Fact Sheet on the effects of Sexual Violence: factors of Sexual Violence, Suicide, and Substance abuse: how to heal and build communities of hope

Sexual Violence includes rape, intimate partner violence (domestic violence) and other unwanted sexual attention including stalking and sexting. None of these are part of Navajo traditions.

Rape and violence against men, women and children was used to subdue native peoples. These traumas now echo through native communities and decrease health and vitality.

A doctor studying extreme obesity found that adverse experiences in childhood such as sexual, physical, emotional abuse, having an alcoholic parent, witnessing violence in the home or being neglected greatly increase the chance of poor health throughout the person’s life.

Suicide and substance abuse reflect extreme pain. Although substance abuse is less common on the Navajo Nation than most of America, the lack of treatment means it affects many families and perpetuates the cycle of adverse childhood experiences, sexual violence and suicide.

The power that drives these destructive forces is shame. Sexual violence is done to shame the victim, shame then drives suicide and substance abuse.

The beginning of healing is to listen. First listen to yourself. Hold shame like a ball and throw it away. Sometimes this takes a lot of work, counseling, traditional ceremonies, using new therapies to change patterns in the brain can help.

As you get stronger you can listen to others, **T’aa’aanii ani Yiisiniltas’aa’**

**Then build a community where joy is present**

**A tribal government that works**

**Homes where children can thrive and reach their full health and potential.**