



**SIDE** *by* **SIDE**



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# 01. PREFACE



We both came into DSI with a love for people, stories and a deep desire to contribute to social good, rooted in values of care and relationships. Understanding histories, people and communities authentically is something that has been central to us in our personal lives as well as in our practice as professionals and something that we often hear from our friends, mentors and families is that we are two thoughtful, poetic and empathetic individuals. We honor these values and we wanted our thesis to be a reflection of what we see and what others see in us.

Though we value the traditional design thinking process, we also understand that it is rooted in white supremacy and a culture that does not value or prioritize people nor understands the implications of design on communities. Throughout this one year, we have made attempts to stop, reflect and modify the process to align with our values. Our thesis is thus not just our final intervention, but our process as well.

As Enneagram 9s (peacemakers), we tend to see the world from multiple perspectives, sometimes this shows up as a strength and sometimes as a weakness. Going into the project, it was critical for us to keep centering survivors. Initially this meant and looked like building relationships and working with survivors only, creating an intervention dedicated to them. However, as we unfolded the ecosystem, we started seeing multiple actors and influencers that can support the survivor in healing. We understood that centering the survivor could also look like centering the needs of those that are capable of supporting them instead. From this point onwards, our thesis took a turn into an unprecedented and uncharted land, that we hope to keep building on.

This journey has been one filled with joy, love, tears, care, and surprises and is dedicated to each other and our beloved community.

Alyson & Nishita





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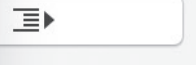
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Alyson Fraser Diaz



Nishita Chheda

# 02. BACKGROUND

Mute Stop Video

Participants 2 Chat Share Screen Record Reactions

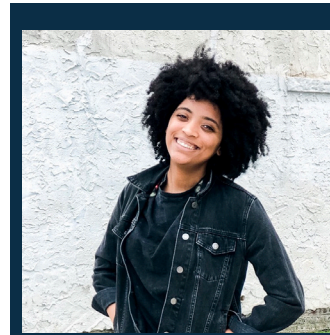
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**This process book is a year long culmination of survivorship, community, friendship, reflection, and joy.**

## The Humans Behind Side by Side



Alyson Fraser Diaz

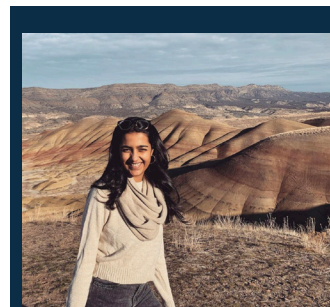
Alyson is a communications designer, strategist, and visual artist working in the social impact sector. She combined her lifelong love of art and design with years of experience in the nonprofit sector to pursue a career in social design. Alyson has a diverse educational and professional background which has inspired her multifaceted perspective on how design can be used to create better outcomes. She approaches everything with humility and compassion which helps her to find common ground across difference. In addition to Alyson's design practice, she loves reading dystopian novels, printmaking, and trying new coffee shops.

Words that remind me (Nishi) of Aly:

Sunshine

Laughter and joy

A wall plastered with Riso prints



Nishita Chheda

Nishita is a researcher, strategist, and visual sense-maker from Mumbai, India, committed to working towards gender equity, environmental reclamation, and education. With a background in Sociology and Communication Design, and experience working with under served communities in the global south, her work strives to center around care, compassion, and creativity. When not working, her weekends are spent pursuing patches of soil in this concrete city, trying out zero waste recipes, and exploring illustrations and the written word.

Words that remind me (Aly) of Nishi:

Wisdom

Gentle and thoughtful

Plants growing everywhere

### To Our Friendship:

A friendship and project designed across oceans and timezones.

We believe that at the root of our thesis is our friendship. Side by Side bloomed and thrived because of the conditions it was nurtured in and we owe a lot of it to the care and love we have for each other, endless joy and laughter and a lot of "We've got this!"



# Glossary

## Survivor

Someone who has experienced sexual violence. Not everyone identifies with the term survivor however we have chosen to use it throughout our project. Survivors come from every gender, race ethnicity and age.

## Co-Survivor

A co-survivor is someone who was a part of the survivors life before, during, and/or after the traumatic event has occurred. Can be friends, family, co-workers, or loved ones. Anyone who has also been impacted by the violence that occurred. <sup>1</sup>

## Sexual Violence (\*trigger warning)

Sexual violence is when someone has forced or manipulated someone else into unwanted sexual activity without their consent. <sup>2</sup> Sexual violence is a term used to include the many types of sexual harm including (but not limited to) sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, alcohol facilitated sexual assault, and sexual harassment <sup>3</sup> Those who commit sexual abuse can be acquaintances, family members, friends, trusted individuals or strangers. Contrary to popular belief, 8 out of 10 people know the assailant. <sup>4</sup>

## Trauma

Substance And Mental Health Services Administration describes individual trauma as resulting from “an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.” <sup>5</sup>

1. Sexual Assault Information for Friends & Family. (n.d.). Erie County Ohio Resources. <https://www.erie-county.oh.gov/SexualAssaultInformationforFriendsFamily.aspx>  
2. “What Is Sexual Violence? Fact Sheet.” National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2010.  
3. “What Is Sexual Violence.” Coalition Against Sexual Assault & Rape in MN That Trains Advocates, [www.mncasa.org/what-is-sexual-violence/](http://www.mncasa.org/what-is-sexual-violence/).  
4. RAINN. (n.d.). Perpetrators of Sexual Violence: Statistics | RAINN. <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/perpetrators-sexual-violence>  
5 Trauma and Violence. (2019, August 2). SAMHSA. <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is defined by RAINN as “an anxiety disorder that can result from a traumatic event.” <sup>6</sup> The symptoms include: re-experiencing the trauma through flashbacks, dreams or intrusive thoughts, avoiding things that remind you of the event, sever anxiety and depression. <sup>7</sup>

## Triggers

A trigger is when the brain registers a sight, smell, sound, taste, or sensation that is connected to a traumatic event. When a traumatic event is experienced, our brains activate our nervous system ( “fight, flight, or freeze” reactions) to help us survive. We stop processing information and storing it in our brains as linear memory. For people who have experienced trauma, the brain is unable to assign a sense of time, making someone respond to the sight/smell/sound as if the traumatic event were still occurring. This can feel very debilitating. <sup>8</sup>

## Disclosure

Disclosure is when someone tells another person about an incident or experience of violence. In a survivors life, disclosure is pivotal as research suggests that when survivors experience negative or dismissive responses when disclosing their experiences for the first time, they often decide not to seek further support. <sup>9</sup>

## Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a public health problem that affects millions of Americans. The term “intimate partner violence” describes physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. <sup>10</sup>

6) Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder | RAINN. (n.d.). RAINN. <https://www.rainn.org/articles/post-traumatic-stress-disorder>  
7) Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) - Symptoms and causes. (2018, July 6). Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20355967>  
8) Holland, LGSW, S. H. (2020, November 2). What Does It Mean to Be Triggered? Viva Center. <https://www.vivapartner-ship.com/optimal-living/what-does-it-mean-to-be-triggered/>  
9) Disclosures of Sexual Assault. (2016, May). Health and Human Services. <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/-/media/health/files/collections/factsheets/d/disclosures-of-sexual-assault---guide-for-srs.pdf>  
10) Intimate Partner Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC. (2020, October 8). Intimate Partner Violence. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/index.html>



# Frameworks

So much work has been done to lay the foundation for Side by Side. We are grateful for the people working in communities every day who have created helpful frameworks that guided us. Below are three that we feel are important to mention.

## Trauma Informed Care, Design, & Relationships

The principles of trauma-informed care, according to Substance And Mental Health Services Administration, include safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment, voice and choice, as well as cultural, historical and gender issues.<sup>11</sup> For Design this means making sure that our research practices and interventions take all of these principles into consideration. We attended multiple trauma informed design workshops before working with survivors and were inspired by the work of Sarah Fathalla and her teachings on Trauma Informed design.

In an article on Medium, titled Trauma informed Relationships,<sup>12</sup> the author, Kiki, discusses how these principles of trauma informed care could be applied to interpersonal relationships. Within our partnership with each other and with the relationships we build with all the survivors and co-survivors we worked with we aimed to practice these principles.

Being trauma informed determined everything from how we facilitated our interviews to our final intervention.

## Transformative Justice

“Transformative Justice (TJ) is a political framework and approach for responding to violence, harm and abuse. At its most basic, it seeks to respond to violence without creating more violence and/or engaging in harm reduction to lessen the violence.”<sup>13</sup> Early in our research we knew that reforming the criminal justice system was not the direction we wanted to take. TJ practices focus on community, healing, and people with marginalized identities and this is central to our work.

11 Gill, N. (2019, December 9). The Importance Of Trauma-Informed Design. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesnonprofitcouncil/2019/12/09/the-importance-of-trauma-informed-design/?sh=3502ffde6785>

12. Mingus, M. (2021, March 1). Transformative Justice: A Brief Description. Transform Harm. <https://transform-harm.org/transformational-justice-a-brief-description/>

13. Mingus, M. (2021b, March 1). Transformative Justice: A Brief Description. Transform Harm. <https://transform-harm.org/transformational-justice-a-brief-description/>

## Equity Based Design

“Equity-Centered Community Design (ECCD) is a framework developed by the Creative Reaction Lab that acknowledges and utilizes the role of people + systems + power when developing solutions or approaches that impact “the many” within different communities. It is a unique creative problem solving process based on equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating with the community. This design process focuses on a community’s culture and needs so that they can gain tools to dismantle systemic oppression and create a future with equity for all.”<sup>14</sup>

## Shame Resilience Theory

Shame resilience theory is a grounded theory developed by Dr. Brene Brown and is based on building resilience to shame by connecting with our authentic selves and growing meaningful relationships with others. Shame resilience involves moving towards empathy when we are experiencing shame and moving away from it. The theory is built on 4 principles:

- Recognizing shame and understanding our triggers.
- Practicing critical awareness.
- Reaching out and telling our story.
- Speaking about shame and communicating our experiences with our trusted loved ones.<sup>15</sup>

14 Our Approach. (n.d.). Creative Reaction Lab. <https://www.creativereactionlab.com/our-approach>

15. Brown, B. (2020, July 6). Shame Resilience Theory. Jane Taylor | Transition Coach | Engagement Coach | Well-being Coaching | Mindful Self-Compassion Coaching | Gold Coast | Mindfulness Teacher. <https://www.habitsfor-wellbeing.com/shame-resilience-theory/>



## Sources

### Books

The Body Keeps the Score - By Bessel van der Kolk M.D.  
Beyond Survival - Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha  
Turn This World Inside Out: Emergence of Nurturance Culture- Nora Samaran  
Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds by adrienne maree brown  
Dear Sister: Letters to Survivors of Sexual Violence - Lisa Factora-Borchers  
Queering Sexual Violence - Jennifer Patterson  
All Along You Were Blooming - Morgan Harper Nichols  
Trauma and Recovery - Judith Lewis Herman  
Beyond Harm: Toward Justice, Healing and Peace- Derek R. Brookes  
Believe Me: How Trusting Women Can Change the World - Jessica Valenti and Jaclyn Friedman  
The Sexual Healing Journey - Wendy Maltz

### Trainings, Workshops, Conferences

Survivors Agenda- Black Femme Town Hall  
YVN Event Day One - Ping Chong Secret Survivors Sarah  
Video series on Interviewing survivors  
National Sexual Assault Conference  
Me Too: Survivors Agenda Summit  
Trauma Informed Design Research  
Supporting Survivors Workshop- Cassandra Corrado  
Trauma Informed Care Principles- Jamie Harper, CPRS  
Allied Media Conference  
Restorative Design Conference (Sarah Fathalla Workshop)  
Boundaries Workshop- Wellcium

### Podcasts

Unlocking Us- Brene Brown and Tarana Burke  
Interview with Elizabeth Clements

A black and white photograph of a smartphone, a pair of glasses, and a book titled 'BEYOND SURVIVAL'. The smartphone screen shows a video player with a photo of Tarana Burke and Brene Brown. The book cover features the title 'BEYOND SURVIVAL' in large, bold letters, with the subtitle 'STRATEGIES AND STORIES FROM THE TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT' below it. The book is edited by Ejeris Dixon and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

**“If we don’t deal with shame,  
we can’t get to healing.”**

-Tarana Burke (Founder of Me Too)





# Collaborators

## Day One, YVN

The Youth Voices Network (YVN) unites adult survivors of youth intimate partner violence by creating opportunities for survivors to connect, speak about their experiences, and raise community-wide awareness of the issue – all while fostering personal growth and healing.

YVN is committed to building a safe and non-judgmental space for a diverse community of survivors of teen dating abuse, including individuals of any gender, race, class, ethnicity, country of origin, religion, or sexual orientation.

Youth Voices members join a community of fellow survivors who are building their public speaking, advocacy and leadership skills by taking action against dating abuse. Member's experiences have the potential to save lives by raising knowledge about domestic violence and resources for help. Their advocacy with legislators and leaders impacts attitudes and creates policy change.

YVN exists as a program under Day One, a New York City Non profit that partners with youth to end dating abuse and domestic violence through community education, supportive services, legal advocacy and leadership development. Alyson has been part of YVN which created an open & trusting partnership.

Learn more about their work: <https://www.dayoneny.org/>

## VIV

VIV promotes survivors, or anyone who has experienced intimate or sexual harm, to exist, thrive, and live in any way they deem necessary. We work in tandem with public services, such as therapy and legal aid, but we are distinctively different from such services as we prioritize alternative modes of healing that are otherwise inaccessible. Due to our creative approach to support, VIV grows and changes with its communities.

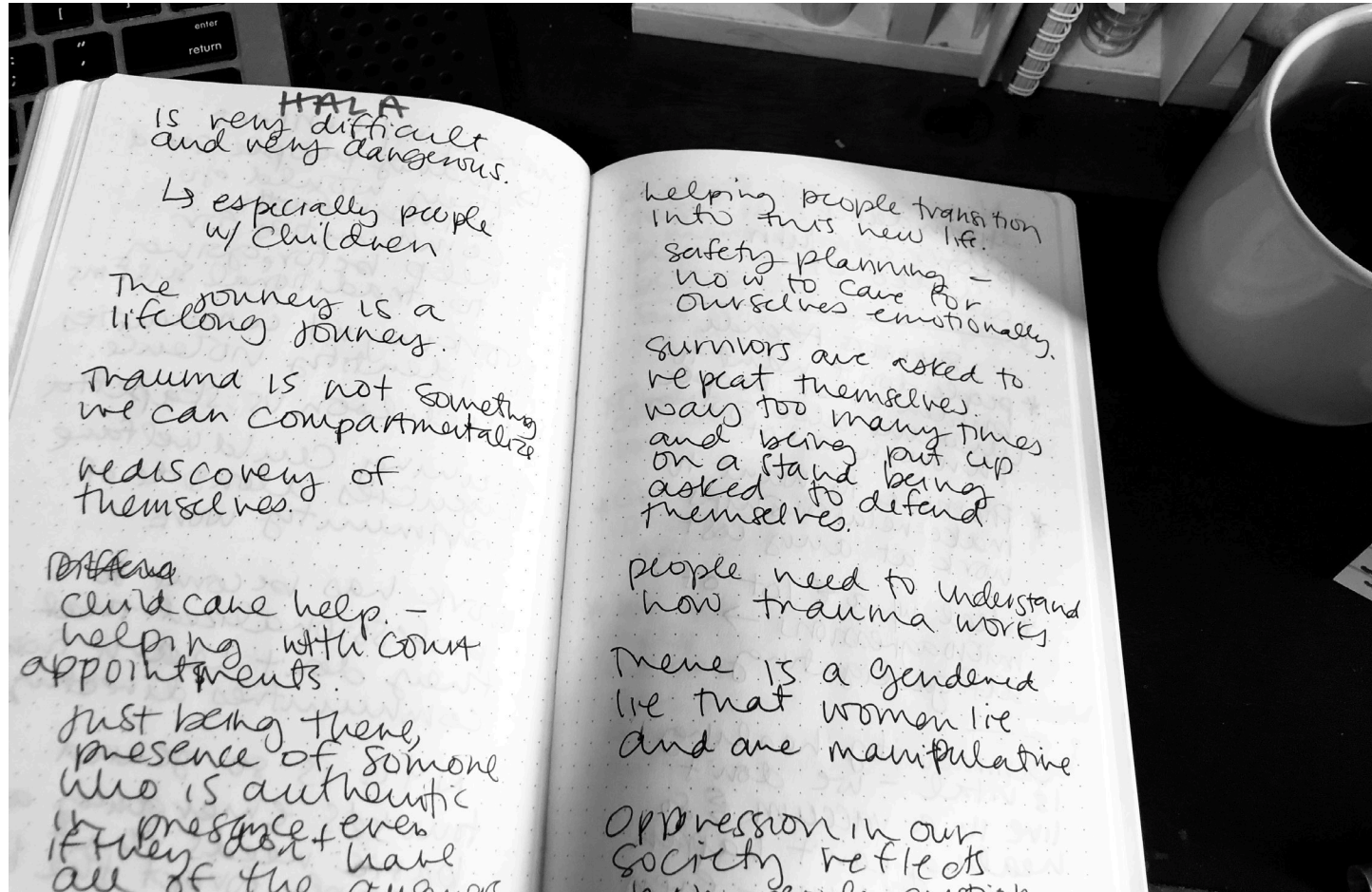
Learn more about their work: <https://survivorscreate.org/>

## Yours, Rio

Yours, Rio offers three avenues of trauma-informed coaching tailored to your individual needs. You can pick one or combine all three programs —TALK, MAKE, and ORGANIZE — to empower yourself through communication, creativity, and interior design. Whether you're growing in mental health or pursuing new goals, Yours, Rio is for anyone ready to take leadership over their healing.

