

thriv·ol·o·gy

# Seeds of Healing

*Installation  
Do-It-Yourself Guide*

*Instructions for implementing a  
Seeds of Healing installation*

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

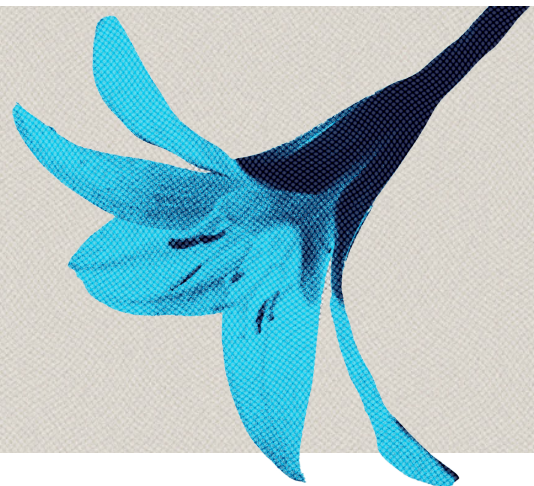
## **Background**

### **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 DIY 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 do-it-yourself, or DIY, resource to guide you to implement the Seeds of Healing Installation.** We adapted our original installation, so this experience can take place at a range of events, such as conferences, meetings, or trainings. The Guide includes a description that can be used for event materials, user flow notes on preparation, suggestions for materials, and set-up instructions. From start to finish, you have everything you need to facilitate the Seeds of Healing Installation 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. Whether you replicate the installation as is or adapt it to fit your event and community, 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: A Community Garden Installation

## Description

The Seeds of Healing: A Community Garden Installation experience encourages you to reflect on how you nurture your own seeds—both metaphorically and literally—as you craft unique 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.

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.



## User Flow

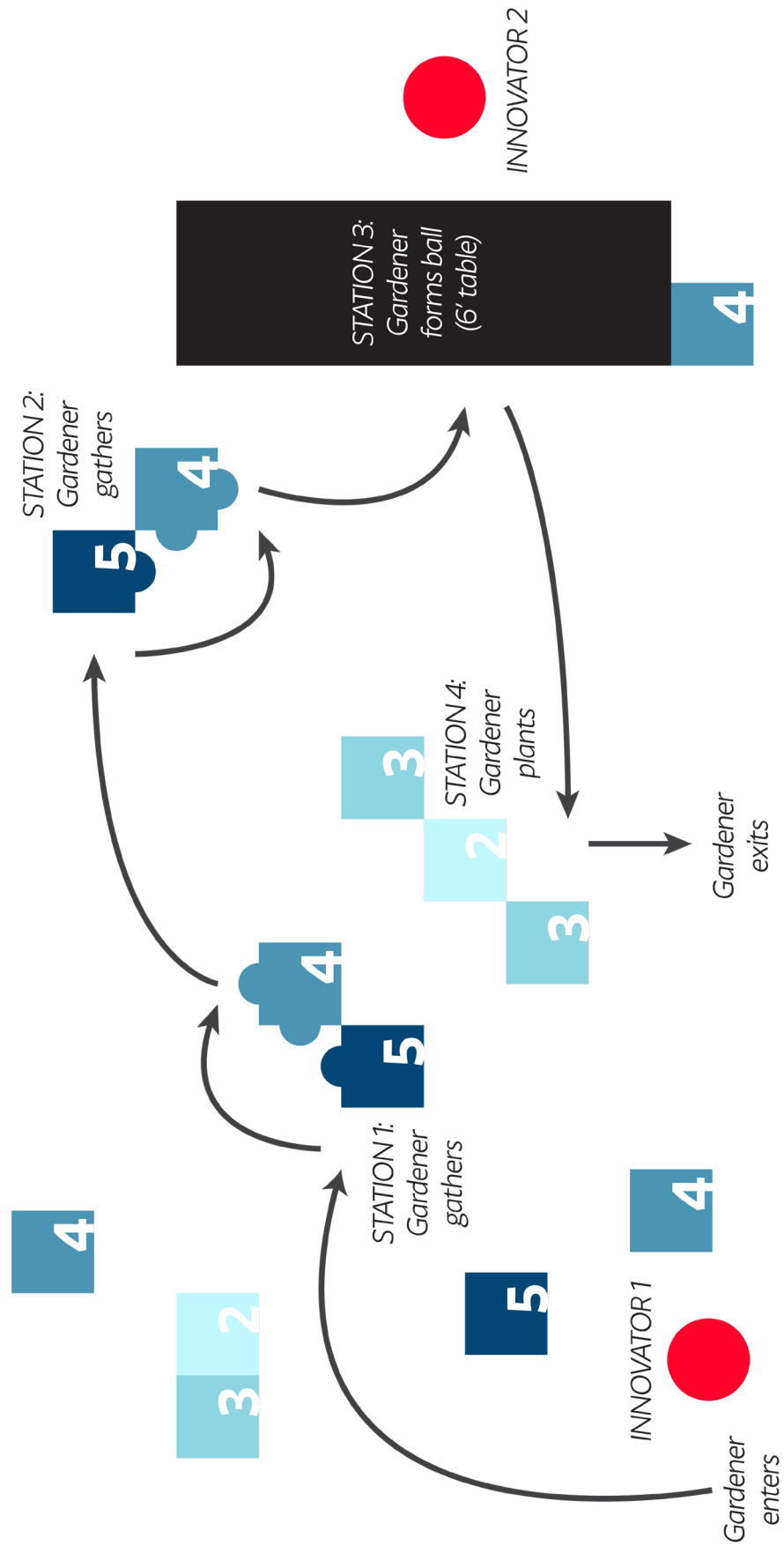
Note: This user flow assumes the use of all materials from the recommended materials list. If fewer or different materials are used, this flow should be adjusted accordingly.

