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# The BHWP Messenger

Culturally relevant,  
evidence-based, and  
trauma-informed  
behavioral health and  
wellness resources for  
schools, staff, students,  
and families.



CONTACT US

[biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com](mailto:biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com)

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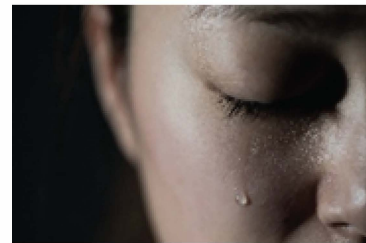
WELCOME TO THE BHWP MESSENGER, a monthly newsletter focused on strengthening the resiliency of students, schools, colleges, universities, and staff. Each issue includes current information about webinars, trainings, resources, effective coping skills, and helpful videos to enhance your knowledge regarding behavioral health and wellness related topics.

# Eating Disorder Awareness

**Caution: This article contains sensitive content about eating disorders.**

February is National Eating Disorder Awareness Month. While it is challenging to find studies and statistics that accurately describe the level of eating disorders for Native people, we know from working with schools, Tribal colleges, and our own families; young people are struggling. According to National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA), eating disorders have the second highest mortality rate of all mental health disorders, surpassed only by opioid use disorder. During the pandemic, calls to the Eating Disorders Helpline doubled and so did hospitalizations for youth with eating disorders.

Food often plays a significant role socially and ceremonially for Native people. Historical trauma carried from previous generations puts Native people at higher risk for eating disorders compared to other populations. For example, experiencing food insecurity leads to increased risk for binge-eating.



Stress, anxiety, and depression can cause a relationship with food to become unhealthy. An eating disorder can add further emotional and physical stress. Diabetes, obesity, and mental health issues are widespread in Native communities and can be related to eating disorders.

Eating disorders can take several forms; anorexia, bulimia, and binge-eating are the most common. These disorders can affect all genders.

Anorexia is when a person obsesses about food and their weight and chooses to not eat. Anorexia can lead to health issues such as anemia, heart problems, osteoporosis, and kidney damage. Young people who are anorexic often have a warped body image. They may see themselves as being fat when they have a low weight. People with anorexia may find it hard to focus and have trouble remembering things. Mood changes and emotional problems include feeling alone, sad or depressed, anxious, afraid of gaining weight, and thoughts of hurting themselves.

Bulimia is when a person overeats and forces themselves to vomit or takes laxatives. Bulimia can lead to health problems such as low blood pressure, irregular heartbeats, feeling tired, weak, dizzy, or faint, blood in vomit or stool, cavities, and swollen cheeks. People with bulimia may not want to eat in front of others, exercise too much, or eat large amounts of food in one sitting.



Binge-eating is when a person eats large amounts of food in a short period of time. Binge-eating can lead to weight-related health problems, such as: diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, can lead to high triglycerides, fatty liver, and sleep apnea. Mental and physical problems related to binge-eating include poor quality of life, obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

According to the Mayo Clinic: the exact cause of eating disorders is unknown. As with other mental illnesses, there may be many causes, such as:

**Genetics and biology.** Certain people may have genes that increase their risk of developing eating disorders. Biological factors, such as changes in brain chemicals, may play a role in eating disorders.

**Psychological and emotional health.** People with eating disorders may have psychological and emotional problems that contribute to the disorder. They may have low self-esteem, perfectionism, impulsive behavior, or troubled relationships.

What is the eating disorder called Pica?

Persistent eating of things that are not food over a period of at least one month.

Person over 2 years old eating non-food items.

Happens more often if person has other cognitive or mental health challenges.

Needs to be assessed by a doctor.

## Risk Factors

According to Mayo Clinic, certain factors may increase the risk of developing an eating disorder, including:

**Family history.** Eating disorders are significantly more likely to occur in people who have parents or siblings who have had an eating disorder.

**Other mental health disorders.** People with an eating disorder often have a history of an anxiety disorder, depression, or obsessive-compulsive disorder.

**Dieting and starvation.** Dieting is a risk factor for developing an eating disorder. Starvation affects the brain and influences mood changes, rigidity in thinking, anxiety, and reduction in appetite. There is strong evidence that many of the symptoms of an eating disorder are actually symptoms of starvation. Starvation and weight loss may change the way the brain works in vulnerable individuals, which may perpetuate restrictive eating behaviors and make it difficult to return to normal eating habits.

