

March 2024



Heal, Hold & Center

Reflection Guide



[#HealHoldCenter](#)

Inspiring action through a unified message:
Building on *“No Survivor Justice Without Racial Justice”*
for Domestic Violence Awareness Month and Beyond



National Resource Center
on Domestic Violence



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What is Domestic Violence Awareness Month?

Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is a national campaign dedicated to raising awareness about domestic violence. Every October, organizations and individuals unite across the country for a national effort to uplift the needs, voices, and experiences of survivors. Congress declared the month of October to be Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 1989.



About the Domestic Violence Awareness Project

“Nothing that we do that is worthwhile is done alone.”

Mariame Kaba



In 1995, the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV) convened several national domestic violence organizations to launch a new effort to support domestic violence programs' awareness and education efforts for Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM). This collaborative effort became the Domestic Violence Awareness Project (DVAP).

The Domestic Violence Awareness Project has identified many themes for DVAM throughout the years meant to inspire people to action, including “It IS your business” and “Awareness + Action = Social Change.” In 2020, the DVAP uplifted the call to action “No Survivor Justice Without Racial Justice” to acknowledge the ways we must boldly pivot our work to dismantle white supremacy and center the needs and experiences of survivors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, especially those most marginalized. This message continues to be at the core of our messaging for DVAM.



Heal, Hold & Center

For DVAM and beyond, the Domestic Violence Awareness Project calls on us to *Heal, Hold & Center survivors*, especially those navigating anti-Blackness and other systems of oppression. We know there is no survivor justice without racial justice. We must work together to embrace the many cultural ways we can **heal** from violence and oppression, **hold** space for survivors, and **center** those most marginalized in all of our efforts to end domestic violence.

This guide offers an opportunity to dig deeper into each piece of the theme – *Heal, Hold & Center* – as well as its connection to the broader core message, *No Survivor Justice Without Racial Justice*. The prompts throughout the guide can be utilized through personal reflection, in organizations with fellow advocates, with survivors who may or may not access formal services, in community spaces with those invested in peace and justice, with the general public via social media or awareness events, and elsewhere.

In this guide, you will find conversation starters, considerations, and prompts for personal and organizational reflection. Marketing materials, sample social media posts, and related materials featuring the #HealHoldCenter theme are available for your use and adaptation at: <https://www.dvawareness.org/HealHoldCenter>



Ponder:

- How might your organization pave a path that celebrates the essence of Heal, Hold & Center for survivors and marginalized communities?
- In your collaborations and partnerships, how are healing, holding space, and centering marginalized voices weaved into the fabric of your efforts?



No Survivor Justice Without Racial Justice

Racial justice is our work. Dismantling anti-Blackness where it shows up in our personal and professional spaces is a specific and integral part of racial justice work. We must be the work, not just do the work. We all have a role to play in creating safe and thriving communities for all.



Reflect:

- How does your organization’s mission, values, and/or actions align with “No Survivor Justice Without Racial Justice”?
- Detail your community’s efforts towards racial justice.
- Identify barriers faced in the pursuit of racial justice and its implications for survivors, communities and prevention efforts.
- Relate the theme, “Heal, Hold & Center” with racial justice.
- If the discussion hasn’t begun, what’s your first step?

“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Desmond Tutu



HEAL

Healing is an important component of our work to address domestic violence. It is necessary for those who experience harm and those who cause harm, as both may be part of each of our lived experiences. It can and should look different for each of us, depending on our unique cultural backgrounds, values, and beliefs.

The theme invites us to widen our embrace, including seniors and others we may not reach.



“Rarely, if ever,
are any of us
healed in
isolation.
Healing is an act
of communion.”

bell hooks

Consider:

- How does your organization address the healing of older adults?
- Are partnerships in place to make healing accessible for seniors?
- Who determines what healing looks like and whether it's happening?
- Are healing circles a part of your organizational/community/ family practice? Here are examples of how some communities are holding space for healing circles: <https://healingcirclesglobal.org/>
- In what ways does healing work contribute toward preventing domestic violence?





“Mainstream ideas of healing are deeply rooted in ableist ideologies that you’re either sick or well, fixed or broken, and that nobody would want to be in a disabled, sick or mad body mind.”

Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

HOLD

To hold space is to be physically, mentally, and emotionally present for others. It is to listen respectfully, without judgement, so that others may feel cared for, understood, and seen. Holding space is simple, yet offers a powerful antidote to invisibility and isolation. Holding someone is an act of caring that can come in many forms beyond physical touch.



Delve Into:

- What are your methods for holding space (for example, support groups, therapy, counseling, or prevention activities)? Are these methods successful or culturally responsive? Are the outcomes meeting your organization’s goals and the participants’ expectations?
- List ideas for creating a dedicated time for seniors and other marginalized groups. Identify if specialized advocates are available for their distinct needs.
- What are ways you hold space for those who experience trauma in your workplace, your community, and your family?



