



AIDS Bereavement Project of Ontario

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Resiliency Map: Initiative Overview

From nine years of work, the AIDS Bereavement Project has identified resiliency as a core competency in front-line AIDS work. **Resiliency is the capacity of individuals and groups to move forward with hope, clarity and effectiveness in the face of the multiple loss, complex grief, and ongoing transition related to HIV/AIDS.** It is our belief that grief and loss are pervasive characteristics of HIV/AIDS that limit people's capacity to effectively integrate prevention knowledge into their behavioural patterns. Trauma literature and direct experience would also have us believe that they have a significant impact on people's ability to effectively access or provide care, treatment and support. Rising numbers in urban infection rates suggest that the information of AIDS education is not enough to support people to make healthy choices.

The Resiliency Map is a 16×16-foot floor blanket or quilt with concentric circles depicting self (centre), emotional reactions/ relation to others (next circle), community/social networks (third circle), and the socio-political environments (outside circle). These concentric circles are intersected by two meridians: one representing motivation and commitment, and the other representing shared personal and organizational values. A more detailed image of the Map can be found on page 4.

The Resiliency Map is a vehicle to engage in a meaningful dialogue on the complex issues that HIV/AIDS raises in our communities - grief, loss, hope, resiliency, capacity, death, sexuality, entitlement, empowerment, rage, community - but which we have not yet found sufficiently complex theory and shared language to explore.

Originally conceived of as a flat one-dimensional cone image, the Resiliency Map has evolved into a multi-dimensional tool. It can be used for assessment, problem-solving, program planning, team-building, psychological, emotional and spiritual healing, evaluation and other purposes requiring a purposeful identification of stressors, current coping strategies, new coping strategies, and required coping strategies.

The Resiliency Map allows people to weave a narrative as they literally walk on this floor map and articulate their journey with or in response to organizational issues. The Map creates an opportunity for people to describe their motivation and attachment for involvement, the stressors and coping strategies of self, and the stressors in interpersonal relationships balanced by their strategies of resiliency. The Map provides a rich opportunity for individuals to both identify the impact of stressors and share observations about the organizational, community and larger socio-political responses. Through this process of identifying current stressors and resiliency strategies, new individual and collective strategies emerge based on shared purpose, motivation, and commitment.

While the Resiliency Map has been conceptualized, created and used within the context of existing workers in community-based AIDS service organizations, it is a new resource and as such is only beginning to be used outside of the AIDS sector. It has been piloted with several types of human service workers, including an aboriginal women's shelter, a sexual assault centre, palliative care nurses and ALS care providers.

This model provides a means to help situate the individual and collective experience of stress and coping within individual, relational, organizational, and socio-political contexts. The model recognizes that people have considerable motivation and commitment in response to the issues they are working on, shared personal and organizational values, and individuals and groups are able to assess, identify, and create resiliency.

Background:

The Resiliency Map is derived through the experience of the AIDS Bereavement Project of Ontario's Project Sustain, a 3-year national project designed to "identify the impact of AIDS grief and multiple loss, provide regional comparison of the unique challenges facing ASOs, and

attempt to identify and help initiate resilient strategies within three distinct regional AIDS Service Organizations in Vancouver, Winnipeg and the Atlantic.”¹

Through the experience of Project Sustain, and based upon previous research² a visual theoretical framework (see ‘Cone’, page 5) was developed to “depict the interconnectedness of our losses and the ways they are complexly layered in the day to day lives of ASO workers”.³ This ‘Cone’ provides a means for ASOs to identify the impact, recognize our coping strategies, and develop new forms of resiliency in response to HIV-related grief.⁴ While the ‘Cone’ was an excellent conceptual tool, it’s developer, Val Gervais, perceived it might have different utility as a vehicle for experiential self-learning and facilitating community dialogue if it were actually transferred to a physical assessment tool. National training participant feedback expressed a need to explore further how “practical tools and techniques using this model be developed, tested and disseminated”. By February 2002, a first rendering of a floor-size Resiliency Map was created. It was first used in March 2002 with the Ontario AIDS Network PHA Caucus.

The following page shows an image of the Map, where the meridians of ‘Motivation and Commitment’ and ‘Shared Values’ cross through every layer of our lives and bring us to the experience of Core Identity. The central words are ‘SELF’, with ‘LOSS/HOPE’ underneath.

The Resiliency Map is based on:

- ❖ **the Ethnographic Tool and the ‘Cone’ developed by Gervais⁵;**
- ❖ **three years of a research generated through Project Sustain;**
- ❖ **and the experience of the AIDS Bereavement Project of Ontario working with people living with and impacted by HIV/AIDS in Ontario.**

¹ Perreault, Yvette and Gervais, Valerie. Project Sustain: Creating and Reinforcing Supports for ASO Workers Coping with the Impact of Multiple Losses, Year One Evaluation Report, February 1999 to March 2000, ABPO, 2000.

