

# RAICES Y

ROOTS & WINGS

*Alas*

# GUIDE

**Integrating ancestral practices and the four elements  
to nourish mind, body, soul and community**

Presented by Resilience Social Work Inc.



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH  
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



Phoenix Rise Project



# **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

(LOS ANGELES COUNTY)

We respectfully acknowledge that this workshop guide was created and shared on the ancestral and unceded lands of the Tongva, Gabrielino, Kizh, Tataviam, Serrano, and Chumash peoples, who are the original caretakers of the lands now known as Los Angeles County.

We honor their ongoing relationship with this land, their living presence, and the resilience of Indigenous communities past, present, and future. Many of the healing practices reflected in this guide are rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, and we offer this work with gratitude, humility, and respect for Indigenous sovereignty and wisdom.

We hope that this work will contribute to collective healing, remembrance and respect for indigenous sovereignty and continued resilience.

To learn more about the First Peoples of Los Angeles County, please visit the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission website at [lanaic.lacounty.gov](http://lanaic.lacounty.gov).

# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Raices y Alas Digital Guide, created to accompany you during this seven-session workshop.

The purpose of this program is to foster awareness about mental health, reduce stigma and promote healing within the Latino community, integrating ancestral practices and cultural wisdom.

Throughout this series, we will explore how the four elements – fire, earth, water and wind – can become powerful tools to nurture the four pillars of wellbeing: mind, body, soul and community.

Each session is designed to invite you to actively participate, reflect on your personal experience and strengthen collective empowerment in an environment of respect and support.

Remember that every step you take on this path is an opportunity to reconnect with your roots and discover new wings.

Allow yourself to learn, heal and grow, knowing that you are not alone: your history, your culture and your community are sources of strength.

This space is for you, so that you can be inspired, take care of yourself and be motivated to create wellbeing in your life and in those around you.

After each session, complete the suggested activities and use a journal to record your reflections and progress and share your experiences with your group or community if you wish.

**Trust your process and celebrate every step forward,  
no matter how small!**

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# SESSION 1: FUNDAMENTALS

## THE FOUR ELEMENTS AND PILLARS OF WELLBEING

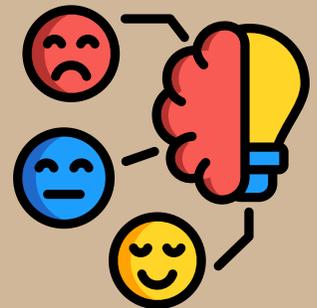
### UNDERSTANDING OUR EMOTIONS AND THE STRESS RESPONSE

We are all emotional beings, and every feeling we experience is valid, even difficult ones like anger, frustration, sadness or disappointment. Emotions function as important signals our body gives us to alert us to what is happening around us. These signals help us recognize and respond to external circumstances, guiding us to act with caution, ask questions, explore new possibilities or simply enjoy the moment.



In times of stress or when there is a history of trauma, managing emotions can be more complicated because our survival instincts are more active, making us more sensitive and reactive.

Understanding that emotions are not just reactions, but valuable information, allows us to notice our environment and choose how to move forward in a way that supports our wellbeing and our relationships with others.



Let's practice on the following sheets.

# HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY?

Write a word or phrase and accompany it with an emoji that represents how you feel.

- 💭 I'm thinking about:
- 🤔 I don't understand anything about:
- 🥰 I'm obsessed with it:
- 🔥 My energy is focused on:
- 🤯 I can't get over:
- 🍷 I just want:

**SELECT YOUR EMOJI FOR TODAY AND WRITE SOMETHING IF YOU NEED TO:**

- 😊 **I FEEL GOOD** \_\_\_\_\_
- 😐 **I'M NEUTRAL** \_\_\_\_\_
- 😞 **FEELING A BIT DOWN** \_\_\_\_\_
- 😡 **I'M FRUSTRATED** \_\_\_\_\_
- 🤯 **EVERYTHING OVERWHELMS ME** \_\_\_\_\_
- 😴 **I JUST WANT TO SLEEP** \_\_\_\_\_

Today I want to remind myself that...



