

DELVE-ing into Cultural Humility: How Respect and Deep Listening Can Heal a Nation – Supplemental Material – Accompanying PDF

Included in this PDF:

Chapter 8 Summary of My Learnings

An Invitation

Acknowledgements

Definitions and Abbreviations Needed to Understand the Story

References

Resources

Praise for DELVE-ing into Cultural Humility

About the Author

The DELVE Formula Infographic

Chapter 8 A Summary of My Learnings

Critical reflection includes being able to explore your assumptions, actions, and responsibilities from a moral, ethical, and social perspective. Taking time to reflect on your learnings provides an opportunity to grow personally and professionally.

The following Tips Lists are my learnings sorted into themes. At the end of each list, you are invited to make a list of three ‘take home’ learnings.

Cultural Humility Tips

1. **Cultural Humility is when you realise you don't know what you don't know, and you are willing to ask for help when you need it.**
2. **Take the time to learn the true history of this country and listen deeply to the stories of the First Nations people.**

3. **Take the time to learn about your local First Nations history** and find out who are the respected local First Nations leaders in your area.
4. **Respect, care, and a willingness to help are the essential ingredients** needed to establish trust and love.
5. **Respect needs to be earned.** You may not have created the trauma, and you may wear the consequences of others' actions because trauma created by others and our ancestors remains in our systems and our bodies until it is healed.
6. **People and programs often start out with good intentions.** However, they are unaware of their unconscious conditioning that prevents them from functioning to their full potential and making a difference.
7. **Mainland dominant cultural norms applied to remote and island communities often create more harm than good.**
8. **If you witness things that don't sit right or feel right, do something about it.**
9. **We need to create safe learning spaces** where people can learn about Cultural Humility and be better prepared to work in our communities with First Nations people.

REFLECTION: What are three key things you have learned from this list?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Trauma-Aware, Healing-Informed Service Delivery Tips

1. **We need to acknowledge the role our ancestors, as colonisers, played** in creating the current dysfunction in our country and souls, because when one inflicts trauma on another, it, in turn, is inflicted on them as well. We are all connected in the quantum field.
2. **Unconscious, unresolved trauma runs our systems** and continually disadvantages those who are not from the dominant culture.
3. **Unconscious bias and a lack mentality can impact how our systems are created and services are delivered.**
4. **Traumatised systems are based on lack and scarcity** and fail to have the capacity to be flexible and meet the needs of the people they are meant to be serving.
5. **Unresolved trauma in our collective psyche creates repetitive destructive patterns** of racism, discrimination, and inequality that keep us from moving forward as a nation.
6. **Trauma creates fragmentation.** It can alter the way we see the world and make it difficult to respond appropriately. Or it can lead to an overreaction to situations or others.
7. **Patience is needed when tackling systems that are broken and fragmented.**
8. **The only way change is possible is when we, as a society, can acknowledge that we have a part to play,** beginning with our individual healing journey, which will, in turn, facilitate ancestral and collective healing.

9. **We need to become culturally fit**, which is being able to examine our own cultural conditioning, assumptions, and beliefs while working in traumatic environments and being able to manage our responses and be deeply present for others.
10. **First Nations culture can provide the healing needed for us all**, but only if First Nations people are given the opportunity to lead and create projects they know will work.
11. **We need safe spaces to harvest and integrate our learning journey**, using a variety of modalities to heal, like the We Al-li healing programs.
12. **There is some amazing work being done in collaborative projects** with First Nations and non-First Nations people that are place-based, and community-led, that can benefit us all.

REFLECTION: What are three key things you have learned from this list?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Course Content Creation, Program Creation and Facilitation Tips

1. **Find evidence-based programs** that are cocreated by First Nations people for First Nations people and have the courage to try something new and innovative.
2. **Only a holistic approach** that is a wraparound service (e.g., transport, food, learning, and social support) has the capacity to provide an environment that inspires growth, connection, and engagement.
3. **Be prepared to adapt continually** and adjust your expectations, plans, and desired outcomes—often it is the unplanned and unintended that are the most spectacular!
4. **There are creative, innovative ways to facilitate learning** in remote areas where many people already have the skills but need to get a piece of paper to keep their jobs.
5. **Substantive Equality** is a special measure enshrined in our law for us to use. It means that we need to create a level playing field to give everyone a fair go and take a different approach to overcome the effects of disadvantage and discrimination.
6. **Reasonable Adjustment** means we must be prepared to adjust the course materials to meet the needs of the student's learning styles and create assessment processes that cater to their difference and allow them to demonstrate competence in trauma-aware, healing-informed, and culturally safe ways.
7. **Recognised Prior Learning** must be a priority. It is the first step because this embodies Substantive Equality. Students need to be credited with what they have already learned in the field or other training programs. This avoids time wasting, repetition, and undertaking meaningless tasks, just to tick a box for the assessment-intensive training systems.