Learn more about their work: <https://www.yoursrio.com/>

# Extended Community



## A Note on Covid-19:

Due to Covid 19 this project was created virtually, across time zones, and with many amazing people! While we would have loved to host our facilitations in person, especially for such a sensitive topic, we had to get creative translate to fully digital.

**Sharene -Connect NYC**

**Catalina - Reciprocate Healing**

**Hala -Psychologist and Author**

**Rio - Yours, Rio and VIV**

**Michele - (Formerly) Day One**

**Joanna - Day One and Curl Up with Books**

**Justine - IDEO and Ensoma**

**Denise Shanté- Denise Shanté Brown**

**Brian Gorman- Hidden Water**

## Survivors & Co-Survivors

**CB DC**

**CM RD**

**MB ZS**

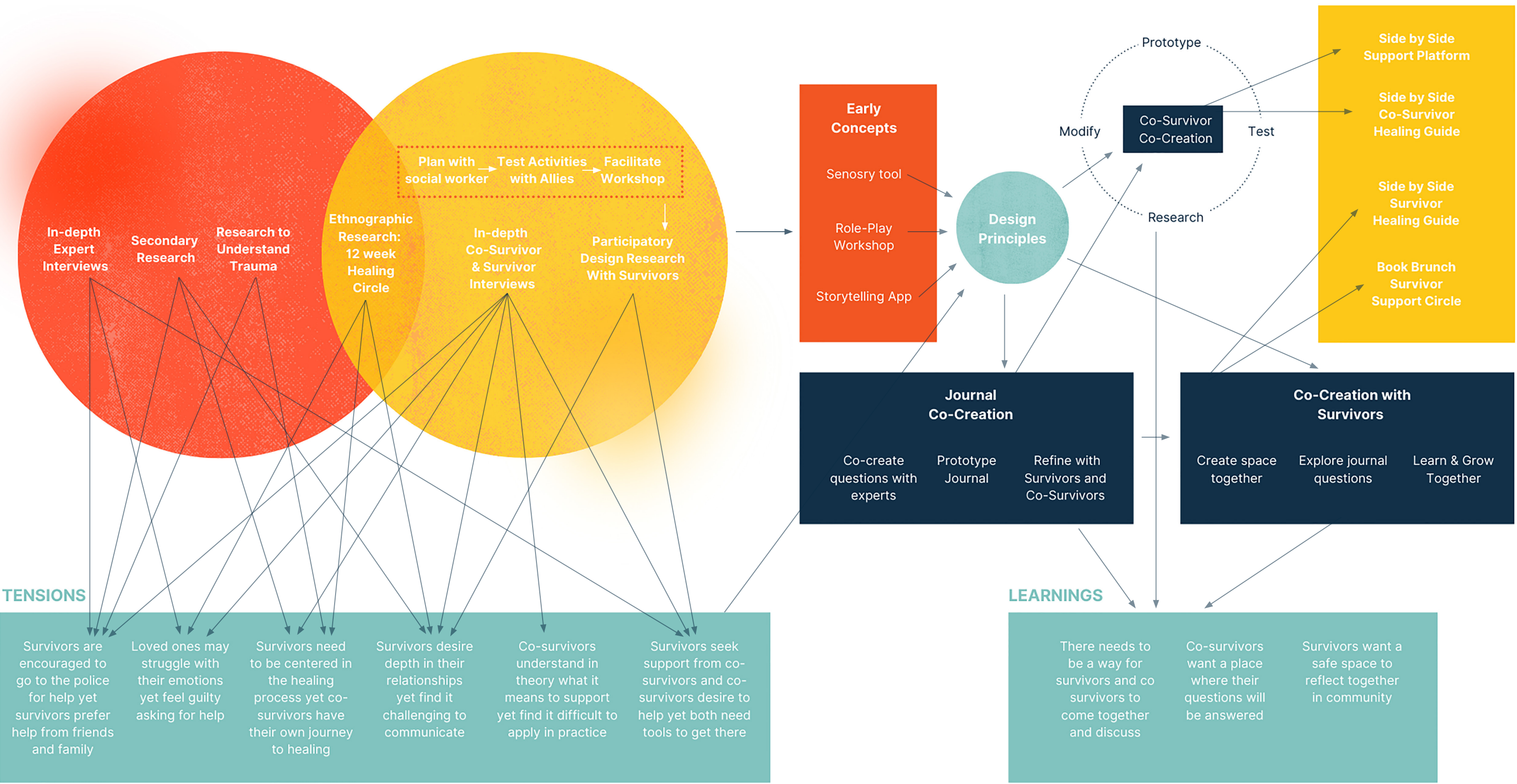
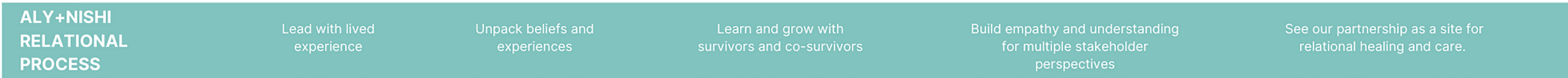
**MF LM**

**MG DS**

**EJ**



# Design Process



# TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

## Embodying Trauma Informed Care Principles

### Safety

Throughout our process, we practiced safety by ensuring that our community felt secure and comfortable in our presence. We took time to build relationships giving ourselves, each other and our community the space, patience and understanding that was necessary to nurture feelings of safety.

### Trustworthiness

An important aspect of our process was to build trust by being transparent about our intentions, processes and methodologies. We made attempts to practice open and honest communication at all times, to ensure our words reflected our actions.

### Mutuality

We practiced mutuality by practicing co-creation and collaboration. We also made sure that at each step, we were giving back something to our community that was valuable to them and that they desired such as tools, artifacts and feelings of community.

### Empowerment, Voice and Choice

More than 90% of our process has been participatory in nature. We truly believe that the tent is so much bigger than all of us and made active efforts at building relationships with our community, listening to their experiences and giving the power back to them to take control over their process. Additionally, we made sure to give people a chance to reflect privately before sharing and choose what they wanted to share. It was important that everyone participating felt that they had control over their story and a choice in what they shared.

### History, Culture and Gender

We took active attempts at understanding historical, cultural and gender nuances that are embedded in our topic. We did this by going through an extensive literary research phase, accompanied by interviews and conversations with experts in the field. We also made effort to create a space where everyone's lived experience was valued regardless of their gender expression, culture, or history.







**70%**

of survivors experience PTSD at some point in their lives.

**80%**

of survivors know the person who assaulted them

**37%**

experience family/friend problems, including decreased trust.

RAINN







**How might we re-imagine  
long-term healing for  
survivors of sexual violence.**



**TENSIONS**

**& INSIGHTS**





Loved ones  
may struggle  
with their own  
emotions...

...yet feel guilty  
seeking help.

#### Expert Interviews: Who are Co-Survivors?

Going into this topic, we were aware of our strengths and shortcomings. We were aware of how sensitive and harm inducing our actions could be if we went unprepared. We were also clear on our role as designers and knew that we lacked a formal understanding of the physiological and psychological impact of trauma on survivors and their communities. Moreover, we did not want to reinvent the wheel, we wanted to leverage existing expert and community knowledge. As designers, our strengths lied in facilitating this trans-disciplinary knowledge building, in building relationships and connecting the dots and, so we did. Our first step was to read existing

literature and validate the information we were gaining through experts on-field and gain a more practical understanding of the same. To do this, we spoke with multiple social workers, community organizers, and trauma experts working in New York City with survivors of sexual violence. The insights we gained from each of these conversations were rich and nuanced and highlighted the importance of an expert-led lens. We did not stop here, at each step ahead, when we started immersing ourselves with the community, we were backed by the support of social workers and experts, whom we are ever so grateful for!





**Co-Survivor: someone who was with you before, during, and/or after the traumatic life changing event.**

Brian Young- <https://linkedbypink.org/>

### What We Heard:

“One of the biggest things that people can do to support for folks, is to actually read about sexual violence...Sometimes the best ways that people can support is also by knowing what is their job and what’s not their job.”

M.P. Social Worker

“But I think the very few times I’ve really talked to co survivors about these things from my professional role, they just feel sometimes like they don’t know what to do but also sometimes like it’s selfish to take a service or a support. People perceive it as a zero sum like somehow if I’m getting support my partners is losing something “

Hala Alyan, Psychologist

### What We Learned

Co-survivors lack comprehensive, actionable resources on r@pe culture, boundaries, empathy, self care, consent) and the effects of trauma. Additionally, they lack an informal community/network to learn with and feel validation from.

Co- Survivors/ support people feel unprepared to support survivors and fear what unpacking trauma may bring up for them personally yet they may often feel selfish for seeking help

It is important for Co-survivors to have boundaries. Everyone has a role to play in the healing system but it is not a co-survivors job to be a therapist or “fix” their loved one.

When survivors do expect too much from Co-survivors or co-survivors take on more than is their responsibility, that puts a lot of stress on a relationship and is not healthy. We learned that our intervention would need both party to acknowledge/learn their role and boundaries.

Most resources are dedicated to survivors and not to building up support. This lack has a lot to do with lack of understanding about how to engage the support system and also the lack of funds available. Because of this, creating something within the non-profit system that supported co-survivors was unlikely.



**Survivors need  
to be centered  
in the healing  
process...**

**...yet co-survivors  
also have their own  
journey to healing.**

### **Journey Maps**

The focus of our initial discovery stage was to gain a deep understanding of survivors' feelings, behaviors, and their healing journeys. We learned that though each survivor's journey was unique, they shared patterns in where they were in their healing journey and the support that was accessible to them during that phase.

Based on these learnings and insights, we created 4 survivor personas: the avoidant one, the resurgent one, the motivated one and

the secure one. As a survivor navigates their journey, they may see themselves transitioning from one persona to another.

Understanding these different identities and the evolving nature of their journey was crucial for us to make sure that our intervention was accessible to survivors wherever they were in their healing journey.

As a disclaimer, this is just a mapping tool that helps make sense of complex data and by no means a comprehensive representation of their experience.





**“There is a feeling of helplessness of not really being able to support [my partner] in certain situations. I’m supposed to be her partner but there’s really nothing that I can do at this point, besides just being there. And that really pains me.”- Jay\* Co-Survivor**

\*Name changed for confidentiality

## Co-Survivor Personas

### Feelings

### Boundaries

### Understanding of Trauma

### Understanding of Their Role

| Inactive Co-survivor   | Occasionally Supportive Co-survivor   | Active Co-survivor   | Overly Active Co-survivor   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Sadness, confusion, disengagement, apprehension, fearful   | Concerned, angry, sympathetic, fearful  | Empathetic, encouraging, compassionate, appreciative, loving, caring   | Empathetic, loving, caring, eager, guilty   |
| Speaks supportively when the conversation comes up.<br><br>Is busy in their own life.<br><br>Remembers and checks-in occasionally. | Asks the survivor to reach out whenever they need them.<br><br>Remembers and checks-in occasionally.<br><br>Takes efforts to understand sexual violence, however, gets impacted by the adversity of the issue and its impact. | Is there for the survivor whenever they need them.<br><br>They understand what the survivor needs.<br><br>Makes active efforts to understand sexual violence and its impact of survivors and co-survivors as well.<br><br>Understands their role as a supportive friend to the survivor.<br><br>Joins a support group for co-survivors.<br><br>Takes care of themselves. | Constantly reaches out to survivor assuring them they are there for them.<br><br>Puts the survivor before them.<br><br>Is very protective about the survivor’s state, wants and needs and tries to fulfill all of them.<br><br>Takes effort to understand sexual violence.<br><br>Sees it as their responsibility to “fix” the survivor and the survivor’s problem. |
| Very low.  | Low.  | Medium.  | Medium.   |
| Very low.<br><br>Unsure if they even play a role in the system.  | Low.  | Medium.  | Very Low.   |



## Survivor Personas

|                          | Avoidant Survivor   | Resurgent Survivor   | Motivated Survivor   | Secure Survivor   |
|--------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Feelings                 | Denial, shame, , Stress, anxiety  | Hopeful, encouraged, courageous, hesitant, vulnerable, distrust, shame, stress, anxiety  | Strong, motivated, healthy, stress, anxiety  | Balanced, stronger, healthier, assertive, empowered, in control, stress, anxiety  |
| Behaviors                | <p>Disconnects with themselves and others.</p> <p>Develops defense mechanisms that distract them from the harm.</p> <p>Is hyper-vigilant and cautious at all times.</p> <p>Has uncontrolled emotions and bouts of severe anxiety.</p> | <p>Reflects and identifies on the experience and the impact.</p> <p>Seeks support.</p> <p>Attempts to make small lifestyle changes towards their physical and mental well being.</p> <p>Is faced with distrust and difficulties with communication and relationships.</p> <p>Has lower bouts of anxiety.</p> | <p>Continues to reflect and unpack the experience and it's long-term impact.</p> <p>Identifies and builds a multiple avenue support circle.</p> <p>Identifies healthy care mechanisms.</p> <p>Starts building trust and relationships.</p> <p>Starts forgiving the self for self-blame.</p> <p>Has occasional triggers and stress.</p> | <p>Has gained independence.</p> <p>Maintains healthy care mechanisms.</p> <p>Has started to engage in activism/awareness work.</p> <p>Grows their identity outside of the incident.</p> <p>Has lowered reliance on support.</p> |
| Available Support        | Counselors, <b>Friends/Family</b>   | Counselors, <b>Friends/Family</b> , Support Groups, Spiritual Support  | Counselors, <b>Friends/Family</b> , Spiritual Support, Self-Help Avenues   | Counselors, <b>Friends/Family</b> , Advocacy/Awareness Groups, Spiritual Support, Self-Help Avenues   |
| Interaction with Support | <p>Feels distanced from them.</p> <p>Hasn't openly spoken about their experience with them.</p>   | <p>Starts speaking about their experience and health with friends/family.</p>  | <p>Forms stronger and closed bonds with specific friends/family that becomes their circle of care and support.</p> <p>Begins to build new connections and relationships.</p>   | <p>Has an established support circle.</p> <p>Builds new connections and relationships.</p>  |
| Experience with Support  | <p>Is unsure of who to open up to.</p> <p>Feels hesitant because of the underlying shame and stigma.</p>  | <p>Feels supported occasionally.</p> <p>Is often met with negative reactions.</p> <p>Is facing difficulties communicating about their experience.</p>  | <p>Feels supported and cared for.</p> <p>Is starting to feel equipped to have healthier conversations.</p> <p>Is still occasionally met with judgmental and negative reactions.</p>  | <p>Has established healthy communication routines.</p> <p>Has established boundaries.</p> <p>Builds trust and intimacy.</p> <p>Knows how to manage and respond to negative reactions.</p>                                       |

