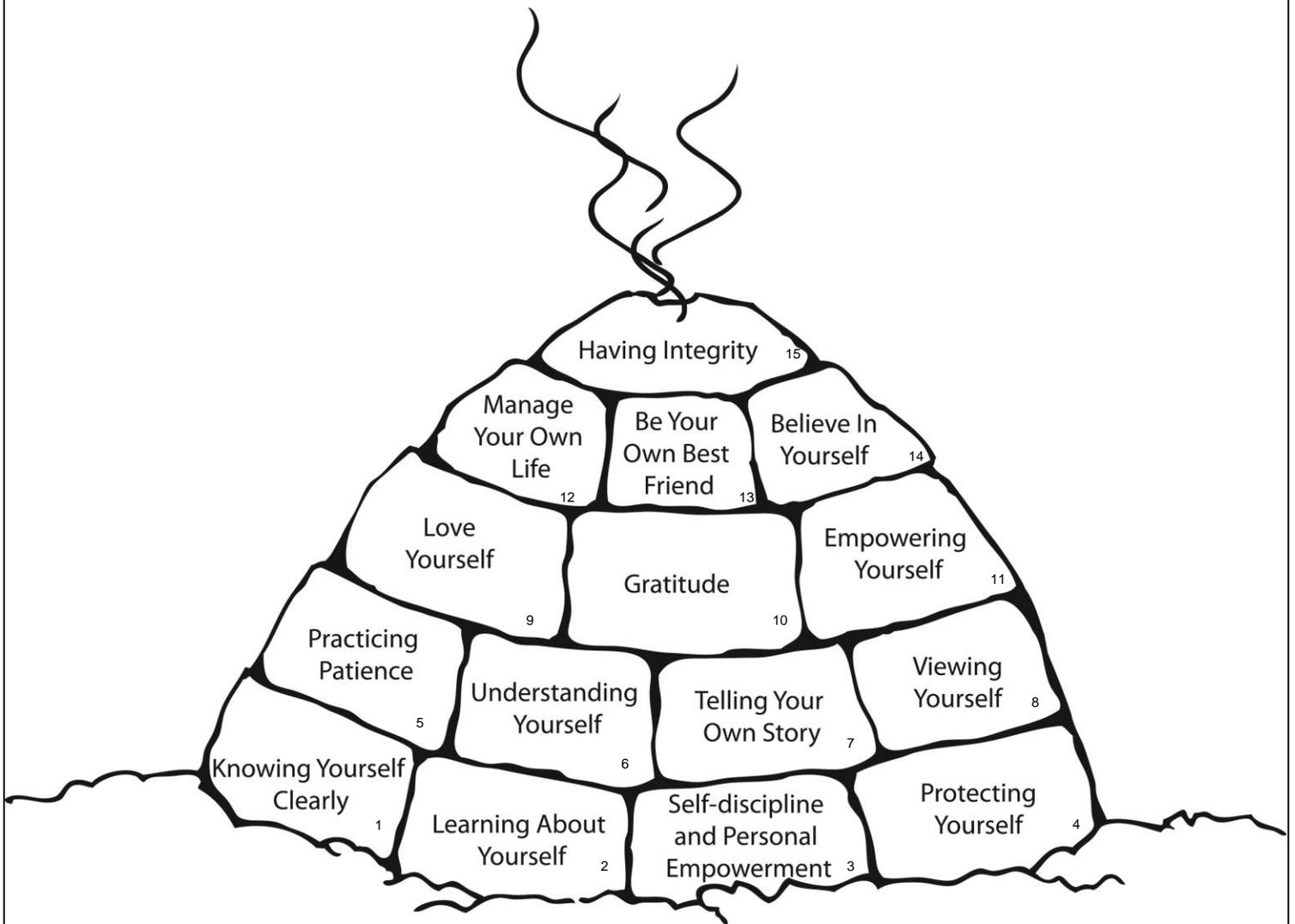


The Igloo of Life

By Meeka Arnakaq





1. Knowing Yourself Clearly

The first important step toward personal growth is to explore ourselves and our experiences. Do we know who we really are, where we come from, and what our core personal values are based on? Are our values playing a big role in creating stability in our lives? Our knowledge about ourselves starts from our cultural background and community. What does your cultural background and community mean to you?

In this course, our focus is to explore our life experiences in order to recognize how much we have learned and how much we know and can do. For Block One, write or draw one or two things that you know about yourself. For example, you could record a value you hold strongly or a personal quality that you value about yourself.



