



Healing Foundation

Strong Spirit • Strong Culture • Strong People

Glossary of Healing Terms

This glossary contains words that are regularly used in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing

TERM DEFINITION

Healing	Healing refers to recovery from the psychological and physical impacts of trauma. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people this trauma is predominantly the result of colonisation and past government policies. Healing is not an outcome or a cure but a process; a process that is unique to each individual. It enables individuals, families and communities to gain control over the direction of their lives and reach their full potential. Healing continues throughout a person's lifetime and across generations. It can take many forms and is underpinned by a strong cultural and spiritual base.
Stolen Generations	The Stolen Generations are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families as a result of past Australian government policies, from the late 1800s to the 1970s. The removed children were sent to institutions or adopted to non-Indigenous families. They were separated from their culture, family, land and identity.
Trauma	Trauma affects a person's physical or emotional safety and is often caused by a psychologically stressful event or series of events. The person may respond to this event/s with feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror. These traumas can occur at a personal level or at a collective level (war, natural disasters, or genocide). Trauma can affect a person for many decades and in many different ways. If people have not had the opportunity to heal, then they may act out their pain in negative ways including physical or emotional violence, abuse or addiction.
Intergenerational trauma	Intergenerational trauma is a form of historical trauma transmitted across generations. Survivors of the initial experience who have not healed may pass on their trauma to further generations. In Australia intergenerational trauma particularly affects the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.
Social and emotional wellbeing	This refers to our feeling of being healthy on a physical, spiritual, emotional and social level. It is a state where individuals and communities are strong, proud, happy and healthy. It includes being able to adapt to daily challenges while leading a fulfilling life. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people land, family and spirituality can also be considered central to wellbeing.
Resilience	Resilience is an individual or collective inner strength, developed over time, as a result or reaction to stress, sadness, dysfunction or trauma. Resilience is about experiencing and identifying adversity and learning how to cope. Coping may include developing supportive relationships, maintaining links to culture and community or visiting a support program.



Glossary of Healing Terms *continued*

TERM	DEFINITION
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Trauma-informed practice	Trauma-informed practice is a strengths-based approach to healing that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">» is based on an understanding of, and responsiveness to, the impact of trauma» emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for people seeking help and for the helpers» creates opportunities for people affected by trauma to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. It recognises the prevalence of trauma and is sensitive to and informed by the impacts of trauma on the wellbeing of individuals and communities.
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Cultural knowledge	An accumulation of knowledge that has been handed down from generation to generation which could be held by particular individuals or family groups. It includes knowledge about spiritual relationships; relationships with the environment and the use of natural resources; and relationships between people, which are reflected in language, stories, social organisation, values, beliefs, and cultural laws and customs.
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Identity	Identity is the distinctive characteristic which belongs to an individual, or is shared by all members of a group. It can be a sense of who you are and the community or communities you are a part of. Identity recognises that we are all unique.
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Kinship	Kinship refers to the patterns of social relationships, the way people are organised into groups and how they are related to one another. It defines how people behave within a community and how they understand their roles and responsibilities.
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Spiritual health	Spiritual health is a focus on the strong spirits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and is an important part of culture. It emphasises people's relationships with each other, with land and place; and the connection between past, present and future. Over time, spiritual health has been weakened as a result of colonisation, assimilation and Stolen Generations policies.
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Self determination	Independence – the freedom of a group of people to determine their own future. This may include defining their political status and governing themselves without influence from outside groups. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it means taking control over their own affairs.
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Lateral violence	Lateral violence refers to damaging behaviours that come from within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities such as backstabbing, bullying or even physical violence. It is often called internalised colonialism because it is behaviour that arises out of being an oppressed group of people. When people feel oppressed and live with fear or anger, they can end up turning on each other, even on those closest to them.
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Please note - this is a summary of key healing terms produced by the Healing Foundation. It is intended for use by anyone interested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing, but it does not intend to be a definitive or exhaustive list. You are invited to use this glossary as a tool for your own discussions on healing.