



Center for African American Recovery Development

RCO Toolkit

Resource 4.4

Afrocentric Wellness & Trauma-Informed Recovery Guide



4.4 Afrocentric Wellness & Trauma-Informed Recovery Guide

Purpose

This guide offers starting practices for weaving Afrocentric wellness traditions and trauma-informed approaches into recovery services. It helps staff, peers, and volunteers create spaces that restore mind, body, and spirit through culturally rooted healing.

Why This Matters

Mainstream recovery models often focus narrowly on sobriety or individual treatment, while Black traditions emphasize communal restoration. Without cultural grounding, wellness programs risk overlooking:

- **Movement-Based Healing** – Dance, drumming, and rhythm as tools for recovery.
- **Mindfulness with Ancestral Roots** – Practices grounded in heritage, not borrowed models.
- **Healing Justice** – Linking personal recovery with racial and social justice.

Afrocentric wellness reclaims recovery as a holistic, cultural, and communal process.

Core Training Topics

- **Movement & Rhythm in Healing** – African dance, drumming, yoga.
- **Grounding & Meditation** – Breathwork, mindfulness, and ancestral connection.
- **Trauma-Informed Practice** – Recognizing trauma triggers, fostering safety, and restorative practices.
- **Healing Justice** – Integrating advocacy, equity, and community repair into recovery.

Essential Peer & Staff Skills

- **Grounding & Centering** – Guiding peers through calming, present-moment practices.
 - **Trauma Awareness** – Recognizing signs of retraumatization and responding with care.
 - **Wellness Integration** – Incorporating movement, rhythm, and mindfulness into recovery planning.
 - **Advocacy for Justice** – Supporting racial healing and community-level change as part of recovery.
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Practices & Activities

1. Grounding Practice (10 minutes)

- **Setup:** Lead a 3-minute breathing exercise.
- **Instructions:** Use affirmations like *“I carry resilience in my body. I carry healing in my spirit.”*
- **Debrief:** Ask: *How did this shift your energy? How could this be used in a peer support group?*

2. Wellness Mapping (20 minutes)

- **Setup:** Groups list Afrocentric practices that support recovery (e.g., yoga, drumming, African dance, meditation, storytelling circles).
- **Debrief:** Ask: *Which practices are accessible in your community? Which require resources or partnerships to bring in?*

3. Trauma-Informed Role Play (25 minutes)

- **Setup:** Create a scenario where a peer is triggered by a group conversation.
- **Instructions:** Practice responding with grounding, empathy, and boundary-setting.

- **Debrief:** Ask: *What responses fostered safety? What made the peer feel excluded?*

4. Healing Justice Circle (25 minutes)

- **Setup:** Form small groups to reflect on how personal recovery connects to community struggles (housing, policing, racism).
 - **Instructions:** Each person shares one way their recovery is tied to collective healing.
 - **Debrief:** Ask: *How can recovery spaces support justice, not just sobriety?*
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Quick Checklist

- ✓ Trauma-informed language and approaches
- ✓ Afrocentric wellness activities included
- ✓ Grounding and mindfulness rooted in heritage
- ✓ Healing justice and racial equity built into program design