**Attendees enter the installation area.** They see about 4-6 towers, made from milk crates stacked together and decorated to look like trees.

On a couple of those towers, there are **eight seed dispensers** filled with seeds and labeled with signs with prompts about taking care (of themselves and their relationships). Attendees will respond to the prompts by dispensing some seeds for their corresponding answer into their seed packets. If you opt out of these towers, place seed dispensers on tables or attached to walls.

After filling out their seed packet, attendees next **move to a writing station**, where they write a one-two-word response to a prompt about taking action. They write their response on a pre-cut leaf-shaped green paper, which will then be given to installation facilitators.

Installation facilitators will create a **visual community garden** by adding these leaves to a wall throughout the event. The more attendees that move through the space, the more it evolves into a community garden, as attendees contribute their “taking action leaves.”



## Preparation

- 1 Determine budget and space.** Depending on how much you can spend and how much space you have, decide if you can implement the installation as is. If you cannot, decide how you will make adjustments.
- 2 Select seeds.** It is important that the seed packets created through this experience do not cause harm to the native environment. 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. We recommend eight kinds of seeds below that are generally non-invasive.
- 3 Order materials.** Order the materials you need from the suggested materials below. 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.
- 4 Select signage and send it to a printer.** This guide includes signage for the installation space, and the larger event (e.g., conference, meeting, training). You may need to edit the signage to tailor it to your event. Once it is ready, export it as a high-quality PDF and send it to a printer in the size needed for full-color printing.
- 5 Determine operating hours and staffing.** Depending on the allowances of your event, determine the operating hours of the installation. Once you have created the installation schedule, ensure you have people to serve as installation facilitators available during this time. Communicate assignments to installation facilitators and share expectations for facilitation.



## 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.*

### Seeds and Dispensers

- 8 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](#)
  - [Sweet Alyssum](#)
  - [Petunia](#)
  - [Dwarf Sunflower](#)
  - [Nasturtium](#)
  - [Seed dispensers](#) (8)
  - [Seed packets](#) (enough for one per estimated participant)
  - [Small planters](#) (enough for one per estimated participant)
  - [Multicolor construction paper](#), shredded.
  - [Pellets](#) (enough for one per estimated participant)

### Paper Leaves

- [Twine](#)
- [Clothes pins, pack of 50.](#)
- [Cardstock paper, green.](#)
- [Washi tape](#)
- [Permanent Markers](#)

## Logistics

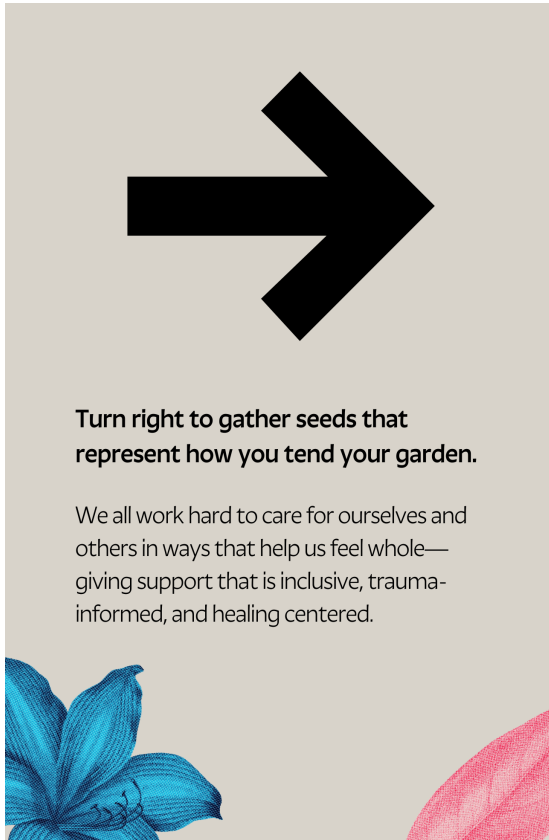
- Title poster (see sample provided)
- Seed signs/labels (see sample provided)
- Three tables