**“I wanted to put the experience away in a box and not think about it ever again.”**

- Shay\* Survivor

\*Name changed for confidentiality



**Survivors are encouraged to go to the police or hospital for help...**

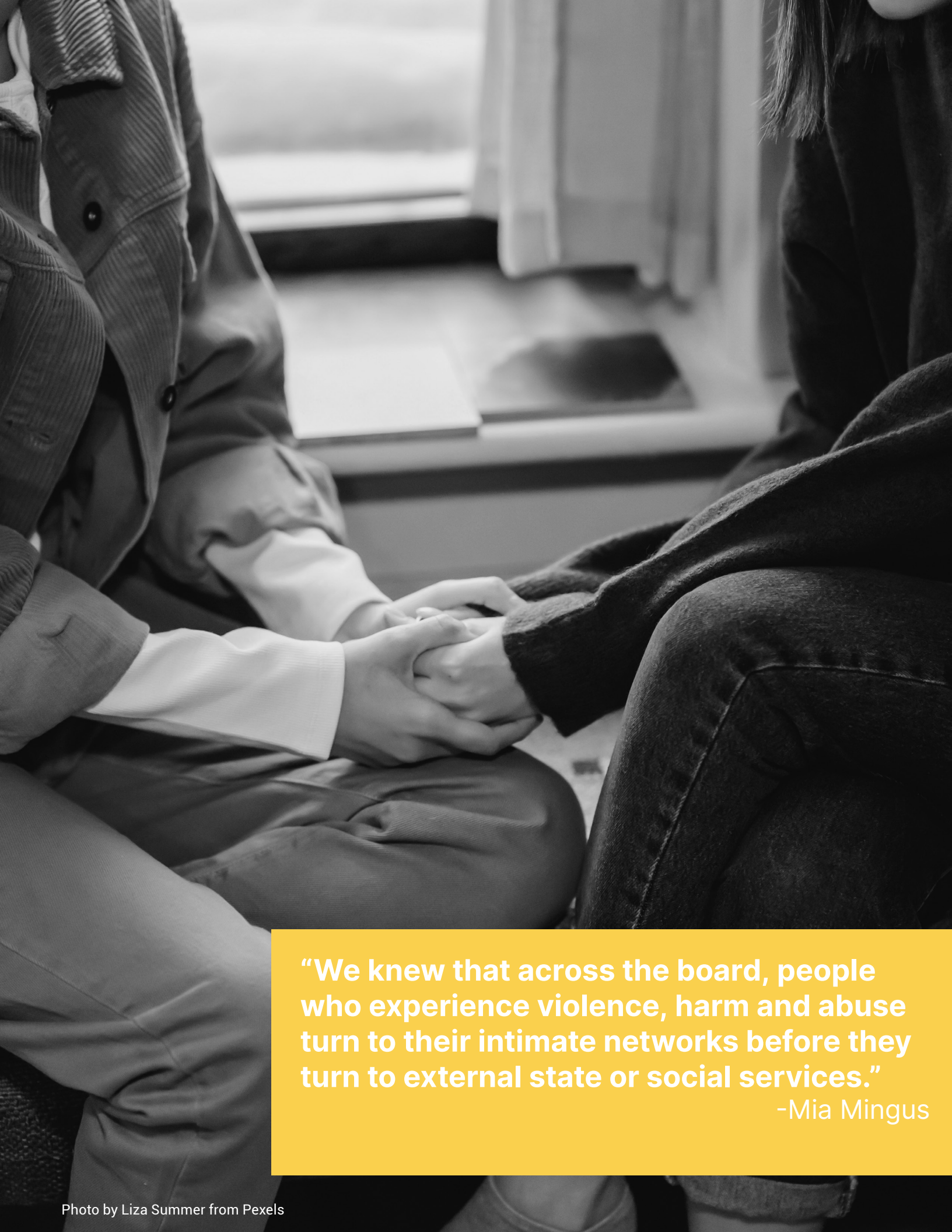
**...yet survivors prefer help from friends and family.**

### **Support Ecosystem Map**

Our project began by trying to understand what types of support are available to survivors, what support is most utilized by survivors, and what support is available for long term healing. What typically comes to mind for people is going to the police to report the crime and going to a medical center. We also looked into services from non-profits and other places where survivors might find help like books or social support. Non-profits and crisis centers tend to provide education programs, immediate crisis intervention, and/or short term support (in the form of support groups) (\*) but few places provide resources or support for the longer term healing that survivors may

require. This leaves the survivor with limited options, either going to therapy long term or having to navigate the healing process with little support if therapy is not accessible to them. This is compounded for BIPOC survivors, Queer survivors, and other marginalized groups who do not trust formal supports or have been harmed by formal support like medical system and criminal justice system in the past. Their accounts of trauma are often denied or seen as questionable making them even less likely to seek formal support or even disclose to friends and family.





**“We knew that across the board, people who experience violence, harm and abuse turn to their intimate networks before they turn to external state or social services.”**

-Mia Mingus

## What We Read:

**“Ideally, anyone who has been forced into a sexual act should be seen within 24 hours at a hospital emergency room where a specially trained team provides medical care and counseling, collects high-quality forensic evidence and supports often terrified victims who may — or may not — choose to pursue legal action.”**

-Jane E. Brody

**“My deepest desire is supposed to be incarceration for my abuser. I’m supposed to want him to suffer, to pay for what he did. But I’ve never wanted that. I wanted some healing. For me and for him”**

- Blyth Barnow

## Learnings & Synthesis

Many survivors reach out to friends and family (intimate networks) looking for validation and support before going to systems. This emotional and material support can be pivotal in the healing journey and positive response decreases risk of PTSD later on.

Trust is essential for healing and is learned and built in relationships. It is often assumed people have trust within their support systems but it can be hard for survivors to learn to trust again.

Traditionally survivors form isolated networks with each other however this can create further alienation from other “everyday” support.

Healing cannot occur in isolation- We are wired for connection.

Trauma is often viewed as a personal and private matter but needs to be treated holistically as collective and systemic harm.

Long term changes are being made in policy, sex-ed and consent education and prevention. Unfortunately, there are few comprehensive tools to help current survivors navigate healing.

System is focused on healing through criminal “justice” but many survivors have no desire for criminal punishment. The system does not prepare survivors or practitioners for support beyond the legal system or enable survivors to take the time they need for healing.





## Ecosystem

Sexual violence affects not only the survivors but the communities that they are part of. However, it is treated as a private issue instead of a systemic one, with the burden being placed on survivors' shoulders to heal themselves. This is reflective of the systems that are currently in place:

### Institutional Support

The outermost ring is institutional support. These systems are set up to address immediate needs. In NYC especially, the focus is on housing security and formal prosecution. Though essential, survivors need more sustainable forms of support to process long-term trauma impacts. Additionally, for marginalized communities, these are inaccessible and oppressive, furthering the harm.

### Communal Support

The second layer is community support. Many of these organizations are underfunded compared to institutional support and are often tied to short-term models of 12 weeks or less. While some communities are more flexible and can provide some nature of social support (ex: faith based communities), many times the person who committed the assault is part of the survivors close community. Because of this, people may be unlikely to share or face backlash when they do.

### Relational Support

The next layer is relational support. Many survivors reach out to friends and family looking for support before going to systems. This emotional and material support can be pivotal throughout the healing journey, and early positive responses decrease the risk of PTSD later on.

### Self Support

When survivors seek to heal and ask for support, they are often met with judgment and disbelief from both, formal and informal support systems, creating further feelings of isolation. Because of this, many survivors choose to navigate the healing journey on their own- relying on self-help, the internet, and other resources to process their harm.





## Long-Term Sustainable Support System

The majority of institutional support is not designed to last the duration of a survivor's healing journey. With the exception of social workers, therapists, and treatment programs, the majority of institutional support falls into immediate or short-term support. We believe the most long-term and sustainable support system has elements of all four. Each playing a unique role and coming together to support the work of the survivor.



## Opportunities for Each Circle of Support

The first circle of support is support from a practitioner. We consider anyone with a trained understanding of trauma and processing to be in this category, like therapists, trauma-informed yoga teachers, and healers. They provide support unpacking trauma, offer tools for managing triggers, and support in navigating relationships post-trauma.

The second is the Survivor-survivor support. These are shown to be vital because of the shared understanding of experience, information sharing, and help in feeling you are not alone.

The last is support from friends and family. This group has a lot of potential but there is not much traditional research about them. In interviews with survivors and experts, we found that these relationships are important sources of support but come with many challenges. Especially when it comes to parents and romantic partners.

Lastly is self-support. Sexual violence is incredibly isolating and healing cannot happen alone. However, no matter the avenue of support, survivors will still need to do the hard work of acknowledging the impact the harm has had on them and continue to practice self-care throughout the healing journey.

While our project focuses on building up relational support, we have incorporated elements of self-work, relational support, community support, and therapeutic support into our final intervention.

**“Healing cannot happen in itself, we don’t live in a vacuum, so healing cannot happen in a vacuum. There can be individual stuff that happens by yourself, but you have to be connected to other people - best friends, support group, family, whoever!”**

Ignacio G. Rivera  
 Founder  
 The HEAL Project

Heard at the Me Too Survivor's Agenda Summit Workshop: Queer and Trans Perspectives on Violence and Abuse



**Survivors desire  
depth in their  
relationships...**

**...yet find it  
challenging to  
communicate.**

### **Participatory Design Research with Survivors**

We started our primary research by doing individual survivor interviews and informal conversations where we heard that many struggle in their personal relationships. After initial conversations with survivors, we felt that participatory design research would be the best method moving forward because it would enable us to incorporate more trauma informed practices. We did not feel it was not right for people to share something so personal and for us to have to treat it as an interview. At the same time we are not therapists and know the boundaries of our work as designers. This led us to learn more about survivors' experience through a facilitation. We worked with the social workers who run survivor support groups at Day One, our community partner, to create

this facilitation. The facilitation started with a getting to know you activity, then we facilitated a social support mapping process based on Pod mapping where people can map out the close friends, as well as acquaintances and generally community that are there to support them. Pod mapping tool created by the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective for people who are experiencing intimate partner violence. We changed the activity a bit to be more focused on long term support and more general care needs . We then asked the follow-up questions to understand how the support they desire is different from the support they receive. Lastly we ended with an imagination activity asking participants to create something that would address the gap reflected on. We then shared together.

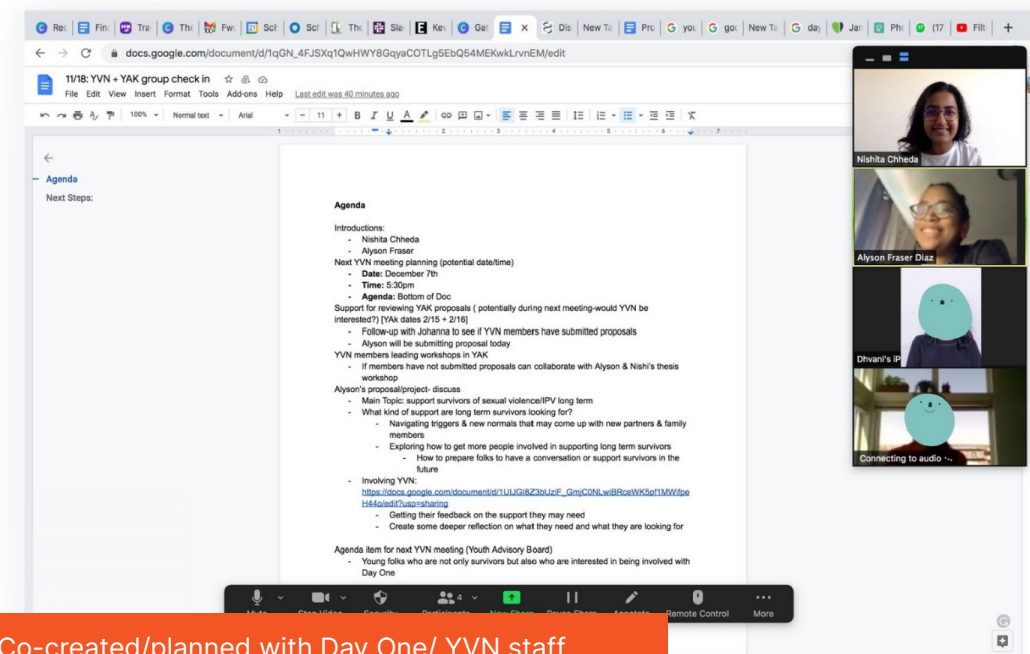




## What We Heard:

**“This made me realize there are a lot of people in my life I can turn to for support”**

**“I really opened up to my friend but her response made me question..is this person really even my friend?”**



Co-created/planned with Day One/ YVN staff

4. It is 2050. You are an inventor, and you have had all the resources to create anything you want. You have created something to help your friends and family support you better. What is this, draw anything that comes to your mind.. We purposely made this short we dont want you to over think it but think a need that you brought up in question three and what you think could solve that no matter how strange or imaginative. This will be a share out so be prepared to show the group.

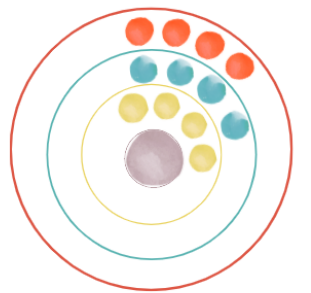


Imagination Activity: The Future of Support

## What We Learned

This workshop confirmed that survivors do desire support from friends and family and also want to be a good friend to the people in their lives. We learned that survivors desire reciprocal relationships with depth and honesty however frequently struggle with communication. Participants conveyed they wished their partner could know what they were thinking and when to leave them alone or that they wish they had a tool that could communicate for them. We also learned that times of disclosure are pivotal and if a friend or family member responds with judgment then that may cause a break in trust or even an end to the relationship.

### BUILDING A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM



#### DIRECTIONS

1. Draw a circle in the middle of the paper and put your name.
2. The yellow circles are your inner circle. They are the people you most often rely on for support.
3. The blue circles surrounding your inner circle are people that you could rely on for support, but need a little more work.
4. The red circles at the edge of the page are for networks, communities or groups that you are a part of.

Facilitated a version of pod mapping, a Transformative Justice practice originally conceived by the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective.

#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Looking at the people in your innermost yellow circle, what about them earns them the spot?
- Reflect on the sweet moments in this journey, when you felt supported? What did that look and feel like?
- What is missing in these relationships? What is it that you desire that you would want your support system to lend you?

Reflection questions after pod mapping as well as an opportunity to share whatever they chose from the reflections.



Loved ones  
understand in theory  
what it means to  
support...

**...yet find it  
difficult to apply  
in practice.**

### Supporting Survivors Workshop

Early in our conversations with our community partner considered how people could better support survivors and realized that problems arise as early as disclosure. When someone shares their experience and is met with a negative response, it can have a very negative impact. We wondered if that could be prevented and if early education (whether people know of a survivor in their life or not) would be helpful. Our community partner was really happy with the workshop we ran for survivors and asked us to facilitate a similar workshop at their annual conference. The conference is geared towards young people (aged 18-24) as well as guidance counselors, parents, and trusted adults.

We wanted to be understanding to the fact that there could be survivors as well as support people in attendance. We incorporated the pod mapping from our first facilitation as well as a few more activities to prompt reflection for how to be a good support person. The majority of education about how to support a survivor currently comes in the form of a do's and don'ts list. We wanted to explore how this could be more engaging and also practical so that when someone in their life did disclose, participants could remember what they learned. We chose to play a spoke word poem and have reflection questions to promote critical thinking and through storytelling.





**How might we prepare support people with more than a list of “do’s and dont’s”?**

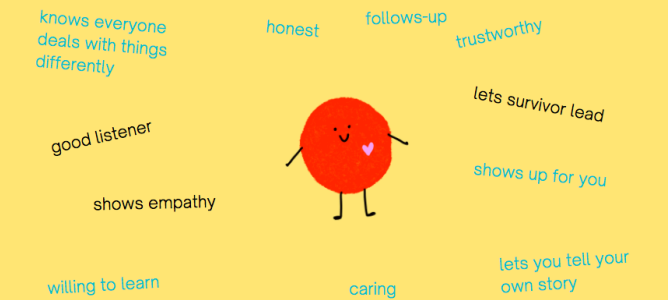


Opening activity was a spoken word poetry video where the two poets shared the other person's experience instead of their own. The moral was that allies have a role but it is not to take over someone else's experience"

**“Sometimes what you need isn’t what your friend needs”**

- Jen\* Participant

**QUALITIES OF A SUPPORT PERSON**



Activity where participants were able to add what they thought were qualities of a support person. Everything in blue was added by participants.

**REFLECTION PROMPT: 2 MINS**

What came up for you as it relates to supporting someone who has been through an experience that is different from your own?

Time for personal journaling and reflection

**YAK 2021 SCHEDULE**

- Welcome: 10:30-10:40am**
- Opening: 10:40-11am**
- Movement Exercises w/ Gibney Dance
- Workshop Slot 1: 11-11:45am**
- Say It Like You Mean It
- Resilience, Resistance, Healing,
- #CoupleGoals... Really?
- Seeing Through Sexism
- Break: 11:45am -12:45pm**
- Performances: 12:45-1pm**
- Workshop Slot 2: 1-1:45pm**
- Upstander through the screen
- "Read the Room"
- All About Allies
- Bought/Broken VR
- Workshop Slot 3: 1:45-2:30pm**
- Here to SLAY
- Supporting Survivors
- Racism, Family Violence, and Culture
- Liberating Gender
- Closing: 2:30-3pm**
- Manifestations of You

**What We Learned**

We were pleasantly surprised by the participants knowledge of how to be a good support person. Initially we were wondering if an approach that reached more broadly with public education would prepare people before someone disclosed. Through this workshop we realized that while building empathy and understanding are important life skills to be cultivated throughout life, people need more practical support throughout the process of supporting a survivor beyond disclosure. People understand in theory how to be supportive but there is often more that happens in the moment that may prevent them from responding in accordance with this knowledge.



**Survivors seek  
support from  
co-survivors and  
co-survivors  
desire to help...**

**...yet both need the  
tools to get there.**

### **Synthesis and Opportunity**

The premise of our work and our model of change is a positive reinforcing loop. By increasing support for co-survivors, they are better able to support survivors which lessens the burden survivors feel to heal alone and decreases the shame and stigma they encounter.

The less stigma they encounter, the more trust is built. With more trust, comes more open communication, enabling them to identify and communicate their needs, feelings and boundaries, leading to healthier and stronger

relationships with themselves and each other.

One healthy relationship can be a catalyst for the survivor to build more trusting and meaningful relationships with others, in turn reducing the burden on the co-survivor to be the sole support system for the co-survivor.

