



**A PROJECT OF
OUT NORTH**
Anchorage, Alaska

Creative prompts, poetry,
and coloring pages to
help you explore
mental health.



OUT NORTH

AWBW art transforming trauma
A WINDOW BETWEEN WORLDS

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health can be hard to talk about. Being vulnerable, understanding your emotions and actions, and trying to empathize with the people around you sometimes feels insurmountable. But we can use more than just words to communicate about mental health. The purpose of this workbook is to provide you with creative prompts, poetry, coloring pages, and blank spaces to help you explore mental health in whatever way feels best for you. It's an invitation, an opportunity, and an opening.

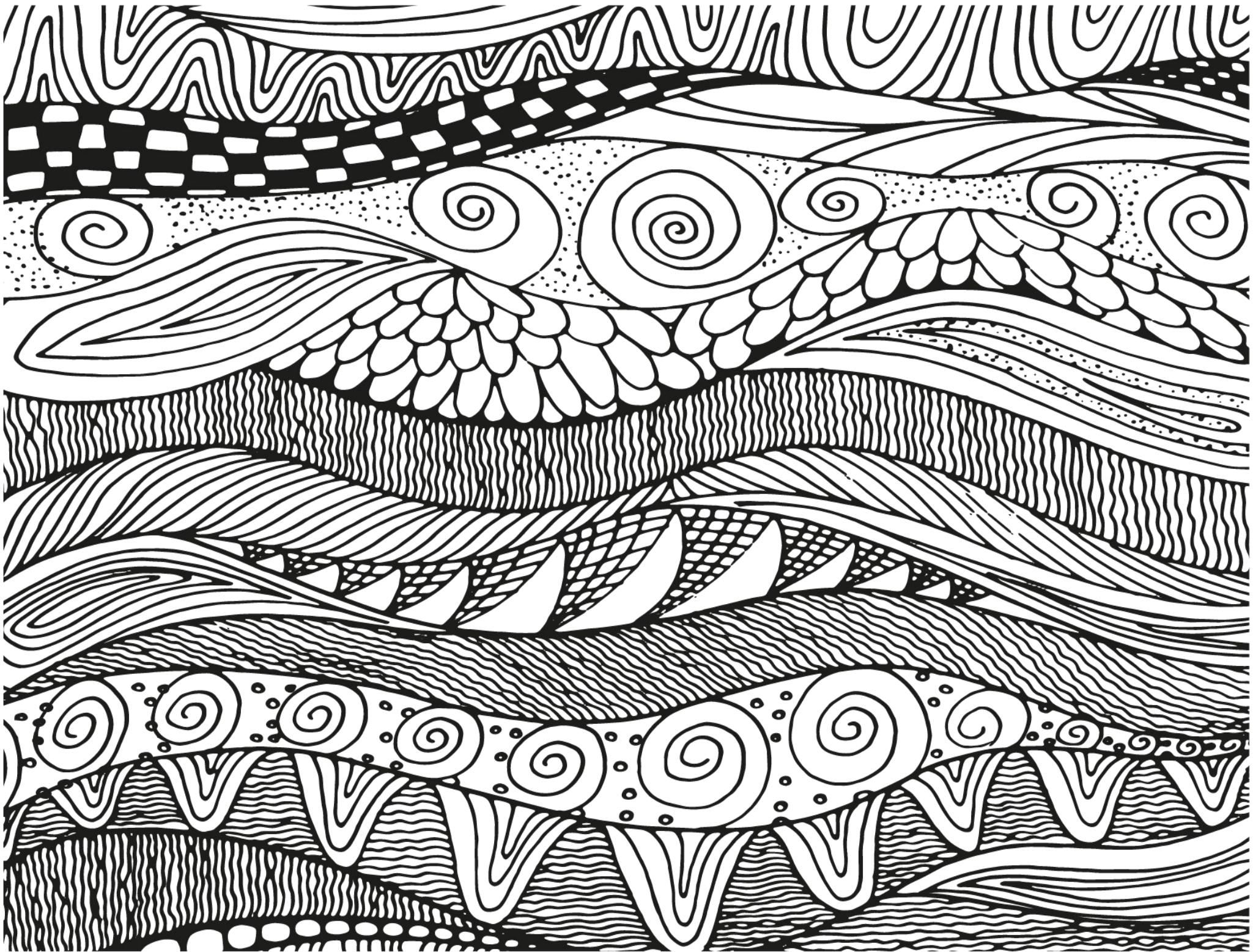
This workbook is part of a larger project called Mental Health Mosaics created by Out North, an arts nonprofit and community radio station in Anchorage, Alaska. It was created in partnership with A Window Between Worlds (AWBW), a global organization that uses art to help people heal from trauma. AWWB's knowledge and guidance made this workbook possible.

Though it stands on its own, the workbook can also be used in conjunction with a podcast called Mental Health Mosaics. The podcast focuses on the stories of people with lived experience and includes advice from other experts, too. The workbook and the podcast both explore issues identified by a project advisory board full of people with varied lived experiences, such as living with mental health issues, being in recovery from substance misuse, and working as traditional healers. You can subscribe to the podcast by searching for "Mental Health Mosaics" on any podcast app. You can also listen to episodes on our webpage, www.mentalhealthmosaics.org. There you'll also find visual art and more poetry from the writers featured in this workbook.

Thank you for picking up this workbook and joining us on the journey to explore and destigmatize conversations around mental health. This is yours to use as you see fit. Remove pages, ignore the prompts, explore it at your own pace. You can download and share copies for free from our website to use both personally and with groups. The prompts can serve as inspiration on their own, and it need not be printed.

Anne Hillman
Mental Health Mosaics Project Director



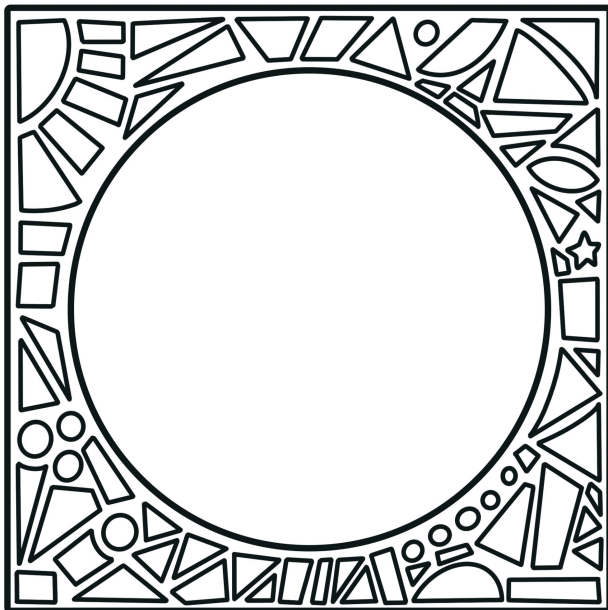


BREAKING THE SILENCE

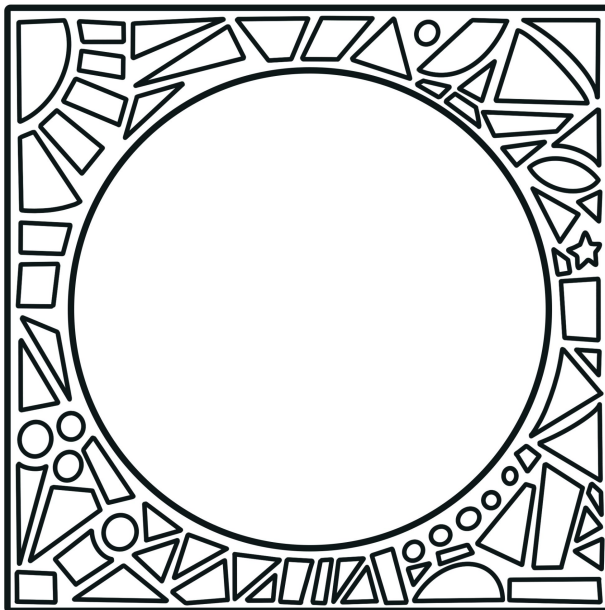
The first step for normalizing conversations around mental health is breaking the silence. Sometimes that means sharing a small detail about your mental wellness with a friend. Sometimes that means being bold in public. Every move is meaningful.

