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Ua Ola Loko i Ke Aloha (Love Gives Life Within): Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha

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Abstract

Aloha is more than a greeting of "hello" and "good-bye." Native Hawaiians believe Aloha is a foundational cultural value encompassing love, compassion, and respect. Mindful Forgiveness is a process of releasing negative emotions and thoughts towards a person, or persons, or event (e.g., COVID, cancer) who has caused a grievance, harm, or offense to increase feelings of hope and peace. In this paper, we explore the role of Aloha in enhancing the Mindful Forgiveness process. Via a peer support group with individuals practicing Mindful Forgiveness, we found that incorporating Aloha values and practices into the forgiveness process helped participants let go of resentment and anger towards the grievance and offender and led to increased feelings of peace and well-being in a cultural context. Mo'olelo (stories) and our lived experiences and other findings suggest that incorporating the values and practices of Aloha into Mindful Forgiveness may deeply enhance the therapeutic benefits of releasing grievances and facilitating healing. Further research is needed to fully understand the potentiality of Aloha in promoting Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha in healing grievances and kaumaha (heavy grief).

A Hawaiian proverb says "ua ola loko i ke aloha." It translates in English as "love gives life within." The kaona (underlying meaning) behind this proverb is that love is imperative to one's well-being (Pukui, 1983). Aloha is the concept, belief, value, and enactment of Native Hawaiian well-being. However, many contemporary Hawaiians are dealing with kaumaha (heavy grief) from historical trauma due to colonization (Paglinawan, Kauahi, Kanuha, & Kalahele (2020). Paglinawan et al. (2020) posit that going back to ancestral ways of knowing, being, and doing help to heal problems encountered by Hawaiians in contemporary times.

Native Hawaiians and other Indigenous populations may experience intersectional trauma as they deal with the effects of colonization, cultural historical trauma, and loss of connection to ancestral ‘ike (knowledge) layered on top of other traumas. Clarke & Yellowbird (2021) discuss “how the consequences of historical trauma are intertwined with cultural repression of healing practices” (p. 2). They suggest the interventions intended for these populations consider the historical sustainable beliefs and practices from pre-colonization times as an entrée into culturally responsive care (Clarke & Yellowbird, 2021; p.2).

Connection to a person’s culture is curative and integral to well-being. For Native Hawaiians, the basis for all relationships is through aloha (love, affection, compassion, grace, friendships) (Meyer, 1998; Paglinawan, 2020). Culturally, the value and expression of aloha were the reason Native Hawaiians continued to survive colonization in love and connection and stand in strength among the world community (Meyer, 1998; Paglinawan, 2020). A review of literature regarding Native Hawaiian mental health also reveals that family, spirituality, and connection to place are essential to promote emotional well-being (Burrage, Antone, Kaniaupio, & Rapozo, 2021). Other research reveals that Native Hawaiian ‘ōpio (youth) who connect with their Hawaiian identity have higher levels of self-esteem and well-being (Serna, 2020). Serna’s (2020) study findings found that cultural factors (which include principles and values) decreased anxiety and increased positive social interactions for ‘ōpio in the intervention group.

There are complementary methods and ways of being that promote well-being to not only Native Hawaiians, but other populations as well. The work of Dr. Luskin from the Stanford Forgiveness Project stems from the simple premise of using mindfulness, gratitude, and forgiveness as remedies to distress (Luskin, 2016). Luskin’s (2016) research uncovers that forgiveness benefits those suffering from grievances. Some of the benefits of using mindful practices and a step-by-step process of forgiveness include: 1) increase in positive emotions; 2) easier access to feelings of hope, care, affection, trust, and happiness; 3) less anger; and 4) reduced depression and anger. Further, forgiveness work also enhanced spiritual points of view thereby helping those who released grievances to feel more connected to people and nature (Luskin, 2016). Luskin’s work on forgiveness utilizes two complementary techniques of gratitude and guided imagery using a positive emotion refocusing technique (PERT) for those suffering from grievances to move through the forgiveness process mindfully towards release and, ultimately, inner peace (Luskin, 2016).