When both survivors and co-survivors feel less burdened, they are able to open up, learn and grow, while contributing to a safe and brave world.





**Co-survivors**

**Increasing support for co-survivors lessens the burden placed on survivors to heal alone and decreases the shame and stigma felt by them.**

**Survivors**



# To build healthy relationships

self-awareness

communication

**Survivor**

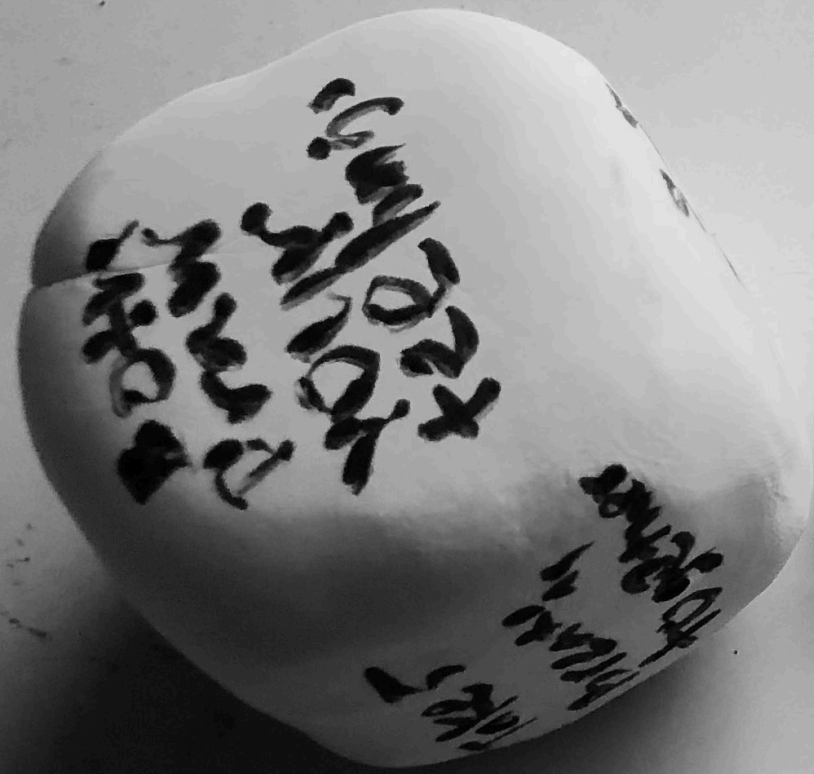
**Co-survivor**

trauma education

understanding  
their role







I AM  
surrounded  
by love

I AM  
whole  
I AM  
healing

INDIVIDUAL  
REFLECTION

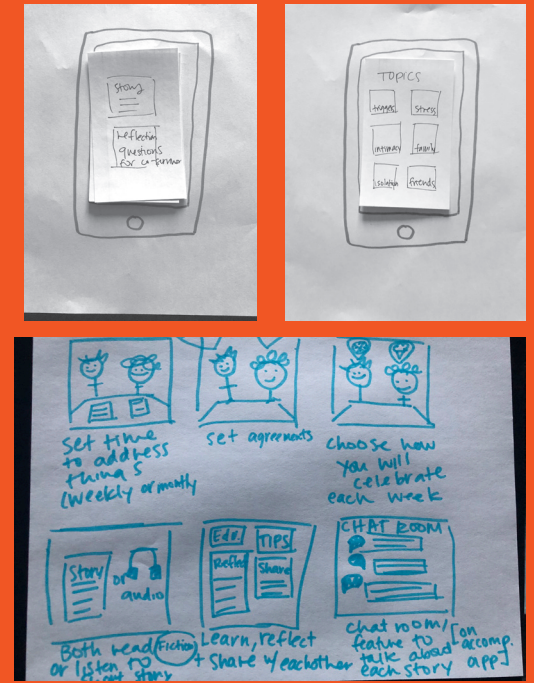
# 04. MAKING PHASE



# EARLY CONCEPTS

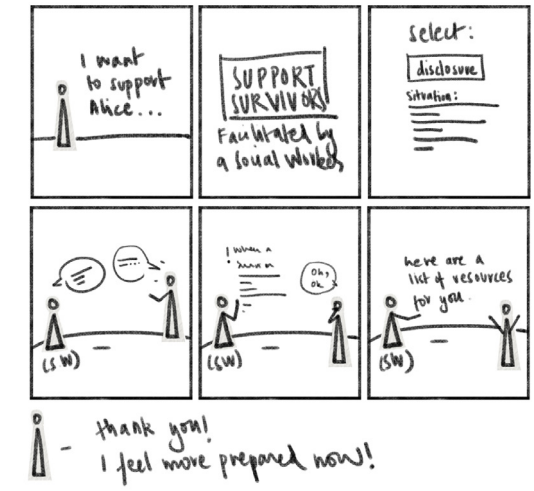
## Concept 1: Empathy through Stories

The first concept leverages storytelling to build self-reflection for the survivors and empathy for co-survivors. This could take both digital and physical forms where we touch upon the nuances of this relationship such as shame, grounding, and stigma. Storytelling is a great way to identify feelings, build self awareness, and provide a safe distance for survivors/co-survivors to reflect.



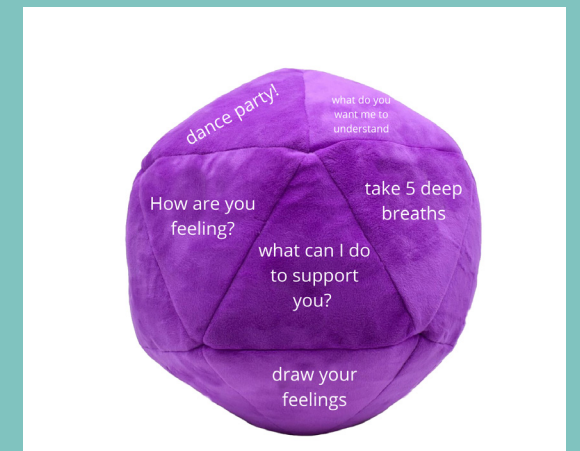
## Concept 2: Role Play for Preparation

The second is a series of workshops where we would prepare people who currently support or want to support survivors. We will help them practice having uncomfortable conversations through role-playing.



## Concept 3: Sharing Needs

The third is a sensory tool for communication that can be used by both survivors and co-survivors to ground them in tough conversations, inspire curiosity about the other person's feelings, and prompt open communication. Partners would toss the ball and do the activity together or ask their partner the question as a starting point.





# DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**01.**

Ensure a variety of support is available and accessed, both formal and informal.

**02.**

Create a holistic model including individual, communal and working alongside someone with formal experience.

**03.**

Design moments for survivor of both connection to self and togetherness with the co survivor.

**04.**

Ensure participants have flexibility and autonomy to go at their own pace.

**05.**

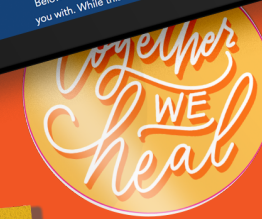
Build and foster a sense of self awareness and safety before they come together.

**06.**

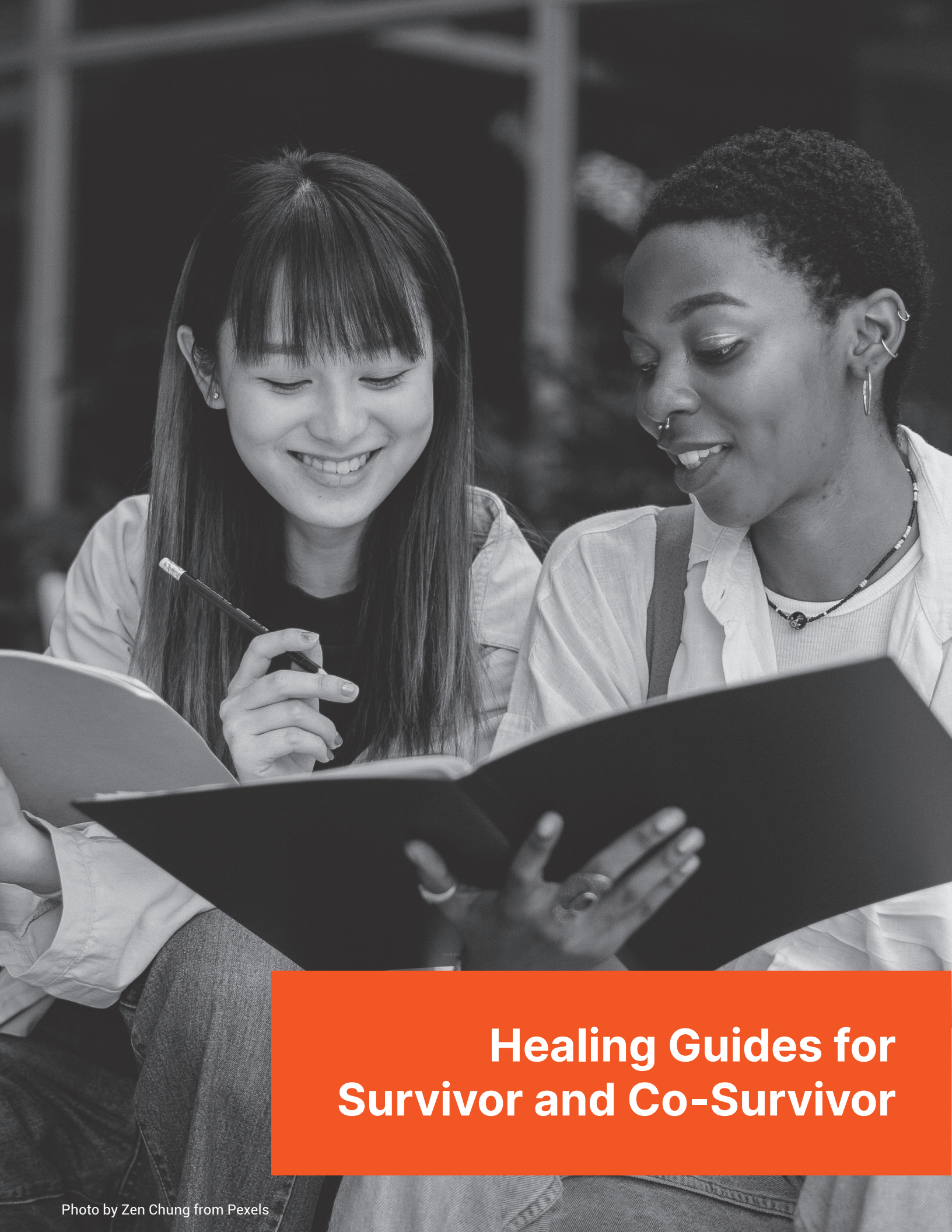
Create moments of education and of joy!



# FINAL INTERVENTIONS







## Healing Guides for Survivor and Co-Survivor

Photo by Zen Chung from Pexels



### Side by Side Healing Guides

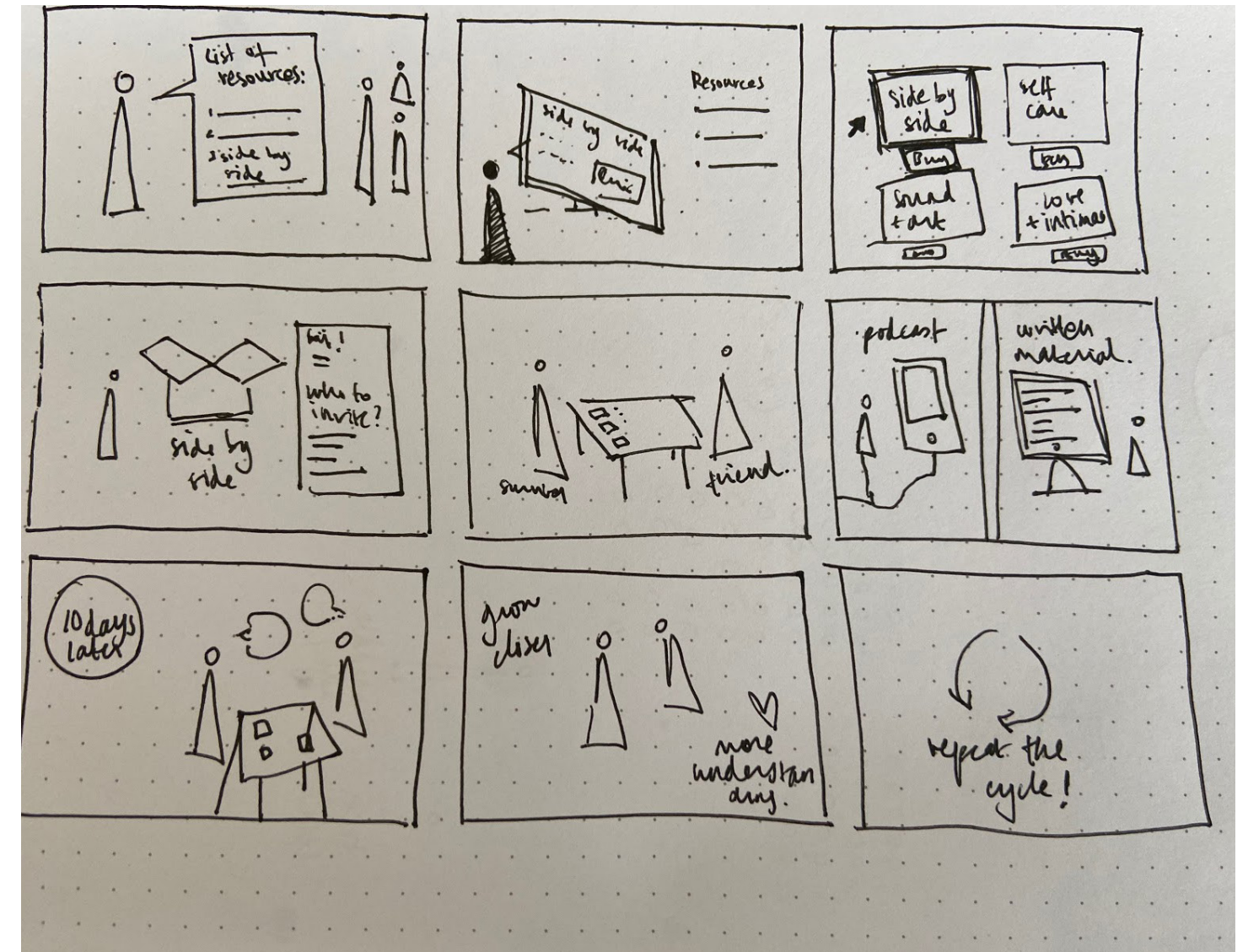
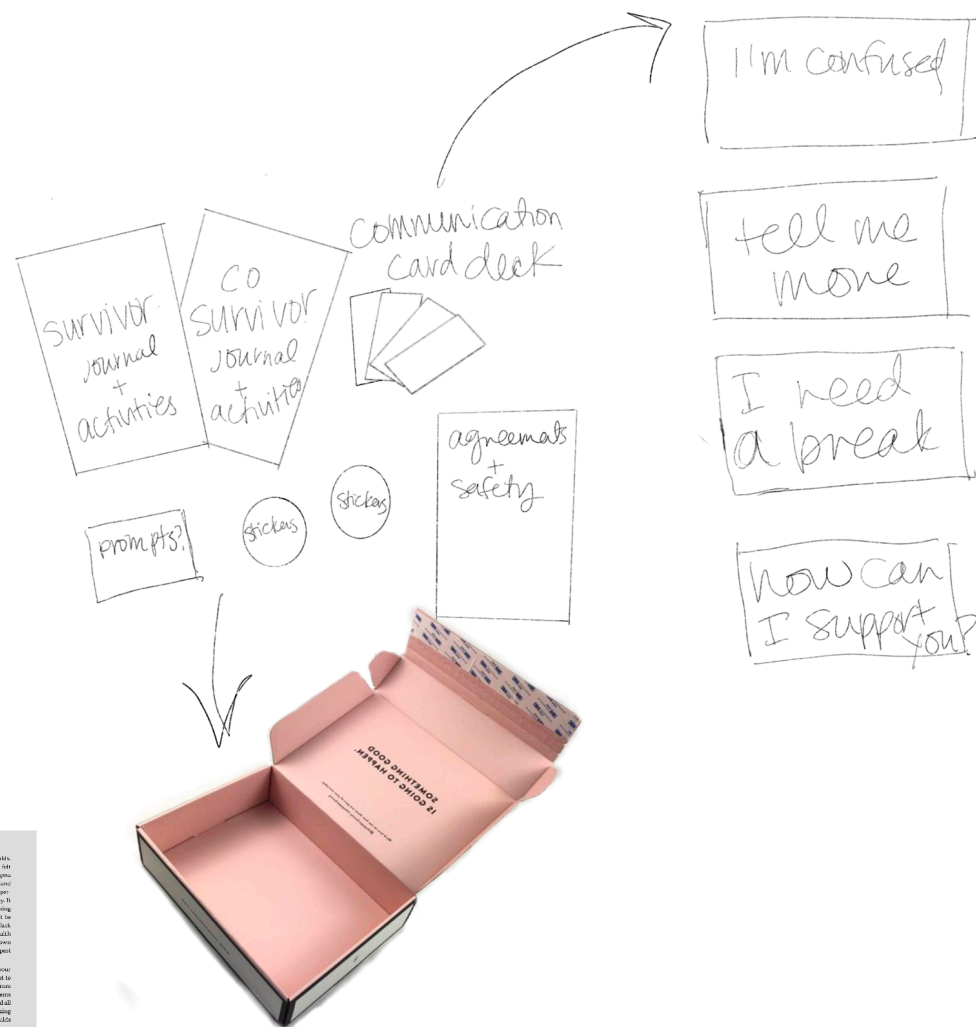
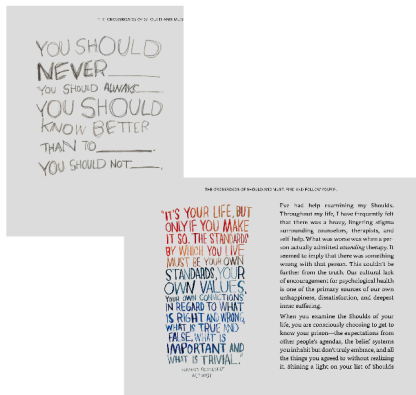
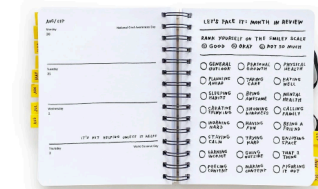
To address our last insight on the need for both survivors and co-survivors to do individual self work before they come together, the first piece of our intervention are healing guides that we co-created with our community partner as well as survivors and co-survivors.

