



NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

for self, family, & community



TOOLKIT





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INTRODUCTION

Even before the coronavirus pandemic altered the lives of millions of Americans, there were palpable and measurable signs of trouble in Black and other communities of color: high levels of unresolved trauma; rising rates of youth suicides; increasing numbers of fragile families; and an uptick in overall violence. Those challenges demanded a bold and unique response.

Esther Productions, Inc. and Young Parent Elevation Network joined forces in 2020 to create The National Reconciliation Week. Its mission is to aid individuals, families and communities in addressing unresolved trauma, which often triggers other adverse conditions, through a deliberate and structured system of reconciliation, as designed by fatherless pioneer, author and certified life coach Jonetta Rose Barras.

With the success of last year's project, the two organizations will present The National Reconciliation Week 2021. The project's goals are to help individuals and families in 100 communities heal from the emotional, mental and physical trauma of estrangement; to teach them effective methods of self and familial care, which would reduce the potential of recurrence of previous trauma; offer effective tools for developing and maintaining whole, healthy, stable relationships both personal and familial, including providing the framework for successful co-parenting; and to better equip them in creating a new post-pandemic normal.

The National Reconciliation Week Toolkit is designed to provide ideas and resources for individuals, families and communities who would like to participate in this event, including creating their own individualized reconciliation projects.

We invite you to **ENGAGE YOUR INNER CIRCLE – FRIENDS, FAMILY, NEIGHBORS AND COLLEAGUES**

- Are there people in your life with whom you've been wanting to reconcile, but haven't known how?
- 📄 We've put together resources to help you engage in a conversation or host a healing circle from your home or in a virtual setting. Whenever possible, invite people from different backgrounds and cultures to join your conversation.

Register for The National Reconciliation Week virtual event via Zoom from June 6-11, 2021 to discuss how reconciliation could help you and your family.

If you need additional assistance, you may reach us at

nationalreconciliationweek@gmail.com

estherproductionsinc.com/reconciliation-week

Follow us on Facebook @nationalreconciliationweek or on Instagram for the latest news about NRW.



OVERVIEW

The National Reconciliation Week (NRW) advances the concept that leading a healthy centered, balanced life requires being in touch with our emotions and understanding the effect they may have on our physical, mental and spiritual health. The process of connecting to the internal to enhance the external is what we call “reconciliation,” and can be implemented by an individual, an entire family, persons within a family or a community.

The NRW offers individuals, families and communities an entire week to intentionally focus on the process of reconciling to effect healing from the emotional, mental and physical trauma of estrangement; to inspire better self-care, familial and community relationships; and to empower achievement of stated goals, aspirations or dreams.

It's important to note that **reconciliation is a journey--not a destination—requiring a deliberate and purposeful effort to yield positive empowering results.** The NRW believes effective reconciliation can address unresolved trauma while diminishing the potential for recurring trauma. It also can assist in creating a new post-pandemic normal.

Reconciliation starts with :

- A self-survey (A sample is provided in this NRW Toolkit)
- A goal
- A plan for implementing that goal (A sample is provided in this NRW Tool Kit)

Reconciliation requires:

- A respectful and honest dialogue with yourself and others.
- Recognition and understanding of your emotions and experiences as well as other people's.
- Open-mind, open-heart, and the willingness to travel on a learning journey.



FOR INDIVIDUALS

It may seem strange advocating a reconciliation process for an individual. However, when we experience multiple traumas, they can begin to layer on our psyche. Think of what happens when a floor is waxed. If there isn't any effort to remove the old wax, the floor eventually becomes dull, losing its sheen and beauty.

That is the same thing that happens with an individual's mental landscape--spirit and soul. Self-reconciliation is almost like removing that old wax. When it is done correctly a whole, healthy person appears. When the journey is embraced as a system of self-care, the self-reconciling individual will not only witness a change in herself or himself but also in the relationship with others—family and friends.

Deciding whether to take a solo reconciliation requires engaging in a candid and honest conversation with one's self. There are questions that must be asked and answered without fear or hesitation.

For example, it is important to assess your personal emotional landscape. Sometimes we compartmentalize our lives, hiding the painful from ourselves as we pretend things are fine. Reconciliation requires opening those compartments and facing that pain in order to be healed and to be empowered.

