

## Medicine Wheel

Ask yourself, in the **physical realm (YELLOW - EAGLE)**, how are you doing? Do you exercise regularly? Do you eat foods that are good for you? Do you see a doctor on a regular basis? How else might you take care of your physical self? List the things you do that keep this quadrant in balance and the things you feel you should do to maintain the balance of the whole Medicine Wheel. The physical realm can be seen as exercise, nutrition, and stress management.

I'm doing well. In the beginning of 2020 I was able to take my health and strength and evaluate what it meant to me. I was able to lose twenty pounds at the beginning of the year, and so far have kept it off with a focus of not just losing more weight, but being happy in my own skin. I also took a look at my own nutrition. I am a vegetarian and I made it a goal this year to learn how to fill my body with sustainable meals, as many non-meat eaters tend to fill up on carbs and sugars just to feel full, and I was no exception.

Thanks to my parents I still have a very good health plan and I regularly visit things like the dentist and eye doctor. Being able to take these appointments for granted has made me want to value our health system in the future and ensure that I have the same abilities in my future career as well. Obviously being able to attend to myself in these ways is a luxury not available to all, and I'm very grateful for it, but if we take the time to take care of our bodies I believe we'll be happier and healthier overall.

How is your **mental realm (WHITE-SALMON)**? Do you read regularly to keep your mind active? Do you play mental sharpening games like crossword puzzles or sudoku? Do you have a hobby that challenges you to study or keep records of progress? What might you do to keep your mental faculties sharp and active? Consider reading, visualizing, planning, and writing when looking at this quadrant. Quality time with family. Learning from Elders/Teachers. Listening to oral stories/history.

I regularly try new things to keep myself challenged and excited. This year over quarantine I learned how to knit and even shape foam to make various replica movie props which is a hobby of mine I picked up in film school. I'm also *always* reading. It is a relief for me at the end of a long day, and so far in 2020 I've gorged my way through over thirty books, which is a decent amount considering the slump we all definitely faced when COVID-19 first became a real part of our lives.

The **spiritual quadrant (RED-BEAR)** is challenging to discuss because it exists in a deep part of yourself that sometimes is hard to explain or recognize. Do you pray or meditate? Do you know and understand the values that drive your life and the lives of

your family and community? What can you add to your life that might help you develop spiritual strength? Spiritual practices. Relating to nature. A belief in higher power. Smudging, singing, dancing.

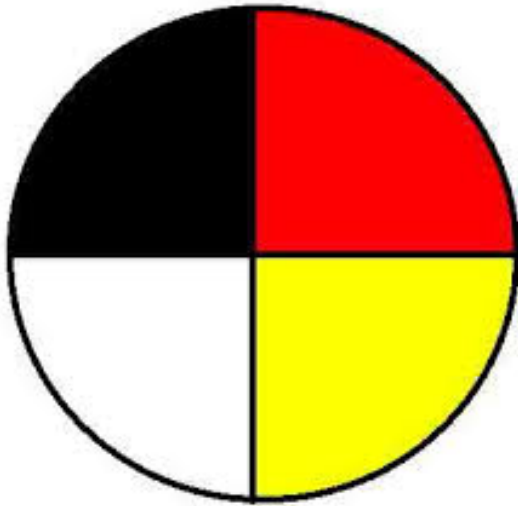
Spirituality has never been something I've needed in my life to feel whole, and I believe that is okay. Not everyone needs to pray or meditate to feel good about themselves or be good to other people, and I can recognize that my own presence adds to my friends' and families' lives every day without that. I feel connected to nature when I am outside and that is enough. I feel connected to myself when a good book or film makes me cry and that is enough. And I feel connected to those I love when I share memories with them, and that is enough. Even though I do not actively practice spirituality, I believe we all have a spiritual strength we give off at all hours of the day. I think to best strengthen this, each person has to discover for themselves how they can best reflect on their lives and the world around them. Whether that is through prayer or some other means, all are acceptable if done with good intentions.