At some point in their healing, it is essential for survivors to gain skills to communicate the full extent of their experience. Often their story has become a rote narrative over time, edited into the form least likely to provoke rejection. The experiences of co-survivors are unique and complex too. Many co-survivors

go through secondary harm, however their experiences are not acknowledged and taken into account, leading them to neglect their own healing journey.

Research suggests that through the creative arts, through talking, writing, art, music, dance, and other forms of self-expression, people can begin to tell the real story. That also may be one reason these art forms have been practiced in cultures around the world for millennia, helping individuals and communities come to terms with what has happened to them.





## How it Began: Prototype 1

From our original concepting we came up with our first prototype. We hoped to create a box of items a survivor and co-survivor could get with a journal and a set of activities they would do together. We created a storyboard for how it would go and below is the explanation.

We need to use both, physical and digital mediums in an integrated manner, to our advantage.

Through our intervention, we want to address the specific need within relationship building, around healthy communication while redirecting them to existing resources on education.

1. Survivor is getting support from a formal setting and post 12 weeks, the Circle keeper/community worker gives resources to survivors to help in their long term healing journey.
2. Survivor checks out side by side and is ready to get more people involved in this process.
3. They invite a friend.
4. They go through the process - the value and intention setting, individual learning and reflection & repeat.
5. They grow closer and continue to nurture their communication.



Hi!

We are so excited to start reading with y'all! Along with the book, we wanted to share some reflections and small activities.

Some are for us to do together and some for us to do individually. Feel free to go through them and do what feels right for you!

- What's in this guide:
1. My care plan
  2. A reflection prompt
  3. My care circle
  4. Body scan

*2. Reflection*

Go back to the pages you've marked and choose a poem or two that resonated most with you.

Use this space to reflect on the poem. You can free write, draw, doodle, reflect in any way that makes sense to you :) While you are reflecting, think about what stood out to you?

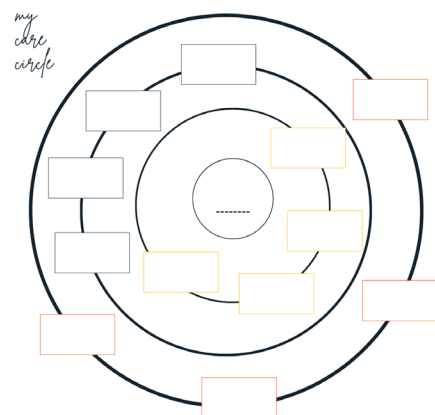
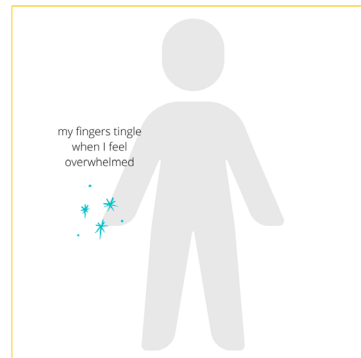


*Body Scan (for when we meet)*

Often when we feel intense emotions, it shows up in our body. Sometimes these are connections we are more aware of such as racing heartbeats and sweaty hands, and other times, these are signs that we don't know are connected like knots in our stomach or headaches.

Paying attention to our bodies can help us feel more empowered to care for our own needs and share what we are feeling.

In the coming week, try to be conscious of how strong feelings show up in your body. Draw what the feeling feels like to you and mark where it shows up. See example below then complete your own on the next page.



*Guide (for when we meet)*

1. Draw the black circles on a piece of paper and write your name in the center. Then add colored circles and names according to the color. (See next page for example)
2. The yellow circles are your inner circle. They are the people you most often rely on for support.
3. The blue circles are people that you could rely on for support, but aren't your first go-to people
4. The red circles at the edge of the page are for networks, communities or groups that you are a part of.
5. Add one trusted adult in any circle, if you don't know what to do- you can reach out to them for support.

*1. My Care Plan*

Think about the things that bring you calm, joy, and ease. List as many things as you can below. Think about both, things that are easily accessible to you at any time in the day (ex: eating a chocolate) and things that may require some more planning (ex: going for a hike)



*1.5 My Care Plan*

Look back at your list and circle your top five things.

Next, order them into a self care plan so that it is easy to know how to care for yourself when strong feelings arise. We suggest starting with something small and easily accessible!

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

## Co-Creating with an Expert

We wanted to make sure our work was trauma informed and appropriate for our population so we connected with Day One about the possibility of creating a journal. She connected us to the Director of Programs who would know more about the needs of her participants. It turns out that she is actually an expert at creating journals! She worked with youth to make Journals in the past and wanted to partner with us more deeply outside of her professional role at Day One. Our collaboration with Joanna helped us to build a set of parameters that we needed to consider before designing, such as the frequency, interactivity and length of our healing guides. We then collaborated with survivors and co-survivors to develop a framework and create prompts and activities that reflected their needs and desires. We considered creating it be double sided; one side for independent journaling and one side with collaborative activities.

| fx                             |  | THEME   |   |   |  |   |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|---|
| A                              | B  | C   | D | E   | F  | G   |
| Identifying feelings and needs | When you know you need to have a difficult conversation what feelings do you experience?<br>In that moment, how do you see yourself responding - fight, flight, freeze?<br>When overwhelmed, we cant take any info in or process it properly - what do you need to feel better?<br>Where do you feel which feeling?<br>What do you need to feel like a relationship is balanced and reciprocal?<br>When you know you need to have a difficult conversation what feelings do you experience?<br>Write down one of the self destructive ways you deal with your trauma. Ask yourself if you're ready to give this up. What will you replace this habit with? | Draw out your feelings - choose a shape, color, texture<br>Body scan<br>Self care plan                                    |   | What does your loved one need when they are feeling overwhelmed? If you're not sure, ask them   |  | Part of knowing each other's inner world is understanding what your partner needs when they are flooded?<br>The Gottman Institute |
| Triggers                       | List down all known triggers to you.   | List making - known triggers, this is a journey, keep notes of things that are triggering that I did not know were before |   | As secondary victims, this may affect you adversely as well. How does having conversations around your loved ones trauma impact you?<br>What are some of your triggers?<br>What are my loved ones triggers?<br>How am I supporting my loved one when they feel triggered?<br>How can I support my loved one's triggers during conflict? | List making - known triggers, this is a journey, add to this list as you become aware of new triggers* | How can we support each other's triggers during conflict?<br>Develop communication rituals around triggers as they arise.         |
| Trauma 101                     | basic trauma info - ed - long term impact of trauma, consequences  |   |   | basic trauma info - ed - long term impact of trauma, consequences, secondary impact of trauma - loved ones as secondary victims   |  |   |
| Trust                          | How do you want to be more courageous?<br>Who are some people that you trust- why do you trust them?   |   |   |   |  |   |
| Safety                         | what does safety mean to you?<br>5 senses - safety<br>what are some things that give you a sense of feeling unsafe?<br>what communications (verbal + physical) feel safest to you? How do I want my loved one to know?<br>how does your loved one make you feel safe?<br>what is your perception about asking for support? what has influenced this idea?  |   |   | what are some things that may not seem like a big deal to you but are - eg: a hug?  |  | communicate safe communication<br>make a safety plan  |

## Journal First Draft

The first draft of our journal was more of a workbook created for our book brunch members. (See next section for more on book brunch.) We began with the activities we created with Day One Social workers for our Participatory design workshop. Everyone gave us such good feedback and hoped we would make it available for more people so we knew we wanted to include it. We also wanted to make sure that before talking about past experiences, people would be equipped with a self care plan. We added an activity to improve self awareness around how emotions show up in the body as well as an activity to make a self care plan.





## Co-Creating with Survivors and Co-Survivors

Co-creating with our community was as important to us as it was to collaborate with an expert. So having learned about the benefits of journaling and about creating a structure, we proceeded to collaborate with survivors and co-survivors to develop a framework and create prompts and activities that reflected their needs and desires. Once we had a drafted list of questions as a foundation, we shared the document with survivors to get their feedback. We left a note for them at the top and created a document for each person to reflect on and add feedback. They also added some new questions they were reflected on. We did the same with a set of questions for co-survivors.

go deeper, maybe like what does being a secondary survivor mean to you? who do you want to be as a co-survivor?

**Add:** "// Slight reframe: List some of the ways you deal with trauma. Thank all of them for serving their p..."

1:36 PM Mar 23

Want to ensure there isnt self-shaming here

Hi Catherine!!!  
Thank you for collaborating on this journal with us and being part of this journey!  
Please **Highlight in yellow the questions you like** **Highlight in blue any questions you don't understand** **Highlight in Orange any questions you don't like or would not want to journal about.**  
Please feel free to add any prompts that you wish you had/ are currently reflecting on!

**What is your intention for this journey?**

**Where you want to grow - relationship with myself, relationship with my loved one**

Take out your notebook and **lovingly write the reason(s) why you are committing to this journal** and what you hope to gain from it.

**Draw your life as a garden - what season are you in now? which season is your favourite, how rooted do you feel, what needs more sunshine, notice your buds (growth), what are some weeds that you do away with, where have you grown, where do you want to grow more?**

Write a letter to your younger self- first though, **picture yourself at a certain age** and allow yourself to feel compassion for **little** you before writing the letter.

**Do you identify as a survivor, why or why not?**

**Pod** mapping- mapping out who you have in your **circle of support**

Creating a self care plan

These different types of relationships have been really important for me to think about, especially because they all function differently. I'm also wondering if there's another version of the question that is more about "people who know" and "people who don't know" not the greatest phrasing, but for me that's been something I've battled with.. How do I grow and even maintain relationships with people I don't want to share this with? Especially if the trauma is a reason why certain people were pushed away...

## Co-Creating Together

**"Things will come out that you didn't even know were there. The inner critic quiets down as words spill out onto the page, as the pen or keyboard seems to channel whatever bubbles up from inside. Through writing, we can connect parts of the brain that don't normally speak to each other, without worrying about what anyone will say."**

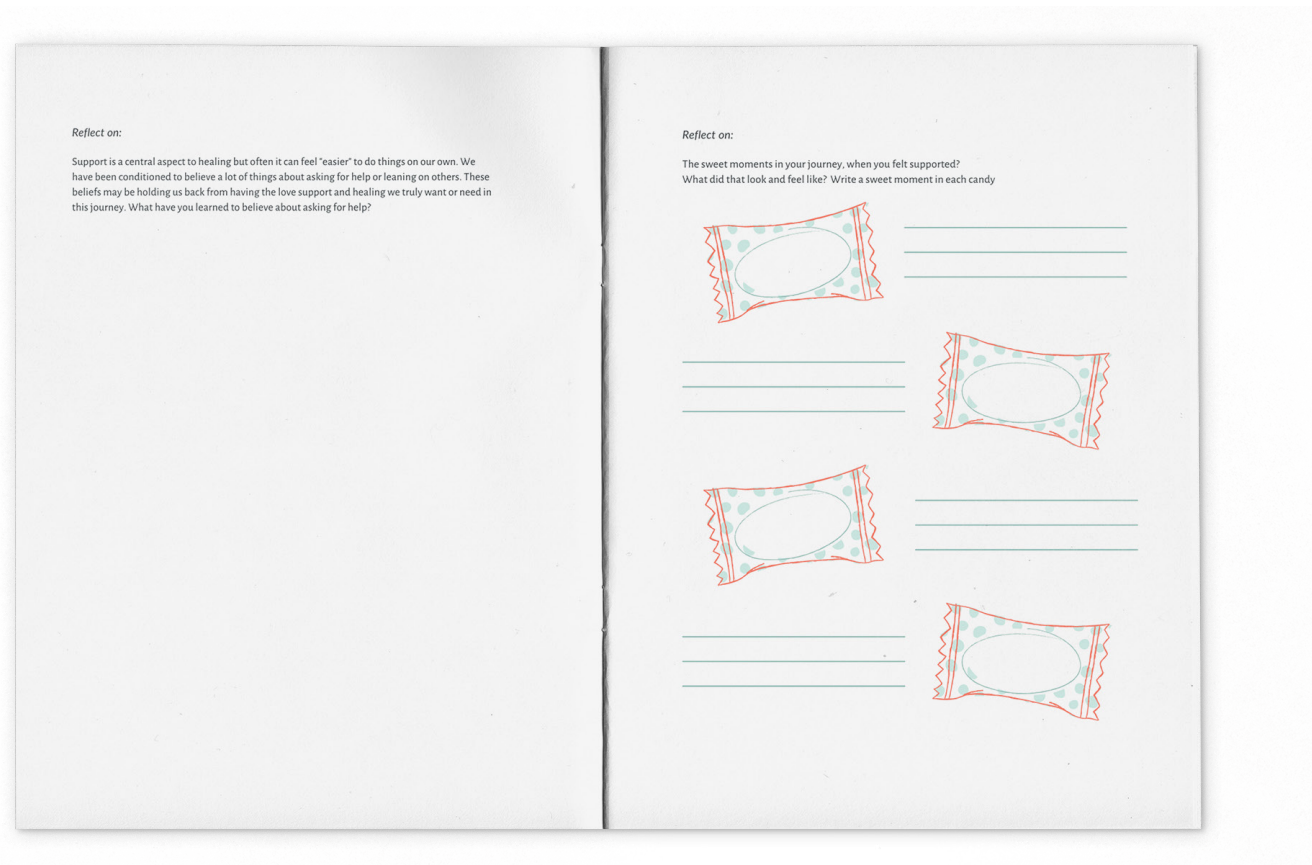
Bessel van der Kolk, MD., Body Keeps the Score

## Journal Final Draft

From their feedback and a few more meetings with survivors and co-survivors we realized that this was a massive undertaking. We scaled down to focus on one topic area with the intention of continuing to build out the full journal in the future. We made the framework for the full journals and then decided to focus on the section that most directly relates to social support.



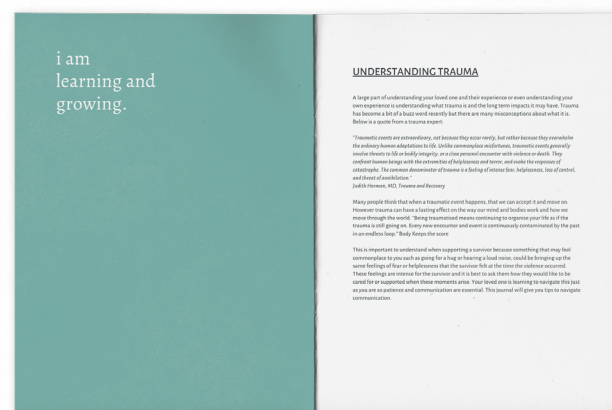




## Two Complimentary Guides

Our healing guides help survivors and co-survivors acknowledge the reality of their experiences and then gain the necessary tools to communicate the same with each other and the people in their lives. For the survivor, this guide focuses on self empowerment and how their past connects to their present.

The co-survivor guide is more focused on education around trauma and support, as well as understanding the boundaries of their role as a loving supportive presence and not a therapist. The healing guide uses creative journaling and educational activities as a tool for healing and reflection, allowing people to process without worrying what another person might say.



