

thriv·ol·o·gy

# Seeds of Healing

*Activity Facilitation Guide*

*Instructions for implementing Seeds of  
Healing within your community*

*Thrivology translates research to practice to create practical resources youth-supporting professionals can use in the real world.*

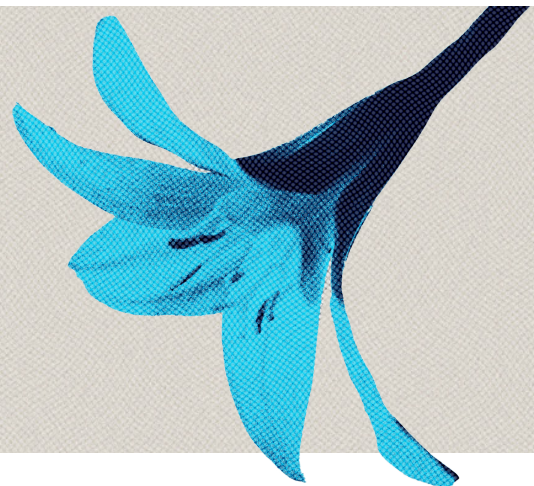
## **Background**

### **Seeds for Transformation and Growth**

Self-care isn't selfish—it's a necessity. We know you work hard, devoting so much time and energy caring for others. You carry the heavy burden of the trauma you encounter in your work, along with the weight of your lived experiences. Amidst busy schedules and demanding responsibilities, it can be hard to prioritize nurturing your own dreams and relationships.

In their modest and unassuming form, seeds encapsulate the potential for transformation and growth. Just as seeds thrive when nurtured and cared for, so do our intentions, dreams, relationships, and communities. The Seeds of Healing Installation is an immersive experience that encourages you to reflect on how you nurture your own seeds—metaphorically and literally—as you craft planters and watch them grow. Through this experience, we create a space that reminds us that the foundation of a flourishing garden lies in adopting an inclusive perspective that considers the needs of our diverse ecosystems.

***Just as seeds thrive when nurtured and cared for, so do our intentions, dreams, relationships, and communities.***



## Community as a Tool for Healing

Youth-supporting professionals are often immersed in environments where they encounter the raw realities of trauma daily, such as listening to the harrowing stories of the young people they work with or witnessing distressing situations firsthand.<sup>1</sup> Levels of depression, anxiety, and stress can act as potential risk factors that connect secondary traumatic stress to burnout. Compassion fatigue, which occurs when professionals take on the suffering of patients who have experienced extreme stress or trauma<sup>2</sup>, is a notable concern for professionals aiding those who have experienced trauma.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the evident need for healing and support, most workplaces lack sufficient opportunities for professionals to process traumas and foster emotional well-being. The lack of support places additional strain on the mental and emotional resilience of youth-supporting professionals, but it also limits their ability to effectively engage with and support the young people in their care.<sup>4</sup>

Conversely, workplace support significantly enhances the mental health of youth-supporting professionals by reducing stress and burnout,<sup>5</sup> fostering resilience, and promoting job satisfaction, which ultimately leads to better outcomes for the young people they serve.<sup>6</sup> Further, arts-based interventions, including community art projects, enhance mental health and

well-being by providing opportunities for emotional expression, and social connection, and fostering a sense of belonging. By engaging in collective artistic expression, professionals can alleviate the emotional burdens they carry, fostering a sense of community and shared understanding that bolsters their ability to care for others.<sup>7</sup>

***By engaging in collective artistic expression, professionals can alleviate the emotional burdens they carry.***

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<sup>1</sup>Bolić, E. B. (2018). Secondary traumatic stress and vicarious traumatization in child welfare professionals in Serbia. *Journal of Public Child Welfare*, 13(2), 214–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2018.1502117>

<sup>2</sup>Clay, R. A. (2022, July 11). Are you experiencing compassion fatigue? <https://www.apa.org/topics/covid-19/compassion-fatigue>

<sup>3</sup>Hopwood, T. L., Schutte, N. S., & Loi, N. M. (2019). Stress responses to secondary trauma: Compassion fatigue and anticipatory traumatic reaction among youth workers. *Social Science Journal*, 56(3), 337–348. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.soscj.2018.08.008>

<sup>4</sup>Cavanagh, N., Cockett, G., Heinrich, C., Doig, L., Fiest, K., Guichon, J. R., Page, S., Mitchell, I., & Doig, C. J. (2020). Compassion fatigue in healthcare providers: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Nursing Ethics*, 27(3), 639–665. <sup>5</sup>Caringi, J. C., Lawson, H. A., Devlin, M., & Vanderwill, L. (2020). The impact of secondary traumatic stress on children and youth professionals: A systematic review. *Child and Youth Services Review*, 110, 104–154.