Once you've had that very personal conversation, you can then plan your reconciliation, including what issues you hope to address that may be serving as a barrier to your best self and when you hope to start your reconciliation. (We have included a sample plan at the end of this Tool Kit.)

You may also want to invite one or two friends who are in a similar position and who may want to enhance their internal landscape to improve the lives they are living.

You are invited to register for The National Reconciliation Week June 6-11, 2021 on Zoom and participate in those activities to launch your journey.



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FOR FAMILIES

In life, we circle back to some of the same places and people we knew during our childhood. The question is whether as we are climbing a spiral ladder, leading us to better life, to healthy landscapes, to warm and loving relationships. It is hard to dispute that our life's path begins inside our first homes, our families.

At The National Reconciliation Week, the founder and team believe that family can be the bulwark against most of our personal/individual challenges; it is also the wall against encroachment of social problems. Whether we are talking about the state of black males, juvenile incarceration, substance abuse or teen pregnancy, a strong, attentive and nurturing family is the ultimate antidote.

Sometimes, however, the dynamic of family can cause fissures, ruptures, estrangements that can be temporary or can last for years. Reconciliation is important to healing the family as a unit and each person within the unit. There are occasions when division has not affected the entire group but perhaps a subset: father and daughter, mother and son, sister and sister or brother and sister. Whatever the case, the need for reconciliation is indisputable.

We invite families to gather for an honest dialogue about the state of their relationship. Ask questions like:

- Have we lost touch with each other's dreams and desires for the future?
- Do we encourage each other actively to be our best selves; what is the meaning of "best self" in your family?
- Do members of your family openly express love for each other; do you mean it when you say "I love you" or is it an obligatory statement?

Now take the time, together, to examine the emotional, internal landscape of your family. (Use the internal survey that appears later in this Kit to guide the assessment)

You may want to desire a reconciliation plan for your family, or you can simply host a "Family Reconciliation Healing" to begin to determine how everyone would like to proceed. It's important that the conversation is gentle, kind and open.

You may consider organizing a watch party during The National Reconciliation Week to help guide your efforts.



FOR COMMUNITIES AND THEIR LEADERS

A community is composed of individuals and families. If there is turbulence inside the individual, you can bet there is turbulence in the family. If there is trouble in a family or several families, there is bound to be disturbance in the community. That is why the founders and team of The National Reconciliation Week have made the connection between self, family and community. When they are all healthy and whole, society is a much better place.

These days we have seen COVID-19 ravage families and communities. We have seen the adverse effects of institutional racism and economic inequity. We have seen the increase in violence, much of it the outgrowth of unresolved individual or family trauma.

Some communities have deteriorated dramatically. Others are fragile, held together by sheer will and determination. All of them, even those that seem to be operating well, can benefit from reconciliation.

What should be the form of that community reconciliation? We recommend a community dialogue.

Don't see this as a political conversation, or one in which the government is the focus. Rather, make this conversation about the families in the community—the ones on your block; perhaps have everyone meet at a nearby recreation center, food bank or church.

Gather them together for an internal survey. The prime questions could be: How are we doing? Where are we injured or weak? Where is the strength that we can use to build greater strength and prosperity? Are there things within our community that may be serving as a barrier? Is there something we, as a community, can do without the government?

When you have done that survey, develop a plan of "Reconciliation Plan for Community Action." You may want to begin that effort with "A Community Walk for Reconciliation Healing" to create a relaxed atmosphere for all participants involved.

Be sure to develop a schedule for additional conversations and walks. Remember reconciliation is not a destination. It is a Journey.

We invite you to join us for THE NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK to help launch your community healing and reconciliation journey.



WHAT TO REMEMBER

THE MEANING OF RECONCILIATION

RECONCILIATION IS A JOURNEY—NOT A DESTINATION. IT CAN INVOLVE MULTIPLE LEVERS AND MULTIPLE YEARS. (***Please take note that it is much more than repair, reconnection or bonding and should not be confused with these terms.*)

REASONS FOR RECONCILIATION

Healing wounds that may be present, soothing our spirits and growing our soul are the prime reasons for launching your journey.

