

HEALTH

# Identity, Health, and Survivance

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Sovereignty
- Identity

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will be able to ...

- Describe the relationship between identity and health outcomes
- Explain the relationship between identity, health, and survivance

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How does your sense of personal and cultural identity impact your health?
- What is survivance and what is its relationship to health?

## LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?  
*Classroom*
- How are the students organized?
  - Whole class
  - Teams: 2 – 4
  - Pairs
  - Individually

## TIME REQUIRED

95 minutes

## Overview

This lesson explores the concepts of personal and cultural identity and asks students to reflect on how their own sense of identity might impact their health. The lesson provides a holistic look at the different types of health people experience.

While the lesson acknowledges that discrimination based on identity is an unfortunate fact of life for many people, identity can also be used as a spring-board to better health. This concept is explored in the second activity. The lesson also draws on examples from Native American culture to show how survivance and physical identity expression can support a positive experience of health.

## Background for teachers

- Read provided information on the Identity Essential Understanding to learn more about Native Americans in Oregon
- Preview the videos and confirm they are compatible with your technology setup
- Review Activity 1 and decide which aspects of your identity/culture you are willing to share in the classroom as an example



- Review the website: <https://thunderbirdpf.org/?resources=honouring-our-strengths-a-renewed-framework-to-address-substance-use-issues-among-first-nations-people-in-canada> to learn more about the project used as an example in Activity 2

## Considerations for teachers

### Assessment

Students should be assessed both formatively and summatively. Formative assessment can include observation of student participation in classroom discussion and individual and group work. Summative assessment can include review of student worksheets and their ability to:

- Identify and discuss various aspects of their identity
- Explain how identity impacts health outcomes
- Describe how survivance connects to emotional and mental health

### Practices

- *Individual work* – The first activity asks students to complete work independently, with encouragement from the instructor when needed.
- *Small group* – Small-group activities allow students to share and analyze ideas with one, two, or three other people. This practice can be good for students who do not want to share their ideas with the whole class and/or who may be afraid of others' reactions.

## STANDARDS

### Oregon health standards

**HE.1.12.2** – Describe the interrelationships of physical, mental, social, emotional, and environmental health.

**HE.1.12.3** – Explain how environment (both physical and social) and personal health are interrelated.

**HE.1.12.7** – Identify and analyze barriers that prevent people from practicing a variety of healthy behaviors.

**HE.1.12.18** – Describe the intersections of varied identities, including gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, etc.

**HE.2.12.1** – Analyze how culture influences health beliefs, behaviors, and outcomes.

**HE.2.12.13** – Analyze how public health policies and government regulations can influence health promotion and disease prevention.



- *Classroom discussion* – Large-group, whole-class discussion allows students to express their thoughts and hear the thoughts of others. For the instructor, this practice is a good way to take the pulse of the group and see what general themes are emerging. For students, large-group discussion can be a way to express themselves or to hear differing perspectives from others.
- *Sensitive topics* – The discussion of personal identities and culture may bring up uncomfortable feelings for some students. Take time at the beginning of the lesson to reiterate classroom norms and expectations. Give students options to temporarily disengage if they need a break (examples: stepping outside the classroom, listening to music with headphones). Also set aside time following the lesson (or at another convenient time) for students to speak with the instructor one-on-one.

### Learning targets

- I can explain how identity is connected to various aspects of one's health.
- I can describe the relationship between identity, health, and Native American survivance.

### MATERIALS

**What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?**

- Teacher handouts
  - EU\_Identity
- Student handouts
  - Iceberg Worksheet (Activity 1)
  - Identity and Health Handout (Activity 2)
  - Expressing Identity\_tattoo example (Activity 3 extension option)
- Internet connection and ability to play the following videos:
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Py7KjyfyJU&feature=youtu.be>
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-7VbMMUByE&feature=youtu.be>
  - <https://vimeo.com/215256986>

### VOCABULARY

**Emotional health** – One's ability to cope with life's challenges. People who are emotionally healthy are in control of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

**Social health** – One's ability to form satisfying interpersonal relationships with others. Your social health can also include your ability to adapt to different social situations and act appropriately in a variety of settings.

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## Reflection/closure

### Say:

*We are all members of various cultural groups. Some of these groups are connected to our identities, some are not. Think about the cultural groups that you identify with. How do those cultural groups pass along their knowledge, skills, and practices to future generations?*

Depending on time and classroom dynamics, have students respond to the question on their own, in a small group, or as part of a classroom discussion. Ask for volunteers to share examples of how their identity and culture get passed to future generations.

### VOCABULARY (Continued)

**Spiritual health** – One’s relationship with their own personal values and beliefs and how those provide purpose to one’s life. People may choose to practice spiritual health through prayer, meditation, and connecting with others who have similar beliefs.

**Environmental health** – One’s relationship with the physical, chemical, and biological factors of the natural environment.