Below, you can reflect on what you share on the outside now, what's happening inside of you, and what you want to share on the outside in the future. Use any writing materials you like – pens, colored pencils, whatever you have. Use colors, words, and images to express yourself. Then, write down what could help you get to that future self. Use your finished creation to begin conversations with the safe people in your life.

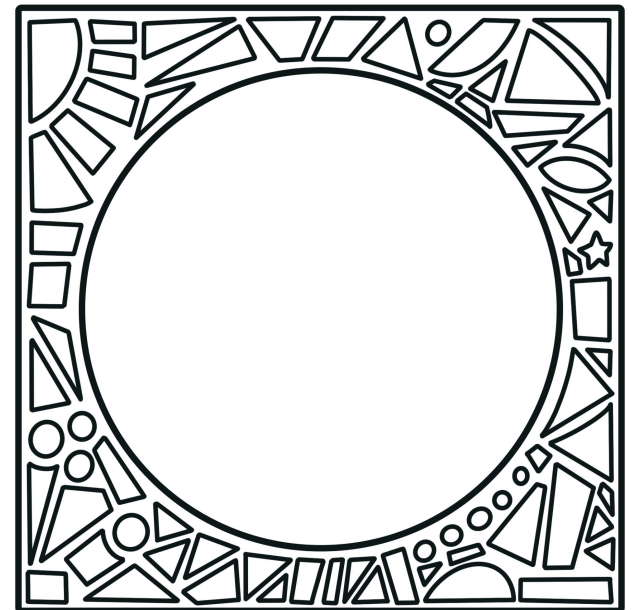
WHAT I SHOW NOW



WHO I AM INSIDE



WHAT I WANT TO SHOW



TO BECOME MY FUTURE SELF, I NEED...



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Break in Silence: Mental Health Mosaics

about life on the equinox

Like I know the what is and what nots
Slung over bones and grave insights
That cosmically spiral on late nights
Into places between spaces
I am looking for traces
Of strength. I need help. I have lost my way
Don't think I'm going to make it another day
There are no beginnings and it never ends
Alone isolated loneliness no friends
For all of my nerves are bad
I can't help but feel sad
I can't help but be funky
A no bath having food and television junky
Laying around depressed on myself
I'm not the same as everyone else
It just can't be me in bubbles
With rainbows in troubles
From rising too high too fast
burst smash pop crash
My soul on ice, heart on fire
I sure do miss true desire
To feel better
So please come hangout with me later
Cuz right now, I am a hot mess
Constant turmoil. I digress.

M.C. MoHagani Magnetek

WHO I AM

Indigenous people in the United States often introduce themselves by talking about their families, ancestors, and their connections to different places. Alaska Native Traditional Healer Meda DeWitt explains, “In a small interconnected community, this information would already be known. However, in modern American culture we rarely take the time to get to know each other. This is a basic framework for introductions that I use with my classes whether they are with teens or adults. Many times new connections are made with people who are already acquainted and it is a great way to connect with people you don’t know.”

For this exercise, write your own traditional introduction. You may want to include your family members, where you are from, your strengths, or what you love in life. Think of it as an opportunity to write about what you really want people know about you. You may also choose to draw images that describe you instead of words. If you feel comfortable, you could share this introduction with someone in your life.



imposter

i stare at the face in the mirror
and feel out of place
am i lost?
or am i an imposter?
feelings like this aren't new but the unease is just as cruel
i don't know how to escape the confinement that is my very mind how
do i turn these thoughts that tear me down into building blocks? how
do i express these feelings without looking like a weakling or
validation seeking?
you see, i am just a being
trapped in a system of affliction
that forces me to be a walking contradiction
my simple existence is a complex act of resistance
and my persistence?
fuels the fire of our desire to build an empire
- I am no imposter