How do you feel you are doing in the **emotional quadrant (BLACK-COYOTE)**? Do you feel you share your emotions with others in a healthy way that respects yourself and others? Do you feel you can understand and appreciate emotions shared by others in your life? What emotions do you have trouble sharing or expressing? Positive Self Image. Positive Self Esteem. Self Love. Positive Environment

I feel very connected to my emotions, so much so that crying and laughing are both just as easy as the other for me. Many people connote crying with sadness or weakness, but I do not agree with that. While crying is a normal response to feeling sad or weak, for me it is also a release just as laughter is. I cry at books and films and everyday things because I like to be in tune with my emotions in that way. I practice self-love by recognizing that not all days have to be good days, but as long as I leave time to do the things that bring me happiness, more good days will come.

If anything I have trouble opening myself up to new people, and even sometimes people I do know. I have trouble within relationships because I feel excited early on but quickly grow bored or talk myself 'out of love'. I believe this is something I need to work on, but I'm also not in a rush to do it. Perhaps it would just be better for me to find someone in that way that I already love in different ways first. For now though, I take love out of my family, friends, pets, and hobbies, and that is enough.

Look at your wheel as a way of assessing how your teaching practise is reflected in your physical classroom and unit plans. What aspects do you need to include more of to promote a well balanced learning space.



How are you incorporating these aspects of the Medicine Wheel and Dr. Martin Brokenleg's Circle of Courage into your classroom?

**Yellow:** Generosity (looking forward to being able to contribute to others, be able to give cherished things to others)

Just like the author of this article I *love* this quote: "young people cannot develop a sense of their own value unless they have the opportunities to be of value to others". To me this feels true of any person, not just young people. Struggling with a sense of value is not

something unique to just children, but if one of the best ways to affirm one's own sense of worth is to be good to others, then there is no kinder thing on earth.

I view teaching as one of the most generous careers possible in today's society. Not to toot my own horn, but we know that teachers give and give every single day. They give their time, their energy, their hard-earned money, but they also give their patience and kindness and knowledge. They share passions to excite students and share their emotional capacity as they come to care for every one of them. If we as teachers can be expected to be this generous, then there is no way we can't expect generosity from our students as well. If a student does not witness acts of generosity or kindness at home, then the next best thing is school, where they'll spend the next 13+ years of their lives.

One way we can practice generosity in school is with our words alone. We can be generous with our words and thoughts the same way we can with material things, and so encouraging our students to provide compliments or help to their classmates, we encourage sharing and love. This would be giving time and emotions, praising friends and other classmates alike for their successes, and comforting them after failures.

**White:** Independence (making one's own decisions and being responsible for failure or success, setting one's own goals, disciplining one's self)

This quote: "Independence is not something that should be pushed on a child, neither should dependence constantly be reinforced either" pretty much sums up how I feel I will look at independence within my own classroom. Independence, especially for children in school, is such a spectrum. Some students easily seek for more independence, whereas others remain dependent for much longer. Neither of these

answers are wrong persay, but it is important to find that middle ground. Asking a kindergarten class to quietly walk themselves to the gym for PE might be too much of an ask if the gym is on the other side of the school, but asking and *expecting* good behaviour from a fourth grade class on their way to the gym is not.

I think one of the best ways we as teachers can help students work toward their own definitions of independence is by letting them chose the goals they're setting for themselves. Asking students to regularly set new goals for themselves such as "I will complete my math homework on time" or "I will practice keeping my hands to myself" and giving them positive affirmations when they succeed in these goals is definitely a way to help instill personal independence in their elementary school years.

**Red:** Mastery (competence in many areas, having self control, responsibility, striving to achieve personal goals rather than superiority)

Not all students should be expected to exceed expectations. I think placing a pressure on students to constantly go above and beyond gives stress uncalled for in an elementary level. I believe that 'meeting expectations' is a perfectly valid end to hard work, and should be praised like any other choice of hard work. However, I definitely recognize the importance of helping those who do exceed expectations go further with their learning so they do not hit this 'stagnant wall' of boredom or even misbehaviour.