<sup>6</sup>Price, M., & Spence, S. H. (2022). Burnout and job satisfaction among youth workers: The role of workplace support. *Journal of Youth Development*, 17(2), 98–113.

<sup>7</sup>Fancourt, D., & Finn, S. (2019). What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review. World Health Organization.

## The Activity Facilitation Guide

The Thrivology team created the original Seeds of Healing installation as an immersive experience at the [2023 Healthy Teen Network national conference](#), offering a journey of self-discovery and community building. Inspired by community art installations, we envisioned a space where individuals could pause, reflect, and connect—both with themselves and with others. We designed the installation with care to invite attendees to think deeply about their self-care practices and relationships. By responding to thought-provoking prompts, and contributing to a growing mural of shared hopes, participants took part in an evolving expression of community and healing.

**We've created this activity facilitation guide for you to implement the Seeds of Healing experience in your own community.** We have adapted the initial installation so that this experience can take place in a small-scale setting within meetings or structures organizations already have in place. This is a complete facilitation guide, with notes on preparation, suggestions for materials, and step-by-step instructions. From start to finish, you have everything you need to facilitate Seeds of Healing in your community.

With this guide, we hope to provide you with the tools and inspiration to create a meaningful space for reflection, connection, and growth, much like we did with the Seeds of Healing installation. Whether you replicate this guide as is or adapt it to your context, the intention remains the same: fostering individual healing and nurturing collective aspirations for a more caring, connected world.

## Feedback

We're always looking for ways to improve our work as we create practical, accessible, user-friendly resources. We'd love to hear your thoughts, once you've had a chance to facilitate this activity: [www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org/Thrivology/Resources/Seeds-of-Healing](http://www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org/Thrivology/Resources/Seeds-of-Healing)

## Suggested Citation

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# Seeds of Healing Activity

## Description

The Seeds of Healing Activity encourages you to reflect on how you nurture your own seeds—both metaphorically and literally—as you craft planters and envision the places where you’ll plant them. Through this experience, we create a space that reminds us that the foundation of a flourishing garden lies in adopting an inclusive perspective that considers the needs of our diverse ecosystems. Each planter symbolizes your active participation in the development of our vibrant, living, growing visual community garden, weaving a harmonious tapestry of collective aspirations, hopes, and care for the world we all inhabit.

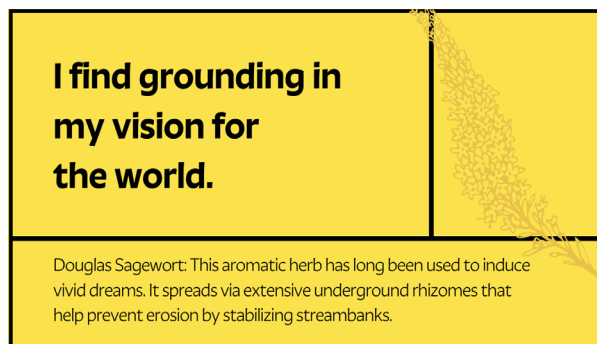
## Preparation

- 1** For this activity, you will need **seeds, soil, small planters, and markers**. Prepare the meeting space with a small planter per participant, filled 3/4 with soil, and marker at each participant’s seat.
- 2** Participants will select, from at least eight different seeds, the **seeds that represent their response** to two prompts. These seeds should be placed in labeled bowls in an area that is accessible to everyone. They will gather these seeds and plant them in their planter.
- 3** We recommend **working with a local botanist** or home and garden store specializing in native plants to select seeds that are local to your environment. Selecting non-native seeds can lead to invasive species spreading through and harming the environment. Additionally, consider any allergies for your group and ensure the seeds you select will not cause harm.
- 4** As part of this activity, participants will also need to **write an intention**. We recommend using planters that can be written on by permanent markers. If you choose not to have participants write on the planters, make sure you have small pieces of paper available for participants. The more visually appealing and high quality these pieces of paper are, the greater impact they are likely to have.