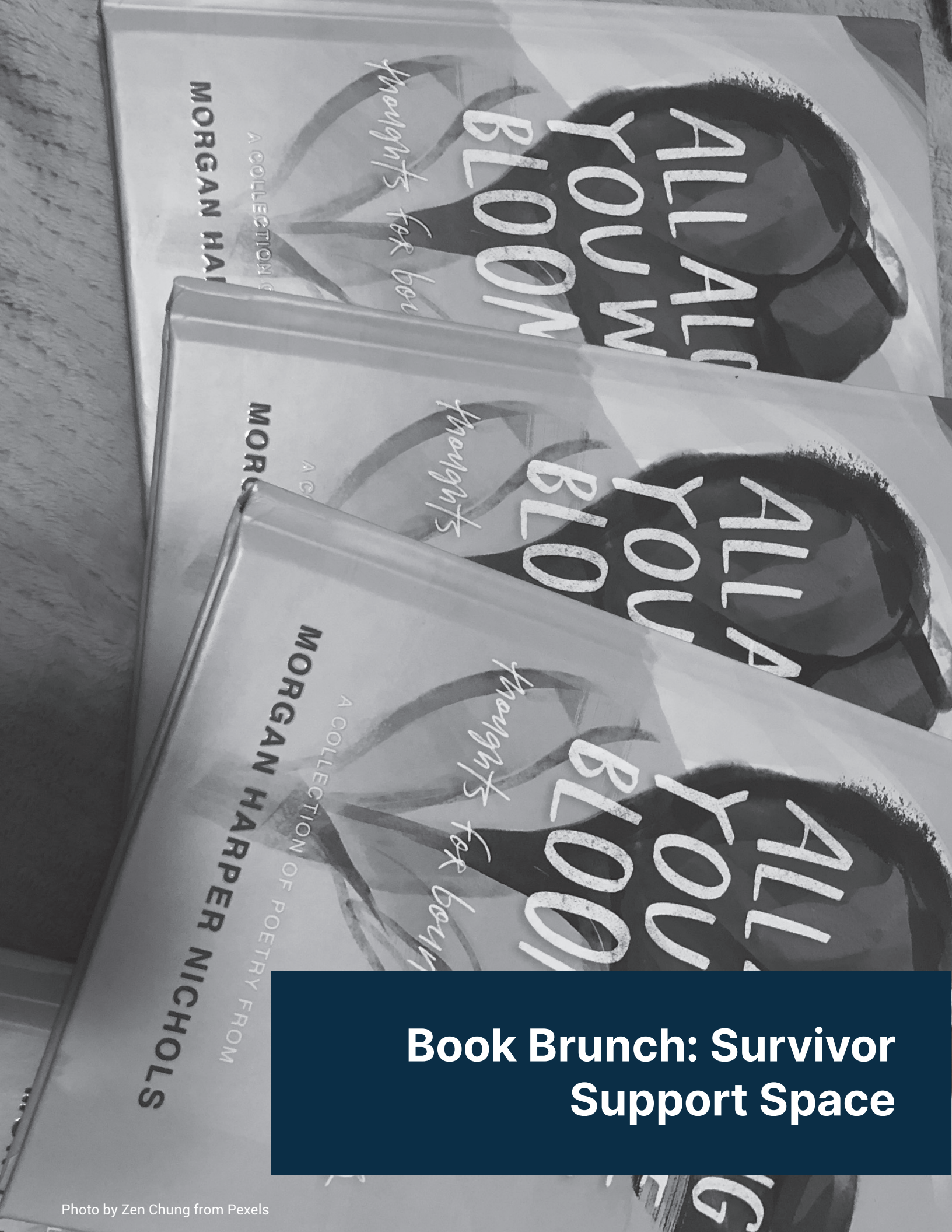
## Way Forward

Our path to sustainability is for the guide to be a published book. We believe this is also the way to make this more accessible and are currently looking into both self publishing and independent publishing. Until now, we have had an initial discussion with Homie House Press and attended a workshop titled 'Pitch Your Passion' by Wise Ink to learn more about how to contextualizes our idea within a larger movement, and pitch it to publication houses.

## Benefits

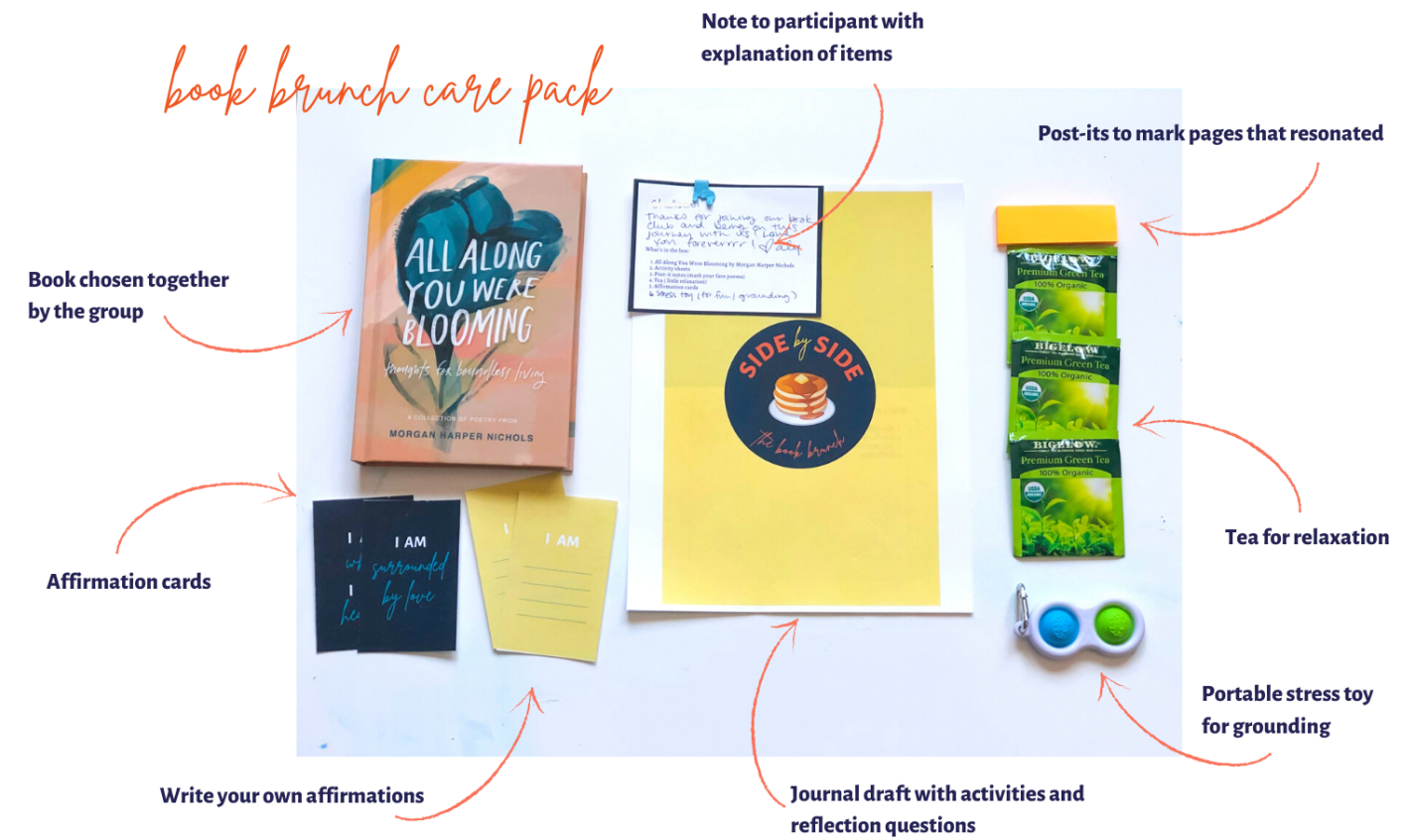
1. The guide allows the survivor and co survivor to take ownership of their own healing and the work that needs to be done individually.
2. Builds vocabulary to better communicate personal experiences.
3. Creates a trusted space where both parties can grow and learn together in a facilitated way.
4. It is flexible and accessible to people regardless of where they are in their healing journey.





# Book Brunch: Survivor Support Space

*book brunch care pack*



Book chosen together by the group

Affirmation cards

Write your own affirmations

Note to participant with explanation of items

Post-its to mark pages that resonated

Tea for relaxation

Portable stress toy for grounding

Journal draft with activities and reflection questions

## Book Brunch

In alignment with our principles, we felt that the traditional design process of prototyping and testing was not trauma informed and went against our intuition. So, in order to get feedback on our healing guides, we invited a small group of survivors to participate in a gathering. Our intention with the first gathering was for everyone to get to know each other and to co-create the form it would take moving forward. The experience was really warm and fun and together we co-created a book brunch where survivors could be in community with each other, while reading and reflecting.

It was also important for us to facilitate feelings of being in a community, create

opportunities for dialogue, and provide and get feedback on reflection tools that we had begun to design. So, in order to create an experience around the book and community, we sent the selected book, our reflection journal, and also included some fun things like tea, a stress toy, and affirmation cards.

We also wanted to make sure that these relationships could go beyond our designated meetings so we created an imessage group for everyone to stay connected and talk as we read.

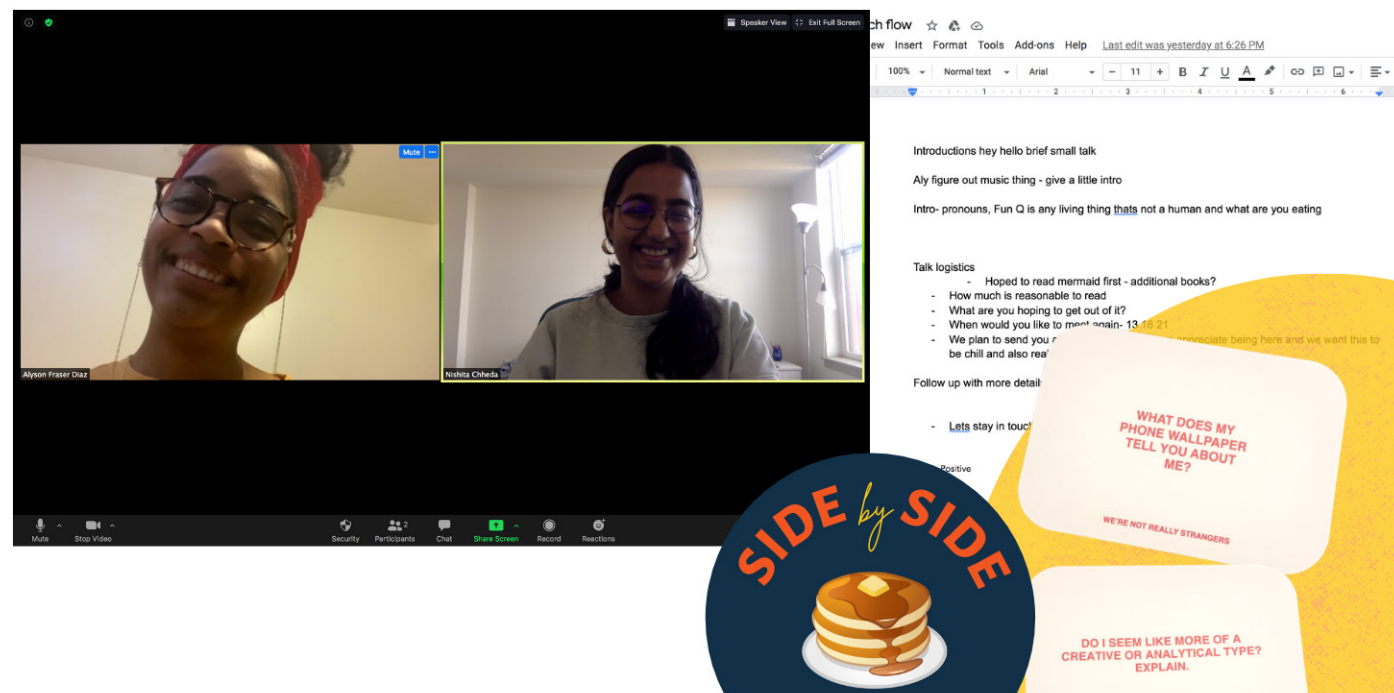




Early on in our research, we learned about the benefits of a support group from a trauma-informed therapist:

“I think support groups for anything that we think of as being shameful or that society has taught us to attach shame to, are huge because the support groups essentially mean there’s more than one person in the room who’s had a certain kind of experience, and well obviously they’re all going to be different. To be able to say, oh, that person also has that experience, that person also feels a shame, that person also feels like it was their fault, that already starts to dismantle some of the shame. In my experience, I’ve seen that three sessions of a group of survivors has done more loosening and softening in a person than a year of individual therapy.”

-Hala Alyan

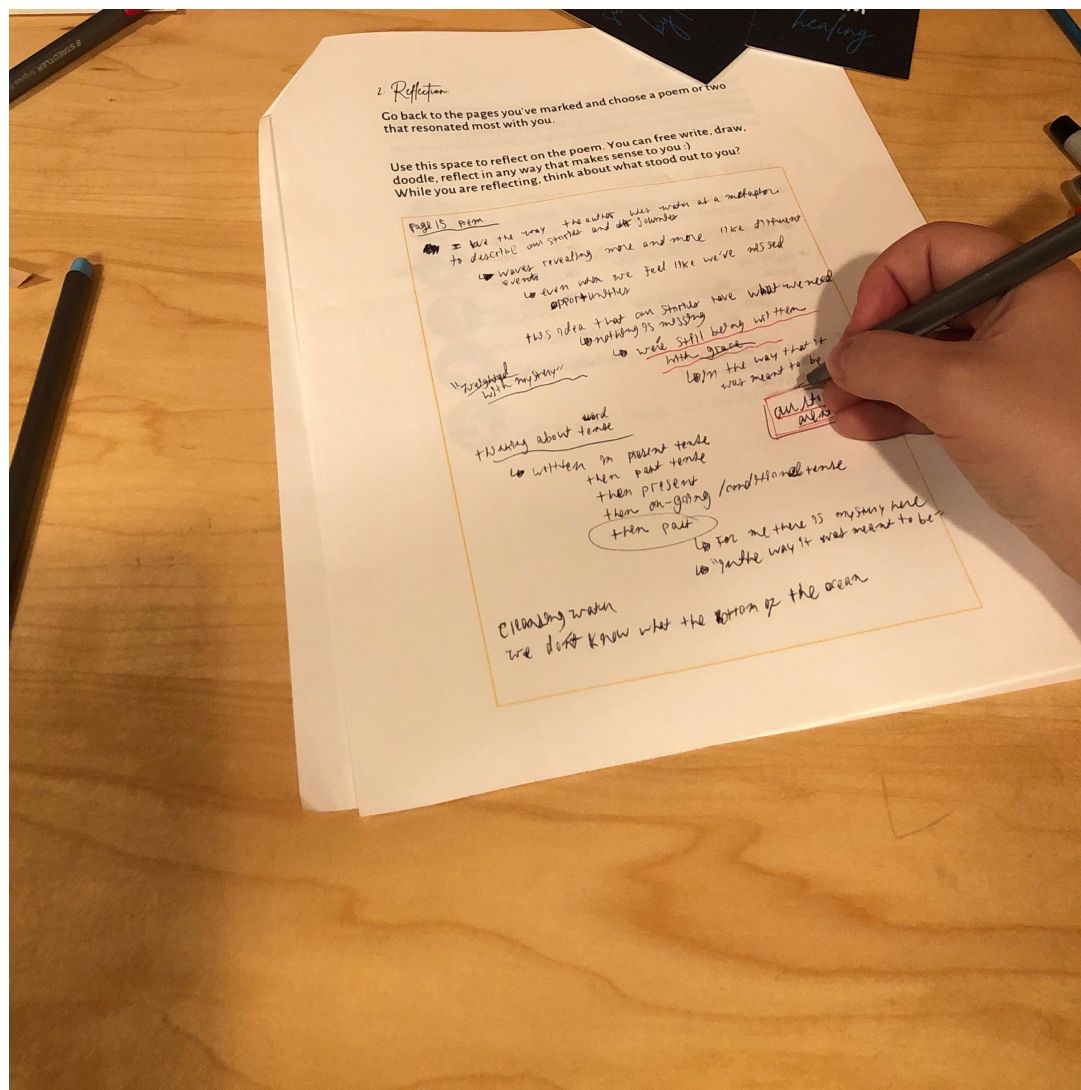
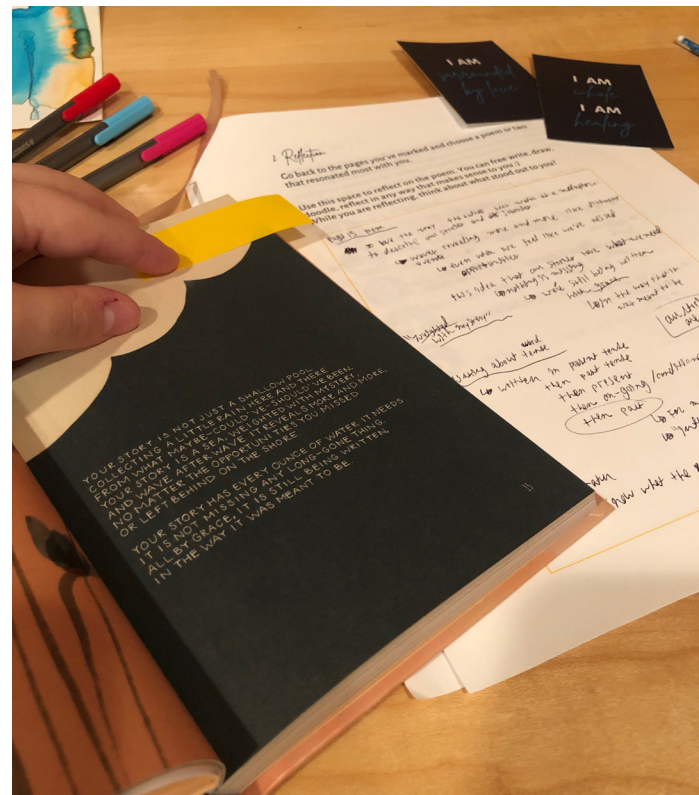


## Benefits

1. Being in a space with other survivors can be extremely beneficial in building confidence in sharing.
2. Creates feelings of validation and fosters belong while learning from one another.
3. Builds capacity for self reflection without judgement.