One of the ways in which I would help support this 'mastery' is by evaluating the students personally, not just as 'students in grade 4' or so on. By looking at a student's strengths and weaknesses on a personal and non-comparative level, we're able to evaluate what the students needs personally rather than according to grade. Those who fall behind will need extra support, but those who exceed will also need the same support only in differing directions. Those who exceed past grade level and certain or all subjects, will be asked more of, within reason. If a student already knows how the definition of a word without being taught, go ahead and ask them to use it in a sentence. This is a structured form of going beyond what is being asked without setting the student completely apart from their peers and alienating them.

Another thing to pay attention to is that academic success does not necessarily equate to higher levels of mental and emotional capacity. Just because a fourth grade is doing grade five math, doesn't mean their emotions are operating on a higher age-level. Expecting a student to have the same level of self-control, responsibility, or self-reflection is inequitable, as much like intelligence, emotional capacity comes with time and patience and observation of others.

**Black:** Belonging (a sense of community, loving other and being)

After completing the readings, this sentence really stood out to me, “When students have a sense of belonging at school they are less likely to go searching for that sense of belonging elsewhere”. I truly believe that this is a true and positive statement. When students struggle at home, they look to other groups for belonging, and sometimes this causes children and people to fall into unideal groups such as gangs or abusive relationships. As humans we are born wanting belonging and love, we thrive off of it along with positive affirmations and time spent with others who give us attention.

I think one of the best ways teachers can provide a sense of belonging in their classrooms is to really take the time to get to know their students. This can be easier said than done at the beginning of the year when the teacher is just focusing on remembering 15-30 names, but if the focus is placed not just on educational understanding, but *emotional* understanding, then we can create a safe space that students look forward to coming to. By providing those positive affirmations and holding back things like guilt-tripping, negative words, and uncalled-for punishment, we create a learning environment where kids are healthier than any alternative.

Another thing that can be done is to give students the assurance that this is a non-judgmental space, and that their teachers can be relied upon to protect them at all times. By naming certain adults as ‘safe-adults’ who secrets can be shared with, students will be more likely to come forward because they’ve found a place where they can belong without judgement.



# OUR CIRCLE OF COURAGE

a student who practices...



## Independence:

Takes responsibility for their actions!  
Understands that their actions impact their environment!  
Is a positive leader and friend!

What is something you can do to keep yourself motivated? What can we do to positively motivate others?  
What are our responsibilities as keepers of this land? How can we acknowledge our responsibility for our actions?



## Mastery:


Believes in their own abilities and hard work!  
Sets goals for themselves and works hard to achieve them!  
Works hard in all aspects of their life with strength and humility!

How can you challenge yourself today? What is one goal you can set for yourself today? What is one goal we can set for our class today? How can we work as a team to accomplish that goal?

## Belonging:

Includes others!  
Helps people feel safe!  
Respects people for who they are!  
Looks for the good in others!


What have you done today to help others feel more at home?  
What can you do today to include others?  
What can we do to make our school more accepting of others?



## Generosity:

Helps others when they're struggling!  
Recognizes that everyone's story is different!  
Offers aid without the expectation of receiving anything in return!

What help can you give today?  
What kind of difference can we make? What kind of words can you offer from your heart to help those who might be struggling?



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Our Circle of Courage



What is one instance you can remember feeling as though you **belonged**? Was it a person that made you feel this way, or a place? When you think of that instance, how does it make you feel?

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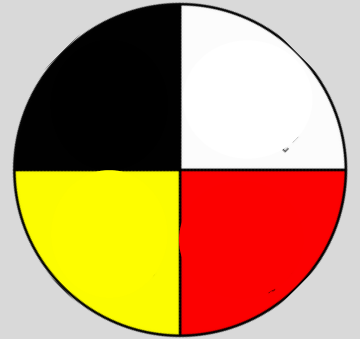
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What does it mean to be **independent**? Can we still rely on others while maintaining our independence? What are a few ways you practice your independence each day?

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Why is it important to have goals? Why do we feel a sense of accomplishment when we achieve our goals? While working toward a goal, is it important to practice things like responsibility and self-control? Does **mastering** something have to be physical, or can it be spiritual or emotional as well?

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Does showing **generosity** always have to be through giving things physically? What are some other ways we can show generosity besides giving items or money? Does giving our time have value? Our patience and understanding? Our emotions? Are any of these things of lesser value because they cannot be physically held?

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