

An abstract painting with a dark, textured background. On the left side, there is a vertical band of bright orange and yellow, resembling a flame or a sunset. The rest of the painting is composed of dark, swirling, and layered colors, including shades of black, grey, blue, and green, creating a sense of depth and movement.

Dancing

With

Our

Ancestors

Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage survivors of Rape and Child Sexual Abuse share their poetic reflections of Joy, Love, Pride, Trauma, the Body, and Healing



Cover designed by: Joshua Woolford

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Dancing With Our Ancestors

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About BAM

The BAM group offers safe refuge for individuals who identify as male, Black, Asian, Mixed Race or multi-heritage.

We meet twice a month online - the 2nd and 4th Monday of the month between 5 and 7pm.

A sanctuary of thought, discussion and reflection, the cultural mix of members creates a rich space for emotional exploration that is centred in negotiating the impact of intersectionality, particularly around discrimination and it's power to overwhelm the trauma and survival of rape and abuse, as an adult, child or both.

Culturally informed, powerful and tender , we bring creative writing, topical reflection, lively discussion, guided meditation, affirmation, music, poetry and prose into the safe space we have developed.

About SurvivorsUK

SurvivorsUK work to ensure every boy, man, and non-binary person in the UK has access to the support they need to navigate the impact of sexual violence and begin recovery.

We are an inclusive service and welcome people with male and non-binary identities, or anyone who thinks we're the right fit for them

Nationally, we provide practical help and emotional support through our National Male Survivors Online Helpline and group work. In London we provide face-to-face counselling, group work, Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA), case worker support, outreach services and clinics for legal advice and sexual health.

To learn more or to self refer to one our services, visit www.survivorsuk.org or text our helpline on 020 3322 1860



Sawubona

From Dionne and Ese

Learning to hold space for yourself can feel challenging when it feels like you are living a life saturated in pain oppression and trauma.

Sometimes it's not until you start exploring the deep grief, that may hit you apparently out of nowhere, that you come to understand much of the pain you feel is connected to the sexual violence you have survived as a child, as an adult, or both.

As therapeutic hosts of the BAM group, we feel a deep sense of gratitude and privilege when we connect with members of BAM - our Black, Asian and Mixed Heritage group for SurvivorsUK.

Together we create a place where you are liberated from the distortions, injustice and inequity of fantasy and fear.

We are creating a village, a diverse collective of survivors who know they have a safe place to be seen, to smile, to cry, to laugh, to reflect, to discuss, to be therapeutically and culturally held, heard and understood with compassion, activism and therapeutic love.

We are inspired by the Zulu greeting Sawubona, which means 'We see you'.

We see you and our ancestors see you. We see you and your ancestors.

This beautiful deep witnessing is affirming and liberating. It provides us with hope and grace to explore our pain through the multi-dimensional power of intergenerational connection, intersectionality and wisdom.

We challenge expectations, distortions, stereotypes and hyper contortions of what it is to be Black, Asian and dual, mixed or multi heritage.

We smother these default Eurocentric social norms and ingrained entitled prejudices with tenderness, beauty, spirituality, intellect, philosophy and the

gorgeous complexity and spontaneity of what is to be a Black, Asian or Mixed Heritage cis gender man, Trans or non-binary individual.

Here we embrace you, come as you are, Gay, Queer, straight, Bi, Pan or Demi. You are welcome.

This is Intergenerational work, this is contemporary work, this is legacy work and we are deeply blessed to create a village with fire and love at its heart.

We are inspired by 'Ubuntu' - an ancient African word meaning 'humanity to others'. For Ubuntu reminds us all that 'I am what I am because of who we all are'.

There are parts of us that may never heal; be it our open wounds or what can feel like keloid scars, these physical, emotional and psychological signs of hurt inflicted and pain endured are powerful symbols of survival.

We aspire to transcend the systems designed to incarcerate Black, Asian and Multi-heritage individuals in a psychological prison where they are hyper visible yet remain unseen.

So wherever you are on your healing journey you and your scars are welcome.

For together we move through the pain and into what we hope may feel like healing light.

We hope this booklet of poetic reflection from some of our BAM members and our small curation of self soothing and therapeutic tools offers you tender companionship and support when you need it.

Sawubona

Dionne and Ese

Dionne and Ese are Group Facilitators for the BAM group at SurvivorsUK and Therapists specialising in trauma and Black and African Centred therapeutic practice.