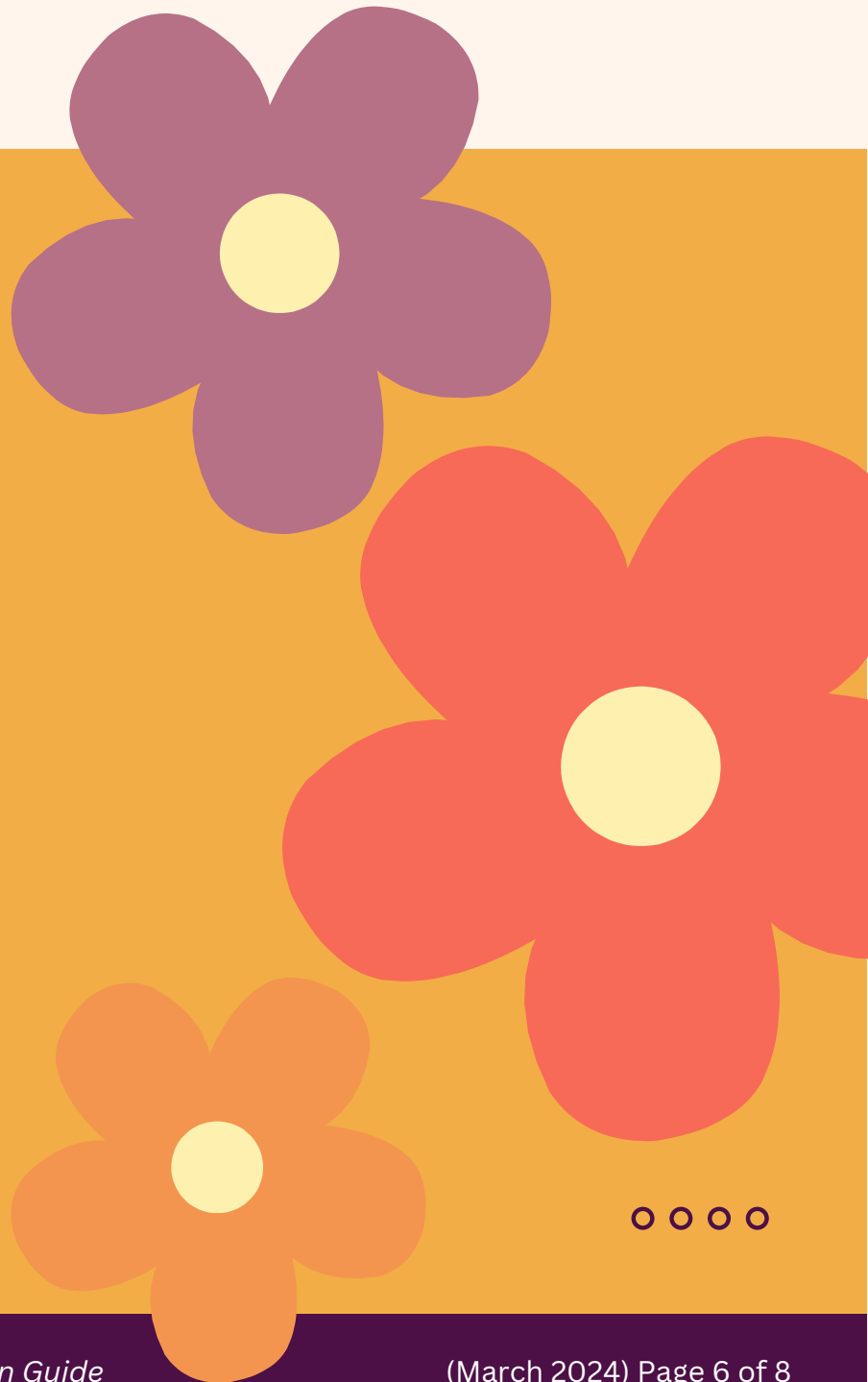
CENTER

To center is to place in the middle – the focal point of greatest importance, around which all things are built. In our efforts to end domestic violence, we must consider who we are working for and who we are most accountable to. If survivors, especially those with the greatest need, are at our center, then all of our efforts must be created in partnership with them, guided by their voices, experiences, and needs. At times, this calls for a “re-centering” of our individual and organizational practices. We have a responsibility to engage in on-going assessment and realignment to ensure survivors remain at the center of our work.



Evaluate:

- Consider your organization’s approach to centering survivors.
- What are some innovative methods to include those who have been previously overlooked, like seniors, LGBTQ+, and male-identified survivors?
- Implement concrete strategies to shift marginalized survivors and advocates from peripheral roles to central ones.
- What are some obstacles to re-centering and potential solutions?





Sustaining “Heal, Hold & Center”

While Domestic Violence Awareness Month takes place in October, we must commit to engaging in these conversations throughout the year. As we move beyond DVAM, consider:

“Thriving, healing and hurting can all happen simultaneously.”

Arlene Vassell

- In what ways does your organization and community acknowledge and put into action that there is “No Survivor Justice Without Racial Justice”?
- How does your community embody racial justice work?
- What are some of the barriers your organization and community have encountered when advancing the work of racial justice?
- How can you work collaboratively with community partners and allies to break through these barriers?
- How does the DVAM theme “Heal, Hold & Center” fit into racial equity work?





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