# SESSION 1: CONTINUED

## UNDERSTANDING OUR EMOTIONS AND THE STRESS RESPONSE

Thanks to our ancestors, we have accumulated keys to survival and resilience, and when we face stressful situations, our body and mind can react in the following ways:



### **FIGHT**

We feel the need to confront the problem directly, sometimes with anger or intense energy. Our inner fire ignites.

### **FLIGHT**

We want to escape or avoid the situation, which can manifest as anxiety or avoidance. We feel like the air is pushing us away from the situation.



### **Freeze**

We feel paralyzed, unable to act or make decisions. We are physically present, but our minds freeze to protect us. The earth anchors us.

### **FAWN (COMPLACENCY)**

We appease, please or comply with a threat to avoid conflict, abuse or neglect even at the expense of our own wellbeing. We flow like water.



Recognizing our automatic responses to stress (past survival strategies from our ancestors) and our reactions is important for identifying our emotional state and regulating our nervous system. So let's reflect on this and write down our reactions and what pushes our buttons to activate.

What are your triggers or events that activate your fight, flight, freeze or fawn response? (e.g., when I am ignored, contradicted, challenged, accused, questioned or complimented...)

# BODY SCAN

Find a quiet place without distractions. Sit or lie down and consider setting a 5-minute alarm.

Start at the top of your head and slowly work your way down to your toes. Pay attention to physical sensations such as temperature, itching, tension and so on. Simply observe without judgment.

What physical sensations are you experiencing? (e.g., notice the temperature, where you hold tension, your heartbeat, your breathing...)

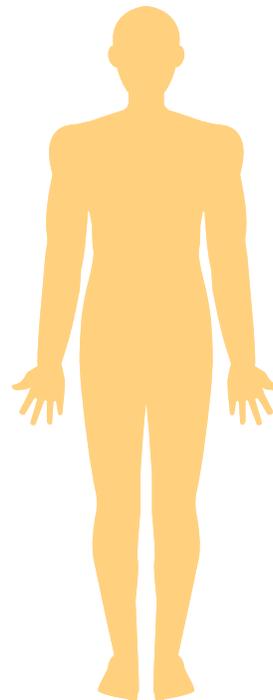
What emotions are you experiencing? (e.g., loneliness, anger, abandonment, helplessness, sadness, fear, joy...)

What thoughts are going through your mind? (e.g., how dare he, he'll see, I'm worthless, I'm stupid...)

Reflecting on this scan, what knowledge have you gained about yourself today?

If you find it difficult to feel it in your body, try coloring the outline of a body in correlation with your feelings.

For example, if your left calf hurts, color your left calf the color that represents that pain you feel.





# HOW EMOTIONS FEEL

Take a minute for each question, trying to identify how you feel the emotion. I suggest closing your eyes to focus on your body and the sensations that each emotion evokes.



**HOW DOES SADNESS FEEL IN YOUR BODY?**



**HOW DOES JOY FEEL IN YOUR BODY?**



**HOW DOES ANGER FEEL IN YOUR BODY?**

# SESSION 1: FUNDAMENTALS — CONTINUED

## ELEMENTS IN ANCESTRAL TRADITIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON WELLBEING

Now that you've connected with yourself and discovered your reactions to stress and different emotions, let's learn about how to use our cultural heritage to process and manage them.

Ancient traditions offer valuable tools for mental health and wellbeing; below we will discover the power and support that the 4 elements provide us.

### **FIRE**

Symbolizes transformation and mental clarity. Using fire (candles, incense) helps to set intentions and cleanse heavy energies that lower our vibration and throw our emotional wellbeing off balance.



### **LAND**

Represents nourishment and rootedness. Preparing traditional foods, using herbs and connecting with nature strengthens the body and emotional stability.

### **WATER**

It is a source of renewal and emotional healing. Cleansing rituals, music and art facilitate the release of emotions and the regulation of the nervous system through letting go, processing and allowing things to flow.



### **WIND**

Encompasses communication and community connection. Mindful breathing, dialogue and group activities foster mutual support and collective resilience

Are there any rituals that you practice in which the 4 elements are incorporated? How do they support your emotional wellbeing?