Please email Dionne and Ese at dionne.st.hill@survivorsuk.org if you wish to learn more or join the group.

You can self refer and learn more about SurvivorsUK's range of group work programmes at www.survivorsuk.org

My love standard

Explain it to me because it's incomprehensible, searching for meaning
in your uncertain scenarios

Clarify to me I need it clear as my window pane

What you've got, how you want, where I fit in your mind games

I'm at a point now where I can't blame myself for your lack of
intention, enthusiasm, and respect

Moving forward thinking you can step to me better come fucking
correct

I've worked too hard, sacrificed too much, lost myself too long to keep
passing out samples, testers and trials.

I'm not waiting wasting anymore time crushing egg shells under my
soles like I'm treading barefoot over hot coals

for you to dip in and out my life because you can't fully commit to be
involved

So pay attention I'm not repeating my myself

You want the best out of me

There's a price, a cost, a fee

mi nuh gi weh luv fi bloodclart free

Cliff

Can anybody be free before we all are?

all these thoughts form fractured pieces,
shards with sharp edges.

I pick through them carefully and line them up,
align them,
as they spill out one by one.

a splattered mess all over the floor and I'm trying to find
some sense.

trying to recognise myself within the shiny saliva
surface.

trying to see, hear, feel a sense of belonging...
longing for it.
waiting too long for it.

I fondle these thoughts between my fingers and start to
feel their body soften.

the words, flint-like, formed in layers which easily crack
and break away.

formed under pressure and over time but not
permanent - not fused, really...

nothing lasts forever, they say.
nothing lasts forever.

and it's easier to say that when you have nothing to
lose,
but what's easy when you have nothing?

and it's easier to forget when you have a world full of
distractions,
but what's the cost of forgetting?

I feel like I'm wading through it,
but I couldn't tell you what 'it' is.

alarm bells ring -
it's time to shift states again.
wake up again,
play numb again.

at least enough to not lose my mind

I don't wanna lose my mind.
I choke,
I don't wanna lose my mind.

'Oh, no I never meant to do you harm'
it's easy enough to say you never meant it.

'Oh, no I never meant to do you harm'
easier to erase it from our collective memory.

'Oh, no I never meant to do you harm'
but minds, like bodies, get wounds, form scars.

and I'm thinking about the end of time.

a bright light, a wicked flame.

melting and blurring the edges, in a constant state of
becoming.

and I start to wonder - what does a body need?

what does any body need?

what
does
anybody
need?

this body which has been through so much. But not
more, or less, than yours... perhaps...

this body which moves, and sways, and fails and falls.

this body which takes up physical space but is
sometimes made to feel too big, too small, too light, too
dark...

this body that can't even dance at a gas station.
no joy without fear.

this body which is you. I. all of us. completely.

this ocean body, too hot to handle.

that forest body, exploited and extracted.

this body which is you. I. all of us. completely.

bodies trafficked and enslaved in systems built and
upheld by capitalist greed. Another, hideous, type of
body.

populated and upheld by other bodies set on
accumulating personal wealth.

this body which is you. I. all of us. completely.

I was recently introduced to a quote by Lilla Watson, an indigenous Australian artist and activist who said:
“If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

and I'm beginning to feel the strings of the web -
tangled and gathered. sticky and strong. wrapped
around this body which isn't free until we all are.

this body isn't free until we all are.

Joshua Woolford

Untitled

You isolated me from everything,
So my joy is those around me.
You purged my world with darkness,
Yet my love is all that I can see.
You made me feel like nothing,
So my pride's in how much I've grown.
You accused me of all that's wrong,
Yet my trauma's truth shall be known.
You stripped away my childhood,
So my body has learnt to cope.
You snatched away my future,
Yet my healing gives me hope.

Clint

Reflections

I look into the mirror and I see

The image of a Black man staring back at me.

This is the image that they see

Less than them is all I will ever be.

I look into the mirror and I see.

The face of a Black man staring back at me.

I grieve for the reflection that I see.

If I had a choice would I want this to be me?

I look into the mirror and I see.

The eyes of a man staring into me.

In his eyes I see all that could be.

If only the world would accept someone who looks like me.

I walk away from my mirror, leaving the image where it should always be .

Alive in the heart of a proud Black man like me.

Junior

"We have the right to self express; to feel pride in our identity. You cannot impose another identity on people and expect them to thrive."

