

# River of Life

## Purposes

To think about traumatic experiences in the context of our whole lives. To integrate traumatic experiences into the longer narrative of our lives.

## Time

One hour.

## Materials

Drawing paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils etc.

River of Life worksheet

## Instructions

1. “Think about your life as a river. Draw the river—the source being your birth, flowing up to the present and on into the future. Draw the important events along the river that have shaped who you are. Add important people and places. You may choose to draw a road or a path instead of a river, or something else that represents your life. Add words as needed.”
2. Facilitator shows their drawing, explaining the events depicted, showing rapids and discolored water through difficult times.
3. As people finish, call them back to the whole circle. Explain that participants will create companion groups of three and a facilitator will be added to the group. One at a time, you will present your drawing to your companion group.
4. A person in the group will take notes on the River of Life worksheet.
5. There will be three chairs, each with a sign “PAST” “PRESENT” and “FUTURE”.
6. The focus person will first sit in the PAST chair and name the important events of their past. With the help of the companion group, the focus person will name their inner and external (e.g. family, friends) strengths that helped them face the challenges of their past.
7. Then the focus person will move to the PRESENT chair and name the important events of their present. With the help of the companion group, the focus person will name their inner and external strengths that they have now.
8. Then the focus person will move to the FUTURE chair and name the important events that they anticipate coming to pass in their future and with the help of the companion group, what inner and external strengths will help them in their future.

9. The focus person may name some goals they have and what they think they need to do to achieve them.

10. The group repeats the process for each person in the group.

**Processing Questions:**

*What did you notice in doing this?*

*What new learning did you get from this?*

*How is this related to transforming power, healing from trauma and living nonviolently?*