

T-MAPS

transformative mutual aid practices

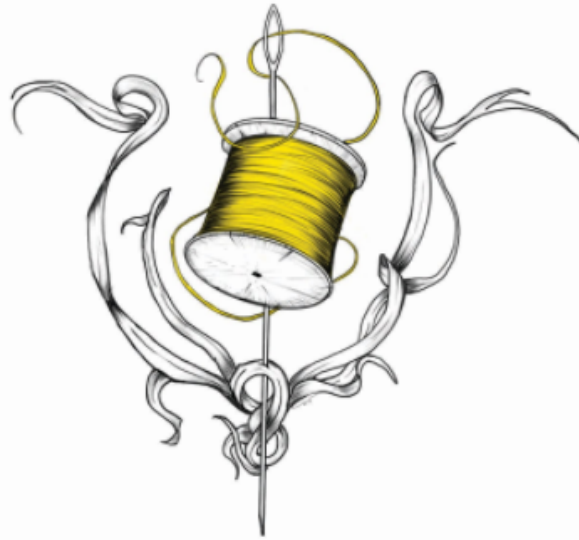


Transformative Mutual Aid Practices (T-MAPs) are a set of community-oriented training materials that provide tools and space for building a “map” of personal stories, wellness strategies, resilience practices and resources.

To receive a copy of your T-MAP, enter your email address here:
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How to Use This Online Tool

You can save your progress and return to this form anytime - just click the Save button, and you'll be provided with the option of receiving a link to come back to your T-MAP. Feel free to skip questions and return to them when you're ready - you can navigate through the links at the top of this screen (that say things like Question 1 and Question 2). When you're finished creating this section of your T-MAP, press submit, and you will receive a pdf of your responses. Then come back to work on the other T-MAP sections!



The T-MAPs Questions



Where we come from and how we tell stories about ourselves is so important. In this section we have a series of questions to help you think about your own personal story and find good language for it. Society has so many expectations and frameworks for understanding your life that might not fit at all, or might fit in some ways but not others. There is an incredible power in creating a personal narrative of your life that fits well for you.

This section has two parts - the first is on understanding your journey with mental health and emotional

distress, and the second on social and cultural context as it informs mental health. If you don't identify as someone who's been through intense mental health struggles and and/or the diagnosis process, some of the questions in the first half might not feel like they apply - it's fine to skip them. In the second half of this section, some of these questions might be new to you - you might not have thought a lot about your cultural or class background, for example - and that's ok. Consider these questions a starting point for your explorations.

How I understand the story of my journey with mental health:

How do I talk about my own mental health struggles/diagnosis (if relevant)? What language do I use?

*Check off any of these examples that apply to you, and **write in your own answers at the bottom:***

I think of myself as creatively maladjusted

I think of myself being a very spiritual person

I think of myself as someone struggling to be whole while living under a colonized system that doesn't work for me

What language do you use?

For years I've wondered if I would have been diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum if that had been more commonly looked at when I was younger. I think of myself being a very spiritual person. My spirituality is a very important part of my mental health. And language is important because in my culture we don't have good ways to express spirituality.

I have been learning a lot about settler colonialism from my Indigenous friends. While I continue to learn of all the ways I benefit from white superiority, life as a Quaker has meant many struggles against white dominance. At 18 years of age, I became a draft resister. I was led to live my life without a car for environmental reasons. I've spent the past decade working to protect the water, working against pipelines. I've found a home in my Mutual Aid community that works against systems of dominance and hierarchy.

If I've been through serious crisis, what were some of the early indications that I was struggling? How did it all happen?

*Check off any of these examples that apply to you, and **write in your own answers at the bottom:***

There has always been something different about me

The truth is I never really felt like I fit in

Add your own:

Quakers used to be referred to as a peculiar people, often refusing to accept the norms of the culture we live in. Living without a car was one of the most visible expressions of that. That periodically created real crisis for me, because it was not only a struggle to live without a car, but this caused conflict with my fellow Quakers, the people I looked to for support, and to be examples of faith in the wider community.

And as I learned more about racism during the years I spent in a Black youth mentoring community, it became a real conflict to find so many Quakers had no idea of their white privileges, and the ways racism was part of their lives.

Over the past five years of making and developing friendships with Indigenous people, I'm learning much

more about the multigeneration traumas they, and their ancestors have from the genocide of their people as their land was stolen and millions were killed as White people moved across the country. Again, white Quakers were involved in some of this when they were involved in the forced assimilation of native children. Native children were kidnapped from their homes and taken to institutions where horrendous things were done to try to erase their Indigenous culture and become more like white people. Over 100,000 children were forced to go to these institutions where there was widespread physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Thousands died. It is a struggle to be with my Indigenous friends, knowing of this history, as it must be for them to have me in their presence. And it has been another source of significant trauma to me to not only know that, but once again for so many White friends to work so hard to refuse to think about this history, let alone do anything they can to begin any process of healing. And over the past three years as part of my Mutual Aid community, I see more clearly the systems of white dominance at every level. Learn more about these things in myself. And struggle again to get other white Quakers to understand this and do something about it. In fairness I must say there are white Quakers who do acknowledge these things and are working to improve them.

What are some low points I have experienced or am still dealing with?

Check off any of these examples that apply to you, and write in your own answers at the bottom:

Describe your own experiences

I didn't reach the low points on this list. That was, despite all my conflicts with Quakers, because of experiences and relationships with them helped me develop my spiritual life. I had a significant spiritual experience when I was around ten years old. From that point on I knew the Spirit was real and present in my life, and in the world.

