I am not giving you traditional powerpoints or a traditional way of referencing. I am doing this intentionally. This is an opportunity to lay down your intellect and to invite your body into an experience of healing that is fun, safe, and holistic (in the fullest use of the word).

For some of us the idea of laying down our intellect is immediately suspect - “will this be woo-woo, feel good mush” - the kind of stuff we chaplains and spiritual sorts are often accused of?” We may have even bought into the idea that something is questionable if it is not quantifiable!” I get that most of us spiritual/religious types are in positions to need to justify our existence to prove our work matters as much as the neurosurgeons (if for no other reason than we will not be cut from the budget)!

Do NOT mistake however, the unique, playful, creative endeavors that we will be doing together as “healing lite”. On the contrary...there is so much research now in support of the creative, right side of brain approach to healing and wellness. In fact there are those who are beginning to “prove” there is no full healing without the integration of the body and the creative. The world of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) has radically and forever changed the face of medicine. CAM is a movement that was pushed forward because people (patients and clients) were using all sorts of “alternative” healing methods and they were paying out of pocket and NOT telling their traditional medical doctors!!! The medical community got wind of this and decided they should pay attention.

What most of the current researchers and clinicians have in common is they are realizing that TRAUMA is a precipitating event that pushes people into
illness. Trauma can mean the obvious like war, but also the stress of love gone wrong in the many forms that can take. Trauma can be “Big T” like 9/11 or “Little T”, which can be the accumulated life stresses that each of us encounters habitually every day. Caregivers are exposed to the pain of the human condition which can contribute to “vicarious trauma”. Which is why good self-care is not a luxury, but an essential.

We, in the mental health world, have expanded our definition of trauma and in the expansion of that definition we have realized that all of us are exposed to trauma and traumatizing events. Some of us get sick from being traumatized and some of us do not. So the burning research question of course is, “Why is this so?” Added to that question was the observation that wild animals do not seem to suffer from long term consequences of trauma in their lives even though they live with chronic stress and a need for hypervigilence (the constant scanning of the environment for threat) but they do not seem to get PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder). Why is that? We have also recognized that people who live in tribes and tight knit communities do not get PTSD. So what is the connection?

The answers are taking at least two tracks, 1) animals have a built in way to “throw off trauma”, one that humans also have but have learned to override. 2) Tribes and communities offer a form of connection and secure attachment that is often missing or damaged in our modern society.

The great news of both of these knowings is that we can all learn to throw off trauma! We can learn how to self-soothe and how to allow our body to process both the big and the little “T”s of life. Plus, we can heal from insecure attachment, we can build tribe and form connections within our communities - we simply need to recognize the essential nature of doing so and be taught the skills. We can become more intentional about connection with self, others, and God.

WE ARE WIRED TO BE ABLE TO NAVIGATE TRAUMA AND STRESS. WE HUMANS ARE RESILENT.

Now the most exciting part of this new research is that the best way to build community and connection with both self and others is with all the fun
stuff – music, dance, singing, art, smells, and food. Now we are talking about the behaviors that compose religious rituals! Imagine, worship, the act of connecting with the Divine, turns out to also be how we re-connect with self and others!!! The way that we heal the worst of our pain is with the acts that help us to experience the Divine....Is God brilliant or what?

When we have completed our 4 hours together it is my prayer that you will leave with a deep sense of peace and freedom (or at the very least you will have identified that you do not feel these things and can begin the process of asking for help to feel them – as they are your human inheritance). Both individually and collectively we will have enlarged our Spirits and we will have more ways to self-soothe so that we may be more available to those who need us. And then if you need to feed your intellect (or if you need proof to convince your Medical Directors to fund these types of healing interventions) you can look up the research.

These are some of the brilliant individuals changing the direction of the conversation about healing
Peter Levine, Ph.D.
James Gordon, M.D.
Andrew Weil, M.D.
Stephen Porges, Ph.D.
Diane Heller-Poole, Ph.D.
Alan Shore, Ph.D.
Bessel Van der Kolk, Ph.D.
Anna Chitty, RPP, BCST, SEP
John Chitty, BCST, RPD
Dan Siegel, Ph.D.
Francine Shapiro, Ph.D.
Christina Puchalski, M.D.
Daniel Amen, M.D.
Pat Ogden, Ph.D.
Judith Herman, Ph.D.
Janina Fisher, Ph.D.
There will be lots of music to enjoy during our time together and I will provide a list of all the Artists and the words so that you have that to take home. But I am NOT going to spoil the surprise by telling you now. Our brains really like surprise, we thrill to new and novel. So begin anticipating all the ways your nervous system is going to be nurtured this day...I can’t wait to meet you. Love, Tina