

FAMILY ADVOCACY CENTER



HEALING

Háázh Dí'nééh



From the onset of child sexual abuse and sexual assault, everything that is personal has been violated – body, mind, spirit, boundaries, strength, happiness, trust, “normal” routines, home life, professional life, school, relationships, goals, hobbies, family interaction, the ability to leave home – an entire lifestyle. Whether a survivor decides to seek help or not, tell someone or not, report or not, healing has begun. Healing from this traumatic experience is never easy. **From the moment the incident occurs, the person is a survivor, not a victim.** Healing from this trauma is an everyday struggle with the hope that the pain will one day be “tolerable” - “tolerable” enough to somehow live a “positive life”. Considering all the negativity that could easily bring a person down, healing is an on-going fight for a survivor. The Family Advocacy Center holds no judgement. People heal differently and at their own pace. A survivor might choose not to say anything and struggle with healing and/or



HEALING

Dí'nééh

find their own way to heal. Another survivor might confide in others, report, go to therapy and find healing in that process as well. As Native People, we also have survivors of historical trauma whose experiences effected generations. When survivors feel supported, there is a sense of relief.

Do not wait for Law Enforcement or the Legal process to proceed before healing begins. Allow healing to start regardless of what is happening with the investigation and legal process. The investigation and legal process will take time and your well-being is of utmost importance; therefore, do not dwell on what is beyond your control. Remind yourself that the process will take time. It will be extremely beneficial if you initiate therapy so when you are needed for the investigation or legal process, you will be in a much better place mentally, emotionally, and physically.



‘IL‘ÍL BEE NIDZÍDZÍKEES

POSITIVITY

You are going to get your life back. You are a survivor. Keeping a positive frame of mind, having goals, recognizing gains and being patient with yourself will help maintain positivity. This does not mean you must wear a smile all the time or be perfect. This means being aware that you are healing and although it will be like a roller coaster at first, it will not always be this way. There are good days ahead. It is helpful to remember things that brought you joy prior to the traumatic event. If you enjoyed a certain hobby before, try getting back into that activity when you are ready. When feelings of doubt start to surface, remember the assault/abuse is not your fault. No one has the right to touch you without your consent.

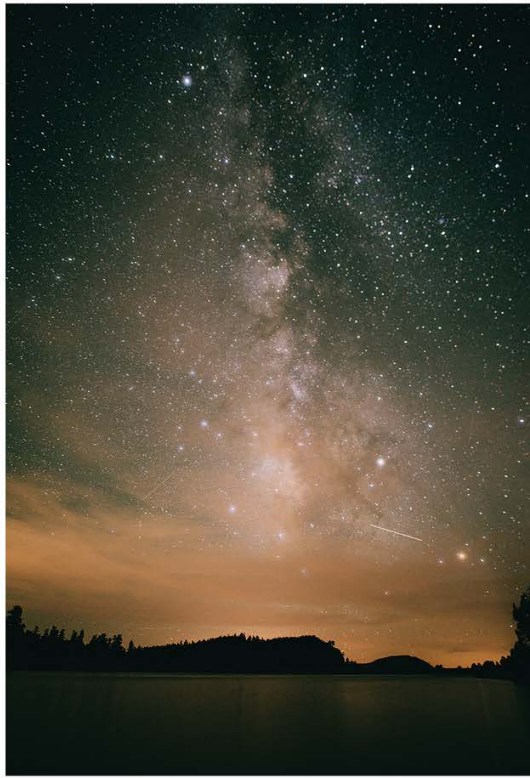
HÁÁ'ÁYÍÍH

SLEEP

Sleep is healing. We cannot stress this enough. When you experience trauma, sleep is always the first to be interrupted and the last to be restored. You should be getting at least 6 hours of sleep per night, at the minimum.