**Mental health** – A state of psychological well-being or an absence of mental illness. It can include the ability to enjoy life, the ability to create balance between life activities, and the effort to achieve psychological resilience.

**Physical health** – One’s ability to care for their body for optimal health and functioning. Components of physical health include strength, nutrition, activity, and hygiene.

**Identity** – A distinguishing characteristic of a person; often tied to one’s membership within a group of people.

**Intersectionality** – The interconnected nature of social categorizations and how they apply to an individual or group; often regarded as creating overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

**Survivance** – The active presence of Native American people, culture, and traditions in contemporary life; a refusal to be seen as mere victims or survivors or as a vanished people of the past.



## Activity 1

### Identity and Culture Iceberg

Time: 30 minutes

#### Say:

*Let's start our lesson by thinking about our identities and how those identities shape our lives. Can someone give me an example of how someone's identity can impact their life? It can be a personal example if you are willing to share or an anonymous example about someone else (but please don't use names).*

Allow for a few students to share. If needed, prompt responses by asking questions like:

- How does gender impact someone's life?
- How does age impact someone's life?
- How does geographic location impact someone's life?

#### Say:

*Thank you for those examples. Each person is a combination of multiple identities and cultures. Some aspects of a person's culture are visible; many are not. Let's use the visual idea of an iceberg to get a better idea of this concept. If you picture a ship on water sailing toward an iceberg, the part of the iceberg that is above water will be visible. However, the majority of the iceberg is below the water and not visible. The iceberg is a metaphor that can be used to represent a lot of things. For our purposes, we'll use the iceberg to represent someone's identity and culture. Some aspects of identity and culture might be visible to others, such as our gender expression or the color of our skin. Other parts of identity and culture are not visible to others, like our cultural attitudes toward dating.*

Model the iceberg-as-identity concept for students using yourself as an example. To do this, use the iceberg worksheet on a projector or draw an iceberg outline on a marker board or piece of paper. As you share information on your visible and invisible identities, keep appropriate boundaries with your students and only share information that is appropriate to share.



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## Activity 1 (Continued)

Distribute the Iceberg Worksheet to the students.

**Say:**

*You will use this worksheet as a way to think deeper about your cultures and identities. On the back is the Cultural Iceberg, which you can use as inspiration to get your ideas flowing. On the front of the worksheet you'll see a simple picture of an iceberg. Above the water line I want you to write in aspects of your identities and cultures that are visible to others. In other words, what can other people learn about your identity and culture just by looking at you? Below the water line, I want you to write in aspects of your cultures and identities that are not visible to others. Spend about 10 minutes working on this on your own.*

When students have finished the Iceberg Worksheet, process the activity as a whole class using one or more discussion questions. Select the best processing option based on the remaining class time and the maturity level of the class. Options for processing are:

1. Ask each student to respond to one or more of the discussion questions privately in their journal.
2. Have students discuss one or more of the discussion questions in small groups.
3. Have a whole-class discussion about one or more of the discussion questions.

Pick and choose from the following discussion questions:

- Did you learn anything about your identities that surprised you?
- What feelings did you experience as you completed this activity?
- Which identity or identities do you think about most often? Least often?

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### Activity 1 (Continued)

- Which identity or identities have the strongest effect on how you perceive yourself?
- Which identity or identities have the strongest effect on how others perceive you?

## Activity 2

### Identity as Health and Healing

Time: 30 minutes

#### Say:

*In the previous activity we examined how our identities can impact our experience of life. Now let's think more specifically about health. Much like identity, one's health cannot be reduced to one or two factors. One's health, or general sense of well-being, is made up of emotional, social, spiritual, environmental, mental, and physical health. This handout summarizes various aspects of one's health. Take a minute to read through each definition.*

Distribute the handout and ask students to read silently or in pairs or ask for volunteers to read each definition out loud. Instruct students to find a discussion partner close by.

#### Say:

*With your partner, discuss how identity can impact someone's health. Think about all aspects of someone's identity as well as the big picture of health that is represented here on the handout. How are health, identity, and culture connected? Spend a few minutes discussing this with your partner.*

If needed, provide partners with the following discussion questions:

- Have you ever experienced discrimination based on your identity in a health care setting?
  - If not, have you heard about other people experiencing discrimination identity-based in a health care setting?
- What historical examples can you think of where someone's identity had an impact on the medical care they received?



## Activity 2 (Continued)

- How do you think your identity and culture impact your experiences with:
  - Physical health
  - Emotional health
  - Social health
  - Spiritual health
  - Environmental health
  - Mental health

Allow two to five minutes for discussion. Ask for a few volunteers to share what they discussed. If student answers are focused primarily on one aspect of health (e.g., physical health) encourage them to think about all aspects of health.

Ask the class to decide if their responses were more focused on healthy or unhealthy outcomes.