It was also important that I attended Scattergood Friends School, a Quaker boarding high school on a farm in Iowa, where I learned the skills to be a life-long learner. And where I developed a network of friends that has been important in my life ever since.

What are some barriers I have had to overcome or still need to overcome to move forward?

Check off any of these examples that apply to you, and write in your own answers at the bottom:

Describe your own barriers

What are some of the most important lessons I've learned along the way?

I learned the Spirit is real and has guided me in many ways, at many times. I learned that it is important to do what the Spirit is telling me to do, both from the times I did, and the times I did not. Having that spiritual source has meant I didn't stress so much about what others might think of me. That gave me the freedom to focus on what I've been led to do, so I usually have a clear vision. I definitely learned there were usually wonderful unanticipated effects of following spiritual guidance.

If I have a diagnosis, how do I relate to it? Have I dealt with shame about my struggles and/or

diagnosis? Do I accept it? Does it fit?

If I have ongoing experiences, like voices or visions, or extreme states, or unusual beliefs, how do I relate to these experiences?

Are some aspects of them positive? How so? How do I make sense of them in light of who I am and things they might be connected to what I've experienced?

I previously wrote about the importance of spiritual guidance in my life.

Understanding how my identity and cultural background affect my mental health:

What are the most important aspects to me of my background or identity?

Check off any of these examples that apply to you, and write in your own answers at the bottom:

The place where I'm from
Religion
Sexual Orientation
Being part of a subculture
Where I go/went to school
Growing up rural
Growing up poor

Describe your experiences:

Examples:

- *I'm a mixed race woman who grew up in Queens. My dad was in prison. I was raised by a single mom with good intentions, but she was super overworked and not able to be very present. I felt like I was on my own and didn't have much support. I learned how to be really strong and self-sufficient, but there wasn't any room to have strong emotions. There was a lot of racism around me growing up.*
- *I identify as non-binary when it comes to gender, and come from a conservative, working class family. I never fit in and no one understood me. It's been hard to find work as an adult, because people don't want to hire people with weird gender presentations.*
- *I'm not really sure. I grew up as a white middle-class person and I don't have a strong feeling about my background and identity. I think about myself as pretty typical. No one's ever asked me this question before.*

Growing up on farms in Iowa gave me an appreciation of nature. That also meant we didn't have a lot of money. Being born into and continuing to live in Quaker communities has been significant in many ways and many times. I grew up in a time when sexual orientation was something not talked about. It took a while to admit to myself, and then my family I am gay. Much as I try not to, I still have some of those old

feelings of gay being bad.

How are these aspects of my identity part of my strength and resilience?

Check off any of these examples that apply to you, and write in your own answers at the bottom:

I learned how to be self-sufficient
My religion gives me values and community
I get to be part of a really interesting subculture
I'm really open minded because I grew up around so many different kinds of people
I always know I have other people who've struggled like me to look to as examples

Describe your experiences:

Examples:

- I was raised in a family of really strong women who knew how to get things done. I had a deep connection to my religious upbringing and it gave me a sense of ethics and values.
- As an adult, I've become part of queer culture and activist culture, and my community is really empowering and creative and lets me be whoever I want to be.
- I am proud of my heritage. My worldview is extremely broad because I grew up in NYC, where there is immense diversity. I am proud of having overcome my schizoaffective disorder with medications, therapeutic modalities and supportive people, and I use my experiences as a strength to help others.
- At least several generations back there are people in my family who hear voices and although it can sometimes feel distressing at other times I feel like the voices are a gift and something that connects all of us

My Quaker communities are a really interesting subculture and did a large part in determining my values, and living in community. I learned how to be self-sufficient in that culture. And especially by attending Scattergood Friends School, a Quaker boarding school that not only provided college preparation, but also taught life skills. I'm really open minded because of the things I learned from my Quaker community, even though the Quakers in my orbit were almost universally white. We did have students of color from around the world at Scattergood. My Spiritual leadings helped me become part of a people of color student empowerment community, to make deep friendships with my Indigenous friends, and Mutual Aid community. People in all those communities are inspiring examples.

How have my family, class background, and culture of origin affected my experiences with mental health and emotional distress?

Check off any of these examples that apply to you, and write in your own answers at the bottom:

I'm really open minded because I grew up around so many different kinds of people

Describe your experiences:

Examples:

- As a first generation American with immigrant parents, I was the first person in my family to graduate high school or attempt college. I had a lot of high expectations put on me, and not a lot of support. My family didn't believe in mental health struggles - they just wanted me to try harder and focus more.
- I grew up black and working class and there was no time or money to get any kind of mental health treatment. Mental illness was a white thing. My folks saw therapy as a luxury for rich people. I was on the receiving end of a lot of racism and that contributed to my trauma and anxiety.
- In my white upper-middle class world, everyone got therapy. It's just what you did. All the kids were on Prozac.
- The voices I hear directly echo past experiences of bullying or abuse related to my gender, race/ethnicity, or the neighborhood I grew up in
- I grew up in an abusive household, both my parents had substance abuse issues and for the longest time I really didn't have any support for what I was going through, I didn't even know I was struggling with my mental health.

I'm very fortunate to have been Spirit led to non White communities, including a people of color youth mentoring community, a sacred journey that created deep friendships with Indigenous friends, and a very diverse Mutual Aid community.

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**You've completed
section three!**