**Stress.** Whether heading off to college, moving, landing a new job, or a family or relationship issue, change can bring stress, which may increase your risk of an eating disorder.

## Treatment and Signs

Eating disorder treatment depends on the particular disorder and the individual's symptoms. It typically includes a combination of counseling, nutrition education, medical monitoring, and sometimes medications.

The most important thing to know is that eating disorders do not look the same. Families are not to blame and people with eating disorders do not choose to have these illnesses. Here are possible signs of an eating disorder:

- Falling asleep in class, low energy, or trouble focusing
- Wearing baggy clothing
- Not participating in food-based activities or celebrations
- Preoccupation with earning straight As or "overworking" on assignments
- Skipping meals or making excuses for not eating, eating separate meals
- Withdrawing from normal social activities
- Persistent worry or complaining about being fat and talk of losing weight
- Frequent checking in the mirror for perceived flaws
- Repeatedly eating large amounts of sweets or high-fat foods
- Calluses on the knuckles from inducing vomit
- Leaving during meals to use the toilet
- Eating in secret

## Taking Preventative Steps

Although there is no sure way to prevent eating disorders, here are some strategies to help children develop healthy-eating behaviors:

- Avoid dieting or talking negatively about your own body
- Talk about the risks of unhealthy eating choices
- Cultivate and reinforce a healthy body image in all young people
- Create a healthy social atmosphere
- Enhance young people's self-worth by focusing on the group as a whole and the talents of everyone
- Invite dietitians to talk at schools about mindful eating, food choices, and self-care for all students
- Engage a school counselor to teach about healthy versus unhealthy eating behaviors

## Mindful Eating Wellness Moment



Wellness Moments are a great way to take a few minutes and decompress from daily stress. The videos and resource cards provide calming messages, activities, and suggestions for implementing research-based wellness and self-care into your daily life. Each Wellness Moment is paired with an accompanying resource card, including guided activities that teach self-care practices to start a new wellness practice today. Additional resources are listed on each card to provide more information.

## Resources

National Eating Disorders Association

ANAD | Free Eating Disorder Support Groups & Services

Eating Disorders (for Teens)- Nemours KidsHealth

National Eating Disorders - Pica

A New Perspective on Eating Disorders in Indigenous Peoples

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline



**ONLINE CHAT**

Monday-Thursday 9am-9pm ET  
Friday 9am-5pm ET



**CALL**

**(800) 931-2237**  
Monday-Thursday 11am-9pm ET  
Friday 11am-5pm ET



**TEXT**

**(800) 931-2237**  
Monday-Thursday 3pm-6pm ET  
Friday 1pm-5pm ET

# Greater Health Wellness Corner



Many plants can be used as medicines. Thyme and mint are two plants that can be helpful to balance the appetite and assist digestion, ease mental fatigue, and help anxious people to relax.

## How to Use

- Plants can be used fresh or dried to make tea.
- Essential oils can be added to an infuser, hot bath, or massage oil.



## THYME AND MINT TEA

- 3 thyme sprigs
- 6-8 mint leaves
- 1 1/2 cup of boiling or cold water

Thyme and mint tea tastes great on its own. For more flavor, add honey. Cold thyme and mint tea can be infused with different fruits. Add apple or peach slices to cold tea for a refreshing drink.



## HERBAL BATH SALTS

- 3 drops thyme essential oil
- 3 drops peppermint essential oil
- 2 tbsp Epsom salts and mix well
- Mix oils and salts then add to hot bath

## SAFETY NOTES

Essential oils should only be used with a carrier oil before you can use them safely on the skin. Do not eat or drink.

## References and Resources

Thyme: [12 Health Benefits and More \(healthline.com\)](https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-thyme)

[8 Health Benefits of Mint \(healthline.com\)](https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-mint)

Peppermint Oil | [NCCIH \(nih.gov\)](https://www.nccih.nih.gov/)



# Strategies to Address Compassion Fatigue

The Wellness Wednesday webinar in January was titled, "Strategies to Address Compassion Fatigue." Many people experience compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue refers to absorbing trauma and emotions associated with helping others. It is also known as secondary traumatic stress. Compassion fatigue can surface in our emotional, mental, and physical health.

Some symptoms of compassion fatigue include diminished capacity to empathize, digestive problems, or feeling exhausted.