EQUALLY IMPORTANT, reconciliation is a form of self-care; familial, community and society growth. Remember you want to come to terms with the past, the pain, and trauma in order to fully appreciate and enjoy the future. You want your family to be whole and healthy. You want to break the cycles that have captured you, making it unable for you to achieve self-actualization and real empowerment.

THE IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF RECONCILIATION

- Conducting an Internal Survey
- Creating a reconciliation plan or vision
- Implementing the Plan: making contact; unpacking the bags and discarding emotional baggage; understanding impact to heal and reduce pain; giving and receiving forgiveness; establishing new habits or rituals; fledging a new course; repeat.

BE AWARE OF OBSTACLES

Number one is always yourself and personal fear. Then, there are the people around you who know your history and their fear about what reconciliation could mean—will you get hurt; will they get hurt; will someone they may not like come back into your life; is it good or bad for the tribe and the family. CONSIDER AND THEN FORGET ALL THAT.



LEARNING SOMETHING NEW

Reconciliation is a journey. Consequently, with each new trip into yourself, inside your family, your community, you learn more, and gain greater mastery giving you the impetus and the courage to take yet another journey.

SELF-SURVEY (Can Also be used for Family or Community Survey)

1. WHAT IS YOUR EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE?

Describe how you feel now?

Describe how you felt three years ago?

Are your feelings better or worse?

If they are better, why?

If they are worse, what do you believe has led to the deterioration of your emotions?

2. WHO CAN POSITIVELY AFFECT THAT EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE?

You?

Another Person—Friend, Family?

A Group of People:

3. IF YOUR ANSWER WAS YOU, AND INITIALLY IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Are you carrying emotional baggage from some past event or interaction with someone?

List out those emotions.

What can you do to release that emotional baggage?

As you eliminate each negative emotional attached to a past experience, develop a plan for maintaining your new landscape.



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IF YOUR EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE HAS BEEN ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY AN ESTRANGEMENT OF AN IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP—A FATHER, PERHAPS OR A CHILD, YOU WILL ALSO WANT TO CONSIDER THIS:

Ask yourself : Do you want to reconcile with that person (s)

How do you expect things to change for you, and for that person (s) if you actually reconcile?

How will you reach out to that person (s) to inform that person you are interested in reconciliation: You could write a letter, explaining your current emotions related to that person and why you want to reconcile; explain why you think it is important to both you and the other person; invite that person to share his/her feelings and thoughts with you by responding to your letter.

A RECONCILIATION PLAN FOR YOU OR YOUR FAMILY

TO DEVELOP A SPECIFIC PLAN FOR THE RECONCILIATION JOURNEY, THINK OF THIS AS PACKING YOUR BAG FOR YOUR TRIP.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

WHAT EMOTIONAL ISSUES YOU WISH TO ADDRESS ON YOUR JOURNEY;

HOW YOU EXPECT TO ADDRESS THOSE ISSUES (MEETINGS, TELEPHONE TALKS, LETTERS ETC);

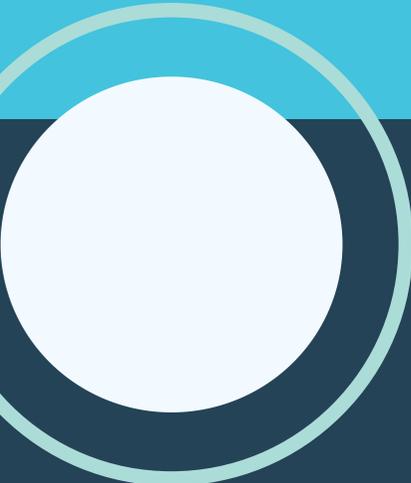
HAVE DATES WHEN YOU WANT TO LAUNCH THE RECONCILIATION ALONG WITH WHAT YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE AT EACH STEP, INCLUDING WHEN YOU INTEND TO SEEK FORGIVENESS FROM YOURSELF AND OTHERS FOR WHATEVER PAIN, ANXIETY OR GENERAL UNHAPPINESS YOU MAKE HAVE CAUSE; AND

INDICATE WHAT YOU INTEND TO DO TO BOND WITH THE PERSON WITH WHOM YOU ARE RECONCILING. What new rituals will you develop and practice together.



Special note: AS YOU GROW THROUGH THIS PROCESS, YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE AND YOUR OVERALL APPROACH IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

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