2. Learning About Yourself

The things to consider are: Am I learning and remembering who I really am? Am I aware of my roles and responsibilities? Do I reflect on my day to ensure that I am in alignment with my principles and values, that I will love myself as I am, that I will always remember that I am a good person, that I

share similar background with others, and that it is okay to be different from others? Am I aware of my skills and strengths and my potential for wellbeing and self-reliance, and independent living?

In Section Three of the course, we have explored some of our family relationships and learning as a way to begin identifying and documenting what we know and can do. You may be surprised to see how much you have learned from your family, including your roles and responsibilities. For Block Two of the igloo, draw or describe something new that you have learned about yourself.

3. Self-Discipline and Personal Empowerment

A sense of self-discipline may help you to feel empowered as your own person and to work through obstacles in your life more easily. Personal empowerment can help us to have the ability to control emotions and manage our feelings in a healthy way.

Let's use an example of a person who just received a pay cheque, but this person has no self-discipline to manage money well. Without considering family priorities, he uses up the money for things of little importance and does not try to save for future needs. He doesn't realize until a few days later that he has run out of money and still has another seven days before the next payday. This is an example of not practicing self-discipline and this eventually leads to a sense of personal disempowerment. Have you had experiences like this before? How did it feel?

Feeling overwhelming anger at someone but not allowing it to become a physical manifestation is one example of maintaining self-discipline. It is an ability to refrain oneself from hitting someone else or damaging other people's property.

This kind of self-discipline helps us control our emotions, so we can react constructively to other people's criticism. It helps us to take the time to think twice about our intentions. It helps us to find alternative solutions and to avoid self-pity or even suicidal thoughts. It helps us to a path of a healthier life. All of this is an integral part of building a strong foundation and knowing who you really are. We always have a choice about how we react and how we act out our feelings. Do we conduct ourselves in a way that respects our own life and the lives of others as sacred?

Exploring our relationships to family and land can help us to think about the importance of self-discipline. On the land, self-discipline is essential for survival and success. For Block Three, draw or describe one way that you practice self-discipline in your life.



4. Protecting Yourself

Let's consider an analogy of a person who has fallen through thin ice. This person will do everything possible to get to his own safety. Or, consider a person in a boat accident—this person will fight to stay alive. The same principle applies to our emotional stability. We need to know when to protect ourselves from falling through the cracks in our lives—or to stop ourselves from drowning. This means keeping yourself in a safe environment that nurtures your life and supports your emotional growth.

If you witnessed a boating accident, you would do everything possible to save the people involved in the accident. You would feel overwhelming fear for them and love for them. You must apply the same love for yourself and the same desire to keep yourself safe and protected. Consider personal care, but also the company you keep, the food you eat, the relationships you have, and anything else that influences how you feel and what you do.

By taking your personal safety and wellbeing seriously, you will be better prepared for unknown circumstances and you won't become a victim of unsafe environments or unhealthy relationships.

For Block Four of the igloo, draw or describe one or two things you do to protect yourself.



5. Practicing Patience

Practicing patience allows you to live through challenges and to remember that everything passes in life. You must have patience with yourself when you are facing a difficult period in your life—as difficult periods will pass. Working to improve ourselves takes time and patience. We often think that changes should happen immediately, but this is not usually the case. It takes patience with yourself and others.

Let's talk about some ways we practice patience...

Do you feel that you are patient enough with yourself?

Do you know any stories about the importance of patience?

For Block Five, draw or use a few words to describe one way in which you practice patience with yourself.

6. Understanding Yourself

This is a big topic with many components! It is important to understand yourself and be honest with yourself about who you are. Even more mature people may not have a good understanding of themselves. The way that they express themselves may indicate that they are in denial. They may not understand themselves well or be able to express who they really are.

Understanding ourselves opens the door to appreciating our potential and our unique gifts and it allows us to see new opportunities and possibilities. It is key for you to communicate with yourself (“self talk”) and with others.

Think about what you know and understand about yourself. Use your portfolio work so far to help you consider your special gifts and talents. For Block Six, draw or describe some of your unique abilities and gifts.



7. Telling Your Own Story

Telling our own stories helps us understand ourselves and be truthful about our lives. It helps to build our confidence because it affirms who we are, where we are from, and what we believe. It also helps us to clarify our uniqueness, our talents, skills, interests, and our limitations or fears. We may all be in the same program and study the same topics, but we use our own world

view and understandings which makes our learning unique to each of us. Each person would tell the story of this course just a little bit differently, because they would be telling their own story about it.

Now that you have had the experience of creating a life chronology and working on a personal life story, draw or describe something from your life experiences that is meaningful to you for Block Seven.