Self-care is individualized and can look different for everyone. Native people are often taught to use the tools and skills given by their Elders. Many Tribes prioritize connecting with the earth, practice smudging, or attend ceremonies. Through these practices they often feel a sense of connectedness to self, and the Creator. Other forms of self-care may include exercise, journaling, visiting with friends and family, and setting boundaries.



## Positive Wellness Tip

First, take time at the end of each day to reflect and think of three good things that happened that day.

Next, write them down.

Lastly, explain why those things were good, and your role in making them happen.



# Self-Harm Awareness

**Caution: This article contains sensitive content about self-harm.**

March is self-harm awareness month. Some people wear an orange ribbon, butterfly jewelry on their wrist, or a beaded bracelet to encourage awareness. Self-harm is the intent to harm one's own body. Self-harm includes skin carving or cutting, self-medicating, and abnormal scratching. Burning oneself and punching or hitting walls to create pain are also methods.

Other examples are drinking poisonous chemicals, radical skin picking, pulling hair, and purposely interfering with wound healing. Warning signs include isolation, avoiding social interactions, and wearing baggy clothing or clothing that is not weather appropriate to hide wounds. Individuals who self-harm are at an increased risk for suicide.

Self-harm can be an unhealthy coping behavior and can be a way of dealing with deep distress and emotional pain caused by years of trauma. It may help someone express feelings they cannot put into words, distract from their lives, and release emotional pain. They may feel better, at least for a little while, but then the painful feelings return, and they feel the urge to hurt themselves again.

School staff spend a lot of time with students and may be the first people who notice warning signs and behaviors of self-harm. Follow appropriate protocols if there are concerns for a student's safety and well-being.

Make sure to reach out to appropriate staff when considering talking to the student. It is important to know what local resources are available in schools, whether urban or reservation settings.

Splashing icy water on your face or holding an ice cube in the palm of your hand can be healthy alternate ways to get relief when self-injury comes to mind. The heart rate slows down, body temperature returns to normal, and breathing rate decreases. Please do NOT try this exercise if you have a pre-existing heart condition.



Self-harm treatment options include outpatient therapy, partial-inpatient care (6-12 hours a day), and inpatient hospitalization. When the behaviors interfere with daily living, such as school and family relationships, and are health or life-threatening, a specialized self-harm hospital program with an experienced staff is recommended.



The 988 suicide and crisis lifeline is a national hotline for immediate confidential emotional support. If you have safety concerns for yourself or a loved one, reach out for support and help.



Call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org). You can also reach Crisis Text Line by texting MHA to 741741.



## 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SELF-HARM

### 1. NOT AN ACCIDENT

Self-harm is intentional, purposeful behavior.

### 2. NOT ABOUT ATTENTION

People who hurt themselves frequently consider it a private thing and try to hide their behaviors.

### 3. ANYONE CAN DO IT

Anyone close to you could be self-harming, no matter their age, gender, race, or lifestyle choices.

### 4. MORE MENTAL THAN PHYSICAL

Self-harming is only a physical manifestation of mental stress and people frequently self-harm to release stress, gain some control, or feel alive.

### 5. NOT NECESSARILY ABOUT SUICIDE

Even though some people who self-harm feel suicidal, many see self-harm as a way to feel alive.

**RESOURCES**

Crisis Text line | Text HOME  
To 741741 to be connected  
to a trained crisis counselor  
for free, 24/7

Parents and caring adults can  
join "Talking is Power," a text  
messaging service that shares  
different topics on how to talk  
to youth by text messaging the  
word "EMPOWER" to 94449

Resources & Support- Healthy  
Native Youth

Suicide Prevention | Indian Health  
Service (IHS)

Self-harm | NAMI: National Alliance  
on Mental Illness

Self-Directed Violence and Other  
Forms of Self-Injury | CDC

**I- Imagery**

Use your imagination to create a relaxing setting or decorate an imaginary room with secure doors and windows where nothing can hurt you. Make up a calming fantasy world or relive a happy memory moment by moment.

**M-Meaning**

Search for the purpose in a painful moment. Focus and repeat the positive aspects in your mind.

**P - Prayer**

Open your heart to the Creator, God, or your own mind. Ask for strength and put your faith in the Creator, God, or another higher being.

**R - Relaxing actions**

Relax in a hot tub. Do some yoga or stretch. Breathe deeply. Relax the muscles in your face.