8. **Printed course books, with no visual learning cues, that are designed for people to use independently are a recipe for disaster** for First Nations learners. I have seen an entire twenty-two-unit course delivered this way in a remote community, for First Nations learners, who have English as their second or third language.
9. **Social support, engaged tutors, and culturally safe learning spaces are essential** in retention and completion of studies in tertiary pathways in remote areas.
10. **Celebrate the wins and make the effort to visit projects and places that are highlighting the brilliance of First Nations people**, e.g., a graduation ceremony of Elders who have attended university as mature-aged students, or a First Nations health unit in a mainstream hospital, showing young people what is possible with further learning.
11. **Effective education creates a sense of belonging. It is best done outdoors.** It creates a space of love, connection, co-operation, creativity, fun, and low stress—not competition.
12. **Science is showing that the best way to heal from trauma is in nature**, and we can create improved health and wellbeing through nature-based play and education.
13. **We want to raise creators, not consumers**, and nature is a great place for increasing and using our imagination.
14. **Follow your heart, be creative and allow your passion to find a way through any obstacles that appear on the path.**

REFLECTION What are three key things you have learned that you could take home from this list?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Notes:

An Invitation

I have created The DELVE Formula for you as a learning map.

I trust you will find it useful.

We need to DELVE into what truly happened in this country without shame or blame.

We need to create space and places for it to land, be held, and the learnings to be harvested and integrated calmly.

That will lead to healing on all levels, individual, ancestral, and collective.

I am a Cultural Humility Mentor for non-First Nations people, Holistic Educator, and Trainer. I am committed to being part of the solution as we co-create a world that is better for us all to live and thrive in.

I have created an infographic on the DELVE Formula. You can download a copy from my website (www.growingwellbeing.com.au). There is a link to where you can buy copies of my book.

You can also find me on LinkedIn (Cindy Anne Mathers), where I will post any future news!

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following people whose work has influenced my life in many ways:

Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson, a First Nations Jiman and Bundjalung woman, academic, and transformational leader. She is a founding member of We Al-li Ltd, which provides trauma-aware, healing informed training created and delivered by mainly First Nations people. This work has had a profound effect on me and countless people around the country. I'm also grateful for her permission to quote her social media comments arising from the torture of youth in correctional facilities.

Aunty Doris Shillingworth, a Gandugari Elder and Aboriginal Education Assistant, who graciously allowed me to use the framework she created to explain how I engaged in a culturally humble way with First Nations people.

Dr. Tyson Yunkaporta, a First Nations man who belongs to the Apalech Clan from Western Cape York, Queensland, Australia, educator, and academic, whose work gave me a language to explain what I had intuitively been doing to meet the needs of my First Nations students. His work provided a framework for self-examination of my own approach and a language to share my journey to Cultural Humility.

Dr. Claire Zammit, whose transformational work on women-centred leadership and coaching has allowed me to truly embrace my power and step into self-leadership and self-authorship of my life and find soul sisters who continue to support and sponsor me.

Thomas Hubl's work on healing from collective trauma, which gave me a language to describe my experience and inspired me to view my journey from a higher perspective. He helped me to get out of shame and blame and see past the symptoms of racism and discrimination and understand it was the systems that were traumatised and why.

Greg Campbell, whose book *Total Reset: Realigning with our timeless holistic blueprint for living*, shares his over-thirty-years' experience of learning from the Goolarabooloo people in the West Kimberley. At the request of the Senior Law Man Lulu, he has shared it with the world at a time when we need it most. His work helped give me clarity on how to move forward by telling my story with balance and respect.

Sarah Blackwell, Founder of Archimedes Training Forest School Education in the UK. Sarah created a Acknowledgements 117 one-page observational tool to measure the impact of her programs on participants, and she graciously allowed me to modify it for an Australian First Nations audience and context. It is a brilliant tool that captures the improvement of social and emotional wellbeing in a culturally safe, trauma-aware, healing-informed manner.

Christine Kloser and the team at Get Your Book Done, and my fellow authors, thank you for your brilliant support in getting my message out to the world.

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Andy Greig and the crew from Agunya Ltd provided a creative, innovative space to explore and implement the value of culturally safe, social and emotional wellbeing evaluation tools. My five years as a volunteer with Agunya was pivotal in consolidating my learning and skills, and I had the privilege of meeting and working with wonderful First Nations youth and Elders.

Possums' Den Community Preschool Staff, a wonderful child-centred team who enabled me to complete my Forest School Facilitator placement with them. We learned firsthand the power of education in nature and the value of observational social and emotional wellbeing evaluations.