## Suggested Materials

*Disclaimer: We provide links to materials as examples of where to obtain these items. We are not sponsored by nor promoting any of these specific products, brands, or services.*

- **Eight varieties of seeds.** Seeds can be purchased online or at a home and garden store. We have crafted this guide with the following non-invasive varieties. If you choose other seeds, simply swap the variety you have chosen into the guide below.
  - [Zinnia](#)
  - [Marigold](#)
  - [Pansy](#)
  - [Snapdragon](#)
  - [Nasturtium](#)
  - [Sweet Alyssum](#)
  - [Petunia](#)
  - [Dwarf Sunflower](#)
- **Small planters.** Each participant should have their own planter; consider a [multipack of mini planters](#).
- **Soil.** To avoid a mess, we recommend these dehydrated pellets, [like these](#).
- **Seed containers and labels.** Place all seeds into containers that are labeled. Label them with a description of the seed and its symbolism (i.e. Snapdragon: I work to strengthen my resilience.) [Different color containers](#) will help you to indicate most clearly where seeds are located.



*Example seed label*  
[Download templates here](#)

- **Permanent markers.** Each participant will need a permanent marker they can use to write on their planter.
- **Clean up supplies.** If you are using real soil or participants hydrate their pellets during the session, ensure that you have supplies to clean up any messes created (i.e. water, spray cleaner, wipes dustpan, and brush).
- **Handwashing station.** Gardening is messy work. Provide a handwashing station (i.e. sink, soap and a towel) or supplies for washing hands (i.e. wipes).

## Facilitation Guide

Use this guide to support creating a Seeds of Healing Activity in a group setting. We provide a sample script, which you may adapt to fit your voice and group.

*Note: Because Seeds of Healing is an activity designed to be embedded within an existing meeting and its infrastructure, we do not include steps for other standard facilitation practices, such as setting group agreements.*

Topic	Details and Script Recommendation	Timing
Introduction and Purpose	<p><b>Introduce the activity.</b></p> <p><i>As part of our meeting today, we are going to do a self-care activity called Seeds of Healing. The Seeds of Healing experience encourages us to reflect on how we nurture our own seeds—both metaphorically and literally. We are going to work through an activity to create unique planters that we can watch grow and remember that with support from each other, we can flourish even with the unique needs of our diverse ecosystems.</i></p> <p><b>Explain the purpose of the activity.</b></p> <p><i>Self-care isn't selfish—it's a necessity. I know you work hard, devoting so much time and energy caring for others. We carry the heavy burden of the trauma encountered in our work, along with the weight of our lived experiences. Amidst busy schedules and demanding responsibilities, it can be hard to prioritize nurturing our own dreams and relationships.</i></p>	1 minute

Topic	Details and Script Recommendation	Timing
	<p><i>Taking care of ourselves is a lot like tending to seeds in a garden. Seeds need care, attention, and the right environment, to grow and thrive. So do we. And seeds are the promises of potential, the tiny beginnings of something incredible waiting to burst forth. This activity allows us to create one-of-a-kind planters that represent our intention for self-care, and contribute to our community garden.</i></p>	
Seeds of Healing Activity	<p><b>Facilitate the Seeds of Healing activity.</b></p> <p><b>Prompt 1</b></p> <p><i>To choose the seeds we will add to our garden, we will work through three prompts. The seeds in the bowls before us represent different answers to these questions. After I ask the question, I will share some potential responses and the seeds that align with these responses.</i></p> <p><i>The first prompt is:</i></p> <p><i>What helps you handle the weather? As with plants, people need both periods of rest and growth. How do you take care of yourself through balmy days and storms?</i></p> <p><b>Options:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Snapdragon: I work to strengthen my resilience.</i></b> <i>Snapdragons symbolize strength and the ability to endure gracefully. Even with their delicate appearance, they stand tall and resilient under challenging conditions, reflecting confidence and grace under pressure while embracing their unique character.</i></li> </ul>	10 minutes