## Milk Crate “Trees” or Pillars

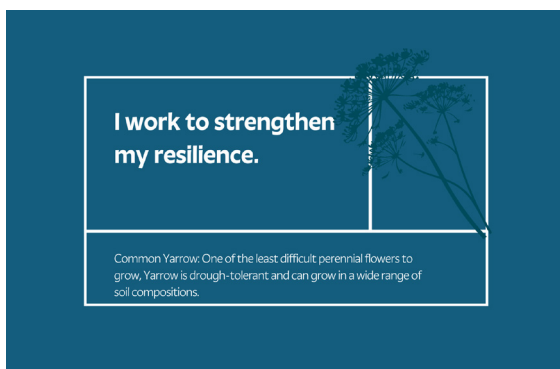
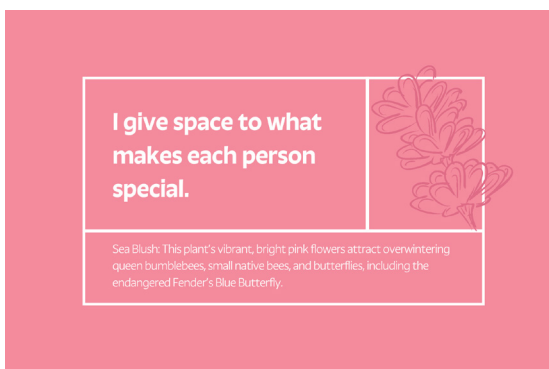
- [48 square milk crates](#)
- [Artificial grass turf](#)
- [Industrial scissors to cut the turf](#)
- [Heavy-duty snippers to cut the turf](#)
- [Cinder blocks/bricks](#)
- [Zip ties](#)



## Sample Signage



## [Download prompts template](#)



## [Download seed signs template](#)

## **Set-Up**

### **Station 1: Entry**

- Set up the table with seed packets.
- Set up the welcome sign.
- Build milk crate trees:
  - Stack milk crates at various heights, 3-6 crates high.
  - Secure crates to each other in a “tree” with zip ties.
  - Cut turf in organic shapes.
  - Attach turf to crates with zip ties by cutting slits in the turf.
- Place milk crate trees around the room, ensuring at least four each are at Station 2 and Station 3. Place bricks in milk crates to secure them once they are placed.

### **Station 2: Seed Packet Building Station, Part 1**

- Fill each seed dispenser with assigned seed.
- Shred multi-color construction paper and add it to the seed dispenser for aesthetics.
- Attach seed dispensers to milk crate towers.
- Label seed dispensers with signage that includes seed name and correlation to answer.

### **Station 3: Seed Packet Building Station, Part 2**

- Fill each seed dispenser with assigned seed.
- Shred multi-color construction paper and add it to the seed dispenser for aesthetics.
- Attach seed dispensers to milk crate towers.
- Label seed dispensers with signage that includes seed name and correlation to answer.

### **Station 4: Writing Station**

- Set up sign.
- Hang twine horizontally on the wall with washi tape.
- Attach clothespins to twine.
- Pre-cut leaves from green paper.
- Set up the table with leaves and permanent markers.

### **Station 5: Exit**

- Set up the table and lay out pots.
- Add one pellet, in packaging, to each pot.



## Facilitation

### Station 1: Entry

As participants enter, they go to the welcome table to receive instructions about how to rotate through Stations 2, 3, and 4 from a staff member. The staff member provides them with an empty seed packet and directs them to Station 1. The room is decorated with milk crate trees.





## Station 2: Seed Packet Building Station, Part 1

Station 1 includes four towers with four seed dispensers. There is a sign posted with the question, **“What helps you handle the weather?”** Seed dispensers are labeled with the type of seed and the answer to this question the seed represents. A staff member should instruct participants to dispense the seeds for their answer into their seed packet before moving on to Station 3. If you have chosen the seeds we provided in the supplies list, suggested answers are below. If you have selected your own seeds, update the answers to align with the chosen seeds.



### **Snapdragon: I work to strengthen my resilience.**

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.



### **Sunflower: I seek out moments of joy.**

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.



### **Petunia: I lean on my community for support.**

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.



### **Sweet Alyssum: I find grounding in my vision for the world.**

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.

### Station 3: Seed Packet Building Station, Part 2

Station 3 includes four towers with four seed dispensers. There is a sign posted with the question, **“How do you help others flourish?”** Seed dispensers are labeled with the type of seed and the answer to this question the seed represents. A staff member should instruct participants to dispense the seeds for their answer into their seed packet before moving on to Station 4. If you have chosen the seeds we suggested in the supplies list, suggested answers are below. If you have selected your own seeds, update the answers to align with the chosen seeds.



**Zinnia: I build community at a sustainable pace.**

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.



**Marigold: I ask people what nourishes them.**

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.



**Nasturtium: I give space to what makes each person special.**

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.



**Pansy: I encourage people to keep reaching toward their goals.**

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.

#### Station 4: Writing Station

Station 4 is a writing station where attendees write a one- or two-word response to the prompt, **“How do you cultivate the world you want to see?”** Staff should provide this instruction and direct participants to the pre-cut leaf-shaped green paper and markers on which participants can write their answers. After participants complete this, staff should add these leaves to the twine on a wall in the event space that will grow into a visual community garden. Participants are then directed to the exit.

#### Station 5: Exit

As they exit the installation, participants should be handed a vessel and a soil pellet. The staff member should instruct them to bring these home with them. When they get home, participants should open the pellet in their pot, add water, and then add seeds to the top of the soil.



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