And no acknowledgement would be complete without thanking my family:

To my children **Jesse and Andrea**, who since their late teens, have had a nomadic mother who kept them guessing where she might be next. However, you have always been supportive, and I love you with all my heart.

Big thanks to my sisters **Susan and Lisa** and their families who have given me so much support over the years! So much gratitude to you all.

And finally, a heartfelt thanks to my nephew **Nathan and his wonderful partner Jacqui** who have provided me with a home several times over the years and lots of laughs, love, and connections.

Definitions and Abbreviations Needed to Understand the Story

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander: This term describes the First Nations people of Australia. They are two very distinct cultures with very different ways of being.

Ancient Indigenous Wisdom: Ancient Indigenous wisdom tells us we are all connected and whatever we do to others, we do to ourselves. Today, through the entanglement theory, quantum physics can prove that we are all connected in the quantum field.

Colonisation: The unlawful occupying of another person's land with the aim to dominate and control. It leads to disrespect and disregard of human rights, creating trauma that fractures the social fabric of communities. Trauma has been passed down through the generations with an increasingly devastating impact on the cultural, spiritual, social, emotional, physical, and community wellbeing of First Nations people in Australia. The colonisers are also traumatised because they do to themselves whatever they do to others.

First Nations People: I use this term because I feel it is more respectful, and that it clearly identifies that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were here, living in harmony with nature, their environment, and each other, long before colonisation. First Nations people comprise many different and distinct groups, each with their own language, stories, and culture. It is estimated they were here at least sixty-five thousand years ago.

Healing: Healing is the bottom-up, grass-roots innovation through what we have harvested and integrated into our life experience. Harvesting and integration mean reflecting with a calm mind to process what we have been exposed to, and then digesting it so we can learn from it and allow that information to change our perspective. For example, if we haven't understood the impact of colonisation on us all, and the separation and racism it has caused, then it is still in our bodies, and we have not integrated that learning.

Therefore, we haven't healed. Once we have done our own healing work, we can then create the space for our own families to heal, both the living and those who have passed. Quantum physics shows us through the law of entanglement that we remain connected energetically to our ancestors. When the collective becomes a coherent holding space, shame and blame are dissolved and healing is possible.

Healing-informed: is a strengths-based approach that focuses on what is possible.

Human Rights Declaration: Adopted in 2007, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was declared in response to the need to acknowledge that Indigenous peoples' rights were still being abused around the world. The Australian Government took two years to agree to sign it. Four key principles guided the declaration: self-determination, participation in decision-making, respect for and protection of culture, and equality and non-discrimination.

Reasonable Adjustment: There are legislative requirements that the principle of Reasonable Adjustment be applied in the design of assessments in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector. The assessment process should not prevent any person from demonstrating their competence, skills, or knowledge because the design of the assessment failed to take into account their limitations (Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015).

Substantive Equality: Substantive equality is acknowledging that not all people come from a level playing field, and things need to be done differently to get the same result. It is a special measure of human rights in Australia (<https://humanrights.gov.au/ourwork/guidelines-understanding-special-measuresracial-discrimination-act-1975-cth-2011>). However, few people know about it or use it.

Trauma: Trauma is an overwhelming experience where you temporarily cannot process the situation with your existing resources, and it can fragment the mind. It remains unconsciously stored in the body, waiting for the time when the resources are available for it to be processed.

Trauma-aware: This term is replacing trauma informed because it is important to not just know about whether someone has experienced trauma. It is necessary to be aware of how this impacts people and then move towards a healing-informed process to create the space for healing.

Western Consciousness: We have been conditioned to believe that the power is outside of us, and we are looking for external forces to save us. However, if we can see that we have the power to initiate our own individual healing, this will flow out to our families and communities and enable us to contribute to collective healing. Collectively, we can face the transgressions of the past so we can make new choices moving forward.

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Praise for DELVE-ing into Cultural Humility

This is important work—it is through deep listening and walking together with mutual respect that we can create a new way forward. — **Emeritus Professor Judy Atkinson, Jiman and Bunjalung woman, Transformational Leader, Founder of We Al-li Ltd, Writer, Educator, Researcher, and Creator of Tertiary Trauma Healing Programs**

Cultural humility is upsetting when it's absent and annoying when it's conspicuous. The path between those two is really wide; this book shows the diverse trails you can take without landing in the gutters. — **Dr. Tyson Yunkaporta belongs to the Apalech Clan from Western Cape York Queensland, Educator, Academic, Researcher and Author of Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World**

This user-friendly guide to creating a way forward for us all as a nation will help us get beyond the surface stuff like flags and artwork. As a First Nations person, it is a tool I can use in the workplace for non-First Nations people who might like to be allies but are not sure of how to do that! Having mentored Cindy over many years, we know we can collaborate and create programs that work for us all. — **Sharon Kingaby, First Nations Mentor and Aboriginal Regional Development Officer, Contributing Author in Growing up Aboriginal in Australia**

