

# Understanding the Dance of Life

DIMENSIONSTRADITIONALHISTORICALCONTEMPORARYGAPS IN KNOWLEDGESOLUTIONSPHYSICALEarth as  
 &lsquo;Mother&rsquo;, Nature as family  
 Connection to country, source of renewal  
 Traditional medicine  
 Traditional diet and activity,  
 &ldquo;healthy specimens&rdquo;  
 Physical genocide  
 Dispossession, &ldquo;uprooted&rdquo;  
 Environmental degradation  
 Rapid change in diet  
 Incarceration, Institutionalisation  
 Forced labour  
 Ill-health, exposure to disease  
 Population changes  
 Present morbidity, burden of chronic illness  
 Burden of care on children  
 Land-rights and treaty  
 Holistic view  
 Urban, rural and remote differences  
 Exclusion from health  
 Stress, immunity and chronic disease  
 Grief and mortality  
 Transgenerational trauma and physical health  
 Chronic illness and mental health  
 Complimentary healing practices  
 Sovereignty and Native Title  
 Equity and access Accountability  
 Traditional diet, medicines and healers  
 Connection to country  
 Holistic medicine  
 Best Start to Life  
 Basic requirements  
 PSYCHOLOGICALDifferent concepts, beliefs and meaning  
 Sense of self; External attributions; Site of distress  
 Shared learning, cognitive development  
 Identity and role  
 Autonomy and relatedness  
 Life continuum, belonging  
 Birth & bereavement  
 Psychological Genocide  
 Profound trauma  
 Abuse  
 Loss and grief  
 Extreme powerlessness  
 Misdiagnosis,  
 Mislabelling,  
 Re-traumatisation  
 Place in society  
 Present trauma, loss, grief  
 Future uncertainty  
 Psychological morbidity, illness  
 Identity issues  
 Psychological strengths  
 Apology  
 International perspective  
 Exclusion from humanity  
 Appropriate Diagnostic systems  
 Treatment options  
 Culturally valid tools, Appropriate Outcomes  
 Accountability measures  
 Impact of racism and discrimination  
 Cultural and spiritual phenomenology

Culture bound syndromes  
 Truth in history  
 National 'Sorry Day'  
 Human rights, Safe development, future assurance  
 Inclusiveness  
 Pride, positive images  
 Professional development  
 Indigenous therapies, grief and trauma  
 Addressing 'stress'  
 Identifying and tackling racism  
 SOCIALCommunity centred  
 Kinship system  
 Attachment and Child rearing  
 Early autonomy  
 Country as home, kin  
 Collective Vs Individual  
 Obligation and reciprocity  
 Two-way sharing  
 Social genocide  
 Stolen Generations  
 Racism and apartheid  
 Slave labour  
 Changing role of family especially men  
 Role models  
 Family disruption, isolation  
 Loss of buffering  
 Removal of children, adults  
 Paternity  
 Present disadvantage, impoverishment  
 Reconciliation  
 Exclusion from society  
 Family therapies  
 Children's needs Vs Family  
 Community outcomes  
 Systemic barriers  
 Social Justice  
 Social determinants  
 Generational view, Long term commitment  
 Whole of life concept  
 Tracing family,  
 Restoring Kinship  
 Recording Oral histories  
 Narrative therapies  
 Empowerment  
 Representative body  
 SPIRITUALOrigins of life  
 Dreaming  
 Belonging, connectivity  
 Philosophical views  
 Beliefs, Experiences, Healing  
 Spiritual genocide  
 Impact of mission life  
 Imposition of Christianity  
 Value of wisdom  
 Intolerance, Understanding difference  
 Exclusion from existence  
 Spirituality and Health  
 Existential Despair  
 Central to health of Australia  
 Healing  
 Understanding, tolerance, respect  
 Purpose and future hope  
 CULTURALLore/Law  
 Language  
 Ceremony

Healing Beliefs, Expression, Experiences  
 Cultural genocide  
 Misinterpretation  
 Tokenism  
 Sacrilege  
 Cultural clash, two worlds  
 Cultural mix  
 Cultural practices, age, gender Endurance and resilience, strengths  
 Cultural knowledge  
 Cultural grief  
 Exclusion from custom and consciousness

Continuum of cultural identity  
 Diversity of practice and experience  
 Models of care  
 Acceptance  
 National Identity  
 Compensation  
 Cultural renaissance Self determination (Indigenous rights)  
 Indigenous governance  
 Cultural security  
 Cultural Respect Framework  
 Education, training  
 Shared learning, Collaboration

#### Overview:

As outlined in the Dance of Life description, there are a number of dimensions each with a number of layers that require consideration when developing a comprehensive approach to understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health as well as providing assessment and treatment. The following framework lists a number of factors operating at the individual, family, community or broader societal level that could be impacting on mental health and wellbeing. Although many factors lay outside the responsibility of the mental health sector, mental health professionals play a vital role in advocacy and in working collaboratively across sectors to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

Mental health professionals also have a sphere of influence and respect in broader society that can facilitate the process of reconciliation and social justice. Risk and protective factors as well as the concept of resilience needs to be understood within a broader context and through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lens. This allows for the appropriate development of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention programmes. Given the magnitude of the historical legacy combined with the contemporary complexities of working within a cross cultural context in mental health, it is essential to be able to understand what influences behaviour, symptom formation and response to treatment.

Clinicians need to be able to tease out the impact of disadvantage and discrimination, be able to recognise illness in the midst of cultural and spiritual complexity and ambiguity, and attempt to address the many factors impacting on wellbeing. Incorporating historical and cultural perspectives as well as flexibility in approach will enhance the clinicians skills and knowledge and provide a platform for meaningful and respectful cross-cultural exchange.