**Say:**

*Conversations about identity and health often focus on negative and unhealthy outcomes. Unfortunately, it's too easy to think of examples of someone being treated poorly by a doctor because of their identity or being denied health care because of their identity. Even though these negative examples might be prevalent in our minds, people get a lot of strength and support and healing from their cultural identities.*

**Say:**

*Let's take a look at an example of researchers using cultural identity as a path to healing and wellness. This specific research was done in drug and alcohol treatment centers in Canada. The project's goal was to improve health programming for Indigenous people in treatment by utilizing Indigenous culture and cultural practices. We will watch two short videos that explain the project in more depth.*



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## Activity 2 (Continued)

Watch the videos:

- Honouring Our Strengths: Project Introduction Trailer  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Py7KjyfyJU&feature=youtu.be>
- Honouring Our Strengths: Elder Jim Dumont, Methodology  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7VbMMUBysE&feature=youtu.be>

**Say:**

*Look back at the two papers you have in front of you. You have the Identity and Culture Iceberg that you completed, and you have the Identity and Health handout. In the videos, you saw an example of how people are using cultural identity as a path to healing and wellness. Take a few minutes to answer the question: How do your identities and cultures provide you with health, wellness, and healing? Think about ALL of your identities and cultures and ALL aspects of your health. You can take notes on the handouts or on a separate piece of paper.*

Allow 5 to 10 minutes for students to work independently. When they are finished, ask for a few volunteers to share examples of what they came up with.

### Activity 3

## Survivance and Health

Time: 25 minutes

Ask if anyone has heard the term “survivance” before. If so, ask students to explain what they know about the term and its usage. Explain that the term originated with Native Americans and Alaska Natives and provide the following definition of survivance: “The active presence of Native American people, culture, and traditions in contemporary life; a refusal to be seen as mere victims or survivors or as a vanished people of the past.” Ask students why they think this concept is so crucial for Indigenous people.

#### Say:

*Survivance is about more than just survival. It's about preserving practices, traditions, and ways of life for Native Americans, and it's about expressing one's identity in the present. It's also a way to overcome tragedy and trauma. Survivance can seem like an abstract concept, so it might be easier to think about acts of survivance. We're going to watch a short video that is not specifically about survivance but is a demonstration of it. As you watch the video, think about how the actions of the Tribe demonstrate survivance. Take notes if that is helpful for you.*

#### Play the video:

Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians: Connecting with the Land

<https://vimeo.com/215256986>

When the video is finished, ask students where they saw examples of the Cow Creek Tribe demonstrating survivance. If students get stuck, see below for examples.

Examples of survivance:

- Sued government for land
- Never gave up
- Introduced bills into Congress five times



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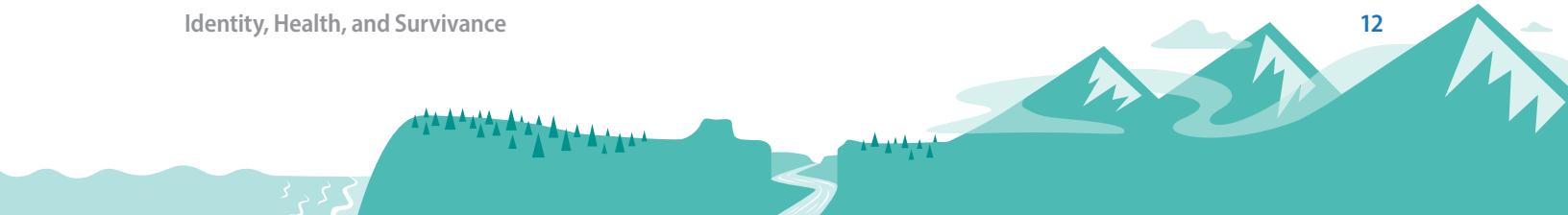
### Activity 3 (Continued)

- Eventually got formal recognition for the tribe
- Reservation restored to tribe
- Culture camp

**Say:**

*Think back to our previous activity where we talked about mental, emotional, and social health. How do you think survivance is connected to mental, emotional, and social health? Think about health at an individual level, as well as the health of a group of people.*

Allow time for discussion.



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## Extension Option

### Expressing Identity

Time: 15 minutes

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**Say:**

*When people take pride in their identities, they often choose to display those identities in their clothes, their hairstyles, or with body modifications. What examples come to mind of someone expressing their identity through their appearance?*

Allow time for student responses and discussion.

**Say:**

*Tattooing is a common practice among many of the Native American tribes of the Oregon Coast. Read this quick overview of the practice and think about how Coastal Indians use tattoos to demonstrate identity and survivance.*

Distribute the handout and allow time for students to read on their own. If your students are auditory learners, ask for volunteers to read the handout out loud.

Instruct students to chat with a partner to answer the question on the handout: How do you express your identity to others? After a few minutes have passed, ask for a few volunteers to share what they discussed. Close this activity by asking students to reflect on how expressing identity through appearance is connected to survivance.