



Expectations About Race and Racism in a Helping Relationship

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People of color often encounter discrimination in various contexts, including within helping relationships. Cultural sensitivity and a willingness to explore a participant's past experiences with mental and medical health professionals encourages better engagement in services with a racially different clinician. This guide aims to assist clinicians to effectively work with historically marginalized participants. For more information and useful tools, visit: <http://www.mentalhealthnys.org/login/login.cfm?EventSID=457>.

<p>Culturally Respectful Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Respect is greater than rapport for ethnic minorities ◆ Variability in respectful behavior(s) cross-culturally requires clinician sensitivity ◆ Example: Repeated questions during assessment ◆ Potential adaptations: slow down questioning, silences, small-talk, self-disclosure 	<p>Addressing Environmentally-Based Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Treatment goals should include making goals that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Minimize stressors *Increase personal strengths/supports *Build skills for more effectively interacting with their environment
<p>Identify Cultural Strengths and Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Cultural strengths and supports are resources for treatment ◆ Types of cultural strengths and supports <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Personal strengths may include pride in culture, religious faith, and language abilities *Interpersonal supports may include, extended family, traditional celebrations *Environmental supports may include comfort foods, and access to cultural activities 	<p>Validate Self-Reported Experiences of Oppression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ When a participant discloses perceived discrimination and oppression, avoid automatically looking for alternative explanation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *"Could it be that they meant something else?"
<p>External vs. Internal Influences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Internal = Cognitive Factors ◆ External = Environmental Factors/Situational factors ◆ Acknowledge and accept the relationship between the participants' internal and external influences. 	<p>Emphasize Collaboration Over Confrontation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Treat the participant as an equal and encourage feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *"What can I do to better support you?" <p>Cognitive Restructuring: Helpfulness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The participant is the best judge of what is helpful within their life and what can hinder them ◆ Questioning the rationality of a belief can make the clinician appear uncaring or naive ◆ Considering the utility or advantages of the belief increases the level of trust between the participant and clinician and shows the participant that they are the expert of their own life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *"You are right to be angry but is this helping you?"



Do Not Challenge Core Beliefs

- ◆ Challenging core beliefs often alienates participants and can be culturally insensitive
- ◆ Instead, inquire about their core beliefs and how they view them
- ◆ Example: Individualistic therapist challenging a collectivistic client to separate themselves from their family, which is a primary source of stress for the client.

Creating a List of Healthy Cognitions

- ◆ Generating a list of personal strengths or external supports can challenge unhelpful cognitions:
 - *Internal coping resources
 - *Past successes
 - *They are valued by others
 - *Community and Family
 - *Support from a Higher Power

Culturally Informed Homework Assignments

- ◆ Consider whether assignments fully capture the participant's cultural context
 - *Make sure an inventory of enjoyable activities includes culturally-relevant activities for the participant to choose from
- ◆ Involve participants in the creation of homework
 - *"What is the smallest possible step you could take that would make you feel like you are making progress?"

Multicultural Counseling Competence

- ◆ Being aware of one's own cultural heritage and biases while respecting other help-giving practices
- ◆ Knowledge, such as understanding sociopolitical factors that affect ethnic minorities
- ◆ Skills, such as sending and receiving culturally adequate verbal and nonverbal messages

Self-Reflection Questions

Self-awareness is the first step towards effectively working with participants of color. Consider the following questions to help you process your experiences and biases, to allow for personal and professional growth.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What were your first experiences with feeling different?2. What were you told about others who were ethnoracially different?3. What were your earliest memories of race or color?4. What stereotypes do you hold of pluralistic populations?5. What are your experiences as a person having or not having power in relation to race or class?6. What are your preferred therapeutic methods that may not be culturally attuned or adequate? | <ol style="list-style-type: none">7. What steps can you take to learn more about your participants' cultural backgrounds?8. How might you be inadvertently repeating negative or oppressive interactions representing the dominant culture with participants?9. How can you make use of therapeutic "mistakes" or microaggressions in ways that increase therapeutic alliance?10. What is difficult for you to address regarding race, culture, or other differences you have with your participants? |
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