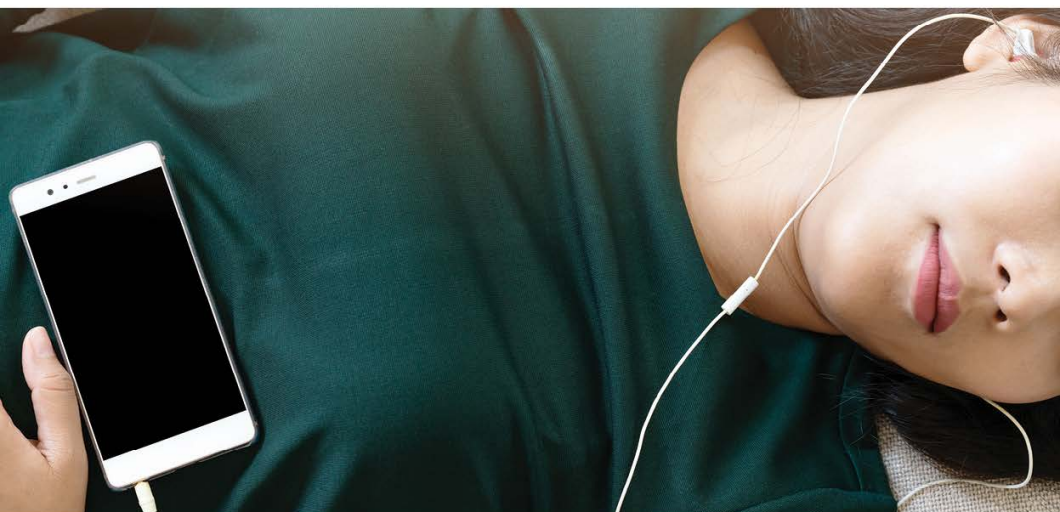
If you are having trouble sleeping, this is a normal response after a traumatic event. You might experience nightmares, night terrors, waking up frequently, feeling unsafe, and becoming hyper vigilant. These are all signs of stress. Give yourself time to re-adjust to a regular sleeping pattern. Some helpful techniques may include:

- Creating a bedtime routine for yourself and using it every night. If you have gotten use to going to sleep late, the goal is to work toward an earlier bedtime. At a specified time, say 9:00 pm, start getting ready for bed – put your pajamas on, wash up, brush your teeth. Give yourself about 30 minutes to do this. By 9:30pm, start turning off the lights, TV, music, etc. Keep the routine calming. For instance, stay away from watching scary movies or shows that might trigger you or keep you awake. The goal could be to be in bed and asleep by 10:00pm. The routine might be challenging at first but once you set a routine and stick to it, you will be training your body and mind for sleep.
- Use a night light in your room or in the hallway so if/ when you wake up and are feeling unsafe or unsure of your surroundings, you will have some light to identify your room and that you are safe.
- If you have trouble falling asleep or going back to sleep after you have waken up, try listening to some soothing music of your choice. What also helps is reading a book or listening to an audio book that will



distract your thoughts but will not keep you awake. Listening to a story can be calming. A recommendation is Harry Potter, since it is a mellow story and the imaginativeness will distract your mind and allow for sleep.

- Pick a room to rearrange. This will help your mindset and shift your perspective to a fresh look at home. You don't necessarily have to rearrange an entire room if you don't have the energy for it. If you prefer, start small and rearrange a small area, such as a corner of a room, a table or a favorite spot in your living environment. As you feel ready, you can rearrange other areas if you would like.
- Naps: if you have trouble falling asleep at night, try staying awake all day. If you feel taking naps will make it harder to fall asleep at bedtime, don't take naps. This will allow your body to feel tired enough to fall asleep at bedtime.
- Music: create a calming playlist that will help when you have trouble sleeping. Make sure the music is something that will encourage relaxation. In other words, don't play music that will keep you awake or stimulate your mind/body too much. The goal is to fall asleep.



- Sleep aids: before trying sleep aids, mention this with your advocate and/or your medical provider. There are a variety of sleep aids that your medical provider can recommend.

Sleep is losing consciousness. If you don't feel safe, you're not going to sleep. When you don't get an adequate amount of sleep, your mind and body will not feel rested. As healing takes place, you will find your sleep pattern improving.



