seeking a Circle Facilitator to assist us in creating a “Healing the Healers Network (HHN)” of peer-learning and healing circles that will provide Youth-Service Workers in Oakland / East Oakland with support to better serve Oakland youth who are in crisis or who have been exposed to trauma.

The Group Facilitator will lead 2 circles of 8-10 participants (in each circle). Each of the 2 circles will meet twice per month for 1.5 - 2 hour sessions (for a total of 4 sessions per month).

For each group, one meeting per month will consist of a peer-learning circle in which group members can bring issues that they are working on to the group for advice from other group members. The other monthly meeting will be a ‘healing circle’ in which group members can receive healing and self-care for themselves from exposure to “vicarious trauma”, etc.

**Responsibilities**

1. Plan and convene peer learning and healing circles for the HHN (eight 1.5hr-2hr sessions per month)
2. Conduct 1-on-1s as needed with participants
3. Document all preparation, facilitation and follow up of circle processes
4. Work w/ Project Manager to conduct evaluation of the program with participants
5. Maintain a high degree of confidentiality and integrity
6. Regular communication and coordination with Supervisor
7. Prepare and deliver program reports to Supervisor (who will share with the Planning Committee)
8. Performs other duties as assigned by Supervisor

**Required Qualifications**

1. A strong commitment to social justice and to the mission and vision of East Oakland BHC.
2. Behavioral Health Professional Certification and Understanding of Trauma
3. Experience with Healing Work or Cultural Healing Practices
4. Previous experience with youth development and youth-service workers.
5. Demonstrated ability to work effectively and meet objectives in a highly collaborative environment
6. Ability to work effectively with people from diverse backgrounds and communities.
7. Excellent written and oral communication skills.
8. A valid California driver’s license

**Desirable Qualifications**

1. Some familiarity with East Oakland or a community with similar characteristics and conditions.
2. Bilingual Spanish/English preferred.
3. Circle Keeper Certification or 5 years experience
4. Ability to maintain a warm, friendly and helpful demeanor in all interactions.
5. Capacity to work well in a pressured, fast-paced environment and in consultation with supervisor, set priorities in the presence of conflicting needs.

Length of Position - This is a 9-month contract.

Compensation - Rate of Pay for this Contract is: $70-80 per hour DOE, Maximum 10 hours per month for 9

To Apply

Complete applications should include a cover letter, resume, writing sample and 3 professional references. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Please direct application packages to Nicole@urbanpeacemovement.org with “Circle Keeper Application” as the subject.

The writing sample should answer the following question: What are the top three issues facing East Oakland youth and what solutions inspire you? (Please do not exceed 250 words.)