**O - One thing in the moment**

Keep yourself in the moment by focusing all of your attention on what you are doing.

**V-Vacation**

Give yourself a short vacation. Jump in bed and pull the covers over your head. Head to the beach, the woods, the lake, or the river for a day. Turn off your phone, or just sit in a park for a whole afternoon.

**E - Self-encouragement and rethinking**

Be your best cheerleader. Say or think of phrases like, "You got this," or "I will be OK."

# Mini-Vacation in the Classroom

February's Wellness Wednesday webinar, "Mini-Vacation in the Classroom," inspired teachers to encourage creative learning, create a wellness-filled classroom, and implement mini-vacations in the classroom. A mini-vacation can be achieved by using brain breaks. Brain breaks are changes in classroom or residential routine, curriculum, or activity.

Physical activity brain breaks get students moving and can help give them a mental boost. Different types of brain breaks can energize or relax students or even teach new skills. By having a mini-vacation in the form of a brain break, students can learn things in a new way. These breaks provide processing time for students to solidify their learning and can increase information retention in other areas.

How do you have a mini-vacation in the classroom? It is simple and research supports the idea of regular brain breaks throughout the school day. By varying teaching styles and lengths of lessons, it has been found that attention and productivity are increased and stress is decreased.

We also know that these brain breaks, mini-vacations from our usual day, keep our brains healthy and can provide opportunities for social and emotional learning.



## Mini-Vacation Ideas

### Physical

- Dancing
- Movement games
- Walk

### Mental

- Journaling
- Meditation
- Brain teaser

### Social/Behavioral

- Positive quotes
- Self-care plan
- Talking Circle

### Spiritual

- Story telling
- Song
- Meditation

BHWP shared ideas for short brain breaks that need very little planning ahead. Some of the ideas included movement breaks with dance videos from GoNoodle or playing Simon Says.



Sometimes there is time for longer brain breaks which may require more planning. Some of these breaks can be an opportunity to dive deep into learning something new or in a different way. BHWP shared the example of virtual travel, which allows students to learn about a different part of the country or world. Another longer mini-vacation idea is to create a Kahoot to review for a test or ask students to build questions so they can present a Kahoot to their classmates.

### SET EXPECTATIONS FIRST AND OFTEN AS YOU CHANGE ROUTINE

When preparing students for Brain Breaks give expectations for managing the activity:

- Be respectful
- Follow the direction
- Manage your body and space responsibly
- It's ok to sit if you cannot do the above expectations

Mini-vacations can support staff and students' well-being. Perhaps you are interested in physical well-being and use the cooking classes and recipes on GoNoodle to promote a healthy diet. Supporting mental well-being by building problem-solving opportunities can encourage creativity. Activities that support spiritual and social well-being, such as reading stories aloud by Native authors that reflect students' experiences and builds resilience.

Changes to our routine with students in the classroom or the residential hall may seem daunting, but mini-vacations can be worthwhile for everyone with a little planning. [Click here](#) to watch a recording of the Wellness Wednesday webinar, "Mini Vacation in the Classroom."

### "What's the Rule?" Game

- Write down an item on your chalkboard, whiteboard, or smartboard.
- Tell your student to guess what items to add to the list (without saying the rule).
- When a correct guess is made, write the word on the board.
- For example, if you write ball, students might guess bat and balloon - which would be correct if the rule was words that begin with the letter B.

Five minutes of downtime to build critical thinking skills. "What's the Rule?" encourages students to guess words to add to the list and eventually guess the rule.

## Resources

[Research-Tested Benefits of Breaks | Edutopia](#)

[Mental Health/Social-Emotional-Behavioral Well-Being](#)

[Why Not Take a Vacation in Your Classroom? \(inspiredtogetherteachers.com\)](#)

[Simple Ways to Cultivate Happiness in Schools | Edutopia](#)

[Fostering Identity, Joy, and Skill Development in Elementary School | Edutopia](#)

[10 Steps for Avoiding Teacher Burnout | Edutopia](#)

[Classroom Physical Activity | Physical Activity | Healthy Schools | CDC](#)

[Brain Break Ideas for the Classroom](#) | [Teach Starter](#)

[4 Ways to Incorporate Brain Breaks in Your Classroom](#) | [GCU](#)

[GoNoodle](#)

[Ka hoot!](#) | [Learning games](#) | [Make learning awesome!](#)

## Virtual Medicine Wheel Spinner

Create a virtual medicine wheel spinner by using the on line [Wheel of Names](#) | [Random name picker](#). Creating a virtual medicine wheel spinner can add specific activities for your class's well-being.