Jonathon



Healing together

A lovingly curated embrace of self-soothing and therapeutic gems for those challenging moments when your soul needs medicine.

Inner Child and Younger Person work

You may be a survivor of Child Sexual Abuse, learning to hold space for your inner child or younger self can be an important part of your healing journey. Nurture and nourish that part of you that was hurt with love, compassion and mindfulness.

Have a conversation with your inner child or younger self; Ground yourself and connect with your surroundings... feet on ground, body on earth, feel the temperature, hear the sounds in the room.

You may wish to share these affirmations with your younger self -

I am walking into my life now and the future I am creating

I am safe

*I am seen
I am accepted
I am enough
I am loved
I am with you always
I live in a new reality now*

Inner Child reflection

Our inner child is our original or true self. It's also the hidden childlike part of our personality characterised by playfulness, spontaneity, and creativity. When our inner child gets triggered, it can lead to anger, hurt, and fear that we don't understand or that seems oversized compared to the actual trigger.

These journal prompts invite you to get curious about what your wants and needs looked like as a child and what they look like now.

*What does your inner child need today?
What made you feel safe and loved as a child?
What made you feel fearful and silenced growing up?
Were you creative a child? If so, how?*

What did you like to create?

What would you change about your childhood?

What would you keep the same?

**From How We Heal – uncover your power and set yourself free, by
Alexandra Elle (2022)**

Inner Child affirmation

Read this meditation out loud into the voice memo app on your device. Create a ritual out of listening to the playback. Perhaps you make your favourite tea, cook a nice meal for yourself, or run a warm bath to prepare for some intentional time. Allow this practice to be your moment of self-love reflection and inner peace. Set a reminder to replay this inner-child affirmation as often as you need.

Dear younger self,

You are safe. I am creating a good life for you. Even on the days I am lost. I trust that a new direction or path will emerge. I love you deeply. I'm sorry for ever making you feel like I didn't. I was learning then and I am learning now. I am dedicated to my healing because of you.

What you didn't have then, you have now. Thank you for reminding me that I can show up for myself. Thank you for not giving up on me. You've shown me that I can be who I've always wanted to be. You are safe. You are loved. I am here.

From How We Heal – uncover your power and set yourself free, by Alexandra Elle (2022)



B.R.E.A.T.H.E. meditation

You may choose to close your eyes, breathe in 2, 3, 4

B

is for Believe that you can transcend and overcome any situation as 'this too shall pass'.

R

is for Run, but if you can't run, walk, and if you can't walk, crawl; whatever you do keep moving at your pace to where you need to be.

E

is for Expect, to expect the worst but hope for the best so you are prepared.

A

is for Accept challenges, as rough seas make strong sailors.

T

is for Trust in yourself, as a lot was done to make us not trust ourselves; but we are teachable so you will get there.

H

is for Hang on in there; and

E

is for Excel, as we are the descendants of the survivors of the survivors.

As we bring this short meditation to a close Let us focus on our words and Breathe - breathe in 2,3,4, and out 2,3,4 and open your eyes, focus on something around you, to bring you back into your space, your body and feel your feet on the ground.

McInnis 2022

Some affirmations you may be drawn to, make your own or tweak to fit your healing needs.

I Build Rest into my Daily Routine

I Meet Feelings of Inner Resistance
with Curiosity

I Am In Tune with my Capacity
without Judgement

I Proactively Communicate my Needs and
Boundaries with Care

I Respond to Unplanned Events with Flexibility

I Am Grounded

I Am Rooted

I Am Present

Soulful affirmation exercise

We'd like to share with you a soulful exercise to support your mental and emotional wellbeing drawn from the work of Dr. Shelly Harrell who approaches therapy from an African centered perspective.

The invitation is for you to pause in this moment and connect with an energy you desire to intentionally affirm in this moment or as you go through your day. It is built around reciting the following:

I claim

I activate

I embody

For example, I'd like to embody more ease. And so, I recite:

I claim, I activate, I embody, the energy of ease today, and for the rest of the week. Àșe!

I claim, I activate, I embody the energy of compassion today and for the rest of the week. Àșe!

I claim, I activate, I embody the energy of love today and for the rest of the week. Àṣẹ!

I claim, I activate, I embody the energy of generosity today and for the rest of the week. Àṣẹ!

I claim, I activate, I embody the energy of joy today and for the rest of the week. Àṣẹ!

I claim, I activate, I embody the energy of serenity today and for the rest of the week. Àṣẹ!