² Gervais, Valerie. AIDS Grief and Multiple Loss: The Experiences of Individuals within an AIDS Service Organization, unpublished Masters thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998.

³ Perreault, Yvette. The Basics of Grief and Multiple Loss: a Training Manual for Workers in AIDS Service Organizations, ABPO, 2003.

⁴ Ibid.

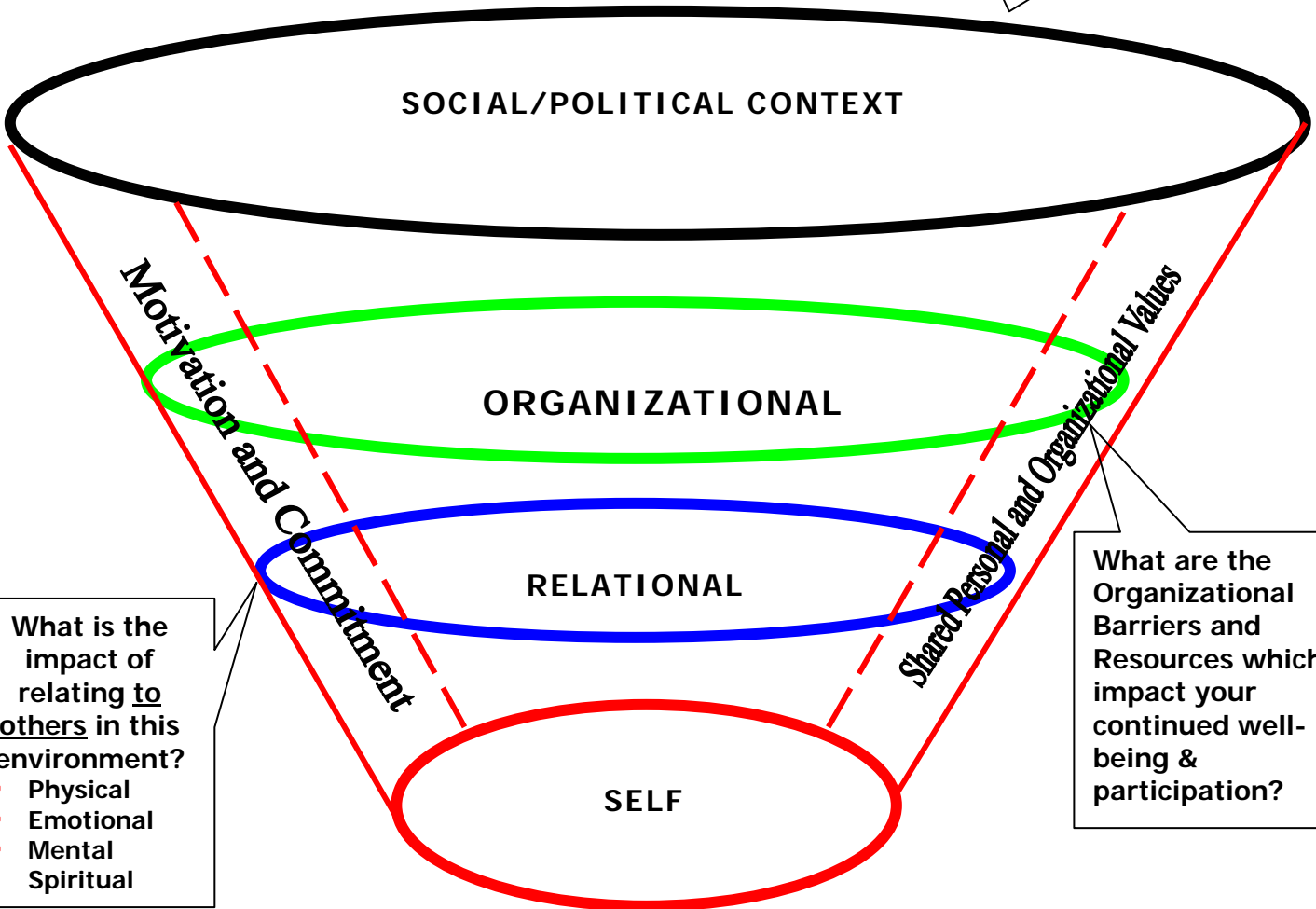
⁵ Gervais, Valerie. AIDS Grief and Multiple Loss: The Experiences of Individuals within an AIDS Service Organization, unpublished Masters thesis, University of British Columbia, 1998.

RESILIENCY MAP



'The Cone'

What are the Barriers and Resources in the community and larger social/political context?



**Sustaining Balance between Loss and Hope:
Layers of Stressors and Coping Strategies**