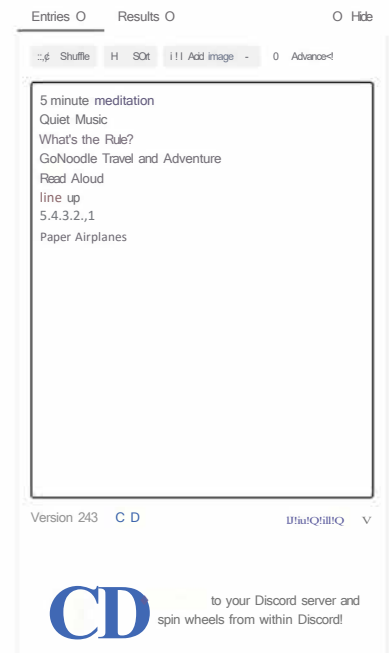
Links to activities on this virtual online medicine wheel spinner:

### Spiritual

- Listen to quiet music
- 5 Minute Meditation
  - Child Relaxation Script
  - 5 Minute Mindfulness Meditation Video

### Social/Behavioral

- Read aloud
- Line up:
  - Ask students to form a line in a certain order. Possible examples are alphabetical by first or last name, birthday or height. A fun time limit for the exercise is to challenge the student to complete the line before a song is done. After the song is done, verify the accuracy of the line by asking students their birthdays or engaging with them and noticing their efforts in a positive way. This activity encourages students to communicate, problem solve, and engage in teamwork.



### Mental

- [Paper Airplane Design and Contest](#)
- [What's My Rule? Math Version](#)

### Physical

- [5-4-3-2-1](#)
- [Go Noodle Travel and Adventure](#)

# Youth Mental Health First Aid at Isleta Elementary School



Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) is an evidence-based, trauma-informed training designed to teach participants how to assist a youth experiencing a mental health or substance misuse crisis. Participants who take this training learn risk factors and warning signs for mental health and addiction concerns, strategies for how to help someone in both crisis and non-crisis situations, and where to find resources. This curriculum, from the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, certifies participants in YMHFA for three years.

## ALGEE: THE ACTION PLAN

- **ASSESS** for risk of suicide or harm.
- **LISTEN** non-judgmentally.
- **GIVE** re-assurance and information.
- **ENCOURAGE** appropriate professional help.
- **ENCOURAGE** self-help and other support strategies.

In January 2023, BHWP provided YMHFA training to staff at Isleta Elementary School in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The Isleta Elementary School principal, many teachers, IT technicians, janitors, bus drivers, and kitchen staff learned how to assist youth in crisis.

Native staff from BHWP led the YMHFA training which was culturally relevant for the Isleta Elementary School. The National Council for Mental Wellbeing curriculum teaches the ALGEE Mental Health First Aid Action Plan also, referred to as EAGLE. See image on the left.

If your college, university, program, school, or department would like YMHFA training, please email [biebhwpc@tribaltechllc.com](mailto:biebhwpc@tribaltechllc.com) to request a training.



# Book Review for Educators

**Gift Horse** is a book for preschool through third grade elementary students. The story is told by award-winning author and illustrator and member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, S. D. Nelson. His artwork was influenced by ledger book drawings from the turn of the twentieth century and are colorful and interesting.

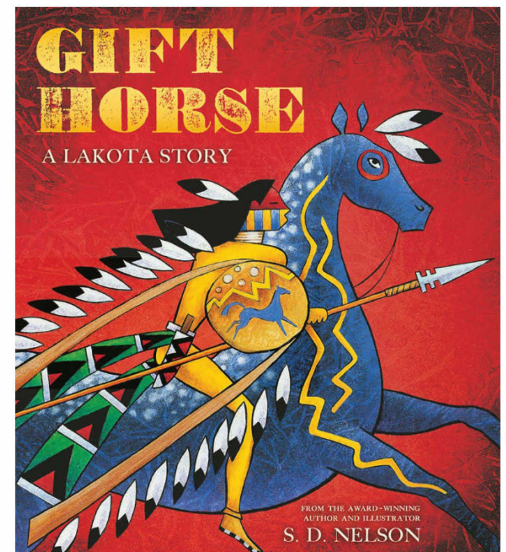
**Gift Horse** tells the story of a boy who receives a horse as a gift from his father. The boy names the horse Storm and the two of them have many adventures. Because he and Storm ride across the wide-open prairie and stir up dust, people called the boy Flying Cloud. As Flying Cloud grows older, he takes part in a vision quest and a buffalo hunt.