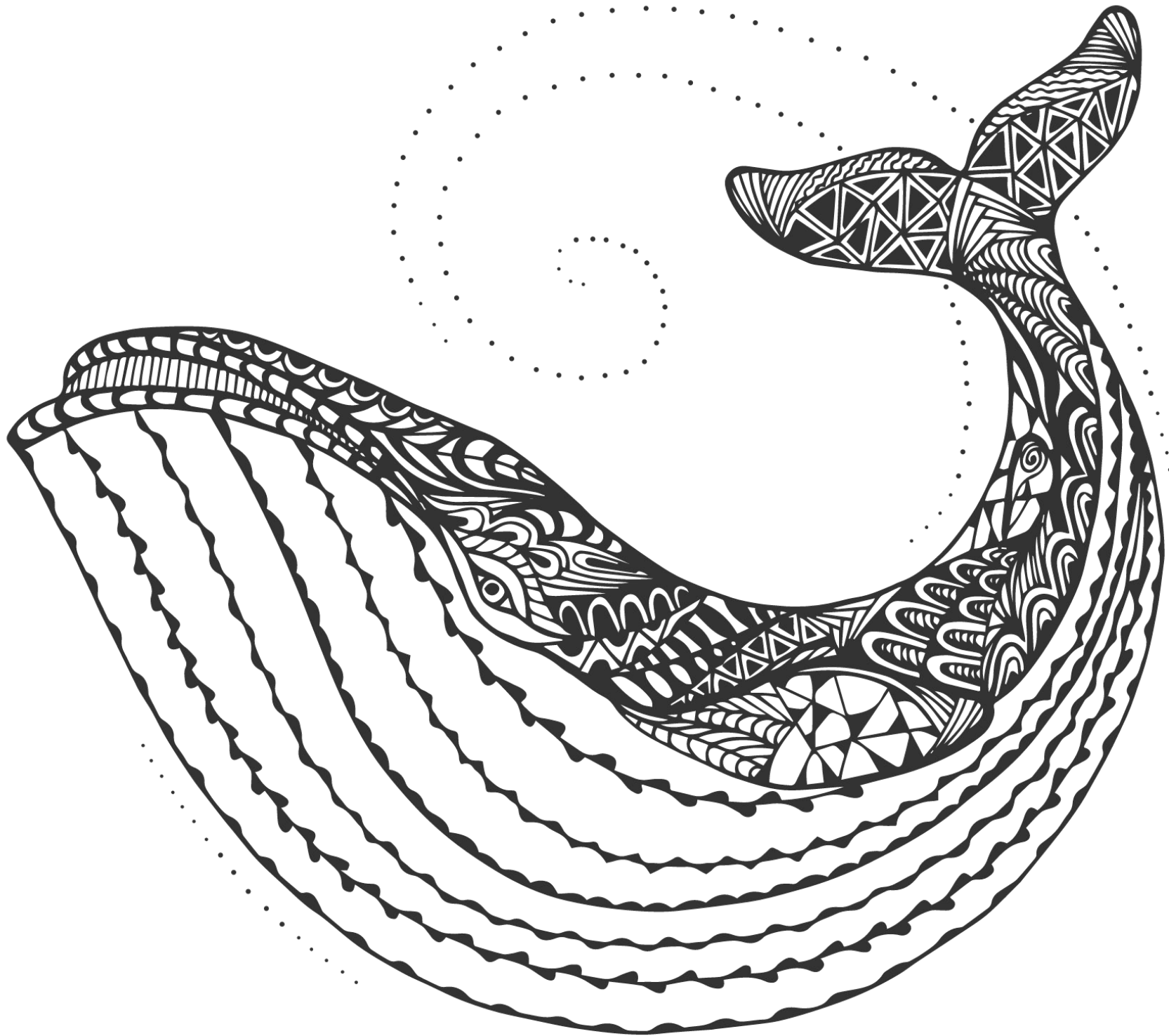
Alexis Rexford

IDENTITY AND MENTAL HEALTH

Sometimes it's hard to talk about our identities directly. Artist Lauren Stanford uses ceramic sculptures of animals as a tool. "Animals are this almost safer vehicle for talking about things that can be uncomfortable to talk about," she said, "such as your mental health or really tough experiences you've been through."

To help you understand your own identity and how you fit into the environment around you, picture yourself as a different animal - real or imagined. Use this space to draw or write about your animal identity. Why did you choose that animal? How does it fit into the environment? What are its strengths? What does this communicate about your mental health?

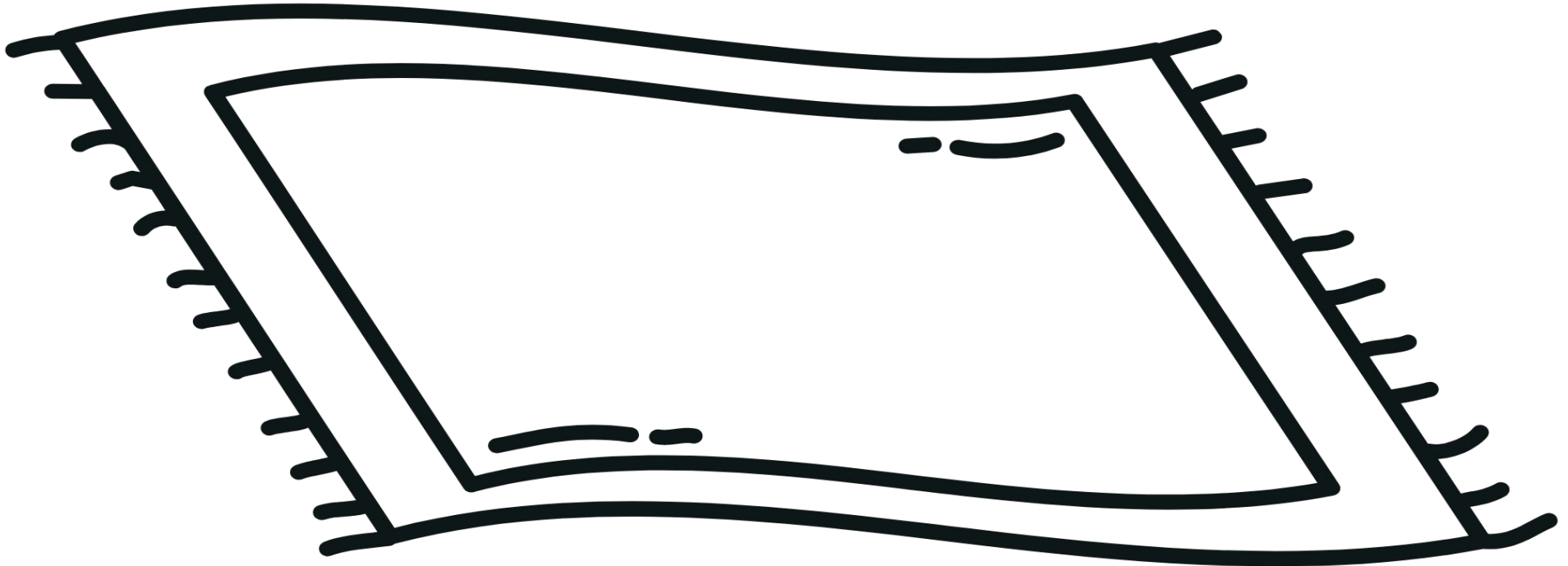




COLONIZATION, INEQUITY, AND MENTAL HEALTH

We all stand on the interwoven experiences of the generations before us. For many Indigenous people, relationships with the land, historical traumas, and cultural strengths continue to shape their experiences today. Historical and intergenerational trauma as well as systems of oppression affect all of our mental health in different ways.

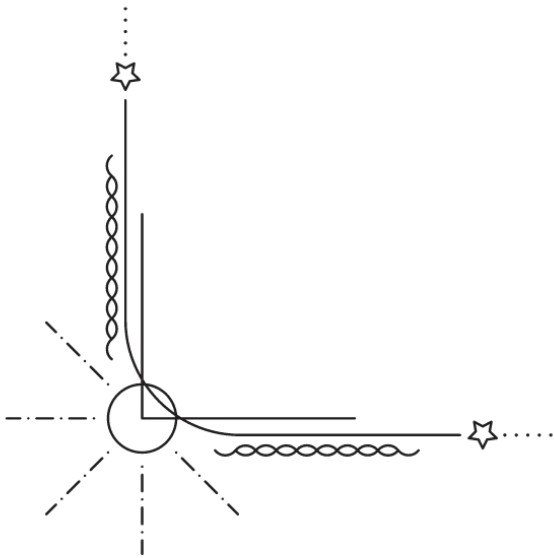
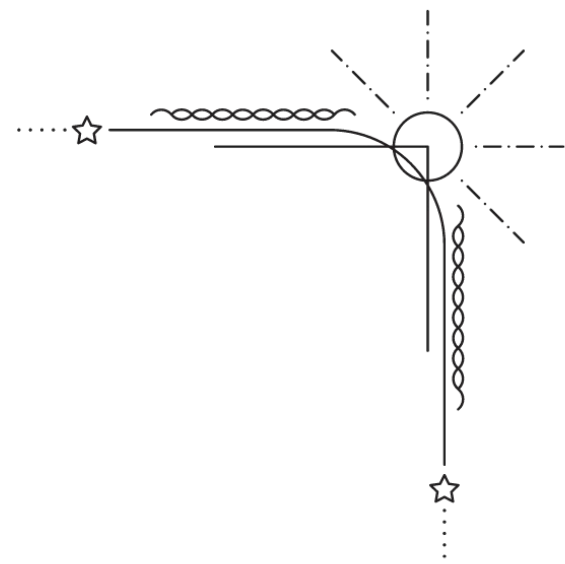
On this carpet, you are invited to use colors, images, and words to write about past and current issues that shape our community's mental wellness — this can include colonization, racist policies, and any questions you have. In the bottom section, we encourage you to notice strengths you bring to this moment, and ask yourself “What do my reflections, experiences, and learnings inspire me to do?” History cannot be erased or undone, but it can be acknowledged and used as a starting point for healing. Together we can work toward this healing.



STRENGTHS I BRING TO THIS MOMENT... WHAT THIS REFLECTION INSPIRES ME TO DO...