# PERSONAL REFLECTION TEMPLATE

WHAT DO MIND, BODY, SOUL AND COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU?

Instructions: Take a few minutes to reflect calmly. There are no right or wrong answers. Write or draw whatever comes to mind. This reflection is for your personal process of healing and self-discovery.

 MIND. What does the mind mean to you?  
(Thoughts, emotions, beliefs, focus, learning, emotional wellbeing)

 BODY. What does the body mean to you?  
(Physical sensations, health, rest, movement, body signals)

 SOUL. What does the soul mean to you?  
(Spirituality, purpose, inner connection, values, essence)

 COMMUNITY. What does community mean to you?  
(Family, friends, support, culture, roots, belonging)

 Final Reflection. How do you connect mind, body, soul and community to support your wellbeing?

**Reminder: Your wellbeing has different components. Honoring your mind, body, soul and community is an act of self-love and collective resilience.**

# HOMework

Use this sheet and answer the questions each day for a week or longer if you like to practice awareness of your emotional wellbeing.

## MY DAILY EMOTIONS LOG

Choose two words from the list to describe how you feel today. Can't find your emotions there?

Feel free to use other words.

I believe these feelings are:

- Both are heavy
- Both are positive
- positives and heavy
- More positive than heavy

I feel this way because

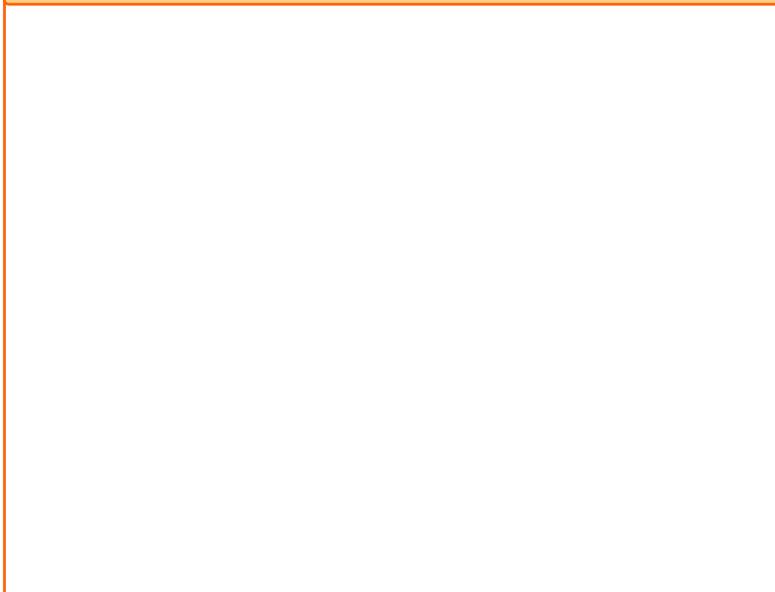
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What can cheer you up or help you be happy today? Draw it below.



### LIST OF EMOTIONS

angry  
annoyed  
anxious  
embarrassed  
clumsy  
brave  
calm  
cheerful  
cold  
confused  
discouraged  
disgusted  
distracted  
saddened  
excited  
friendly  
guilty  
happy  
hopeful  
jealous  
lonely  
loved  
nervous  
offended  
frightened  
thoughtful  
tired  
uncomfortable  
insecure  
worried

## SESSION 2: FIRE

### NOURISHING THE MIND

Fire symbolizes enlightenment, clarity and transformation. In this session, we draw upon ancient rituals – such as candle lighting, storytelling and setting intentions – to foster mental clarity and resilience. Participants will learn practical strategies for managing stress and honoring their inner wisdom.

#### GUIDED MEDITATION:

#### REMEMBERING OUR ANCESTRAL HERITAGE AND INNER RESILIENCE

##### TO LISTEN, ACCESS IT HERE:

[https://youtu.be/cg1ZIGWnH\\_8?si=jKVKMVq2FtGuZ65H](https://youtu.be/cg1ZIGWnH_8?si=jKVKMVq2FtGuZ65H)

Before we begin, we invite you to enter this space with openness and curiosity. This meditation has been created to help you reconnect with your inner strength, your hope and the wisdom that resides in your family history.

