

## S.E.L.F.: A Compass for the Recovery Process

S.E.L.F. is an acronym that represents the four interactive key aspects of recovery from bad experiences. S.E.L.F. provides a nonlinear, cognitive behavioral, therapeutic approach for facilitating movement, regardless of whether we are talking individual clients, families, staff problems, or whole organizational dilemmas (Figure 2.7). It is a crucial concept in the Sanctuary Model and will be revisited repeatedly in the chapters on the Sanctuary Commitments. We can best describe the nonlinear aspects of S.E.L.F. using a visual image:

S.E.L.F. is a compass that allows us to explore all four key domains of healing:

- *Safety*: attaining physical, psychological, social, and moral safety in self, relationships, and the environment.
- *Emotional management*: identifying levels of various emotions and modulating emotion in response to memories, persons, and events.
- *Loss*: feeling grief and dealing with personal losses while recognizing that all change involves loss.
- *Future*: trying out new roles, ways of relating and behaving as a “survivor” to ensure personal, professional, and organizational safety, to find meaning, to make more viable life choices, and to help others.

While using S.E.L.F., the clients, their families, and staff are able to embrace a shared nontechnical language that is neither blaming nor judgmental. It allows them all to see the larger recovery process in perspective. The accessible language demystifies what sometimes is seen as confusing and even insulting clinical or psychological terminology that can confound clients and staff while focusing on the aspects of problematic adjustment that pose the greatest challenges.

