

Culture Helps Us Heal

Substance Use

Substances - like alcohol and drugs - change the way our brain works. One of the first changes that happens is that substances take over the part of our brain that controls our cravings. Soon people find themselves taking substances more often and in larger amounts.

When someone's substance use causes them to have health issues or problems at work, school, or home, they may have a substance use disorder.

Fortunately, pregnant people - like anyone else - can and do recover from substance use disorder. They can also have a happy, healthy baby.



The Power of Cultural Traditions

Recovering from substance use can be a long journey, with many ups and downs. Luckily, our cultural teachings are very powerful. They have helped many of us understand how to live well for generations.

Although everyone's relationship to their traditions is different, for many of us participating in our cultural practices is healing.

Here are some ideas:

- **Relieve stress** by doing activities that calm your body, mind, and spirit. Activities like meditating, praying, singing, spending time in nature, dancing, or cooking can help you feel relaxed and grounded.
- **Work on a traditional craft**, like weaving, carving, or basketmaking. Doing so teaches many lessons, including patience and practice keeping a good mindset. Also, working with traditional materials connects us to our roots and can help us turn inward to be able to "hear" our own thoughts.
- **Take care of your body** by gathering and eating natural foods from the earth that will support you in feeling good.



- **Take care of your mind** by creating a hopeful vision of your future that includes a healthy baby and family. Pregnancy and parenthood are sacred times when our minds are focused on the tasks to come. Connect with individuals – like understanding doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers - who can support your vision of a healthy and happy life.
- **Tend to your spirit** by getting connected with your traditional teachings. Speak with Elders and other knowledge bearers about pregnancy and parenthood. Our ancestors knew how to be well. Knowledge about wellness and how to live a happy and healthy life is often passed down from one generation to the next.



Connection is the Opposite of Addiction

Growing our connection to our culture and our community can help us build up our wellness skills. It can also support us in creating a hopeful vision that can help us navigate through life.

If life is a path, our culture, is like a map and compass. Through participating in our culture, the answers to life's questions can come from within us, even as we are supported by our community. This is very powerful.



Visit the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board's website at indiancountryecho.org/family-care-plans-toolkit to learn more about substance use, getting help, and other important topics.