



Trauma Healing Journey: Breaking Cycles of Violence

*This does not apply in all cases, for example, child sexual abuse

What Keeps individuals and groups stuck in the victim or aggressor cycles?

- Lack of safety: fear the event will happen again, loss of faith and hope
- Blaming self or others
- Seeing things as either/or (“us or them”); retaliate or be re-victimized)
- Lack of support: initial bonding after trauma is replaced by alienation due to conflict, prejudice, and/or broken trust; lack of spiritual support; social and cultural pressures
- Not realizing one/the community is trapped in patterns of learned helplessness and hopelessness
- Lack of awareness of how much identity is in being a victim or aggressor (healing/peace is threatening)
- Memorializing and telling the story in ways that keep individuals/groups in the victim or offender cycle
- Leadership that further inflames the conflict/ trauma
- Pain/emotions that overwhelm the rational brain and is not dealt with

What helps individuals and groups break free?

- Safety: emotional, spiritual and/or physical (e.g. event is over, faith beliefs, turning off news and being able to center, routine, parents protecting children)
- God, grace, faith, prayer, religious rituals
- Strength of community
- Choice/decision of victim/survivor; willingness to move beyond blame
- An awareness of healing options (seeing hope)
- Available outside support: spiritual, physical, social, emotional, cultural
- Willingness to break patterns of learned helplessness and hopelessness
- Leadership (whether it keeps communities in inner cycle or leads towards healing – e.g. modeling and telling transforming narratives, providing ceremonies and religious rituals that promote long-term healing, working with own trauma, level of self awareness)
- An understanding of trauma and what it does to us physically, emotionally, spiritually, and to our identity
- Memorializing and telling the story in ways that promote long lasting healing
- Pain (facing it is better than re-cycling))
- Facing own or group’s shortcomings (what I did or failed to do)
- Space and time away from the trauma
- Resiliency