<https://sdnelson.net/product/gift-horse-lakota-story/>

## **GIFT HORSE: A LAKOTA STORY**

By S.D. Nelson



The book, **Gift Horse** is an exciting story told from Flying Cloud's perspective. In his own voice, the reader accompanies Flying Cloud as he tried to rescue Storm when she is kidnapped and when he is given the shirt of a Lakota Warrior.

**Gift Horse: A Lakota Story** is available in paperback and hardcover.

# Meet a Member of Our BHWP Team

## Communication Coordinator Mary-Ellen Hemming

Hello, my name is Mary-Ellen Hemming and I currently work at Tribal Tech as a Communication Coordinator. I have my certification as a Tobacco Treatment Specialist and obtained my Bachelor's degree in Psychology, and Master's degree in Health Administration. My fiancé and I live in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where I am an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

I have been working with BHWP for the last six months and my education and certification have helped me enormously with work product creation, evaluations, and working in Tribal communities. Working with this program, I enjoy seeing the positive impact and healing the team can make in the lives of families, educators, youth, and communities. Another part I like is working on evaluations because feedback and data can assist with improving work products, communication, and processes moving forward.



Prior to joining Tribal Tech, I worked for my Tribe for 11 years as a Health Educator and a Tobacco Treatment Specialist. The experience I gained helped me to understand Tribal practices and values. I appreciated sending the message that traditional tobacco is sacred while helping Tribal members quit commercial tobacco to better their health and well-being. I have also worked within the Tribal health system with Centers of Disease Control and Prevention grants to improve the health and wellness of my Tribal community.

I am very close with my mom, brother, and sister. I am the middle child. I recently got engaged this past year and am grateful for my partner and his support. Some of my hobbies include figure skating, hiking, collecting small stones, and taking my 1-year-old bichon poodle out for walks. I enjoy staying in cabins near the water on Keweenaw Peninsula. Being by water helps my emotional and spiritual health; my spirit name means "River Woman." I also like to be away from technology and in nature to boost my mental health. For spiritual wellbeing, I pray and lay down semaa or tobacco. I look forward to a warm, Michigan summer!



# BHWP Calendar

Please visit our [Events](#) page for more information. To request an individualized training for your staff, school, or department, please email us at [biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com](mailto:biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com).

## MARCH 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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12	13	14	15	16	17	18
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## APRIL 2023

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### VIRTUAL TALKING CIRCLES

The Talking Circle is a safe and sacred space to share thoughts, feelings, joys, and sorrows while providing support among colleagues and friends. Respected knowledge-keepers who have earned the privilege of conducting the Talking Circle will lead this confidential virtual event.

### WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

Wellness Wednesday webinars provide practical strategies and information about mental health trends, healthy lifestyle choices, educational best practices, and Indigenous resiliency building.

### CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS

This continuing education unit (CEU) webinar course has been tailored especially for those in behavioral health-related roles. CEUs will be available to licensed behavioral health professionals (LPCs, LMFTs, LCSWs, etc.). Webinar courses available will provide opportunities for behavioral health skill-building and obtaining training hours toward continued licensure.





# Upcoming Events and Behavioral Health Conferences

## Tribal Public Health Conference 2023

- Date: April 11 - 13, 2023
- Location: Durant, Oklahoma
- Registration: <https://tphconference.org>

### UNCLE DAVE'S JOKE CORNER

What do you call a dachshund that has been outside in the cold?



*A chili dog!*

Ojibwa/Bad River Ojibwe, Wisconsin "Gizaagiin"-1 love you

### EASY WAYS TO SPREAD MORE LOVE

- Give a smile to a stranger.
- Say "please" and "thank you" more often.
- Cook a special meal for an elder.
- Pay for a stranger's coffee without telling them.
- Allow someone to keep the change as a tip.
- Donate to a charity.

*t;MA-rdft-tAt.-rk*  
Wellness Corner

Klamath-Modoc, Oregon "Moo 'Amsterdam ni stinta" - I love you