# Trauma Informed Virtual Space





## Book Brunch Photos

## Feedback

“

It was so nice to have community in this isolating time, and especially to have a safe and open sense in it, where people were accepted as they were and their strengths and triumphs were celebrated. And that there wasn't pressure to be anyone you weren't or share anything you didn't want to.

“

I've never had the opportunity to really gather with other people with similar trauma for a healing journey, so that's been really special for me. The time we've spent together has been an incredible reminder that I am surrounded by love. These gatherings have almost given me the permission I thought I needed to feel the love that is around me.

“

The activities and strategies I've learned have enabled me to engage in deep reflection regarding how I really feel and what I really need while I'm on this healing journey. Our time together has given me space to grow and has given me language to better express myself and talk about my experience with myself and others. Thank you for all your work. I can't wait to continue this journey with you all. I feel like I've gained support and love that I didn't imagine at the start of these gatherings.

“

The work that you're doing is so needed. For years I thought that working through and interrogating my experiences (positive and traumatic), feelings, and needs wasn't worth while work, and that I didn't have time for it, because I had better things to do with my time.





### Side By Side Brunch

Hello friends! We are so grateful for the time that we have spent together so far and cannot wait to see how we can shape it moving forward. This is a short survey on understanding more about your experience so far so that we can better understand what has worked for each one of us better!

For the following questions, rank how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. 1 is strongly disagree 5 is strongly agree.

Description (optional)

"I have more tools to support me on my healing journey." \*

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly Agree

"I am better able to reflect on how my past experience is impacting me today." \*

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly Agree

"I feel comfortable sharing in a group setting." \*

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly Agree

"I am better able to manage my emotions and practice self care." \*

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    Strongly Agree

How was your experience being part of the book brunch? Did you gain anything from this experience, if so, please share below. \*

Long answer text

Would you change anything about the experience? If so please share below:

Long answer text

Anything else you want to add :)

Long answer text

# 100%

of participants strongly agree that they feel better able to reflect on how their past experience is impacting them today

# 100%

of participants strongly agree that they feel better able to reflect on how their past experience is impacting them today

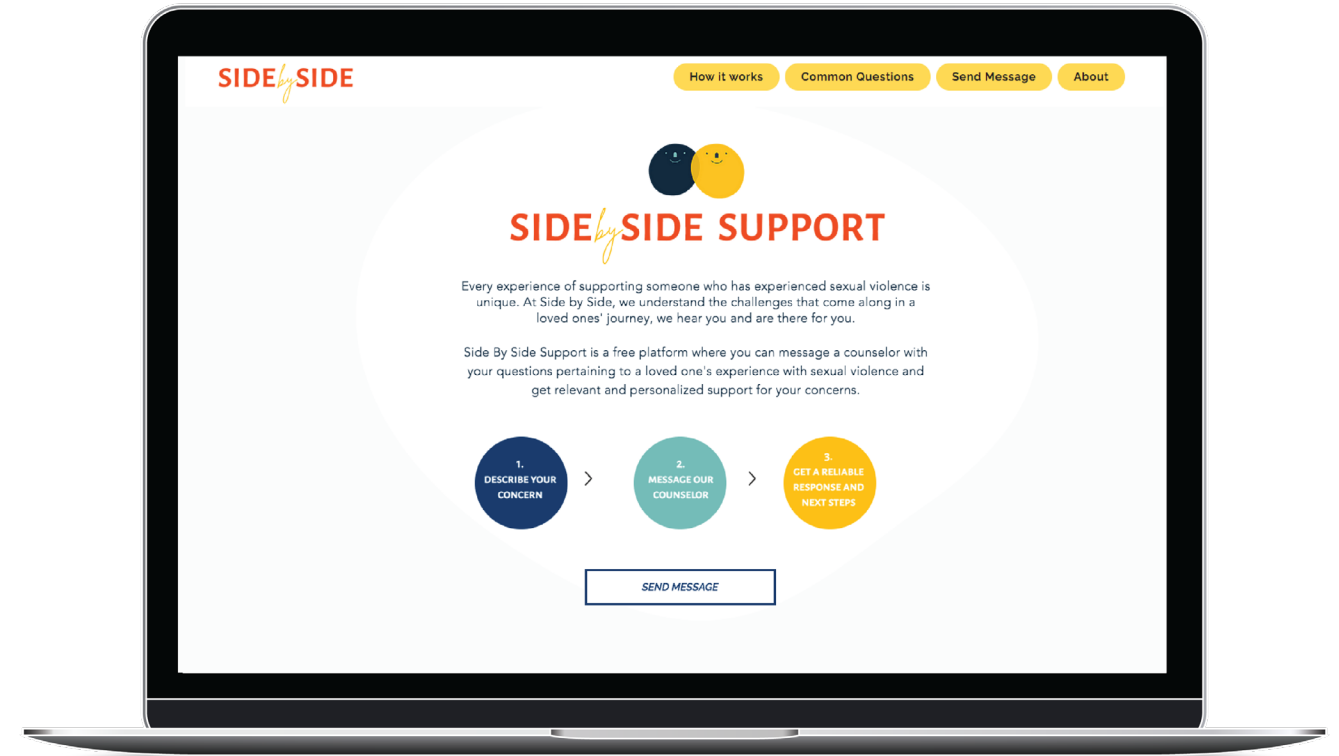
# 100%

of participants strongly agree that they feel better able to manage their emotions and practice self care





## Side by Side Support Platform



### Side by Side Support Platform

During our initial research phase, we attended a 12 week healing circle at Hidden Water, NYC. Along with a survivor circle, they also facilitate circles for co-survivors, where we connected with a participant who said that though the 12 weeks of support were helpful, he desired a more sustainable support model where he could get continuous support as and when things arise and have a space where he could be in community with other co-survivors.

We also learned from survivors and experts that one of the biggest reasons behind negative and judgmental feedback from co-survivors came from their lack of understanding of trauma and their role in the system of support.

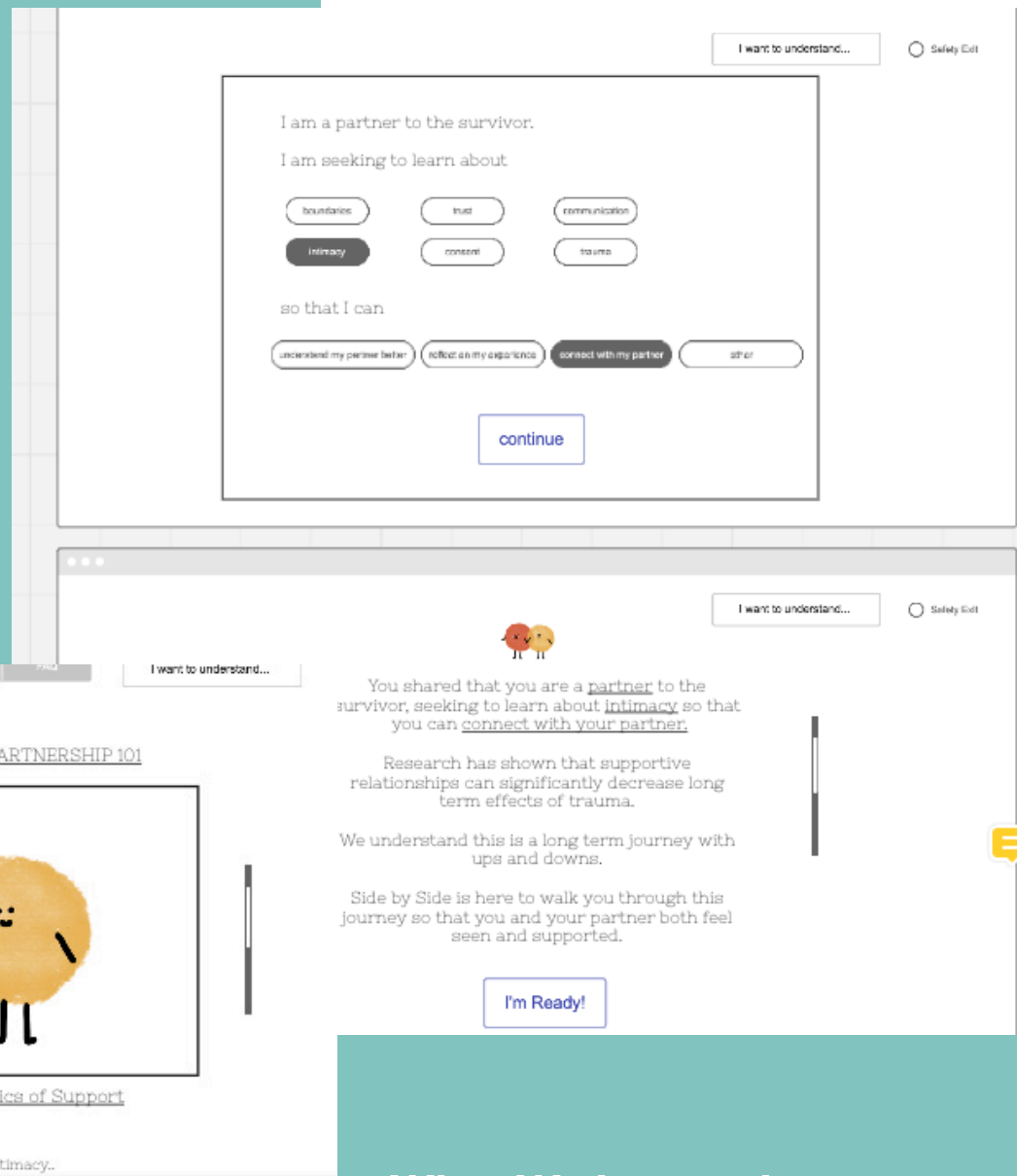
This gap was validated in our research with co-survivors. We also learned that they desired a space for their questions to be answered and a space where they could find community. Taking this feedback from our community, we created a digital resource platform called Side by Side Support where co-survivors could send a message to a trauma therapist, receive a response with additional resources and also learn from the experiences of other co-survivors.



## What We Did

We originally wanted to create an educational platform so people could learn about trauma and support in a more engaging way.

## Prototype 1: Educational Platform



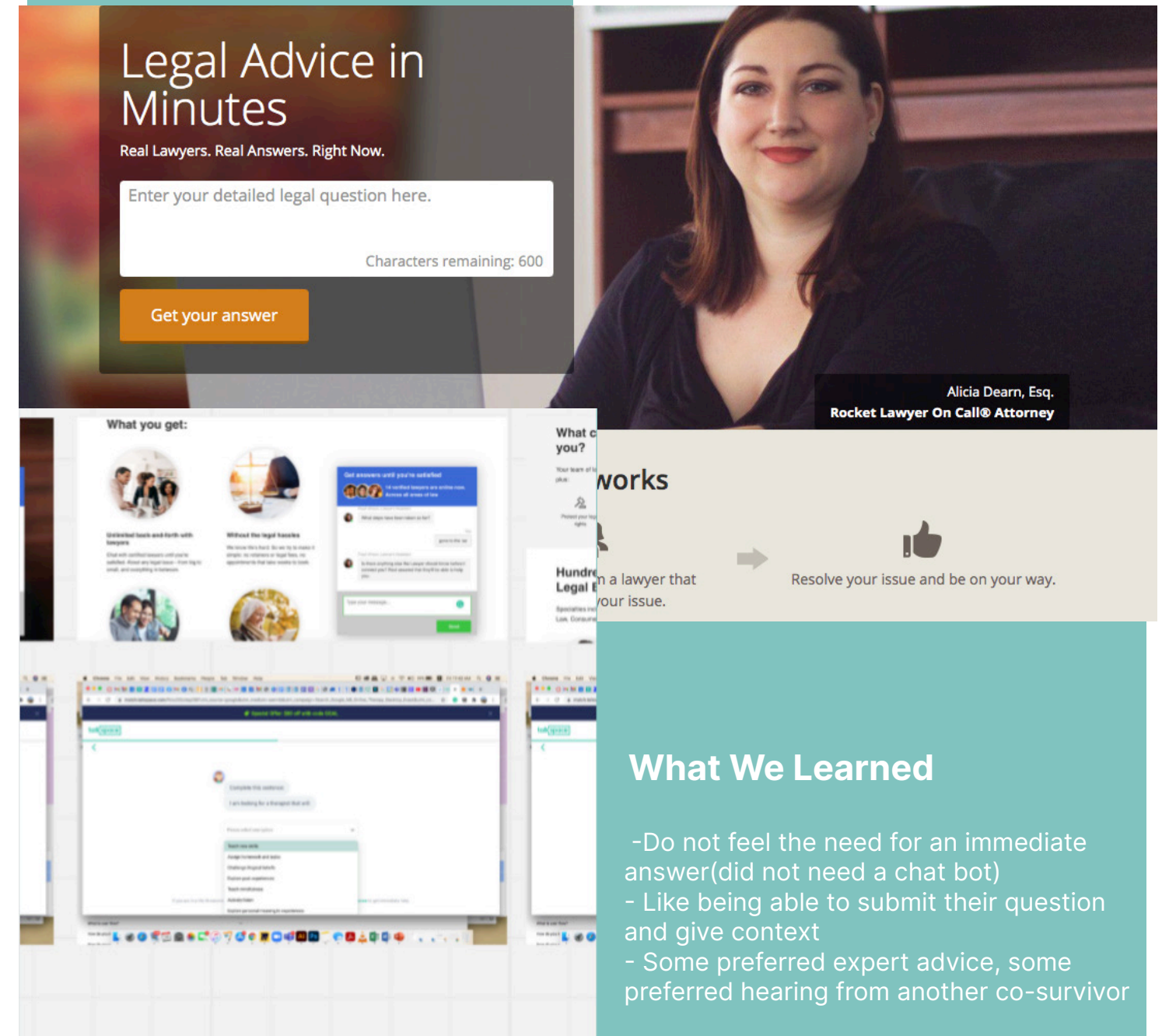
## What We Learned

- People found it overwhelming
- Just wanted the answers to their questions
- Very low understanding of trauma language

## What We Did

- Researched different question and answer vs chat formats
- -Got feedback from Co-survivors about what format works best and if they needed an immediate answer

## Prototype 2: Answer to Questions



## What We Learned

- Do not feel the need for an immediate answer (did not need a chat bot)
- Like being able to submit their question and give context
- Some preferred expert advice, some preferred hearing from another co-survivor



## What We Did

We spoke with the Trauma Life Coach that we know to hear from their perspective about a platform like this. They have experience running a suicide hotline and also being a trauma life coach.

## Co-Creating with Trauma Specialist

## Final Side by Side Platform

**SIDE by SIDE**

FINDING SUPPORT



Every experience supporting someone who has experienced sexual violence is unique. Get relevant and personalized support for your concerns.

SEARCH

ASK

JOIN

SHARE YOUR CONCERN WITH A QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL

what is your preferred name?

what are your preferred pronouns?

how would you like us to respond to you?

share your question here:

SUBMIT

## What We Learned

- People found it overwhelming
- Just wanted the answers to their questions
- Very low understanding of trauma language

IDE by SIDE

How it works

Common Questions

Send Message

About

## SIDE by SIDE SUPPORT

Every experience of supporting someone who has experienced sexual violence is unique. At Side by Side, we understand the challenges that come along in a loved ones' journey, we hear you and are there for you.

Side By Side Support is a free platform where you can message a counselor with your questions pertaining to a loved one's experience with sexual violence and get relevant and personalized support for your concerns.

1. DESCRIBE YOUR CONCERN

2. MESSAGE OUR COUNSELOR

3. GET A RELIABLE RESPONSE AND NEXT STEPS

SEND MESSAGE

## SEND A MESSAGE

Preferred Name/Screen Name \*

Ex. Jonah or JJ45

Preferred Pronouns (she/he/they/ze/etc.) \*

(Ex. he/he/they/ze/etc.)

How would you like your response delivered? Enter your email id/phone number

My relationship to the survivor

- Friend
- Romantic Partner
- Family
- Ally
- Other

I need support with my relationship

Tell us more about your question or concern

All Posts Boundaries Understanding Sexual Assault Support Self Care

I did not respond well when my friend shared their experience. How do I fix this?

I don't want to make this about me but my friend being assaulted is so upsetting

Are nightmares normal? I'm worried about my partner

Is it okay to bring up my friend's assault in conversation?