‘ADÁ Eating

Along with sleeping, it is expected that your usual eating habits might change. You might not want to eat, you might forget to eat, you might not feel hungry, you might find yourself eating too much and/or eating unhealthy foods. You might feel nauseas after eating. Know that these are normal responses to trauma. It is important to maintain a healthy diet. If you don't feel like eating, try having healthy snacks with you, such as cheese, crackers, trail mix, granola bars and fruit. If you feel that food makes you nauseas, try eating simple stews and brothy soups. Keep foods simple and work toward implementing other healthy foods. Other examples of healthy foods are yogurt, boiled eggs, herbal tea, foods with proteins and of course

drinking plenty of water. Try to refrain from consuming carbohydrates high in fat because this will only spike sugar levels then drop sugar levels, which could lead to hypoglycemia and hinder building a healthy future.



‘ATAH ‘ALZÉÉH

Exercise

Exercise is important for healing. Exercise will help burn off stress and anxiety. Start with something simple like stretching your muscles then work your way up to walking. Work with your comfort level and build on it as the week's progress. You can work out alone, with someone, inside and/or outside. Create goals for yourself then celebrate meeting those goals. Exercise will build your physical and mental strength and can reassure you of your abilities. Repetition is key. Make sure you stay hydrated, drink plenty of water before, during and after any type of exercise. Also consult a doctor about what may be recommended for you. Remember to breathe and always keeping your safety in mind. Some examples of exercise are:

- Yoga
- Lifting weights: use what you have
- Stretching

- Walking/jogging/running/virtual races
- Bicycling
- Hiking
- Subscribing to online workouts and/or apps

YÍNÍÍŁ BIŁ NIJIGHÁH

Emotional/Mental Pain

The body holds memories. Pain is real, it's there. Child Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault survivors are in pain – pain that is constant, pain that comes in waves, pain that is unexpected. Acknowledge it and be aware that while in pain, daily life can be even more challenging. Pain and trauma can lead to other unfortunate events. If you are not dealing with pain in a healthy way, bad habits can be formed and/or an already unhealthy lifestyle can worsen. Ways of coping with pain prior to the sexual assault, which were harmful (i.e. cutting, drinking to blackout, other substance use) may return. These are self-destructive patterns and are unhealthy. They can lead to worsening the situation. Knowing this, it is important to recognize when coping skills are needed and what will work for you.





‘ATAH BEE BIK’ÍJIIGHÁÁH

Coping Skills

Coping skills will help manage traumatic memories, flashbacks and triggers. Being realistic in choosing coping skills is most effective. For example, if deep breathing works for you in stressful situations, utilize deep breathing. In contrast, if screaming is helpful but not ideal, it might be best to only use screaming in a safe place where it will be suitable. Choosing practical and versatile coping skills will help in many situations. For instance, if drawing is your chosen coping skill, but you won't always have access to drawing supplies, then perhaps utilize drawing for when you are home or in an environment where you will have drawing supplies. Taking a break and/or positive self-talk are good coping skills because you do not necessarily need anything to step away for a break and/or to meditate on some positive self-talking. Other coping skills might be to make a call to a supportive person, like an advocate or an understanding friend who will help you process. You might find it helpful to pick three coping skills that work for you



and practice them with someone you trust. So in the event the coping skills are needed, it will be easier to respond. Some coping skill suggestions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Positive Self Talk: the idea is to replace negative thoughts by making positive statements to yourself.
- Grounding: this technique grounds you in the moment and in the environment you're currently in. Cedar, sage, mountain tobacco and/or something related to your faith may help.
- Calling a friend: choose two people that will support you and call them.
- Deep breathing: slowly inhale through your nose, hold and count to 4, slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat 3 times.
- Taking a walk/exercise
- Be around animals: tending and being around animals can be comforting.
- Journaling: write out your thoughts to get them out of

your head, express your feelings. Journaling does not have to make sense to anyone but you.