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The trauma I carry

The trauma I carry is not only from my experience in this lifetime;
The trauma I carry is the trauma of my ancestors,
The trauma of the Land,
The trauma of the Sea

The trauma I carry is the identity stripped from my great grandmothers and grandfathers;
Their language,
Their beliefs,
Their ways of life

The trauma I carry is the attempt to assimilate my grandmothers and grandfathers;
The christianity inflicted upon them;
The boarding schools hundreds of miles away from their sacred lands,
The *promise of a better life*

The trauma I carry is the abuse tolerated by my father;
The abuse of teachers when he spoke his mother tongue,
The abuse of his alcoholic father,
The alcohol he abuses

The trauma I carry is the expectations weighed on my mother;
The expectation of her to walk in two entirely different worlds,
The expectation to establish herself as a Native woman- to find a husband & raise a Christian family,
The expectation to give her children a *better life*

The trauma I carry is my mother's;
Her best years spent feeling unworthy because she was a single mother of two;
Her depression and alcoholism I never understood;
Her lost battle against cancer

The trauma I carry is the violence done to the Land;
The rape for oil valued by this capitalistic society,
The destruction of forests an entire ecosystems for the colonizer to enjoy, The anthropogenic pollution that never ends

The trauma I carry is the pollution of the Sea;
The plastic that will never degrade,
The oil spills that infect the animals relatives that provide us sustenance, The rising temperatures that endanger the species we still have yet to discover

The trauma I carry is horrendous;
It is ruthless,
Complex,
But most of all it is heavy

The trauma I carry is not burdensome;
I carry it with strength and resilience,
I carry it with grace,
I carry it so my children and grandchildren will not have to.
-cycle breaker

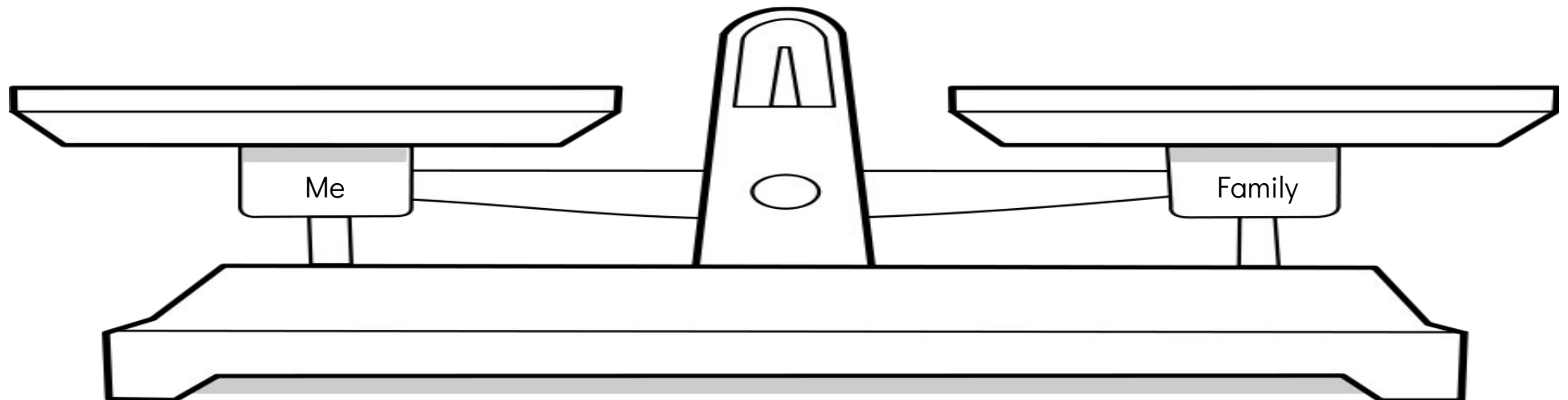
Alexis Rexford

BALANCING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Families and relationships require compromises and balancing different needs. Ensuring that we look out after each other's mental health while also caring for ourselves can be challenging. In this exercise, write or draw about your needs, your family's needs, and how you balance the two. Are there activities that you do together or separately that help keep you in balance? Do you have other support systems? Use this window of time to think about healthy balances and healthy relationships.



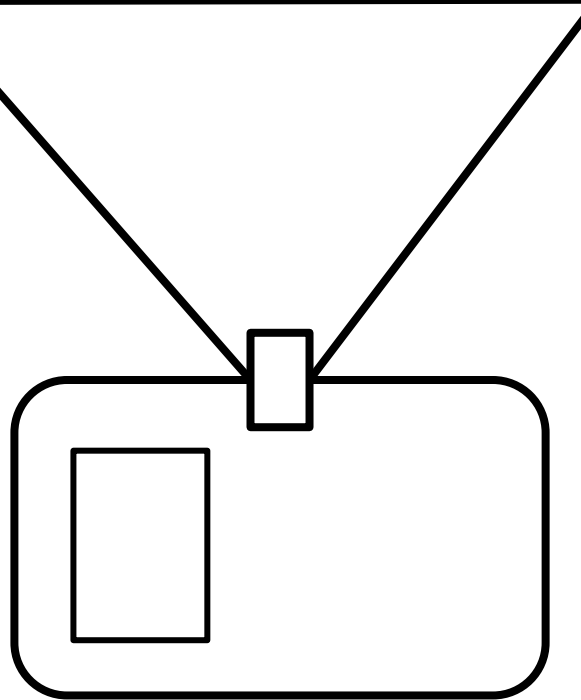
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UNDERSTANDING BEING DIAGNOSED

Receiving a mental health diagnosis can feel like you're being slapped with a label that marks you as different. It can also be relieving, like you finally understand what's going on inside your head. In this exercise, write down different words inside the ID badge that you feel people have used to label you or that you have used to label yourself. Outside of the badge, use words and/or images to describe how that makes you feel. You can also use the ID badge to write about how you want people to see you. This is your space to use in whatever way feels best.



INSPIRATIONS I CARRY FORWARD...

Footnote 3: When You Told Me Identifying With OCD Was A Problem

At the time it was a relief – to know my weirdness had a name.
To know it was something separate from me.
But then I came to own it
because owning it became easier than hoping it would go away.
Because owning it became an identity.

I grasp to guilt, for it's all I know.
Without it, I am nothing at all.
I am normal. I am no one, I am just a girl.

Elizabeth Wulbrecht

Act 6: A Path To Healing

Each diagnosis
I hold close,
nurtured like a small child.
For with each
comes forgiveness,
an absolution of guilt,
an explanation for behavior
I can't help but hate.

This diagnosis
I carry
as something separate from me,
an illness that doesn't define
any aspect of my personality.
This understanding
allows hope to arise
as beautiful as a butterfly.