For Native Hawaiians, offering culturally responsive and trauma-informed ways (e.g., safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support, collaboration, and mutuality; empowerment; voice and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues) of implementing

programs are key to prevent harm (Duane, Casimir, Mims, Kaler-Jones, & Simmons, 2021; SAMSHA, 2014). Trauma-informed interventions with Native Hawaiians also prioritize and integrate cultural values (e.g., self-empowerment, interdependence, storytelling, spirituality) in a psychologically safe environment (Burrage et al., 2021; SAMSHA, 2014). The Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha peer support model we use offers intentional, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed programming to promote Native Hawaiian well-being.

Native Hawaiian Worldview

We, as researchers and practitioners working with Native Hawaiian kamali‘i (children) and families, privilege the Native Hawaiian worldview and values in our work. From this worldview, Native Hawaiians practice the core values of Pono and Lōkahi (see figure 1). The Pono Triad focuses on the balance between na‘au (mind), kino (body), and ‘uhane (spirit). With the Lōkahi Triad, the focus is on unity with kānaka (humankind), Honua (natural world), and Akua/‘Aumakua (spiritual world). This worldview lays the foundation for practicing Aloha. Interdependent relationships with people, places, and spirit were paramount in an island society. Grievances had to be dealt with quickly since people lived and were related so closely together. Aloha was the guide in how to cultivate these relationships to live in harmony and prosperity.

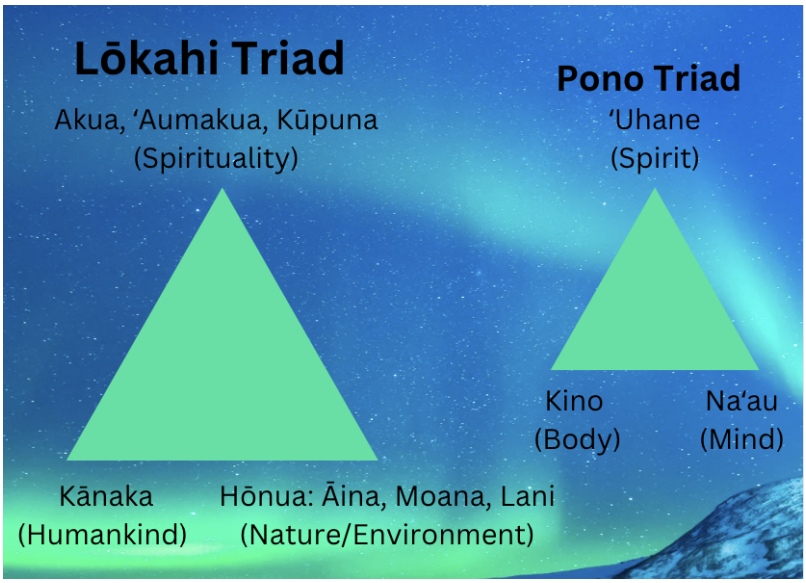

Figure 1: Native Hawaiian Worldview. (Adapted content from Nānā I Ke Kumu Helu ‘Ekolu, 2020).

Aloha

Thus, we start with, and from, Aloha. Aloha is a complex Hawaiian word with many deeper meanings: love, affection, compassion, mercy, sympathy, pity, kindness, sentiment, grace, charity; greeting, salutation, regards; sweetheart, lover, loved one; beloved, loving, kind, compassionate, charitable, lovable (Pukui & Elbert, 1986)

We learned from Aunty Pilahi Pāki, a renowned Hawaiian kupuna (elder), that the essence of Aloha is as an enduring practice and way of knowing and being. She shared, "ALOHA is something that is there. We can feel it but cannot touch it.