The inner fire we're going to imagine isn't something new. It's an energy that has been present in our families for generations. It represents resilience, love, courage and the ability to keep going even in difficult times.

It's not necessary to "do it right." Every experience is valid. Some people will feel calm, others excited, others perhaps tired. All are welcome.

We invite you to listen to each other, respect each other and support each other with kindness. This is a moment to pause, breathe and remember that we are not alone.



\*If you listen at home, you can sit or lie down comfortably to listen and if possible use headphones, light a candle, burn palo santo or incense to increase consciousness, cleanse your space and energy field and be able to focus.



# LET'S REFLECT

Instructions: Take a few minutes to reflect individually or as a family. You can write, draw or share aloud. There are no right or wrong answers.

## 1. Connecting with the Inner Fire

Where did you feel the fire or light in your body during meditation?

What did that fire feel like?

(e.g., warm, calm, strong, small, bright)

## 2. Thoughts and Focus

After meditation, how does your mind feel?

Calmer  More focused  The same  A little agitated  I'm not sure

What positive thought or message would you like to remember from your inner fire?

## 3. Emotions and Hope

What emotion did you notice most during or after meditation?

Calm  Hope  Gratitude  Sadness  Joy  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What gives you hope at this moment in your life or in your family?

## 4. Family Connection

How did it feel to share this experience as a group, in a community, or as a family?

Something I admire or am grateful for in my community/family is:

## 5. Integration and Closure

How can you remember or ignite your inner fire when you feel stressed or discouraged?

Breathing deeply  Thinking about my family or ancestors  Listening to music

Moving my body  Another way: \_\_\_\_\_

One word or intention that I take with me today is:

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Reminder:**

The inner fire never goes out. Sometimes it feels small, but it's always there. Returning to it is an act of love, connection and collective healing.

## THE POWER OF CONVERSATION

Opening up to community is an age-old tool we can use to maintain our emotional wellbeing. Before, this was done around a campfire; now we can do it with a lit candle and use incense or palo santo to bring calm and release heavy emotions.

Some “pan dulce” (pastries) with coffee and a good chat served as therapeutic outlets and a source of emotional and communal support for our grandmothers, aunties and neighbors who lacked access to emotional wellness services in their time. We can continue to use this powerful tool today, as it helps us overcome isolation, release heavy emotions, share joys and receive validation, information and support.



Let's share our own stories of resilience and how we have overcome hardships in our families, such as leaving our homeland and adjusting to a different country, poverty and uncertainty, etc...

**What are some family stories that deserve validation, that we need to feel and let go of into the fire?**



# LET'S MAKE INCENSE

Sacred smoke is an ancestral tool that helps us release heavy emotions and energies from our bodies and spaces, connecting us with our ancestors. It also helps us cultivate inner peace, awareness, grounding, and connection with nature. Cleansing our energy is essential for emotional wellbeing and sacred smoke is a supportive resource we can incorporate into our daily routine.

## Basic recipe for incense:

- 1 part\* of resin (copal, myrrh, ...)
- 3-4 parts of dried powdered botanicals and/or wood powder
- 1 drop of essential oil or fragrance per teaspoon of dry mix (optional)

Botanical Ingredients you can use for your incense: Rosemary, lavender, clove, bay leaves, cinnamon, rose petals, chamomile, palo santo (sawdust), sage, orange or lemon peel (dried and powdered), anise, lemon extract, copal, myrrh, frankincense and you can add your favorite essence as well if you like.



## Instructions:

Mix your preferred combination of powdered ingredients and then add a little water to obtain a consistency that is malleable like dough and mold them into a cone shape.

Then let them dry for 1 or 2 days until they are completely dry and ready to use.

Experiment with different ingredients until you get your favorite scent. Remember to burn them on sand in a dish, in an incense burner or copal burner (Copalera).



# TASK

## ANCESTRAL FIRE DIARY:

### CONNECTING WITH MY INNER STRENGTH TO FACE EACH DAY

**Instructions:** This journal is a safe space for you. You can write words, phrases, lists or draw. You don't need to complete everything in one day.