- Reading a book: pick a book that is satisfying and positive for you. Reading will change your frame of mind.
- Listening to a positive audio book: choose an audio book that will be positive and comfortable to listen to, nothing scary or overwhelming.
- Listen to music
- Treating yourself: it is perfectly fine to treat yourself. Watch a favorite movie, have a favorite snack, go to your favorite store or online shopping site and buy yourself something nice.
- Fun activities: expressing creativity is healing and a sign of resilience. When your creativity returns, you are healing. Consider your hobbies and favorite activities and build upon those areas. If you enjoy beading or sewing, choose a project that you will enjoy creating. You can tend to plants and/or a garden to watch something grow. Activities do not necessarily have to be expensive. Even drawing with a pencil and paper or growing an herb garden indoors is using your creativity.



‘ÁNIID ‘ÁNÁYOODLÍÍŁ

Triggers

Healing can be interrupted by triggers. Triggers brought on by all senses – sound(s), touch, sight, smell, and taste. Healing can be disrupted by a living situation, substance abuse, changes in relationships, lack of sleep, nightmares, changes in eating habits, inability to focus, fear of safety, and/or situations out their control, such as perpetrators still in the family/community, unknown perpetrators, non-believers, blaming, shaming, domestic violence, additional abuse, living in isolated areas, lack of services/support/transportation, changes in services and even COVID-19. Always pay attention to your gut instinct. If something does not feel right, utilize coping skills to get through a difficult situation. Utilize your intuition by gauging what you can handle and what you can't. Healing and progress toward peace can come to a halt when triggers become overwhelming. It is understandable that survivors may struggle with basic needs - sleeping, eating, work and daily routines. After the body heals from abuse and/or assault, the mind and spirit need time to heal as well. Noting triggers and how they came about is helpful. Allow yourself to process stress and anxiety.

BEE TSIZTL'AHZHDOOGÁÁŁ

Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms

- Substance abuse: sometimes people use drugs and alcohol to help cope with pain and trauma. Be aware that substance abuse can reactivate traumatic memories or lead to dangerous situations.
- Self-harm: people may think about or act on harming themselves thinking it will make them feel better but is only a temporary distraction from the actual trauma.
- Suicide: if you have had any thoughts of suicide prior to

the sexual assault, those thoughts may return. If suicidal thoughts do not return, acknowledge that and feel good about that. **The National Suicide Crisis Hotline is 1-800-273-8255. Another resource for support is Stronghearts Native Helpline 1-844-7NATIVE (762-8483) available 24/7.**

BEE 'ÁNI'NÁLDZIIH

Therapy

Therapy is extremely beneficial to healing. Although it is not required and there is no set timeline on when to begin therapy, it is good to consider and if possible, start right away. It is recommended that therapy is initiated immediately following a traumatic event, such as a sexual assault. Therapy may last a short time but it's something you can always re-visit at any time when needed. Therapy will help guide your understanding, with a trained professional, of what is occurring mentally and emotionally. Your Family Advocate can help set up therapy referrals for you. Give a therapist three visits to determine whether the relationship is a good fit or not. If you feel a particular therapist is not a good fit after three visits, then you have every right to request for a different therapist. You should feel comfortable with your therapist. If you need to switch therapists, do not feel bad for wanting to do so. Therapists are aware that a good relationship is necessary.

DINÉK'EHJÍ É'ÉLÍ

Traditional Healing

A main collaborator for the FAC is TMC's Traditional Practitioners, which we offer as an option. When interested, we reach out to Traditional Healers in the form of a referral. Please let us know if you need a referral. Survivors find peace, comfort and restoration of Hózhó through traditional prayers. Hózhó is the balance of the



mental, physical, spiritual and emotional systems. When one or more areas is low or depleted, the overall balance is interrupted. A traumatic experience, such as sexual assault and/or child sexual abuse can heavily interrupt Hózhó.