8. Viewing Yourself

Personal assessment can help us recognize and enhance our good qualities and to change the things that are not serving us well. Looking inward takes dedicated time and is a practice of discipline. We need to look at our challenges in order to overcome them. We also need to reflect on our positive accomplishments! For example, many years ago when people had never seen airplanes before, they were very afraid of them and hid to protect themselves. Now, we travel all over the world and airplanes are very much a part of our lives. How we view ourselves in various situations helps to build our confidence and empowers us to move on to new things without fear. Where do you go to reflect and have quiet time? Who do you talk to when you want to reflect on personal experiences?

For Block Eight, draw or describe a good quality about yourself. Try to celebrate this quality in yourself and feel confident about it.



9. Love Yourself

When we love ourselves, care for ourselves, and feel good about who we are, we are more likely to stay on a healthy path in our lives. It helps us to be good to ourselves and to others. When we are able to love ourselves, we are also able to love others. When you have little love for yourself, it is sometimes called a lack of self-esteem and it is reflected in how you treat yourself and others.

For Block Nine, draw or describe something that makes you feel good and shows that you love yourself.

10. Gratitude

Appreciating yourself is harder to do than appreciating others. We often acknowledge when someone else gives us a wonderful gift or is considerate of us, but we do not often transfer this gratitude to ourselves. We should recognize our good traits and kindness—we should show ourselves respect and gratitude for who we are and what we can do in our lives. When we do this well, we have more drive in our lives and we are better able to support

ourselves. We have the ability to be grateful to ourselves and when we do this we are better able to take on the challenges in life and make the most of any circumstances. It is like saying “thank you” to yourself.

For Block Ten, draw or describe a way in which you show gratitude. How do you say thank you to yourself for being a wonderful person?



11. Empowering Yourself

When you are striving to build on your skills and interests, you are in fact empowering yourself. Each step forward builds confidence and allows you to keep on a good path of learning and development. Every step adds to your confidence and builds on the empowerment you feel. In life we may face storms or challenges – we cannot stop in the middle of them –

we have to find the shore and handle the situation so that we can get past it. This is empowerment through experience: learning from an experience, living through the difficulties, and succeeding in the end.

For Block Eleven, write a few words or draw an image that completes the following sentence: “I feel empowered when...”



12. Manage
Your Own
Life

It is easier to manage our own lives when we know and believe that we can get through things and that we have the ability to trust in the outcome. There are several aspects to managing our lives both physically and emotionally. It takes stamina, determination and courage. We need to trust in our own ability and not give up.

Perseverance is as important today as it was in the times of our ancestors.

What helps you to manage your life? What gives you courage and determination? For Block Twelve, draw or describe something that helps you take ownership of your life.



13. Be Your
Own Best
Friend

When you are your own best friend, you take care of yourself. You don't work against yourself or disregard yourself. You look for and find things that are good for you. You find opportunities to help you grow and encourage yourself to be the best you can be. When you are your own best friend you are not afraid of being by yourself – you are able to do things on your own or with others. And, as it is with other friends, you can have time when you are separated or having difficulties in your relationship. Sometimes friends or families have differences that separate them but they later reunite and have even stronger relationships. You too can reconnect with yourself and increase your sense of being your own best friend.

For Block Thirteen, draw or describe a way in which you act like your own best friend. How do you take care of yourself? What makes you feel good?



14. Believe in Yourself

Belief in yourself affirms who you are. It is about having trust in yourself and faith in what you can do. This is very grounding. It helps you to know who you are and allows others to see you as you are. This is a key component and is a result of having achieved the other stages in personal development.

When someone does not believe in themselves, they are not aware of their potential and they believe that this is how others view them, too. They are vulnerable to the criticism of others and slowly their confidence is eroded and they have little to no self-confidence or belief in their future. When Inuit were self-reliant, they believed in themselves because each day they accomplished what they needed to do to survive. This self-confidence was a necessary part of life – as it is today. We need to find new ways of recognizing our abilities, dreams, and accomplishments so that we can continue to believe in ourselves and our potential.

For Block Fourteen, draw or describe a way in which you that you believe in yourself and your potential.



15. Having Integrity

Personal integrity is about honesty. It means that you are truthful with yourself and others. It is a balance between our physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual wellbeing. When we are balanced emotionally and

mentally we are in better harmony with ourselves. This allows us to feel more grounded and to demonstrate integrity in all that we do. When this is the case we can count on ourselves and others can count on us.

For Block Fifteen, draw or describe something that relates to the feeling of personal integrity in your life. "In my life, I demonstrate personal integrity by..."