ALOHA is a way of life because it takes your heart. The five ways to bring ALOHA out are: your eyes, your spoken words, your hands, your hearing and your breath." Using Hawaiian cultural values in the acronym of ALOHA, as shown below, Aunty Pilahi provides deeper meanings to understand how to practice ALOHA:

A – Akahai – meaning Kindness to be expressed with a feeling of tenderness

L – Lōkahi – meaning Unity to be expressed with a feeling of harmony

O – ʻOluʻolu – meaning Agreeable to be expressed with a feeling of pleasantness

H – Haʻahaʻa – meaning Humility to be expressed with a feeling of modesty

A – Ahonui – meaning Patience to be applied with perseverance

(As shared by cultural practitioner and her student, Pono Shim)

In contemporary times and despite cultural historical trauma, Native Hawaiians still hold on to vestigial ancestral values and relationships but may need reminders to reawaken these practices in daily life.

Aunty Pilahi Pāki's ALOHA is a way of living Aloha that emphasizes the importance of love, respect, unity, and harmony. This includes: 1) acknowledging the past and present, and taking responsibility for one's actions, 2) living in the present and being mindful of one's thoughts and actions, 3) operating from a place of love and compassion, treating others with kindness and respect, 4) holding oneself and others accountable for one's actions and taking responsibility for one's own well-being, and 5) acting with integrity and honesty, and being true to oneself and others.

The concept of ALOHA means to live in a way that is guided by reciprocal love, respect, and compassion. By embracing this way of living, individuals can cultivate deeper connections with themselves, others, and the world around them, promoting lōkahi, or harmony, unity, and well-being for all things.

Mindful Forgiveness

Mindful forgiveness is the practice of intentionally letting go of resentment and negative emotions towards someone who has caused harm. It is a form of self-care that can improve mental and emotional well-being and has been shown to have positive effects on physical health as well. The topic of forgiveness has been widely researched for its benefits as well as its origins. Forgiveness can be found in all major world religions as a practice used to some degree (Toussaint, Worthington, Williams, 2015), and there are many definitions of forgiveness. Forgiveness can be viewed as an emotion focused coping technique to deal with transgressions (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Or an intentional decision to release negative feelings towards the transgressor (Mandasaurwala, Sadriwala, 2021).

In Forgive for Good (2016) Dr. Fred Luskin from the Stanford Forgiveness Project defines forgiveness as:

- Feeling peace
- Being for you and not the offender
- Taking back your power
- Taking responsibility for how you feel
- Focusing on your healing

According to Luskin (2016, pg. viii), forgiveness is NOT:

- Condoning unkindness
- Forgetting that something painful happened
- Excusing poor behavior
- Does not have to be an otherworldly or religious experience
- Denying or minimizing your hurt
- Does not mean reconciling with the offender, and
- Does not mean you give up having feelings

Mindfulness is being fully present in the moment and being aware of your surroundings without judgment. In this context, Mindful Forgiveness is a program developed by JoYi Rhyss, founder and executive director of The Practice Center that combines mindful practices and teachings of Dr. Thao Le and the forgiveness process by Dr. Fred Luskin. It emphasizes the need to be present to connect with one's own emotions and for providing safety for self, while walking through the forgiveness process.

Benefits of Mindful Forgiveness

Research has shown there are significant benefits to practicing forgiveness to one's own physical, emotional, and mental health. Dr. Luskin has shared the following benefits of Mindful Forgiveness (Luskin, 2016):

1. Improved mental and physical health: Forgiveness has been linked to decreased stress, lower blood pressure, and improved overall well-being.
2. Increased feelings of happiness and well-being: Forgiveness can help individuals to let go of negative emotions such as anger and resentment, which can lead to increased feelings of happiness and well-being.
3. Stronger relationships: Forgiveness can help to improve relationships by promoting understanding, compassion, and communication.
4. Greater resilience: Forgiveness can help individuals to bounce back from difficult situations, as it allows them to let go of negative emotions and focus on the present.
5. Greater self-awareness: Mindful forgiveness allows individuals to become more aware of their thoughts, feelings, and emotions, which can lead to greater self-awareness and self-regulation.
6. Increased sense of control: Forgiveness can help individuals to feel more in control of their lives, as they are able to let go of negative emotions and focus on what they can control.
7. Greater sense of peace and inner calm: Mindful forgiveness can promote a greater sense of inner peace and calm, as individuals are able to release negative emotions and find a sense of resolution and understanding.