We end with **Àṣẹ** which breathes life into the affirmation – the power to create that which you speak.

Àṣẹ derives from the Yoruba people from Nigeria, West Africa and is used to seal a prayer or affirmation like the ones you've just recited above.

Soulful Affirmation Exercise
(Harrell 2021)
@soulfulnesswithdrshelly

Rememberings

Extracts from *My Grandmother's Hands* by Resmaa Menakem

There are two kinds of pain.

Clean pain is pain that mends and can build your capacity for growth. It's the pain you feel when you know what to say or do; when you really, really don't want to say or do it; and when you do it anyway, responding from the best parts of yourself.

Dirty pain is the pain of avoidance, blame, or denial – when you respond from your most wounded parts.

Body centred practice

Take a moment to ground yourself in your own body. Notice the outline of your skin and the slight pressure of the air around it. Experience the firmer pressure of the chair, bed or couch beneath you – or the ground or floor beneath your feet.

Can you sense hope in your body? Where? How does your body experience that hope? Is it a release or expansion? A tightening born of eagerness or anticipation?

What specific hopes accompany these sensations? The chance to heal? Perhaps to be free of the burden of anxiety, depression and trauma? To be free? To live a bigger, deeper life?

Do you experience any fear in your body? If so, where? How does it manifest? As tightness? As a painful radiance? As a dead, hard spot?

What worries accompany the fear? Are you afraid your life will be different in a way you can't predict? Are you afraid of facing clean pain? Are you worried you will choose dirty pain instead? Do you feel the raw, wordless fear – and, perhaps excitement – that heralds change? What pictures appear in your mind as you experience that fear?

If your body feels both hopeful and afraid, congratulations. You're just where you need to be for what comes next.

Moving through clean pain

The process involves five steps. Each one anchors you in the present and most importantly in your body – the five anchors.

Anchor 1

Soothe yourself to a quiet mind, calm your heart and settle your body

Anchor 2

Simply notice the sensations, vibrations and emotions in your body instead of reacting to them

Anchor 3

Accept the discomfort – and notice when it changes – instead of trying to flee from it

Anchor 4

Stay present and in your body as you move through the unfolding experience with all its ambiguity and uncertainty and respond from the best parts of yourself

Anchor 5

Safely discharge any energy that remains

Walk it out

Walking has become a big part of my healing journey. I love being under the open sky and feeling the earth beneath my feet as I turn a question over in my mind. During this walking meditation, consider the following:

“What stories do not belong to me that I’m holding on to?” Start your sentence off with “The stories that don’t belong to me are...” and list the things that speak to you. Ask yourself where you learned this and how it makes you feel today. Hold space for anything that comes up.

Give yourself time to process what comes up and be patient with yourself as you turn inward. Remember, you know how to find your answers. You have what it takes to identify the ways you want to change, shift and grow. Be patient and compassionate with yourself as you listen to yourself rewriting your story and changing your narrative.

From How We Heal – uncover your power and set yourself free, by Alexandra Elle (2022)

Write it out

Writing is an adventure into the unknown of our own knowledge, experience and memories... because we don't know what we will find out: we have to learn by not knowing.

Writing allows us to let go of the certainty we may normally feel in our lives; who we are, what we think, feel, know. We do this to allow ourselves openly to explore whatever needs exploring in a process of 'certain uncertainty'.

We are the world's best authorities on our own experiences and so will never write the wrong thing (uncomfortable sometimes, but never wrong). In order to tell you what you need to know, your writing has to take free-rein; it is in letting go that we find our direction.

The 'full sea' on which you are afloat is that of discovery.

Six minute splurge

Allow the page to store, what might feel like a muddle of thoughts, or use this space to capture insights or inspirations which may spring to mind from nowhere, these may be developed later.

So put the pen or pencil on page and write with no forethought, planning and certainly no awareness of grammar or form....

A list might come out, or seemingly jumbled odds and ends, our minds often jump about before we find a path through.

Whatever it is, it will be right. It need never be shared, if you don't wish, and need never be re-read, it's yours.

You will never write a wrong thing... it may feel bland... but it may also illuminate like a bolt of lightning and having written, it can feel like lightening yourself of a heavy load...

Or try using these beginnings overleaf as prompts and ask yourself about yourself... write as much or as

little as you like... it's impossible to get it wrong...
write without thinking. In fact, try not to think at all
until later.