News stories about offenders upset my sister. What do I say?

Hearing the details of my friend's abuse is stressful but I want to be supportive

Discussing Intimacy with a Partner

Updated April 2020

How can we talk about intimacy without pressure?

Question: My partner and I have been dating for almost a year now but we do not have the level of intimacy I would like. I know they are a survivor so I don't want to push the issue but it has started to get a bit frustrating for me. I don't want to bring it up because it always turns into a fight. How can I approach the topic without coming across like I am pressuring them?

Hi Rob thanks so much for reaching out to us. I'm Rita, a trauma expert who will be speaking with you today. Intimacy can cause a lot of confusion for loved ones as well as survivors. I would love to share a few tools and tips for how you can approach the topic with your partner. The impacts of sexual abuse can be extremely difficult to understand if you haven't experienced the abuse yourself, low libido is one impact common for survivors because they often do not want to revisit activities that remind them of the traumatic event. It may be helpful to do an activity called a yes/no/maybe list. Both you and your partner can write out the things you are comfortable with the things you aren't comfortable with and the things you might be willing to try. Here is a link to a great list, if your partner is open to doing this with you it may help to spark some communication about what they are comfortable doing and what they aren't comfortable doing so that you are able to respect their boundaries while also feeling a sense of intimacy with them it is important for your partner to know that there are boundaries and that you will respect their intimacy boundaries. This will continue to build trust. [Here is a link to a yes/no/maybe list](#)

There are many ways to have intimacy with your partner in addition to what traditionally comes to mind (sexual intercourse). Try exploring these other [areas of intimacy](#) while you and your partner continue to communicate about physical intimacy. Patience is key as well as respecting boundaries and building trust. If this is something you would like to find more information on this or think you and your partner could benefit from a couples counseling session feel free to book time with me [here](#).

f t in e

Understanding Sexual Assault • Support

18 views 2 comments

See All

Recent Posts

I did not respond well when my friend shared their experience. How do I fix this?

Are nightmares normal? I'm worried about my partner

Is it okay to bring up my friend's assault in conversation?





Therapy is good for being more vulnerable but I don't think my therapist has the full context to help me in this area of being a partner to a survivor. It would be great to have a resource or someone I could reach out to for advice as things arise"

- Jay Co-Survivor



A way to send a message to a professional trauma specialist.

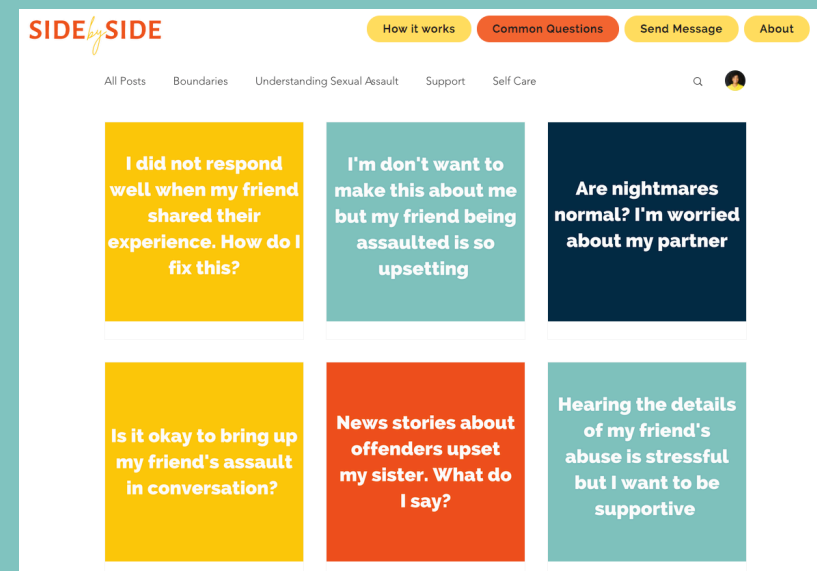
## Benefits

1. It provides them with a space to learn and grow, without judgment. This also reduces the strain on survivors because it relieves them of the burden from them having to explain themselves
2. Provides them with a reliable source of information and answers, decreasing further harm from misconceptions.
3. It is a community space where they can feel seen and heard and where their experience is validated without feeling guilty.



"Hearing other peoples stories and realizing that they are going through similar struggles in their relationships gave me the courage to be more open which gave me the confidence to speak to my partner"

- Henry Co-Survivor



A Way to read other people's stories and build community.

## Way Forward

Our sustainability plan is to continue building out our relationship with a trauma specialist, Rio who said that they would be interested in co-creating this platform with us in a way that is mutually beneficial to both co-survivors and practitioners.

## Feedback



" I love the message feature. Everything seems so warm and inviting."

-Henry\* co-survivor



**Catalyst to  
decreasing shame.**

**SIDE** *by* **SIDE**

Shift mindsets in  
relationships

Disclosing  
sexual violence is  
less stigmatized

Awareness and  
societal change



# PUBLIC PRESENCE

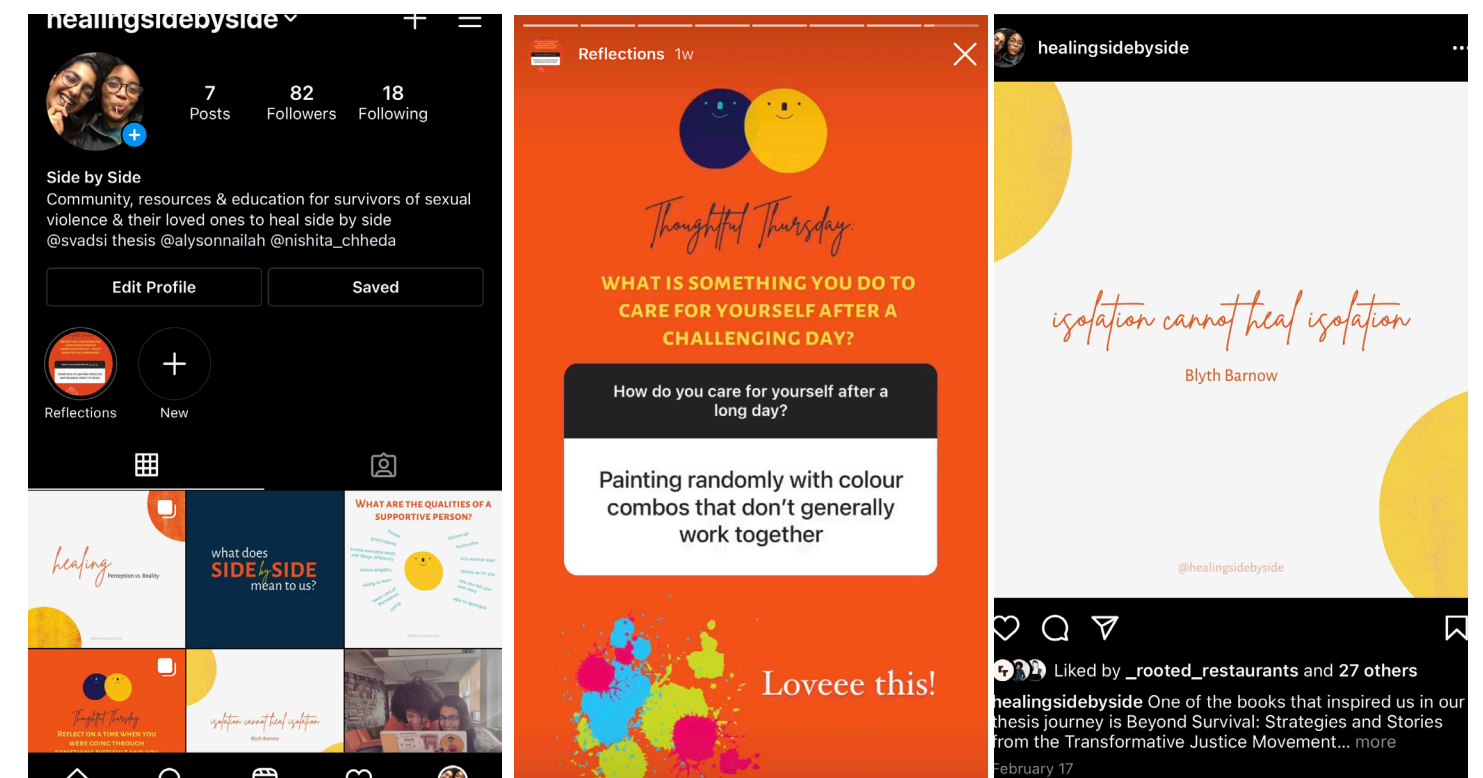
## Our Strategy

To engage more with our community and those that advocate for this fight against sexual violence, we created an Instagram account: @healingsidebyside. Our hope for this page is to build relationships with our growing community and begin to set a foundation for talking about healthy and supportive relationships for people who have experienced sexual violence, loved ones, ally and the larger community.

Because the community of survivors we are working with is a mix of people who identify as women and non-binary, and the group of co-survivors we are working with is a mix of

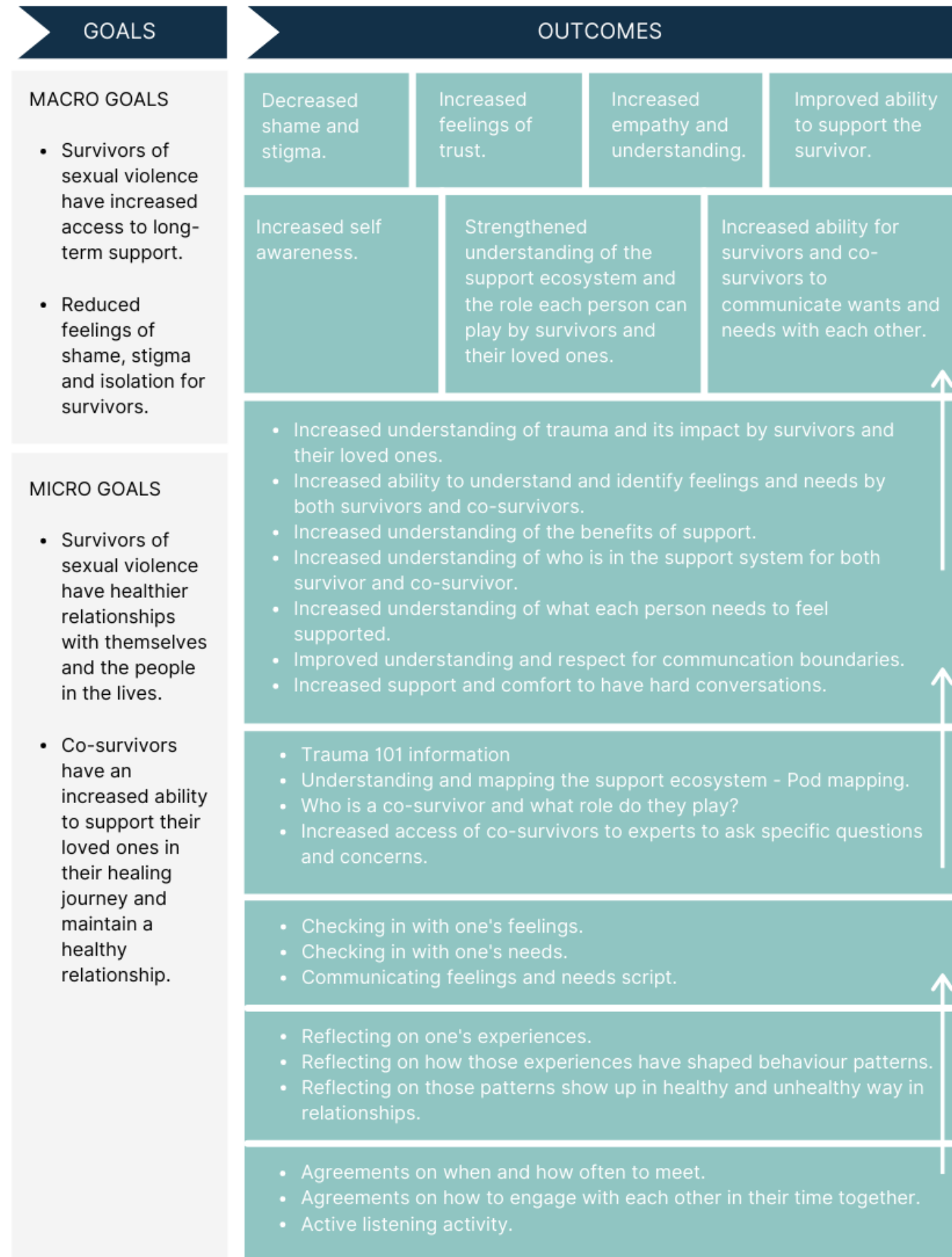
people who identify as men and women, we designed our visual language to be neutral. It is our desire for Side by Side to not only reach both survivor and co-survivor communities across the gender spectrum but also make them feel welcomed and so we felt that this decision was important for us to make.

So far, we have gotten some engagement and interactivity which has been fun for us to see. We think that this space also gives people an opportunity to learn from each other and process their own thoughts about a variety of topics in the comfort of their own homes and screens.





# Theory of Change (TOC)





# TOC Narrative

## Goals

Through Side by Side, we aim to leverage the potential of loved ones in a survivor's long-term healing journey by improving their ability to support survivors in reducing feelings of shame, stigma, and isolation.

Side by Side achieves this goal by providing educational tools and resources, increasing a sense of community, and helping people build healthy relationships. All of this will help survivors to feel more supported in their long-term healing journey and their support people to feel more equipped to participate in this process.

## Outcomes

In order to support our goal, some pre-conditions need to be designed, supporting both survivors and co-survivors. Our intervention specifically focuses on building a better understanding of trauma and its impact, increasing self-awareness, and improving the ability to communicate with each other.

## Inputs

Education: Throughout this journey, education is integrated by providing engaging and relevant information on trauma and its impact.

Self-awareness: Individual and relational capabilities are built by reflecting on prompts and engaging in activities. These aid survivors and co-survivors to understand themselves and their experiences better.

Communication: At the end of each section are facilitated activities for survivors and co-survivors to come together and communicate their needs, feelings and boundaries.

## Intervention

Our intervention is Side by Side- a system of tools and resources that support survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones to heal together. Currently the system is composed of a survivor healing guide, a co-survivor healing guide, a survivor-survivor book brunch gathering and an online educational platform.

The Healing Guides: Both guides use creative journaling and educational activities as a tool for healing and reflection, allowing people to process without worrying what another person might say. At the end of every section there is an activity for them to come together and discuss.

Side by Side Book Brunch: The book brunch is a creative, safe space where survivors could be in community with each other, while reading and reflecting using the healing guide. Survivor-survivor relationships are central to healing and foster a sense of belonging.

Side by Side Support: The educational platform is primarily a chat based platform where co-survivors can talk to a practitioner and ask any questions that come up for them. The goal of this is to relieve burden from the survivor having to educate the co-survivor or field potentially harmful questions. It also provides a place for co-survivors to get support and care for themselves as they care for the survivor. Additionally there will be some information about trauma and resources for learning in the journal and on the platform.

## Assumptions

Our project lies on three assumptions. Firstly, that survivors are seeking support in their healing journey, second that co-survivors desires to lend support to the survivor and play a role in their healing journey. Lastly we are assuming that survivors recognize that this is not immediate crisis care. As part of our resources, we will be providing a disclaimer to call 911 or the RAINN hotline if they are in need of immediate care.



# THANK YOU

Thank you so much to everyone who made this project possible! **Thank you our community and collaborators** for sharing you time, wisdom, and experiences. **Thank you to Book Brunch participants**-we have so much love for you and thank you for creating such a beautiful space with us! **Thank you to our friends and family** for all of your love and support. And special thank you **to our advisor Sahar** for being our therapist when we needed and our biggest cheerleader!

## **Alyson:**

Thank you **to my parents** for giving me and this (crazy!) program a chance. Thank you **to my husband, Roberto**, for being by my side the whole time, cheering me on and pushing me towards my dreams, and loving me unconditionally. Thank you **to my therapist, Natalie**, for being the biggest catalyst to my growth and healing. Last but not least **thank you Nishiboo!** I cannot imagine going through this experience with anyone else! So thankful that we have been able to learn, grow, and heal together. Can't wait to see what the future holds.

## **Nishita:**

Thank you **to my lovely parents** for trusting in me, having my back, for reminding me to take care of myself, and being stress busters whenever this journey got overwhelming. This would not have been possible without you two, without the countless facetime calls, and without the comfort of home. Thank you **to my beautiful sister, Dhvani**, for being my rock, for always being there for me, for being so much more than anything I could have ever asked for. Even across seas, our bond only gets stronger, each passing day, and I am so grateful for that. Thank you **to my sweetest friends, Hely, Nidhi, and Zubin**, for the laughter and love that y'all surround me with. And lastly, **to my soul twin, Aly**, for a partnership that goes so much beyond this project. I have learned so much with you and from you, and am so touched by your happy light! I cannot wait to see what's next for us! Thank you for this bond, and for truly being Side by Side!

We couldn't have done this without you all!!