Mindful forgiveness can provide many benefits for mental and physical health, personal well-being, and relationships. It can help individuals let go of negative emotions, increase self-awareness, build resilience, and find a sense of peace and calm (Luskin, 2016).

Other studies reveal similar outcomes. One study found that individuals who practiced mindful forgiveness had lower blood pressure, better immune function, and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety compared to those who did not practice forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Additionally, mindful forgiveness has been found to improve relationships and increase feelings of compassion and empathy (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2007).

Benefits of Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha

The concept of mindful forgiveness with aloha has been a topic of interest in recent years within the field of positive psychology and spirituality. Aloha spirit has been proposed as a framework for promoting mindful forgiveness in research literature. Aloha, which stresses

compassion, understanding, and acceptance, can help people learn to forgive. In a qualitative study of Hawaiian women, the incorporation of aloha into the process of forgiveness was found to be an important cultural value that facilitated the ability to let go of resentment and negative emotions (Krishnamurti & Hare, 2017). Keith (2021) introduces the "Aloha Mindset" as a framework for understanding the process of mindful forgiveness. The author argues that the Aloha mindset, which emphasizes compassion, understanding, and acceptance, can be a useful tool in promoting forgiveness in individuals. Nakamura (2020) conducted a qualitative study to explore the experiences of individuals who practice mindful forgiveness with aloha. The study found that participants reported feeling a greater sense of inner peace and reduced negative emotions such as anger and resentment. Kawakami (2019) provides a theoretical perspective on the role of aloha in mindful forgiveness. The study found that participants reported feeling a greater sense of inner peace and reduced negative emotions such as anger and resentment. Other research finds that the aloha spirit is an important cultural value in Hawaiian culture and can be used as a guide for promoting forgiveness in individuals (Kanahele, 2014; Kaulukukui, 2012; Lee, 2018; Loo, 2015; Lui, 2016).

Overall, the research suggests that mindful forgiveness, combined with the value and practice of aloha, can have numerous benefits for mental and physical health by allowing individuals to move on from past transgressions while also encouraging increased empathy and understanding towards others, which can improve relationships and overall well-being. Despite the various studies that have been conducted, more research is needed to further explore the benefits and applications of mindful forgiveness with aloha.

The Role of Aloha in Mindful Forgiveness

Aloha, as articulated and lived by kupuna Aunty Pilahi Paki is not one thing but is a process and layered reality and is itself a way of being, of seeing, of doing. To remind us that we must act from and within these values. The values of Aloha or love is that we enter spaces with humility and respect and aloha – recognizing the shared mana or spiritual power that unites us all.

The values that spell out ALOHA and the intentions of these values are woven throughout our Mindful Forgiveness sessions. Values such as Lōkahi (unity and harmony), that honor differences. Yet, when the balance of unity is interrupted, what are the processes that restore balance and how are they negotiated, talked about with those who are walking with you in the mindful forgiveness space? For Native Hawaiians, it is a process of restitution and restoration through hoʻoponopono or making things right, and the first step is mihi, to ask for forgiveness in any harm intentionally and unintentionally caused. This is one way we restore balance in spiritual

and physical relationships. This is the model we privilege. A quotation from our mentor, kupuna Aunty Lynette Paglinawan reflects:

> Love is universal. Cultures have [their] own way of restoring balance so healing can occur. If you are pono ʻole (without pono), aloha cannot come out, how can you heal, how can you forgive? Help people work through their own imbalances. Return to pono. Underlying pono is love, it comes through. (Paglinawan, 2022)

Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha is not based on a Western twist on Native Hawaiian forgiveness. Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha is grounded first in the values and practices of ALOHA as taught by our kūpuna. As facilitators, we first have to practice ALOHA within our own lives to then facilitate a Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha group. The concepts of Mindful forgiveness provide the blending of Western thought and practices to enhance, give structure and process. Mindful forgiveness as a stand-alone, peer support process has benefited all types of people from around the world.