I am...

I know...

I think...

I believe...

I remember...

I feel...

I want...

I wish...

I can...

I wonder...

I hope...

I was told...

I promise myself I will...

**Extracts and prompts from Reflective Writing in Counselling and
Psychotherapy by Jennie Wright and Gillie Bolton**

"BAM offers a respite from oppressors and colonisers and their micro and macro aggressions. I don't have to filter my reality. I don't have to mask how I really feel to survive."

The Brown Gay Refugee



Untitled

I am a Black, autistic, queer, androgynous, non-binary survivor of sexual assault; physical, mental and emotional abuse and parental neglect.

I have found a deeply personal way to disrupt the reoccurring nightmares that left me disconnected and heartbroken by exploring my family history, re-connecting with my ancestors and being guided by their wisdom. I honour my ancestors and I honour my peace.

Understanding the impact of inter-generational trauma has offered me a powerful portal to liberation and healing.

My relationship with my ancestors is unconventional, but illuminating and empowering.

My ancestors made themselves known to me, as conscious memories of being sexually abused began to emerge back in 2020. I felt alone and disorientated - their emergence let me know I am not.

Through personal rituals, dreams, offerings, family history study, conversations, meditation, body work, creative visualisation and affirmation, I feel heard and held by my ancestors.

My ancestors have released the shackles that were around me for so long. I know now that I am not the trauma that was perpetuated against me. So, I can now receive all the things I was denied as a child.

My relationship with my ancestors has helped me get my life back; a life taken away from me before I had any say in the matter.

Quackers

Scars

My trauma is alive within me.

My healing has left me with scars.

I hide my scars to preserve my joy, but it comes at the cost of my pride.

My scars are my greatest triumph but they are also my greatest shame.

Do I hide my scars so that you can't see me?

Or I am just afraid to see myself?

To see myself changed from what I once was, from everything I hoped to be.

Your ugliness has left your mark within my body.

But my love has washed you away from my soul.

Junior

Untitled

My joy is joy

My love is love

My body is my body and not your
Body or any others body or
Anybody

My trauma is my trauma

Which will create karma or
calmer

Darren

My trauma

When working with trauma survivors

Remember the equation

Time is pain

Time can be punitive

Whilst chasing up late or needlessly delayed

Responses, answers, knockbacks

I wonder if anybody gets how two days

Can be the difference between a suicide or a jail cell because I'm already stretched to my uppermost limits and I may be having

Child care problems and domestics and

Mental health stuff brought on by the

Very thing I am fighting and waiting for a response on . so a casual "oh i was meant to ring you last week" line actually cuts like a knife, so please be more mindfully aware

Of the head space your client is in when

Deciding to put off that response till Monday.

Marvin

Coming Home

My sanctuary
My prison
In a body I call my home
This cage I inhabit
But could never really call my own
I walk through this world numb
Split in to at least two
A part that you were breaking
And a part I kept from you
So good I got at hiding
Numbed to my joy
Numbed to my pain
Numb to everything except my disdain
Rejecting my body
Rejecting my life
Rejecting love
Stuck in strife
I thought I was broken and then I broke some more
I broke right down to my core
But through those cracks I began to see
That there was still some hope for me

And little by little I'm starting to feel
All the things that were denied to me
And day by day, I commit to my healing
Piece by piece, I will regain my freedom

Yusuf

"Not everything that is
faced can be changed,
but nothing can be
changed until it is faced."

James Baldwin



Will you support us?

Sexual violence affects 1 in 6 men. SurvivorsUK are here to help sexually abused men, boys, and non-binary people, as well as their friends and family, no matter when the abuse happened. **But we can't do that without your help.**

We offer our services entirely for free. Therapeutic programmes like the BAM group are only made possible through funding and donations.

Every pound you choose to give will have an instrumental impact in changing someone's life for the better.

£12 could enable a survivor to have a 45-minute support session with one of our emotional support workers.

£20 could support a survivor to attend a group session

Donate by scanning the QR code, or visit www.survivorsuk.org/donate



"Nothing I accept about myself
can be used against me to
diminish me"

Audre Lorde

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About SurvivorsUK

SurvivorsUK work to ensure every boy, man, and non-binary person in the UK has access to the support they need to navigate the impact of sexual violence and begin recovery. We are here for anyone who thinks we're the right fit for them.

SURVIVORS UK

We Support. We Challenge. We Build.