Elizabeth Wulbrecht

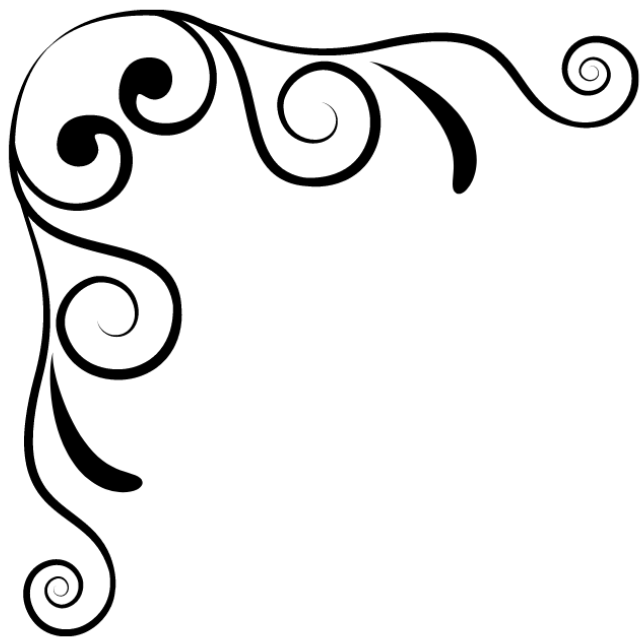
I DESERVE...

Everyone deserves to have their basic needs met, like access to healthy foods and safe housing. But sometimes both internal and external forces, like depression, internalized negativity, or systemic racism, make us feel like we don't deserve them. For this activity, in the left column, write down things you think you or other people deserve in order to be mentally well. You may want to say them out loud or write them down over and over. Sometimes this may be hard because you don't feel like you deserve anything. Writing down what healthy things you think other people deserve might help you think about them for yourself. In the right column, write about how saying these things makes you feel. Why do you or don't you feel like you deserve them? What might change that?

I deserve...

Thinking about this makes me feel...

Insights I take from this...



STRONG FOUNDATIONS

Housing provides people with a strong foundation to start their healing journeys, especially when dealing with mental health issues. Paradoxically, having mental health challenges can make keeping your housing difficult if you don't have other supports in place.

In this exercise, think about what gives you a strong foundation, like people in your life, your values, or your identity. In each brick write or draw about parts of your foundation, either things you already have or things that you want to have in your life.

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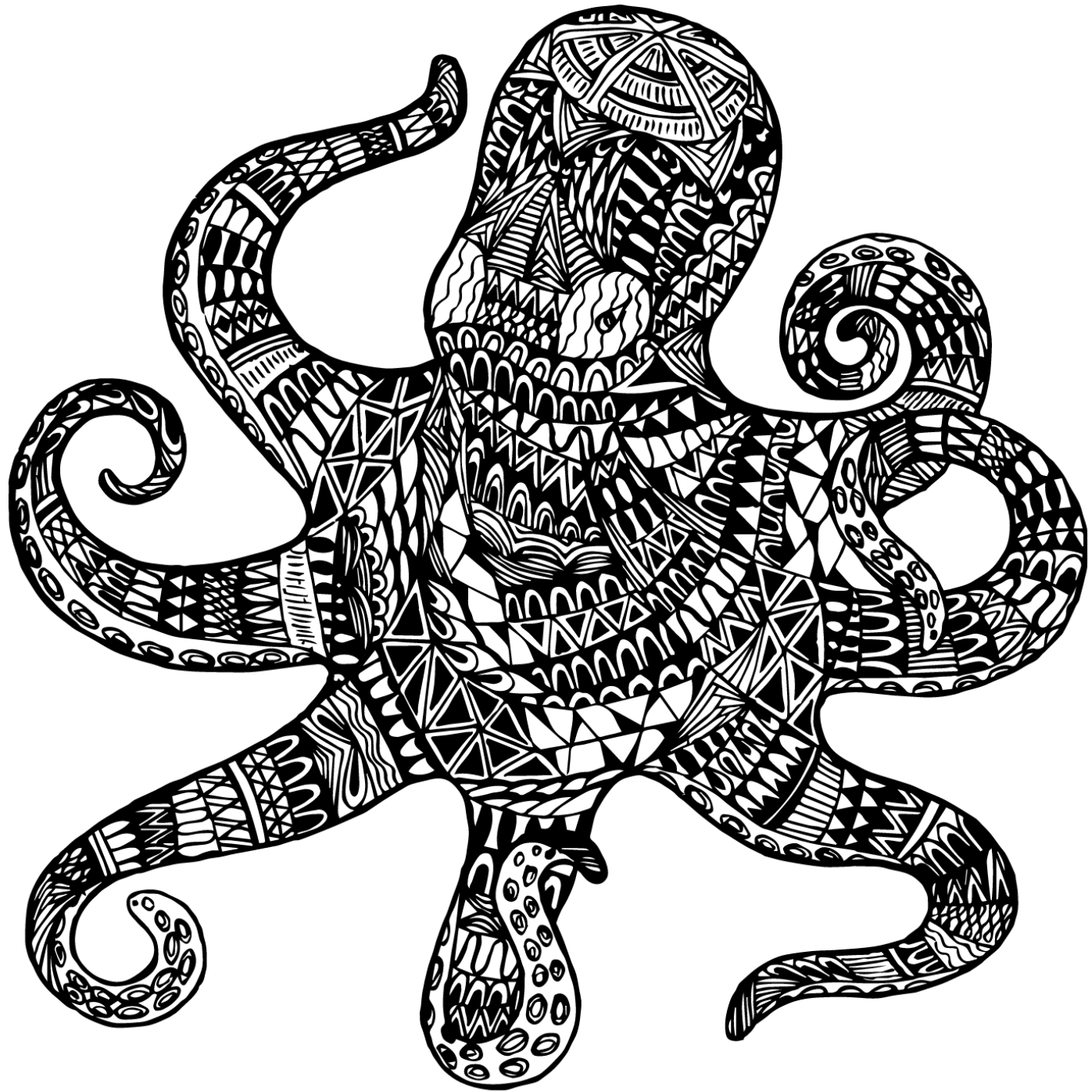
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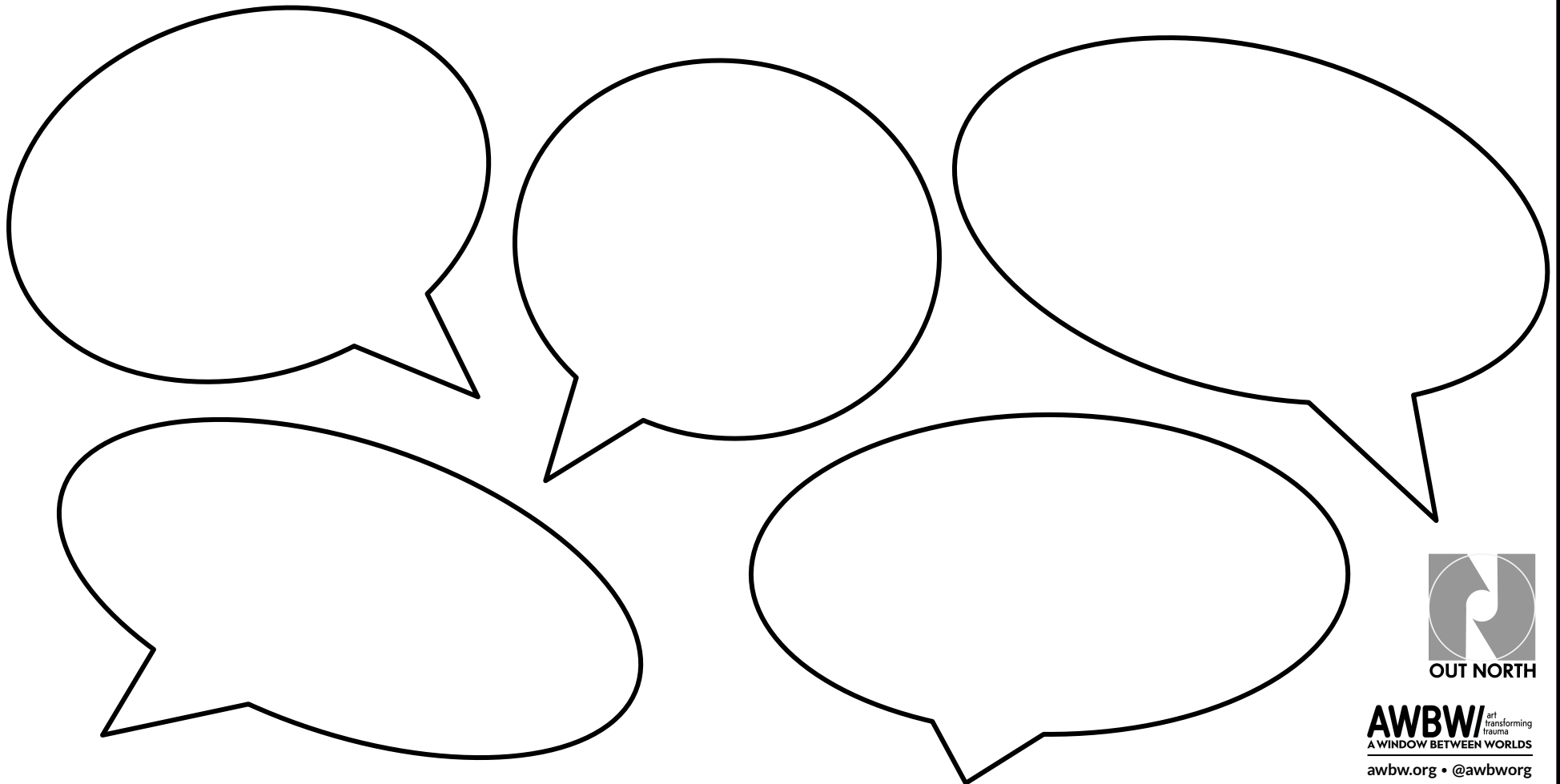