Return to these questions when you feel overwhelmed, tired or disconnected.

 1. Lighting the fire today Today I feel mainly:

Overwhelmed  Tired  Sad  Anxious  Hopeful  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Where do I feel these emotions in my body?

(e.g., chest, stomach, throat, head) If my inner fire could speak today, what would it tell me?

 2. Remembering my ancestral resilience. Think of someone in your family or ancestors who has overcome difficult times. Who is it? What quality or strength do I admire in that person? What part of that strength lives in me today?

 3. Using fire to calm overwhelm. When I feel overwhelmed, I can ignite my inner fire by:

- Take 3 deep breaths
- Place a hand on your heart or belly
- Remember a family story
- Light a candle (if it's safe)
- Listen to music that connects me to my roots
- Move my body (walk, stretch, dance)
- Another way: \_\_\_\_\_

Which of these practices do I want to try today or this week?

 4. Accompanying difficult emotions A difficult emotion I've been carrying lately is:

If that emotion were fire, it would be:

Gentle  Intense  Unstable  Protective  Subdued  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How can I allow my inner fire to transform this emotion, instead of fighting it?

 5. Focus and clarity. When my mind feels scattered, what helps me return to the present?

A phrase or reminder that helps me focus is:

 6. Integration for daily life. A small action I can take today to take care of myself is:

Something I am grateful to my body for today is:

 Journal Ending. Read this affirmation aloud or silently:

**“The fire of my ancestors lives within me. Even on difficult days, I am not empty. Within me there is strength, memory and hope.”**

### Reminder:

The ancestral fire doesn't always feel strong. Sometimes it's just a small spark. That's enough too. Returning to it is an act of self-love and collective healing.

## SESSION 3: EARTH

### TAKING CARE OF THE BODY

The earth represents nourishment, grounding and stability. This session is dedicated to ancestral foods, healing herbs and movement practices. Together, we will experience grounding exercises and learn how traditional remedies can support physical and emotional wellbeing.

### THE PLANTS AND THEIR MEDICINE

Our plant relatives have been on this planet longer than humans. Plants know how to survive harsh conditions and want to share their knowledge with us. They are here as allies to support and balance the various emotions we all experience at some point in our lives. Allow these ancient remedies into your life so they can heal and help.



Next, we will share different plants that support our emotional and physical wellbeing.





# HERBS AND FLOWERS THAT HELP LIFT OUR SPIRITS AND BRING COMFORT



<p><b>Sadness and Stress</b></p>	<p><b>Melissa:</b> It has the ability to improve mood without causing anxiety. It provides a relaxing effect on the nervous system.</p>
<p><b>Anxiety/Worry</b></p>	<p><b>Lavender:</b> It has the ability to relax the nervous system, improve memory and boost mood.</p> <p><b>Chamomile:</b> Provides inner peace. Calms anxiety and insomnia; relieves stomach upset.</p> <p><b>Melissa:</b> It has the ability to improve mood without causing anxiety. It provides a relaxing effect on the nervous system.</p>
<p><b>Over thinking/Worry</b></p>	<p><b>Valerian:</b> promotes peace, encourages quality sleep and brings a sense of peace and happiness.</p>
<p><b>Grief and Loss, Guilt</b></p>	<p><b>Lavender:</b> It has the ability to relax the nervous system, improve memory, and enhance mood. Studies have also shown that it relieves pain.</p> <p><b>Rose:</b> Balances depressive emotions and relieves heart depression. Rich in vitamin C and antioxidants.</p>
<p><b>Anger, Resentment, Dissapointment</b></p>	<p><b>Dandelion:</b> Strengthens and detoxifies the liver, where anger, disappointment and resentment are processed. Relieves heartburn and stomach upset caused by anger. Increases vitality and overall health.</p>
<p><b>Loneliness, Feeling Ignored/ Invisible</b></p>	<p><b>Holy Basil (Tulsi):</b> Balances the internal environment to promote a sense of wellbeing. It helps reduce stress and lowers cortisol, calming the nervous system. It fosters a sense of resilience and a more positive attitude.</p> <p><b>Rosemary:</b> Strengthens the mind and memory. Helps reduce stress and the low mood that often accompanies isolation. Promotes self-connection.</p>
<p><b>Fatigue, Exhaustion</b></p>	<p><b>Milky oats:</b> restores and nourishes the nervous system weakened by chronic stress and overwork.</p>

