

Week 2:

- **Mindfulness Exercise**
- **Check in:**
 - **Anything that came up last week that you would like to share?**
 - **Evaluations**
 - **Revisit rules (taking up too much space?)**
- **Introduce Metaphor**
- **Roots: Mel**
- **Ground: Josh**
- **Trunk: Mel**
- **Branches: Josh**
- **Leaves: Mel**
- **Fruits: Josh**
- **Grounding Exercise**
- **Close**
 - **Evaluations**

Introduce the Tree of Life Metaphor

The Tree of Life is a hopeful and inspiring approach to working with children, young people and adults who have experienced hard times. This methodology was co-developed through a partnership between REPSSI (www.repssi.org) and Dulwich Centre Foundation. Ncazelo Ncube (REPSSI) and David Denborough (Dulwich Centre Foundation) initially developed this Tree of Life approach to assist colleagues who work with children affected by HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. This approach has proved so successful and popular that it is now being used with children, young people, and adults in a wide range of countries across Africa, and also in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Russia, Nepal, the USA, and elsewhere.

This approach enables people to speak about their lives in ways that make them stronger. It involves people drawing their own 'tree of life' in which they get to speak of their 'roots' (where they come from), their skills and knowledges, their hopes and dreams, as well as the special people in their lives. The participants then join their trees into a 'forest of life' and, in groups, discuss some of the 'storms' that affect their lives and ways that they respond to these storms, protect themselves, and each other.

The Tree of Life enables people to speak about their lives in ways that are not re-traumatizing, but instead strengthens their relationships with their own history, their culture, and significant people in their lives.

The Tree of Life has been used with children, young people and adults in many different contexts, including groups of refugees and immigrants; people whose community has suffered from a natural disaster (floods); groups of young people who have been expelled from school; women who have been subject to domestic violence, neglect, physical abuse, and emotional abuse within their families; adults who are experiencing mental health struggles, and in many other contexts.

Tree of Life is a means of enabling adults to develop a second story about their lives and ensure that they had a safe territory of identity in which to stand before speaking about difficulties in their lives.

- How we are like trees/forests?
- What are the different parts of a tree? (Discussion)
- Do you have a favorite tree? Why?
- What is your favorite season? What happens to trees then?

Roots of the Tree

The roots of the tree are a prompt for clients to speak about: where they come from (i.e. village, town, and country); their family history (origins, family name, ancestry, extended family); those who have taught them the most in life; their favorite place at home; and a treasured song or dance.

We are going to first focus on your Roots

What are roots? What do they do? What do they make possible? What can they look like?

What are your roots? (Where do you come from, your family history, ancestry, extended family, whose who have taught you in your life?)

Step1: Participants are asked to draw a picture of some tree roots

Step2: Participants are asked to begin adding their answers to the “What are your roots?” question onto drawing

Step 3: Group member are invited to share (if time permits)

Have a look at your roots and the names you’ve written down.

Who would you like to be in your life 10 years from now? (peoples, types of relationships)

Would your best friend/ friends be in your life?

Do you think that you will have new people in your life? Who would they be: friends, partners, children, neighbors, co-workers?

The ground & soil (WE CAN CHOOSE TO FOCUS ON ONE OR THE OTHER)

The ground represents where the client lives at present; and some of the activities that they are engaged in during their regular daily life.

GROUND: Focus on the present and the solid people, things, in your life that help ground you? Who is in your home presently? Other relatives, friends, or special people? Pets? Activities? Add to picture of tree – words, pictures, etc.

SOIL: What is Soil? Why is it important?

Use a Soil metaphor for emotions.

Soil helps a tree grow and it contains many qualities (emotions).

A soil is healthy when it has many nutrients and not just a few.

Why do you think this is so? If a tree's soil was only anger or sadness how would it grow?

Step 1: Name Types of emotions

Step 2: Categorize difficult emotions/Pleasant emotions

Step 3: Why are emotions important? What do they tell us?