WORDS OF HOPE

Talking about suicide, depression, or other mental health issues can be uncomfortable, especially when you want to protect someone. But being direct and non-judgemental helps. And it's never your job to fix another person's problems. Sometimes you just need to listen.

In this space, practice writing words that help you when you are having a difficult time. What gives you hope? You can also practice direct ways of asking someone about suicide or telling someone if you are having those thoughts. This is your space to write anything you need.

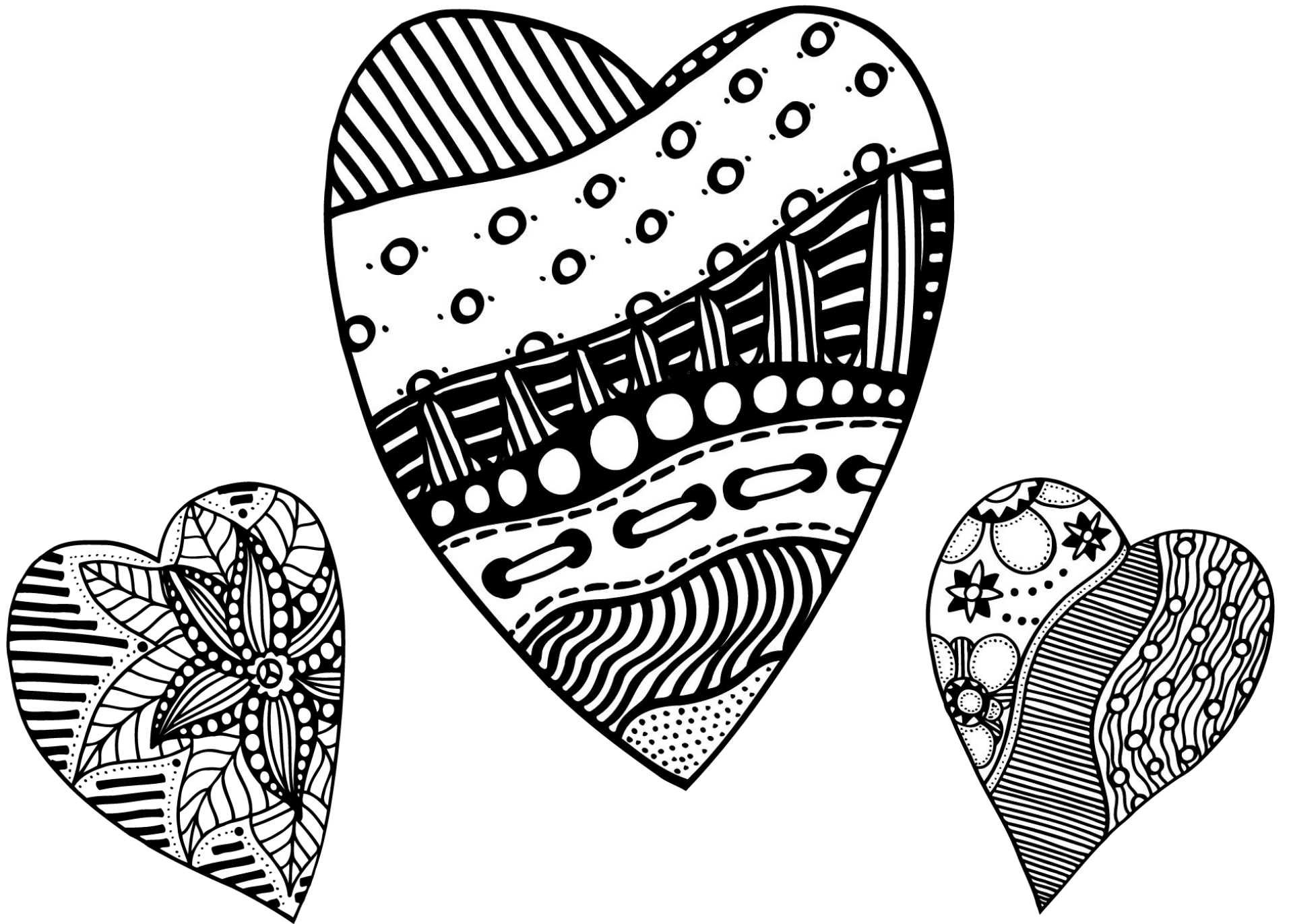
If you are thinking about suicide or you just need to talk, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24/7 at 1-800-273-8255 or text HELLO to 741741 to the Crisis Text Line.



Five large, empty speech bubble outlines are arranged in two rows. The top row contains three bubbles, and the bottom row contains two. These are intended for users to write words of hope or direct communication within them.