# SUPERMARKET HERBS FOR COMMON REMEDIES

 <p><b>Ginger</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-inflammatory</li> <li>• Digestive support</li> <li>• Pain reduction</li> <li>• Nausea relief</li> <li>• Lowers blood sugar *Contraindication: GERD, ulcer medications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinly sliced tea</li> <li>• Add to soups</li> <li>• Mix with honey</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Cloves</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports strong bones</li> <li>• Reduces oxidative stress</li> <li>• Supports blood sugar regulation</li> <li>• Ulcer-causing bacteria *contraindicated for blood clotting medications and diabetes medications</li> <li>• Aids digestion</li> <li>• Improves heart health</li> <li>• Protects the liver</li> <li>• Promotes sleep</li> <li>• Relieves stress</li> <li>• Boosts immunity</li> <li>• Anti-inflammatory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add to soups and cooking</li> <li>• Clove tea</li> <li>• Mouthwash</li> <li>• Cooking in soups and rice</li> <li>• Tea</li> <li>• Steam inhalation</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Turmeric+ Black Pepper</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digestive disorders</li> <li>• Joint inflammation (arthritis)</li> <li>• Respiratory infections</li> <li>• Wound healing</li> <li>• Maintaining a healthy liver</li> <li>*Contraindications: anticoagulant medications, gallbladder problems, upcoming surgery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add to smoothies</li> <li>• Add to soups</li> <li>• Tea</li> <li>• Golden milk powder (Cinnamon, ginger, turmeric, black pepper and milk tea)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Mint</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digestive discomfort</li> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Fresh breathing</li> <li>• IBS relief *contraindications for acid reflux medications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teas</li> <li>• Aromatherapy with oil</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Chamomile</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves sleep</li> <li>• Reduces muscle spasms</li> <li>• Indigestion</li> <li>• Bloating</li> <li>• Mild cramps *Note that is part of the Daisy family and if allergic please avoid.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tea</li> <li>• Topical for skin conditions</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Garlic</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces high cholesterol</li> <li>• Respiratory infections</li> <li>• Immune support</li> <li>• Reduces LDL cholesterol</li> <li>• Reduces hypertension</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh garlic in food</li> <li>• Garlic oil</li> <li>• Garlic in honey</li> </ul>

# COMFORT FOODS AND INGREDIENTS

Comfort foods in Latin America often revolve around staple foods like corn, beans and roots, prepared in hearty dishes that foster a sense of community and nostalgia.

**Cocoa:** Revered since ancient times, cocoa is known for its mood-enhancing, uplifting and mental wellbeing-supporting properties.

**Pozole/Broths:** Hearty stews and soups, like Mexican pozole, Salvadoran "Sopa de Res" (beef soup), or Colombian ajiaco, provide emotional warmth and a sense of home. They also strengthen family bonds as they are usually shared in family gatherings.

**Tamales:** Although they differ in their preparation and wrapping depending on the country, tamales are deeply linked to family gatherings and Christmas traditions, providing a strong sense of cultural connection and comfort.

**Empanadas:** Whether savory or sweet, they are popular comfort foods throughout the region, evoking fond memories of family and home.



**Plantains and cassava:** Basics in Latin-Caribbean cuisine, these ingredients provide a satisfying and nutrient-rich base for many comforting dishes, such as mofongo, tostones or cassava bread.

**Avocado:** Present in many dishes, creamy avocados add a touch of indulgence and are a source of healthy fats.

**Seeds:** Pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, peanuts, quinoa are full of omega 3s that help our brain because of their healthy fat and other essential vitamins and minerals they offer.

**Hibiscus flower:** In addition to being refreshing, it offers benefits such as reducing blood pressure and cholesterol, thanks to its antioxidants. It is an ally for diabetes and cardiovascular health, promoting overall wellbeing by protecting cells from damage and facilitating relaxation and a sense of wellbeing.