As kanaka of this ʻāina and working with kanaka of this ʻāina it became important to bridge the concepts of Mindful Forgiveness to a local context. Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha was created with the intention to bridge Native Hawaiian and Western views. It was a natural adaptation as Mindful Forgiveness already has alignment with ALOHA values, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha Alignment Chart.

Mindful Forgiveness	**ALOHA**	**Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha**
Mindfulness Forgiveness Grievance Story	Aloha- love	Being gentle with yourself as you begin this journey and become vulnerable to share your hurt and pain
Grief & Revenge Fantasies	Akahai-kindness	Giving yourself permission to give voice to the pain and anger in a safe place
Stress Reduction	Lōkahi-unity	Practicing self-care and balance as you work on these areas in your life
Unenforceable Rules	ʻOluʻolu-agreeable	Look within at ways you set expectations and how to understand other points of views

Self-forgiveness Positive Intention	Haʻahaʻa-humility	First forgiving ourselves before we can forgive others. Setting a new positive intention
Forgiveness Story	Ahonui-patience	Rewriting our grievance story to a forgiveness story to be authentic to where we are today

Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha was an adaptation, bringing together the Native Hawaiian and Western perspectives on forgiveness. The Native Hawaiian perspective emphasizes the importance of emotional and spiritual well-being, as well as the interconnectedness of all things. While, the Western perspective typically focuses on cognitive approaches, such as understanding the reasons for an offender's behavior and making a conscious decision to forgive.

Table 1 illustrates how Mindful Forgiveness (Western perspective) naturally aligns with the values of Aloha (Native Hawaiian perspective), which include love, kindness, unity, agreeableness, humility, and patience. For example, the practice of mindfulness is a key component of mindful forgiveness, and it aligns with the Aloha value of love. Mindfulness allows individuals to be gentle with themselves as they begin the reflective journey of forgiveness and become vulnerable to share their hurt and pain.

Overall, Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha is a concept that brings together the Western perspective on forgiveness and the Native Hawaiian perspective on forgiveness by aligning mindful forgiveness with the values of Aloha, allowing individuals to process their emotions and forgive in a holistic and authentic way.

Intervention

Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha is a peer support, family strengthening group intervention. It was inspired from and derived from the research found in Dr. Fred Luskin's book, "Forgive for Good." The authors from a Hawaiian serving organization were trained and rigorously certified in the Mindful Forgiveness process by Dr. Luskin and JoYi Rhyss, and have experienced Mindful Forgiveness, themselves, as participants.

The authors have personal and professional lived experiences with Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha and how this fostered our own healing from grievances and loss that brought us pain. The authors intentionally brought Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha to staff as a professional development tool, as a "heal the healer" experience.

Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha was expanded from staff development to mākua (parents) and their kamali‘i (children) in the community, as a Family Strengthening peer support group via virtual Zoom sessions in 2020, at the height of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The idea was to teach the same information to the mākua of the ‘ohana in their own peer group, while sharing the same content revised to make it understandable and relevant to their kamali‘i who met separately with their peer group.

Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha process taught kamali‘i and mākua how to consciously release feelings of hurt, helplessness, resentment, and retaliation while focusing on connecting one’s thoughts and feelings to the present moment with breathwork exercises such as Hanu & Hā and living the value of aloha.

Peer support groups varied over the course of four different cohorts of *Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha*. Initially, developed to assist kamali’i, ages 13 – 17, and young adults, ages 18 – 26, the program was also offered to staff from partner social service agencies to better understand the mental health benefits of Mindful Forgiveness and its alignment with the Hawaiian Worldview. See Table 2 for the *Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha* timeline.