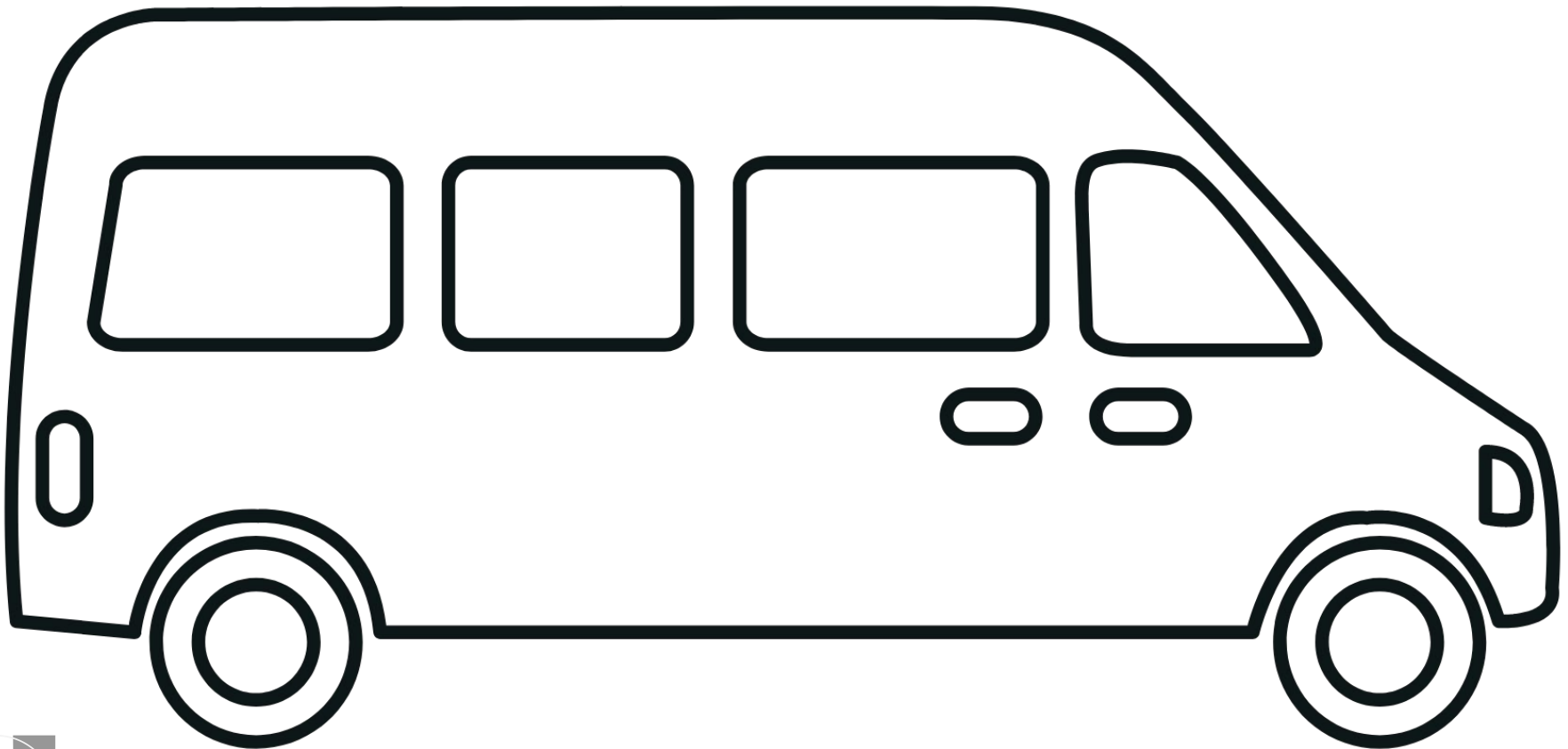
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PERSONAL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

Communities around the United States are creating mobile crisis teams to respond to mental health crises. Usually these teams consist of therapists, paramedics, or peer support specialists. They are people who can help you navigate the crisis and find long-term support.

Oftentimes when we are in crisis, it's hard for us to remember what we need. In this space we invite you to take note of your needs now so you can reference it in the future. Please think about what you need during a crisis. Do you need certain people or things? Or maybe you need space? Write or draw about your personal crisis response team.



Landscape with the Poet as Emergency Responder

there, where the earth cracks
 at the whim of black molten blood
there, where a stream dries—
 a wound torn through the woods

I, too, apply poetry to that spot

*dab here
 &
 rub, gently, into skin*

though I know the ache will persist

it's therapeutic, this medicine, not a cure

I wrote a poem for my brother
 applied it to his chest

*check for pulse
 &
 give two breaths, if needed*

as if it might (un)burrow the splinter
 dug into his heart

breathe, breathe

I do not have a brother

We made a pact upon the plains—a primed canvas
 —clasped our bleeding hands together
and watched the blood drip out from our palms
 onto dead grass, dead leaves

I wrote a poem for that earth
 some years after my brother was dug beneath it,
below that hard to sift,
 harder still to dig clay

*administer compressions at a rate of 30 bpm
think: 'Stayin' Alive' by the Bee Gees*

I never had a brother

I had an aching thought

 I walked out into an empty field
on the hottest day on record
 before the next hottest day on record

where I stood, a tremor ruptured the flatlands
which folded upright and formed the ruins of walls
 bits of earth and rock tumbled downward
 until the walls were barren, stripped, clean

