



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

From Lateral Violence to Lateral Kindness



LATERAL KINDNESS PROMOTES SOCIAL HARMONY

The impact of colonialism, residential schools, and cultural genocide continues to result in both intergenerational and contemporary trauma for many Indigenous people. These impacts have also resulted in lateral violence, which occurs when we direct our feelings of dissatisfaction or anger towards one another – instead of recognizing that the true adversaries are colonialism, internalized racism, and oppression in other forms.

Lateral violence, also referred to as lateral “unkindness”, is expressed in many ways, such as gossip, verbal and physical assaults, passive aggressive behaviours, blaming, shaming, attempts to socially isolate others, demeaning activities, bullying, and threatening or intimidating behaviour.

Lateral kindness is an approach to addressing lateral violence. It is based on Indigenous values that promote social harmony and healthy relationships. Lateral kindness uses First Nations teachings about respect, fairness, and the importance of relationships to create an environment built on a foundation of kindness.



Lateral kindness has the potential to positively affect our health outcomes in a number of ways:

1. Lateral kindness works to address and end lateral violence within the workplace, families, schools and communities. Lateral violence is a public health issue that harms mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health.
2. Lateral kindness has the power to improve health services and address lateral violence in health organizations and systems. By shifting the cultural norms about interactions between patients, health service providers and health partners, lateral kindness helps create safer, more inclusive and culturally safer services.
3. Lateral kindness has the power to improve health services by increasing workplace safety. It can also improve the retention of health staff by setting values, standards and by building personal skills.



SEND A "LATERAL KINDNESS GRAM" TO LIFT SOMEONE'S SPIRITS

The First Nations Health Directors Association (FNHDA) has developed the Lateral Kindness Gram. The "Gram" promotes lateral kindness by sending an uplifting message. With the Lateral Kindness Gram you can recognize a client, peer, friend, family member or an acquaintance for their positive attitude, their contributions to the team, or anything they do to help create healthy, self-determining and vibrant BC First Nations children, families and communities.

Join the lateral kindness movement and send a kindness message to lift someone's spirit! Learn how to [here](#).

EVERY PERSON'S BILL OF RIGHTS

1. I have the right to be treated with respect and dignity.
2. I have the right to experience and express my own feelings.
3. I have the right to say "no" without feeling guilty or selfish.
4. I have the right to ask for what I want – and of course, the other person has a right to say "no".
5. I have the right to consider my own needs in a relationship.
6. I have the right to change my mind.
7. I have the right to decide what to do with my own property, body, and time.
8. I have the right to take time for myself.
9. I have the right to do things as long as it does not take away from the rights of another person.
10. I have the right to make mistakes without being punished or humiliated.
11. I have the right to bring up a problem with another person and discuss it.
12. I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously.
13. I have the right to feel good about myself.
14. I have the right to live without fear.

The above is adapted from the Victoria Family Violence Program, Victoria, BC

TOOLS TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS – A CHECKLIST

Part of healthy communication is making sure that we are speaking with others in respectful and collaborative ways. We can use our words to help or hurt people. When our interactions with people become difficult, it can be easy to get defensive or angry. The list below can help us to maintain respectful relationships with our family, friends, colleagues and community members.

1. Be direct and say what you have to say in a respectful way.
2. Use “I” statements to state your feeling, describe the behavior/issue and the effect on you, and to ask for what you need. For example, “I feel sad when I’m not invited for lunch because then I think that you don’t like my company. I’d like it if you invited me in the future.” Learn more here.
3. You have the right to express your ideas, feelings, and needs but remember to listen to the other person in return and respect their ideas, feelings and needs.
4. Ask questions to get more information and to clarify what the other person means i.e., Do you mean that _____?
5. Be willing to work things out and believe that things can be worked out. Try to be as cooperative as you can.
6. Suggest creative solutions.
7. Agree to disagree when there is a difference of opinion.
8. Use your sense of humour.
9. Take responsibility for your own feelings. Avoid using roadblocks to communication like blaming, threatening, shaming or judging.



RESOURCES

A [video featuring Dr. Raven Sinclair](#), Associate Professor, University of Regina on Lateral Kindness

A [video that explores lateral violence](#) within First Nations communities, organizations, and families

The [Head to Heart Campaign](#) by the First Nations Health Directors Association is a helpful resource that includes stories, tips and reminders based on a 3 Pillar approach in reducing stress.