Sessions

Program logic model is that by participating in the Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha peer support groups, participants could identify past traumas, have an understanding how these past grievances may lead to suffering in the present, learn how to expand perspective of the situation, and practice forgiveness towards others and self with the hopes of improved well-being and healing. Finally, by understanding where the suffering comes from, and how holding onto this suffering is detrimental to one’s mental and physical health, participants can find the path toward peace and healing.

The total peer support group session time (altogether) was 12 hours over the span of six weeks. Each session was scaffolded to meet the program outcomes for participants: 1) build skills towards self-healing, 2) learn how to release feelings of hurt, helplessness, resentment, and retaliation vengeance while focusing on connecting one’s thoughts and feelings to the present, 3) build resiliency when bringing awareness to what causes distress, 4) build positive predictability in stress response, and 5) learn to control reactions to stressful situations.

Utilizing the Mindful Forgiveness workbook created by JoYi Rhyss, Mindful Forgiveness peer support groups consisted of six, two-hour sessions, as follows:

1. Mindfulness, Forgiveness and The Grievance Story: definitions, practices, activities
2. Grief and Unveiling Revenge Fantasies: definitions, processes, activities
3. Stress Reduction: mindful meditation practices; open to a different perspective, activities
4. Dismantling Unenforceable Rules: definition, examining expectations, activities
5. Self-Forgiveness and Forgiveness Review: unpacking stories, Positive Emotional Refocusing Technique (PERT), review forgiveness process, activities
6. Rewriting the Narrative – The Forgiveness Story: rewrite their story, positive intention, activities; celebration

Cultural Adaptations

Each session incorporated Hawaiian cultural concepts, values, and practices. Each session began with the breathwork exercise (Hanu & Hā) and the sharing of a short moʻolelo (story) from Queen Liliʻuokalani's life as a role model for forgiveness. Through the breathing exercise and listening to the moʻolelo, participants could find a connection and comparisons to the life of our Moʻi Wāhine, Queen Liliʻuokalani, the last reigning monarch of Hawaiʻi. Queen Liliʻuokalaniʻs reign was overthrown and she was imprisoned in her residence, Iolani Palace. She suffered numerous losses, including the loss of her crown, and weathered these kaumaha by composing mele (music) and pule (prayer).

The moʻolelo and mele of Queen Liliʻuokalani and how she coped with kaumaha and loss, the connection between the Hawaiian Worldview of being Pono (right) in body, mind, and spirt, and the mindful forgiveness process of releasing acknowledging and releasing grievances facilitated participant healing. Facilitators incorporated Queen Liliʻuokalani's music and the ʻohe hano ʻihu (nose flute) as our chime sounds to allow participants to find the connection between their culture and find ways to forgive and release kaumaha, grievances, and other losses.

The use of the Lōkahi Triad (e.g., relationship between humankind, Spirituality, and natural world) allowed participants to understand that we all have connection to each other and our ancestors as we learn to understand different perspectives. The Queen's story of forgiveness during her imprisonment showed the participants that we can find productive, positive methods to give us the strength to see forgiveness toward those who have hurt us as a way of healing ourselves. Another cultural adaption was creating a space to talk about spiritual experiences that are common to Hawaiian families. The concept of Hōʻailona or seeing signs and symbols and trusting your naʻau or gut instinct were discussed in the sessions. The participants were encouraged to talk about them and what they mean to them in the context of forgiveness.

Emphasizing moʻolelo of Queen Liliʻuokalani, the connection between the Hawaiian Worldview of being Pono and mindful forgiveness and using the Queenʻs music and the ʻohe hano ʻihu as our chime helped participants to find the connection between their culture and ways to forgive through positive actions.