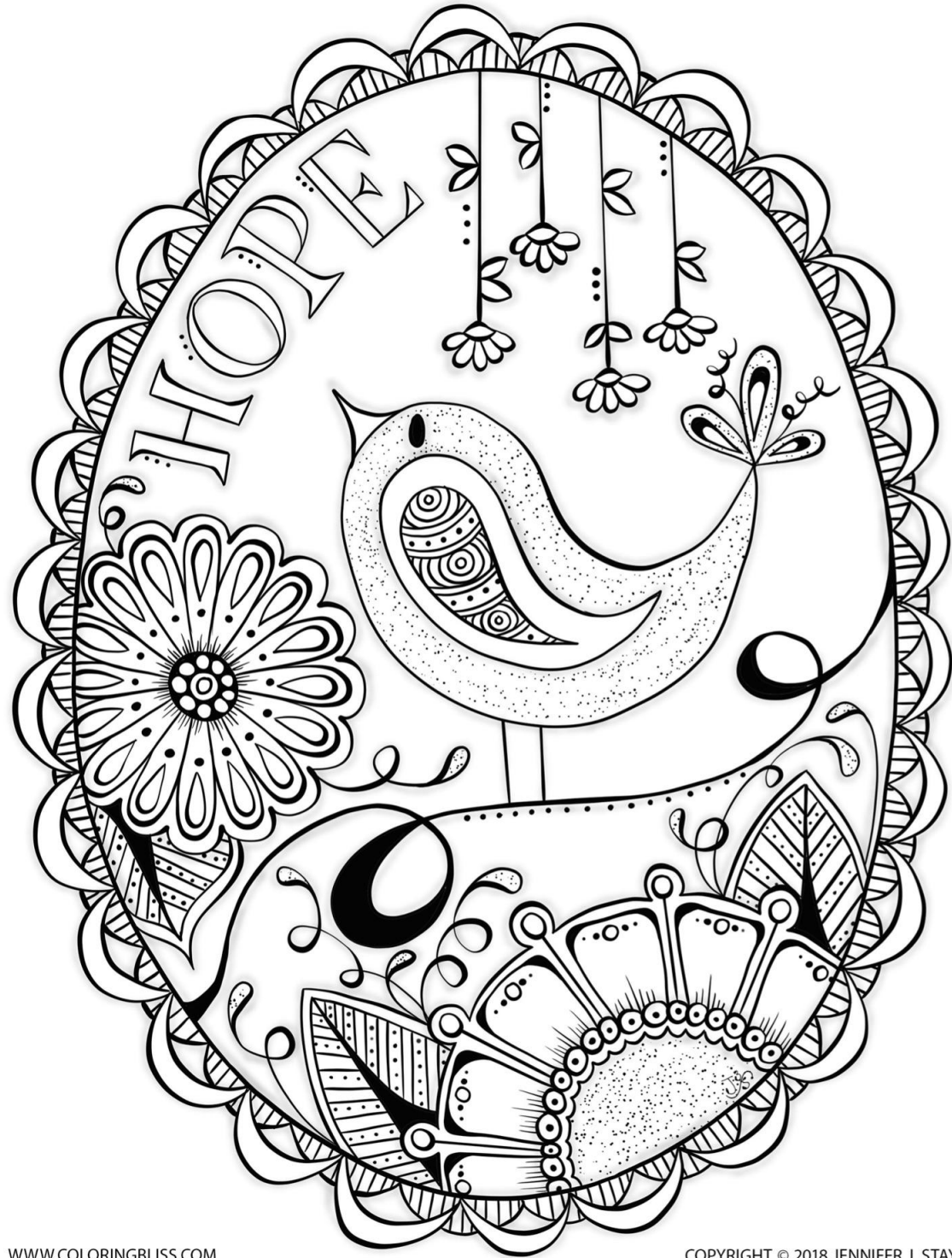
shadows immersed me

the doctor will see you now

& contrasted the sunlit terrain ahead

the doctor told me once CPR commences
 the patient is typically lost
there were hills rolling along that plain
 and so the horizon was obstructed, not quite a flat line

Sean Enfield



Self Care Toolbox

Just getting off... it's been a long day
Youthful gifted black trans and gay
Gonna sit back relax and blaze in the tub
Break out the Dead Sea Salt body scrub
Zoom in come closer stay WOKE
Wanna know why Nubia is so DOPE
I don't just sit in water... I soak
Shea butter rose petals and luxurious soap
Lavender moisturizer head to toe. I'm 5'9
A Queen Bee over 45 and oh so fine
As I was saying so now I'm all fresh & clean
Leave the bathroom hot and full of steam
Booty shorts crop top... I'm ready for bed
3rd Eye ready for wild dreams in my head
But before I doze off a poem I write
Prayers and gratitude before 🌊 Goodnight.

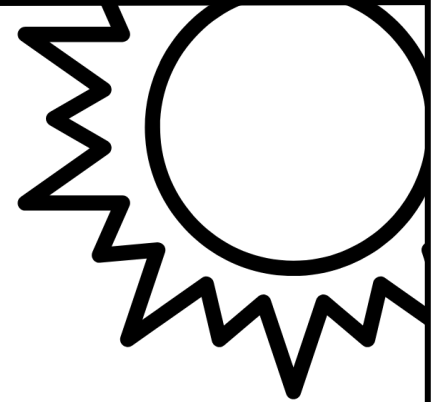
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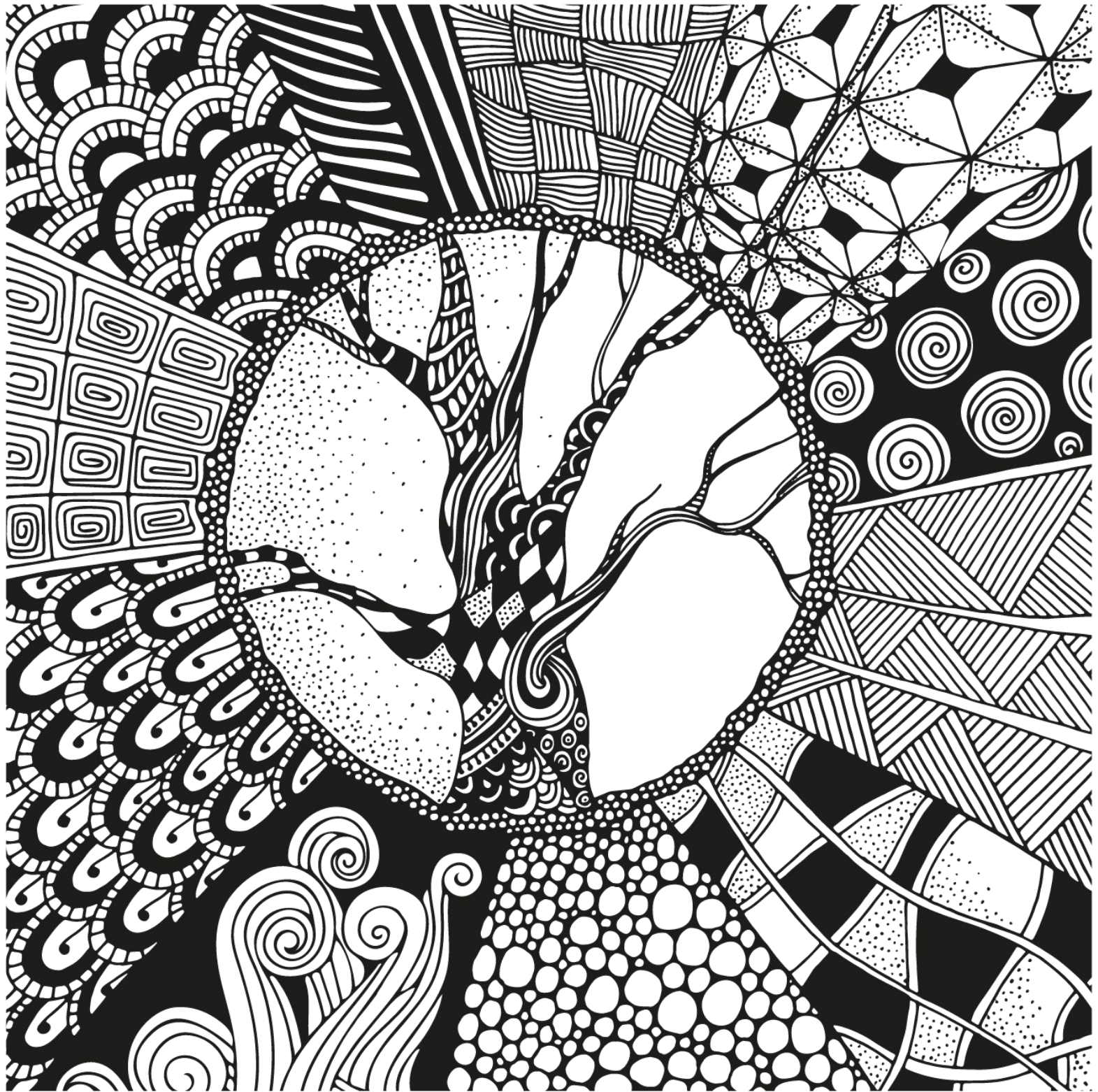
HEALING

Part of healing is accepting where you are and what you need to grow. “Humans are biological beings,” traditional healer Meda DeWitt reminds us. “In order to heal, we need our basic needs met.” For this exercise, we invite you to draw yourself as a plant emerging from a seed that is surrounded by what you need to grow and thrive. What do you look like when you are healthy? What will help you heal? Be as creative as you’d like. Healing is different for all of us.



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M.C. MoHagani Magnetek

Dash Togi

RESOURCES

Please use this space to write down people and organizations you can turn to for support. We've included some free, always available crisis support lines below. Remember, you do not need to be thinking about suicide to reach out. Every crisis is different, and every crisis matters. You matter. You deserve support.

Crisis Lines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1-800-273-8255
(starting July 2022, you can just dial 9-8-8 in the US)

Crisis Text Line - Text HELLO to 741741

Veterans Crisis Line - 1-800-273-8255 or text **838255**

Trevor Project for LGBTQ+ youth - Text START to 678-678 or
call 1-866-488-7386

Information on resources like housing, support - 2-1-1