This book provides the author's lived experience learning journey working in the First Nations health space in a number of roles and states in Australia. It will be most useful to the non-First Nations workforce as a guide on the benefits of working in collaboration with First Nations people when creating programs and learning pathways to meet the needs of the First Nations workforce and students. Having known Cindy both as a friend and as her mentor, I have witnessed firsthand someone who truly understands what cultural humility is and the respect she has for First Nations people and their culture. — **Michelle Elwell, Central Arrernte, English and Irish descent Senior Research Coordinator, Edith Cowan University**

I feel inspired and hopeful for the future after reading your book. The DELVE Formula will provide a tool for conversations that breaks apart old ways of being and assumptions. I can see your work being used in schools to develop a lens of Cultural Humility. This alone can change the world! — **Kathleen Miller, Transformational Leader and Education Consultant, USA**

I have had the pleasure of mentoring and co-facilitating with Cindy Mathers in a community project. I chose to work with her as I could see she had a deep respect for our culture and was able and willing to collaborate. Together, we created a pilot program that showed what was possible when we combine our knowledge systems, skills, experience, and passion. — **Venessa Poelina, Nyikina Traditional Custodian from the Mardoowarra, Lower Fitzroy River in Western Australia, born and raised in Broome, Life Promotion Practitioner**

DELVE-ing into Cultural Humility is a wealth of information moulded into an invaluable resource. It is an insightful tool that provides a depth of knowledge and experience applied in a cultural context that can be shared in our country, so that we can create a better future for us all. This important work will only further assist First Nations people and non-Indigenous people to collectively walk together in understanding our shared history and healing journey. — **Mia Hampson, First Nations Strategy Manager for implementing a community-led governance model for self-determination and Indigenous Participation Program Leader, a descendant of the Wannangini people of the Broken Bay Tribe, Central Coast of NSW**

This book is a must-read. The DELVE Formula is soundly based and needs to be embedded in the curriculum of universities for the cultivation of cultural humility in our future leaders, educators and health professionals. DELVE-ing into Cultural Humility is an important work nourished by the humility and wisdom that transcends differences. It is also a practical tool for generating beneficial shifts in the awareness, understanding and behaviours of non-Indigenous people generally as well as those engaged with the Indigenous world. I am so glad that you have shared your unique, vast wealth of lived and learned experience and knowledge in this valuable resource. — **Greg Campbell, Author of Total Reset: Realigning with our timeless holistic blueprint for living**

As a non-First Nations educator who had not had the opportunity to teach First Nations students, I was honoured to be approached by Cindy Mathers to support her in creating a new collaborative and responsive way to meet the needs of First Nations students in our training system. This was the most humbling and rewarding experience of my career. — **Lyn Leigh, Tertiary Health Educator in Australia**



About the Author

Cindy Mathers has travelled her own unique path in a quest to find out how to create fairer systems for us all. She is known as a disrupter and change-maker and, despite many efforts, she has failed to fit into the current systems.

For over twenty-five years, Cindy has lived and worked around her country, Australia, as a nurse, teacher, adult trainer, and volunteer. She has witnessed first-hand the impact that traumatised systems, especially in the education and health sectors, have on us all, particularly the First Nations people.

She has spent thousands of hours of study, travel, and volunteering, and has been on her own personal and ancestral healing journey. Cindy is aware that the disrespect and disregard of Human Rights at the time of colonisation created trauma that has remained in the collective psyche.

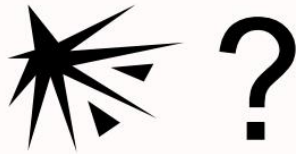
She understands that, as a country, we need to acknowledge we have all been impacted and that the restoration of Human Rights for all is needed for healing and moving forward together.

Cindy has created the DELVE Formula as a simple pathway, using a Human Rights approach to creating change and new systems. She believes, healing at an individual, ancestral, and collective level is possible and that walking together, we can do it.



The DELVE Formula™

5 KEYS TO CREATE CHANGE



1. Deconstruct

How did our systems become so broken and fragmented?

2. Explore

What is the impact of Disrespect and Disregard of Other's Human Rights on us all?



3. Listening

Listening with deep presence and open hearts to what has happened to the First Nations people in our country.

4. Viable

What is already working that honours the human rights of all?



5. Energise

What collaborative or First Nations led initiatives are working? Energise them!



Cindy Anne Mathers is the Author of *DELVE-ing into Cultural Humility: How Respect and Deep Listening Can Heal a Nation*, 2023.

Follow her on LinkedIn Cindy Mathers
E: cindy@growingwellbeing.com.au