Evaluation Findings

Data was collected via observation, moʻolelo, and pre-post surveys that used a reflective format to measure learning, growth, and impact of the intervention. Overall, the reflections during the discussions and moʻolelo around the six modules used in Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha, along with the pre and post surveys, showed for participants, the potential for internal change in self-regulation, and hopefully over time, long lasting aloha for oneself and others. When making peace with their and other's actions, participants were able to let go of the painful grievances still associated with the actions of themselves, others, and experiences.

Staff experiences, moʻolelo, and observations reveal the importance of well-trained facilitators, who have gone through the mindful forgiveness group process, themselves, as participants. This is in order to provide a safe, nurturing environment for all group members (e.g., group participants and facilitators). Potential group participants should be assessed for group readiness, as processing grief, loss, and trauma is a key element of the group. It is noted that for optimal group dynamics, the group size should be no more than eight participants to create a sense of trust and intimacy.

The pre and post survey data of the "Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha" program with families showed an improvement in participants' mindfulness skills and a change in their perception of forgiveness. Many participants reported a change in their ability to focus on the present moment, accept thoughts and feelings without judging them, handle emotional pain, accept things they can't change, and manage emotions in healthier ways. Participants reported a change in their perception of mindfulness as being present emotionally and physically, being at peace with their thoughts, and being able to see the full picture of their grievances. They also reported a change in their understanding of forgiveness as letting go of emotions that harm, moving forward, and coming to peace with what happened. The program has implications for practice in promoting mindfulness and forgiveness for better mental health.

Past program and training participants over the past year were also interviewed in Jan 2023. Interviewed participants were selected from these criteria: 1) participation and completion of a Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha six-week course; 2) participants were either client participants, staff participants and/or facilitator participants; and 3) participants were available, able, and

provided informed consent to meet and participate in the interview. There were four interview questions as aligned to the Pono triad (e.g., mind, body, spirit):

1. What, if any, changes did you experience in your mind after Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha?
2. What, if any, changes did you experience in your body after Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha?
3. What, if any, changes did you experience in your spirit after Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha?
4. Anything else you'd like to share about your experience with Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha?

Themes from the interview responses (N=8) are as described below:

Emotional and psychological benefits aligned with apriori codes of the ALOHA acronym:

- Release of negative thoughts and emotions related to the grievance: Aloha can be understood as a way of releasing negative emotions and fostering positive feelings towards oneself and others.
- Increased ability to see others' perspectives: Aloha can be understood as a way of understanding and accepting others, which may lead to increased empathy and understanding.
- Recognition of the importance of self-forgiveness: Aloha can be understood as a way of accepting oneself, which may lead to self-forgiveness.
- Emotional lightness and sense of peace and comfort: Aloha can be understood as a way of feeling at peace and content with oneself and others, which may lead to emotional lightness.
- Increased awareness of self-forgiveness and self-love: Aloha can be understood as a way of accepting and loving oneself, which may lead to increased awareness of self-forgiveness and self-love.

These themes suggest that interview respondents in the Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha program experienced emotional and psychological benefits such as relief from negative thoughts and emotions, an ability to understand others' perspectives, and an increased sense of self-awareness.

Physical benefits:

- Lightness of being, free of heaviness: Aloha can be understood as a way of feeling light and free from negative emotions, which may lead to physical lightness.
- Peace and comfort: Aloha can be understood as a way of feeling peaceful and comfortable, both with oneself and with others, which may lead to physical comfort.

These themes suggest that interview respondents experienced physical benefits such as feeling lighter and more at peace after practicing mindful forgiveness.

Spiritual benefits:

- A connection with others and a higher power: Aloha can be understood as a way of connecting with others and a higher power, which may lead to a spiritual connection.
- A shift towards a kinder and happier spirit: Aloha can be understood as a way of fostering kindness and happiness, which may lead to a spiritual shift towards a kinder and happier spirit.
- Recognition that forgiveness is an essential human ability and a key to spiritual growth: Aloha can be understood as a way of recognizing the importance of forgiveness in spiritual growth and human connections, which may lead to recognition of the importance of forgiveness.