Topic	Details and Script Recommendation	Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sunflower: I seek out moments of joy.</b> Dwarf sunflowers symbolize optimism, happiness, and a joyful spirit. Like their larger counterparts, they turn toward the sun, constantly seeking light and positivity, reminding us to find joy in every moment and to grow through all experiences.</li> <li>• <b>Petunia: I lean on my community for support.</b> Petunias symbolize a soothing presence and the comfort found in close connections. They convey feelings of companionship and healing, representing the importance of leaning on others for support and staying positive and grounded, no matter the circumstances.</li> <li>• <b>Sweet Alyssum: I find grounding in my vision for the world.</b> Sweet Alyssum symbolizes calmness and emotional balance, grounding us in our deepest aspirations. With its delicate fragrance and gentle presence, it represents simplicity, serenity, and protection from negativity, encouraging a sense of peace in one's surroundings.</li> </ul> <p>Select two to three seeds that best reflect your answer to these questions. If multiple answers apply to you, select one or two seeds from the applicable answer bowls. Is anyone willing to share which seeds they selected and why?</p> <p>[Facilitate discussion on how people handle the weather.]</p>	

Topic	Details and Script Recommendation	Timing
	<p><b>Prompt 2</b></p> <p><i>The next seeds we add will come from a second question.</i></p> <p><i>The second prompt is:</i></p> <p><i>How do you help others flourish? Everyone has different ways of tending to their loved ones, peers, and young people. How do you take care of others and help them grow?</i></p> <p>Read each of these answer options and the associated seed options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Zinnia: I build community at a sustainable pace.</i></b>  <i>Zinnias symbolize endurance and lasting friendship, representing the steady growth of connections over time. Their vibrant colors reflect cheerfulness and a spirit of remembrance, reminding us of the importance of nurturing relationships and communities, even under challenging conditions.</i></li> <li>• <b><i>Marigold: I ask people what nourishes them.</i></b>  <i>Marigolds symbolize warmth, creativity, and passion, encouraging us to seek what sustains and energizes us. Their bright colors, reminiscent of the sun, represent determination and the ability to thrive in adversity, inviting us to find strength in what truly feeds our souls.</i></li> <li>• <b><i>Nasturtium: I give space to what makes each person special.</i></b>  <i>Nasturtiums symbolize individuality and uniqueness, celebrating the qualities that make each person distinctive. With their bold colors and unexpected flavors, they represent creativity, spontaneity, and the courage to embrace one's true self and life's unique challenges.</i></li> </ul>	

Topic	Details and Script Recommendation	Timing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pansy: I encourage people to keep reaching toward their goals.</b>  Pansies symbolize determination and perseverance, reminding us to keep pushing forward with loving thoughts and creativity. Their association with free thinking, compassion, and consideration, along with their name's origin from the French word "pensée," meaning "thought," represents the power of thoughtful reflection in achieving one's aspirations.</li> </ul> <p>Is anyone willing to share which seeds they selected and why?</p> <p>[Facilitate discussion on how they help others flourish.]</p> <p><b>Prompt 3</b>  Our third prompt will help us to cultivate the plants we want to see in our planter.</p> <p>The third prompt is:  Each of us has a part in growing thriving communities, whether we give our attention in classrooms, clinics, community centers, or homes. Where is your garden plot, and what is one way that you take action towards positive change?</p> <p>Write the answer to this question on your planter or the paper in front of you.</p>	

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Details and Script Recommendation</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Reflection	<p><b>Debrief the activity.</b></p> <p>Use some or all of the following questions in a quick large-group discussion. Ask the question and give space and time for team members to respond.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What practices do you find most helpful in managing the challenges that come with supporting youth?</i></li> <li>• <i>How do you balance looking after yourself while also supporting others, and what could help you maintain this balance?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is one thing you would like to start doing regularly to improve your overall well-being, and how can you make space for it?</i></li> <li>• <i>How does taking care of yourself impact your ability to effectively support the youth you work with?</i></li> <li>• <i>What role does your community or support network play in helping you maintain your well-being, and how can you rely on them more when needed?</i></li> </ul>	9 minutes

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