Step 4: How do we know we are having them? Signs / sensations

Step 5: How are emotions like Soil?

Step 6: What does your soil look like?

Step 7: Share with group

(If time) Grounding exercise

Name 5 things you can see

Name 5 things you can hear

Name 5 things you can sense / touch with your body (hair against cheek, cold hands, feet in the shoes)

Trunk of the tree

When the focus turns to the trunk of the tree, this is an opportunity for clients to speak about, and represent in drawing, some of their skills. These include: skills that may have become apparent when they were talking about what they do in their daily life; or skills that they have demonstrated during the group. During this process, counsellors can also ask questions about the histories of these skills, how long the client has had them, and did they learn these skills from anyone in particular. This enables stories to be told about these skills, and the information from these stories can also be recorded on the tree. While drawing the trunk, discussions also take place about special memories that the client can recall in his or her life. These are valued memories that the client holds precious.

What are some things that I am good at or like to do?

What would my partner say? What would my best friend say? What would my child say?

“Quiet” skills: What is something that surprises people about you, when they get to know you better? (i.e. being de-rooted and getting new roots in the new ground)

When did I start doing this? Who shares this skill or ability with me? How have they taught or introduced this to me? When and where?

What would you call this skill?

What does it make possible?

Personal qualities (kindness, fairness, strength, etc.)

How would (important person) describe me as a friend/student/team member/family member/classmate etc.?

What are some of the personal qualities they would say?

What does this say about the type of person you are or what is important to you or what you value?

Think a time when you demonstrated this, what skills or values did you enact?

What did it make possible?

Branches of the Tree

The branches of the tree represent the hopes, dreams and wishes that the client has for the direction of their life. While the client is drawing the branches, counsellors can ask questions to learn about the history of these hopes, dreams and wishes, and how these may be linked to significant people/adults back in the client’s home. When the counsellors get to hear about how long these hopes and dreams have been alive in the client’s life, they may also ask about how the client has managed to hold onto these dreams and what has sustained their hopes.

Hopes for self, and others. Hopes for family, school, friendships, family members, what/how their lives could be.

What would you be doing?

What kind of work do you think you would be doing?

What kind of activities would you be involved in?

What would you be really good at?

What would you have accomplished that you were proud of?)

Leaves of the Tree

The leaves of the tree represent people who are important to the client. The counsellor makes it clear that these can be people who may be alive or may have passed on: Just because people are no longer alive, it does not mean they are not still very important to us. Counsellors may ask the clients questions about why these particular people are the most special to them.

This process may encourage a client to tell stories about what was significant about their relationship with a person who has passed away. This can contribute to an honoring of this relationship. It may also lead to stories about how the client continues to think about and remember those who have passed away.

Who are the people that you would like to have in your future. In your heart, memory, daily life, etc.

Draw a picture of how your family may look like in 1 year from now.
What would be some of the things you will be doing with your family?
Who are the significant people in your life?
Would your partner be in your life?
Would your mom/dad be in your life?
Would your siblings/uncle /aunts be in your life?
Leaves for others? Yourself?
Are the leaves close to the branch/hope?

Fruits

The fruits of the tree represent gifts that the client has been given. These do not have to be material gifts but could be acts of kindness, or care, or love from others. At this time, the counsellors may ask:

What would these people (maybe the people on the leaves) bring / add to your life?
The positive things that people bring to your life can sometimes be called gifts. What does the word gift mean to you?
Think about a significant person in your life past or present
Think about and name one things they have taught you. It could be that they encouraged or taught you to develop a specific skill, an attitude, an interest in a subject or activity.
Describe this gift in a few words and write it down on a piece of fruit.
Why do you think the person gave you this?
What did they appreciate about you that would have led them to do this?
What do you think you might have contributed to their life?

Think about other significant people...a teacher, friend, family member, etc.