These interview themes suggest that interview respondents experienced spiritual benefits such as feeling more connected with others, experiencing a greater sense of kindness and happiness, and recognizing the importance of forgiveness in spiritual growth. Overall, the themes that emerged from the Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha interview responses align well with the value of Aloha, which emphasizes empathy, compassion, letting go, self-discovery, and personal growth.

Discussion

Based on these findings, there are several implications for practice that can be derived from incorporating Aloha into Mindful Forgiveness. First, incorporating cultural values and practices can enhance the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions and increase the chances of success for individuals seeking support. Secondly, incorporating Aloha into Mindful Forgiveness can offer a culturally responsive approach to working with Native Hawaiians and other populations with diverse cultural backgrounds who have experienced cultural historical trauma. Third, the importance of assessing readiness for participation in group, as the process of revisiting grievances may be heavy. Fourth, incorporating Aloha into Mindful Forgiveness can help individuals address the interconnected aspects of their well-being, including their emotional, physical, and spiritual health.

Other considerations and implications for practice are as follows. Implementing a *Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha* group can be a transformative experience for participants. However, there are several considerations that need to be considered to ensure the group is effective and supportive. First and foremost, participants should cultivate a growth mindset and be open to exploring new perspectives on forgiveness and relationships. This will help create a safe and supportive

environment for exploration and growth. Group size is important. Smaller group size can create a more intimate dynamic, while a larger group may provide more diverse perspectives. It's important to find the right balance that will best support the goals of the group.

Diversity is another important consideration. The composition of the group can impact the discussions and experiences, so it's important to reflect on how to create a diverse and inclusive environment. The format of the group, such as in-person vs. virtual, can also impact the level of engagement and connection among participants by choosing the format that will best support the goals of the group. Establishing clear group guidelines and principles can help create a safe and supportive environment for exploration and growth. Incorporating mindfulness and meditation practices can also deepen the experience and promote self-reflection. Group facilitators should be well trained and have a strong understanding of Aloha, mindfulness, forgiveness, and relationship dynamics to be able to facilitate meaningful discussions and activities.

Providing follow-up resources and support can help participants continue to integrate and apply *Mindful Forgivenss with Aloha* in their daily lives. Regularly evaluating the progress and impact of the group can help refine and improve the experience for future participants.

Implementing a *Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha* group can be a powerful experience, but careful consideration of these factors can help ensure the group is effective and supportive for all participants. Further research is needed to determine the generalizability of these findings to other populations and to further explore the specific mechanisms through which Aloha and Mindful Forgiveness work together to improve well-being. Nonetheless, these results offer promising implications for practices and highlight the potential benefits of incorporating Indigenous values and practices into therapeutic interventions. In conclusion, the combination of Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha has the potential to be a valuable tool in promoting well-being and improving the mental health of Native Hawaiians and other populations impacted by cultural historical trauma and other losses.

Conclusion

Our experiences, observations, and research findings suggest that incorporating mindful forgiveness with the traditional Hawaiian value of "aloha" into therapeutic peer support processes has a positive impact on Native Hawaiians and others. The results indicate that this culturally responsive approach has a positive effect by reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder while promoting feelings of hope, compassion and well-being in participants who completed the Mindful Forgiveness with Aloha peer support group. This paper highlights the importance of culturally responsive therapeutic interventions as a curative response

to the effects of cultural historical trauma, grief, and other losses. Additionally, this paper draws attention to the need for continued exploration into the benefits of incorporating indigenous values and practices such as love, belonging, and community into mental health support for holistic well-being of the body, mind, and spirit. We close this paper by returning to ‘ike kupuna, by offering this olelo no‘eau, or Native Hawaiian proverb:

“He kēhau ho‘oma‘ema‘e ke aloha.”
Love is like cleansing dew.
Love removes hurt.
Olelo Noeau #683 (Pukui, 1983)

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