According to Aaron Sam, a TMC traditional practitioner, when a survivor is receiving traditional services at TMC, the following process can be expected: a patient receives knowledge about how their trauma is interfering with peace and harmony. When a prayer ceremony begins, the patient's clans are acknowledged to properly introduce the patient to the Holy Ones and the prayer paraphernalia. The point of the prayer ceremony is to address fear, broken trust, uneasiness, and imbalance that have been brought upon the patient by sexual assault and child sexual abuse. When a person has experienced trauma, they have been abruptly taken out of their reality and are struggling to deal with the wrong that was done to them. They are disconnected. It is necessary for the person to be re-introduced to the reality of the situation and to begin healing from the trauma. The person needs to be rebalanced and reassured. By being rebalanced, the person needs to be re-introduced to society and the new

reality of healing. The person needs to be reconnected with strength and harmony. Ceremonies that are conducted to help heal a survivor from sexual assault and child sexual abuse and restore the mind, body and spirit are Protection Way, Smudging and Blessing Way. Additionally, smoking traditional Mountain Tobacco and providing offerings to nature may be conducted during traditional prayers. Providing offerings to nature is a way to give back for the blessing of rebalancing. While Navajo -Traditional prayers are an option for healing, Mr. Sam stresses self-care to go along with the prayers and ceremonies. Survivors can practice self-care by praying daily for their own healing. Praying will welcome positivity and keep negativity away. Self-care will strengthen the restoration of peace, harmony and Hózhó.

To accommodate survivors who are traditional, the FAC keeps cedar, sage and sweetgrass on hand, should a survivor need cedar or to be smudged while at the FAC.





DÍI BEE NÍKÁ'IILYEED

What we can offer you

Although the Family Advocacy Center represents the medical portion of an entire process, we ensure that we will work in our full capacity to provide quality care. Survivors and families can expect to be listened to, believed, fed, comforted, supported, and guided toward a path of healing. In some cases, survivors take two steps forward and several steps back. At times, our office may be the only safe place for support. Reaching out and contacting survivors is an important part of our services. During our interaction with survivors, we review overall well-being. If there are signs of distress such as anxiety, self-harm, depression, substance abuse, expect that we will take the proper channels, for you, to intervene and get help. We encourage mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual healing. We work individually with survivors to find what works and rule out what does not work. At times, survivors may need a phone conversation to maintain strength. Other times, survivors may need to come to Family Advocacy Center for support.

Translated words for the FAC Healing Booklet and Glossary

ENGLISH TERMS	DINÉK'EHJÍ
Healing	Háázh Dí'nééh: after being violated one feels like you have been unrobed/naked but this word is describing reclothing, reclaiming oneself after having been violated
Positivity	'Ił'íł bee nidzídžíkees: speaks to possessing a sense of value
Sleep	Háá'áyyíh: not so much sleep as the literal sense but resting
Eating	'Adá: the act of eating
Exercise	'Atah 'alzééh: a sense of lighting the load
Emotional/ Mental Pain	Yíníłł bitł nijigháh: suffering from mental anguish; literal translation: walking with mental anguish
Coping Skills	Bee bik'íjiighááh: a sense of overcoming
Triggers	'Ániid 'ánáyoodlíł: renews the event
Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms	Bee tsiztl'ahzhdoogáát: creating barriers/obstacles for self
Therapy	Bee 'áni'náldziih: to heal the mind
Traditional Healing	DinéK'ehjí É'élí: Navajo/Diné way
What we can offer you	Díí bee níká'iilyeed: how we will help
Notes	Níł bééhózin dooleet: what you need to know

This image shows a full page of blank handwriting practice paper. It features approximately 28 evenly spaced horizontal black lines across the entire page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The background is plain white, and there are no margins, text, or other markings present.

Trauma makes you stronger, you will see/feel your strength building, you will see/make connections, and you will hold a perspective that the pain and trauma may not knock you down like before but will make you a better, stronger person. Healing from child sexual abuse and sexual assault is not simple nor does the trauma disappear. Over time, survivors adapt and learn how to cope with their traumatic experiences. It is our hope that survivors find the courage within themselves to speak up, know that support services are available and understand the strength they possess. All survivors are brave.

‘Oodlǎ’ Bee Hahóót’í’

“Start By Believing”



We can all be a part of Survivor’s healing.



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