

## *Living Spherically*

Sarah Rivers Deal, Ph.D.



Borrowing from a traditional Native American Indian perspective, living spherically implies directing life energy in four directions – North, East, South and West. The Medicine Wheel aids in identifying an internal dialogue by graphically illustrating balance and harmony (or lack thereof) in our lives. The circle represents the interconnection between systems – as one system changes, the others are inevitably affected either positively or negatively. Eloquently stated by Chief Seattle, “Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”

The North represents the mind, which encompasses intellectual pursuits and personal reflection. The East represents one’s emotional life, including passion, creativity, intrapersonal and interpersonal connectedness, and spirituality. The South represents one’s connection to nature and all living organisms. The West symbolizes exercise of the physical body and body awareness.

Those seeking balance can utilize the medicine wheel to gauge how much energy is invested in each direction and make changes accordingly. First, start by drawing a large circle on a sheet of paper, indicating all four directions. Second, focus on each direction and reflect on the current time and energy invested. For the North, ask yourself, “What are you doing to find inner calm or relaxation and wisdom learned from others?” For the East, “How connected do you feel to humankind, to yourself, to the universe? How are you living a creative existence?” For the South, “What am I doing to protect and sustain Mother Earth? How connected do I feel to nature and all living organisms?” For the West, ask yourself, “In what ways am I exploring and enjoying my physical capacities?” While reflecting, it may help to include symbols, abbreviations, or simple drawings that indicate the type of activities related to each direction. Note that some activities may overlap. For example, taking a walk in nature may stimulate the mind through reflection (North), the body through exercise (West), and the spiritual side through feeling connected to the divine (East).

Once you have completed this exercise, review your medicine wheel and see where your energy is directed and where it’s lacking. The overall goal is not to be extremely active in all directions, resulting in a feeling of being spread too thin. Emphasize quality over quantity. Spend some time reflecting on the direction currently most neglected. Set a goal to take one small step toward this direction within the next week. For example, if South is the most deprived area, one might establish a goal to take a 20 minute walk twice weekly in a neighborhood park to start. Setting small, accomplishable goals and then building on them increases the chance for success. Overall, give yourself credit for areas that receive your energies and attention, but also be

mindful of where you could improve. Challenge yourself, knowing that you are a work in progress.

To read further on the medicine wheel and its application for wellness, see “Cherokee Full Circle” by J.T. Garrett and Michael Garrett.

*Sarah Rivers Deal, Ph.D. was an Associate Professor of Psychology & Counseling at Northeastern State University in Broken Arrow and a holistic therapist/licensed professional counselor. She now has a small private practice in Austin, Texas called Two Rivers Psychotherapy.*